



Parkway Fellowship

RIGHT-HAND MAN • WHEN IT'S TIME FOR SOME PAYBACK • 1 PETER 3:8-17 • 6/21/2020

MAIN POINT

Since payback to Jesus is something I can never do, then payback to others is something I should never do.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

How do you tend to respond when you are wronged?

Have you ever been involved in a conflict that escalated unnecessarily? What happened?

What is the difference between justice and revenge? Why is it easy to confuse the two?

All of us have reactionary tendencies, and those tendencies teach us that we must always allow God's will to supersede our own. When we allow our personal desires to eclipse our desire to serve the Lord, our fleshly revenge escalates out of control, trouble leads to more trouble, and our hope in God and His justice gets lost along the way.

Henry Ford once observed, "Whether you think you can, or you think you can't—you're right." To his thinking, circumstances were irrelevant. One's success within any situation was not determined by the circumstances of the situation, but the approach of the individual within the circumstances. In 1 Peter 3, Peter wrote to people experiencing persecution for their Christian faith. For some, such circumstances might excuse a waning hope. The answer Peter gave them and us was to set aside payback and set our hope in Jesus.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 PETER 3:8-9.

What five characteristics did Peter identify in verse 8 that should characterize Christians' relationships with one another? What is the significance of each one? How do these qualities contribute to hope in believers?

What word or short phrase would you use to describe the image Peter painted in verse 9 of Christians' relationships with those outside the church? Explain your choice. How would relating to non-Christians in this manner contribute to hope within believers?

What does the corresponding nature of "giving a blessing...that you may inherit a blessing" tell you about a Christ follower's hope?

God never intended believers to be lone rangers, operating by themselves through the course of life. His design from the garden of Eden was for His people to serve in partnership with one another. When we live in harmony with other believers and with the lost, we nurture our individual hope as well as the hope of brothers and sisters in Christ to whom we relate. As we give a blessing of hope in the way we relate to others, we will find that we inherit a blessing of hope as well.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 PETER 3:10-12.

Peter drew from Psalm 34:12-16 for this section of verses, though he used third person language while the psalmist used second person. Review the verses in the psalm now and compare them to Peter's. As with the previous section of verses and the verses from Psalm 34, Peter's adaptation does not include the word "hope," but we certainly see the concept in the opening half of verse 10.

What do these verses tell you about the lifestyle Peter envisioned for his audience?

How would such a lifestyle be important for people who are treated unfairly and wanting ?

How can such a lifestyle contribute to a sense of hope for obedient followers of the Lord?

Oftentimes, our sense of hope is compromised when we allow our relationships to deteriorate or when we engage in other lifestyle manners we know betray our faith and calling. Peter held up a God-honoring lifestyle as a requisite for the hope we all seek.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 PETER 3:13-17.

Peter pulled no punches with those who would read or hear his letter. What ironies or seeming paradoxes do you find in his words?

Peter told those who were already suffering, or soon would be, to be prepared to share hope. What does that mean? How do you do that?

If you were one of the thousands of contemporary believers presently living under persecution, how might Peter's words in these verses make your hope more resolute?

Peter acknowledged that those who do good should not suffer or experience harm for doing so. Yet his concern was not really whether authorities lined up with what should or shouldn't be. Rather, his concern was whether believers aligned themselves with what should be and whether they were prepared to give a "defense" (apologia, from which we get the English "apology," a reasoned, explanatory argument) for their hope. And even that defense Peter expected to be given "with gentleness and respect." Peter was more concerned with the behavior of believers in the midst of suffering than with the legality or legitimacy of the suffering.

Believers will suffer, be it mildly or severely. But our hope need not disappear when suffering comes. Let us strive to put to shame the world behind our suffering by the loving humility we demonstrate, responding with blessing rather than evil, and always be prepared to share the "reason for the hope that is in you."

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

In your own words, why the resurrection is the reason for our faith in Christ?

In this week's message, we learned that when it's time for some payback, God wants me to: Know my why. Think gray (don't make assumptions) and offer grace. Pause to pray so I don't ruin the day. Which of these three points stands out to you the most personally? Why? What steps can you take to apply it?

In what situation right now does it encourage you to know that "the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayer"?

How does your hope impact the way you live on a daily basis, regardless of the favorableness of your circumstances?

PRAYER

Thank God that His design is for you to have a hope that remains constant without regard to changing conditions. Ask Him to help you set aside payback and set your hope on Him. Invite Him to prepare you to share that hope with others and even with those who treat you unfairly.

COMMENTARY

| 1 PETER 3:8-17

3:8-12 In climactic fashion, Peter commanded Christians (“temporary residents,” 1:1) not to return evil for evil so they could receive God’s blessing. The apostle’s teaching here (v. 9) reflects that of Christ elsewhere (Mt 5:43-44; Lk 6:27-28).

3:13-4:19 Believers are commanded in this section to distinguish themselves by doing good, even when faced with pagan hostility, because God will vindicate the righteous.

3:13-17 Believers are commanded to suffer only for the doing of good and not for evil among those who call this world their home.