

# OpenTheo

## 1 Peter 3:8 - 3:22



### 1 Peter - Steve Gregg

In this passage analyzed by Steve Gregg, Peter calls followers to embrace sufferings graciously, love their enemies, and pursue peace. He reminds them that suffering for righteousness' sake brings blessings and that having a clear conscience is better than being ashamed in front of Christ. Peter also discusses the antitype of baptism and the idea that death of the body does not necessarily bring death of the spirit. Overall, the passage emphasizes the importance of living a Christ-like life, even when faced with hostility and suffering.

## Transcript

We're turning to 1 Peter 3. I really had hoped in our last session that we would get through more than we did. We only got up through verse 7, and that is a very natural stopping point. It's just that I wished to get more done.

But it's not a bad place to stop if you have unlimited time to get through the rest of the material, which we don't. But the end of what we covered last time was the end of that portion of Peter that might be called the Household Code. At least commentators refer to the instructions given to husbands and wives, servants and masters, children and parents, such as you find these instructions blocked together as units in Ephesians and Colossians.

And here, they call that the Household Code. Some commentators believe that this was just a code that was well known throughout the early church and that different epistles just inserted it for practical purposes and instruction. That may be so.

Or it may be that Paul invented it, as it were, in his writings. When I say invented, I don't mean that it wasn't inspired. I just mean that he was the one who was the first to write it.

And we have found that Peter, in his epistle, has been very much following in many respects what Paul wrote in Ephesians. Peter seems to have a great parallelism between itself and Ephesians. Now, he has spoken in chapter 2 about servants and in chapter 3 in the beginning about wives and about husbands.

But he's done with that now and he goes on to more general things. He even introduces verse 8 with the word finally, which may sound like he's closing the epistle. Some actually have felt that he did intend to close the epistle within the next few verses.

Perhaps that chapter 3, verse 8 through chapter 4, verse 11 was what he intended to be the final section. And we see in chapter 4, verse 11, it ends with amen, as if it is closing something. In fact, it ends with a doxology, to whom belong glory and dominion forever and ever.

Amen, at the end of chapter 4, verse 11. And scholars sometimes suggest that Peter was winding down the epistle at this point, but then we find there's a considerable bit more in the latter part of chapter 4 and then chapter 5 that was added on, which may have been added on because before he got around to sending the completed letter, he saw a need to put on an addendum. Some would suggest because before the letter was sent, he got news that there was an increase in the persecution of the Christians and needed to write something in light of the more pressing trials that they were having.

So that in chapter 4, verse 12, he said, beloved, do not think it's strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you as though some strange thing happened to you. And he gives instructions about bucking up and being courageous and holding fast under greater trial. Whether the scholars are right about this or not, nobody knows.

It's only a theory. It does seem to fit the facts, but it's not the only possible theory that could fit the facts. In any case, it may be in verse 8 that Peter sees himself as winding the letter down.

And yet once you begin to wind it down, sometimes you think of other things to say that you didn't know you were going to say. So we're really only about a little over halfway through the book. And he's saying finally.

He says, finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another. Love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous. Now, all of these exhortations have to do with social relationships.

Christianity obviously calls us to a certain kind of relationship with God, but also certain kinds of relationships with each other. When Jesus distilled the whole duty of man down to two statements, he said you should love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And you should love your neighbor as you love yourself.

So you've got this relationship with God, loving God, and this relationship with your neighbor. Many times people have underplayed the relation with God to give more of just a totally a social aspect to Christianity. But it's also possible to go the other way, to speak only about your prayer life and your Bible reading and your worship of God and neglect the social obligations.

And I believe the social dynamics in the body of Christ are one of the most powerful witnesses that God intended for the world to see that Jesus is real. In fact, Jesus said in John chapter 17, he prayed, Father, I pray that they may be one, even as we are one, so that the world may know that you've sent me. He said that twice.

He said it in John 17, 11. I think he said it again in verse 21 of the same chapter, that they may be one so that the world may know. That is the unity, the relationships, the distinctive relationships among Christians, the social life of the Christian community would be such that the world would look on and say, wow, I guess Jesus is from God.

Likewise, Jesus said in John 13, 35, by this all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another. So the relationships, the loving relationships in the Christian community are to be the witness to the world. Certainly the witness is verbal as well.

The gospel has to be preached, but it has to be preached to a world that can see a visible community that has been transformed and that transformation is seen in the quality of their relationships and the way they behave toward each other. And so most of the exhortations in the scripture have to do with how people treat each other. Now, of course, it's necessary to love God, but John said in 1 John, if anyone says, I love God and hates his brother, he's a liar for he that does not love his brother whom he has seen.

How can he love God whom he's not seen? So it's one thing to say you love God, but who can tell, who can tell if you love God or not, unless you're obeying God in his command to love your brother. And so Peter gives a number of exhortations that all have to do with relating with other Christians. He says, first of all, be of one mind or be in unity, being of one mind.

Actually, I think in the Greek, it says, mind the same things or be concerned about the same things. The same things would no doubt be those things that are common concerns for all Christians, the concern that God would be glorified, the concern that the kingdom of God would advance. Certainly Christians have other concerns too, but they should share this one concern and it should be their compelling concern.

Jesus said, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. So that then all the other things would be added to the other things or the other concerns in your life. The principal concern is the kingdom of God and the glory of God and the righteousness of God.

The Christian community should be focused as a group of people whose lives are centered and focused and pointed at this one objective, that the kingdom of God would prosper and grow. That's the one mind we're to have, having compassion for one another. All right, so we're hardened to other people's suffering.

Compassion, actually in the Greek as well as in English, is a word that means to suffer

with. In English, I guess it comes from the Latin, come means with and passion means suffering. So that's why we call the last week of Jesus' early life, the passion week.

