**IN YOUR HEARTS REVERE CHRIST AS LORD**

1 Peter 3:8-22

Key Verse: 3:15

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect….”

 One of the bible verses that I often quoted in my message is 1 Peter 2:24. “He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” Peter simply declared and testified to what Jesus accomplished on the cross on our behalf and the amazing grace that has been given to us. Because of Jesus’ sacrifice, we can die to sins and live as God’s people. No matter what the world throws at us, God will never reject us—we are, now and forever, His people. No circumstance, relationship, or authority can remove us from God’s plan and purpose for our lives: to bring people to salvation in Jesus.

Today’s passage is about suffering—specifically, the kind of severe suffering that comes as a consequence of living for Jesus. In the world, over 360 million Christinans are suffering under persecution. Especially in the Top 10 nations, following Jesus means death. What about us? Though we do not have such severe persecutions, we are in a spiritual war against cultures of the U.S such as Materialism, Gendrism, Humanism, Individualism, Relativism, Pleasure-seeking, Consumerism - godless cultures. Our society is increasingly turning its back on God’s truth. Persecution is coming. we should prepare ourselves.

In this passage, Peter is not teaching believers how to avoid suffering. Rather, he teaches us how to live victoriously in the midst of suffering and how to lead people to the gospel of Jesus. Let’s learn from today’s passage how to win these spiritual wars against godless cultures; how to live victoriously in a hostile world.

**First, form a loving community (8-12).**

 Living in a materialistic society that values people based on worldly standards such as wealth, education, appearance, social status, and success. -inevitably lead many to become competitive, self-centered, materialistic and eventually godless. When I came to UBF, what truly captured and moved my heart was not the Bible study or the message, but the kindness I experienced - the warm-welcoming, the genuine acceptance, and even the delicious food. Though I was a stranger, I felt deeply loved and accepted.

Where can we find a community where people are not judged by their outward conditions, where no one seeks to take advantage of another, where constant competition is not the norm, and where people love one anothers, seek other interests and do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit? That is the church of Christ. Church is not a building, but a community. Jesus said “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (Jn 13:35) This is the way God wants His people to overcome the hostile world.

In verse 8, Peter reaffirms the teachings of Jesus to believers who are facing severe hostility : “Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.” Peter presents a list of attitudes believers should have.

“To be like-minded” means having unity of hearts, especially concerning what we believe, our calling, our identity, our goal. When we are like-minded with one goal with one spirit, we can work together even though we may differ in background, personality, or opinion. Peter told us that we are living stones like Jesus, being built into a spiritual house with Christ as the cornerstone. This unity is not about uniformity where everyone thinks exactly the same, like in a communist system. But, it is about harmony. To be like minded, we must deny ourselves, but focus on God. Clinging on to ourselves and our egos, we cannot be united. But when we follow Jesus, denying ourselves, we can be like-minded.

Sh. David, M. Emmanuel, and M. Joseph Lee are very different individuals, yet they serve together because they share the same mind - the same purpose to carry out God’s mission of saving souls, especially young campus souls. They have their own desires, thoughts, and plans, they deny themselves and work together for the sake of God’s greater will. Because of people like them, this spiritual house stands strong to serve God’s salvation work.

“Be sympathetic” means to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep, having close fellowship with one other. To survive in this competitive world, it is easy to become selfish and indifferent. As a result, many suffer from deep loneliness, which causes major health issues like heart disease, dementia, depression and even suicide. Being sympathetic requires overcoming our pride, selfishness, pride and prejudice in order to understand one person deeply and genuinely.

Think of the Samaritan woman - despised and rejected and isolated because of her immoral life. Everyone found it justified to condemn her, yet no one understood her wounds or her deep thirst. Though he knew everything about her, Jesus did not despise her. He understood her deep thirst for true worship and humbly reached out to her, asking “Will you give me a drink?” Instead of being judgemental out of self-righteousness, we too must embrace those who are weak, broken and hurting.

Think of the tax collector, Matthew. Everyone hated and rejected him as a sinner. Jesus saw him and called him ‘Follow me,” for he was lost and he needed a doctor. Jesus went to his house, ate and drank with him, and perhaps, even danced with him - rejoicing together because Matthew had been found by God. Be sympathetic - the Church can embrace sinners just as Jesus welcomed them.

 To love one another means to love each other with brotherly affection, as members of God’s family. We have been born again into a living hope and adopted into God’s family. so, we are not merely members of an organization. We are beloved brothers and sisters in Christ.

