

# Responding to Persecution Part 3: Pursue Your Happiness

sermonaudio.com

*Our Identity in Christ*

By Ty Blackburn

**Bible Text:** 1 Peter 3:8-12  
**Preached on:** Sunday, December 10, 2023

**Providence Church**  
2146 Buford Hwy  
Buford Hwy, Duluth, GA 30097

**Website:** [www.providenceduluth.org](http://www.providenceduluth.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch](http://www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch)

I invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 3. We'll be looking at verses 8 to 12 again. We've seen that the focus of this particular passage is responding to persecution. That's been the main title of the last two messages. This is our third Sunday in this particular paragraph in 1 Peter, verses 8 to 12. And it's all about responding to persecution. As we live the life that God has called us to live as new believers, as new people who've experienced the new birth, by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and come to know God, we live differently and in our different lives, Peter says, we live out the beauty of God's design, we show the glory of what he has done in the way that he intends man to live, but it confronts the world around us. And we see that darkness hates light and so we will find ourselves to be misunderstood, misrepresented, maligned by those around us and they will speak words at times of insult and hatred. And when we find ourselves being hated for the sake of the gospel, that is persecuted, we need to know how to respond and so this passage is about responding to persecution. And we've looked at the first message two weeks ago, we said that we need to know how to prepare your heart. Prepare your heart was the theme of our first message on verse 8. It talks about five key attitudes. We'll read it again in a moment. You'll see those five key attitudes that we talked about that we need to prepare our hearts for persecution. And then we need to plan our response. We need to know exactly what we're going to do when we encounter persecution. We looked at that last week. And this morning we want to look at the third aspect of that in the sense that what we've seen is the first message two weeks ago, prepare your heart, we answered the question, how do you prepare for persecution? Well, you prepare your heart. Last week answer the question, what do you do when you are persecuted? What exactly, what precisely do you do? And then today we want to answer the question, why? Why do you do what you do? That's what Peter does in this section. He spends most of his time expounding why we should obey him, God, in the face of persecution.

And so the message this morning, the title is "Responding to Persecution, Pursue Your Happiness." It's a counter-intuitive title. In persecution, you have an opportunity to be truly and ecstatically happy. It seems so opposite what we would expect. I mean, you think about being persecuted, nobody wants to be persecuted. If we do, there's something wrong with us, right? If you just want that, we don't want, we don't naturally want to be

hated, ostracized, and yet, this passage is telling us that if we find ourselves in that moment when we are being persecuted, we actually have stumbled onto a doorway through which if we enter, we will come into contact with greater happiness than we can at any other time in our lives. He's describing this opportune moment and so, we're calling this responding to persecution, pursue your true happiness. Let's read the text together, beginning of verse 8, 1 Peter 3.

8 To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; 9 not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. 10 For, "THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT. 11 HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT. 12 FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."

Let's pray together.

*Father, we worship You today. We praise You for You are worthy to be praised. You are good, and You do good. Lord, we marvel at the wonder of what You did in sending Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We delight in the glory of His work, the sufficiency of His work, living a perfect life, tempted in every way yet without sin, and then dying an atoning death, paying the full price for everyone who would ever believe. We come rejoicing in so great a salvation, and we come asking that You would help us to walk worthy of the calling which we've been called. Open the eyes of our hearts, help us to believe more truly in Your word, to repent where we need to repent, and to be more completely devoted to our great Savior. We pray in His name. Amen.*

Pursue your happiness, I almost said pursue God's blessing, basically it's the same thing. He's saying, listen, when you find yourself in persecution, you need to have already prepared your heart, you need to plan your response, you need to do what the Scripture says, you need to obey God, but you should pursue God's blessing. He's saying this is an opportunity to pursue God's active blessing, and so I'm making equivalent God's blessing and our highest and truest joy because God's blessing brings great joy. So he's saying pursue your happiness. That's the logical flow of the verses. Verse 8, he gives those five attitudes that we need to be prepared for persecution, that our hearts might be disposed when unbelievers mistreat us, then we can do what he says by not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead, on the contrary, give a blessing for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. The reason you give a blessing and you don't do evil, you do good is because you were called to inherit a blessing and you want to receive your inheritance.