The passion of the Christ means the suffering. In Latin, passion is suffering. Come, passion means suffering with.

In the Greek, it's something like sun pathios or something like that, which is also with. Sin is with and pathios or whatever, I don't know the ending of the word is suffering. So both in Greek and English, this means to suffer with.

Having compassion, we might think that just means that we have mercy on people, but it actually means that we feel their pain. We suffer with them. This is often said of Jesus, that he was moved with compassion when he saw the multitudes because they were like sheep without a shepherd, or he was moved with compassion when he saw a sick person wanting to be healed or some other need, some suffering that people had.

He suffered with them. He felt it. He was moved inwardly.

And that's how we are to be toward each other as well. It should not be possible that we hear of the suffering of one Christian and it doesn't move us. In Hebrews chapter 13, it said, remember those who are bound as being bound with them, meaning Christians who are in prison, suffering.

He says, being in the body, that's Hebrews 13, three, remember the prisoners as if chained with them and those who are mistreated since you yourselves are in the body also. You're in the same body. Their suffering is your suffering.

Paul said in first Corinthians, when one member suffers, all suffer. And so to suffer with is what it means to have compassion. Although of course, it's not necessarily talking about being in the same conditions of suffering, but inwardly to feel their suffering as if it is your own.

You're sharing their pain, as it were. He says, love as brothers. This word is actually Philadelphia.

It's the verb form of Philadelphia, which means brotherly love. And so because we are brothers, we should love as brothers, as if we're family. Be tender hearted.

This would be the opposite of becoming hard hearted and inconsiderate and unfeeling toward each other. And the last word says, be courteous. In the Greek, this word is friendly, but the older manuscripts have a different word there.

And the King James and the new King James have the word courteous. And again, the Greek word that is found in the Texas Receptus there is to be friendly with people, to be considerate and I guess outgoing to people. However, in the older manuscripts, the

Alexandrian text, there's a different word in there that means humble or humble minded.

So to be humble with reference to your assessment of yourself vis-a-vis others. Being humble minded means in a sense, you evaluate yourself, not in a flattering way. And especially with reference to other people, you put them above yourself, at least their concerns above yours.

So Paul says in Philippians chapter two, verse three, Philippians two, three, Paul says, let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind, that's humility. Let each esteem others better than himself. And he says, look, let each of you look not out for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

You consider that the other person's interests and concerns are as important as your own. And that's, that's being humble is essentially placing the other person on the same level as yourself, if not above yourself. In Romans 12, 10, Paul says, be kindly affectionate.

Romans 12, 10, be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love in honor, giving preference to one another. This is again, what humility is. You give preference to the concerns of the other person more than yourself in preference, in honor, preferring one another over yourself.

So that's what humble mindedness means. It doesn't mean that you think worse of yourself than is true. It just means that you be in touch with reality, that your claim on having your way is no greater than anybody else's claim on having their way.

By nature, from our childhood, we learn the habits of, of laying, laying claim to what we want. If that means we manipulate our parents or we manipulate the world around us, or we, uh, you know, whatever it is, we, we force our way, whatever it is, we see us getting what we want as the one thing we have to labor for. And it, we sort of have the impression that our needs, our preferences, our interests are somehow to us a higher priority than anybody else's.

And we're told, you know, if you don't look out for yourself, no one else is going to look out for you. So you've got to look out for number one. Well, the Bible says, well, actually, when you're born again, it's the opposite.

You, you don't consider that your preferences and interests are more important than anybody else's. If anything, you're willing to put theirs ahead of yours. That's what humbleness is.

It's a change of that selfish arrogance that sees oneself as the center of the universe and realizes that I'm not even close to the center of the universe. Everybody else is as worthy of consideration as I am and their interests certainly are not any less important than mine. Now it says in verse nine, not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but

on the contrary, blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

Now this not returning, reviling for reviling or evil for evil goes back to chapter two, when Jesus is presented as our example, who suffered in verse 23, first Peter two, 23, it says who Jesus, when he was reviled, he did not revile in return. And when he suffered, he did not threaten, but he committed himself to him who judges righteously. So as Jesus didn't revile back at those who reviled him.

And reviling is basically verbal abuse is what we'd call it verbal abuse today. If somebody is verbally abusing you, you don't verbally abuse them back. Jesus didn't.

And you don't do that. Instead, what do you do if someone's reviling you, abusing you, you bless them. Well, where in the world did Peter get that harebrained idea? Well, he probably got it directly from Jesus' own statements about that because Peter was present in when Jesus gave the on the Mount.

And Jesus certainly said that in Matthew chapter five and verse 44, Jesus said, but I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. The especially bless those who curse you is precisely what Peter is saying. If they revile you return blessing to them, not cursing, not reviling.

Paul also had said this in Romans chapter 12. And I have suggested that Peter's epistle shows some familiarity with Romans also, although Peter would have gotten this teaching directly from Jesus himself. He would be aware that Paul also had brought it up in his writings in Romans chapter 12 in verse 17, Paul said, repay no one evil for evil, but have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

If it is possible, as much as depends on you live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. Therefore, if your enemy hungers, feed him.

If your enemy is thirsty, give him drink, be nice to your enemies. For in so doing, you'll heap coals of fire on his head. Do not overcome, do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

The idea is that if someone does evil to you and you respond in an evil way, you have been overcome by the evil. It has conquered you and you've become its servant too. Now you become one who is acting under the influence of evil, just like the person who was wronging you.

Don't become overcome with evil, overcome evil with good. The person who is attacking you and reviling you, that person is overcome by evil and you will be tempted to take on that same spirit and to be overwhelmed by the evil that they're caught up in, but you

can conquer that. You can overcome that with good.

