

## THE OPPORTUNITY: Suffering that Shines with Hope

1 Peter 3:8-22

As you know, there is no limit to the amount of helpful things at our fingertips through the internet. Things like – *How should I prepare when headed out on a long trip?* Google "preparing for a trip" and you'll get plenty of advice. One website offered 14 steps unpacked in 3 categories<sup>i</sup> for "How to Prepare for a Long Car Trip"

### PART 1 GETTING READY AHEAD

- #1 Make lists a week or two before the trip
- #2 Make sure you have everything you need, including things to entertain your young children
- #3 Charge your electronics
- #4 Talk to people going on the trip beforehand (clarify expectations, talk about stopping along the way, etc.)
- #5 Book your hotel or overnight stops ahead of time

### Part 2 PACKING

- #1 Bring a large enough bag (for the little things)
- #2 Pack your suitcase, comfortably, 2 days before the trip
- #3 Pack an additional carry-on bag (with books, entertainment options, non-perishable snacks)
- #4 Prepare your snacks (beforehand)
- #5 Pack some "stomach smoothers" (peppermints, gum, ginger, Tylenol)

### Part 3 DAY OF THE TRIP

- #1 Wear something comfortable (under your regular clothes, wear your pajamas!)
- #2 Check everything one last time before you leave
- #3 Choose your seat once you get in the car (if permitted...don't fight over seating!)
- #4 Drive to your destination (use your GPS; stop along the way for refreshment)

Why? Because traveling can be fun, but traveling can also be taxing. Your expectations are high! -- "this is going to be great!" But, a trip can "turn south" pretty quickly – *especially* if you haven't prepared. Everything from car trouble to sickness to tough weather to being the victim of crime to ...you name it. Trips require preparation; long trips require thoughtful preparation.

You're aware – are you not? – that you are on a long trip *this morning*. You know that if you've been reading 1 Peter. This letter to us...

- who are "elect **exiles**" (1:1)
  - *those who are barred from one's native country, typically for political or punitive reasons.*
  - *the condition being exiled, or a person who is exiled<sup>ii</sup>*
  - *A person who lives away from their native country, either from choice or compulsion<sup>iii</sup>*
- whose "imperishable, undefiled, unfading inheritance" is "kept in heaven for you" (1:4)
- going through what Peter describes as the "time of (your) exile (1:17)
- "**sojourners** and exiles" (2:11)
  - *to stay for a time in a place; live temporarily<sup>iv</sup>*
  - *a period of time when you stay in a place as a traveler or guest<sup>v</sup>*

The questions for us is – *Are we prepared to travel well?* The truth is that as disciples of Jesus Christ, we can stumble our way on this trip, or we can travel well. We can miss the opportunities along the way, or we can take full advantage of them. We can travel along like everybody else, or we can shine as those who are headed on their way home to their Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ.

How do you want to travel? There are travel instructions in the next portion of Peter's letter in which He will encourage us with this:

**Sojourners who shine  
expect the best...and take advantage of the worst!**

*1 Peter 3:8-22*

**1 Peter 3:8** Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. **9** 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. **10** For

“Whoever desires to love life  
and see good days,

let him keep his tongue from evil  
and his lips from speaking deceit;

**11** let him turn away from evil and do good;  
let him seek peace and pursue it.

**12** 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.”

**13** Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? **14** But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, **15** 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, **16** having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. **17** For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

**Exiles who are also sojourners who shine expect the best on this trip...and they are also prepared to take advantage of the worst!** First,

**#1 On this sojourn, we expect the best from the Lord**

**1 Peter 3:8-13**

**1 Peter 3:8** Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

Peter begins with how sojourning exiles should "travel" to their home country together. Verses

8-9 answer the question, "If anyone ever encounters Jesus' exceptional disciples, what can they count on seeing?" They should count on seeing

- unity of mind (people with prepared minds about what life is about and where they are headed)
- sympathy (understanding for one another along the way; everybody is facing different stuff)
- brotherly love ("philadelphia" – word for love that speaks of friendship)

- tender hearts (hearts that are both compassionate and courageous)
- *humble* minds (Paul, Phil 2:3, "In humility count others more significant than yourself", ESV)

Among those traveling to heaven, there must be a culture, and unified environment of others-orientation – there is no place for selfishness or self-centeredness on this trip. Here at Christ Community Church, we describe the environment this way

- transparent relationships
- intergenerational discipleship
- purposeful responsiveness
- radical generosity

In fact, (Peter adds), you should see THIS! – "radical generosity" <sup>1 Peter 3:9</sup> *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.*

We can travel this way – and be known for our remarkable responses, our surprising grace and generosity -- because on most legs of journey, on most days, the Lord blesses us with the best of life when we are committed to Him. Peter quotes from Psalm 34:12-16

<sup>10</sup>For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; <sup>11</sup> let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. <sup>12</sup>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."