It's interesting, he uses the phrase inherit a blessing There's some really rich imagery. One of the things that it does, those recall in chapter 1, verse 4, we were reminded that we have obtained an inheritance. Those of us who belong to Jesus Christ, who have been born again and who placed your faith in Jesus, you have, 1 Peter 1:4, obtained an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. You have an inheritance in heaven. That's wonderful. It is reserved. It's kept there for you. Nothing can diminish it, but that's not what Peter's talking about in chapter 3, verse 12. Not that aspect of our inheritance. He's talking about the inheritance, the place now of receiving God's inheritance even now. That's the whole argument that he's working out here. You were called, the reason that you don't want to return evil for evil or insult for insult, you want to obey God and receive his blessing because you were called to inherit blessing upon blessing upon blessing in this life.

And the way that he makes this case is then he quotes from Psalm 34. You see that in verse 10. He introduces it with in Greek, the preposition "For," and then he quotes five verses from Psalm 34. It takes less verses here in the New Testament, but essentially it's five verses from Psalm 34 with slight differences that Peter makes to call some things out. But he basically is asking this question, he says, "Do you want life? You're being persecuted and you have a choice. Are you going to respond in kind to that persecution, which is what your flesh wants to do? Are you going to return insult for insult, evil for evil? As you think about that and you ponder it, do you want life?" And the word life here is the Greek word zoe, which means fullness of life, not just mere bios, biological life, fullness of life. "Do you want life? Are you seeking life? Do you want to really live? Do you want to live the good life?" And then he just further describes it with these next two verbs, "the one who desires life, to love and to see." The word love here is the word, it's a verb from agape, the noun agape. an infinitive from to love, but it's the strongest word for love. "Do you want the fullest type of life? Do you want to love your days?" I mean, think about that, to love your days.

Have you found yourself, "I just love, I love today, this was just awesome"? When was the last time you could say that? So often we don't feel like that, right? Sometimes we have expectation that this is going to be a great day and we get to the end of it and we're like, "That wasn't that great. You know, all these things happened. My plans didn't happen the way I wanted them to." And that's one of our problems is we judge our day by how well it goes according to our plan. Nothing wrong with planning. In fact, planning is a good thing but we have to remember, a man plans his way, the Lord directs his steps and we have to learn to embrace what God is directing. He is our shepherd. That is, he leads us where he wants us to be. Yeah, we plan our way, we try to do that in a godly way, thinking about his glory, but we still plan our way, but we find ourselves often in places we didn't intend to be, and when we do, we know that, "My Shepherd has led me here." That's a key part of responding correctly. That can help us to be thankful in all things.

And he's telling us here, "Listen, do you want life? Do you want to love your days? Then get on God's agenda. Get completely on God's agenda and you will love your days. You will love your life. You will see good in it." To see good, to love and see good days.

You're going to love them and you're going to see just good everywhere. This is your inheritance if you're a Christian but we live in a world where we see lots of evil. And in fact, he's talking about receiving evil and hostility in the moment and what he's saying is, if you get on God's agenda in that moment, when you're receiving evil and hostility, you will see good and glory and joy to such a level that you will be amazed because this is your inheritance. You were called to inherit blessing.

To be in Christ, listen, what do we deserve each one of us? You know, I like that you hear people sometimes say, "How are you doing?" And some people say, "Better than I deserve," which is actually really accurate. If you're, well, everybody's receiving better than they deserve, but especially if you're a Christian, you're receiving better than you deserve. I mean, even the unbeliever in the worst situation is receiving better than he deserves because he's not yet in hell. That's what we all deserve. But we are receiving better than we deserve and so God is being so kind as, but when you become a Christian, think about this, the moment you place your faith in Christ, saved by grace alone, grace, no merit, through faith alone, faith, no works, in Christ alone, the full merit and accomplishment of the work of Jesus Christ, to be justified, to be saved is to place all of your hope in Jesus and to receive then everything that Jesus is and has accomplished is now credited to your account. God took your sins and he credited them to Jesus and Jesus suffered for them on the cross and he took all of the wrath of God against my sin and your sin and those who believe and he took it away and he gives us back Jesus' righteousness, and now when God looks at you, he looks at you through the blood-bought righteousness of Christ, and he sees and desires only to bless you. This is why Romans 8:32 says if God did not spare his own Son, and he says this in the context of suffering, found a lot of suffering in this life, but he says, if God did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how will he not together with him freely give us all things?