When they revile you, don't revile back, but bless them back. Peter says that you may inherit a blessing. It's interesting in verse 9, 1 Peter 3, 9, when he says about this, he says, but on the contrary, blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

You were called to what? To responding lovingly to people who are not loving to you. That's what you're called to. Essentially, that's the great commandment.

To say you were called to this is an echo of the words back in chapter 2, verse 21. In chapter 2, verse 21, it says, for to this you were called. Same statement, same words.

You were called to this, but in chapter 2, verse 21, he's speaking specifically to those who were slaves who were being treated badly by their masters and were encouraged to take the abuse patiently rather than to fight back. He says, you were called to this because Jesus did that very thing. He says, Jesus is your model.

We're to follow in his steps. Now, what was said to the slaves in that particular circumstance is said to all Christians who may experience abuse from other people. Well, you're called to this.

The Christian calling is the calling to suffer graciously, to suffer lovingly toward those who cause your suffering. To be like Jesus. That's our calling.

He says, you'll inherit a blessing. Now, verses 10 through 12 actually are a citation from Psalm 34, verses 12 through 16. It says there, he who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile.

Guile means deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it.

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayers. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. Now, why does he quote this lengthy passage from the Psalm? Well, it gives the pattern of life for those who would like to love their life and see good days.

Would you like to have a life that you enjoy? Well, how do you get a life that you enjoy, a life that you love and have good? What's the good life? Of course, in the world's eyes, the good life is that you are pretty much unmolested by enemies. You are comfortable. You've got a lot of spending money.

You've got pretty much the ability to get whatever you want. You eat well. You sleep comfortably.

Everything's good. That's the good life. Maybe you can travel, have a lot of vacation

time.

That's the good life that people are seeking. Well, the Bible says no, the good life actually is good in the moral sense of being good, by being a good person. And if you want to have a good life and love your life, first of all, refrain your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking guile.

That is, stop lying. Stop using your mouth in such a way as to transgress against God's laws. It says, then let that person turn away from evil and do good.

Now, everything up to the middle of verse 11 is putting away things. Stop doing this. Stop doing evil.

Stop speaking evil. Stop lying. And now, replace that behavior with doing good.

Now, this agrees with what Paul said when he said, do not be overcome with evil. But overcome evil with good. That was, of course, the last verse of Romans 12 that we looked at a moment ago.

And he said, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If your enemy is thirsty, give him drink. That's how you overcome evil with good, rather than yourself being overcome by evil.

Evil wishes to overcome you. Remember when Cain killed, well, actually it was before Cain killed just before he did that, God confronted Cain and said, evil is lurking at the door, but you must overcome it. He's basically saying that evil, sin, he called it sin, is like a crouching predator ready to leap upon you and consume you, but you have to overcome it.

Evil is like, almost like a living thing, almost like a predatory beast. Of course, Peter is later going to compare Satan to a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour in 1 Peter chapter 5. So, in a sense, Peter might even have this imagery in mind that was given to Cain by God. This sin crouches at the door.

You must overcome it. How do you overcome evil with good? Well, you just give up on evil. You just say, I'm not going to do evil.

I'm not going to speak evil. If they speak evil to me, I'm not going to speak evil back to them. I'm not going to retaliate.

I'm going to just do good to them. That's what Jesus did, and that's what Jesus commanded. Why not? That's the good life.

Now, you might say, but you'll get walked on. You're just going to make yourself a doormat for people to just abuse. Well, that comes up in Peter.

He's going to talk about that more a little bit here, but the point here is that even if it



turned out to be so, that you were, that you are taken advantage of because you are good, then you are taken advantage of for righteousness sake. And Jesus said, blessed are you if you're persecuted for righteousness sake. This is not the way people think naturally, but it is the way that God thinks and wants us to be thinking.

He wants us to be, to maintain a good conscience. He's going to bring this up a few verses hence, but he's quoting this passage from Psalm 34 to say, you want to have a good and enjoyable life, get rid of the sin, get rid of the malice, get rid of the bad behavior and the bad speaking, and just do good. Let the person who wants to have a good life, seek peace and pursue it.

You know, it is said of the sinners in Psalm 14, that they don't know the way of peace. And Paul quotes that in Romans 3, he says the way of peace they have not known. There are ways to live that promote peace and tranquility with your neighbor.

And there's other ways that don't. And it's amazing how many people don't seem to know that they don't know the way of peace. If you turn the other cheek, you're going to promote peace in a hostile situation.

If you give a soft answer to someone who's angry at you, you're going to promote peace in that situation. It doesn't mean peace will always happen. We just read a moment ago in Romans 12, if it is possible, as much as lies in you, live at peace with everyone.

The suggestion is it's not always going to be possible because it doesn't all lie with you. It's not all your doing. Peace requires two people wanting it, but you make sure that you and all your relationships are doing the thing that if the other person did the same thing, there'd be peace.

You can't guarantee that they'll do the same thing. And there may not be peace, but make sure if there's not peace between you and someone else, it's not because of anything you're doing. As much as depends on you, Paul said in Romans 12, be at peace.

In the book of Hebrews, in chapter 12, verse 14, it says, pursue peace with all men and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. Those who do not pursue peace with all men and pursue holiness, those people will not see the Lord. God is not going to welcome them into his presence because they're not on the proper agenda.

They've got their own agenda, not his. His agenda is that you promote peace. Jesus said, blessed are the peacemakers.

And this has to do with the way you respond to people who are hostile to you. When Jesus talked about turning the other cheek or going a second mile or giving to those who ask you, he's talking about as much as you can, you do the thing that'll basically remove the hostility from a situation and that'll deflate it. And you can't always make sure that the other person will allow you to deflate them if they're evil, but you can make sure you

aren't overcome with evil.

And if peace does not continue in the situation, it will not be your fault, but his. And so it says here in verse 11, let that person seek peace and pursue it. Just like the writer of Hebrews said, pursue peace.

