

Virtue as a Vehicle - 1 Peter 3:8-22

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Date: 24 May 2026

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[0 : 0 0] How often we fall short of the glory of God. We are so glad that you have, through your Holy Spirit, regenerated us and adopted us as sons! and daughters so that we can look to our Father and we can say, along with Jesus in Gethsemane, not my will, but your will be done. Lord, I'm reminded of how John the Baptist summarized his relationship with Jesus in John 3.30. He must increase and I must decrease.

Would you make much of yourself today in this time and place? In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You can be seated. You'll open your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 3. We are going to read here in a moment from 1 Peter chapter 3 verses 8 through 22. I thought I'd give you the three observations I'll be bringing today as a part of this sermon from this text in advance so that you can sort of look for them as we work our way through the text. I think there's at least three observations that would be helpful to us this morning. The first has to do with victim identity and how this text interacts with sort of a victim mentality we see so often in the world today. The second is the way that it prescribes virtue as a vehicle to ride out hard times. And the third is just a reminder that certain virtues are kind of volatile and they kind of evaporate under heat and pressure. So you can look for those three concepts as we read our text for the first time this morning. 1 Peter chapter 3 verses 8 through 17. Finally, all of you have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called that you may obtain a blessing. For whoever blessed desires to love life and see good deeds, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you will be blessed.

Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. Yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be God's will, than for doing evil. I think a first observation I present to you this morning is how different this approach is from what we see in the world today related to sort of the victim mentality. Let me kind of define what I mean by a victim mentality or a victim identity. One definition breaks it down into four components. Blame shifting, consistently crediting other people or bad luck for your own circumstances that have a lot more to do with you than you're admitting.

A learned helplessness, a settled feeling that nothing you do will ever make a difference or can make a difference in your pain. Number three, pain is identity, wallowing in grievances until the hardship becomes the defining feature of your personality. The first thing you reach for to explain or introduce yourself to others is your pain. Resisting feedback, defensiveness, the moment someone offers a way forward. Not maybe personally defensive in terms of taking offense, but so sure that no one could ever counsel you out of this if they haven't experienced the exact same thing. And even then, there are probably nuances of your nuances of your situation that would evade their good counsel. That's one way to think about the victim mentality. Another Christian author writes it this way, if you have a victim mentality, you see your whole life through the lens that things happen to you, most of life read as negative beyond your control and as something you're owed sympathy for because you deserved better. And then the diagnosis underneath the diagnosis, at its heart, it's a way of avoiding responsibility for your own life because if you believe you have no power, you never have to act. I would say that I would just summarize it with the three Ps. Number one, when people are caught in a victim identity, there's a sense of permanence. It's almost as if they're saying, this is

who I am and there's no way out. This is just me. There's a sense of powerlessness. They feel like they have very little influence over their situation. And there's a sense of permission. And this is the most stark in the church. When someone is suffering, they are viewed as it's almost like the wound becomes the warrant. And now you have total permission to be an idiot, to not be godly, to not pursue righteousness, to not do hard things, to not be sacrificial, to not be hospitable, to stop serving the Lord Jesus in any meaningful way because you're hurt.

And so that's the victim mentality that spread not only in the world, but unfortunately also in the church. But the Bible does not work that way. And we see that in this particular text. That's not because the Bible is naive about injustice. Christianity is founded on the most unjust act to have ever occurred to anyone at any time. We understand injustice. We understand victimhood. And yet, maybe because we understand it well enough and we've seen it redeemed in the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Bible just has a different approach to people who are victims. Let me walk through this concept pretty clearly because here's what you see in the letter to these folks in 1 Peter. They are really suffering. This is not like, well, it's not as bad as you think it is. This is tough. In chapter 1, verse 6, we're seeing that they're being grieved by various trials, that they are facing the fiery trial that has come upon them. Later in chapter 4, in chapter 3, we see that they are slandered and reviled.

[6 : 59] They suffer when they do good. They're spoken against as evildoers. Some of the slaves are enduring beatings. They are under a evil emperor. And many of the wives in the church are under men who do not obey the word. This is not imagined victimhood. This is the real thing.

Peter never once tells them it isn't happening. And he never once tells them this shouldn't hurt. But notice what he refuses to do. He refuses to let them treat this pain as permanent.

The suffering is always framed as a limited kind of thing. He says that explicitly in chapter 5, after you have suffered for a little while. And if necessary, at the beginning of the book, for a little while, you endure this or that. The time frame of pain in the Christian perspective is never seen as ultimate. And so the victim is never seen as fully and only and totally a victim.