God's disposition is to give his children good things every day. He wants to give you good things every day. This is where the prosperity folks misinterpret things, because they don't understand what good is. But the reality is, I almost named this "Responding to Persecution" by "Pursue Your Prosperity." True prosperity, not the world's prosperity, not an easy life, not wealth, natural physical wealth, not just the physical blessings of health and wealth. No, no, true prosperity. But we have to see things as they really are. God does, his heart disposition toward everyone who belongs to Jesus is nothing but blessing. That's the inheritance we have in Christ. He only wants to bless you. So every time you come into contact with something that seems devastating and difficult, you know what it really is? It is your God loving you and desiring to bless you more fully. That is the truth. And so Peter is saying, listen, in the midst of persecution, a place you didn't want to be, God brought you there to bless you and so don't miss out on the blessing. That's what he's saying. Don't miss the blessing. It's right there for you. And it really is, we're going to see that as we go forward in the message.

It's interesting that his motivation, his rationale, he basically says, listen, you need to prepare your heart, this is what you need to do, plan your response, your response is don't revile, don't insult, don't return insult for insult, but give a blessing, that's what you're to do but why you're to do it is to receive more blessings from God in this life. True

blessings from God. It's interesting, other places you read instructions like this, don't revile when people revile you, pray for those that persecute you. We looked at them last time, a couple of places, Matthew 5 where we're told Jesus speaks and says, "Listen, pray for those who persecute you. Treat them with kindness." And the motivation, the reason he gives is, "so that you can be like your heavenly Father. Do it because you can be like God. This is how God is. God causes the rain on the just and the unjust." That's not the motive that Peter picks up. Now that's a good one. The Bible, we're to look at the whole council of God, and that's part of the reason we are to do this but that's not what Peter picks up on. In Romans 12, when it says don't return evil for evil, he says, leave room for the wrath of God, "Vengeance is Mine, I'll repay." The reason you don't return evil for evil is because God's going to deal with it and that's another legitimate biblical reason. But Peter's reason that he focuses on exclusively in 1 Peter 3 is a wonderful complement to those other two reasons and the reason is, don't return evil for evil so that you can know the fullness of God's blessing in this moment. You are right at the threshold of an extraordinary blessedness from God.

I think this is actually, this idea that you're right there at the threshold of this tremendous happiness is the reason that Jesus actually, in Matthew 5 earlier, in verses 3 to 12, gives the Beatitudes and he pronounces eight blessings. "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are they that mourn." It ends up with, "Blessed are you when men say evil of you and persecute you for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad." Now he talks about your reward in heaven's great. Your reward in heaven is getting greater as you're being persecuted right now. But Peter is saying, even beyond that, rejoice and be glad because you have an opportunity to experience God's blessing right now. It's kind of like, you know, I never did this with our kids, we always told them where we were going, but somebody was telling me recently, I can't remember who it was, was telling me about they were going on a trip and they weren't going to tell their kids until they like got there. They were driving and the kids are wondering, "Where are we going?" And you know, they're not old enough to like figure out, they know exactly where the road goes and everything. They're just kind of watching states. You know, those of us get older, you know, 75 South, if you're leaving Kentucky is going into Tennessee. But when you're five years old, you just, "Hey, there's Tennessee. You know, hey, we went from Kentucky to Tennessee, where are we going?" Well, they were like taking them to, you know, some amusement park or something. They had no idea. "We're going to see family."

I can't remember what it was but anyway, they didn't know. Suddenly they find out, "Dad is taking us to this wonderful place." That's the kind of force of what he's saying here. Your Father has brought you to this wonderful place and really every day, every day, that is your birthright as a Christian. Now, how does that come? It comes through, listen, it comes paradoxically through difficulty after difficulty after difficulty. Psalm 34:19, I mentioned he quotes Psalm 34:12 to 16. Verse 19 says, listen to this, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivers him out of them all". Many are the afflictions of the righteous. If God loves you and he really loves you, wants to bless you, he's going to lead you through affliction. And that's really good news. Doesn't seem like it, but once we learn and are trained by it, the discipline of God is exceedingly wonderful. That's what this passage is talking about.

