

When Doing Right Cost You

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[0:00] Chapter number three, first Peter chapter number three. It's good to be here in the Lord's house tonight. It is toasty out there, but thankful we're in here. Looking forward to a great week. And the last few stragglers start back to school tomorrow.

So pray for them, pray for the teachers. And thankful for just the opportunity to be in the Lord's house today. And hope you enjoy the services of morning. Hope it's a blessing and encouragement and help. And hopefully that'll be the same tonight.

We're walking through the book of first Peter. And Peter's writing to a people that are scattered abroad. God, difficulties coming, persecutions there. But just because life is difficult doesn't mean that we change the way that we live.

We still live for Christ. He still gives us an opportunity. And we live in a world that's not going to always understand us. They're not going to always treat us the way that we should be treated and vice versa as well.

But Peter's going to deal with that today. And so our text is going to be in verses 13 through 17 of chapter three. But I'm going to just read from verse eight down to verse 17. Because it's still kind of the same thought.

[0:57] He's dealing with us as believers. How do we bring this in? We looked a little bit last week about how we live as a church family. We should have a family resemblance. And he's kind of going to come out of that as well and show us a few things in verse 13 through 17.

But verse eight says, Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another. Love as brethren. Be pitiful. Be courteous. Pitiful as being humble. Different things like that. Not rendering evil for evil or railing for railing, but contrawise blessing.

Knowing that you are there unto call that you should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile.

Let him eschew evil and do good. Let him seek peace and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and his ears are open unto their prayers. But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

So the Lord, we're reminded in that verse that God sees everything. That God knows where we are. He hears us. He understands what we need. And he reminds us here in verse 13. So Peter asked a question.

[1:57] And who is he that will harm you if you be followers of that which is good? But and if you suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye.

And be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you for the reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

Having a good conscience that we that whereas they speak evil of you as evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

For it is better if the will of God be so that you suffer for well-doing than for evildoing. So tonight in our text, I want to preach a message entitled this, When Doing Right Costs You.

Because sometimes we do the right thing and we think, that didn't go how I expected it to. We feel like if I do the right thing, I shouldn't have any problems when it comes back in my life. That's not how the world operates.

[2:59] And that's not how we are going to face things. So how do we deal with it when that comes to our plate? And that's what we're going to look at tonight. So let's ask the Lord to help us as we open up His Word. Father, thank you for this time together. Thank you for just another opportunity to gather together, to lift our voices in praise, to open up your Word.

So thankful we have a copy of your Word in our hands. And Lord, I pray that you wouldn't just make us think that we're here just to get some information. But Lord, help it to transform our lives, that we can apply it.

Some things that maybe we're facing this week are going to face. And Lord, I pray that you would just be with me now. You would empty me of self, cleanse me of sin, give me the words to say that it'll be a help tonight. And we ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

You may be seated. Thank you so much for standing. I'd imagine everybody in this room has done what was right. You knew it was the right thing. You did it.

And it still made things harder. I mean, sometimes we assume that if we do the right thing, everything ought to work out. You know, if we tell the truth, then people will appreciate our honesty.

[4:00] If we stand for what is right, people are going to respect our convictions. If we treat people well, then they should treat us well in return. And if we live for Jesus and we try to do what the Bible has called us to do, then surely life will go smoothly.

And it will be smooth sailing all the way through. Anybody find that to be true in life? Generally, that's not how it works. And sometimes you do the right thing. And you are criticized.

You may take a biblical stand on some convictions and you're kind about it. But you still stand firm on it. And somebody is going to call you narrow-minded.

Sometimes we show kindness to other people. And sometimes it gets taken advantage of. Instead of reciprocating or being thankful for it, they just use you and kind of throw you to the side.

Sometimes you try to honor God. And instead of a life becoming easier, it actually becomes harder. And you're thinking, Lord, I'm trying to do everything you've called me to do.

[4:59] And I think that's really where our faith can be tested. Because it's easy to do right when doing right is rewarded. If you know, hey, if I do this, then there's going to be some good things coming down the pipe for me.

But what happens when we do right and it costs us something? That's what Peter is going to address tonight in our text. That's what he wants to show us. Because Peter is writing to these believers that were suffering many times just for being a Christian.

They're scattered all over. They're all over Galatia and these areas. Not because they wanted to be. It's because life forced them this way. And they were strangers and they were pilgrims living in a culture that did not understand them.

That did not share in the convictions that they held so dearly. And as we've really seen throughout this section particularly, Peter has been showing them how to live in a world that doesn't always treat them fairly.

Whether it's the government or whether it's the workplace environment. Whether it's even within our own homes. And really as we saw last week in verses 8 through 12, he kind of broadened the application to the entire church.

[6:04] How do we live within a church family? Because even though we're a church family, sometimes life is going to be hard even within these walls. We may be misunderstood. We may be mistaken in what we do and what we say.

And Peter comes here and he asks a very practical question in verse 13. And who is he that will harm you if you be followers of that which is good?

