

Saint Pauls Cathedral, Melbourne
Bible Study, Sunday 9 August 2020
1 Peter

1 Peter 3:1 - 7

What we studied LAST week.

⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. ⁹ Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For

*“Those who desire life
and desire to see good days,
let them keep their tongues from evil
and their lips from speaking deceit;
¹¹ let them turn away from evil and do good;
let them 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.”*

This week’s passage: 1 Peter 3:13 - 22

***1Pet. 3:13** Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, ¹⁵ but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; ¹⁶ yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God’s will, than to suffer for doing evil. ¹⁸ For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. ²¹ And baptism, which this prefigured, 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, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.*

Verse 13 begins the final section of 1 Peter. As way of introduction to this section, read the following from Max Anders¹:

¹ Anders, Max, Holman Bible Commentary, vol 11, 1 Pet, 1,2,3 Jn, Jude, p 53

The last major section of 1 Peter begins with verse 13. From here 1 Peter is primarily concerned with the believer's response to actual persecution and intimidation. His (Peter's) focus is the believer's response to specific attacks. He begins to zero in on this response by asking a question in verse 13: "Since we are doing good in our lives, will people harm us?" Peter has exhorted his readers previously to be good to others as a witness and defence against nonbelievers (see 2:12), so this question would naturally flow from such an exhortation. The question suggests an answer something like this, "Under normal circumstances when you do what is right and good, you should not expect pain or harm to be directed your way."

Circumstances are not always normal, however. Slaves face the prospect of suffering for doing what is good (see 2:20)². All Christians need to hear about suffering and trials in general (see 1:6–7).³ Peter himself suffered under circumstances that were not "normal." Suffering in the believer's life requires discussion.

Right (*dikaiosunen*) (in verse 14) is often translated as "righteousness." In this context, the emphasis is on right living, or living that parallels the standards of the Word of God. This kind of behaviour sometimes produces a negative reaction from others.

1. In what way is the believer blessed (v.14) (see 2.21)?⁴
2. Although we might be "blessed" we are human and have normal human responses when harm is directed at us. Peter hints at one such response. What is it that he hints at? What does he say we should do rather than responding in this way? (verses 14 – 15).
 - (i) What does it mean to "sanctify Christ as Lord"? (verse 15)
 - (ii) When we do this, what does Peter say we are able to do in the face of persecution? (verses 15 – 16)
 - (iii) From the opening words of chapter 1, Peter has emphasized the **living hope** of the believer (see 1:3).⁵ The unbeliever does not enjoy this hope but is connected only to an **empty way of life**, and a life of spiritual darkness (see 1:18; 2:9).⁶ One of the distinguishing marks of believers in Christ is their possession of hope. Christian hope is to be so real and distinctive that non-Christians will be puzzled by it and ask

² **1Pet. 2:20** If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval.

³ **1Pet. 1:6** In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, ⁷ so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

⁴ **1Pet. 2:21** For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

⁵ **1Pet. 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

⁶ **1Pet. 1:18** You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold,

1Pet. 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

for an explanation. We should seize the opportunities of witness presented in these kinds of situations. Our response should be characterized not by smugness or vindictiveness but by **gentleness and respect**.

(iv) What might this “gentleness and respect” look like?

3. If we **do** suffer for doing what is right, what encouragement does Peter give us? (verses 18 – 22)

Some Difficult Verses to Understand

There are libraries of books dedicated to the explanation of what verses 19 – 21 might mean. In order that they don’t “bog us down”, I present Max Anders comment on them:

3:19–21. *Will our salvation last? Can Jesus Christ’s work on the cross accomplish complete and final salvation forever? Or does our pain and suffering as believers indicate that something has gone wrong with the overall plan? Two vivid illustrations reassure us of Christ’s victory and our security.*

*The first illustration concerns the imprisonment and judgment of disobedient spirits or angels. It finds a parallel in Jude 6. At least eighteen major theories have been suggested to explain these verses, and we cannot review all of them (see W. J. Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation to the Spirits: A Study of 1 Peter 3:18–4:6*. *Analecta Biblica* 23, Rome, 1965; Wayne A. Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, InterVarsity Press, 1988, 203–239).*

After his resurrection and before his ascension into heaven, Jesus Christ went to the place where disobedient supernatural powers are imprisoned. There he proclaimed to them his victory over death and God’s ultimate and final judgment on those evil spirits. Christ’s proclamation to them is of his victory and of their doom, now sealed because of Christ’s death and resurrection. In doing this, Christ reaffirmed that he is superior to all powers. These evil powers cannot separate the believer from Jesus Christ, so the eternal benefits of his salvation are assured.

Like Noah and his family, the Christians to whom Peter wrote were a small, persecuted minority who were surrounded by a majority that was disobedient to God. Christ’s triumphant proclamation and the reference to the Flood remind them that they will be the delivered minority in eternity.

Verse 21 has also generated great debate. This writer believes that Peter used the historical account of Noah and his family as an analogy for the triumphant salvation provided through Christ. His reference to baptism, however, is not water baptism. The flood waters did not save Noah—quite the opposite. The waters of the flood destroyed everyone in judgment. Noah passed through those waters safely because he and his family were placed securely in the ark. Water baptism does not fit the picture and is not the point.

The point of the analogy becomes clear when we recall that when a person accepts Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, he or she is placed into “the body of Christ.” At that moment the Holy Spirit enters that person’s life as a permanent resident. This action is described in the New Testament as “the baptism of the Holy Spirit” (see 1 Cor. 12:13). This is Peter’s emphasis. When you accept Christ, you are placed spiritually in Christ. As this occurs, you stand before God with a “good conscience” (v. 21) because your sins have been forgiven. Water baptism does not

provide a person with a clear conscience before God; baptism by the Holy Spirit does.

3:22. *We find further assurance of the eternal nature of our salvation because Christ is **at God's right hand** in heaven. At this very moment Christ occupies an exalted position of royal dignity and authority alongside God the Father. The theme here is vindication. Christ, in his journey to heaven, has broken the power of evil; therefore, the future is assured in Jesus Christ. **Angels** includes good and evil spirits. Both angels and demons are subject to Christ. **Authorities and powers** indicate rulers and distribution of functions within the angelic world. All created spiritual authorities and powers are subject to Christ. He is the Lord indeed!⁷*

If you would like to read further on these verses I refer you to the Tyndale Bible Commentary on 1 Peter by Wayne A. Grudem (Vol 17: 1 Pe, p 164) and also *Sacra Pagina* New Testament Commentary volume on Peter and Jude, p. 102

⁷ op cit p56-57