

Strange World Good God-6
“Battles & Blessings”
1 Peter 3:8-22 (NIV)

Hey Newsong!

I want to take a second to welcome all of our first-time guests and those watching with us online!

How many of you are thankful for air-conditioning? AC is a blessing, and not everyone has it...in fact, all across our city this week, many organizations opened up cooling centers where people can come in and find some relief...

Now we've been in a heat-wave this week, but you can also say that our world has been in a heat-wave figuratively speaking for quite some time...

How many would agree that our world isn't really a life-giving place?

Tensions are high...

Socially

Politically

Economically

Spiritually

The Bible isn't about what happened, it's about what always happens...what was true in Peter's time is true in our time...

People need relief from the heat-wave...

Peter's about to tell us that Jesus' Church (that's us) should be like an AC bringing refreshing and relief...

Offering the Living Water of Jesus...Because Jesus is and always will be the answer.

Now before we dive in, let's remember that Peter is writing to Christians who were living in what today is modern day Turkey. They're under Roman rule. They're being persecuted...mistreated...and even tortured and killed because of their faith in Jesus...

Peter's writing to encourage them, assuring them that although they live in a strange world, they serve a good God!

Here's the thing...

We cannot control how hot it gets out there...But we do with God's help have the ability to change the atmosphere where we live, where we go to work, where we go to school...

From a culture that sucks the life out of you to one that brings life to you...

From a culture that is hopeless to one that is hopeful

From a culture that is restless to one that is restful

From a culture that is unpleasant to one that is enjoyable

How do we do that?

Even though the world is on the highway to hell, how do we invite heaven into our home, our life, into our relationships and into our church family?

So for the past couple of weeks Peter has been dealing with how believers live their lives before an unbelieving world...

He's pointed to three areas of social interaction...

- Government
- Workplace
- Home

The key word in all of these is...Submission.

Now, Peter's going to continue with how we Christians should live out our lives...
And what you need to know and understand is this...

There are two spiritual cultures colliding with each other...a culture of Heaven and a culture of hell...and as we navigate through this life we have to choose which culture we're going to live by...which one are we going to invite into our life...

Now you may be thinking I thought then when we die we either go to Heaven or Hell...That's very true...but while you're on this earth, these two cultures are colliding with each other, and you get to decide which one to live by

1 Peter 3:8-12 (NIV)

Notice he uses the word "Finally" in other words all of that stuff I just said about submission...you've got to live it out every day

He's saying when it's really hot out there...we need to be wise and help cool things down...We can only do that by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let's take a closer look at these two cultures
Culture of HELL

Vs. 9 "Repay evil for evil." This is revenge you cut me off...I'm going to speed up and cut you off...You hit me...I hit you back harder...This is how our world is! The problem with this, is that the conflict never ends...we're just trying to one up, and outdo each other...

But notice it's not just things we do to each other, but things we say to each other...
"Returns insult for insult" You say something about me...I'm a say something about you...
You commented on my IG...I'm going to comment on yours...

Have you ever seen people cutting each other up and spilling their tea on social media? Like Husband and wives putting all of their dirty laundry out for the world to see...

If you know people like this... You've got to pray for them, because in one post it looks like the police were involved... and in the next they're madly in love and sipping Mojitos on the beach in Cancun...

What happens is insult for insult destroys relationships... Slander and gossip destroy reputations... When you slander and gossip... when you accuse someone you're speaking the devil's language... That's the culture of hell...

The world is going to try really hard to conform us to its culture... get us to join them... This is where we see things like "Social Shaming" and "Cancel Culture..."

And Peter's letting us know that if you live according to the culture of hell, ultimately you are not just doing evil against other people ...you're doing evil against God!

Peter's saying hey, it may be 100 degrees in our city...in our work, in our school, it's a culture that returns evil for evil and insult for insult...it shames, blames, and defames...

But in our car, in our home, in our part of this strange world...we need to keep the AC on! We don't have to allow everything out there to come in here...We don't have to invite the culture of hell into our lives...

So as strangers in this strange world how do we walk according to the culture of Heaven? This is so radical...let's look at the text!

Culture of **HEAVEN**

The first characteristic we see is in verse 8...

