

Reason For Hope - 1 Peter 3

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[0 : 00] 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 8 to 17 and the page is 1219. 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 8 to 17.

So the title over it is Suffering for Doing Good. Finally, all of you be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called, so that you may inherit a blessing.

For whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.

They must turn from evil and do good. They must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their prayer.

[1 : 28] But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.

Do not fear their threats. Do not be frightened. But in your hearts, reverber Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. Amen. Thanks, Mary. Let's pray together. Father, thank you for your word.

[2 : 57] Thank you for its truth. Thank you that we have it written down, recorded for us today in our own language, so that we can read about you, and by your Holy Spirit come to know you and love you.

And we pray that as we look at your word afresh today, that it would give us a greater confidence in what we believe. A greater confidence to share Christ with others.

A greater confidence as we face a world that does not want to know or want to listen. Father, equip us and bless us, we ask.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, according to the latest report on global persecution by the organization Open Doors, one in every 12 Christians in the world lives in an area or in a culture in which Christianity is illegal, forbidden, or punished.

That's about 215 million people. Each month, the report tells us that 322 Christians are killed for their faith.

[4 : 41] 214 churches and church properties are destroyed. 722 forms of violence are committed against Christians, such as beatings, abductions, rapes, arrests, and forced marriage.

It actually reflects what it was like when Peter wrote this first letter. If you were a Christian in the first century, well, then it was not a safe place to be.

And for many Christians living today, it's not an easy place to live. And while we might not live in a country where following Jesus is illegal or forbidden or punished, we are living in a society which is increasingly hostile towards those who would say they're Christians.

As we stand up for Christian values, as we speak out for Christian truth, we will get reaction, we will get hit.

Peter reminds us of this right at the beginning of his letter. Look at chapter 1, verse 6. Chapter 1, verse 6.

[6 : 02] In all this you greatly rejoice. So he's been talking about some of the blessings we have. Though now, for a little while, while you may have had to suffer grief, in all kinds of trials.

So as Christians, we will face all kinds of trials. And some of these trials, if you jump to chapter 4, verse 12, is the trial of suffering for being a Christian.

Chapter 4, verse 12. Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you as though something strange were happening to you. You see, as pressure continues in our society today to repeal, for example, the Eighth Amendment, so there is an increased intolerance towards any other view. If you speak out for the rights of the unborn, you will be slandered and isolated. And as society rejects the claim that Jesus is the truth, so there is greater hostility towards Christianity. [7 : 25] If you stand for what you believe, you will be marginalised and pushed out. And that's really the theme of chapter 3 and the reading we had.

Turn to chapter 3, verse 9. Verse 9 is saying to us that if we are Christians, you will suffer insult. Or look at verse 14. If we are Christians, you will face threats. If you are a Christian, verse 16, there will be those who speak maliciously against you. You see, to stand up for Christian values, to speak out the Christian truth, it will be tough, it will be difficult. So how do we live in a world that is hostile to Christ and his church? And again, as Peter wrote this letter at the beginning of the first century, for the first 250 years, it was dangerous to be a Christian.

[8 : 40] You were either removed from where you lived and displaced somewhere else. You could be locked up. You could be fed to the lions. You could be crucified.

So Peter is well placed to tell us how he can help us to be a faithful witness in what can be a difficult situation.

So three things we're going to look at. First, do not fear those who threaten you. Do not fear those who threaten you.

Look at verse 13. Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.

Do not fear their threats. Do not be frightened. Now I get frightened all the time as a Christian.

[9 : 39] I fear that if I speak out for Jesus, if I stand for what the Bible teaches, I fear that people will think I'm a little bit odd, strange, that I'll be talked about.

But the thing that I fear most of all is that I will lose my friends because I love my friends and I want to keep them. And you might fear that if you associate with Christians, you might be insulted or laughed at.

So for a more easier and more comfortable life, well, when we're in the company of our friends, we just keep quiet. Why rock the boat?

Why say something that they might take as offensive? But, it tells us in verse 14, do not fear their threats.

Don't be frightened. Don't be frightened about what people might say. Literally, literally, don't be intimidated. Well, you say, that's much easier said than done.

[10 : 45] It's easier, easy to read these sorts of things. But, we do fear what people think of us. But, there is no need to fear. And the beginning of 14 gives us the reason why we don't need to fear.