So what we're going to do the rest of our time, we're going to look at three points. First of all, the paradoxical nature of true happiness. The paradoxical nature of true happiness. When you're being actively persecuted, when you're being reviled and insulted, you're at the threshold of extraordinary happiness. That's what we've said and we see that, and it's interesting, especially looking at Psalm 34. I want you to turn with me to Psalm 34. It's a Psalm of David. And if you look at verse 12, "Who is the man who desires life And loves length of days that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil And your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous And His ears are open to their cry. The face of the LORD is against evildoers, To cut off the memory of them from the earth." Look down to verse 19, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all." David, and something that you need to be aware of if you haven't heard this before, when you look at Psalm 34:1 and just above it, the title there, a lot of times you'll have a title that's giving you the theme of the book. Mine has in bold print, "The Lord, a Provider and Deliverer." That's something that just the authors, I mean, the printers of the Bible put in, the guys that printed this New American Standard Version put that in there. But underneath it, there is this statement, "A Psalm of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed." This is actually an edit that may have been in the original time the Psalms were gathered and put down, that the editor of the Psalter who put the Psalms together, David wrote it, wrote half of it, Moses wrote some, Solomon wrote some, other people wrote some, but many people wrote Psalms, but half of it by David and an editor at a point in time in history, we don't know exactly when, put these together and God superintended the process of the editing so that what we have here is his perfect word. It's debated among conservative Christians who believe that every word is the word of God, whether this particular verse that "A Psalm of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed," is inspired. But regardless whether it's actually inspired or not perfectly, all evangelicals have considered this a very valuable piece of information that someone way back in the beginning before the Hebrew Bible was given down to us put this in there. I tend to think it was. In fact, the Hebrew Bible, they actually make that verse 1. You read the Hebrew Bible, verse 1 says, "A Psalm of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed." Verse 2, "I will bless the LORD at all times." So it's making it like it's actually a part of the text, the Hebrew Bible. Again, I said it's debated, you can look at that, but this, you'll find this kind of description a number of places; 14 different times of David's Psalms, you give this kind of extended context.

So it tells us when this happened and you can read the account in 1 Samuel 21, but I want to just kind of summarize it for you. David, remember when he was called, he was anointed by God to be the king. We don't know exactly how old he was. It's 1 Samuel 16, this happened. Probably 13, 14 years old. He was little enough that he seemed kind of scrawny and not really likely to be the king. But I think he was also big enough, though, to have already killed a bear and a lion defending the sheep by God's grace and help. And so 13 or 14 years old, he's anointed king, but he doesn't become king for 16 or 17 years until he's 30 years old. Why did God anoint him at 13 or 14? It's like the Lord has a lot of

things to do. You have a to-do list, sometimes you might get it out of order. I do this, then I gotta do that, I'll do this, then I gotta do that. I really should have done this later. "Sorry, David, I should have anointed you when you were 29." No, God had a purpose in anointing him when he was a teenager and in making him wait all those years and a key part of it was because David was going to learn that God was going to lead him through a lot of affliction to bless him and to prepare him. If you read the story in 1 Samuel, he's anointed in chapter 16, he then kills Goliath in chapter 17. Chapter 18, he becomes a part of Saul's court. Soon after he becomes a part of Saul's court playing the harp, Saul picks up a spear and tries to kill him. Happens twice, he throws a spear at him twice while he's playing the harp to help Saul. Then Saul sets out just, it's an up and down, crazy kind of life for David. At one minute he seems to be favored, the next minute Saul's trying to kill him. And so for a while he stays around trying to work things out and be faithful to the Lord, trying to figure out what God is doing. And finally, Jonathan, Saul's son tells him, "You've got to get out of here. Dad's determined to kill you, run."

And so David runs and shortly after he runs, he ends up in Gath, town of the Philistines, and here we're told his name's Abimelech. Abimelech actually is a title for the king. When you read through the Old Testament, you'll see this title very many times about kings of the Philistines or kings in that area. Literally, the word Abimelech means "My father, the king." Abi, my father, melech, king. My father, the king. Because when you go back to 1 Samuel 21:1-5, you see that the king's name was Achish. But he had the title of Abimelech and so here he's referred to as Abimelech but you go back, it's just like we have different ways of referring to the president or the governor. The president, you know, he is President Biden or he's the leader of the free world. It's that kind of thing. Here it's the leader of the free world, "My father, the king."

When he feigned madness before him. You go back and you read the story, David is running from Saul and he thinks maybe it's going to be a good idea to go to the Philistines who are against Saul, maybe they'll take me in. He gets there and initially a warm reception turns cold in a hurry as some of the advisors to Achish say to him, "This is David who has killed so many Philistines." And David realizes he's in danger and he feigns madness, that is he acts like he's a crazy man. He starts foaming at the mouth and acting bizarre so that the king lets him go. Interesting story.

