

Let's start with a question that Pastor Kevin began his message with last Sunday. Can you think of a time and a circumstance in your life when you did something that was right and things went terribly wrong? You tried to bless someone and got persecuted in return?

When we face an unfair treatment it is so easy for us to become vengeful and vindictive. Something in us cries out for justice and if possible we will try our best using all of our resources to get our revenge, to make the perpetrator to pay fully for it.

No wonder many love the story of "the Count of Monte Cristo". It is the classic story of an innocent man, Edmond Dantes whose peaceful life and plans to marry his beautiful fiancée, Mercedes are abruptly shattered when his best friend Fernand, who wants Mercedes for himself, deceives him. Edmond is wrongfully, but deliberately imprisoned and the rest of the story is how he brilliantly strategizes for revenge against those who betrayed him.

We love this kind of story because that is man's way of reacting to unfair situations in life. We want the wrongs to be made right and we want it happen

instantly. We want justice and we want it now. We want an eye for an eye type of approach and if we are honest we want two eyes for an eye for two eyes.

But there is a better way. You see we may make that perpetrators to pay for their injustice and we may get our way but we won't get peace.

The better way is God's way which is quite different from our ways (Isaiah 55:8). It is God's way of response that Peter is exhorting us to follow in his letter that we have been studying for the past few weeks.

Let's read 1 Peter 1: 13-18.

What do you think Peter wants to communicate in these verses? What is his main point and focus?

1 Peter 3:13 says, "Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?" What is your comment?

Do you believe if we do good all the time, could we hope to avoid all persecution?

What is said in verse 13 is not always and in every circumstance true but generally true. What Peter means is that for the most part if we act right and treat people with respect and follow the golden rule ("Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"), we will not get harmed or harshly treated.

However according to Greek structure of that verse there are rare occasions, where we do good and act in right way and still receive evil for our goodness. what should we do at those times as a Christian?

Here are a few principles to put into practice when facing suffering and injustice:

1. Continue doing good and feel joyful and blessed in the midst of it.

Is this principle biblical? Did Jesus and other apostles thought the same way. Let's investigate that.

Jesus: "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you". (Matthew 5:10-12)

Paul: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up". (Galatians 6:9)

James: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kind". (James 1:2)

Hebrews 10:32-39 is a very helpful passage exemplifying this principle in

everyday ordinary lives of believers in first century and for that matter what is happening in the lives of many of our brothers and sisters around the globe right now.

2. Do not worry or panic. Don't get overwhelmed or paralyzed by fear. Don't be troubled or agitated on the inside. If I shouldn't fear or panic, the what can I do?

- _____ . "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me". (John 14:1)
- _____. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus". Philippians 4: 4-7

3. Acknowledge Christ Lord over our lives and the circumstances we are facing. What does this mean to us in a personal and practical way? Explain and give an example of the past or present.

4. Be ready and willing to give a witness.

Did you notice what Peter said in verse 15. He said “give an answer to everyone **who asks**”.

Dr. Genova has written a book entitled: “If Jesus Is the Answer, What Is the Question?” I think that is what Peter is saying. Most of the time we want to witness to people in our words without them having a question or being interested in our faith and how we live it in our relationships.

However, when we react in a godly way in the face of unjust treatment and unfair suffering, people are going to notice that. It will be at those times that our family, friends or coworkers are going to ask how we live such a different life. They will ask us and we need to be prepared and willing to witness. The word “to give an answer” is apologian in Greek which we get the word apologetic from. It means to be able to give a verbal defense of what we believe.

- Are you willing to share your faith if somebody asked you to do so?
- Are you prepared to do so?

If your answer is no to one or both of these questions what are you going to do about it? What steps can you take to be prepared to make a defense of your faith?

One more comment. Peter is instructing us that when we are giving a witness for

our hope we should do that in a winsome way. We need to do that in a gentle and respectful way. In colossians 4:5-6 Paul also exhorts us likewise.

What is the difference between giving a defense and being defensive?

How hard is it to separate these ideas when you are under verbal attack?

How would you advise someone to “keep their cool” when their belief is questioned?

Look up Proverbs 15:1. What other good reason for gentleness and respectful speech is found here?

5. Keep a clear conscience (v.16).

- How do I keep a clear conscience

- What would be the result?

Think of one or two things that you have learned in this study that you'd like to work on in the coming week. Remember that this is all about quality, not quantity. It's better to work on one specific area of life and do it well than to work on many and do poorly and give up.

We started our study with the classic story of The Count of Monte Cristo which is man's ways of facing injustice. We then talked how the Bible teaches us to act differently than the world system. Now I would like to close with another classic story about a young man who was also Like Edmond unfairly treated and betrayed by his closest relationships, his brothers and yet he was able to rise above his circumstances and entrust himself to God and yes his story did have a good ending.

This young man's name was Joseph and he is a classic example of suffering unjustly for doing good and yet keeping a clear conscience and a right and joyful spirit throughout his ordeal(1 Peter 3:16-17). His story is found in chapters 37 to 50 of the book of Genesis. If you have not read it before or it has been a while, I encourage you to read it. But I want to draw your attention to this few verses.

After Joseph went through a lot of hardship and unjust suffering for many years, he finally found the opportunity to get even with the perpetrators, his brothers. But he not only did not repay their evil with evil but he did them a lot of good. Read Genesis 50: 15- 21.

Joseph's journey from pit to pinnacle took about 13 years.

End your time in prayer and especially spend a few minutes in confession, repentance and asking and extending forgiveness.