You can pursue it. You don't always obtain everything you pursue. But every bit of your actions toward your neighbor, including your enemy, should be a pursuit of peace in the relationship.

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayers. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. So that's why you'll have a good life if you do what God wants you to do, because his eyes will be toward you and his ears will be open to your prayers.

And that will not be so if you're doing something else. You're going to be living with God as your enemy. Better to have enemies, human enemies, that you are not retaliating toward and that you suffer at their hands than to have God as your enemy and have to face his wrath.

Better to face the wrath of man in one respect here, because man can do much less to you than God can. Remember Jesus said, don't fear those who can kill the body and can do no more, but fear him who can kill the body and cast the soul into Gehenna. So this quote from Psalm 34 essentially is saying kind of the same thing that Peter's saying.

That's why he quotes it. In verse 13, he says, and who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? Now, the question is rhetorical, as if to say, generally speaking, people will not hurt you if you're doing the right thing. Now, Peter knows that this is not always true, and he says so in the next verse.

There are exceptions, but in general, if you want to enjoy your life, in general, if you want a peaceful life, then pursue peace. If you want to have a life that's free from unnecessary complications and stresses and conflicts, well, then just pursue what is good. And in general, pursuit of good behavior avoids a lot of unnecessary conflicts.

That's what the book of Proverbs is continually saying. It's saying that if you follow the ways of wisdom, it'll give you long life. It'll give you health.

It'll give you good relationships. It'll give you prosperity. Now, Proverbs is always saying those kinds of things, but of course, it's not always true that that's the case, but it tends that way.

If you pursue a good life, there's a good chance that you're going to avoid the conflicts that come from being a thief or a drunkard or an abuser or just a rebel rouser. Basically, you pursue a good life, and you're going to find very few people who want to hurt you.

Who is he that will harm you? Now, the word harm doesn't just mean intend to do you harm, but it actually means to succeed in inflicting permanent damage to you.

That word harm in the Greek means to do actual damage to you. People can hurt you without necessarily harming you. The doctor's creed, first do no harm, doesn't mean inflict no pain.

You can inflict pain in the course of remedying a situation. Painful surgeries, for example, sometimes are necessary, but they do harm. It do more harm not to have the surgeries in some cases.

Harm speaks of actually inflicting some kind of enduring damage. People can afflict pain on you, but if God's on your side, they can't harm you ultimately. Why would they even want to harm you if you're a good person? Now, of course, you can't push this thought too far or else you become like Job's counselors.

You know, why are these bad things happening to you? Why would that happen if you're really a good man? If you're good, bad things won't happen to you, they said. Well, they were wrong. Job was good and bad things happened to him.

And Peter knew that was true too. He's speaking generically that if you do good, you're not going to have so much trouble with people as if you do bad. The more bad things you do, the more enemies you're going to make, the more trouble you're going to get into.

Live a trouble-free life as much as possible by being good as much as possible. But he says in verse 14, even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake. So he sees it is possible.

You might suffer for righteousness' sake. Jesus said, if you're persecuted for righteousness' sake, be glad you're blessed. And he's actually going to say that here.

If you do suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. He's actually alluding to the beatitude that Jesus gave. Blessed are you when men persecute you for righteousness' sake.

Well, it does happen, but it's not going to happen as much as if you're being bad. If you're behaving badly, you're going to make enemies everywhere you go. If you behave well, most people will not wish to be your enemy.

Some will. And if they do, don't worry about it. You're blessed because you're suffering not because of what you did wrong, but because of what you did right.

By the way, the whole concept of suffering for righteousness' sake, which occurs in Jesus' teaching in here and elsewhere, in the Old Testament with Job and so forth, or Joseph, or others who suffered for no good reason, that is no fault of their own. This concept really

is pretty much against the Eastern religious concept of karma. Because in the Eastern religion, if you are suffering, it is because you had some bad karma.

You did something wrong. It may not have been in this life. It may have been in a previous life.

And you've come back. You've been reincarnated into this condition to suffer for the bad karma that you had from doing bad things in your previous life. Karma guarantees that you never suffer for righteousness.

You only suffer for bad behavior. You might suffer while you were being righteous, but it's because you were bad previously. A righteous, innocent person may suffer in this life, but it's only because they were bad before and they carried over their karmic debt over into the next lifetime.

In Eastern religion, there's no such thing as suffering for righteousness' sake. You're always suffering for bad karma, which you earned by your bad behavior. So this is one of the many ways in which the biblical worldview differs from that of the East and the Hindus and so forth.

You may, in fact, suffer for righteousness' sake. That is, you haven't done anything wrong at all. It's only because you've done what's right that you suffer.

But he says here in verse 14, and this is in quotes because he is quoting Isaiah 8. He says, do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. Unquote. Verse 15, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear, having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. Now the quotation from Isaiah 8, which he gives here at the end of verse 14, is in an interesting context because Isaiah was standing kind of alone for God in an unpopular position at a time when Israel was pretty much seeing things differently than he was. In fact, the people of Israel were very afraid because at the time Isaiah 8 was written, the nation of Israel and the nation of Syria to the north of Judah were conspiring to conquer Judah and to overwhelm Judah.

And King Ahaz in Judah was terrified of this conspiracy that was coming against him. And God sent Isaiah to give the counterintuitive advice to Ahaz to not worry about this. It's not a big deal.

God's going to be on his side if he trusts God about this. And in the context of that threat, in verse, Isaiah 8, 12, or verse 11, 12 is good. It says, do not say a conspiracy concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, nor be afraid of their threats, nor be

troubled.

Now that last line is the one that's quoted in 1 Peter 3, 14. Do not be afraid with their fear or be troubled. It says, let the Lord of hosts, excuse me, the Lord of hosts, him you shall hallow or sanctify.

