

# Faithful Witness 1 Peter 3v8-22

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 13 November 2016

Preacher: Jonny Grant

[ 0 : 00 ] Our reading today is in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 8 to 22. In the Church Red Bible, it's page 1219.

Okay, I hope you find the verse. 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 3, chapter 3, verse 8 to 22. Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another.

Be sympathetic. Love as brothers. Be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil, or insult with insult, but with blessing.

Because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

It's 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 what they fear.

[ 1 : 44 ] Do not be frightened. But in your heart, set apart 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. Keep a clear conscience so that those who speak maliciously against you, against your good behavior in Christ, may be ashamed for their slander.

It is better if it is God's will to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous.

To bring you to God, he must put to death in the body, but made alive by the Spirit. Through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.

In it, only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water. And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also. Not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of good conscience towards God.

[ 3 : 14 ] He saves you by the resurrection of Christ Jesus, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand with angels, authorities, and powers in submission to him.

Amen. Amen. Thanks very much, Kevin.

We'll keep your Bible open there at 1 Peter 3. Before we start, I just want to say that it's a longer passage than we've normally been dealing with on a Sunday morning.

So we're not going to cover everything. So there may be questions that arise, things that weren't covered, or you just want to come back on. Please feel free to talk with me afterwards. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for this letter written all these hundreds of years ago to a people belonging to you, yet scattered, feeling alone, isolated, struggling.

[ 4 : 40 ] And Father, so we identify as people who belong to you, struggling to fit in this world and knowing how to live.

And so we ask that as we look at your word today, it would equip us and encourage us to be faithful witnesses in our communities, in our work, in our schools, wherever we are during the week.

That we would be a faithful witness, pointing to you through what we say and in how we live. We ask for your spirit's help to us all today, in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, I want to introduce you to Pastor Alim. Alim lives in the city of Aleppo in Syria, which you know from watching the television has been turned into a pile of rubble following constant bombing and shelling.

While mothers have left, Alim remains to care for the church. He explains, The other day as we finished our meeting on Friday, a bomb exploded next to the church, killing a young girl and her brother.

[ 6 : 14 ] On Sunday, when we were getting ready for church, bombs exploded around our house. But I feel a calling from God.

He wants me to be here till the end, as long as there is work to do in Aleppo. Part of that work has been to provide food and basic needs for up to 2,000 people in their community, half of whom are from the Muslim background.

In the face of severe opposition and persecution, they bless others. They pray for them, they care for them, they speak of the certain hope that they have in Christ.

And many who saw that church as the enemy have now found a warmth and a welcome. And as a result, in that bombed city, people are turning to Christ and are being baptised.

Alim is seeking to be a faithful witness in what is a hostile world. Now that is the big message of 1 Peter.

[ 7 : 32 ] As we stand up for Christian values, as we speak out for Christian truth, we will get hit. We mightn't live in Aleppo, we mightn't face being bombed, but if we are followers of Christ, we will face opposition.

Look at verse 9. You will suffer insult. Verse 14. You will face their threats and you will be frightened.

Verse 16. There will be those who will speak maliciously against you. The reality is, if you are a follower of Jesus, you will get hit.

So, how do we live in this world that is hostile to Christ and to his church? Well, look at verse 8.

Finally, all of you, it's as if he's bringing to conclusion what he has been talking about all the way from chapter 2, verse 12.

[ 8 : 45 ] Having shown us what it is like to be a faithful witness in society, in chapter 2. What it's like to be a faithful witness in our work, chapter 2, verse 18.

What it's like to be a faithful witness within the home, chapter 3. He now shows us that this is the calling for all of God's people.

Verse 8. Finally, all of you, whatever circumstance of life we find ourselves in, all of you, live in harmony with one another.

Be sympathetic. Love as brothers. Be compassionate and humble. If people who are against Christ are going to turn to Christ, we need to respond by being faithful in our witness.

So, what's that going to look like for you and for me? Well, first, we are to bless those who stand opposed to us.

[ 9 : 53 ] Bless those who stand opposed to you. Look at verse 9. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called.

If we're followers of Jesus, we are to bless those who would stand opposed to us. Why? Well, look at the rest of verse 9.

So that you may inherit a blessing. Now, we need to be clear what that is. This is not tip for tap.

This is not, I bless you and God is going to bless me in return. So, if I bless five people, then God is going to bless me five times.

No, we have already been given a blessing. We have already received an inheritance. Have a look back at chapter 1, verse 3.

[ 11 : 01 ] Chapter 1, verse 3. Just starting into the verse. You see what it says? 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, a blessing that can never perish, spoil or fade, which is kept in heaven for you.

So, we have an inheritance that is guaranteed. So, our blessing of other people is a sign that we have already inherited a blessing from God.

