

Relationships with the World 1st Peter 3:13-22

We continue this week in our study of the letter by the Apostle Peter to the churches begun by Jews that were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost when the disciples received the Holy Spirit and spoke in languages they did not originally know. The day when 3000 were added to the church.

Last week our passage focused on relationships within the home, the home life of the follower of Jesus. This week our passage takes us out of the home and out into the world where we are likely to suffer as followers of Jesus. We are going to go through my favorite verse in 1st Peter this morning which is one of the reasons I push you all hard on the depth of your knowledge of scripture. So let's dig into the text.

For the first verse of our Pericope to make sense this morning, we have to go back to a short quote Peter made from the book of Psalms:

1 Peter 3:10–12 (ESV)

10 For

“Whoever desires to love life

and see good days,

let him keep his tongue from evil

and his lips from speaking deceit;

11 let him turn away from evil and do good;

let him seek peace and pursue it.

12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,

and his ears are open to their prayer.

But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

Peter’s quote from Psalm 34 reminds us that things go better for us if we say and do the right things. If we are not deceitful in our speech. If we turn from doing evil things to do good things. Since God is righteous and listens to the prayers of those who do good but not those who do evil.

1 Peter 3:13–14 (ESV)

13 Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,

The context almost demands that this question Peter begins with is viewed as a rhetorical question. But I don’t think that Peter is actually asking a rhetorical question. Look what he says. He asks who can actually harm those who are zealous to do good. What harm really can come to the follower of Jesus who is

actually following Jesus and doing what God has called him to do? The answer to that question is any harm is temporary and superficial. The truth is that as a follower of Jesus you are protected by God, and He will bless you. We should not fear what can be done to us we are blessed by God.

What does “blessed” mean? The word translated as blessed at first was used in Greek literature to speak of gifts from the gods. Later in Greek literature, the word was used to speak about the freedom that the rich experience from normal cares and worries. It was used in Scripture to speak of the joy received by participation in God’s Kingdom, our relationship with God. In other words, this word speaks of the lack of concern or worry over what goes on in our day to day world because we have been adopted as children of creator/sustainer of the universe. You do not have to fear things going on around you today because God called you to be His child and will care for you as any Good Good Father would do. I love the picture that Peter gives us here. We do not need to fear anything in this world because we are blessed by God with everything that it means to be His child. That comforts me, it should comfort you as well.

As good as that message is, it is only the intro to the main topic of the passage. We should not fear those who could hurt us in the world, but rather we should be prepared to talk about the blessings we receive.

1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)

15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

Don't fear what could hurt you but honor the Messiah the Lord as Holy. That tells me we are to respect and revere Jesus. We are to worship Him as our savior and Lord. The word Lord here should remind us exactly who Jesus is. Lord, as used in the New Testament, is different than Lord used in the Old Testament. "Lord" in the New Testament is the New Testament personal name of God, akin to Yahweh. Clearly reminding us that Jesus is God Himself.

One way we do rever God is always to be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for the reason of your hope.

I get that we are not all evangelists. In fact, as Dr. Tony Webb reminds us, most of are not evangelists. But we all should be prepared to talk about the blessings we have in Jesus Christ.

The idea of prepared here to stand ready to speak about the blessings you have received and will be received. In my experience to stand ready, I have to do something beforehand. In my training at the Ft Wayne Police Academy a long time ago we went through real-life shoot/don't shoot scenarios over and over. We went through some real practical examples to prepare us for what we would face out in the field.

You as followers of Jesus are to stand ready to speak up concerning the hope that lies within you. Look again at verse 15.

1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)

*15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, **always being prepared to make a defense** to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,*

So how do we get prepared? Peter says we are to be prepared to make a defense. Defense is the Greek word ἀπολογία from where we get the name of a branch of theology we call apologetics. It does not mean to say you are sorry for being a follower of God. It means to defend being a follower of Jesus. ἀπολογία carries the idea of making a verbal defense of what you believe.

Quite often we hear today that we don't have to say anything to other but let our life display our faith. Well, often your life does not give a good picture of the blessing God has given you. And here Peter uses a specific word that directs us to be prepared to give a verbal defense of why we have hope in God. That means you cannot depend on your life to speak out for you, you actually have to communicate with words what you believe and why you believe it.

We have been saved by the creator/sustainer of the universe. We have been purchased from the slave market of sin and given eternal life. Your eternity is sure because it is maintained by

God, not you. No matter what happens to you in this world, it will be nothing compared to the blessings God has already given you and will give you in the future.