There will be better days. There will be better days. That's kind of a fundamental of Christianity. There will be better days. We will get to a place where it is all made right. So yes, these people are suffering. But Peter never sees this as the end of the story because it wasn't the end of the story with Jesus. Jesus died on the cross and was raised from the dead. And secondly, Peter doesn't only encourage them by saying this is temporary. He actually calls them to a high level of virtue in the midst of their victimhood. They really are victims. But Peter is not seeing any reason. In fact, he's seeing every reason to commend them to virtue, not the other way around. In chapter one, he calls them to be holy. Also in chapter one, he says, love one another earnestly out of a pure heart. In chapter two, put away all malice and deceit and envy and slander. Again, in two, honor everyone. In chapter three, women are told to submit to their husbands and not fear anything that is frightening and not adorn themselves in gold jewelry. Is that because they're not in hardship? No, they're absolutely in hardship. It's just that Peter is refusing to speak to hurting women the way that most Christian women speak to hurting women, which is the wound is the warrant. And Peter's like, no, the wound isn't the warrant. Yes, you are actually suffering. And that is all the more reason for you to pursue virtue. Have unity of mind. He's calling us to all these sorts of things throughout the passage. Have unity of mind in your suffering. Sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, a humble mind.

Keep your tongue from evil. Verse 11 of chapter three, turn away from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it. Verse 15 of chapter three, honor Christ the Lord as holy in your hearts.

[9 : 46] Verse 16, make your defense with gentleness and respect. Chapter five, verse six, humble yourselves. Chapter five, verse seven, cast your anxieties on him. Chapter five, verse eight, be sober.

Be sober minded, be watchful. Chapter five, verse nine, resist the devil. Think about these are real victims, not an imagined wound. But rather than give them sort of the world's treatment for how the world handles people who are hurting, the Bible comes in a very different direction. It says, yes, you are suffering. And that is a good reason for you to pursue virtue.

Now, the reason for it being a good reason to pursue virtue is because, point two, our virtue is a vehicle out of the pain. Our virtue is a vehicle out of the pain. Look back at verse eight.

Finally, all of you have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Now, let's pay attention here to why these virtues are being prescribed. We'll look at the virtues

themselves toward the end of the message. But let's ask this question, why, with people hurting so much as they are, does Peter call them to these virtues, to live a virtuous life? He says, in verse nine, do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling. On the contrary, bless.

For to this you were called that you may obtain a blessing. For whoever desires to love life and see good days, this is from Psalm 34 that we read this morning as our call to worship. Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. [11:30] Let him turn away from evil and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. Let me give you two reasons why the Bible would have us commend each other toward virtue and excellence in the midst of our suffering, even if that suffering is hard and unjust. The first one is this. There is a general pattern in Scripture in which godliness leads to the good life. There is a general pattern of Scripture in which godliness leads to the good life. I get that from verse nine of our text.

For to this you were called that you may obtain a blessing. For whoever desires to love life and see good days must do X, Y, and Z. So I want to tell you, and I think you've, if you've listened to my preaching for some time, you know this, I am concerned that in an effort to differentiate ourselves from the prosperity gospel, we've gone too far. And the truth is that the Bible is full of language that makes it clear that good behavior generally leads to blessings and bad behavior generally leads to curses.

That's generally the pattern. That pattern is referenced generally in this text in two ways. Number one, he just cites Psalm 34 with zero systematic kind of harmonization with what we think of as a better or purer theology. He's like, look, the Psalm says it. If you want to live a good life, if you want to have a good life, be honorable, be righteous, pursue peace, keep your lips from evil. But even later, he says, you know, who's out there trying to hurt you if you're zealous for good? And then he says, but even if someone is, the Lord will have your back. Well, what is he doing there? He's saying generally, generally, good behavior leads to the good life. Generally, bad behavior leads to the bad life. And when there are edge cases or exceptions, we don't build entire theologies out of them. We simply acknowledge them for what they are and for what God is doing through them. The other day, I read this verse. I'm not going to tell you where it's from yet. And I thought, this is so interesting. I want to pass this on. Agree with God and be at peace. Thereby, good will come to you. Receive instruction from his mouth and lay up his wounds in your heart. If you return to the Almighty, you will be built up.

