

1 Peter 3:8-22

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- [0 : 0 0] Good evening, everybody. I'm really glad to be here tonight and be able to preach tonight with all of you. This is my first time preaching, so I thought I'd introduce myself a bit first.
- So my name is Thomas Lowen, and I'm joined by my wife Addie over here. I've lived in Edinburgh for seven years now, and before coming to Brunsfield, I attended Crossroads.
- I'm really glad to have a few from Crossroads here tonight. And we got married two years ago, and since then Addie's lived here. So it's really great to be part of this church and to be able to share tonight.
- But enough about me and us, and I'll just pray before I start preaching. Heavenly Father, I thank you for your word, and I thank you that you are with us.
- I pray that you'd be speaking tonight, and they wouldn't be my words but yours. God, I pray that you'd be blessing this church, and that your word would be active in our lives.
- [0 : 5 8] I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. So, to get you thinking about the passage, I've got two questions to ask you. So firstly, when was the last time someone asked you why you were a Christian?
- And the second one is, what did you answer them? So tonight we're looking at 1 Peter 3. I have 8 to 22 there and 9 to 22 here.
- But Peter's been talking in the last two chapters in his letter to Christians throughout the world about suffering, about being holy, being made holy, and living in holy relationships with those around them.
- So now in this passage, he's talking to us about how to live a holy life, and he's giving us some examples from the Bible and some practical examples of how to live. And then he talks about baptism and how it applies to suffering in our lives and salvation.
- Finally, he talks about living a life submitted to Christ and how all things are submitted to Christ. In life, we will have challenges, but throughout them all, we are meant to share the Lord.
- [2 : 1 2] So we're thinking about whether or not our life is different enough that people will ask us about it. In verse 15, Peter says, So we'll be breaking down the passage into a few parts.
- So the first is, do we live a holy and different life? The second is, how do we react to suffering? Then, have we publicly declared our faith?
- And finally, do we live in submission to Christ? So to begin, we're asked, do we live a holy and different life? Peter gives a couple examples of things to be doing in life, and verse 8 is pretty self-explanatory.
- He says, Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate, and humble. I'm sure whether you're a Christian or not, these all sound like pretty good things to be doing.
- It's a pretty good standard to live by. Then in verse 9, Peter takes it to another level. He's saying, Do not repay evil with evil, or insult with insult.

[3 : 27] On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called, so that you may inherit a blessing. So Peter's talking about a principle that Jesus had taught him back in the day.

Back when he lived with Jesus, he was quite the fiery-tempered young man, and we most likely know the example of the Garden of Gethsemane, where he chopped off the ear of the soldier.

Most of us, if we saw that in a movie or in life, would say that was pretty justified, and even pretty admirable, that he was defending his master and trying to protect him.

But Jesus taught him to turn the other cheek. He told Peter to put away the sword, and he healed the man instead. Now this is different than what the world holds as admirable.

The world lives by an eye for an eye, and has done so for thousands of years and generations. And whether it's as a child or in war, we've all pointed and said, well, you started it.

[4 : 31] And we take that as justification for getting retribution to people. We think that getting revenge will make us feel better. But we all know that that's not true.

It won't make anything better. There's a famous quote by Coretta Scott King, the wife of Martin Luther King Jr., that says, an eye for an eye leaves everyone blind.

So Peter's calling us to be different to the world in this passage. He says to not be conformed to it, and we're to seek to bless and forgive all those around us.

By doing this and trusting the Lord, the burdens of our suffering can be lifted from us. These actions and paths that Christ has described and that Peter's describing for us are the theme of this whole letter.

And they're not easy at all to live by, but they are better. So next question is, how do we react to suffering? In verses 10 to 12, Peter's quoting David from Psalm 34, verses 2 to 16.

[5 : 37] David reacted to suffering in this passage, and he says, If we go to the psalm, Psalm 34, it reads as the title, of David when he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who drove him away and he left.

So it's not the most famous story, so we probably need a bit of backstory to it. And it's quite interesting, and I recommend you read it in your own time. But to summarize, he's remembering back on 1 Samuel chapter 21.

In the story, David runs away from Saul, because he's afraid of Saul, and he runs to the Philistines. But then he's afraid of the Philistines, so he pretends to be insane.

So he's drooling all over the place, acting crazy, and then he runs away from them too. So this psalm is about trusting the Lord, and clearly he didn't trust the Lord in this situation.

