

1 Peter 3:8-22 ~ Suffering for Doing Good

1. In Verse 3:8, Peter lists five key qualities that every Christian should have. What are they? Describe each in your own words. Did they come naturally to Peter? (Mark 8:31-33) Do they come naturally to you?
2. In Verse 3:9, Peter says to repay evil with a blessing and to repay an insult with a blessing. Have you ever actually done this? (Matthew 5:39-45)
3. When are you most tempted to return evil with evil and insult with insult? Why?
4. In Verses 3:10-12, how does Peter's quote from Psalm 34 sum up and add to all he has said in Verses 2:11 through 3:9? (James 3:2-18)
5. How did Peter use a rhetorical question to further explain his point? (3:13)
6. Why did Peter write about suffering for what is right? (3:14, Matthew 5:10-12) How could this be a blessing?
7. What did Peter instruct his readers (and us!) to be prepared to do? Who will assist you in this? (3:15-17, Mark 13:11)
8. What were the five things Peter said about Christ's death in 3:18? (Hebrews 9:28, 7:27, Romans 5:1-2)
9. Verses 3:19-20a can be very confusing. Bible scholars have put forth several different interpretation of this passage. What do you think that sentence means?
10. Who were the eight people saved in the ark that Noah built? (3:20b) What did God establish with Noah. What was its symbol? (3:20, Genesis 6:18, 9:12-17)
11. What did Peter say that the waters of the flood now symbolize? (3:21) There is actually a double symbolism here; what is it? (Romans 6:3-4)
12. In Verse 3:21, what is the "pledge of a good conscience toward God" [NIV] or "a response to God from a clean conscience?"
13. Who does Peter say is in submission to Christ? For how long? (3:22, Ephesians 1:21, 6:12, Hebrews 1:4)

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1. In Verse 3:8, Peter lists five key qualities that every Christian should have. What are they? Describe each in your own words. Did they come naturally to Peter? (Mark 8:31-33) Do they come naturally to you?

Note that in 2:11-17 Peter addressed all his readers; in 2:18-25, he addressed slaves; in 3:1-6 he addressed wives; in 3:7 husbands, and now is is again addressing everyone. The five qualities he says everyone should have and that go a long way in helping believers serve God effectively are:

- 1) Harmony—pursuing the same goals
- 2) Sympathy—being responsive to the needs of others
- 3) Love—seeing and treating each other as brothers and sisters
- 4) Compassion—being affectionately sensitive and caring
- 5) Humility—being willing to encourage one another and rejoice in each other’s successes.

Peter developed the qualities of compassion and humility the hard way. In his early days with Christ, these attitudes did not come naturally to his strong-willed personality. Mark 8:31-33 – He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the things of God but the things of men.”

2. In Verse 3:9, Peter says to repay evil with a blessing, to repay an insult with a blessing. Have you ever actually done this? (Matthew 5:39-45)

This is really tough. Forgiveness is tough enough, but this is even harder. In the earthly world it is deemed acceptable, even admirable to get revenge or to get even. John F. Kennedy, who claimed to be a good Catholic, said more than once, “Don’t get mad, get even.” A few years ago, Evelyn Murphy, a former Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts and a Women's Studies Research Center Scholar gave a major speech entitled, “Don’t get mad, get even.” There’s a website called “thePayback.com” that has as its slogan, “Don't get mad, get even”. It elaborates: “Get Revenge On People Who Have Done You Wrong! We stand ready to help you get revenge.”

What does Jesus say? Matthew 5:39-45 – But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. “You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I

tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

3. When are you most tempted to return evil with evil and insult with insult? Why?

4. In Verses 3:10-12, how does Peter's quote from Psalm 34 sum up and add to all he has said in Verses 2:11 through 3:9? (James 3:2-18)

Verses 3:10-12 are from Psalm 34:12-16 written by David. In the psalm, Verse 11 is the lead-in which says, "I will teach you the fear of the Lord," which in this context means honoring God by living in accordance with the Lord's will because of your reverence for him.

The psalm then says that those who do good (as Peter spelled out earlier) will "love life" and will "see good days." God's eyes will be on them and he will hear their prayers (v 12).

Okay, what has Peter said in these two chapters so far:

1. You as Christians are a chosen people, you are the people of God and you should praise God for having mercy on you.
2. As Christians, you are aliens and strangers in this world because you belong to God's world.
3. You must be submissive to earthly authority, to your earthly masters, even ones who treat you harshly, and you must follow Christ's example of not retaliating or responding to insults, but rather entrusting yourself to the Lord.
4. Wives must be submissive to their husbands, and husbands must treat their wives with respect and consideration.
5. You must all live in harmony with each other and show love, sympathy, compassion, and humbleness.