<sup>13</sup>Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?

Living with gracious, surprising generosity – compare these two ancient proverbs.

***That man may last, but never lives,  
Who much receives, but nothing gives;  
Whom none can love, whom none can thank,  
Creation's blot, creation's blank.***  
*Thomas Gibbons (1720-1785)<sup>vi</sup>*

***A man there was, and they called him mad;  
The more he gave, the more he had.***  
*John Bunyan (1628-1688)*

No doubt, this led Henry George Bohn (1796-1884)<sup>vii</sup> to say, "**Give and spend, and God will send.**"

As exceptional, sojourning disciples of Jesus, you and I can expect our desire to love life and see good days to be fulfilled by the Lord...especially as we turn away from evil and pursue the good, especially when our traveling is marked by unity, sympathy, brotherly love, by humility...especially

even in our generous responses to having evil done to us, or when we are reviled. The Lord is open to our prayers, and ready to bless us as we bless others.

But there are times – there are stretches of the journey – **when we face the worst**. Peter:

<sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup> 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, <sup>16</sup> having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

<sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

What's Peter saying? Simply this – as sojourning disciples of Jesus Christ...

**#2 On this sojourn, we are not surprised, but (rather) prepared, to take advantage of the worst 1 Peter 3:14-17**

NOTICE THE SITUATION: *suffering for **righteousness** sake*

This is when we suffer for “doing good,” for “doing the right thing” and because we do that, we attract the attention (and perhaps scorn) of those who do not want the righteousness to have a say in the matter. There is a very interesting section in an ancient Hebrew document called *The Wisdom of Solomon*<sup>viii</sup>; it describes the “enemies of the suffering righteous”:

*Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions; he reproaches us for our sins against the law, and accuses us of sins against our training. He professes to have knowledge of God and calls himself a child of the Lord. He became to us a reproof of our thoughts; the very sight of him is a burden to us, because his manner of life is unlike that of others, and his ways are strange. We are considered by him as something base; he avoids our ways as unclean; he calls the last end of the righteous happy, and boasts that God is his father (Wis 1:12-16).*

Ever been there? You're the one making some in your family uncomfortable because you kindly, quietly do not agree with the immorality being practiced by your parents or your children or your siblings. You're the one who won't run his/her mouth through the gutter just to fit in, or get stupid-drunk or high just to say you're all having fun. You're the one who gets laughed at, or perhaps labeled an intellectual pigmy because you are confident the Bible is God's Word and Jesus is the savior of the world. That's the situation...so notice the Holy Spirit's instruction.

- **Something to KNOW** - know that you will be blessed...and what is happening IS GOD'S WILL
- **Something to REFUSE**- refuse to be afraid or upset
- **Someone to HONOR** - honor CHRIST in your heart as HOLY (i.e., He uniquely deserves your worship and loyalty)

- **Something to EXPLAIN:** BE PREPARED to EXPLAIN (when you are being treated this way) YOU HAVE HOPE
- **Some way to WITNESS:** OFFER your EXPLANATION with humility

Rather than be discouraged or retreating, take advantage of what some might regard as the worst – that which is totally unfair. There is a unique opportunity from God in it.

God is a Master Artist. And there are aspects of your life and character-good, quality-things He wants others to notice. So without using blatant tricks or obvious gimmicks, God brings the cool, dark contrast of suffering into your life. That contrast, laid up against the golden character of Christ within you, will draw attention . . . to him. Light against darkness. Beauty against affliction. Joy against sorrow. A sweet, patient spirit against pain and disappointment-major contrasts that have a way of attracting notice. You are the canvas on which he paints glorious truths, sharing beauty, and inspiring others. So that people might see Him.

