

**“When Holiness Meets Hostility” 1 Peter 3:13-17, Sermon Notes**  
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**Saving Grace Bible Church**  
**August 18, 2019**  
**Morning Worship Service**

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:7-18

If you have been around Saving Grace Bible Church for any amount of time, you have noticed that something we seek to bring is precision and clarity with the Word of God. We believe that God has communicated in such a way that is able to be understood and applied to our life and ministry. We believe that passages have one meaning that was communicated by the original author to the original audience in the original context and it carries timeless truths with implications for our lives today.

This is a commitment to the authority of Scripture and it is not popular. Definitive truth is increasingly thought of as arrogant. To say that the Word of God means one thing and should be submitted to is considered narrow and unloving. Our culture demands that we compromise and soften our message to accommodate to the sensitivities of those around us. And following the culture, many professing churches want to lay aside every doctrine that might possibly offend someone and just talk about vague generalities of the Christian life.

Faithful pastors with much more wisdom and foresight than I, have cautioned the church that this downward slide of the culture and the hostility toward our faith are only going to increase. Biblical fidelity will be increasingly marginalized, slandered, and persecuted.

The church must hold the line as the Pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim 3:15.)

Pastor Eric concluded last week by saying that he believes it is the hardest time in the history of our country to be a Christian who takes the Bible at face value.

So as a body that has committed ourselves to coming under the authority of the Word of God, we need to be prepared to face hostility

Please make your way to 1 Peter 3:13-17

Peter has at least three primary themes in his first epistle

1:1-2:10 - Salvation: Its Cause and Effects

2:11-3:12 - Submission: Man to Government, Servants to Masters, Wives to Husbands

3:13-5:14 - Suffering: Peter prepares the church for suffering that is sure to come

Let's read 1 Peter 3:13-17

1 Pet. 3:13 "Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?"

1 Pet. 3:14 "But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED,"

1 Pet. 3:15 "but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;"

1Pet. 3:16 "and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame"

1Pet. 3:17 "For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong"

In 3:13-17, Peter equips the church with 3 reminders for when holiness meets hostility:

1. Suffering for holiness is a divine blessing (13-14)
2. Suffering for holiness is a divine opportunity (15-16)
  - a. To demonstrate humble submission (14b-15a)
  - b. To proclaim your reasoned hope (15b-16a)
  - c. To reveal the sinner's shame (16b)
3. Suffering for holiness is a divine appointment (17)

The First reminder for When Holiness Meets Hostility:  
Suffering for holiness is a divine blessing

“And” actually begins v13- this conjunction connects our passage to what Peter just taught in the immediate context about a righteous life of the believer.

Peter just summed up all our relationships in v8-9

**1Pet. 3:8** “To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;”

**1Pet. 3:9** “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”

His question in v13 transitions us to what will be a reality for those who live godly lives

Peter uses a rhetorical question in 13 to connect the holy living in v8-12 to the hostility that likely to come in the Christian life. The rhetorical form gives intensity to the unexpectedness of such suffering

The question seeks to identify the individual who would react in violent aggression to the holy life of the believer. It is a question of “Who.” Because naturally one would assume a holy life wouldn't be met with such hostility

Peter asks, Who is “The one who will harm”

13- κακώσων - Future Participle (DW: 567) With the article it is substantival.

“Harm” The verb denotes mistreatment and implies that damage is done through their actions. This harm is hostility in attitude or activity

Acts 14:2 uses this word to denote harmful *attitudes* towards believers

Acts 12:1 - harmful *actions* against believers

Notice the reason this harm is unexpected-

“If you prove zealous for what is good”

-ζηλωταὶ - a zealot.

one who is earnestly committed to a side or cause, *enthusiast, adherent, loyalist*  
ἀγαθοῦ- that which is good, profitable, upright, generous, virtuous

Peter is describing believers being those who are earnestly committed to a righteous life. This is not the one who does an occasional good deed, but the enthusiast for the doing of good

Goodness stands emphatically at the head of this conditional clause to strengthen the contrast between doing harm and doing good

Ellison observes, “We are far more likely to suffer, if we are zealous for other people to do right, then if the zeal is applied to our own lives.”

It is certainly true that holding everyone else to a strict standard and giving yourself a free pass will certainly bring about hostility, but that is not what Peter is suggesting here.

So the question is “Who is the person who would harm the one devoted to holiness?”

Peter is presenting suffering for holy living as counterintuitive  
For anyone to act in such a way would be a perversion of justice, of what is right

Peter asks the question that would certainly be in the mind of some of his readers.

