

Living Righteously

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[0 : 00] So 1 Peter chapter 3, picking up at verse 8. Finally, all of you have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart and a humble mind.

Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

4. Now, who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?

5. But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled. But in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

5. Yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that when you are slandered, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ may be put to shame.

[1 : 42] 6. 7. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. 7. 8.

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 which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison.

8. 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.

9. 10. 11. 11. 12. 12. 13. 14. 14. 15. 14.

15. 15. 15.

[3 : 04] 15. and obey. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, Christians are kind of people who we really do confound the world by the choices that we make or we should be confounding to the world by the choice we make.

Our values, our priorities, our aspirations, our hopes, our dreams should be very counter-cultural really. And this counter-cultural lifestyle comes because we hope for something that the world can't give. We have a sure and certain hope of spending eternity with God. And this cannot and will not be taken away from it. It's guaranteed.

Right? When the Apostle Peter's writing his letter to the believers in the first century, remember Nero was the emperor at the time and he wasn't particularly friendly towards Christians nor was the Jewish hierarchy friendly towards Christians.

And life was tough for Christians. They were persecuted. They were accused of being atheists because they just worshipped one God. They were accused of being cannibals because, well, they ate the body and blood of the Lord Jesus.

And they were prosecuted for not worshipping Caesar as God. Peter himself would one day die for his faith in Jesus.

[4 : 34] In some parts of the world today, pastors are oppressed and prosecuted and put in prison. Churches burnt down. And Christians have any chance of promotion prevented.

In today's passage, we're told that we're to live righteously no matter what comes our way. We're told that we need not fear those who might harm us for being righteous.

And remember, 1 Peter's being addressed to people who are foreigners, who are sojourners, people who are on a journey towards heaven. That's us. It's addressing people like us, those who trust in Jesus and are passing through this world to glory, to heaven.

And what God is doing for us in his word today is equipping us for times when life is tough. He's equipping us with what we need to know so that we can stand in a world that's hostile to God.

And because today's passage goes into places that are difficult to understand, I'll give you what Peter wants us to know in one sentence, right? And this is the drift, right?

[5 : 47] What he wants to say. Do not fear to be righteous even when it hurts. There you go. Or put it in a slightly different way. Do not fear to follow Jesus when it hurts.

That's the bottom line from today's talk. And the reason for this is simply that glory is guaranteed. And we pick up the passage in verse 8 as Peter finishes telling us how to live well in the world with each other and with those who oppose us.

And he wants us to be living righteously with each other. You see there in verse 8, he's coming to the end of how we should be having Christians living. In honourable ways as aliens in exile. As foreigners, as journeys, as strangers longing to settle one day in their homeland for all eternity. And every one of us, he's saying, is to have a unity of mind, a common mind, be like-minded. You see there. Finally, all of you have a unity of mind. Sharing the same thoughts and attitudes. The question is like-minded about what?

[6 : 52] Well, it's going to have a mindset that transcends a minutia of this world. The Psalms speak about how beautiful it is when brothers are like-minded.

Let me read to you from Psalm 133. Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity. It's like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collars of his robes.

It's like the dew of Hermon which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore. That's the kind of picture, how good it is when brothers dwell in unity. And the key to living with each other in unity of mind is all here in verse 8, really. As each of us need to love each other and care for each other. The devil loves to see us doing in each other with friendly fire.

That's what he delights in when he sees brothers fighting and squabbling. And as such we need to love each other and care for each other.

[8 : 01] Having a sympathy, understanding one another, considering what's going on for the other person, walking a mile in their shoes. Having a love for one another which is as deep as siblings in a family would have for each other.

That's the kind of brotherly love. A tender heart, a soft heart. The same kind of heart as Jesus had when he saw the crowds on the hill who had been with him and they were hungry. And he says his heart was moved. The same word is there. To care for the crowd. And he fed them in the wilderness. And notice a humble mind. Humble means simply thinking of yourself less. That's what humility is. And wouldn't it be that that way of life was more and more evident in me? Us. How good would that be?