Let him be your fear and let him be your dread. And he will be as a sanctuary, that's a safe place, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel and a trap to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and so forth. We get beyond the passage that Peter's alluding to.

In the context, the people of Judah were threatened through no fault of their own by hostile enemies. In this case, a conspiracy of Israel and Syria coming against them. And basically God said to Isaiah, don't worry about the conspiracy.

These people are talking about the conspiracy. They're just obsessed with this danger they're in because of the conspiracy. Don't even say conspiracy.

Don't even mention it. It's not that big a deal. You just trust in God.

Don't be afraid of what they're threatening you. Don't be afraid of what they're afraid of even, but just hallow the Lord or sanctify the Lord God in your heart. As Peter said in verse 15 of chapter three.

Now here, it's interesting because of the way this would be applicable to our time because there's a great number of people who talk about a conspiracy. In fact, the term conspiracy theory is a very standard term in our modern vocabulary. The idea that there are very powerful international bankers and political figures that are conspiring together to bring in a one world socialist order and so forth under their leadership.

These conspiracy theories have been around for a long time and some of them might have some truth in them. It's hard to say. There certainly are powerful international bankers who have, who get together and talk about something.

They do control the world money system. They own the federal reserve. I mean, there are things like that going on and this sometimes gets Christians and non-Christians very obsessed with, oh my, there's this conspiracy.

These people, the Bilderbergers, the Trilateral Commission, the Council for Foreign Relations, these people are all, the Illuminati, they're conspiring to control our lives. It's the same kind of fear that the people of Isaiah's day had. There's these powerful nations coming to invade us and take over our lives.

God said to Isaiah, don't worry about the conspiracy. Not that there isn't one. God didn't say there's no conspiracy.

There was in fact a conspiracy, but he said, don't worry about it. These people are worried about conspiracy. You just let, you just fear me, God says.

Let the Lord be your fear. Let the Lord be your dread. You fear God and you'll have nothing else you need to fear.

Now that doesn't mean there will be no danger. It doesn't mean whatever conspiracy exists will just vaporize and go away, but it means that whatever danger there is that you have no control over, you shouldn't be worried about. Just let your concern be to please God, to do what's right in his sight.

There may be dangers, but it does no good to fear them. Just fear God. If you fear God, even if there are real dangers, even if there's real suffering to have, God will be on your side.

And frankly, all people suffer, but not all people suffer with God on their side. And that makes the world of difference. Life is full of suffering.

Job said, man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward. Every person suffers. You don't have to be a Christian to suffer.

Some people give up their Christianity because they suffer, but they go into the world and they suffer there too. What's the point? You're not going to escape suffering by ceasing to be a Christian. And you're not going to escape suffering by being a Christian.

Suffering is universal. The difference is that the Christian who's living with a clear conscience before God suffers with God on his side, suffers with God as his aid, suffers with the grace of God given to him to transform the experience into something that is actually ultimately a blessing, that works for good. Don't be afraid of suffering.

Just fear God. Just do the right thing and stop focusing on the things that fearful people fear. And so here in verse 14, 1 Peter 3, he says, even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you're blessed.

Do not be afraid of their threats or be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. That's what Isaiah 8 said to Israel or to Judah in his day. But then he goes on and be always ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

This word defense, the Greek word is apologia, and we get the word apologetics from it. We also get the word apology from it, but the English, modern English word apology, we usually actually use that differently than its original meaning. We usually think of an apology as something you do when you're sorry for something you're kind of ashamed of and you apologize for it, but apology has a different function.

It originally in the Greek means a defense of one's actions, not a repentance for them, but a defense of them. Now he's not saying defend yourself against persecutors. He's saying defend your faith.

He's not talking about physical defense of your own safety. He's talking about defending your beliefs, and that would be entirely something you do verbally, of course. He says, be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and reverence or fear.

That is, you have a gentle, meek, reverent, attitude in dealing with those who oppose you. Now, notice he indicates that all Christians should be prepared to give an answer if they're asked. Not everyone is called to go out and just confront sinners with the gospel in the way that an evangelist does.

Paul said God gave some evangelists. Not everyone's an evangelist. Some people are called to go out in the streets or wherever they go and to proclaim the gospel.

That's their gift. That's what they do. Other people would be terrified doing that or just wouldn't, they'd be tongue-tied.

They wouldn't know what to do. That's not their gift. The gifts that God gives should be practiced by those who have them, but it should not be thought that those who don't have them are required to do the same things.

But everyone should be ready if someone asks you. That's a different situation. Most of Jesus' teaching was given in answer to questions, or at least to curiosity.

The crowds that came to hear Jesus preach were often curious. Is this the Messiah? Is this the guy they wanted to know? What's he teaching here? What are these miracles about I keep hearing? There's curiosity. People came.

It's easy to talk to people who are curious. When people have a question in their mind or on their lips and you can give them the answer, that's the most ideal time for getting the truth into someone's heart because they're asking for it. If you just go out on the streets and start preaching to people who are passing by, you're more likely to get, you're going to harden them against you.

They're going to just think you're rude. But if someone asks you, boy, the door is wide open. And even if you're not an evangelist, you need to be one who has reasons that you can articulate for why you are a Christian, why you have the hope you do.

And you need to do so gently with meekness, means gentleness, and with reverence. You're not doing it with a hostile or argumentative tone. Paul said something very much like this very thing in 2 Timothy chapter 2, 2 Timothy 2 verses 24 through 26.

Paul said, And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility, correcting those who are in opposition. If God perhaps will grant them repentance so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will. Paul is assuming that the people who oppose you are potential converts.

They're not your enemies. They are the ones who've been taken captive by the devil. They're the prisoners of war.

The devil is your enemy, and he's their enemy. They don't know it. They've been captured.