“Who is the one who will harm you if you are a zealot for good?”

If your passion is v8-9, doing good to others—being harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit, not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead

Why would we be mistreated if we are about living the holy life that God has instructed us?

It is an appropriate question in light of the amount of scripture given to the church concerning persecution. Why would there be so much truth about how to face persecution if we are living godly lives? Shouldn't holiness meet hospitality? Shouldn't our humble disposition and kindness towards others be met with friendliness rather than persecution?

Peter implies that harm is not expected for those whose pattern of life is doing what is right. Nonetheless, it is a present reality in a fallen world that believers who are marked by sacrificial love will be hated and labeled as unloving. Christian's who humbly submit to the truth of God's word will be slandered as arrogant and intolerant. Christian's who love their neighbors enough to tell them of their desperate condition and call them to faith and repentance, are looked at as oppressive and fanatical.

Peter did not promise a life free of persecutions, for his own life and the teaching of Christ would give the opposite expectation

Suffering for being humble and godly may seem illogical, yet Peter knows the light of the believer's life will be hated by those who love darkness

**John 3:19** “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil”

**John 3:20** “For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed”

**John 3:21** “But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God”

It may be counterintuitive that holy living is met with hostility but the Scripture acknowledges that it is a present reality that we must be prepared to face!

From a human perspective, suffering for righteousness doesn't make sense, but from a divine perspective it is a blessed state to be found.

What to do when holiness meets hostility...

Peter writes here to prepare his readers for that time when suffering comes. The language of the passage foresees suffering as a future reality to be prepared for. It is likely that Peter is writing before a season a great persecution under Nero, to equip the church for coming hostility.

We must understand that holy living does not prevent suffering. In fact, holiness can be a stimulant for hostility to a world who hates the light. That is the situation Peter lays out before us.

A righteous life infuriates the wicked.

So Peter gives us the divine perspective for when holiness meets hostility.

Look at v14

εἰ καὶ πάσχοιτε - Conditional optative (DW: 484)

14 begins with “but” (alla), marking a strong contrast to the thought that a righteous life should avoid suffering.

An aggressive life of holiness does not always disarm the persecutor.

“Even if”—This is a 4th class conditional (less probable future). very rare construction.

Peter is not teaching that suffering is exceptionally rare, but that it is not perpetual. Peter, by using this 4th class conditional statement, is teaching that you can live for righteousness sake and at times, not suffer. Suffering is not so rare that it would be surprising for the believer.

He tells his readers in 4:12, not to be surprised.

“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;”(1 Pet. 4:12 NAS95)

You may live righteously and go years without facing great hostility. You may face people who lightly dismiss you as a religious person, you may be less popular for your faith. Some unbelievers may even appreciate your character and the good things you do

And Peter uses this conditional clause to say, there is a looming possibility that your holy life would face persecution.

If you are seeking to live a righteous life and you have not faced great hostility, Peter is not cautioning you that you are a lesser Christian, but beloved, you should indeed be well informed of how to face hostility when it comes

“suffer for the sake of righteousness”

“Suffer” is a general term to experience something that falls to one’s lot, whether good or evil, but the overwhelming use in the New Testament is speaking negatively of unpleasant or hurtful experiences of some kind.

“For the sake of righteousness” - “because of righteousness”

-this is a unique suffering in this life. It is speaking of a suffering that is brought upon you because of your righteous life

Suffering is indeed part of the human experience in a sin cursed world. As Job says “For man is born for trouble, As sparks fly upward.”(Job 5:7 NAS95)

But this suffering here is not just general misfortune in this life. It is unique suffering brought upon your life due to the Christian’s righteousness. This is not speaking of your positional righteousness, your standing before God, but rather your practical righteousness, your righteous living.

This suffering is a result of a distinctly Christian life,

Just as Christ specified in the beatitudes

Matt. 5:10 “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 5:11 “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me”

This is not suffering because of your personality, your personal preferences, your team or political party affiliation. It is a suffering that is in connection of your devotion to righteousness as a believer

Peter equips the church for suffer by giving us the perspective: “But even if you suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are:

“Blessed” - There are two primary words for blessing in greek. One is eulogetos which focuses attention on the divine source of blessing in praise. The other is makarioi, which refers to a distinctively Christian joy which flows as a result of salvation. This is the word used through the

beatitudes. The emphases of this word is on the state of blessedness, this is why it can be translated as happy or joyous

Peter doesn't seek to go on and answer why suffering for righteousness is a blessed state to find yourself in. Christ says in Matt 5:12 to "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Persecution reminds you of the great reward awaiting you in heaven, the brevity of this life, and the association with the people of God

Even though it seems illogical to suffer for righteousness sake, you must not consider it to be strange or a curse from the Lord. Peter tells us clearly, "You are blessed!"

