

Title: “How Should We Respond?”

INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles to: II Pet. 1:3 .

Background: In these past few months the world has faced COVID-19 with many surrounding uncertainties: where did it come from, how does it spread, is it truly a pandemic, and a host of other questions. Alongside this virus came a host of other issues: lockdowns, essential vs. non-essential, social distancing, masks, and liberty and freedom under attack. Do we obey government or God? Can we do both? Should we meet despite the governor’s directive not to?

That was March into April. Then came late May with the death of George Floyd. Following that we saw marches, protests, riots, death, and destruction of property and businesses. We heard the BLM slogan. We have heard the cries to defund the police. Photos of anarchists. CHOP/CHAZ in NE Seattle. We have heard of things like systemic racism and inequality. We have seen pro-freedom/police rallies. We have heard the term: All Lives Matter. But, do they really?

Meanwhile we have a split country with anger against our President and his followers. We have MAGA/KAG. We have an upcoming presidential election that is as important as ever. We have a clear socialist running for the Democrat nomination. At first the president blew off COVID. He finally wore a mask in public the other day for the first time. He and many other Republican leaders think the country needs to reopen.

Meanwhile the presses keep printing money. A trade war with China is ongoing.

Then in early June the U.S. Supreme Court with its supposed conservative majority gave new meaning to gender and opened the potential floodgates for religious persecution. Yet, a few weeks later they ruled 2x in favor of religious liberty. Then they reversed that trend by ruling against life in the abortion case from LA.

Health unrest. Social unrest. Economic unrest. Moral unrest. Spiritual unrest. Will the Bible be ruled as hate speech next? While Christians attempt to stand in the gap, the radical agenda of those who wholeheartedly oppose God come at them with rabid intensity. The enemy will not stop until they either render the church useless or eliminate it.

So, what shall we do? How should we respond? As Christians what can we do? Do we live in terror and avoid all forms of media? Do we bury our head in the sand and hope this all goes away? Are there clear Biblical grounds on how to live in difficult and tumultuous times?

Let’s look today at the: **Title: “How Should We Respond?”**

Explanation: The Bible offers us the truth that within its pages are the answers to life’s greatest questions. The Bible lays claim to this promise: “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (II Pet. 1:3). While the Bible does not answer specific questions, its pages give us perfect principles and truths needed for everyday living and for desperate times.

Let us look today at some principles for us to live by as we seek to follow God and His Word:

I. The church must pummel the heavenlies with prayer to Almighty God.

Explanation: What did the men of the Bible do during difficult times? They prayed. Daniel prayed for repentance, beginning with his own life.

Daniel 9:3-7: “³And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: ⁴And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; ⁵We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: ⁶Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. ⁷O Lord, righteousness *belongeth* unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, *that are near*, and *that are far off*, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.”

Paul prayed: “²Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; ³meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the ^amystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, ⁴that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.” (Col. 4:2-4) Paul viewed his imprisonment not as a trial but an opportunity to advance Christ’s kingdom.

¹²But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, ¹³so that it has become evident to the whole ^bpalace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; ¹⁴and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. – Phil. 1:12-14

Application: How much have you been praying lately? Have you prayed for our authorities at all? Have you prayed for those who oppose us? Have you prayed for wisdom, grace, and salvation for them? Or have you complained? Have you said bad things about them?

¹ I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; ² For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. – I Tim. 2:1-2

Isaiah: Isaiah prayed. Isa. 6:5 was a woe of his own. Confession, cleansing, and a commission all unfold in Isa. 6. Isa. 12 – Isaiah trusted in His Deliverer. He declared His mighty acts. He praised Him for His greatness and for all that He is in Himself.

Maybe it is time to be a bit quieter in speech against others and a lot more in prayer for others.

II. Christians must come to the place that they believe this world and nation is not our home.

Explanation: As we look at Paul, Peter, Christ, and other Biblical authors we find a theology rooted in the future, eternal, heavenlies. In fact they all saw themselves as pilgrims on a temporal journey, here for the purpose of glorifying and serving God.

Phil. 3:20 - For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Col. 3:1-3 - If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Eph. 2:6, 19 - And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

Application: The saints who truly trust God in times of need find complete comfort in laying up treasures in heaven.

I Tim. 6:19 - Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Matt. 6:20 - But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Matt. 19:21 - Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

Heb. 10:34 - For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

Application: We should trust in the unfading, incorruptible, amazing inheritance reserved for us in Heaven. The people of faith in the Bible lived not for this world but for the God of this world. The United States is not the answer to the world's problems. The issues of the day are addressed in the Bible from the perspective of sin and the Savior. We must continue to remember that no one person, no matter how we much we agree with them, will be able to save us. Only Jesus Christ can save a person from the wretched life of sin and worldliness.