It may not be riches and good health in this life, but for eternity you will have everything in the presence of God for eternity. We need to stand ready to tell people all that God has given you all these blessings.

I used this illustration a few weeks ago, but it fits here perfectly.

You receive a notice from your bank that your mortgage has been completely paid off, you owe nothing. In fact, the bank has also deposited 20 million dollars in your account for you to spend however you want. The only catch is that you have to tell people about what the bank has done for you. What would you say? Would you take the bank up on offer. You bet you would, and you would be vocal about what the bank has done.

We should be no less vocal about what God has done for us. Our debt is paid off, and our account is full and overflowing. God said just tell people about what I have done. Be prepared to make a defense of the hope that is within you!

Look at the last phrase of the verse. We are to stand ready to make a defense of the hope that is in us, yet we are to do it with gentleness and respect. Let me just say that is really hard to do. I think we all have felt like shaking someone we are talking to and shouting at them “why can’t you understand this?” They can’t understand it because it takes the work of the Holy Spirit for

them to understand it and when we get in their face we hinder that process. We don't know when the Holy Spirit will be working in their lives. And really that is not the point of what Peter is saying. We need to stand ready to talk about what God has done for us, all the time and we need to do it with gentleness and respect. Don't hurt your chances to make a difference in their lives by your attitude with them. Stand ready to speak all the time with gentleness and respect.

1 Peter 3:16 (ESV)

16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

Verse 16 carries on where verse 15 left off. In fact, it is a continuation of the same sentence. Verse 14, 15, and 16 are all one sentence. As one sentence they rightly go together. Let me read it to you as the Message translates these verses.

1 Peter 3:14–16 (The Message)

Even if you suffer for it, you're still better off. Don't give the opposition a second thought. Through thick and thin, keep your hearts at attention, in adoration before Christ, your Master. Be ready to speak up and tell anyone who asks why you're living the way you are, and always with the utmost courtesy. Keep a clear conscience before God so that when people

throw mud at you, none of it will stick. They'll end up realizing that they're the ones who need a bath.

Sometimes it helps to read it or hear it in a different translation.

Peter is telling us that we need to maintain our testimony before people by respecting them and being gentle with them. If we do that we can have a clear conscience before them. You won't have to keep looking over your shoulder to make sure your sinful life is not rearing its ugly head. If you don't do anything wrong, you don't have to fear it being exposed.

Peter also tells us that when we actually do live properly before the world those who want to slander us are put to shame. I have witnessed this first hand. They get ashamed of the way they live their life when they look at your life. When we are gentle with people, especially those who treat us improperly, our gracious response can have a tremendous effect on them. The bottom line of this verse is that the best way to have a clean conscience is to have a clean life serving God.

1 Peter 3:17 (ESV)

17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

I looked at this verse for a while and was not quite sure what Peter was driving at here. But then I realized that Peter has already talked about this topic. In 1st Peter 2:15 and 19-20 Peter says the same thing. Suffering despite doing the right thing may

be God's will for you. It just might be that no matter how obedient you are, how much you do to serve God that suffering is in store for you. Peter also tells us that it is better to suffer for doing good rather than doing evil. If you suffer for doing evil, it would be punishment. But when we suffer for doing good, we display a character more like Jesus than the world.

1 Peter 3:18 (ESV)

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

In this verse, through to verse 22, Peter illustrates what he was talking about in 13-17 and once again Jesus is the perfect example for us.

Peter reminds us that Jesus suffered for sins. Not His sins, my sins, your sins. He was righteous and suffered because of the unrighteous.

But why did Jesus suffer or die once for sins? That He might bring us to God. A couple of things I want to make sure you see in the text here. It is Jesus that brings us to God. It is not you that you go to God, Jesus brings you to God. For by Grace you have been saved it is the gift of God so that no one can boast. Jesus bring you to the Father.

Also notice that Peter slips in the reality that Jesus only had to die once, not over and over again. His sacrifice was sufficient enough to pay the price once and for all. Nothing else can be or should be added to His sacrifice on our behalf.

The last half of the verse has some more doctrinal heavy stuff in it. We are approaching Easter in which we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the Grave on the third day after His crucifixion. If Jesus died on the cross and then remained in the grave, we are to be pitied Paul says. Because we would have no salvation if Jesus were not alive if death was not conquered by eternal life. Jesus died in His physical body but was made alive again by the Spirit.

There is some difficult reading of this phrase because of some differences in the early manuscripts. The earliest manuscripts make it clear that Peter is speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit in raising Jesus from the grave. At some point, an article was placed in the text that made it less clear. Some English translations have included the article, and so it is less clear.