Beloved, if you are experiencing suffering for righteousness sake, count it a great blessing. Pastor Matt Stanchek- "Suffering is not a result of God's rejection of you, but rather of His election of you."

This is God's perspective on suffering that we must believe. We are blessed when we suffer for righteousness sake

The supernatural response to the unnatural suffering for righteousness sake, is to consider it a state of blessing!

Suffering for Holiness is a Divine Blessing!

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Suffering for holiness is a divine opportunity 15-16

- a. To demonstrate humble submission (14b-15a)

14b - "AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED,"

14- μή φοβηθήτε - Prohibitive Subjunctive (DW: 469)

Peter gives two prohibitions. Two things not to do: Do not fear, Do not be troubled

Fear - the feeling of fright or terror that grips and controls the fearful

Troubled - to cause inward turmoil, *stir up, disturb, unsettle, throw into confusion*,

Shook up and agitated. This is the opposite of firm in your faith

Peter first commands the church not to yield to the fear of these persecutions. Peter says more literally, "Do not fear their fear"

Peter is not commanding us not to fear what they fear, rather he is command us not to fear what they want us to fear. I like the NASB, "Do not fear their intimidation." Because I believe that is what Peter is saying.

Persecutors will seek to silence your message and discredit your life by hurling insults, threats, attack on your character, imputing your motives, harming you physically! Peter says, don't fear what man can do to you! Don't be troubled by them. Don't let this throw you into crippling fear and being unsettled in your faith

Peter quotes Isaiah as a command for us not to fear man in the midst of suffering.

Isaiah 8:12-13

The context of Isaiah 7-8 is important. The Southern Kingdom of Judah was threatened by the Northern Kingdoms of Israel and Aram (approximately modern day Syria). These two countries were threatening to remove Ahaz as king of Judah and to install a certain Tabeel as king in his stead. The threat filled Ahaz and Judah with terror (Isa 7:2), but Isaiah promised that the Lord would preserve Judah, that Israel and Aram would be vanquished by Syria, and that the Lord would provide a sign to demonstrate the faithfulness of his word. Judah and Ahaz were to respond by trusting in the Lord's promise. In Isa 8:11-15 the Lord commands his people not to fear the plot hatched by Israel and Aram. They should only fear Yahweh, the God of Israel, and put their trust in him alone. - Thomas R. Schreiner,

Fear of God is the antidote to fear of man

-Fear of man. When we are mistreated for Godliness, there will be a temptation in your heart to fear man.

Fear is the opposite of faith. It is similar to the concept of worship. Essentially, you fear what concerns you the most. If you fear man, you believe or act as if he has greater power over you than God

How might the fear of man cause us to respond?

- By softening our words and deeds to cater to their desires
- By Silence when we should lovingly confront
- By fleeing away
- By compromising truth

POSITIVELY!

The Faithful Response to Suffering (15-16)

Rather than fear and trouble, what are we to do?

15a - but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts,

"BUT" In contrast to fearing man and being troubled your faith

sanctify - here does not mean to make holy. You cannot make Christ holy. It is to revere or treat as holy

This is to esteem God above man

Clowney states "When the Lord sanctifies us, he makes us holy; when we sanctify the Lord, we set him apart as the Holy One."

It is for us to treat Him as He is. It is to recognize the Lord as supreme in absolutely reverence.

The mood of this imperative (aorist) distinguishes this as a one and for all action. Once and for all, Christ is to be enthroned in our hearts

"in your hearts" - This is your mission control center. Your inner man, the core of who you are

"Christ as Lord" - Lord is emphatic here, standing at the front of the clause. This is the one in charge, the one in position of supreme authority. The Master. The Owner. The incarnate fulfillment of the Old Testament messianic prophecies.

Isa 8 says, it is Yahweh whom you should fear or regard as holy.

Peter says, it is Christ whom you are to fear/regard as holy.

Matt 10:28 "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

Suffering provides an opportunity to demonstrate a humble submission!

When we are tempted to fear man, we must recognize that there is a competing lord over our hearts.

In that moment, we must be aware and ask the question: Who am I esteeming as Lord, as holy?

Who is my Master? Who governs how I am to respond to these persecutions?

Who am I living to please?

There is another opportunity suffering

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"Out of their enthronement of Christ as Lord should flow a personal readiness to explain to opponents the nature of the hope that dominates the lives of committed believers." Heibert

BE Prepared

Readiness

"always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you,"

There is no verb in Peter's construction, but we should rightly understand it as an implied imperative.