But, even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Peter wants us to know that if we are Christians, in the midst of facing threats, we are really blessed.

And what's the blessing that he's talking about? Well, go back to chapter 1, verse 3. We, we read it at the beginning. Let's read these verses again.

Chapter 1, verse 3. These are the blessings that we have if we are followers of the Lord Jesus. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.

[11 : 56] This inheritance is kept in heaven for you who, through faith, are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

These are the blessings that we have received. we have new birth, a new beginning, a fresh start. And that new birth leads into a living hope.

Not a dead hope, but a present and an alive hope. And that leads us into an eternal inheritance. And did you notice what God has promised to his people about this inheritance?

Look at the end of verse 4. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you. But not only that, verse 5, who through faith are shielded by God's power.

So, this inheritance is kept for us by God and we are kept for this inheritance by God.

[13:12] He keeps the inheritance for us and He keeps us for that inheritance. Nothing can take us away from that inheritance and no one can take us away from that inheritance.

God keeps us and He shields us by our power. So, by His power. So, people can say what they like, they can think what they like, they can do what they like because we are truly blessed.

This is what keeps us being faithful in our witness when we face opposition or face threats. Open Doors, what I mentioned just now in their report at the beginning of this year, said that in North Korea there are an estimated 300,000 followers of Jesus.

If discovered as a Christian not only are you imported to labour camps as a political criminal or even killed on the spot, your families will share in their same fate as well.

Or in Yemen, which just has a few thousand believers, all Christians in that country experience persecution for their faith.

[14:36] Believers face detention and interrogation by authorities and death threats from their families and radical Islamic groups. Or in Somalia, in East Africa, where there are just a few hundred Christians, upon discovery, if they find out you are a believer, you are very often killed right on the spot there and then.

Believers are also persecuted by their families and their communities. Now think about a believer living in one of these countries. What keeps these Christians talking about Jesus when it's not safe? Well, they've got an inheritance that nothing and no one can take from them. Yes, they can be imprisoned. Yes, their families may turn their backs on them.

At worst, they will be killed. But even if they should lose their life, it will mean they receive their promised inheritance. So can you see how we do not need to fear the threats of others?

Yes, you may become unpopular. You mightn't be liked by your friends. You might even miss out on a job opportunity. You might even be shunned by your family.

[15:58] But whatever we may lose in this life, remember the blessings that we have. We have new birth, a living hope, into an inheritance that can never ever perish, spoil or fade.

And this inheritance is kept for us and we are kept for this inheritance. So when we go to work tomorrow, when we head off to college, when we hang out with our friends, read the words of verse 14, do not fear their threats.

Do not be frightened. We have this incredible blessing from God. So first, do not fear their threats.

Second, speak hope to those who ask you. Speak hope to those who ask you. Verse 15, but in your hearts revere Christ as Lord.

So, verse 14, don't fear others. Don't be worried about what they'll say or what they'll do. Instead, revere Christ as Lord.

[17:16] Because of the blessings we have received from Christ, we revere him. That is, we honour him. We submit to him. What a great and glorious God we have.

He is our Lord. He rules over our life. He rose again from the grave. He controls our eternal destiny. How could we not revere him and turn to him?

So as we revere him, we want to live lives that please him. In our work, we want to live for him with our friends. We want to speak up for him. So the rest of verse 15, as we revere Christ, always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

Now there's three things here in verse 15 that we want to look at. first, always be prepared to give an answer. To give an answer is simply to give a reason for why we believe what we believe.

It's where we get the word apologetics from. It's about making a defense of our faith, an apology, explaining the reasonableness of what we believe, that it's true and it's dependable.

[18:44] So let me ask, if you are a Christian, why do you believe what you believe? I wonder, could you explain it? If somebody challenged you, could you defend it?

What if someone comes up to you and says, you know, this Bible, well, it's all made up. It's just a collection of stories all about this person called Jesus who never really existed?

How would you answer somebody like that? Well, we could point to 2 Peter chapter 1. Have a look at 2 Peter chapter 1.

You see, we mustn't forget that when these letters were written, there were lots of skeptics and doubters around just like there are today and say, well, how could you believe any of these things? And so Peter would give evidence to show that we can believe. So in some ways he's responding to some of the challenges that may be put to him.