If that was the ongoing more and moreness of God's people. That would be just a wonderful thing to continue to promote and encourage. How this way of life would transform every community that it was found in.

[9 : 23] That would be staggering. And notice how important the way we think is. For the way we think directs everything we say and do. That's what our thinking controls.

What we say and what we do. That's what our thinking does. That's how we're to live with one another. And the bottom line.

Righteously. With other believers. And also we live righteously with unbelievers as well. With opposition. Verses 9 to 12. Don't repay evil for evil or reviling for revile.

Remember Jesus didn't do that. In 1 Peter chapter 2 we read about that. He was reviled but he did not revile in return. Revile means criticize. Or do it in an abusive, angry way.

An insulting manner. Tearing the other down. When Jesus suffered he did not threaten. Now you may have heard the phrase.

[10 : 26] I don't get mad. I get even. Paying back the other for the wrong that they have done to you. Well that's not the way of Christ.

Nor is it the way of his people. It should definitely not be the way for me. Instead. On the contrary. You see. On the contrary. Bless.

Ask God's favour to be given to them. Ask God to bring his gracious power upon them. I take it. Ask God to open the eyes of their hearts. To know the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And to repent and believe in him. Now why would anyone. Be like that. Towards anyone who opposed them. Well it's because.

This is what you're called to. Called to be living like Jesus. See that. This is. How you. What you were called to. We were called to live righteously.

[11 : 27] And to live like Jesus. By the power of the Holy Spirit. That he gives us internally. To do that. And we will obtain a blessing. We will actually. Have life in the kingdom of God. Eternal life. Enjoying the inheritance. Stored up for us. Guaranteed for us. Which is what Psalm 34 tells us. That was quoted there. It's what King David wrote. And what King Jesus endorses. We're to live righteously. Because God knows who is righteous. And God knows who isn't. See God listens. Have a look at there. God listens to the righteous. God is for the righteous. And he's against evil. And he turns away from the wicked. See Psalm 34 verse 12. 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. We can trust God. To judge justly.

[12 : 27] For the Lord says. In Jeremiah chapter 32. Vengeance is mine. I will repay. Says the Lord. And that is the way.

To live in the midst of opposition. Not taking vengeance. In our own hands. As we would naturally want to do. Which is exactly the way. That King David was living. When he wrote this psalm. Being opposed by Saul. And sometimes. Living righteously. Will lead to suffering.

For doing so. So be prepared here. See. Look at verse 13 to 14 with me. Verses 13 to 16. Tells us. To not fear suffering.

For doing good. For it's better to suffer for doing good. Than doing evil. Verse 17. And then verse 18 to 22. Gives us the ultimate reason. To be willing to suffering. For doing good.

[13 : 25] See notice the word for. The word for. Will give us all the. All the reason. What goes beforehand. So at one level. We shouldn't expect. Right.

Verse 13. Now who is there to harm you. If you are zealous. For what is good. At one level. We shouldn't expect. To suffer. If we're doing what is good. When we are righteous. Right. We won't suffer harm. From those who are reasonable. If you're living a good life. Good deeds. They need to be defined. By God.

Not by the world. Let me just. Spell out a bit. Sometimes what society. Defines as good. And what God defines as good. Overlap. Right. Will be identical. Love your parents. God says. Love your parents. And sometimes. They'll be diametrically. Over. Hello crow. Sometimes they'll be diametrically. Over. They'll be diametrically. Opposed. God says.

[14 : 20] Love your enemies. And the world says. Hate your enemies. Right. So the world says. Immorality is good. God says. Immorality is evil.

Good deeds. Need to be defined by God. Not society. And yet as Peter writes. Suffering for doing good. Is also a reality. Verse 14. But even. Right. If you should suffer for doing good. See people are suffering. For being righteous. Malign. For being morally pure. Strange it is. For not plunging into the filth. That they're swimming in. See it there in chapter 4. Verse 4. Spoken of as evil doers.