Essentially, BE READY

This adjective "ready" is 2nd person plural, following the imperative sanctify, thus it is meant to carry the force of the imperative

Nasb supplied "being"

I would simply supply "Be"

Always BE ready...

This is a state of being prepared and continually willing

What is it we are to be continually ready to do?

"to make a defense" - apologia is where we get the word apologetics. An "apology," not the modern sense of apologizing, but the sense of making a defense.

It is a compound word "apo" and "lego" And meant to "reason off" or "Reason from"

It is to remove misconceptions and answer objections, thus making a defense of one's position.

It can be used as an official defense before a magistrate (Acts 22:1, 25:16) but here it is speaking of a less formal clear and logical reasoning for your hope.

We can be sure this is what Peter means because he says, "to everyone." That is to everyone who asks you

What are they asking?

"to give an account for the hope that is in you"

They are asking for a reason, an accounting for the hope that is in you. The reason is a rational account.

They are seeing the evidence of your faith and wanting to know the reasoning. *I see how you live in holiness in midst of hostility, why do you live this way? Why do you have hope in suffering? Why do you count yourself blessed to suffer?*

What is this hope?

Hope is faith in practice. The exercise of faith. Hope is faith flexing its spiritual muscle.

The believer's hope is

to look forward to, with implication of confidence about something coming to pass,

to look forward to something in view of the measures one takes to ensure fulfillment, *expect*,

We could call it an expectant confidence in things to come.

What God has promised, He will do.

It is interesting that the question is concerning the hope in you, rather than the faith in you. The question of faith would be a question of doctrine. This question is that of hope.

Peter said in 1:3, Peter said God "caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,"

This is a life lived in eager anticipation of the promises of God coming to pass

In 1:13 - Peter called believers to fix their hope. This is an unwavering confidence in the coming of Christ.

In 1:20-21, Peter said our hope is centered in the God who has revealed Himself in Christ. Imparting present salvation and the hope of future glory.

This living hope is evidenced in the believer's faithful response to suffering, so the onlookers ask, "What is the explanation for this hope that's on display in your life?"

Peter implies that we are living lives that demand answers.

Why do you live that way?

Why are your priorities different than mine?

Why do you have hope and joy when everyone is against you?

Are you living a life that demands an answer?

Are you prepared to give an answer?

This does not mean you must have a PHD and a sermon prepared with an outline and illustrations and a diagram. This means you know the scriptures well enough to say, this is why I live this way.

Principle: When Christ is enthroned in your heart, suffering will be an opportunity to proclaim the truth.

Holy living and gospel proclamation cannot be separated

So we have suffering as a blessing and suffering as an opportunity

Peter then addresses the manner in which we present this hope

These questions of the believer's hope are likely coming from hostile sources, and Peter wants us to be prepared not only with WHAT TO SAY but also HOW TO SAY IT.

-Peter knows that the tendency of the human heart when being attacked is to fire back.

We must prepare our hearts for how to respond in the moments of interrogation.

"The believer's hope should characterize both the content and the manner of his Christian witness."  
Hiebert

The manner of our message: 15c/16a - yet with gentleness and reverence

Gentleness - - the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one's self-importance, *gentleness, humility, courtesy, considerateness, meekness*, this is to avoid the temptation to overpower the opponent with the force of human personality or aggressiveness.

This is not to be confused with weakness. It is not as though we are to be timid and weak in our presentation of the truth. We are to demonstrate a humble confidence in the truth.

someone who brings a calming element to this conflict.

- In secular greek this word was used for a lion tamer

- This is not weakness, but controlled power. Be guarded of arrogance or belligerence in your defense. Guard against giving an impression of haughty superiority

Reverence/fear - this is recognizing that whatever you say and however you act is before the Lord. It is debated whether this should be taken as reverence toward the individual, which would have the idea of showing respect to the persecutor or Peter could be referring to fearing God. I believe both are in view. He certainly not commanding believers to fear man.

But he is calling believers to consider their words carefully recognizing the importance of the truth they are communicating.

There should be a conscious concern, lest through their folly or lack of restraint, the truth of God be brought into disrepute

Martin Luther commented, "Then must ye not answer with proud words and bring out the matter with a defiance and with violence as if ye would tear up trees, but with such fear and lowliness as if ye stood before God's tribunal... so must thou stand in fear, and not rest on thine own strength, but on the word and promise of Christ."