To be compassionate means more than just feeling sorry for others. It means to suffer together in order to ease their burden and suffering. This reflects the very heart of God, who sent his son to die on the cross for sinners. When Jesus saw people who were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd, he had compassion on them. So he healed their sick, taught them the word of God, and fed them even. (Mk 6:34). He also taught his disciples to be compassionate toward the needy (Mk 6:37).

To be humble is the key in forming a loving community. However, it is most difficult for sinful people to be humble because we are naturally proud. How can we be humble? It is possible when we have the mindset of Christ. Though he was God, Jesus humbled himself, came into this world, and became one of us. He served all kinds of people and ultimately gave himself up as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. When we have this Jesus in our heart, we can be humble, even to the point we offer ourselves for sinners.

 These five attitudes are actually the attitude of Jesus Christ, Paul called it “the mindset of Christ.” So, what kind of community has God called us to be? A Christ-like community. To build such a community, each of us must learn how to deny ourselves daily and follow the example of our Lord Jesus.

 **Second, repay evil with blessing. (91-12)**

Look at verse 9-12. Peter focuses on our actions - how to conduct ourselves - when facing hostility. Look at verse 9. “Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.” What would you do if someone gossipped about you or spread likes? How would you respond if someone harassed you out of envy and hatred? What about when someone cut you off in traffic? Be honest! We want to repay evil with evil. If you don’t do so, you are a saint. But what Peter said is beyond that - “On the contrary, repay evil with blessing.”

Do you remember that Peter cut the ear of a soldier who came to arrest Jesus out of anger? He was a hot-tempered man who sought to repay evil with twice as much in return. Then, how could he have changed? It was because of Jesus’ teaching - teaching that he himself lived out. Jesus said, **“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you”** (Lk 6:27b-28). Then, for those who handed him to the cross, Jesus prayed for them, **“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”** (Lk 23:34a). In this way, Jesus brought forgiveness, peace and healing to mankind. So, when someone curses or persecutes you without cause, bless them and pray for them. When someone cuts us off in traffic, we may not show a middle finger, but bless them. This is the way to receive God’s blessing. It is also the way to be victorious over evil. By fixing our eyes on Jesus, we can endure evil and insults and respond with patience and grace - with blessing.

Not only passively respond to evil, but we should actively do good, seek peace and pursue it. In verses 10-12, Peter quotes Psalm 34, emphasizing the importance of controlling our tongue to live a blessed life. Look at verse 10. “For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.” This means that Living a blessed life is connected to how we use our tongue. One evidence that we are made in the image of God is that we can be healed by words or wounded by words. We believe that God’s word has tremendous power - it created the heavens and the earth out of nothing. Likewise, our words carry great power.

Proverbs says, “The tongue has the power of life and death…” (Pr 18:21). But, James also says that the tongue also is a fire… It corrupts the whole body, set the whole course of one’s life on fire….It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.” (Jas 3:6,8b) Then, What should we do with our tongue? Zip our mouths and remain silent? No. God gave us a mouth to express what is in our hearts -Praise and Thanks. Since our words come out from our heart through our tongues, we must store up good things in our hearts to control our tongues. Jesus said, “a good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.” (Mt 6:43-45)

 Then, how can we store up good things in our hearts? Paul said in Phil 4:8-9. “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things.” Thinking about political issues, entertaining businesses, stock markets, and games, we cannot but say those things about the world. We may store up good things, especially the words of God by meditating it day and night; we may store up God’s love for sinners and his amazing grace, by meditating Jesus’ sacrifices deeply, we may share freely the words of life; we may store up praises of God by singing praises day and night instead of k-pop or songs of the world, so we may give praises to God.

Look at verse 11. We must turn from evil and do good; we must seek peace and pursue it. It tells us to take positive and active actions to do good and seek and pursue peace. This is the active process of bringing reconciliation and harmony in our relationships and community, rather than division and conflicts. Verse 12 tells us why we should do so: “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” It is because God watches over the righteous as the apple of his eye. He listens to their prayers; He provides for them, protects them and blesses them in many ways. Even no one sees how we humble ourselves to work together; how much we sacrifices for others; how often earnestly we pray with tears for one soul, God sees everything - even whatever we have done in secret. God hears every prayer. God is also the righteous Judge who sets his face against those who do evil. No one can hide their hearts or deeds from God. Knowing God - who sees, hears, and judges justly - motivates us to live good lives that inherit His blessing.