When they are good. The thing that will cause us to suffer. While doing good. Is this though. To do the work. Right. Of speaking of Jesus. Of letting the world know. That he is the Lord and Savior. That is what will cause suffering. That's what will cause pain. That's what will cause division. That's what will set mother against father.

[15 : 19] Father against son. And that will cause trouble in the family. Living lives which do not compromise. On our allegiance to Jesus. Then people will start to make our life difficult.

But we're not to fear those who hurt us. They are not God. They are not the Lord. We're to honour Jesus the Christ. As Lord. We're not to deny him. We're to stay faithful to him. But he is the one to fear. Not man. Remember. Who it is. That can cast body and soul. Into hell.

Not man. And we need to be prepared to speak. You see in verses 15 to 17. Be prepared to tell people. Why you are willing to suffer for Jesus.

The way we live with Jesus Lord. The way we live under unjust suffering. The way we live in submission to authority. May stir up some interest. Might not. To others.

[16 : 22] It may cause people to think. What's the hope these guys have. Why are they different? Why are they like that? And so it's important that people know.

That it's Jesus. And his Lordship. That's at work in us. It's our faith in him. That makes us different in every way. We'll be ready to speak of him.

Because we've set him apart. As Lord. In our hearts. And we give him the honour. For his work in us. We say. Well it's God who's done that work in me. It's not anything I could do. It's God who's changed me. God who's making me think this way. Live this way. And notice there's a way to speak there. In a way which is totally disarming. Which is like our saviour. Notice. Pick it up there. Verse 15. [17:17] And verse 15. Yet do it. With gentleness. And respect. And into verse 16. Having a good conscience. So that when you are slandered.

Those who revile your good behaviour in Christ. may be put to shame. Gentle. Respectful. Speech. We're going to have a reputation of being good people. Behaving well. Not in fits of rage. Not with anger and disputing. Not in reviling the other. So that our suffering will not be because we deserve it.

But because we don't. Which is precisely how Jesus lived. And so now. We come to the. The tricky part of this passage.

Right. The first verse. Not so hard. But it gets deep. So let's have a look at the righteous ones. And Christ's suffering then. In verse 18a.

[18:20] This is the reason we're to behave like this. And to live like this. See. Verse 18. For. For Christ also suffered once for sins.

The righteous for the unrighteous. That he might bring us to God. We get the first half of verse 18. Right. But let's not overlook it.

Let's delve into it. Ever so briefly. The long awaited Messiah Christ. The anointed King of Israel. Suffered once for sins. Suffered his shorthand for all that went on at the cross.

His sacrifice. Which was a willing submission to the Father's will. was for sins.

My sins. Your sins. And the sins of the world. It was a suffering of the wrath of God. For what our sins deserve. Death. He suffered once at the hands of wicked.

[19:21] Sinful. Evil. People. Who reviled and cursed him. And mocked him. And scorned him. So that he could bring blessing to those who hated him.

Now if you're not a follower of Jesus yet. That's the thing to take home. From this passage. This morning. That much is familiar to most of us.

But what follows. Scholars differ over. And the understanding is part of God's word. At least five or six different ways of understanding it. And I'm going to give you one. Alright. So.

What on earth is going on here. In verses 18b to verse 21. I mean. Who are the spirits? I mean. Where is Christ preaching?

When is it all happening? What did he preach to them? Well. What's Noah all about? And. Well. Let's try and work it through phrase by phrase.

[20:24] Alright. Here we go. Who are the spirits in prison? Right. See there in verse. 18b. That he might. Being put to death in the flesh.

But made alive in the spirit. In which he went and proclaimed. To the spirits in prison. Right. Who are the spirits in prison? Kind of work sort of backwards a bit here.

Well the spirits kept in prison are probably both fallen angels. Right. And the spirits of unbelievers. That's what I'm saying.