So Peter is concerned with the manner in which you share the hope that it is you,  
And he is also concerned with the character of the messenger of the gospel because God is accomplishing His purposes through our suffering

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16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame

A good conscience is essential for a faithful testimony

Your conscience is that God-implanted ability to evaluate the moral quality of thoughts, words and deeds. It is a divinely gifted smoke alarm system for your soul.

Your conscience is the God-given gift of introspection. It is the inward ability to discern right from wrong. It is only as good as it is biblically informed.

It is your moral boundaries. It is like a smoke alarm, alerting you of danger.

ILL: It is like the game Operation that I use to play as a kid. If you touch the sides it buzzes and the eye flash red. Don't do this!

But the conscience can be seared. 1 Tim 4:2 - false teachers with seared consciences as with a branding iron. They have taken the batteries out of their smoke detector. They have touched the sides of the operation board so much that they can't even hear the buzz sound.

The construction that Peter uses places an emphasis on the moral quality of the conscience

“Good conscience”

-this is a life of personal integrity. A life of bringing every known sin under the authority of Scripture

A good conscience does not mean someone has not sinned, but they are not continuing to live in a pattern of sin that has been made aware to them.

A good conscience avoids willful disobedience and when you are aware of sin, you must repent of it.

The conscience is numbed and dulled by undealt with sin.

Do not cover up your sin. Expose it and forsake it.

Peter wants to make sure our practice matches our proclamation!

A life of hypocrisy calls to question the veracity of the message we proclaim.

Maintaining a good conscience is essential to face an opponent without fear, and to effectively defend the truth

A life where the words call Christ Lord and the actions defy His word is a life of hypocrisy.

An opponent to the truth will use the hypocrite as evidence that the gospel is ineffective.

You will never truly be bold in word, unless you are holy in deed

**Prov. 28:1** The wicked flee when no one is pursuing,  
But the righteous are bold as a lion

What is the purpose of this good conscience?

16b - so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

Antagonists will not always be silenced, but God will always be accomplishing his purpose!

“Those who revile you” they are characterized by their vicious threats and abuses hurled at believers. This reviling is not merely thoughtless insults, but an element of meanness and maligning

Notice the target of their maligning-  
"Your good behavior in Christ"

These assaults are aimed at the conduct of the believer's life that is morally honorable and approved by God. Specifically, behavior that demonstrates union with Christ. The excellent moral life of the believer united to Christ is what these persecutors cannot stand.

The light of Christ is shining through these believers lives in such a way that those who love the darkness hate the light and want to put it out

Peter is saying that your good conscience as they are assaulting the likeness of Christ in your life will put them to shame because your practice matches your message.

That is the believer's life and testimony are consistent and the persecutors are ultimately humiliated, shamed

Will this shame come to them now in this life or on judgment day?

We don't know. We hope it is now and that the Lord uses our testimony and godly life to draw sinners to repentance, but we are certain, if it is not now, it will be then

Paul says in 2 Thes 1:6 -

**2Th. 1:6** "For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,"

**2Th. 1:7** "and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,"

**2Th. 1:8** "dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus"

**2Th. 1:9** "These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,"

**2Th. 1:10** "when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed"

Thus, we hope their shame will be now so that they will repent.

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This third and final reminder comes as an encouragement to the church.

<sup>17</sup> "For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong."

Peter here, is making a comparison between suffering for sin and suffering for righteousness.

We will all suffer in varying degrees in this life. But some kinds of suffering are better than others. It is better that you suffer for being righteous, not for being sinful

Listen to the original order of the verse

"It is better doing good, if the will of God will it, to suffer, than doing evil."

There is an encouragement here for the believer suffering for righteousness  
Peter says it is better - more useful, more advantageous, better  
Suffering for righteousness is not something to hang one's head in shame, but a reason to rejoice.  
The one who suffers for their own sin consequences in this life, that is not something to be proud of.  
It is not an encouragement to the faith of a believer to suffer affliction that you brought upon  
yourself. If you are suffering consequences for your sin, humble your heart and repent of it, owning  
your guilt.  
If you are suffering for a holy life in a hostile world, rejoice in it.  
But for the believer whose pursuit is union with Christ, likeness to Christ, and a faithful testimony  
of Christ- He has this hope!  
It is a good reason to suffer

Secondly it is divinely planned!

"If the will of God will it" - This language indicates that suffering for righteousness is not something  
to be afraid of, nor something to seek after. It is something that in the infinite wisdom of God, He  
has willed to be a reality in the church.  
You can comfort your heart- If God has willed this, it is a good thing. It is advantageous. It is divinely  
purposed

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