*Joni Eareckson Tada*

### **Sojourners who shine expect the best...and take advantage of the worst!**

And, the next 5 verses are interesting – they provide reminders from Biblical history that sojourners committed to righteousness prevail

**1<sup>st</sup> – Our Lord – who suffered for righteousness – prevailed!** *18 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 made alive in the spirit,*

**2<sup>nd</sup> – Noah & his family – who suffered for righteousness – prevailed!** Vs.19 in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, **20** 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. **21** 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, **22** who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Again – let's think carefully here about Peter's point. The Greek word "baptism" (vs.21) means "being immersed in" something. Peter says, "Remember, Our Lord was immersed in suffering – even to the point of death. **But he prevailed.** He was *made alive* after his baptism in suffering."

"And," Peter continues, "Noah and his family **were immersed in the suffering of the flood waters.** **But they prevailed.** They were brought safely through."

SO...when you and I are baptized – when you and I are immersed in suffering for righteousness, **we too will prevail.** In our baptism of suffering, our good conscience before God will result in salvation. We belong to the resurrected Lord. All the scoffers end up under His feet.

## ***What this means for exceptional disciples...***

Don't you just love how Peter encourages us here?! We don't have to be set back on our heels, or be intimidated by others, or make excuses as if we have something to apologize for. You have the freedom and encouragement from the Spirit of God to set apart Christ in your heart and lift your head

### **Sojourners who shine expect the best...and take advantage of the worst!**

*1 Peter 3:8-22*

Nothing will convince and convict those around us like the peaceful and positive way you and I respond to our twentieth century hurts and distress. The unbelieving world-your neighbors, the guy at the gas station, the postman, the lady at the cleaners, your boss at work-is observing the way we undergo our trials.

*Joni Eareckson Tada*

This passage is a call from this seasoned apostle to choose to live expectantly. Fr. John Powell<sup>ix</sup> - "Two men looked out from prison bars. One saw mud, one saw stars." In the pursuit of the fullness of human life, everything depends on this frame of reference, this habitual outlook, this basic vision which I have of myself, others, life, the world, and God. What we see is what we get.

Benjamin Reaves, *Leadership*, Vol. 10, no. 2.

Living expectantly means more than just believing in church doctrines; it means more just than trusting my life to God. Living expectantly is faith on tiptoe. Living expectantly means believing with God that life is worth living, believing that ministry will never become routine for me, believing that in God I will never experience the dullness of the daily. I live in the expectancy that in my life God will do a new thing that will transcend the past.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.wikihow.com/Prepare-for-a-Long-Car-Trip>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/exile>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/exile>

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/sojourner>

<sup>v</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sojourner>

<sup>vi</sup> Dr. Thomas Gibbons (1720–1785) was a London nonconformist minister who wrote hymns, sermons, and poetry.

<sup>vii</sup> Henry George Bohn (4 January 1796 – 22 August 1884) was a British publisher. He is principally remembered for the *Bohn's Libraries* which he inaugurated. These were begun in 1846, targeted the mass market, and comprised editions of standard works and translations, dealing with history, science, classics, theology and archaeology. Bohn was a man of wide culture and many interests. He himself made considerable contributions to his Libraries, he collected pictures, china and ivories, and was a famous rose-grower.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry\\_George\\_Bohn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_George_Bohn)

<sup>viii</sup> According to <https://gotquestions.org/Wisdom-of-Solomon.html> The Wisdom of Solomon, also called the Book of Wisdom, is one of the books of the [Apocrypha](#). The others in the group are 1 and 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, the Letter of Jeremiah, Prayer of Manasseh, and 1 and 2 Maccabees. The books of the Apocrypha are accepted primarily by the Roman Catholic Church and are included in Catholic Bibles. The Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical books teach many things that are not true and are not historically accurate. The Roman Catholic Church officially added the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonicals to their Bible at the Council of Trent in the mid-1500s AD, primarily in response to the [Protestant Reformation](#). None of the apocryphal books are included in the [canon of Scripture](#). The Wisdom of Solomon was believed by some to have been written by King Solomon, although his name appears nowhere in the text. However, the early church rejected the authorship of Solomon; an ancient manuscript known as the Muratorian fragment refers to the Wisdom of Solomon as having been written by "the friends of Solomon in his honor." It is widely accepted today, even by the Catholic Church, that Solomon did not write the book, which dates back to the 1st or 2nd century BC, many centuries after the death of Solomon.

<sup>ix</sup> in *Through Seasons of the Heart*. Christianity Today, Vol. 33, no. 14.