So, in response to this undeserved blessing of this inheritance that will never perish, spoil or fade, the response to that or the sign that we have that is in turn to bless other people.

That's what chapter 3, verse 9 is saying to us. You see, it's so natural to retaliate and want revenge. A colleague at work makes fun of you with a snide comment.

You want to retaliate. A friend speaks aggressively against what you believe and you want revenge. You get hurt, so you want them to hurt.

[ 12 : 32 ] You suffer, so you want them to suffer. But not so for the Christian. Because we are blessed. Because we have an inheritance, we in turn bless those who stand opposed to us.

We are to be a blessing. We are given an example of what this looks like in verses 10 to 12. This is a quote from Psalm 34.

Now, Psalm 34, you can read it all at home, is at a time when Saul is king. Saul was the people's choice. David, who was God's choice as king, is being pursued by Saul.

He's being chased down by Saul. And David's life is in danger. But how does David respond to this threat? Well, look at verse 10.

For whoever would love life and see good days, so whoever has the blessing and has that inheritance to come, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.

[ 13 : 50 ] He must turn from evil and do good. He must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their prayer.

But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. You see, in the face of extreme opposition, David sought to bless rather than repay or take revenge.

So a colleague speaks against you, slanders your name, spreads a nasty rumour for no other reason than they find your Christian values irritating.

But don't gossip. Don't look for the next opportunity to belittle them. Look at verse 10. You must keep your tongue from evil and your lips from deceitful speech.

You take a stand for Christian values. You speak up for the right of the unborn. You take a stand not to cover for your boss or to tell lies.

[ 15 : 09 ] And as a result, well, you lose out on promotion. You get all the rotten jobs to do. But don't fight back. Don't plot how you can take revenge.

Instead, verse 11, We must turn from evil and do good. We must seek peace and pursue it.

You see, it's not our job to get back at others. It's not our place to retaliate and seek revenge. It is our role to bless.

It's to do good to those who hurt you. Have you been hurt by someone else? Bless them. We are to speak kindly to those who malign you.

Have you ever felt ostracized or pushed away by somebody else? Speak kindly to them. Of course it's hard.

[16:13] Of course it's tough. But like David, we pray and we leave things with God. Verse 12, For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their prayer.

We can hear David praying in the midst as he's being pursued by Saul, crying out to God for help, that he might bless rather than retaliate.

For the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. We have been incredibly blessed.

We have an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. So do not repay evil with evil, or insult with insult, but with blessing.

So first, bless those who oppose you. Second, speak hope to those who threaten you.

[17:15] Verse 13, Who's 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 what they fear. Do not be frightened. Now I don't know about you, but I suspect it's true. I get frightened all the time as a Christian.

I fear that if I speak out for Jesus, if I stand for what the Bible teaches, I really fear I'm going to lose some of my friends.

I fear that people will think I'm weird. They probably think I'm weird anyway, but they might just think I'm a bit more weird. I fear that I'll be talked about.

You might fear that if you associate with Christians, you'll be insulted and laughed at. And so for an easier and more comfortable life, we just put the head down and keep quiet and hope that nobody sees or nobody asks.

[18:27] But, what does it say in verse 14? Do not fear what they fear. Do not be frightened.

Literally, it's saying to us, do not fear their threats. Don't be intimidated by what people might say to you or what they might do to you.

Well, you say, that's easier said than done. That's easy to read. The theory is fine. Don't fear. But we all fear what people think about us. But genuinely, really, there is no need to fear.

The reason, look at verse 14 again, even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.

It's the reminder again that if we are Christians, if we're followers of Jesus, we are blessed. Let's go back to chapter 1, verse 4 again.

[19:31] Let's remind ourselves of that blessing, that inheritance. Verse 4. Because of the resurrection and our faith in Christ, verse 4, we have an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept in heaven for you.

But there's more. Verse 5. Who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

The blessing that we have received is that heaven is kept for us and we are kept for heaven. Nothing can take us from our inheritance and no one can take our inheritance from us.

So, people can say what they like. People can think what they like. They can do whatever they want to us because we will always be blessed and that inheritance and that blessing cannot be taken away.

It's this blessing that keeps Pastor Alim in Aleppo. It's what keeps many travelling into North Korea.

[ 20 : 53 ] It's what keeps thousands of Christians talking about Jesus even when it's not safe. Yes, people can be imprisoned. At worst, their lives can be taken and it does happen.

But even if someone should lose their life for Christ it will mean that they receive their promised inheritance. So, people can say what they like do what they like because we will always be blessed and it's because of this inheritance because of this blessing that we have that we too do not need to fear the threats.

We do not need to fear what people think of you if you stand up for what the Bible teaches. Do not be frightened. We have a blessing.

So, don't fear. Instead, we can speak of the great hope that we have. How do we do that?

Look at verse 15. Chapter 3, verse 15. But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Christ is your King, not your boss.