III. We must remember that we are not the last ones standing.

Explanation: Do you ever feel the enemy is gaining the upper hand? Do you ever feel discouraged by the trends against Christianity in America? We may think that no one else believes in God. That is a very narrow, short-sided view. While the American, western culture is under attack like never before, to think that we are but a few left is not correct. Indications in many persecuted countries are that the gospel is rapidly spreading and growing.

Application: We must not say like Elijah, there is no one else. Having said that, the remnant is much likely smaller than we realize. Many who profess Lord do not truly know Him. Not all roads lead to Heaven; for there is only one way to God and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Isaiah: The greatest promise from the beginning of time, from Gen. 3:15 onward, is that the Redeemer would come. Isa. 7:14 tells us the specific name: Immanuel, which means *God with us*. Let that sink in: Isaiah was promised that God would dwell among His people. His very presence would come to this earth, and we know why that was: to save His people from their sins. The connection becomes crystal clear that even though in Isaiah's day there was a small remnant, the promised Redeemer would come to save them. They were to place their trust and hope in that truth and that would carry them each day as the nation faced great judgment.

Even if we were the last ones standing, we would never be alone. Heb. 13:5-6 – 5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

Psalm 91:1-4 – “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. 3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. 4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.

Job 19:25-26 - 25 For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: 26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

I Peter 2:9 - 9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; - If we are God's people, the reality of His presence is with us. Even when we fail, He is with us.

Psalm 145:18 The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

Hebrews 4:16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

James 4:8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

IV. **We must develop a robust theology of suffering.**

Explanation: The faith-followers of the Bible had a robust theology of suffering rooted in the suffering Servant.

Paul – II Cor. 12:7-10 - 7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Phil. 1 - 13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; 14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. 20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

II Cor. 12 - 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. 8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; 10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. 11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. 12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you. 13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; 14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. 15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. 16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; 18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

James – 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

5:17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

Peter – 1:6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: 9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: 24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. 25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

4:1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; 2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

4:12 - 12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory^[b] and of God rests upon you. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" 19 Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

What happens if we are mistreated by others? **David** – Psalm 37:1-6 37 Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. 2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. 3 Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. 4 Delight thyself also in the Lord: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. 5 Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. 6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

The theology of suffering must include the following truths:

- 1) Christ is our example, He has set the bar for suffering, and any suffering that unfolds in our lives should be connected to what He has done on the cross and for the specific reason of glorifying God.
- 2) God allows suffering to teach us, stretch us, and grow us into conformity to His Son. Suffering always serves a greater purpose than what we may immediately see or believe it to be. One of the purposes is to teach us to rely more on God. II Cor. 1:9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:
- 3) The human response of these people of faith always has its theology rooted in the truth of the revealed word(s) of God.
- 4) Suffering is always done with meekness and humility. Gentleness, love, and forgiveness towards those causing the suffering and harm are the norm, not the exception.
- 5) People of faith completely trust in God's **sovereign** will for their lives. II Tim. 2:12 12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.
- 6) Having an understanding of God's power and love makes it possible to fully trust God. The more you trust God, the easier it is to obey Him. – Psalm 32:10 Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord.
- 7) God is both sovereign and **good**, and He is always for His children. God gives us life, provides for our needs, and never removes His eyes from us. This means God will always be with us in our suffering. Psalm 62:11-12 - 11 God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God. 12 Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.
- 8) Our trials can teach us how to minister to others who are suffering II Cor. 1:3-5 3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. 5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.
- 9) Sometimes we suffer for our sin which demonstrates our need for His repentance and forgiveness.

Application: “Trusting God means that *in spite of our questions, doubts, and fears*, we draw on his grace and continue to believe that he is loving, that he is in control, and that he is always working for our good” (Sande 65).

V. Trust God and His Promises

II Cor. 1:9, 20 - 19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

Eph. 1:3ff – 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; 8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: 11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. 13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory

II Cor. 4:14 – Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

Eph 1:19-20 – 19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

I Cor. 15 – 16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18 Then also those who have [c]fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. 20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have [d]fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.

Rom. 1:1-4 – Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God 2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who [a]was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, 4 and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

How does this all apply to our present circumstances?

Action Points

1. We must be the church.
2. We must lead with truth and grace; humility and forgiveness.
3. We must trust God and His promises like never before.
4. Our lives must hold tightly to the doctrine of the resurrection.
5. Our lives matter to God for He created all of them.
 - Racism is evil
 - Anarchy is evil
 - Homosexuality is a sin
 - The killing of innocent lives is wicked.
6. The Bible is still the Word of God.
7. Our focus must not be on this world, but on the Lord Jesus Christ.
8. Pray! Pray!! Pray!!!
9. You are never alone.