[19 : 50] So chapter 1 verse 16, he says, for we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

Remember Ralph read from John's gospel, they were also eyewitnesses. Verse 17, he received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the majestic glory saying, this is my son whom I love, with him I am well pleased.

So he's talking there about the transfiguration and Peter is saying, verse 18, we ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

You see, Peter was there, he saw, he heard, he touched and he's writing up these accounts for us and people are saying, well how do we know it's true?

Well he's saying, go and check out the eyewitnesses, go and ask them what they thought and what they saw. It was all recorded. Let me read to you.

[21 : 03] something from a little book called Truth Matters, which is a very helpful book. Richard Bochum wrote a book called Jesus and the Eyewitnesses.

He argues, for example, that many of the eyewitnesses to Jesus' life, death and resurrection were still in wide active circulation and the first years and were able to function as trusted, authoritative sources and guardians of the tradition, a commonly revered practice and presence in oral societies. Even as advancing age took them away from the living community, the wide range of years in which the early church was populated with some combination of either first hand observers of Christ, elders that sat personally at their feet, and the disciples of those who had heard these accounts of Jesus from an original source stretches well into the second century.

So you see, what we have is not made up. They are eyewitnesses accounts that could be checked from people who were there and as they passed it on one to another, they could investigate for themselves.

So are you able to explain what you believe and why you believe and have a defence for the truth? And let me encourage you at this time as well, why don't you come?

[22 : 44] In all seriousness, come to NBC this week. The whole theme is on the topic of apologetics. Come for an evening just to find out maybe you would stay for more.

We must all be prepared to give an answer. Second, always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you.

You see, if somebody is going to ask you about your faith and what you believe, it implies that you must be living a life that is so different that people are looking at you and watching you and they're intrigued about the way you live your life.

And so they begin to ask you questions. Go back to 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 11. 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 11.

Dear friends, I urge you as foreigners and exiles, so strangers who live in the world, to abstain from sinful desires which war against your soul.

[23 : 59] Live such good lives among the pagans, among those who do not believe, that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

You see, our life is in itself to be an apologetic for the gospel. People should be able to look at our lives and see a difference, a life that backs up the message that we seek to tell.

And people will begin to ask questions like, well, why do you do good to those who hurt you? Why is it that you never seem to get angry?

Why is it that you respond in kindness even when you've been wronged? Why do you respect your boss even when he disrespects and mistreats you?

you? Why is it that you still love your spouse even when they treat you like that? Why do you repay, nor why do you not repay, evil with evil and insult with insult?

[25 : 18] Why is it that you don't sleep with your boyfriend or your girlfriend? You see, if we're followers of Jesus, our lives will be so shaped by the gospel, our life will be a living example and apologetic for the gospel and people will see and begin to ask, why is it that you're like this?

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks of you. And then third, always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have. But what is this hope that we have? What is this hope that causes us to live so differently? Well, remember back in chapter 1 verse 3, it is this living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

from the dead.

This is not a dead hope, this is an alive hope, a hope that shapes how we live our life today and shapes how we view the future. hope in the Bible is not wishful thinking.

It is rock solid, unshakable and dependable certainty of our future. In other words, our hope is guaranteed by the historical fact that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead.

[26 : 45] And this certain hope shapes and affects how we live. It gives meaning to our life as we face into difficulty, as we face death, as we face hardships.

we've got this hope. And it changes everything. Listen again to a quote from the book.

This is a quote actually from Tim Keller and he says this, each year at Easter I get to preach on the resurrection. resurrection. In my sermon I always say to my skeptical and secular friends that even if they can't believe in the resurrection, they should want it to be true.

Most of them care deeply about justice for the poor, alleviating hunger and disease and caring for the environment. Yet many of them believe that the material world was caused by an accident and that the world and everything in it will eventually simply burn up in the death of the sun.

They find it discouraging that so few people care about justice without realizing that their own worldview undermines any motivation to make the world a better place.

[28 : 09] Why sacrifice for the needs of others if in the end nothing we do will make any difference? If the resurrection of Jesus happened however that means there is infinite hope and reason to pour ourselves out for the needs of the world.