[14:20] Then you will delight yourself in the Almighty. You will make your prayer to him and he will hear you. I read that and I thought, well, I think that I agree with all that. And so far as I was trying to help someone sort of navigate what they should do with their lives, was talking to a 15-year-old boy about how to kind of live your life, like here's a good verse for this. But this is from the book of Job. And it's Eliphaz, Job's friend, saying this to Job. Now, I have a sincere question for you this morning. I think it's important to touch on this because I think that our posture toward hurting people needs to be adjusted a bit. I believe that there's very little difference, substantively, between what Peter is telling the hurting people in his letter and what Eliphaz is telling Job. They are both commending virtue as a vehicle out of pain. I believe that there's very little difference between the way that Peter is talking here and the way the prophets routinely talk, the way that God speaks in the Torah to Israel, the way that Eliphaz is speaking to Job.

In fact, let me say this. I believe we've actually kind of failed to understand that the reason why Job is an interesting book is because nothing is happening the way it normally does. Now, I just want to bring this to you. Is Peter, the apostle, being Job's friend to these exiled people who are suffering? He is not being a friend of Job in this sense. And I want to suggest that we, just because, you know, life is busy and it's full and things are complex, we tend to grab like little platitudes or bumper stickers and sort of make them operational rules. But in reality, friends, in reality, most of the time when you talk to someone who is suffering, if you are just prayerful and know the word, you'll be able to identify certain opportunities they have for sin and certain opportunities they have for obedience. You'll be able to identify certain temptations they would have towards self-pity, jealousy, etc. And you'll also be able to identify certain opportunities they have to double down on the word of God. In other words, you could give actual full counsel and not be a friend of Job. You could just let folks know, hey, you're in a hard time, but let me tell you this. The Bible consistently speaks to people in hard times and the call is consistent in this sense.

Let's pursue virtue like your life depends on it. When a man's ways please the Lord, even his enemies are made at peace with him. So there's a real role, I think, for understanding how the Bible responds to people in a victim mentality and how different it is from the way that the world responds and how the church, I think, has become somewhat infected by the worldly approach to hurting people so that we think that there is no room for exhortation even as we offer encouragement and care.

And here's all I would just say. I don't think that Eliphaz is doing exactly the same thing as Peter in this sense. Eliphaz is saying it's all this simple Job. The real sin of Job's friends is their simplicity, of their inability to recognize a larger cosmic battle at play.

I really doubt that I know a lot of you fairly well. I don't see that in many of you. So I just, if I could, I would just want to give you like a little bit permission to say to a hurting person, I'm with you, I'm here, I want to help carry this burden, but also there's nine ways you can screw this up even worse than it is right now. Can we talk about that?

[18 : 28] I really believe that because of our desire to be so vacated from this sort of prescriptive approach, we're really ignoring the way the Bible talks to hurting people throughout the Bible.

Well, it's not only because I think that in some sense virtue is a vehicle into the good life. But there's something even more important happening in this passage, and that is, is that God will vindicate the virtuous. God will vindicate the virtuous. I do not think we fully understand how much God loves to vindicate his name. I believe that so much of what he's doing in history and in providence has to do with his delight in vindicating his name. Look at verse 13 of 1 Peter chapter 3.

Now, who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. Yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

For it is better to suffer for doing good than it should be God's will, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but being made alive in the Spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers, having been subjected to him. Now, I do know a lot of you well, and I know many of you are tempted to take a hard left on baptism saves or are demons aliens, or aliens demons. Like, I know,

I know the vanity of your conspiracy theory hearts, and your edge case hearts, and I know those things perk your interest, and I promise you, I've already written the podcast script for these things, and I would be happy to discuss all of the nitty-gritty details of Jesus preaching to spirits in prison, and so on and so forth, in that podcast. But I can tell you that all of that was admitted not to teach anyone anything in the first century. These were already things people believed.

[21 : 23] They were already stories they knew, and Peter is simply using those stories not to teach doctrines that you're interested in, just as like, well, what does this mean? I'd be happy to talk to you about that. But right now, the focus of what Peter's doing is he's saying Jesus was virtuous, and God vindicated him at every conceivable level, including at the cosmic one. That's what Peter's doing here.