They're under his control. But you don't see them as the enemy. They are the captives of the enemy.

You're there to rescue them. Your approach to them is not hostile to them. You're their friend, just like Jesus was the friend of sinners.

He came to rescue sinners. So do we. Too many times, if we're in an argument with someone who's not a Christian, like a Jehovah's Witness, or a Mormon, or an atheist, or someone like that, we may just take on this defensive posture where we're feeling kind of combative with them.

And Paul says, no, the serving Lord doesn't strive like that, doesn't quarrel like that. He's gentle, patient. He's being winsome because he hopes that that person will be open to what he has to say.

Instead of just proving him wrong and winning the argument, you want to win the soul. And you do that by a spiritual humility and gentleness of approach. And that's what Peter says, too, in 1 Peter 3, 15, you do this with gentleness or meekness and reverence.

You don't use this as an opportunity to pick a fight or to escalate a fight that they're picking. You gently, reverently answer their questions. That's what he says you should do.

And that way you'll maintain verse 16, 1 Peter 3, 16, having a good conscience. Your conscience always be good if you know that you've done the right thing. A lot of times, if you respond in the same spirit as a hostile person has toward you, you may feel like you got your best shot in, and you might even might have even defeated them in the argument.

But you walk away feeling like, I don't think I was very Christ-like in that situation. Your conscience isn't all that clear. You kind of got this nagging feeling like, I wish that had gone a little differently.



And Peter says, conduct yourself in such a way that you will walk away with a clean conscience. I remember that Thomas Akimpas, who wrote *Of the Imitation of Christ* back in the 1300s, I think it was, he wrote that. A monk, he said, how seldom do I come away from any conversation without having something to repent of that I've said.

It's like he says, anytime you talk for very long, it's very rare to do that and not walk away and think, boy, I should have said that. That was stupid, or that was not kind, or whatever, or that was gossip, or whatever. It says in Proverbs, in the multitude of words, there's not sin lacking.

It's hard to find a long conversation which didn't involve some foolishness, some gossip, some self-exaltation, some boasting of sorts. I mean, that's just the way conversations go. And Peter says, conduct your conversation with reverence, with gentleness, so that when you are done in that conversation, you have a clear conscience about it.

You don't have anything to repent about on your side of how that went. Maybe they have something to repent about. You've got a clear conscience, so that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

Now, they'll be ashamed later. They come against you really in a nasty spirit, but you respond in a kind and gentle and reverent spirit. It makes them feel ashamed.

Oops, this person wasn't worthy of this kind of an attack. And of course, we had the same thought given in chapter 2, verse 12. Chapter 2, verse 12, Peter said, have your conduct honorable among the gentiles, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, we have that same line here in chapter 3, those who revile your conduct, who speak against you and defame you as evildoers.

It says in chapter 2, verse 12, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they observe, end up later glorifying God in the day of visitation. That they speak against you, but your response is so commendable, so Christ-like, that in the end, they have to say, you know, you're really a better person than I am. Actually, your God, the God you worship, I have to say, I can't find any fault with him.

I have to glorify your God because your behavior is so good. And that's the same thing he's saying in chapter 3, verse 16. And verse 17, for it is better if it is the will of God to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

Now, one thing to note here is that Peter suggests it is sometimes the will of God that you suffer for doing good. Remember, to this you were called, he has said. In the will of God, suffering is part of the portion of the Christian.

And he said, it's better if it is the will of God for you to suffer for doing righteousness. It's better to do it for righteousness than to suffer for doing what's wrong. Now, this is counterintuitive.

If I suffer and I can see that I did something wrong and I deserved it, I think, oh, well, that's just, I can kick myself for having done the wrong thing and having to bring these consequences on myself, but at least I can see the sense of it. I can see I deserve this. And when you see you deserve it, it's easy to say, okay, I have to accept this suffering because what can I say? I brought it on myself.

But he says, but when we do only good things and someone returns violence or hostility toward us, we think, what's up with that? What'd I do to you? That doesn't make sense. And you feel confused. You feel offended.

You didn't earn that and they gave you that treatment anyway. But he said, that's actually better. It doesn't feel better.

It doesn't even make much sense from a worldly point of view that that's better, but it's better because your conscience is clear. If you do wrong and suffer for it, you might see the justice in it, but you see yourself as guilty. And you live with a conscience that tells you you did the wrong thing and that God wasn't all that pleased with what you did there.

But if you have done nothing wrong and you suffer for it, at least you have this clearness of conscience he speaks about in verse 16. Your conscience is clear because you've done good and someone didn't like your goodness. So they punished you.

Well, that doesn't seem fair, but at least my nose is clean. At least my heart is pure. At least God is on, you know, is favorable.

At least God looks at the situation. He's on my side in it because I didn't do anything wrong. That's the attitude Christians should maintain.

It's much better to have a clear conscience when you're suffering than not to. And you can only have a clear conscience when you're suffering if you didn't do something to bring it on yourself. So he says that's a better situation really.

He says, verse 18, For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit. Now, the word the before the word flesh and the word the before spirit are not in the Greek. This is what we call the definite article.

And there's no definite article before these words. So it really says he was put to death in flesh, but made alive in spirit. And so it seems to be saying that in terms of his physical death, he was killed physically, but he remained alive.

And that remaining alive was seen later, even in the resurrection of his body, that his spirit was not killed. I believe there's some things in first Peter that suggest strongly that after death, the spirit remains alive. And yet there are Christians and some scriptures

that they use to support their view that believe that people when they die don't have a separate spirit that lives on.

We just sleep until the resurrection. But there's a number of things Peter says that suggests that death of the body does not bring about death of the spirit. The spirit lives on.