Now later after he runs from Saul for another number of years, we don't know exactly how many, apparently something like a dozen years he's on the run, he then goes back to the Philistines, to Achish, and things are worked out and Achish really kind of takes care of him, but this time he knows he's in danger, he feigns madness, and God delivers him. Achish says, "I don't need any more crazy men here, send that guy away." They were kind of superstitious about killing crazy people anyway, you know, those people that were idolaters, "This crazy person may be in a trance by some God, don't kill him." That's the kind of thing, they would just let him go, just let him go.

And David then is delivered and he writes this Psalm. Verse 1, Psalm 34, "I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul will make its boast in the LORD; The humble will hear it and rejoice. O magnify the LORD with me,

And let us exalt His name together. I sought the LORD, and He answered me, And delivered me from all my fears." You see the ecstasy and the joy that has come from that tribulation he encountered, he was fearing for his life and he's been delivered and now he's praising God. It leads him to say in verse 7, some of those beautiful verses in Scripture, "The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, And rescues them." David knows that now from experience. Verse 8, "O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!"

So David's life, the picture of this, circumstances were often trying and difficult and yet that's what drove him to the Lord. That's what gives us the Psalter. The reason he wrote 73 Psalms is because he went through such adversity and he came to know God on the other side of it. One brother was telling me that someone he cares a lot about is really struggling with the issue of why God was so hard on Job. Why God was so hard on Job. And like he can't accept, he almost doesn't want Job to be in the Bible. It's a man who professes to be a Christian, but it's very concerning that he would have this kind of attitude. But you step back from it and you're like, well, I guess if you just look at the book of Job in a surface way, think about it. Do you remember how it begins? God commends Job. The author of Job says he is a righteous man. There's no one like him, fearing God and turning away from evil. He is just exemplary. And then there's a dialogue. Satan comes to talk to God and God brings up Job to Satan. He asked Satan, "Hey, where have you been?" Satan said, "I've been roaming about on the earth." God says to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job?" And he says exactly what the author said in the first place, which shows us this is what God thought, that, "Have you considered My servant Job? There's no one like him. He fears God and he turns away from evil. This is an exemplary man. Have you thought about him?" And Satan then says to God, "He only does that because You have a hedge around him. He only loves You because You protect everything. Let me take his stuff and he'll curse You to Your face." And God says, "You can touch everything he has, only don't touch him." And so what does Satan do? He touches everything he has. He takes all of his camels and all of his donkeys and all of his sheep and all of his servants and all of his children, kills them all. That is pretty devastating and why would a God who loves Job, a righteous man, do that? You get the whole picture. He really isn't righteous in his own righteousness. He's righteous because he's continually offering sacrifices. He's looking to the sacrifice to be delivered from his sin. That's what makes you righteous. In the Old Testament, they were making sacrifices because they were anticipating the coming of Christ who would be the sacrifice for our sins, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

And so Job was righteous in that he had received the gift of righteousness from God just like Abraham did, hoping in God's promise, he is saved. Abraham believed the Lord and it was credited to him as righteousness. He was justified in Genesis 15:6, because he hoped in the promise of God. Job, same kind of salvation but he was also not just a man who was justified, he was exemplary in his Christian life. I mean, it's before Christ, but I'm going to just call it a Christian life, because he's looking to Christ. He was exemplary. He was a pretty godly man, so godly that the Lord commends him. But what does God do with that man? He leads him through incredible affliction. And remember what happens after he loses everything? Job does not curse God. He says, "The Lord gave, the Lord's



taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." And then chapter 2, Satan comes back to God and you remember who brings up Job the second time? God does again. God says, "Have you considered My servant Job? He's not cursed Me even though you incited Me against him." Satan says, "Skin for skin, a man will do anything to protect his health and his life. Let me touch his body." And God says, "You can touch his body, but don't take his life." And so then he has boils from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet. He's in absolute abject misery physically. Remember his wife? His wife comes and says, "Job, curse God and die." She wants him out of his misery. And he says, "You speak as a foolish woman, shall we accept good from the hand of the Lord and not evil? In all these things, Job did not sin or blame God."

Now then he spends the next 30 some odd chapters really struggling to maintain his walk with the Lord but in the end, he ends up saying when God shows up and says, "Who is this who contends with the Almighty?" Job's been arguing, "I just need an opportunity to state my case before God." God says, "Okay, state your case." And Job can't say anything and God continues to pour out how great and glorious he is. And then Job says, "Before I had heard about You with my ears, now I've seen You with my eyes and I stand in awe of You." And then God blesses Job double with everything he had before now doubled. And if we get to heaven, when we get to heaven, if we can talk to Job, you know what we're going to find out? "The best thing that ever happened to me was what God did in Job 1 and Job 2 because I got to know the Lord. I got to see that what life's really about. God is good."