**Third, Revere Christ as Lord in your hearts (13-22)**

The Jewish believers were kicked out of their families and nations because of their faith in Jesus. The gentile believers were kicked out of their families because they no longer followed their culture and pagan religions. They were scattered across the world, enduring persecutions. The whole society turned against their faith. Still in this passage, Peter teaches them why and how they could live victoriously even in such time.

 Look at verse 13. “Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?” In most cases, when we do good, people respond well. But still a lot of people persecute us with evil intent, speaking maliciously against our good behavior in Christ. How can we deal with evil?

First, Be confident that we are blessed through sufferings (14a). When the apostles proclaimed Jesus as the Lord and Messiah in the temple courts, they were arrested and flogged by the Jewish religious leaders. But they rejoiced because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name of Jesus (Ac 5:41). This kind of suffering is blessed. It purifies our motives and free us from false hopes. It produces perseverance, character and living hope in the kingdom of God (Ro 5:3-4). In this way we participate in the sufferings of Christ. God uses sufferings as part of his plan - to grow us, strengthen us, and remold us into men and women of God.

Second, Revere Christ as Lord in our hearts. (14b-15a) When we suffer, fear creeps in. It may come through a parent’s threat to cut our relationship—including financial support—or through an employer’s threat to fire us, or social rejection from friends and peers. When fear takes hold, we become paralyzed and then compromise. So Peter said, “‘Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.’ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord.” (14b-15a) What does it mean to revere Christ as Lord? It is to confess and hold fast to our faith in Jesus Christ: Jesus is my Savior, who delivers me from sin and death. Jesus is Sovereign over all powers and authorities, including my life and future; Jesus is Almighty God who can protects, provides, and empowers. Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords; So, Jesus is the only one we should fear (Lk 12:4-5). When we revere Christ as Lord in our hearts, we are no longer afraid of anything or anyone else. Then we become courageous and bold, able to testify about Jesus to anyone. So, we choose to fear God, not man; we choose to trust Him fully.

 Third, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (15b). As we live good lives. people are going to wonder! - How can they live that way? Why aren’t they shaken? Why are they joyful in suffering? Our life of faith and obedience -speak powerfully louder than words. The life of consistent obedience to God; the life of unwavering integrity; the life of sacrificing for one soul; the life of giving even in poor; the life of praise and thanksgiving in suffering testify that the living hope we have in Christ is true. It opens the doors to share Jesus with others.

In our suffering, there is always purpose. In Christ, no suffering is meaningless. so, it is better for us to be rejected and hurt on campus when we go out for fishing than to suffer at home from the sense of guilt and shame. It is better for us to suffer for doing good, it will bring glory to God.

So, what is your answer to the reason for the hope you have? It is the hope of the kingdom of God - brought to us through Jesus’ death and the resurrection. The hope we have is the eternal victory in Christ Jesus; the salvation; the eternal life. In verse 18-22, Peter tells the victory that Jesus brought us through his suffering. This victory is the reason I hold on to the gospel of Jesus. Jesus suffered once for all sinners to bring us to God. His blood atoned for our sins, healed us; and opened the new living way for us to come and worship the living God without fear.

Verse 19 says that Jesus made a proclamation to imprisoned spirits - those who were disobedient in the days of Noah. This part is very controversial. But “spirits” seems to refer to the unsaved of Noah’s day who heard the message of the Spirit of Christ through Noah’s preaching (1:11; 2 Pe 2:5), but still disobeyed and then perished. Only eight people, those in the ark, were saved through water (20).

In the time of Jesus, the water symbolizes baptism - the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Jesus baptized us with water and the Holy Spirit that cleans our conscience and makes us righteous before God. This was made possible by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (21). After resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him (22). This victorious Christ is our Lord. This victorious Jesus will come again with the authority and power to call His. So we can rejoice in suffering because we know that if we suffer with him, we will also reign with him (2 Ti 2:12).

So, why do we believe in Christ? Why do we sacrifice to serve campus students? Why do we live a life of giving, life of serving, life of sacrificing? We can boldly say, Because in Christ, we have living hope and eternal victory.

Let’s listen to Peter’s message: “…in your hearts revere Christ as Lord…always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you….” When we do, we can live a victorious life. We can be good witnesses of Christ for the glory of God and blessing of others.