He seems to say that about Jesus here. And he's going to say it again later in chapter four, in chapter four, verse six, which we will not get to in this lecture. But he talks about people who died or were judged by men, but lived in the spirit, though they died, they live in the spirit.

And so the fact that physical death is not the final word, you may die, but if you're innocent, your spirit will live. Jesus died physically, but not spiritually. He was vindicated.

He had committed his spirit into the hands of God and God preserved his spirit and even raised him from the dead afterward. In verse 19 says, by whom, that is by the spirit, he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared in which a few, that is eight souls were saved through water. There's also an antitype, which now saves us, namely baptism, not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to him.

Now, verses 19 through 21 seem to be kind of a parenthesis, I think. Verse 18 talks about Jesus being put to death in the flesh, but essentially vindicated by God in the spirit through his resurrection. It says that in verse 22, since that happened, he has gone into heaven and he's been exalted above all the principalities and powers, all the rulers, all the demonic forces and the angelic forces.

It talks about how Jesus, though he endured patiently sufferings that he did not deserve, he has now been rewarded by exaltation in heaven. Now, in the midst of this discussion, he talks in verses 19 through 21 about Jesus preaching to spirits in prison. Who are these spirits in prison and at what point in time did Jesus preach to them? Now, a very common view that you hear taught is that it's talking about when Jesus died during those three days that he was in the grave prior to his resurrection.

Where was he? It's often thought, well, he went down to Hades and there he found the spirits of people who had died previously in Hades and he preached to them. Hades being the prison he refers to. He preached to the spirits in prison.

That is during those three days that he was in Hades. Now, this is a possible understanding of those words, but we have to ask ourselves what exactly, let's put a

finer point on this. Who were the spirits he preached to? Did he preach to lost spirits? Some people think that the spirits in prison are not references to human spirits, but demonic spirits.

And some think they're human spirits. But in any case, if they are lost spirits, what did he preach to them? Did he preach the gospel? Did he give them a second chance? Is there a second chance for salvation after people have died lost and Jesus, for example, went and gave them another chance by preaching the gospel to them? Some would say so. Some would say this is the case, though it's not clear.

Others would say, well, he did preach to those spirits, but he didn't necessarily preach salvation to them. He proclaimed his victory over them, that he was more or less rubbing it in their faces that he had come and conquered sin and death and all, and that they had been on the wrong side. And here he was to proclaim his victory.

It's not very likely that that's the way to be understood because when Jesus was in Hades, his victory was not yet apparent. It would be his resurrection that declared his victory. In Hades, if he was with the other spirits in there, he was more or less in their condition.

He was dead. How would that be a clear demonstration of victory? His victory was in the resurrection. So I don't know that that explanation works real well.

Besides, the spirits in prison that he preached to are said to have been those who were disobedient in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared. Now, if Jesus preached to all the disobedient souls that had gone to hell before he came, that would include a much longer period of time, the whole Old Testament period. Was seeing people die wicked and go to Hades or Sheol.

So why would it limit these spirits in prison to those who were disobedient in the time of the flood or just before the flood while the ark was being prepared? He specifically says that Jesus preached to those spirits in prison who were there during the time Noah was preparing the ark, which is interesting. Now, some people think he went and preached to the spirits in prison who were godly like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and David, and those people who died and gone to Sheol that Jesus came and preached and they ascended with him when he left. Well, I think they did ascend with him when he left, but I don't think Peter's referring to him preaching to them because he says who were disobedient.

It specifically says he preached to the disobedient spirits in prison and specifically to those that were disobedient in the days of Noah before the flood. Now, there's two possibilities that seem to fit the wording reasonably well. One of them I would prefer over the other, but one possibility is he is referring to fallen angels.

In fact, some would say he's referring to the sons of God who in Genesis 6 came and

married daughters of men. On their view, these sons of God were angels who came down and married women. We are told this happened in Genesis 6 just prior to God's declaration that he was going to send the flood.

In fact, it was partly due to the sons of God marrying the daughters of men that the earth became corrupt and full of violence so that God said, my spirit will not always strive with men. I'm going to give them another 120 years and then I'm going to wipe them out with a flood. So these sons of God, if they were, let us say, angels angels who fell, as is held by many people, would possibly be the spirits who were disobedient prior to the flood.

Certainly, the timing would be right. Although, one thing that's a bit of a problem with this besides the fact that there's another possibly preferable interpretation of the sons of God in Genesis 6 that does not make them angels. We won't worry about that right now because that takes us afield from Peter.

One reason, perhaps, not to see these spirits in prison as the sons of God that are mentioned in Genesis 6 is because the sons of God married these women prior to Noah beginning to build the ark. They seem to have been a generation earlier than the flood or actually 120 years earlier than the flood and their children are mentioned as having careers as adults also. If you read those opening verses of Genesis 6, it says the sons of God married the daughters of men and their children became mighty men of renown.

So this marriage of these spirits, this sin that they committed was at least a generation or maybe two before the flood came and before Noah was building the ark. And yet, Peter says these were the ones who were sinning while Noah was building the ark. It would seem that once Noah started building the ark, it would be a little late for this sons of God marrying daughters of men thing to be going on just in the way the story is told in Genesis 6. Perhaps someone would see it differently than I do about that, but it seems that way to me.

So there is another possibility that seems to fit the wording fine and that is that he's referring to Noah preaching while he was building the ark, preaching to the wicked disobedient generation that was going to be destroyed in the flood. Why would I say that? Well, first of all, Peter in 2 Peter 2 refers to Noah as a preacher of righteousness. So we know he was preaching.

The truth is that we don't have any other reference in the entire Bible to Noah preaching. However, we do have a reference in 2 Peter 2.5 which refers to Noah as a preacher of righteousness. So Peter is our only source of information for Noah even being a preacher at all in 2 Peter.