Kind of right on the surface, it seems that Peter is saying, Hey, if you do good, then nobody can hurt you. If you do the right thing, then you're going to have no problems in life. But he very quickly reminds us in verse number 14, that's not what he's saying.

Because the very few first words are, But and if you suffer for righteousness sake. He's saying, you might and you will suffer. So he's not saying that we're not going to run into problems.

He's not promising that Christians will never suffer. But what he is going to show us is how to respond when we do. How to respond when doing right costs us. And so as we walk through the text, the big idea I want us to pull out is this, Is that when doing right costs us, Our hope in Christ allows us to stand without fear.

[7:11] It allows us to speak with grace. And it causes us to live with a clear conscience. That's what God wants us to be able to do. So here's the question I want us to keep in front of us as we walk through these few verses.

How should we respond when doing right costs us? Number one, we should respond by trusting God. We seem to see this theme over and over and over in scriptures.

Trust God. We see in Proverbs chapter 3, Trust in the Lord with all thine heart. And all throughout the Psalms and the Proverbs. And really as we come to the New Testament, we see it over and over again.

But it's not just a little phrase that we say as Christians. It is a way that we are to live our life. And so there we see, once again in verse number 13, the Bible says, If ye be followers of that which is good.

He's saying that, hey listen, this applies to you if you're zealous for living for the Lord, if you're zealous for doing good. What Peter is describing here, he's not describing someone who occasionally does the right things.

[8:17] Every once in a while they'll just do it because, hey, they want to have good karma on their side. Hey, they want to have good things flowing their way. That's not what Peter's talking about. He is talking to people who do the right thing all the time.

Try to live a life like that. Not people that just live and do the right thing when it's convenient. When it's going to help them get ahead at work. When it's going to help them do these situations. He's describing somebody in verse number 13 who has settled this in their heart.

I want to do what pleases God. That's the type of person that Peter's talking to. He's writing to these people that had settled, Hey, I'm going to serve God even if it sends me across the world.

Even if it makes my life difficult. And to people that are going to serve God whether people applaud or not. Listen, we don't serve God for the applause. We shouldn't. That's not why we're doing what we're doing.

He's writing to people that are going to serve God whether others understand it or not. Whether people agree with it or not. He's writing to people that are just saying, I want to do what God wants me to do because that's the right thing to do.

[9:25] See, Christianity isn't just believing what is right. It's about doing it. It's about putting action behind what we do. We say it all the time. We need to practice what we preach.

And that's kind of what Peter's saying. I'm writing this to people that are willing to practice what they preach. Whether it's at home or at work and relationships or in the way we're responded when we're mistreated.

But I want to say this off the top. Generally speaking, doing good prevents a lot of unnecessary suffering. I mean, Peter's not against us doing good. We can't become so cynical that we think, well, I'm just not going to do good.

I'm not going to be kind. I'm not going to say nice things because it seems like every time I do it, I just get the raw end of the deal. No, if you're honest and you're dependable and you're gracious and you're hardworking and you're kind, most people aren't going to have a reason to come after you. That's how we're called to live. We're called to live and to emulate Christ. But Peter understands this, and I think we do as well. There's always exceptions to the rule. There's going to be some times that when you live that way, that some people are going to come after you just because you live that way.

[10:37] Just because you love the Lord. And that's why he immediately says what he says in verse number 14. But notice what he does not say in verse 14. If you live right, you'll never suffer.

Doesn't say that. Because sometimes you can do everything right and still suffer. I wish it did, but following Jesus doesn't make us immune from suffering in this world.

It doesn't make us immune for people slandering our name or saying things that are untrue. In fact, sometimes following Jesus is the very reason suffering comes in our life.

You think, well, where did you get that from? Jesus? Jesus? I mean, John chapter 15, he says this. The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. Now, we've got to look at our life sometimes, and we'll dive into this in a minute. Sometimes what we think is persecution is not persecution. We were just dumb. What Jesus is talking about is when we are persecuted for his sake, for living for him, for taking a stand for him, for not compromising, for eschewing evil in the things that we read about and talked about last week.

[11:49] See, people may try to affect and to control our circumstances, but here's what they can't touch. They can't touch who we are in Christ. They can't touch that inheritance, that hope that we have.

And that's the theme that Peter's really been driving home. Because these people were dealing with it, and life was falling apart for many of them, and the things had changed. And it was so, they were

just kind of thinking, what is going on?

But he's reminding them over and over, hey, your hope is still in the Lord. Your hope is alive. You're these lively stones built up in Jesus Christ. They cannot take Jesus. They cannot take your salvation.

They cannot take your eternal hope. See, as Christians, we're not beyond the reach of suffering. But we are beyond the reach of ultimate harm.

They can say things. They can do things. They can try. The world will try to do those things. But Jesus says, they can't touch it. What you have is secure. In fact, Peter says this in verse number 14.