Peter says that children of God should be “**like minded.**” We should have unity. Now unity doesn’t mean uniformity...If you walk into a church and everyone dresses exactly the same, they all sound exactly the same...no one is allowed to have a different opinion...well you better get out of there fast because you’re in a cult!

You can be in unity and still disagree. It’s been said that “if two people agree on everything, one of them isn’t thinking.”

You see, in the culture of Heaven, you can disagree with someone and still have a relationship with them...

Married couples here today, have you ever disagreed with each other?

Pastor Cyndie and I have been married for 31 years...there’s times that we disagree

So pray for her because she's obviously wrong and has areas where she needs to grow!

Like minded means that although we disagree, our relationship is more important than the issue...So we don't cancel people because we disagree with them...In the culture of Heaven, we do the ancient practice of "agreeing to disagree"

We see this in the early church...They had disagreements and arguments all the time, and yet they had unity.

The Apostles argued over who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (**Mark 9:33-34, Luke 22:24**)

Paul and Barnabas argued over John Mark (**Acts 15:37-39**)

Having one mind = cooperation in the midst of diversity...Jesus knows who we are...He knows our nature...He also knows how the devil will use a disagreement to divide and break up relationships...

This is why Jesus prayed that His disciples (this includes us) would be like minded

20 *"I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. 21 I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me. 22 "I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. 23 I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.-John 17:20-21 (NLT)*

So how does being like minded play out in a marriage? We mutually submit to one another...putting the other first...we love and care about our relationship more than we do being right...

How does this play out in church? We must agree on the core issues of Christianity. I love the quote by a 17th century Lutheran Theologian named Rupertus Meldenius...

“In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.”

What are the essentials? The non-negotiables of our faith?

- The Bible is the Word of God
- Jesus is God
- Forgiveness of sin and eternal life only come through Jesus

These are essential Christian doctrines...

Non-Essentials

- Old earth or young earth
- The flood was it global or local
- The Rapture (Pre, Mid, or Post)
- Speaking in Tongues, and other gifts of the Holy Spirit

These are important things...and I have a strong opinion about these things...but they're not as important as these other things...They have nothing to do with our salvation...And we can disagree on these things and still be brothers and sisters in the Lord because we agree on the essentials...

This is why Mormons & JW's & New Heaven New Earth, Scientology, Christian Science, are not part of Christianity but are considered cults because they have departed from the essential doctrines of the faith...

So we're called to be like-minded...The next characteristic of the culture of Heaven is

Sympathy (vs 8)

A simple definition of sympathy

- feeling what others feel so that you can respond with sensitivity to the need
- “Your hurt in my heart”

Love one another (vs 8)

A simple definition is caring about others and not using them

- The Church is a family
- We all share the same “Father”

We shouldn't be strangers, or distant relatives...we should be close like brothers and sisters...

In fact, Jesus said that it would be love that separates us from the rest of the world...

35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”-John 13:35 (NLT)

There was a 2nd century historian named Tertullian who records that the Roman Empire was so suspicious of churches because they were growing so fast, that they actually sent spies to check them out...

One of these spies reported back that “these Christians are a very strange people. They meet in an empty room to worship. They have no image. They speak of one by the name of Jesus, who is absent, but whom they seem to be expecting at any moment.”

The report ended by saying, “And my, how they love him and how they love one another.”

That’s a great reminder for us in the 21st century with the lack of true biblical love in the world...we must remember that as God’s children we’re called to Love God, and love people...all people...even our enemies...

Compassionate (vs 8)

Compassionate means to be tender hearted. It's the opposite of being hard-hearted. This was a counter-cultural in the first century because compassion was not something that was practiced by Rome...

Can I say that it's still counter-cultural today? Just turn on the news for five minutes and you'll see the result of hearts that have become hard...hearts that have invited the culture of hell into them...

A hard heart can care less if you live or die...The world is full of hard hearts...In fact, before we knew Jesus, our heart was hard in many ways...but Jesus has given us a new heart!

Now we have compassion...which means that we're so deeply concerned for someone that you feel it in your innermost being...

In the depths of who you are and you're compelled to do something about it...