[ 22 : 10 ] Christ rules over your life. He controls your destiny. He has given you the inheritance and the blessing. God has made you a child. Make Him your Lord.

Make Him the reason for your life. Verse 15. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

You see, when we bless those who speak against us, when we repay hurt with kindness, when we do good to those who speak maliciously against us, it is so counter-cultural.

It is so different to how the world responds. that a time will come when someone is going to ask of you or speak to you and say, why?

Why do you not get angry? Why do you care for those people that insult you? Why do you respond in kindness when you've been so desperately wronged?

[ 23 : 30 ] Why do you respect your boss even when they disrespect you? Why do you still love your spouse even when they speak bad of you?

Why do you not repay evil with evil and insult with insult? Answer. Look at verse 15.

Because of the hope that we have. Because Jesus has died for me and forgiven me, I can forgive others.

I don't need to hold a grudge. Because Jesus has risen from the grave for me and has given me an inheritance and a blessing, I've got everything to look forward to so I can give my life to serve those who may stand against me.

Because Jesus has blessed me, because I belong to him, because I am part of his family, because I am a royal people, that royal priesthood, a people belonging to God, I can now bless.

[ 24 : 40 ] I can speak of the hope that I have. So in the face of opposition, do not fear. Always be prepared to give an answer.

Be ready. Have it on the tip of your tongue to talk about Jesus and what he means to you. End of verse 15, but do it with gentleness and respect.

I was talking to someone recently who had made the decision not to play matches if it clashed with their times of their church gathering.

An important match had come up and they told the rest of their team and their coaches I'm not able to play today. Inevitably, they were asked why?

And their answer was really simple. They just said because I'll be going to church. The response caused the group of friends to laugh and ask why would you go to church?

[ 25 : 48 ] And very simply they said Jesus is more important. He's a hope. He's the reason for our life. So don't be afraid of people's threats.

Don't fear what they may think about you or what they may say about you. Instead, speak confidently of the hope that we have in Jesus. Bless those who oppose you.

Speak hope to those who threaten you. And third, look to Christ who will vindicate you.

You see, being a faithful witness in the world is not easy. It's really, really tough. Look at verse 17. It is better if it is God's will to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

But why? Are you mad? What's the point? Why would we be so stupid and be so willing to suffer? Why bless those who insult you if all you're going to get is more insults?

[ 26 : 59 ] Why speak hope to people if all we're going to get is abuse? Why be a faithful witness? Why bother? Why suffer for doing good? Why? It doesn't make sense unless Christ vindicates you and he will.

Christ will put the record straight. Christ will correct every rhyme. Christ will see that you taste victory. Let me explain this in three ways.

First, Christ suffered and now rules. So we are to keep going. We are to bless those who oppose us. We are to speak hope to those who threaten us because verse 18 for Christ died for sins once for all the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God.

Christ suffered for you. He didn't repay evil with evil. He didn't retaliate with insult. He blessed those who opposed him.

He spoke to those who threatened him. In fact, he died for those, for people like us who also stood against him. He died for our sins, for my sin, for your sin, the righteous for the unrighteous.

[ 28 : 28 ] He took all our unrighteous behaviour on himself, suffered the punishment that we deserve so that we might have his righteousness and be treated as Jesus deserves to be treated.

End of verse 18, he was put to death in the body, crucified on a cross, but made alive by the Spirit, risen again from the dead.

Verse 22, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand with angels and authorities and powers in submission to him.

Yes, Jesus suffered and died. He was mocked and ridiculed, laughed at, spat upon, but now he lives and he reigns.

The powers and authorities that stood against him now bow in submission to him. Jesus has been vindicated. The record has been put right.

[ 29 : 39 ] Now, what is true of Christ will be true for you if you follow him. Look, what happens when Christ died for us in verse 18?

What does it do? The end of verse 18, it brings us to God. We are united with him. His life becomes our life. So, what is true of Christ will become true for you.

We too will die, but we will live. We too will suffer, but we will reign with him. The victory that Christ enjoys will be a victory that we too will share and enjoy.

Vindication will come. And this is true for all God's people. Noah suffered but was saved.

Do you remember Noah? Called by God to build an ark, that great big boat in a landlocked country, and to preach to the people and tell them that God was going to judge by sending a flood in the world.

[ 30 : 53 ] Can you imagine the abuse and the mocking that Noah faced as he built this ark with no water in sight and preaching?

And yet Noah was faithful in his witness. This is how Peter describes it. Follow closely. They're difficult verses, but we can work our way through them.

Look at the end of verse 18. This is speaking of Jesus. He, that's Jesus was put to death in the body, but made alive by the Spirit, through whom, so through the same Spirit, Jesus also went and preached to the spirits in prison.