Probably. Okay. We read about wicked angels in Genesis chapter 6 verses 1 to 4. Which comes just before the account of Noah. Right. And in Genesis chapter 6.

The angels who are beings. Angelic beings who are disobeying God. Overstepping their heavenly boundaries. And had sexual relationships with human women.

[21:21] And 2 Peter chapter 2 verse 4 says. It's these angels who are kept in eternal chains. Under gloomy darkness. Until the judgment of the great day. So they are bound now.

That's what it means to be in prison. Bound now for the judgment day to come. They are bound now by God. In the spirit realm. The domain that we can't see.

And they are beaten by God. They're not free to roam about. And do what they would like to do.

But. We're also told that they were the ones who disobeyed in the days of Noah.

So it's quite probable. Right. That it's the spirits of unbelievers who have died. Who are imprisoned in the underworld as well. First point.

When did Jesus proclaim. To the spirits. Alright. Well. My answer is. After he rose from the dead.

[22:27] Not before. Okay. When Jesus rose from the dead. He conquered death. And. This is of cosmic importance. It demonstrates that there's no power.

No person. No being. Greater than Jesus. Right. He has been proven to be the righteous cosmic king ruler. Of all time.

For all eternity. See there in verse 18. He was bodily put to death. Right. That means. To put death. To death. In the flesh.

Jesus was crucified. By wicked men. According to the foreknowledge of God. As Peter preached. In Acts chapter 2. But God raised him to life again. And he's the ruler of the world.

And he's made now. To live. In the spirit. Now. Jesus was made alive. In. The spirit. So God raised him to life.

[23 : 24] And gave him a resurrection body. And this body is incorruptible. Perfect. Undefined. And this body is one which is now fit. To live. In the realm.

Of the spirit. Not. In the realm. In the place of the flesh. The realm of the spirit is where we can't see. We can't see that realm right now.

In the kingdom of God. Jesus is there. And he's not some ghost floating around. He is physically. In a physical resurrection body there. And it's the same kind of body that.

All who trust Jesus. Will one day receive. A glorious resurrection body. And at one level. Our inheritance is our resurrection body.

And that. His is incorruptible. And that. It's in that body. That he went and preached. To the spirits.

[24 : 24] In prison. Verse 19. It's a post resurrection preaching. To the spirits. Okay. Well what did he proclaim.

To the spirits then. Well I think it's like Muhammad Ali. I am the greatest. Right. I have conquered death.

I am the king. I am the ruler. You are not. I am Lord. I am God. You are not. God wins. You lose.

Jesus proclaimed his lordship over the spirits in prison.

For Jesus risen from the dead. And proclaimed to them that he is Lord of all. This is not a verse in the Bible. To justify Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory. A place where someone can purge themselves of sin.

And so eventually make it to heaven. No. Jesus conquered death. And his risen body preached that he is Lord. He's proclaimed to them. In the spirit realm.

[25 : 25] That he has conquered death. That they are defeated foe. That he has been made the one who rules for all eternity. It was futile for anyone or anything.

To disobey him or rebel against his authority. No one. Nothing can defeat him. The cosmic forces. They thought they had won when they crucified Jesus.

But that was the fatal nail in their own coffin. For God raised him in power. And triumphed over the cosmic powers arranged against him. Now. What about Noah and baptism?

First thing to get right is. That Peter considers that Noah was a real historical person. And that the judgment of the world in Noah's day by flood happened.

That's the first thing. Just a minor but major thing to take hold of here. That God acted. He rescued righteous people. And judged wicked people.

[26 : 28] It's all through the scriptures. From the beginning to end. Noah we're told was a herald of righteousness. In 2 Peter chapter 2 verse 5. So at one level. The spirit of Christ was in him.

As he proclaimed. The righteousness of God. In his day. And the judgment of God to come. And just like other prophets were moved by the spirit of Christ.