“2019 Reproductive Health Care Act” Love Life, Sound of Freedom

Humble (vs 8)

If I'm humble then I'm thinking about the needs of others and putting their needs first...It means I'm willing to listen and willing to learn...Again this was considered not a strength but a weakness in Roman culture...and sadly it's still considered a weakness in our culture...

Peter goes on to tell us that as Children of God, inviting into our lives the culture of Heaven then we need to be willing to bless up...

When others are cursing at us...or mistreating us, we need to bless back...Can I say that this is an area that is very difficult for me?

I don't know if you're like me, but I'm a counter-puncher by nature...and I can't tell you how many times I've said something in the heat of the moment that caused pain to others...

I have the gift of sarcasm and there are times when it just naturally flows from my lips...

How many of you have gotten so upset...and you had that text or that post or that comment ready and the Holy Spirit was like ahhh no!

How many of you paused for a millisecond with your finger hovering over send...then with a smile that looks kind of like the Grinch pressed send! Atomic Explosion...

And how many of you after the smoke cleared and you saw the damage...regretted it?

Again...What separates Christianity from all other belief systems, including Judaism? Jesus calls us to love our enemies...

Now, imagine how radically different our relationships would be if we decided that we weren't going to invite the heat of hell...but instead the cool refreshing, reviving, air of Heaven..by blessing others...

What does that look like?

Doing what's best for them...You know that you love and forgive someone when you can bless them...If you're struggling with that idea remember that God loves and forgives you!

Sometimes blessing someone means that I'm doing something that is a blessing to them and a sacrifice for me...

Sometimes blessings someone is not spilling the tea about a person when you have a full cup...It's not talking negatively about them when you could...Sometimes blessings someone is not saying or doing anything at all...

Now as we go over the culture of Heaven that we're called to, Who do these qualities and characteristics remind you of? Not Peter! They remind us of Jesus...

So what Peter's saying is that as we walk through this strange world...we need to look more like Jesus, when we do that, we invite the culture of Heaven into our home, school, workplace, church...

Now we get to the part of the letter where Peter may be expecting some pushback...or at least some questions to everything he just said... Because you know how we look for loopholes and shortcuts...Speed limit is 30...I'll go 35?

Remember when Jesus said we have to forgive one another and Peter's like so seven times is good right? Then we can smack them? Jesus is like not even close...

So Peter says that the reason we should live counter-culturally from the world isn't because he says so but because God says so! That's our motivation...And he quotes Psalm 34...

He's like...Hey the Psalm says that God's eyes are not on those who invite a culture of hell...in fact, they are at war against Him...and He will deal with them...

But His eyes are on they're on those who belong to Him...the righteous...and He blesses them...He hears their prayers...He gives them peace because they're pursuing Him Who is the Prince of Peace

So the choice is yours...if you want to love life and see good days in this strange world...love God and love people...turn away from the culture of hell...and walk in the culture of Heaven!

Now if you do that...you know there's going to be push back...Peter talks about this in the next section of our text

1 Peter 3:13-17 (NIV)

Your **MISERY** becomes your **MINISTRY**

Even if you submit to the government, your employer...Even if you follow all of the rules...If you're living in the culture of Heaven You're going to stick out...and there's going to be times where you suffer or you're persecuted, or mocked, or canceled for doing the right thing...

So he's like how are you going to respond? Like Heaven or like Hell?

Two ways to get into trouble as a Christian

- Doing what is wrong/gets you in trouble with God
- Doing what is right/gets you in trouble with the world

Two ways to respond when you get into trouble

Fear of Man (People pleasing)

You're worried about what others will think about you...will say about you...will do to you...this is cancel culture...this is mob mentality...this is shaming on social shaming...

Fear of God (Honoring Jesus)

Living my life to please God...My highest commitment is to Him, Because I love Him, I obey and follow Him...If you walk in the Jesus way...in the culture of Heaven...you don't have to worry or be afraid of anything...because God will bless you! And here's the amazing part...as we're suffering for doing good...non-believers will take notice and ask us...why we have the hope that we have!

Love Life Prayer Walk/Antifa

PC was asked "Why are you here?" Because we care about people...and we want to help

Peter is telling us to live out our faith and then explain it!