Jesus suffered and died on the cross to pay the price you owed. He was placed in a grave for Friday night all day Saturday and through to Sunday morning when the Holy Spirit raised Him from the dead. He did this to provide for you eternal life by presenting you to the Father. All that the Father called He gave to the Father.

These next couple of verses present to us some theology we only really see here and in Jude 6.

1 Peter 3:18–20 (ESV)

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, 19 in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, 20 because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

I read verse 18 again to make the sentence complete. During the time Jesus' Body lay in the grave, Jesus's spirit went to the place where the dead in the Old Testament went. We know from Jesus telling of the Rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16 that the place is called Abraham's Bosom. It is a place of paradise and torture with a great gulf between them. There can be no crossing over from one to the other. This is not heaven. This is where Old Testament people went. OT believers went to the side of paradise and non-believers went to the side of torture.

I should let you know that not all scholars agree that Peter is talking about the period of time between death and resurrection here. Some argue that Peter is talking about after the resurrection and others argue that Peter is speaking about before

Jesus was born to Mary. I think the context, however, demands that Peter is speaking of the period of time between death and resurrection while He was only Spirit.

During this period of time from Friday night through to Sunday Morning, Jesus was in Abraham's Bosom where He confronted "Spirits in Prison." Who are those spirits in prison? Jude 6 provides us an answer.

Jude 6 (ESV)

6 And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—

It appears that the Spirits in Prison is a reference to fallen angels who did not stay within their own position of authority. Or as the NASB states it "Angels who did not keep their own domain." I believe that this is a reference to the Sons of God in Gen 6:1-4. Fallen angels who impregnated women before the flood resulting in the Nephilim and Anakim. I believe that the defilement of the human genome is part of the reason God destroyed all humans on the earth except the 8 he saved on the ark.

Jesus Proclaimed to them the victory over sin and over death. Despite their best efforts they lost the battle and will lose the war as well.

We are told by the apostle Paul in Ephesians that Jesus also led captivity from Abraham's Bosom.

Ephesians 4:8 (ESV)

8 Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."

I believe that when Jesus went down into Abraham's Bosom, he confronted the locked up fallen angels of Gen 6 and when he left He took with him the Old Testament saints taking them to heaven after the resurrection. That is one of the reasons I believe that Jesus was seen at the time of the resurrection but then not again until later that evening. In the meantime, He was establishing His relationship with the Father and delivering to heaven the Old Testament Saints.

1 Peter 3:21 (ESV)

21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Lot's of debate has focused on this verse. First remove from your mind the English word baptism as an ordinance of the church. Read this verse instead with the proper translation of the Greek word βάπτισμα which is properly translated means immersion. Go back to verse 20 a moment.

1 Peter 3:20–21 (ESV)

20 because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

21 immersion, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Noah and his family were saved by God going through the waters of the flood. IN a sense they were immersed in the flood water with God taking them through it in the ark. The picture here is the salvation of Noah and family by God in the Ark. The filth of the world was removed by the flood waters.

We also are saved when the filth of the world is removed from us by the salvation we are given by God through the suffering of Jesus Christ and look at the end of verse 21, the resurrection of Jesus. You only have salvation because Jesus died on the cross and was raised from the dead.

You are not saved by water baptism any more than Noah was saved by being in the water. He was saved because God saved him through the ark that went through the water.

1 Peter 3:22 (ESV)

22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Jesus was raised from the dead and now sits at the right hand of God the Father with everything being subjected to Him. Peter ends the chapter where he began it, with subjection. Jesus has been placed back into the position where everything and everyone is subject to Him. Even those people or angels who do not admit it now.

Conclusion

We may suffer, even when doing the right thing, the right way for the right reasons. Just look at the example of Jesus who is the creator/sustainer of the universe. He suffered in doing the right thing the right way for the right reason. He sets the example for us in how we are to live and act.

When we look at the entire chapter we see that Peter is making the case for our lives displaying the truth of Scripture. Wives should be submissive to their husbands, husbands should be considerate of their wives, we should all live harmoniously with each other, even when we suffer for doing good, we are to be an example just as Jesus was to us.

We should always be mindful that we have been given such tremendous blessings from God for a reason. That reason is to

stand ready to tell people about what God has done for us. We should never shy away from that instruction. Always be ready to defend what you believe. That we requires you to know what you believe and then be able to tell people about. It also means that people need to see that you do have a hope for the future. This is again the white hat principle!

Let's Pray!~