So, at the time of Noah, Jesus, before he ever came, the pre-incarnate Jesus, was preaching through Noah, warning them of God's coming judgment.

He preached, we're told, in verse 19, to the spirits in prison. It's a strange phrase. Who are the spirits in prison? Well, read on verse 20.

[ 32 : 06 ] They are they who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. The spirits in prison are the people, those who are, if you like, are entrapped enslaved to their sin, who disobeyed God and ignored God.

It was not an easy task for Noah to preach this message to a hardened bunch of people, but he kept on preaching, even though they didn't want to listen, even though they ignored everything he said.

And Noah suffered for doing good. He faced abuse, he faced mocking, he laughed at, he was ridiculed, it was really tough.

But what happened to Noah? End of verse 20, in it, in the ark that he built, only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water.

Noah suffered, but yet he was saved, he was vindicated. now it's not just true for Noah, it's true for all of God's people.

[ 33 : 27 ] You see, we suffer, but we are saved. Look at verse 21, follow with me, keep closely to the text and we'll work our way through.

Verse 21, and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also. So the flood of God's judgment, back at the time of Noah, and the ark of salvation, the flood of judgment, the ark of salvation is a picture, he's saying, of Christian baptism.

The water, the rain, the flood brought judgment, death, and separation from God. The ark which carried Noah through the waters brought salvation, life, and eternity with God.

Now when we are baptized, it is a picture of being saved from the judgment of God. Being baptized is going down into the water, under the water.

water. It is as if God's judgment is falling on us, but the point is we don't stay under the water, we come up, we come out through the water, symbolizing our rescue from God's judgment.

[ 34 : 52 ] Now we must be very careful not to think that this simple act of baptism saves us. No, look at the end of verse 21. it saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Just as Jesus was raised to life, so by faith in his resurrection, we too are raised to new life. As we come up out through the water, we are demonstrating our trust in Christ for our salvation, just as Christ was raised, so we too will rise with him.

you go, what's he talking about baptism for? What's this baptism got to do with when I'm being laughed at when I'm at school?

How does baptism help me when people ignore me at work and speak against me? What's the point of baptism when I suffer as a Christian? How is this going to help me?

Well, when we face opposition, when we face unjust suffering, insult, abuse, malicious talk, whatever it may be, he's saying, I want you to look back.

[ 36 : 08 ] I want you to remember your baptism. Because baptism is something visible, something tangible. It is something that we physically experience.

As we look back to our baptism, we remember that just as we came up out through the water. So a day will come when we too are going to rise and we will experience salvation in all its fullness.

The suffering, the struggles that we go through right now are not going to be forever. We will rise. So think back, remember the time when you were baptized.

That's why baptism is so important. if you are a Christian here today and you are claiming and saying yes, I follow Jesus and you are not baptized.

Well, you ought to be. You ought to be. Because in this context it's going to be a tremendous help to you as a Christian.

[ 37 : 15 ] As you seek to live the Christian life and as you find it difficult to be a Christian where you are, this baptism that you look back to is going to help you and bring to memory and remind you that yes, it is a struggle.

But it's not going to be like this forever. I too am going to rise. You see, for the Christian, baptism becomes that defining moment in our lives when we publicly align ourselves to Christ, when we declare yes, I am with Christ.

Where he goes, I will go. What is true of Christ is true of me. In times of struggling and suffering we can look back and remember just as Christ suffered, we too will suffer.

Just as Christ was raised, we too will rise. Just as Christ was vindicated, so we too will be vindicated. The victory that Christ enjoys today will be ours to enjoy forever.

I don't know every circumstance where you will be this week, but as you go, bless those who may stand against you.

[ 38 : 43 ] The person who you find difficult to work with, the person who you find it hard to be a friend to, bless them. For those that may threaten you, those who may speak against you, speak hope to them.

Speak speak about Jesus. Don't fear what they say. You have a blessing to come, an inheritance to come. You have everything to look forward to.

And we can keep on doing it because we will be vindicated. We will share in the victory that Christ has.

Look back and remember your baptism. remember that day. Feel it, picture it, think of it. I went down, I rose, I will be vindicated with Christ.

Let's pray together. Father, we recognize that it's so easy to be a follower of Christ in this room, in this gathering.

[ 40 : 12 ] It's easy to sing songs about you. It's easy to declare, I believe in God the Father. God, we all fear leaving this building, going to work tomorrow, going to college, going to school, going into our families, what people will think, what people will say.

Father, remind us today, fill us with the hope of that inheritance, that blessing, that we will not fear, but that we will be confident to speak out for Jesus, knowing that just as Christ suffered and now reigns, so we too will reign with him.

We will be vindicated, the record will be set straight, we will receive glory and we will be with you. So, Father, fill us with that vision today.

May it be the vision for our week, that as we go forward, we would live for you. Thank you that you are our saviour and ruler of the world.

Amen.