All these other questions, fine to ask. What Peter's doing is he's telling us that we should be virtuous, because if we are virtuous like Christ was virtuous, then God will vindicate us in his time. A little bit ago, actually 40 days ago, this is Pentecost Sunday, I believe, preached a sermon to a smaller crowd on Good Friday, and I mentioned something that I thought it's probably worth repeating, something I had read from John Stott earlier, and he has this thing, I just call it the John Stott vindication matrix. But let me just walk you through this, I think it's essentially what Peter's doing here. Stott's point is that in four different ways, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ was a verdict cast upon him by four different authorities or entities.

Here's what I mean. First, he was tried in the court of religion and found to be a blasphemer. The chief priest asked him, are you the son of the most high? And he said yes. And so he was tried in the court of religion and found to be a blasphemer, and the sentence for blasphemy was death. Secondly, not only was he found guilty by the church, but he was also found guilty by the state. Not only were the Jews conspiring to kill Jesus, but also Rome. And Rome tried him for a different matter, and that was, do you think you're a king? And the sense was that he did, and of course there is no king but Caesar, according to the Romans. And so Jesus was found guilty of a second verdict, and that was not only that he was guilty of blasphemy because he claimed to be God, but he was guilty of treason because he claimed to be the king. Well, there's a third verdict, and that is God's verdict. People in that world understood very clearly, both Romans and Jews, that if anyone were to ever be crucified, it was the clearest sign you could possibly have that God did not like you, that you were cursed, that you were set apart for suffering and the lonesome fate. It is the clearest meme of God forsakenness that existed in the ancient world. That stood for the creator, whoever he is, has turned his back on you, and you are forsaken. So we have three verdicts, the church, blasphemy, guilty, guilty, estate, treason, guilty. God, for some reason, appears very clear that God does not like

[24 : 29] Jesus at all. He is utterly forsaken on the cross. And finally, you have nature's verdict. The verdict of nature is like science, right? It's like you need x number of blood cells, or red blood cells.

You need oxygen. You need oxygen. You can't survive a crucifixion. It's been tried. No one's succeeded. And so there again, the fourth verdict is that creation itself ruled that Jesus was insufficient to the task. And so in four different ways, Jesus was found completely wanting. He was condemned by religion. He was condemned by government. He was condemned by God. He was condemned by nature. He was placed in a tomb. And it really appears in that one moment that that one man had received four simultaneous concurrent death sentences, one from the Jews, one from the Romans, one from the creator, and one from the creation.

There's nobody who has looked more guilty, more foolish, more forsaken than Jesus Christ looked on the cross. And yet, every one of those verdicts was overturned in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the tomb. He overturned. God overturned for him the verdict of blasphemy. Jesus did not deserve to die for claiming to be God because he was God. The verdict of blasphemy is overturned.

He was put to death for claiming to be king. Jesus did not deserve, however, to die for claiming to be king because he was king. The second verdict is overturned.

[26 : 26] There's feeling that Jesus, because he was on a cross, had to be God forsaken and the subject of a divine curse. But Jesus was not a sinner suffering on the cross.

He was a savior suffering for our sins on the cross. And so the third verdict, this is a man accused and set apart from God. No, actually, just the opposite.

He was bearing our sins there. And finally, even the verdict of nature was overturned in the resurrection. Not even creation itself could pass the final sentence on the mortality of Jesus Christ because Jesus is the Lord of life.

So in one weekend, a man went from looking like the most accused, forsaken, guilty, wrong side of every issue guy to being exposed by God, vindicated by God as having ultimate authority over all things.

And I said at the Good Friday service, when Hebrews says Jesus pursued the joy before him, forsaking the shame of the cross, like what were the joys before him? And one of the ones we forget is the joy of being vindicated.

[27 : 40] As G.K. Chesterton puts it, the one perfectly divine thing, the one glimpse of God's paradise given on earth, is to fight a losing battle and not lose it.

So how do we speak to people who are legitimate victims? We put our hand on their shoulder. We say, here's the deal. Let's double down on godliness. Let's double down on trusting God.

Why? Two reasons. One, God generally blesses godly behavior. And two, I'm going to stand with you when the day comes when everybody who counted you out because you were too broken, you messed up too bad, you were too sequestered in your own sin.

I'm going to stand with you that day and say, may God's name be praised and this man be vindicated. He pursued the Lord. He trusted the Lord. And the Lord vindicated his cause like the noonday sun, Psalm 37, I believe.

Well, you vacate all of that if you just say, self-pity is fine. The wound is the warrant. I know you're doing your best. You vacated all of the joy of overcoming, the joy of finding a resource inside your soul for endurance that is not from your soul.