You see if the resurrection isn't true we have come from nowhere we are going nowhere and there is no shape or meaning or purpose to life today but because we have a resurrection hope we can live our lives in service towards others and give our life to all kinds of good things because it counts because Jesus is risen because Jesus is alive I have hope unshakable hope for today and hope for all eternity so first do not fear those who threaten you second speak hope to those who ask you and then third respond gently to those who are against you look at the rest of verse 15 chapter 1 Peter chapter 3 end of verse 15 but do this with gentleness and respect keeping a clear conscience so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander look if we're going to be people who want to talk about

Jesus then our words and our behaviour must reflect the Jesus we want people to know how can we talk to people about forgiveness if I hold a grudge how can I talk about grace if I ostracise those who wrong me how can I talk about a loving God but never invite somebody into my home you see how we live and what we say really matters one author put it like this Christians need to look like what they're talking about what communicates now is personal authenticity the gospel message must not just be heard it must be seen and demonstrated in the way that we live and talk look at the end of verse 15 again we are to do this we are to speak give a reason for the hope that we have with gentleness and respect that means not being insistent on your rights or demanding your own way or having this great argument that kind of clatters everybody else essentially it's actually calling us to be just like

Christ have a look back at chapter 2 verse 20 here is the example of Jesus chapter 2 verse 20 how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it but if you suffer for doing good and you endure it this is commendable before God to this you were called because Christ suffered for you leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps he committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth when they hurled their insults at him he didn't retaliate when he suffered he made no threats instead he entrusted himself to him who judges justly you see if we're insulted well

I don't need to retaliate if you suffered from somebody we don't need to make threats in return we don't have to get back at people we respond with gentleness and respect why because we entrust our life to him who judges justly I don't have to repay insult with insult I don't have to get back at others God is just and he will sort everything out he will hold me account and he will hold everybody else to account so instead I must simply pray that I will become more like Christ in my behaviour and in the way that I speak to others you see how we respond and how we speak really matters look at the rest chapter 3 verse 16 keeping a clear conscience so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander in other words as people see your life as they hear your words as they watch how you respond they will be convicted of how they treated you and it may cause them to turn to

[33 : 52] Christ let me illustrate this with two stories one is a bad example the second one is a good example you may have heard me say this before but in my neighbourhood where we live in our little cul-de-sac we got something wrong or rather I got something wrong with one of the neighbours and it caused offence to them it was my fault and I went to go and see them about something else and knocked on the door and they came to the door and they were really quite cross and this is what they said and you call yourself a Christian I'd never said to them I'm a Christian but they said you call yourself a Christian and you did that you see how we behave and what we say really matters it affects people that's the bad example of living the wrong kind of life and saying the wrong kind of thing here's a good example

I have a friend who grew up a pretty rough life on one occasion he told me that somebody was running after him and he threw a gas bottle back down on top of them and I said well what happened he said I don't know he never came back again so that was the kind of character he was he didn't have time for Christians no time at all but he ended up working for a Christian and just observed the person had talked to them about Christ but for him didn't want to know but he observed something that happened there was an accident in the kitchen there was a big mess and the person he was working for they didn't say anything they were completely calm they didn't explode in anger or expletives or anything else like that that was the actual turning point for Barry becoming a Christian Barry now works in

Nicaragua runs a Christian school seeking to reach out to the community there one simple tiny act in a kitchen used by God to begin the process of changing somebody's life you see what I say what you say how we live really matters it may cause people to be convicted of how they treat you and it may cause them to turn to Christ so as we go into a new week as we will meet again with our work colleagues hang out with our friends go to school wherever we are as we think about sharing Christ don't fear their threats don't be afraid we have this wonderful blessing inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade what can they do to you speak hope to those who ask of you and respond gently to those who are against you live credible godly

Christ like lives in the world in which we live let's pray that god will enable us to do that well father thank you for your word for its truth thank you that it is dependable thank you that we have a certain hope hope the hope of the resurrection from the grave life with you today and life for all eternity father would you give to each person here today opportunity to be able to speak of that hope to be able to bring that hope into the darkness to be able to speak of Jesus father help us that we would not fear what people say help us to revere the Lord change us to be more like Christ so that our behavior and our words reflect him in all that we say and do and we pray that you would give us confidence and courage to speak up and to stand up for the Lord Jesus and we pray father that through our lives as weak and as failing as we so often are that by your Holy Spirit you would be at work within us leading more and more people to the Lord Jesus Christ help us we pray in Jesus name amen we're going to sing which is a rallying cry I guess