

Hope When Life Is Unfair Series

July 27, 2020

Scripture: 1 Peter 3:14-17

14. But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy *are ye*: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

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; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

17. For *it is* better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

Summary: Fourth of a five-part series from 1 Peter that addresses how to find hope in our lives.

Life is unfair:

- **Company goes bankrupt, and you lose your job**
- **Invest your money with the Baptist Foundation and you lose much of your life's savings.**
- **A hurricane or an earthquake hit and you lose all your possessions**
- **A loved one dies or gets seriously ill**

1 Peter 3:14-17

"Most people, when you ask, 'How are you doing?' -- they'll say, 'I'm doing ok, under the circumstances.' Under the circumstances?

What are you doing under the circumstances? Who put you there?

Why don't you get on top of the circumstances?

Circumstances are like a mattress on your bed.

You get on top of them, and you'll rest easy.

You get underneath them and you're going to suffocate."

I can't always control my circumstances, but I can control how I respond to them. That's such a saying, but it is absolutely true. The only way I can have hope when life is unfair is to respond properly to those circumstances.

7 Responses that bring me hope when life is unfair:

1. Rejoice in my circumstances

...But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. (v.14)

James 1:2-4 (NIV)

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

- I'm blessed when life is unfair because God can use those circumstances to help me mature in my faith**

Matthew 5:10-12 (NIV)

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven...

- I'm blessed when life is unfair because I am earning a reward in heaven**

Pray and thank God for my unfair circumstances.

2. Refrain from fear

...And do not fear their intimidation... (v.14 – NASB)

Two explorers were on a jungle safari when suddenly a ferocious lion jumped in front of them. "Keep calm" the first explorer whispered. "Remember what we read in that book on wild animals? If you stand perfectly still and look the lion in the eye, he will turn and run." "Sure," replied his companion. "You've read the book, and I've read the book. But has the lion read the book?"

Illustration: Running from bear – When we get into an unfair situation, our first reaction is to try to run from the situation.

God never promised to remove us from every unfair situation. In fact, the Bible promises us that as long as we live in a world full of sin, we should expect to go through unfair circumstances. But the good news is that God does promise to go through every one of those unfair situations with us:

Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 43:1-3 (Message)

Don't be afraid, I've redeemed you. I've called your name. You're mine. When you're in over your head, I'll be there with you. When you're in rough waters, you will not go down. When you're between a rock and a hard place, it won't be a dead end – Because I am your God, your personal God, The Holy of Israel, your Savior.

Pray and thank God that he is with me in my circumstances, so I don't have to fear.

3. Refuse to worry

...and do not be troubled... (v. 14 – NASB)

We have a lot of jigsaw Christians today. Every time they're faced with a problem they go to pieces." (- Unknown)

John 14:1 (NIV)

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.

Philippians 4:6 (NLT)

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

"If you pray you don't need to worry, and if you don't pray it does no good to worry."

- Zig Ziglar

Pray and turn my circumstances over to God so I don't have to worry.

4. Recognize Christ as Lord over my circumstances

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord... (v. 15)

Daniel 3:17, 18 (NIV)

If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Pray and ask Jesus to be the Lord over my circumstances – turn control over to Him.

5. Refine my witness

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have... (v. 15)

Mark 13:9 (NLT)

But when these things begin to happen, watch out! You will be handed over to the courts and beaten in the synagogues. You will be accused before governors and kings of being my followers. This will be your opportunity to tell them about me.

Pray and ask God to give me opportunities to share with others how he is helping me through my unfair situation.

6. Retain a clear conscience

But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. (vv. 15, 16)

A man consulted a doctor, "I've been misbehaving, Doc, and my conscience is troubling me," he complained. "And you want something that will strengthen your willpower?" asked the doctor. "Well, no," said the fellow. "I was thinking of something that would weaken my conscience."

Paul giving his defense before Felix:

So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

Acts 24:16 (NIV)

Pray and ask God to help me maintain a clear conscience before Him and before other people.

7. Remember that unjust suffering is always better than deserved punishment

It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. (v. 17)

1 Peter 4:15-16, 19 (NIV)

If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. ... So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

Pray and thank God that He considers me worthy of suffering for doing good, just like Jesus did.