

How To Handle Misfortune

Do you feel that you have been mistreated by anyone? If you feel that way, you are not alone because it is a common experience. We see illustrated throughout scripture people that were mistreated and suffer unjustly. If you haven't been mistreated, then just wait because it will happen. How you respond to being mistreated is important because if you mishandle mistreatment you make matters worse. If we live by the philosophy "an eye for an eye" the entire world would be blind. Peter was certainly no stranger to mistreatment. His faith in Christ led to his unjust treatment over and over. In our text Peter deals with this matter of how to handle mistreatment. Let's notice what he has to say.

1 Peter 2:19 *For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. (20) For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.*

(21) *For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: (22) Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:*

(23) *Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:*

(24) *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*

Peter is talking about suffering for doing good things. He mentions two things regarding this matter. First is our attitude and the second is our action.

No. 1 - Peter first mentions our attitude toward unjust mistreatment because the attitude you have toward mistreatment will determine your actions. He begins by alerting us not to be surprised when mistreatment comes. Jump over to **1 Peter 4:12** *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:* Peter is warning us not to be surprised or caught off-guard when mistreatment comes. Don't have the attitude that if you always do what's right that you will always be treated right. Listen to Jesus. **John 15:18** *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. (19) If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

While we may not understand why; mistreatment comes to the righteous. You would think if you lived a righteous life that people would appreciate you, but not true. Let me suggest that people who do good suffer because the world is intimidated by them. People look at the way the world lives and consider that lifestyle as not too bad. But when you put worldly lifestyle up beside the child of God who lives a good, moral and wholesome life, then by comparison that man of the world is intimidated. This is why Jesus said. **(19) If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, ... therefore the world hateth you.** The world hates us because our lifestyle exposes how inferior their lifestyle really is. So sometimes we are treated wrong because we are doing right.

Secondly, Peter says don't feel sorry for yourself when you are mistreated. One tends to sit down and fret when they feel that they have been unjustly treated. But let me suggest we embrace the attitude that the

apostles had. Back when the apostles were arrested in Jerusalem for preaching, they were threatened and beaten and told not to preach any more. **Acts 5:41** *And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.* They rejoiced in that they could suffer for Christ sake. They considered it an honor instead of an imposition to serve the Lord, unlike the priest in Mal 1:13 who said, **“Behold, what a weariness it is.”** Really, serving the Lord is one of the greatest privileges we have. Those early disciples considered it an honor to not only serve the Lord, but also to suffer for the Lord. So when you suffer for the cause of Christ, don’t feel sorry for yourself, but consider it an honor to do so.

Some may think we have much to offer but the Lord thinks so and what a privilege it is to serve. It’s a privilege not only because of the person we serve but because of the promise we share. **1 Peter 3:9** *Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that YE SHOULD INHERIT A BLESSING.* If you are willing to suffer for Him, then you will be blessed for it.

Paul emphasized the same message. **Rom 8:17** *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that WE SUFFER WITH HIM, that we MAY BE ALSO GLORIFIED TOGETHER.* That’s the blessings we will inherit if we deal with the insults, ridicule, and suffering in the right way. Now notice the next verse **(18)** *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* What awaits us in heaven is so far surpassing anything we might experience in life is not really worth mentioning/comparing. It’s like me comparing my black farm truck with a \$250K Rolls Royce. The two are not even in the same league, much less comparing one another. That’s the point Paul is making is that the sufferings of this life are not even worthy of comparison to the glory that awaits us. So when you are mistreated, don’t feel sorry for yourself because you’ve got something wonderful awaiting you.

Thirdly, don’t worry about suffering. **1 Peter 3:13** *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? (14) But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and BE NOT AFRAID OF THEIR TERROR, NEITHER BE TROUBLED.* If you are mistreated for doing good, don’t worry about it and don’t let it intimate you. One concept we need to remember is that they can hurt you on the outside but they can’t harm you on the inside. You are the only one that can harm you on the inside. When you give up on yourself and compromise with the world when you are mistreated, then you harm yourself inside. Don’t be intimidated by mistreatment.

No. 2. Next, notice our action toward mistreated. The first action to take when mistreatment comes is to accept it as God’s will. As strange as it may sound, there are times mistreatment is the will of God. Sometimes when you try to live right, God allows suffering to come. Now God doesn’t cause the suffering, but he allows it to happen. Long ago, God said to Satan, **Job 1:8** *Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?* Satan wanted Job and God allowed hardships to befall him; but God didn’t cause it to happen. That’s also true in our lives. **1 Peter 3:17** *For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.* Look at the next chapter. **1 Peter 4:19** *Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.* Sometimes it God’s will that we go through the fire. Now we don’t always know why it’s that way, but when ever God allows mistreatment to invade the life of one of His children, it’s always for his benefit/well-being if we respond to it in the right way. God can use a bad thing to produce good results.

Joseph of the Old Testament understood this principle. Joseph was hated and mistreated by his brothers. They sold him into slavery and he made his way to Egypt where he was falsely accused and wrongfully imprisoned. But over time, he rose to a powerful political position in Egypt. As time passed, Joseph's father, Jacob and his brothers moved to Egypt and after Jacob died, Joseph's brothers were afraid that Joseph would remember their mistreatment and retaliate. **Gen 50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. (21) Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.** God had something good in mind to allow Joseph to go through that experience of mistreatment. Did God cause these mishaps – no; but God allowed them to happen and then used them for good.

The second action to take when mistreatment comes is to sanctify Christ as Lord. **1 Peter 3:15 But SANCTIFY THE LORD GOD IN YOUR HEARTS: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:** That word sanctify means “to set apart.” It's the idea of elevating the Lord to a high position in your heart; make him your master. Instead of fearing the world that mistreats us, we should respectfully fear God more than the world. The reason for that is because man can only do so much to us but the Lord can do so much more than man. **Matthew 10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.** This physical body is expendable and one day it's going to die but the soul is eternal and it will live on forever. So when you are mistreated, don't respond in such a way that will jeopardize your relationship with God. Sanctify Christ in your heart as Lord.

Third action, keep a clear conscience. **1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: (16) Having a good conscience; ...** When you are mistreated, respond in a gentle, kind way. It's the opposite of being rude, vengeful and obnoxious. Don't do anything that you will regret later. In retaliation to mistreatment, some have said words they later regret saying, and did things they wish hadn't been done. In a moment of rage, the do/say something they will forever wish they could undo.

Fourth and final action, bless those that mistreat you. **1 Peter 3:9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.** Don't render evil for evil but contrariwise render a blessing. Blessing carries the idea “to speak well of someone.” The way you talk about those that mistreat you speaks volumes about your spiritual maturity. No better example of this attitude do we have than Jesus himself. **1 Peter 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:** Look to the next verse to see what example we should follow. **1 Peter 2:22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: (23) Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:** We see this best when Jesus endured the horrendous mistreatment of the cross cried out, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”

Peter sums it all up in **1 Peter 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.** If you suffer according to the will of God, then commit your soul to God in well doing. That term “commit” was a banking term to refer to a

person that you trust to look after and to care for you wealth while you are away. You commit you money into their trust. So when you are mistreated unjustly, commit you soul into the hands of the faithful creator.

I want to expand that thought and suggest that you commit your soul to God regardless of your treatment by others. Such a commitment entails obedience to the gospel. No one will ever mistreat us the way we mistreat God. Yet he made a way for our redemption, a way to be forgiven and to be a join heir with Christ.

Invitation