[12:48] Happy are ye. That doesn't seem like that should go there. But in if you suffer, happy are ye. Now, that word happy doesn't mean we would put a smile on our face like, man, I'm glad everybody's coming after me today.

I'm glad they're making my life miserable. I love when people do that. That's not the idea. No, the idea is this. It's the same that we find in the Beatitudes. Blessed.

Blessed are ye. In fact, Jesus said in Matthew 5.10, blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus has told us over and over, and Peter's reiterating, he's going to hit it again in verse chapter 4, that it shouldn't be strange when difficulties come. But I don't want us to miss this, and I think Peter wants to make sure we don't miss it, that suffering for doing right does not mean God abandoned you.

It's not like the idea that we suffer and it's like, oh, he's left us here. No, God's not going to leave us high and dry. There's nowhere in Scripture that he says that.

[13:56] No, if we're his children, he's promised to never leave us nor forsake us. That he's going to walk with us, even if it's through the valley, the shadow of death. It doesn't matter what life throws at us. We do not have to walk alone, and we never will.

That the Holy Spirit of God lives and resides within us. He's our guide. He's our helper through this difficulty. And it doesn't mean that even if life is hard and maybe people are coming after you, that you've missed God's will, that you've done something terribly wrong in your life.

It doesn't mean that. That's nowhere to be found in this text or any situation in Scripture like this.

But sometimes suffering is evidence that you've chosen faithfulness over convenience.

That might be the situation. So instead of trying to avoid anything that might cost us, when difficulties come, and it will come, he said, we need to ask ourselves this.

How can I honor Christ in this? How can I make sure that I don't respond with how my flesh wants to respond? How can I make sure that I am pointing others to Christ, even when maybe they're coming after me?

[15:01] So Peter, here in verse number 14, he's not pretending like there's nothing frightening about this. He doesn't say, hey, get over it, you big babies.

I mean, that's not Peter's heart here. That's not his burden. He understood what they were going through. I mean, Peter went through this in his own life.

I mean, read the book of Acts. Every time Peter's, they're not trying to cause a riot. They're not trying to overthrow the government. They're not trying to overthrow Rome. Here's what they were doing, preaching Christ.

And every time they preached Christ, you know what they did? Hey, you can't do that. And they'd throw him in jail, and they'd beat him, and they'd do all these things. And yet, the Bible says, they rejoiced. They were happy.

They were blessed. Not because they were being punished. Not because life was painful. No, because they were following Christ. And that was the forefront of their mind. That's what they were living for.

[15:55] And what Peter is telling them here at the end of verse number 14, and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled. Here's what he's saying. Don't let fear control you.

Because that's what the world tries to do. And to be honest, they're pretty successful at it. They have silenced Christians for a long, long time. And I think even in our culture, even in our country right now, we're dealing with the consequences that we've been silent for so long about so many key issues that we realize, how did we get here?

Well, it's because we didn't take a stand. Because we were afraid, and we maybe let fear control us. And they said, well, you can't say that at the workplace, and you can't say it here, and you can't live it here. Peter says, no, we're to live it everywhere.

We're to share the love of Christ. We're to do these things. Because there's a difference between feeling fear and being controlled by fear. See, fear says, what will people think?

You know, we want to be thought well of. And we think, well, if I do this, what will people think? But here's what faith says. What does God think? That's kind of where Peter's saying. We don't have to be worried.

[17:01] We don't have to be troubled. Because we're gods. That's who we're living for. Fear says, what if I do this? What if I obey God? What's it going to cost me? But when we're living by faith, we think, what's compromise going to cost me?

I'd rather please God than live in the fear of man. That's really what Peter is bringing us to. You see, when God is in his proper place in our heart, fear also gets put in its proper place.

That they cannot coexist. Faith and fear cannot coexist. That we must live by faith. And we're going to see here in a moment. But verse 14 just flows so perfectly into verse 15.

He says, and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. You know what Peter doesn't say? You just need to stop being afraid and just believe in yourself.

That's not what he says. No, if you're afraid and you believe in yourself, you're going to be more afraid. Because I don't have the answers. I don't have the ability to stand and do what God has called me to do.

[18:08] No, his answer to the fear of man is this. Put Jesus in his rightful place. He needs to be the Lord of your life. That's what he's been talking about the entire second chapter and coming up into our text here.

And the third chapter is we must submit to the Lordship of Christ. Whether it's in the workplace or the government or our home and our relationship. If everything, if God is in his rightful place, everything else is going to fall in his rightful place.

It's where it needs to be. See, because when Christ becomes small in our thinking, people become big in our thinking. When Jesus is small, we're so worried about everything else.

No, we need to flip that around. That Christ is big and he is the goal and he is the aim. And then everything else kind of goes strangely dim as the old hymn says. So here's the question when we think about obeying Christ.

Whose approval matters most? And Peter's answer is unmistakable. It's Jesus'. It's not your co-worker. It's not your spouse even.

[19:11] It's not your family. It's not this. No, the approval we're living for is God alone. That is what he's called us to do. And that's where real courage begins. Not with a stronger personality.