Here's the thing to remember...

People are only going to ask about our hope if we're hopeful and we're living out that hope...

Some Christians are walking around like Pinocchio...“I love and follow Jesus” (nose grows) Why? Because they say they love Jesus but deny Him by their lifestyle...And others see the hypocrisy and if that's hope they don't want it...

Some Christians are walking around like Eeyore...No Joy...Always down...always whining...always complaining...No one is attracted to that kind of hope

So a great question...with everything going on in our world...

Political tension, economic tension, racial tension...people are angry, people are frustrated...people are hurting
Am I hopeful?

Not in a fake “everything is awesome” “denying reality” kind of way...But in a “it’s a strange world but I serve a Good God kind of way?”
That’s what unbelievers take notice of...That no matter what’s going on we seem stable...

I have peace in the storm...No matter how out of control this world is...God is in control!
That’s contagious...People are looking for real hope and it’s only found in Jesus!

So Peter says be ready to give an answer...So how does this play out in our world? People we live with, work with, go to school with...have interaction with...they see us living in this world but they see the culture of Heaven around in us and around us... and they ask us...

Hey, how have you been married so long and you guys still love each other?

“Jesus”

Hey, why do your kids still talk to you, and want to be around you?

“Jesus”

Here’s the amazing thing about being a child of God...our witness isn’t just about your victories but it’s also about how God was with us while we suffered...

Hey you recently lost a lot of loved ones...How do you get through it?

“Jesus”

Hey, how did you deal with all of the crazy mask mandates, vaccine passports, social distancing, discrimination against churches, violence and chaos without losing your mind?

“Jesus”

Hey, aren't you worried about all of these crazy politicians lying to us, the economy, our 401K, strange campfire smells, global warming...that creepy jumping bug that's all over the bronx right now, ufo's, AI, micro chips, another covid strain? Why aren't you freaking out?

His name is Jesus...

- He's forgiven my past
- He's already in my tomorrow
- And He's with me right now

If we live out our faith people will eventually ask us!

When was the last time you gave an unbeliever a reason for the hope you have? Now, just because you share your faith doesn't mean that people will accept Jesus...(some will) but others will not...Remember the goal is to win people not arguments...We need to speak the truth in love, and many will be offended by the truth, and ultimately reject Jesus

Which is why Peter says that they will talk about you...They will lie about you...Lie about what you said...They will criticize and attack you...But when we bless them...they will be put to shame!

Now verse 17 is one you don't hear very many messages on...Is it possible to suffer according to the will of God? Yes it is!

That sounds cruel of God...to let us suffer for doing good shouldn't we be rewarded
Reward comes later, Suffering comes now...That's the example that Jesus gave us!

What's Peter saying? When we feel the pressure between what the world wants and God says...In that tension there's a great opportunity to share Jesus! So we need to be ready!

As chapter three comes to a close, we'll see that Peter reminds us that as strangers living in this strange world...

We need to stay on **MISSION** by staying on the **MESSAGE**

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous (that's Jesus) **for the unrighteous,** (that's all of us) **to bring you to God.** (Because we can't get to God on our own) **He was put to death in the body** (That's the cross) **but made alive in the Spirit.** (That's the resurrection) **19 After being made alive,[d] he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—** (The days between His death and resurrection He went and proclaimed His victory!) **20 to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,**

21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body (not just getting wet) but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God.[e] It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

The message is all about Jesus

- Our sin separates us from God
- Our religion and good works can't save us
- God comes to us by sending Jesus
- Jesus lives without sin
- Died in your place for your sins
- The righteous for the unrighteous
- His body went into the grave
- He rose again on the third day
- He has ascended into Heaven
- He's seated at the right hand of the Father
- He has all power and authority

- He's coming again to judge the living and the dead
- Today you can experience God's forgiveness and grace if you put your trust in Jesus!

That's the message...

So when the world is trying to pull you and pressure you to change the message...you have to remember the message

Oh, you want to talk about race? Great, let's talk about Jesus because every race needs Jesus...

Oh, you want to talk about gender? Great, let's talk about Jesus, because both men and women need Jesus.