He may be referring to Noah's preaching here in 1 Peter as well. But why does it say Jesus preached to those people who were disobedient in the days of Noah through the

Spirit? Well, this would be possible if Peter was suggesting that the Holy Spirit who preached through Noah was in fact the Spirit of Christ. Thus Christ was preaching through Noah.

Now this might seem a weird convolution of ideas to fit the wording, but it fits what Peter has said earlier in 1 Peter 1. When he's talking about the Old Testament prophets, he said in 1 Peter 1.11 that they were searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicated when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ. There's the prophecies they gave where the Spirit of Christ was testifying through the prophets in the Old Testament. Peter who sees it that way might well see that the Spirit of Christ was testifying through Noah as well to his generation.

If Peter had not used this expression that the Spirit of Christ was testifying through the prophets, it might not be as easy to see the possibility that he's saying the Spirit of Christ was testifying through Noah when he preached. That is to say that in chapter 3 of 1 Peter, it would be not saying that Jesus during the days he was in the grave was preaching to spirits in prison, but in the time of Noah, Jesus preached by his Spirit through Noah to those who have since died and whose spirits are now in prison. Their spirits are now in prison, but they weren't at the time.

They were alive at the time when Noah preached them. The wording actually works well enough that way, but there's one other thing, and I've run out of time, but I can't leave this out in this passage. After he talks about all that, he says in verse 21, chapter 3, verse 21 of 1 Peter, there is also an antitype.

Now what's an antitype? If something in the Old Testament is a type, the thing it foreshadows is the antitype. It's like a prophecy predicts something. The thing it predicts is the fulfillment.

The word antitype means the fulfillment of a type. You've got a type in the Old Testament of something. In the New Testament, you have the antitype or the fulfillment of that type.

It's a Greek word, and it means the fulfillment of a type or the other part of the type. Now the type here is the flood, and the antitype is baptism. What he's saying is that the eight souls that were saved by passing through water and were saved from judgment prefigured Christians passing through water in coming to Christ in salvation.

He's essentially saying something very simple, that we should see the flood in the Old Testament as a type and a shadow of our own baptism. Just like Paul in 1 Corinthians 10 sees the Jews passing through the Red Sea to get away from Egypt, he sees that as a type of our baptism also in 1 Corinthians 10 verses 1 through 6. We can see then that certain Old Testament figures using water, people safely passing through a judgment of water, is seen in the New Testament as a picture of our own baptism. That's what he's

saying.

The flood where Noah was saved through water with his family is sort of like us being saved through baptism. He says, baptism which now saves us. Now this verse 21 has been used by groups that believe that water baptism is absolutely essential for salvation.

Now I believe that water baptism is essential for obedience to God, and I think every Christian should be obedient to God. We are commanded to be baptized, and therefore it is essential. Baptism is essential.

But they would say it's baptism that actually saves us, and therefore if a person has failed to be baptized, they're not saved because it's baptism that saves. They haven't had baptism yet, so they're not saved. And this wording seems to say something like that.

Baptism saves us. But just so that people don't get that very impression, Peter goes on to explain what he is and is not saying. He says in parenthesis there in verse 1, not the removal of the filth of the flesh, okay, not the outward washing of water of the body, but what is he talking about? He's talking about the answer of a good conscience toward God.

Or where it says the answer of a good conscience, some translations say the pledge of a good conscience, and some translations say the appeal for a good conscience. And it's hard to know which one is to be preferred in the wording, but one thing is very clear that what he's talking about as the baptism that saves us has something to do with the conscience, something inside, not something outside. It's not the washing of the flesh, not the body being washed.

That's not what saves us. What saves us is what's going on in the heart, this appeal to God for a clear conscience, for forgiveness. In other words, we are justified by faith.

We are to be baptized, and in the early church they got baptized immediately after they confessed Christ, and they should, and we should, if we're going to follow the New Testament pattern. The early Christians didn't even make a difference in their mind between when they confessed Christ and when they got baptized. It was all one series of events that happened in rapid succession within probably minutes of each other, and therefore they could speak of any part of that as when they got saved.

I was saved by faith. I was saved by baptism. I was saved by receiving the Spirit.

I was saved by whatever, repentance. All those things happened in rapid succession in the conversion experience in the early church, and frankly, I think normally do. Therefore, to say baptism saves us now would be, these statements are not being given so that we can form a systematic theology about what precise moment saves you.

Is it when you believed, or when you repented, or when you got baptized, or when you received the Spirit? All those things happen kind of in rapid succession. It's just a complex of experiences that happened to a person on a day. That was their salvation.

It was not strange for them to talk about either baptism, or faith, or repentance being the thing that saved them because they were all mixed together. They're all kind of one event, one complex event of their conversion. I think that when Peter emphasizes, it's not the washing of the water on your body.

That's not what I'm talking about. It's not going through water that actually is the issue. It's what's going on in your heart and your conscience that saves you.

He said that this is so through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In verse 21, the last, it says, we are born again through the resurrection of Christ. He had said in chapter 1, verse 3, and now we find that we are saved through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Our baptism in water depicts this. We're buried with him in baptism, and we're raised to newness of life. It's like the water is a grave.

We go down, die to the old, come up, raised to new life. This happens not because the water has any power, but because Jesus has risen from the dead. Our faith, our connection by faith to God is what really makes this happen inside.

The water baptism is simply, as I understand it, just the outward manifestation. It's the ritual burial of something that has already died. Our old identity in Adam has died.

We now come up from the grave in a new identity, born again into a new family, the family which is the identity in the body of Christ, the family of God. Anyway, these words have certainly given occasion for people to speculate about a lot of different possible meanings. I've suggested some indicator of what they point to.

You'll find plenty of alternative views presented by preachers and commentators. Obviously, you'll have to make up your own mind. But we'll stop at this point and come back to chapter 4.