Not with greater confidence in ourselves. It begins in a heart that is settled on who sits on the throne of our life. That's where he's bringing us to this point. And that takes us into verse number 15.

And it answers our question again. How should we respond? We should respond by setting Christ apart. By setting Christ apart. Very clearly in these opening verses, Peter tells us, hey, don't be afraid.

Well, sometimes, you know, I remember growing up, I'd be afraid of something. I'd go tell my dad. He's like, well, get over it. That was a great talk. I'm glad I came here. You know, I got a lot of things to think about and move on with my life there.

You know, but sometimes he would sit down and say, hey, think about this. Hey, do this instead. And Peter doesn't tell us just to stop being afraid and act like the world isn't coming against us sometimes.

[20:20] No, he tells us how it's possible. That first phrase there. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. That word sanctify just means to set apart.

To regard as holy. To give God the place that belongs to him alone. The context reminds us once again what the believers are facing.

No doubt they would have probably been misunderstood. They were wondering, if I continue to be faithful, what's it going to cost me? It's already costing me my home. That's why I'm out on the run.

That's why I've had to move my family halfway across the world or whatever it might have been. And here's what Peter is saying. Before you worry about people around you, settle in your heart

where the Lord sets.

That's what he wanted him to get a hold of. Because if we're not careful, the fear of man begins determining what we say and what we do and where we stand. And the book of Proverbs reminds us it's not a great place to live.

[21:18] In fact, it says in Proverbs 29, 25, The fear of man bringeth a snare. But whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe. That's where God calls us to live.

And it's a hard question, but we need to ask ourselves, Is Jesus merely just my Savior or is he functioning as Lord of my life? Because if he's just our Savior, then we're just kind of holding on until he comes back.

But if he's Lord of our life, then he understands what we're facing. He understands that difficult workplace situation. He understands that relationship. He understands that you're trying to live for him. And he is Lord of your life.

Because it's possible to say we believe the Bible until believing the Bible becomes a little bit uncomfortable where we find ourselves. It's easy to agree with the Bible right here tonight. And on a Sunday morning, everybody's singing.

And man, I loved the singing this morning. It was awesome. And we're singing out about the truth of God's Word. And we're agreeing. And we're saying amen to the Word of God. But listen, you're going to go out tomorrow and not everybody's going to agree with the Word of God.

[22:19] And it's not that you don't believe it. But maybe I'm just not going to say something about it today. I don't want to make this an awkward situation. It's possible to say that Jesus is Lord until obedience costs you something.

But maybe you're not willing to pay. But here's what sanctify the Lord God in your hearts means. Let His Word have the final word.

That God is the one that determines how you live. That God's Word determines what we say and what we do and what we stand on. And once that's settled, something interesting should happen in your life.

People begin to notice. When you live for Christ, I didn't say they would always agree with it. But at some point, they're going to notice it. They're going to notice that maybe your speech is a little bit different than everybody else's.

Some of the conversations you may be not willing to get into or say, Hey, I don't really want to talk about that. I don't think we should be talking about that here. Or whatever it may be. It could be at school this week.

[23:18] And it could be at work for some of us as well. And Peter continues saying, Listen, when you sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, here's what you need to be ready for.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you for the reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. Now, the order is very, very clear here.

He says, First, you've got to make Jesus your Lord. And when you do that, it's going to change the way you live. And when that happens, you need to be ready to explain why you live the way you do. You need to be ready to give an answer for the hope that you have.

Because a life that is centered on Christ ought to produce something people can see. What Peter is saying here is he says, Let your hope become visible.

I think what we see in verse number 15, Peter assumes that if we live a life that is pleasing to God, somebody might ask us about it. Sometimes that's why people are chameleon Christians.

[24:19] I don't want to let them know I'm a Christian too much because they might ask me something. That's the point. That's actually the whole goal of it. Jesus didn't say, Let your light just be hidden and only shine when you want to.

No, he said, Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works. They may see how you live and you can point them to your heavenly Father. That is the aim.

And when we think about it, he's writing to people that are suffering and they're being mistreated. And they're living in a culture that is increasingly hostile towards their faith. There's a man named Nero on the throne and he's coming after Christians.

Life is not easy. And yet Peter says, Hey, I expect that somebody should look at your life and say, Why do you still have hope? You've moved here. The government's against you.

And you're smiling sometimes. You seem to have some good things going on in your life. And here's what he wanted them to understand. The world can see when we're hurting, but they should

also see that we're not hopeless.

[25:18] The world can see when somebody's mistreated, but when they don't retaliate, they're thinking, Well, that's weird. Because you know what? You're probably going to be mistreated at work one time.

But if you just kind of let it slide on and say, Hey, no big deal, man. No, don't worry about it. There's going to be somebody in your office thinking, What? Like, that's not how I would have handled that situation.