And so David says the same thing. Listen, it's actually through the pathway of affliction that we see that what really matters is not what is seen, but what is unseen because what is seen is temporal, what is unseen is eternal. The paradoxical nature of true happiness is the path of happiness is through affliction. We have to go through suffering so that we can then see the goodness of God. God afflicts you and then he comforts you. God disciplines you and then he embraces you. And by disciplining and by wounding us, he makes our hearts able to receive and know him. If we didn't have that, we would still be walking around just looking at all the wrong things.

So the paradoxical nature of true happiness. Secondly, the pathway to true happiness. The pathway to true happiness. Back to our text, 1 Peter 3. There's five imperatives. Basically, the pathway to true happiness for the Christian, the pathway to true happiness is obedience, it's faithfulness, it's trusting God and doing what God says. It's trusting God, doing what he says, and leaving the results to him. This is the pathway to true happiness. This is what he says when he quotes and why he quotes that passage. If you desire life and you want to love and see good days, then you must do five things. There's five imperatives here from verse 10 to verse 12.

The first is he must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. It's interesting, Peter actually in quoting from Psalm 34, he turns a second person imperative into a third person imperative. A second person imperative is the normal kind of imperative you and I think of. That's a command. "Take out the trash." Who am I talking to if I say that? It's usually the person I'm looking at, right? "Take out the trash," and they

know who I'm talking to. It's a second person. I'm not saying I'm taking out the trash, I'm telling you to take out the trash, right? And what this is though, is the third person imperative. It's not you take out the trash, it's let him take out the trash. And the idea is let him, I think he does this because it creates a sense of objectivity in the listening. We're talking about how you deal with persecution. What he does is say, let's step back from it and look at a man over here. Let's look at this person, this hypothetical person, and let's see, does this person who's being persecuted want to have life? Does he want to love and see good days? If he does, let him, and he gives five third person imperatives, let him do this, let him do that, let him do this, let him do that, let him do this five times. And what he does is he helps you and me to look at it objectively and say, okay, I want to look at that and imagine that, and it helps us to have a different perspective on it, an objective and careful look at this situation.

So often we're in the midst of suffering, we're in the midst of difficulty, and we can't think clearly so he says take a minute and look at it out there, outside of your circumstance. Look at it over there. And these five imperatives are all in the Greek aorist tense which means, it emphasizes decisive and intentional action. He's saying you find yourself, if you, and I love this, the word desire, life, if you desire life and to love and see good days, those are both Greek present tense verbs. If you are wanting, remember Greek present is not about time as much as the kind of action. The Greek present tense means continuous ongoing action. So when he says desire in the Greek present, it means are you desiring? Are you desiring to be loving your days? Loving, again, continuous, present. Are you wanting a good life? Then, aorist tense five times, then when you find yourself in this circumstance, if you're wanting that, do these things clearly, decisively in the moment.

Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Stop your tongue. Literally, the idea of the word here is to make it stop. Somebody reviles, what's our natural inclination? To respond in kind, either in tone of voice or in word. So stop your tongue from evil, that is, harm. Don't let your tongue do harm. Even though they've harmed you, don't harm them back and not only that, keep it from deceit. Don't be deceptive. Don't lie, speak truth.

There's five sub points really in these five imperatives, keep your tongue. That's the first thing. A, 2A, pathway to true happiness, do these five things. First, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from deceit. The next one he says is turn away from evil and do good. They kind of work in pairs. So it's five things. A, there's kind of a two point, keep your tongue from evil and lips from deceit, keep your tongue and your lips. But then the next two imperatives, turn away from evil, do good, kind of go together as well. Turn away from evil, interesting word here, ekkline. We get an English word from this root word, klino, we get the word incline. Incline means to lean in. You incline yourself to something as you lean toward it. This is ekklin, lean out. Don't lean in. So when evil is happening, don't consider it, don't think about it. The idea is immediately lean out, back off, get away. Too often we allow ourselves to consider evil, turn it over in our minds a little bit. Boy, it'd really feel good to let this person have it right now. You ponder that. That's not doing what this text says. This text says, as soon as the thought comes, reject it

and lean away from it. No, I don't want to have anything to do with evil, that is, hurtful, abusive speech. Now we sometimes hurt people's feelings because we speak truth, and this is not saying we don't do that. No, you speak the truth. The gospel is offensive and you have to offend in that sense, but he's saying don't do something that is truly malicious. Don't speak something that is truly malicious. Don't do something that is malicious and evil but on the other hand, do good. Seek to bless.