In 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 10 and 11. Noah. A herald. A preacher. At one level a prophet. Spoke. And the thing that Noah teaches us.

Is that God will judge evil. And provide salvation for those who will obey him. And so trust God's way of salvation. God judges evil. And provides salvation for those who obey him.

Which corresponds then. We're seeing in verse 21. To baptism. So just as God defeated wicked men opposed to him in Noah's day.

[27 : 29] But provided a way to save a few. So too God has defeated wicked men and wicked forces opposed to him. In Jesus day. And today.

And provide the way of rescue for all who appeal to God. All who will trust him. And his way of salvation from the wrath to come. All who submit to Jesus Lord and Saviour are saved.

Are cleansed of their wickedness. And the offer is available to all. While we're still waiting. For the return of Jesus. And the great judgment to come. God purifies everyone inwardly from sin.

Who believes that Jesus has risen from the dead. And God washes us inwardly clean. That's the washing. That's the baptism. But there's a baptism. As an outward expression of that. An external washing. Is a sign of dying in the waters of judgment. And drowning if you like. In judgment.

[28 : 30] And being raised to life. In the spirit. New life. By the power of God.

And those who believe that God raised Jesus from the dead. Are spared from the judgment of God. Which is to come. And that the flood. Was a graphic foretaste of. And notice verse 18. The thing that Peter wants us to keep hearing. Is that those who trust in the risen Jesus. Have Jesus at work in us. Bringing us to God. Those who are trusting in the risen Jesus.

Are free from the fear of judgment. And will be saved. Just as Noah and his family were saved. From the wrath of God. Suffering and death. Is not the end. For those who are followers of Jesus. The eyes of the Lord. Are on the righteous. He hears their prayers. Now. Where is Jesus now?

[29 : 34] Well. Verse 22. Jesus now rules. At the right hand of God. In glory. Reigning over everyone. And everything. That's where Jesus is now. He reigns over the angels. He reigns over the authorities.

He reigns over the powers. He reigns over sin and death. He reigns over all. Who are aligned against him. We read in Ephesians chapter 6.

Verse 12. And remember this cosmic battle going on. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood. But against the rulers. Against the authorities. Against the cosmic powers.

Against the present darkness. Against the spiritual forces of evil. In the heavenly places. The thing is that Jesus. Has had everyone and everything subjected to him.

He's in authority over everyone. And for this reason we need not fear those who might cause suffering for upon us now. For Jesus rose. Has risen again.

[30 : 30] And will bring us to God. His Lord. He is subject to nothing. In all creation. In heaven or on earth. Everything in heaven and earth. In all creation.

Is subject to him. And the reason we have no fear of those who might harm us. For doing good. Because we're Christians. Is this. Jesus conquered death. Jesus now rules over everyone and everything.

And God will justly judge. And act righteously. The spirits in prison abound for the great day of judgment. Jesus preached to them after he rose from the dead.

Jesus preached to them that he is Lord of the universe. And they are not. Noah teaches us that God judges evil. And saves those who trust his way of salvation. And Jesus is now reigning and ruling in glory.

And will bring all of those who trust in him to glory as well. And so knowing this. There is no need to fear those who might harm us. For doing good. Because we're Christians.

[31 : 28] So. God is for us. No one can defeat us. We don't need to fear anyone or anything. God has defeated every evil force.

And will bring us safely home. That. Is the bottom line. So we can live righteously in this world. As we wait for our God.

To bring us safely to him again. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven. We thank you that you sent your son the Lord Jesus.

That even when wicked men were opposed to him. He trusted you. The one who judges justly. And he was the righteous one.

He became unrighteous for us. Bearing our sins. Taking the wrath that we deserve. And that you raised him to life again.

[32 : 28] Conquering sin and death. That those who trust in him might be where he is. Help us to keep following you all the days of our lives. And to honour you as Lord.

When it's easy. And particularly when it's hard. And we pray these things in Jesus name. Amen.