Oh, you want to talk about politics? Great, let's talk about Jesus, because whether you're blue or red or somewhere in-between you need Jesus!

Oh, you want to talk about the economy? Great, let's talk about Jesus, because both the poor and the rich need Jesus!

Now I'm not saying that these things don't matter, but I'm telling you that the one thing matters most and that's the message of Jesus! We all need Jesus...

Peter is telling us to keep our message about Jesus! Why? Because in a world of bad news...He's the only real good news!

Only Jesus is perfect...
Only Jesus is righteous...
Only Jesus can save us...

So no matter what church you go to...school you graduate from...job you have...cause you support...whatever flag you fly, hashtag you use, protest you participate in, pronoun you prefer, belief system you have...

You have to know and understand that we are all part of the sin problem and only Jesus is the solution!

Jesus died for your sins...

Jesus rose for your victory...

Jesus rules over your eternity...

This is why the most important decision that we can ever make is about Jesus...If you're here today or watching online, and you don't know Jesus...you need to give yourself and your sin to Jesus!

Peter's saying that if God can save Noah...Then God can save you! For those of you who don't know the story, it starts all the way back in Genesis 3

- Our first parents Adam & Eve sinned
- Now that sin is passed down to all of humanity...we're all sinful, rebellious, selfish and foolish by nature and choice

God makes a promise that despite sin, He would send Jesus, The Son of God, to defeat the devil and rescue us from sin...

Over 1500 years go by between the time of Adam & Eve's sin and the time of Noah...By the time we get to Genesis 6, God is looking at the world and He's like these guys are out of control...

The Bible says in Genesis 6 that God looked at the whole human race...everyone on planet earth...and He saw that their deepest desires and passions, and every thought they had was evil...all the time! And the Bible says that it grieved God.

God looked at the world and was like...this is a culture of hell...and all of these foolish, rebellious, foolish people are self-destructing.

They're destroying themselves, their families, their communities, their nations...this is not what I want for them...this is what the devil wants for them...and if I let this continue it's only going to get worse...

So God decides to judge the world...

But in Genesis 6 verse 8 the Bible says ***“But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord”***

Favor means grace...grace is getting what you don't deserve. This is the first time that grace is mentioned in Scripture...

Noah was a good guy in comparison to everyone else, but he was a sinner too...so he couldn't earn God's grace...he didn't deserve God's...God extended His grace to Noah

He tells Noah...look I'm going to bring judgment to the world and I'm going to start over with you and your family...

I'm going to flood the earth and I want you to build an ark...But I want to give everyone a chance to repent so while you're building that ark Noah, I want you to preach to everyone that I'm willing to forgive their sin...

And 120 years go by...Noah and his family are building the ark...Noah's preaching...God's judgment is coming...turn from your sinful, rebellious, foolish ways, and trust in Him...He will save you...

And guess how many people listened to Noah and accepted his message? Zero.

And for 120 years people are making fun of Noah and his family...mocking them, hey Noah where's the rain you promised? Yeah sure God's going to judge us with a flood...blah, blah, blah...they're canceling him, shaming him

Kind of like today...Oh yeah sure...Jesus is coming back...what's it been 2,000 years? You Christians are crazy...you believe in an old book...a talking snake, a pregnant virgin, a savior who dies and resurrects...Oh yeah and I have to believe in Him and do what He says or else He's going to judge me with fire...hey go smoke another one!

And this went on right up until day 120...Noah and his family by faith got on the ark and God sealed up the door...

People are laughing and going about their lives...until a rain drop fell...then another, then another...and the water began to rise...and rise...

Besides the thunder they would have heard...they probably also heard people screaming...people pounding on the ark...but by then it was to late...

Here's what you need to know...

Just as there was a judgment of water there will be a judgment of fire!

Just as everyone thought Noah and his family were crazy...everyone thinks we're crazy

Just like God gave everyone 120 years to repent...God is giving you a chance to repent

Just as by faith they entered into the ark...We trust that Jesus Christ is our ark...by faith we trust Him to deliver us from God's judgment that is coming...

Even though there's great battles being waged in the heavenly realms...there is a great blessing waiting all who will invite the culture of Heaven into their life...

What's the Holy Spirit saying to you today?