So don't do something evil, turn away from that and do good. Bring benefit to that person. Seek their blessing. This is why, he's saying this is why you don't revile again, you give a blessing. Remember we talked about how you give a blessing? You talk to God about them and you talk to them about God, that's what we said last week. And he's explaining this, justifying from Scripture. The reason you bless them, that is you talk to God about them, you ask God to help them and you talk to them about God because the best thing that you can do is tell someone about God and speak God's word to them, is that you are trying not to do evil, you're trying to do good. And then in the last two, D and E, seek peace and pursue it. Seek reconciliation, seek harmony, and I love that, two verbs for the same idea. Seek peace and pursue it. Seek peace means to diligently seek after something, and then he adds to it the verb chase after. So it's like you're going to start to seek something, and now he says go after it. It's kind of the force of this, two verbs to say the same thing.

And what is it you're going after? You're going after peace, God's shalom. You want to be in harmony with people and it doesn't mean, like I said, you're not going to seek peace at the expense of truth, but you're seeking their well-being. And what is peace really? It's when they come to peace with God. No man can have peace if he doesn't have peace with God. So to seek peace and to pursue it is to long for them to come to the shalom of God, that is, the absence of conflict with God where they're no longer at war with God and God is no longer righteously angry with their sin because they've come to Christ. That's the pathway to true happiness.

So in the moment, he's saying, if you want, listen, do you want life? Does this guy over here want life? Does he want to love his days? Then let him do these five things and the idea is, as you look at that guy, you're like, "Hey, I want to be like that. That's what I want to do."

The paradoxical nature of true happiness, the pathway to true happiness, and thirdly, the promise of true happiness. The eyes of the Lord, "For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." Again, quoting from Psalm 34, he says, "Listen, God's eyes are on the righteous." God's ears are attuned to the righteous, that is, he sees and he watches over his people. He's continually watching his people. He hears everything that's going on in our lives. He's listening. It's like, again, he is focused on his people to bless them. You belong to Jesus, he's continually watching over you to bless you. He's looking at you. His eyes are on you. He's listening to you. You know how we want people to listen to us sometimes, right? You're talking to someone, you feel like they're not listening, you see them looking at their watch or looking at the clock or looking at their phone, even worse.

"He's not listening or he's only giving me 30%." God's saying he's giving you 100% because God can give 100% to every single person in the universe and he's not tired or distracted.

The eyes of the Lord, he's looking, he's listening to everything that's going on and what he's looking and he's listening so that he can bless and he's going to bring true happiness. When he sees obedience, he's watching for obedience, when he sees the obedience, he's going to lavish blessing on you. He wants to bless you but what this text is saying is, even though it's your inheritance, God only wants to bless you, you will not experience his blessing unless you obey. Now, remember earlier, I said the way to get saved is not obey. You don't obey, you don't do works to get saved. The only thing you obey is the command to believe, repent and believe the gospel. You place all of your hope in Jesus Christ. That's salvation, that's justification, declared righteous on the basis of faith alone, but once you're saved now, he's saying the pathway to more blessing in your life is the pathway of obedience. The good life, the truly good life is the obedient life. The more you obey God, the happier you will be. He's saying don't miss out on the happiness and when you're being persecuted, this is an opportunity to obey. It's not just, "Oh no, what's happening? I hope this ends as quickly as possible." No, you have an opportunity to obey and to be blessed.

I want to read you a verse from the Psalm right beside Psalm 34, Psalm 35 in verse 27. "Let them shout for joy and rejoice, who favor my vindication." David's talking about being in a situation where people are wanting to see him hurt. They're wanting to destroy him. Probably people in Israel, people around him, in his cabinet, those who seem to care about him, but they're wanting to destroy him and he says to the Lord, he takes it to God. Verse 26, chapter 35, Psalm 35, "Let those be ashamed and humiliated altogether who rejoice at my distress; Let those be clothed with shame and dishonor who magnify themselves over me." Now look at verse 27, "Let them shout for joy and rejoice, who favor my vindication; And let them say continually, 'The LORD be magnified,'" look at that next phrase, "Who delights in the prosperity of His servant." What delights the heart of God is to give prosperity to his servant, not just his people, but the one who's serving him, the one who's obeying him.