And they may not say something immediately, but you know what they're going to do? They're going to file that away. And they're going to notice there is a pattern in your life. It's not that we're perfect. And it's not that you don't always, maybe there are times where you do retaliate and you just, you know, your tongue just says something that you don't want to say every once in a while. We're not saying that we're perfect, but over time they're going to realize there's something different in the way this person lives. There's something different in the way they respond. These believers would maybe have been uncertain about tomorrow.

Job may have been difficult to find. They wouldn't have maybe hired somebody like this. But they also lived in a way that they were confident about eternity. And see, when we live that way, you should have somebody.

[26:27] I hope you've had somebody ask you, hey, what's different about you? Why do you live the way you do? Why is church so important to you? Why are you always inviting me to church?

Every time your church has something going on, you always invite me. Why? What's the big deal? And here's what Peter is saying. When that moment comes, not if it comes, but when it comes, you need to be ready.

You need to have an answer to give them. Because our world desperately needs to see this type of Christian. Because we look at our world, and it's falling apart.

And we're going through the same financial strain that the world's going through. Gas costs us the same amount as it costs other people. Groceries cost us the same amount. And we're dealing with the same pressures. And it's not that we don't feel it, but we're also not living for this world.

We also have a different view and a different hope. And we're not dismissing all of the issues of life, but we are living for something more. And it should show in the way that we live and how we react and what we do.

[27:29] And it's not that we don't experience problems, but the problems don't destroy our hope. Because Christianity doesn't exempt us from hardship. But here's what it does do. It gives us hope in the middle of hardship.

It gives us hope in the middle of difficulty. And there's something powerful about watching someone walk through something difficult and still trust God. It's a wonderful, beautiful thing to watch.

I see it in our own church. We see people on the prayer list, and yet they're here on Sunday mornings and Sunday nights and Wednesday. And we know what they're going through, and we're praying for them. And it's amazing to see here, but it's even more amazing when it's out in the wild, so to speak.

When you're at the workplace, and they know what you're going through. And they know you maybe lost a loved one recently or got a bad health diagnosis or something. And they still see you with a little bit of joy in your life.

With a little bit of peace in your life. How is that possible? Because underneath all the uncertainty that we face as Christians, we have a settled confidence that Jesus is still Lord.

[28:33] That He's still on the throne. That He still loves us. That our salvation is not based on what we do. It's based on who He is. It's based on the promises that we find in the Word of God.

And that gives us an opportunity to say this when they ask the question, let me tell you about my Jesus. Let me tell you what He's done for me. And before we move on and look at a couple other things about this, maybe ask yourself, is my hope visible enough that somebody's going to ask me about it?

We need to take inventory of that. It should be. Listen, your classmates at school, you know what they need to see? A hope that's in your life. Because even as teenagers, they're looking around and they're hopeless.

We live in a generation where we have so many things and yet they think, man, I have no hope in this life. You have it, take it to school with you. We have it, take it to work with us. People need to

see it.

Peter doesn't tell us right here, have all the right answers. No, here's what he says. Live in a way, in such a way somebody wants to ask you a question of why. That's what he's showing us.

[29 : 38] So we need to make our hope visible. But he does make it clear, we need to be ready always to give an answer. The word answer is simply this, it's giving a defense.

This is the same word that we get our word apologetics for. Apologetics is not apologizing for the Bible, it's defending the Bible. And we have an answer for it.

And so Peter isn't saying here that every Christian needs to become a professional theologian. You may not be able to answer every question somebody asks you about Christianity.

You know, sometimes when you start talking about Christianity and your walk with the Lord, you're going to get some weird questions that there are no answers to. You know, my grandma said every time a bell rings an angel gets his wings.

Like your grandma didn't say that. Clarence Oddbody said that. But sometimes you're going to get some weird things. But here's what Peter wants them to know. So you ought to be able to answer this one.

[30 : 40] Why is Jesus your hope? Everybody in this room ought to be able to answer that question. I mean, can you tell somebody who Jesus is? Can you explain what he did for you?

Can you tell them why your sins are forgiven? Can you tell them why suffering and difficulty, maybe if you're walking through that, hasn't destroyed your faith? I think sometimes we make witnessing and sharing Christ with others, I think we make it much more intimidating than we need to.

I would imagine all of us in this room, I've even thought it as well. I'll be honest. Every time one of you asks me, preacher, I want to ask you a question about the Bible. I'm like, oh, great.

Because it's like, I feel like as the preacher, I'm supposed to have the answers. But here's something. Write this down. If they ask you and you don't know, say this. I don't know. But let's find out.

That's okay. I'm sure I've told a lot of you out there in that foyer. I don't know that, but let me look this up and we'll talk to you about it Wednesday. We'll talk about it next week. Let me get my mind around it. There's nothing wrong with that.

[31 : 50] But that's not really what Peter's talking about. He's saying, hey, you should be able to tell somebody what Jesus did for you. You may not have to go into a deep dive and get into all the doctrine of the Bible. Well, that's really not what people need at the beginning.