[29 : 05] You vacate all of the joy of perseverance. And Paul says in Romans 5 that perseverance produces hope. What are we doing when we're giving these people these easy little off-ramps just because they've gotten hurt by the world?

We're doing deep damage. Deep damage to their future hope and joy. Now, that's just an observation how Peter is pastoring these people through real pain.

I want to leave you with this last point. One of the things that Peter's seeing is unequivocally just absolutely true is that certain virtues are volatile under heat.

Certain virtues are volatile under heat. I'm just talking about high school chemistry here about as much as I know. But I think we all understand that back in the day when you're doing these experiments and, you know, I know a lot of us were homeschooled so we didn't learn any science or math.

But back in the day, you know, you're doing the experiments and you learn about boiling points, varying boiling points. And you learn that essentially what's going on, the question is sort of like at what temperature does this substance evaporate or disappear?

[30 : 23] And I think one of the most kind, like just wise ways of understanding yourself and one another is to understand that in pretty much every epistle, these apostles, these pastors, understood that when the heat gets turned up, there are certain things that evaporate more quickly and certain things that stay.

And the things that stay are reviling and sensuality and lying and treating yourself and self-pity. But the things that seem to evaporate the fastest under extreme heat are found in verse 8. Unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

Those are the things that go away the fastest when the heat gets turned up in our lives. Just quickly explaining what is meant by these.

Unity of mind in the Odyssey. Trying to make up for the bad movie that's coming out by giving you lots of good Odyssey content. Odysseus says this Greek word.

[31 : 38] Yeah, I think it's homophron here, but I think it's homophron or something. But it's basically sameness, homo, and fren, which means P-H-R-E-N, which means spirit or heart.

And Odysseus says it is the greatest thing in the world. He says that. He says homophron is the greatest thing in the world. What he meant by that is it is a glorious thing to be with other people who have the same heart and the same mind and we're pursuing the same end.

And he talks about like this is what makes marriage great. This is what makes teamwork great. When you are pulling with another person. So that's homophron.

Sympathize is really just sympathize in the Greek. And we don't need the word empathy because the word sympathy actually just means what most of you turkeys think empathy means. It just means you feel pain in your heart for another person who's going through a hard thing.

Some of you remember we got a whole, like was it a men's group thing? We got this whole thing for like two hours where I was the only one that was right. Larson was the chief wrong one.

[32 : 55] Sympathy. I care about your hurting. I care about it. It matters to me. I don't feel okay when you're not okay. Brotherly love. Loving the brethren. A tender heart.

A good-hearted, healthy tenderness. Not a callousness. A tenderness. Friends, if you have spent any time in the hardships of this world, man, it is two seconds to a hard heart.

It is so hard to stay soft-hearted in a hard world during a hard time when people are treating you badly in particular.

And a humble mind. One of the great things that fear does, one of the quiet things fear does is it amps up your certitude about your perception in a completely unwarranted way.

So when Peter says, stop being afraid, fear will make you full of yourself because you're suddenly in this hypervigilant state where your opinions, your perceptions, that's it.

[33 : 56] So these are the things that evaporate when hard times come. And so I did a little side quest this week and I did a little study on something called post-disaster sociology.

Post-disaster sociology. What happens to a culture when a really terrible thing happens to, you know, some catastrophe happens in an environment.

There's a lot of variables here, but there's basically two main theories. The first was framed in the early 1900s and it's the nine missed meals until anarchy theory.

Okay? So that's the one side of the equation. Basically, we are nine missed meals away from society totally collapsing and from all of these virtues being totally vacated, we're nine missed meals away from someone looking at your fridge with the gun in their hand, right?

Like, that's kind of how people act when hard things come. All of these virtues evaporate. But then there's the other theory which is sort of, no, people rise to the occasion and they work together to overcome the hardship.

[35 : 04] So I was just curious as I was reading these. I think I know, I'll tell you afterward, but raise your hand if you're more of the nine days toward anarchy predictor. That's how you think the world would turn out if things went bad fast.

Okay, if you're, I'm going to have you raise your hand on the other one. Okay, so up high, I just really do want to see. Okay, so you guys are the cynics. All of you own guns, I'm sure. And yeah, okay.

All right. And then how many of you believe that, no, I think we would, you know, work together. I think it would actually cause us to overcome some of our differences and so forth. Some, some of you think that? Okay, okay, awesome.

