

1 Peter 3:8-22

Peter now speaks to how the body of Christ, the Christian community, should function including a discussion of the importance of loving our enemies. **How would you describe the five attitudes that should be on display among Christians (v. 8)?**

1. Live in harmony implies cooperation when there are individual differences. These differences can have a pleasing rather than an irritating effect. We do not all need to sing exactly the same tune, but our tune should harmonize with those of our fellow believers.
2. Be sympathetic means suffering with one another by entering into and sharing the feelings of others. It implies bearing one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2).
3. Love as brothers looks at the special love that unites believers (1:22; 2:17).
4. Be compassionate means feeling affectionately, compassionately and deeply for someone else.
5. Be humble The person who is "humble in spirit" is willing to put someone else's interests and needs before their own (Philippians 2:3-4).

According to Peter, why should we have these five attitudes? What should motivate us (v. 9)?

- "...to this you were called..." It is God's will for us.
- "...that you may inherit a blessing." God will bless us. Ephesians 1:3: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."
- All five attitudes are a powerful witness to our world.

How does one give a blessing instead of an insult (vv. 10-12)? We refrain from speaking evil, walk away from evil, do good, seek to make peace rather than trouble. The insult for insult attitude results in isolation, but the blessing for insult attitude results in oneness – especially within the context of marriage.

What is Peter's point(s) in quoting Psalm 34:12-16 (vv. 10-12)? To show that what he is teaching is not new. David and Peter both want us to understand that the "good life" is not what is portrayed in the Budweiser commercials. The "good life" is the fullest enjoyment of the days God gives us in this life and in the next. The Psalmist emphasizes the blessing that comes to "the righteous" who turn away from evil and do good.

What was Peter's follow-up point (vv. 13-14)? He emphasized the inner confidence a Christian can have when experiencing persecution so that his readers would be equipped to overcome their sufferings effectively. Christians have an incredible contribution to make to their society by breaking the cycle of people returning evil for evil.

How should we react when we experience suffering for doing good (v. 14)? We need to focus our attention on the blessing that will come to us for enduring persecution when we do good (Matthew 5:10). Peter quoted the Lord's exhortation to Isaiah when the prophet learned that the people of Judah and Jerusalem would not respond to his ministry positively (Isaiah 8:12-13). God promised to take care of Isaiah, and He did. Though Isaiah eventually died a martyr's death, he persevered in his calling because God sustained him.

Who are some examples in the Bible of those who suffered for doing right? Job suffered because he was righteous. Others would include Joseph, Paul, the Apostles, Jesus, etc. The only virtuous suffering commended by God is innocent suffering for what is right or good. Deserved suffering is not virtuous.

What might they (the world) fear that we're not supposed to fear (v. 14b)? Suffering, persecution, death, etc.

What does it mean to set apart Christ as Lord in your heart (v. 15)? Making Him the Sovereign of our lives. Inviting/allowing Him to occupy a special place in our hearts and minds. Having a Christ-awareness mindset, an inner commitment, a determination of the mind (Colossians 3:1-3). The lordship of Christ should dominate every area of our lives – our possessions, our occupation, our library, our marriage, our spare time – nothing can be excluded. Recommended easy reading pamphlet: My Heart Christ's Home by Robert Boyd Munger.

What question should we always be prepared to answer (v. 15)? "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have". Be ready for divine appointments.

If I want people to ask me about the hope I have, they first have to see the hope in my life. **What might that look like?** Two visible by-products will be the inevitable result of this hope --- Joy and Peace -- which are proof positive as to how real our hope is. Other Fruit of the Spirit should be visible in our lives as well (Galatians 5:22).

What is the manner in which we are supposed to impart this defense for the faith (v. 15)? “....with gentleness and respect.” In a winsome way. Proclaiming the gospel with grace, not harshly or without concern (Colossians 4:6). But we are also to present the gospel in truth. In sharing the Gospel, may we always maintain the attitude of simply being one beggar sharing with another beggar where to find food.

The conscience is one's inner sense of what is right and wrong.....a moral compass. **What is the value of maintaining a clear conscience (v. 16)?** So that when we are slandered, those who have spoken evil of us for well-doing will one day be ashamed of their false accusations. When we have a clear conscience, we don't have to worry about what others are saying about us -- no real cause for accusing us can be made to stick.

If I know I am innocent of any crime, I can go through persecution with the boldness of a lion. If I have a bad conscience, I will be plagued by feelings of guilt and will not be able to stand against the foe. Even if my life is blameless, the enemies of the Gospel will still find fault with me and bring false charges against me. But when the case comes to trial, and the charges are found to be empty, the accusers will be ashamed.¹

Why did Christ die (v. 18)? To pay the penalty for our sins. To bring us into fellowship and a right relationship with God. Sin had separated us from God. Jesus came to reconcile us to God and restore a fractured relationship that we could not restore.

What are the implications of Christ dying for sins once for all (v. 18)? "Once for all" emphasizes the sufficiency of Jesus' sacrifice. It does not need repeating or adding to by any human works. The emphasis is also on the finality of His sacrifice. In dying once for all, He settled the sin question permanently. The work of redemption was completed.

Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison (v. 19). **Who are these spirits in prison?** The unbelievers who disobeyed God in Noah's day by rejecting Noah's preaching. They are now "spirits" since they died long ago and their bodies have not yet experienced resurrection. He said the spirits of these unbelievers are in prison now (i.e., Sheol) awaiting resurrection and judgment by God (Revelation 20:11-15).² Noah was not just a boat builder. Noah is described as a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5).

Verse 19 has been taken by some to suggest that Christ descended into hell and gave the prisoners there a second chance to be saved. We know from Hebrews 9:27 “*Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment....*” that there is no "second chance" after death to be saved. In all probability, this was preaching the proclamation of God's message, but it was not evangelism. Rather, it was most likely a message of judgment and final condemnation in light of His finished work on the cross.

What is the point Peter is making about baptism (v. 21)? Baptism does not save us by an outward physical cleansing but is evidence of an inward change that has resulted in a good conscience toward God. Note that eight people were saved *through* the water not *by* the water. Scripture nowhere makes baptism a condition for salvation.

Peter was careful to point out that it isn't the actual water washing of baptism that saves us, but the spiritual reality behind the immersion in water. What really saves us is the answer of a good conscience toward God, a conscience made good through the completed work of Jesus.

¹ Believer's Bible Commentary, William MacDonald, 1995 edition, published by Thomas Nelson Publishers p. 2271

² Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on 1 Peter, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>)