He ran away from Saul, ran away from the Philistines, but now he's reflecting back on that time. He sees that he should have been trusting the Lord and living according to his ways. But he suffered instead.

[7 : 05] He imposed all that suffering on himself by his actions, and he didn't have to go through it, and he didn't gain anything out of it. But eventually he did learn to trust God. So back to the question, how do we react to suffering?

In the next verses, Peter says, Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear their threats, do not be frightened, but in your hearts revere Christ as Lord.

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered, once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

He was put to death in the body, but made alive in the spirit. So Peter interestingly asks, Who's going to harm you if you're eager to do good? And most of us would expect, Well, nobody's going to harm me for doing good.

[8 : 15] But he answers, Even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. This isn't at all what we would expect as an answer.

But if we think back on our lives, we know it's true. If we're good and kind to people, yeah, we're less likely to suffer. But we live in a fallen world, and it's cruel, and we will suffer even for doing good.

Whether it's spiteful people, or out of malice, or just completely unfortunate circumstances, there will be suffering in life. And that's the story of so many martyrs around the world.

They loved people around them, and were good, and they shared the gospel, and for that, they were killed. Most importantly, though, it's the story of Jesus. He healed and loved like nobody ever has before, or ever will again.

But for that, they crucified him. God knows the worst and most unfair suffering any of us could ever go through. God's calling us to anticipate and not fear suffering, and it's not easy.

[9 : 23] But he's promised us and shown us that he will be with us. He's been through it himself. On our own, we will be afraid.

But if we trust him and cry out to the Lord, we can face that fear. He's given us the gift of eternal life, and it's worth suffering for. Because it's nothing compared to the joy of eternity.

His sacrifice and gift should always be on our minds and lips. That suffering and trusting him and proclaiming him will be a light to those around us.

Even beyond that salvation, though, and that gift he's giving us, there is more blessing and suffering. It's an opportunity to grow. David grew through that suffering and learned his lesson.

There's many cultures around the world, whether they're Christian or not, that know that suffering is a way to grow. Even in our own culture, we see that it's an opportunity for growth.

[10 : 25] In work and in school, we talk about challenges making us grow. We have sayings like, no pain, no gain, or what doesn't kill you only makes you stronger.

Yeah, they're cheesy, and we might say them jokingly, but there is truth to them. Yeah, we'll make mistakes, and we learn from them. And we will suffer, but if we turn to the Lord, we can learn to trust him more.

Then in the way we actually live our lives, we live in a different way than this. We run away from challenges, and we run away from pain as much as we can. So there's a disconnect between the two ways of seeing life, and we need to resolve them.

It is really hard, but it's not worth running away from pain like David did. It's worth suffering for God and trusting him. Is something you truly believe in not worth suffering for?

Putting this into practice is one of the strongest and most visible testimonies we can give to those around us. When they see us standing in the face of persecution, will this push them to question why we would ever believe so strongly in something?

[11 : 33] An example in the Bible is Paul, who was in prison for years, and he suffered a great deal. But how many came to Christ in Rome thanks to him? So next, we've got a bit of an interesting verse.

So I call it the detour through prison. So I've added the context of verse 18, but verse 19 is the interesting one. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

He was put to death in the body, but made alive in the spirit. After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits. So it's kind of strange. Who are these prisons and who are these spirits in prison?

And why is Peter talking about this now? It's pretty hard to know. And there's lots of people that have lots of good explanations and commentary on it, on who they are and what's going on.

But I'm not going to assume anything tonight. But in verse 22, we read that Christ has victory over everything. So we can read this as an example of that.

[12 : 41] Whoever, whenever, wherever, whatever is going on here with these spirits, they're in submission to Christ, and he has victory. We can trust that Christ is in control and that he knows best.

And so that's all the speculation we'll get into for that verse. So moving on, in verse 20, Peter's starting to talk about a public display of faith.

So have we made a public declaration of our faith? He's talking about baptism and symbolizing, or symbolically, talking back on Noah and Christ.

So to those who were disobedient long ago, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built, in it, only a few people, eight in all, were saved through the water.

So in Noah's time, the world was warned that they were going to die for their sin. They rejected that and kept on living just as they had been, which is quite similar today.