Awesome. Well, I will just ask one last question for both groups. When things get hard for you, do you tend to draw inward?

Do you hide? Do you grumble against others? Do you resist being helped? Do you feel envy toward people who aren't suffering like you are suffering?

[36 : 05] Do you circle the wagons and stop serving the community? Do you lose the capacity to care for other people's hardships? Like, what happens in your heart when things get hard for you?

I think we probably have all experienced when the heat has turned up, these virtues evaporating to some degree. Right? Gets fair.

I think in reality, Paul is being so kind to us, or Peter is being so kind to us through the Holy Spirit in advance, hopefully, I hope no one here is suffering, especially as a victim of great injustice, but in advance, I think we're being told when the heat gets turned up, you're going to be tempted to be disloyal, unkind, and justify your self-centeredness and your selfishness in ways that aren't justifiable.

You will be tempted to use the wound as a warrant. And there certainly are virtues that do evaporate under heat. Friends, let me just give you kind of like golden marriage counsel right now. The first, the first virtue to evaporate under heat in a marriage is courtesy. Just being courteous, polite, kind.

[37 : 27] Stop it. My wife's laughing. We had to move a heavy thing yesterday. It's a very discouraging thing to move heavy things with my wife.

She's willing. It's just, you know, thank you for trying. And I certainly, in the heat of the refrigerator coming down on me, I can tell you that my virtue of courteousness and a lot of other virtues evaporated pretty quickly.

Well, the way that this text is built, it's pretty awesome because the whole idea is that he just keeps telling us to do stuff. He acknowledges our pain, he tells us to do something, and he tells us more about Jesus.

That's the book of 1 Peter. I just think it's just beautiful and glorious that my rightness with God has been bought by the blood of Jesus Christ, by the one who has suffered the hottest heat possible, and none of his virtues evaporated.

Father, forgive them, they know not what they do. Today you will be with me in paradise. That is the person that I'm grabbing onto to get to heaven.

[38 : 45] I'm hiding behind him, he's mine. I'm drafting behind Jesus. Jesus is the only person who's worthy of worship, who's worthy of glory, and a lot of it shows up in how he dealt with being a real victim.

And you know, there's layers of all these things in the Bible, but the first one is worship Jesus Christ. He's so much better than you are. And if you're not worshipping Jesus Christ, tell me who you are worshipping, and tell me why he's better, or she, or it, is better than Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is worthy of your worship. He just is. The most virtuous thing you can do in your difficult season is to worship Jesus Christ.

And secondly, there's this incredible experience available to you if you're a follower of Jesus, and that is, Paul says it this way, I worked harder than any of them, nevertheless it was not me who worked, but him who worked inside of me.

Well, you could say that same thing about suffering, about enduring, about serving. I suffered more than any of them, but I was, I had joy.

[40 : 04] I, I, I didn't lose my temper nearly as much as I thought I would. The virtues didn't evaporate like I expected them to. And then you're in this really beautiful moment where you get to say, I think Jesus Christ is living on the inside of me.

I think through his Holy Spirit he is present in my life. And that's the first vindication a suffering Christian gets to experience. It's not the last, but the first one is my faith is not in vain.

I'm receiving the outcome of my salvation. This is all that Peter's talking about. He's saying, this stuff is going to give you vindication across a whole time spectrum. And initially it's going to vindicate the reality of your faith.

Though tested like fire may be found genuine. It's a beautiful thing to go this way when we're victims. It's not so beautiful to go the world's way.

We're so grateful that Jesus brought us a better way. So with communion today, let's worship the Lord Jesus Christ and think about how the heat was as hot as it could possibly ever get for any person.

[41 : 14] He was the most unjust victim ever and all of his virtues stayed totally put. And now those virtues have secured for you salvation and sanctification in his name.

Let's pray. And then you come and grab the elements and return to your seat. Father God, we praise your holy name for Jesus Christ, the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, who by the word of his power sustains the universe.

believers. We praise your name, Jesus. There's nothing better than you. There's no one better than you. There's nothing worthy of worship more than you are. We worship you, Lord Jesus.

We confess you are awesome. You are glorious. You are like no one else. Lord Jesus. And you've called us to walk with you in your footsteps.

And so we pray that you would help us to do that with virtue supplied through your spirit, not our flesh. And Lord, help us to care for one another in the way that we explored today.

[42 : 18] While the world is pressing a completely different approach to helping hurting people, Lord, help us to care for one another and the way that your word offers care. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.