They just need to know Jesus loves them. And how Jesus, if Jesus saved you, he can save them as well. See, our confidence that we have, the hope that we have, is not in knowing everything about the Bible.

Our confidence that it is, we know Jesus Christ. And he changed us. We were sinners. We were hopeless. We were dead. We were in our trespasses and sin. But Jesus showed up and everything changed.

And it should come out in the way we live. And how we talk and how we love and how we care for other people. And Peter says this. He didn't say just have an answer ready.

He said, be ready always. Wherever God opens the door, be ready. Sometimes the door opens in just some random places. I mean, the door opened for me.

[32 : 50] I mean, I'm just giving you a personal example of somebody in our neighborhood that's walking through something very difficult. Right there on our sidewalk. And she came up to me and she said, somebody in this neighborhood told me you're a pastor.

I said, I am. She said, I'm walking through some really difficult things. I said, let me just tell you this. Jesus loves you. You may have not saw this coming, but Jesus knew it was going to happen.

And right there on our sidewalk, we had this long conversation. I'm trying to get her here to church. Her family's been walking through some very difficult things. But you know what? I didn't have to have all the answers.

I just needed to let her know this. Jesus loves me, but Jesus also loves you. That's what he's talking about. Just everyday life. It wasn't like we had this deep, I didn't even have my Bible.

We were just talking. Listen, that's what God is saying. We need to just be ready. It might happen on a sidewalk. It might happen in a Walmart checkout line because the Lord knows you're going to be there a while. Even in the self-checkout line.

[33:47] I can't even check anything out. I'm like, I don't know how this thing's working. They've got to come check and do all these things. The idea is, he's saying, look for some opportunity. Sometimes we may think an opportunity is coming, and so we run.

We think, well, I don't know the answers. I don't just want to say anything. Ah! No, no. You have the answers they need, at least to get the ball rolling. So here's what Peter says. He says, in order to share the hope, you need to make sure your own heart is full of hope.

Because this world and life, and maybe when we're going through things, and it seems like the world's against us, and people are bad-mouthing us, or whatever it might be. Sometimes that's going to wear our hope down.

You know what? I'm just, today, not today. I don't want to share the love of God today. We may not say it, but sometimes we live that way. But we need to make sure that we constantly are in the Word, and we're reminded of the hope that we have.

Because there is a big difference between knowing facts about Jesus and actually just having a deep, intimate relationship with Him. Because even as Christians, we can just know a lot of facts, but not really develop that relationship like we should.

[34:54] We can go through seasons of dry spells where the fellowship between us and our Heavenly Father is just minimal at best. Surface level at best. But that's why we stay in the Word.

That's why we pray. That's why we remind ourselves of the promises of God. Because before I can explain the hope that's within me, I need to make sure that hope's alive within me. Because when we're in the Word, when God is speaking to us, when we're involved in a local church, and we come, and God speaks to our heart, it should just encourage you to get out and do what God's called you to do.

Hey, that I'm not the only person trying to live for the Lord. And He says, here's what you should do as well. Not only give an answer, but you need to give an answer the right way. The very end, He says this.

Here's how you should answer with the hope that lies within you. With meekness and fear. See, in other words, Peter is saying how we give the answer matters too.

We talked a little bit about it in Sunday school this morning. But we can all say the right thing the wrong way. God didn't call us to beat Him over the head with the gospel. No, He called us to share the truth in love.

[36:01] And I love how one commentator said it. He says, meekness is not weakness. Here's what it is. It's strength under control. He said it's conviction without arrogance. It's courage without hostility.

It's truth without cruelty. That's how God calls us to share the gospel. If we go back in our own mind, you know where the gospel met us? Right where we were. And yes, there's things about it that kind of scared us maybe at the beginning.

That somebody's calling us a sinner. But you know what we realize? God met us right where we were. He didn't say, well, you got to get here. And how dare you think that? And I can't believe you would do that. No, He said, hey, I love you.

There's hope here. And then Peter says, not only do we answer with meekness, but we answer with fear. Not that we're scared of people, but the idea is this. We answer in reverence to God.

That's what the word means often in Scripture. It's not that we're scared of God, but there is a healthy reverence for Him. And while we're speaking to somebody, while we're sharing the truth, while we're presenting the gospel to this person, we need to be conscious of this.

[37:06] I represent Jesus. Jesus. I'm speaking on His behalf. Paul calls us this, ambassadors for Christ. You know, sometimes somebody says something for us, and then it gets back to us like, hey, you said this.

I'm like, I didn't say that. Well, so-and-so. I was talking to so-and-so, and they said this, this, and I'm like, well, so-and-so didn't ask me about that. They were speaking on their own behalf. Listen, we're not out here sharing the gospel on our own behalf.

We are representing King Jesus, and we need to be conscious of that when we're speaking to other people. You know what happens a lot of times? Christians, maybe even well-meaning Christians, they begin to be mean about it.

And instead of sharing the gospel, they actually turn people off from Jesus. Because if that's what a follower of Christ looks like, I don't think I want any part of that. That's why we have to answer with

meekness and in fear.