When you and I, when we obey God's word, he says, don't return evil for evil, but bless, and when he says that, we're to bless in part because we want to honor the Lord and do what he's called us to do, and we want to receive the blessing that he's going to give us. That's the motivation. And I love this because the joy that is there, if you go back to 1 Peter, it's a supernatural kind of joy and blessing that can come in these moments. We've noted how Peter talks a lot about the potential of persecution, the reality of suffering. Look what he says in chapter 4, verse 12 to 14. 1 Peter 4:12, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you." Hey, when you find yourself in the fire, don't be surprised. This is God's way, "but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation." Now look at verse 14, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you." So when you're reviled for

the name of Christ, you have an opportunity to experience the Spirit of glory and of God resting on you. I think what he's saying is when you and I are being mistreated for the name of Christ and we continue to line ourselves up and we stand with God, we stand with Jesus, we stand for God, we stand for Jesus, we find out that he comes and stands with you. He's everywhere, but he comes in a special way and blesses that obedience with his presence and his glory. The Spirit of God and of glory. The Spirit of glory rests on you. That's a powerful word. In fact, it reminds me of what he says in chapter 1, verse 8, the supernatural joy that can come to us, "though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory." When we hope in Christ in the midst of difficulty and adversity and we stand with him and we obey him and we trust him, we have an opportunity for inexpressible joy, the joy of his glory coming upon us.

I was thinking about some imagery that I think we could meditate on. I'm just going to mention it to you. If you go back and you read Exodus 39 and 40, the account of them finishing the tabernacle, and you'll see that the phrase, "as the Lord commanded Moses, that they did just as the Lord commanded Moses, they did just as the Lord commanded Moses, they did just as the Lord commanded Moses," It's like, I want to say 40 times in two or three chapters that phrase occurs. I mean, it happens so much that it's like, "Okay, we got it. Couldn't You have just said this one time?" I mean, we would have got it. I mean, they did this, they did this, and at the end, everything was just as the Lord commanded Moses. But you go back and you read it and you hear it over and over again, they did this thing just as the Lord commanded Moses. They did this thing just as the Lord commanded Moses. Gets to the end of that section of all those repetitions of "just as the Lord commanded Moses," it finally says Moses finished the work, set up the tabernacle, they offered a sacrifice, and you have one more "just as the Lord commanded Moses," and you know what happened then? After all of that obedience, the glory, the Shekinah glory of God fell on the tabernacle and it filled the tabernacle to such an extent that no one could go in because the glory of God was on that place.

God loves to pour his glory out on his people and what I think Peter's getting at in chapter 3 and chapter 4 of 1 Peter is that when you and I obey, we have the opportunity to experience the presence and blessing of God in such a way that our hearts will be thrilled in these moments and the glory will descend. It may not always be the same way, of course, it's up to God. But if you stand for the Lord in the midst of persecution, you will find that he's standing with you. God is faithful. And so persecution, even though none of us wants it, I don't want it. Like I said, we shouldn't want it. And yet if we find that God leaves us into it, "What's my Father got for me today? Where is He leading me? I trust Him. This is going to be wonderful." Even if it's not wonderful with this person, that means it can be even more wonderful with the Lord. Not that we go around pulling for persecution, we shouldn't do that, but we should trust our Lord to take us where no matter where he leads me, he's with me and he will enable me by his grace to honor him.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Father, we thank You for the glory of our salvation. We thank You for the reality that we can stand for You. Lord, we don't have the ability, we know when we find ourselves in situations like that, we have to cry out to You for the power. We tend in our flesh to want to flee and run and hide. We want to not do what You called us to do. But we thank You that if we cry out to You, You will...faithful is He who called You, He also will do it. You will bring it to pass. You will give us the power through our union with Jesus Christ, power of the Holy Spirit. You're just looking for obedience and You will bless. Make Your people more faithful. Lord, we thank You for the glory of what You've done for us in Christ, the wonder of the gospel, and may our lives be increasingly a representation of Your glory and may our lives be filled more and more with the joy of knowing that no matter what we encounter, You have brought it to us to bless us, and let us receive more and more of Your blessing so that people can see Your glory in us and they will know it's all Jesus. We pray this in His name, amen.*