[13 : 44] But Noah heard and he listened. He was willing to suffer for his faith. That suffering was most likely labor for a seemingly meaningless task and probably a lot of ridicule, which is actually quite similar to the suffering we face today in our culture.

Unfortunately, around the world, though, there's many who are believers that face imprisonment, torture, or even death for their faith. We can thank the Lord that we live in a free country where we can meet on a night like tonight and we can worship the Lord so that people on the street can hear it.

And yeah, we might be made fun of for our faith, but it's worth it. The fear is well-founded of being made fun of and it's not pleasant, but we blow it way out of proportion.

Is our faith really so shallow and fear so strong that the knowledge and relationship with the Creator God who has gifted us salvation, not worth sharing based on a few rolled eyes?

More insidious often than this suffering, though, is for what feels like a work in vain, like Noah. How many of us have shared our faith for years or with some, even decades, with friends and loved ones but seen no results?

[15 : 01] God assures us, though, that our prayers and sharing are worth it. The Lord's called us to it, so we can trust Him. And we don't know God's ways or timing, so we've got to have faith.

Noah built the ark, putting aside everything else, because he trusted God and what he had promised. He trusted and suffered for it, but it made the biggest and boldest public proclamation of faith he ever could.

There's no way people didn't ask him why he was building that giant ark. Similarly, we're called to make a public declaration of our faith. In verse 21, Peter says, this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also, not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience towards God.

It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So Peter's saying baptism isn't just a bath, it's a transformation, but it's also symbolic of Christ and Noah.

The symbolism of death and being buried for sins by going into the water. Because we were condemned for our sins and we deserve death just like those in Noah's time.

[16 : 17] But like Noah, we're saved not by our own efforts but by God's gift. Noah's actions and righteousness were definitely what God made note of that he went to Noah.

But it's not Noah's actions that saved him. He couldn't save himself. He was saved because he did what God told him to do. It's his response to God that saved him.

He didn't know he needed to build the ark unless God told him to build the ark. So it's what God told him to do that saved him. He believed and he was saved.

Similarly, we're called to faith and we need to respond to it. It's not our actions that will save us. It's Christ's actions that will. So a normal, typical path to faith is we pray and accept him as our Lord and Savior for what he's done.

We accept that we can't save ourselves. Then we have baptism which is our public declaration of faith. faith. We get in the tank or in the sea or wherever you do it and you're there with the pastor or elder and you answer them admitting that you're a sinner, that you need Jesus and that he is your Lord.

[17 : 35] You're then put into the water symbolizing death for your sins. And finally, you're brought back out of the water symbolizing new life in Christ, eternal life through his life, death, and resurrection.

So just like the rainbow was given to Noah, we're given baptism as a sign of the new covenant that we live under. And likewise, we have no clearer sign that we can give.

Like the ark, if we have a baptism, everybody will know exactly where we stand. So finally, are we living in submission to Christ?

Christ. In verse 22, Peter says, it saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand with angels, authorities, and powers in submission to him.

So all things are submitted to Christ, whether they believe or not. No matter who we are, one day we will face Christ at the judgment seat. The question is, will we stand there saved by Christ or not?

[18 : 44] It's not doing good like Peter taught at the start of the passage about that's going to save us. It's not suffering that he talked about that's going to save us. It's not being baptized that's going to save us.

It's Christ dying and being resurrected for us that will save us. Christ has called us to believe this, have faith in him, and repent. Through this, when we stand at the throne, we will be saved.

So what Peter's been describing in this passage is the natural reflection of our faith. We're to suffer for Christ, to do good, and by this we will be a light in the world.

So my prayer is that as we go into the world, we go submitted to Christ, doing what he's called us to do. Linking back to the start of the message, we're to live a life that stands out and be a light around us to those who know us.

and our life is to be a living answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. By doing good, by doing good in response to evil, by being willing to suffer for Christ when we inevitably will, and by publicly declaring our faith, all of this is a natural reflection of our submission to Christ.

[20 : 01] So how we live should lead those around us to question about Christ. So next time someone asks you about your faith, what will you answer? Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for this evening. I thank you for your word, and I thank you that you're at work in us. I pray that we would do good, that we would be willing to suffer for you, for it is worth it.

I pray that we will live submitted to you, and that we would be a light to the world. I pray that you'd be at work in this city, in this country, and that people would be coming to know you, Lord.

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.