Listen, rudeness is not boldness. I mean, it's not. Being obnoxious is not standing for truth. We aren't called to win arguments.

[38:11] We are called to point people to Jesus. Yes, we stand firmly on the truth, and we should. Because we stand on the truth. But we don't need a sin to defend it.

We don't need to be angry about it. But the Jesus we defend ought to be visible in the way that we defend him. And so really the challenge that we find here in verse number 15 is this.

Is let Jesus be Lord of your heart. Let your hope be visible. Know why you have the hope. And when somebody asks you about it, tell them. That's what we need to do. That's how we set Christ apart.

That it affects every area of our life. They don't have to peel it out of us and think, you know, get down and try to do some investigation PI work on us. No, they think, I think that person's a Christian.

There's something different about him. Let me ask the question. Let me talk to him. See, but our witness isn't just what comes out of our mouth. It's what people see in our lives. And so lastly, we see in verses 16 and 17, we should respond by keeping a clear conscience.

[39:14] Verse 16, having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as evildoers, that they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

For it is better, if the will of God be so, that you suffer for doing well than for evil doing. See, a good conscience means that we can stand before God knowing that I am sincerely seeking to obey him. That the way that I live and the hope that I share is simply trying to represent the Christ the best way we can. None of us here are perfect.

God's not calling us to be perfect. But what he is wanting us to do, he means that there should be some integrity between what I say, I believe, and how I actually live.

That we keep this clear conscience. Peter doesn't say, hey, if you live right, nobody's ever going to say anything about you. No, he says the exact opposite. You're going to live right, and people are going to misunderstand and misrepresent and falsely accuse you, and that's difficult.

[40:23] I mean, I've been dealing with something this past week, and it's difficult. And I'm trying to let it go, just to be honest. But I'm thinking to myself, you don't even know me. I've never even met you.

And you're saying some of these things, and it's kind of really been under my skin. And then I start studying this message, and I'm like, I know, Lord, but I don't want to do that right now. I want to tell him what's up. I mean, honestly, I have.

And I was talking to Brother Justin about it. He's like, you want to beat him up? I'm like, don't ask me that again, because I'm going to say yes. I mean, our natural instinct wants to straighten it out. Let people know our side. Listen, you don't have the facts right. You don't even know what you're saying. And don't misunderstand. There's times, and there's certainly times, when things need to be clarified.

But sometimes the best answer, oftentimes the best answer to a false accusation, is a faithful life. Because we're not living to set the record straight. We're living to please God.

[41:24] We're living to keep a clear conscience before Him. That we can live, that we can stand before the Lord one day and say, hey, I wasn't perfect, but I did everything I could. I lived to the best of my ability.

And that's what Peter is saying. He said, we need to live in such a way, they're going to speak evil of you. But ultimately, when they do that, they're going to be ashamed, because when they falsely accuse you of something you're actually not living for.

Because your conversation, your lifestyle is not for you. You're not building your kingdom. You're living for Christ. I mean, really what verse number 16 says, Live in such a way that eventually the accusation they put against you completely crumbles.

It just falls apart because they have no leg to stand on. So you can't always control what people say about you, but you can control whether you give them a legitimate reason to say it. Because sometimes we do.

Sometimes they may be wrong in how they say it, what they say, but there's some truth to it because we didn't live the way that we should. We didn't have a clear conscience before God. You say, well, how can I live this way?

[42:29] Well, we see this little phrase all throughout the New Testament. It's Paul's favorite phrase, but Peter uses it as well. In Christ. Because living this way, having a clear conscience before God, is not found in Tyler.

It's not found in you. Here's what it's found in. In Christ. We're going to slip up. We're going to fall. But you know what we do? We go and ask for forgiveness. And he's faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and to set our feet back on the path.

Peter isn't telling us here to manufacture some impressive behavior so people will think we're good people. That's not what he's saying. He's saying, hey, we live this way because Jesus completely changed us.

He's made us a new creature. We have the ability to live this way now. Jesus changes the way that we think and we speak and how we respond when we're hurt and the way we handle opposition. And that's what makes our witness believable. We should stick out like a sore thumb. Because when Christ gets in your life, when he's Lord of your life, you're going to respond.

[43:35] You should respond differently than how you used to. Maybe even in your own life, go back. You're not all the way there yet because we're not going to be until we see Jesus. But back in the day, man, flying off the handle was my middle name.

I mean, that might be your testimony. But guess what? God shows up. God gets in your life. Things start changing. What happened to you? Oh, you found Jesus. I did, actually.

And you begin to share the truth and share the gospel with them. Listen, people may disagree with your doctrine. They may criticize your convictions that you have. But Peter's saying, don't give them a legitimate reason to reject Jesus by the way you live.

I mean, that's what he's talking about here in these verses. In verse number 17, just to clarify what he was saying in verse 16, he says, listen, if they're going to be offended, let them be offended by the truth, not your hypocrisy.

If you're going to suffer, let it be because of how you live for Christ, not how you live for yourself. That's the two possibilities that we have.

[44:37] Peter says you can either suffer for evil doing or you can suffer for well doing. If you're going to suffer, make sure you're suffering for the right reason. That's really what he's trying to nail down here.

Because if we're dishonest in the way that we live and the way that we speak, we're going to lose people's trust. We're not being persecuted. That's just what we're reaping, what we sow. If we're rude and people don't want to be around us, that's not because we're suffering for righteousness sake.

That's because you're a jerk. I mean, I don't know any other way to say it. That's what Peter's saying right here. See, sometimes we're not suffering because we're Christians.

We're just suffering from bad decisions. And we see that little line there in the middle of verse 17. That's really where it comes down to. He says, If the will of God be so.

Maybe you are going through something. And you know in your heart you have a clear conscience before God. And this is a hard thing to wrestle with.

[45:47] Because maybe the reason you're suffering right now is because that's what the will of God is for your life. I don't know why. You may not know now. But we do know this, that God works all things together for good.

To them that love God, to those that are called according to His purpose. And what He's going to do is He's using that situation. He's allowing that suffering in your life. Not only to others can see it and maybe draw them to Himself.

But He also is conforming you to the image of His dear Son. He's making you more like Jesus.

Jesus was a man of sorrows. He was a man that suffered. And God's will is always good.

But God's will is not always easy. That's what Peter's saying. Sometimes obedience is going to take you to a place. You never would have chosen for yourself.

Sometimes God does not remove the trial. But all the time God walks through us with it. He doesn't say, hey, I'll see you on the other side. No, sometimes He has to carry us because we can't even walk any further.

[46:49] See, it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking, if I'm in God's will, then shouldn't things be going better? Not necessarily. I mean, multiple times in the Gospels, the disciples were right where Jesus wanted them to be.

And they were in a storm. And they were in a difficulty. And they had no food. And they had all these things. And there was all these problems. But God put them there. But God also stretched them. And God grew them. And God made their life understand certain things.

So if doing right costs you, I just want to remind you, God hasn't lost control. He sees you. He knows. And He can even use that suffering for His purposes. In fact, we think of this entire passage, why would somebody ask these people about hope?

With all their difficulty. Because they should have it. Peter's saying, listen, just because all these things are going on in your life, your hope's not gone, is it?

He already told us that we have an inheritance that's incorruptible. It's secure. It fades not away. That's not just for eternity. That's even for life right now.

[47 : 57] We're not waiting for the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. We don't have to wait until heaven to enjoy the goodness of God. We can experience it right now.

And Peter knows the greatest example of this is Jesus Himself. We're going to get into it next week. Verse 18, though. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins. Peter points us to the ultimate example of someone who suffered for doing right.

Jesus. He only did those things that pleased the Father. He only did good things. He only did the best thing. And yet He suffered more than any person that's ever walked on this earth.

No one ever lived more righteously than Jesus. And nobody ever suffered more unjustly than Jesus. See, the cross reminds us this.

That suffering is not proof that God's abandoned His plan. At Calvary, suffering was the plan. It's what He was coming for.

[48 : 59] And God took the darkest moment in human history. And used it to accomplish the greatest good in human history. And the same can be true in our life.

Yes, it might be a dark moment. It might be hard to understand. But God can take even that, whatever's in your life. Whatever's going to come into your life and use it for good. So how should we respond when doing right costs us?

Keep trusting God. Make sure He's set apart. He's on the throne in our life. And live by keeping a clear conscience before Him. But maybe you're still there and thinking, Well, what if it costs me? What if it costs me somebody's approval or a friendship or comfort or opportunity? Here's what Peter says. Don't let fear make your decisions. Let Jesus make your decisions.

Let Him lead your life. Honor Him in the way you live. Even if it costs you. Maybe you're here and you've lived life.

[50 : 04] You've tried to be faithful and life has gotten harder. God sees. God loves. It could be that somebody's watching you right now.

How you're walking through that thing right now. Do they see Jesus in it? Peter said that's what they need to see. Watching how you handle disappointment.

Watching how you respond to mistreatment. And they may not ask tomorrow. But at some point they're going to say, Why? How? How can you keep moving forward?

And here's what he's saying. Kind of the same thing we talked about this morning. Just a different angle. Be ready. We need to be ready. See, doing right may cost you.

But compromising Christ can cost you a lot more. I don't want to stand before the Lord one day and say, Man, I should have done that. I should have said this. I should have went here.

[51 : 05] I should have been more kind there. I should have shared the gospel. Here's what I want the Lord to say. Well done, thou good and faithful servant. He didn't call me to be perfect. But he called me to trust him.

And to follow him. And to live before him. You say, It's going to cost me a lot. It's going to all pan out in the end. The Lord knows. And he'll settle the score.

And he'll make all things right. Thank the Lord for that. Would you stand with your heads bowed in?