Here, Peter emphasizes that a small part of the body, your tongue, can affect your entire behavior. In his letter, James says that the tongue is like the rudder of a ship or the bit placed in the horse's mouth or a spark that starts a forest fire. In Verses 3:8-10, James says, "no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be."

So the bottom line summary is:

1. Don't use your tongue for insults or gossip but use it to praise God and bless others, even your enemies and abusive bosses and masters.
2. By your actions, show that you are a Christian.
3. God will see you, bless you, and answer your prayers.

[See note at end about the Jewish prayer, Elohai N'tzor, recited after the

“Amidah,” a central prayer in Jewish liturgy that draws from the same verse as Peter 3:10b.]

5. How did Peter use a rhetorical question to further explain his point? (3:13)

As a general rule, people are not harmed for an act of kindness. I might mention here that the phrase ‘No good deed goes unpunished’ is a sardonic and cynical commentary on the idea that acts of kindness backfire on those who offer them. In other words, because life is inherently unfair, those who help others are doomed to suffer as a result of their being helpful. It’s actually a rather stupid and pessimistic saying, and from a Biblical perspective falls in the same category as “don’t get mad, get even.” (Also see next question and discussion.)

6. Why did Peter write about suffering for what is right? (3:14, Matt 5:10-12) How could this be a blessing?

From the NIV Study Bible: In the Greek, this conditional clause is the furthest removed from stating a reality. Suffering for doing good, for righteousness, is a remote possibility, but even if it does occur, it brings special blessing to the sufferer.

Matthew 5:10-12 – ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Peter added “do not fear what they fear...” more or less quoting Isaiah 8:13 in reverse.

Isaiah 8:13 – The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread,

In other words, God’s people are not to view things as unbelievers do. They are not to make worldly judgements or be afraid of the enemies of God. Instead, they are to fear God.

Of course, we must remember that some people in Peter’s audience were, in fact, being persecuted for being Christian believers. Thus, Peter wanted them to make the best possible impression on outsiders to avoid provoking unnecessary persecution (v. 13) and to attract further converts (v. 15).

7. What did Peter instruct his readers (and us!) to be prepared to do? Who will assist you in this? (3:15-17, Mark 13:11)

In the first sentence of Verse 15, he exhorted his readers to make an inner commitment to Christ. They need not be speechless when called upon to defend their faith. Instead you will be ready to answer with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Mark 13:11 – Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

Obviously, being arrested and brought to trial is a somewhat different situation than Peter describes, nevertheless, the Holy Spirit always stands ready to help you defend and speak out about your faith.

Peter adds to his exhortation that Christians are to be gentle and respectful when answering or giving your testimony to unbelievers, even when opposed by them (v. 3:16). Our answer (“apologetic”) is always to be given with love, never in degrading terms. Thus, you will have a “clear conscience” and because of your loving attitude, it will put your opponent in a bad light (“ashamed of their slander”). Even if it doesn’t work out exactly like that, at least your conscience is clear and, as Peter repeats in 3:17, “it is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.”

8. What were the five things Peter said about Christ’s death in 3:18?

(Hebrews 9:28, 7:27, Romans 5:1-2)

1. He died for [our] sins. Hebrews 9:28 – so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

2. He died once for all. Hebrews 7:27 – Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

3. The righteous [died for] the unrighteous. Like Christ, we Christians should be ready to suffer for doing good.

4. He died to bring you to God. Romans 5:1-2 – Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

5. He died in the body but was made alive by the Spirit. This refers to the resurrection, which is generally attributed to the Father (Acts 2:32 – God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Also Galatians 1:1, Ephesians 1:20) although John said Jesus did it on command from the Father.

This verse reminds Peter’s readers and us today that Christ is their (and our) pattern. Just as Christ was put to death [died] in the human, worldly sphere and was raised to life in the spiritual sphere, so will we be. This is not a denial of bodily resurrection but underlines the fact that Christ’s risen life is no mere continuation of natural, earthly existence but is rather an anticipation of the age to come, ‘spiritual’ because he lived directly in the presence of God, indeed, is God.

It was in the spiritual sphere that Christ made a proclamation to the imprisoned spirits (3:19-20).

9. Verses 3:19-20a can be very confusing. Bible scholars have put forth three different interpretation of this passage. What do you think that sentence means?

Interpretation 1: In his preincarnate state, Christ went and preached through Noah to the wicked generation of that time.

Interpretation 2: Christ preached the good news to the pre-Christian dead in the underworld. Some say he did not preach the good news but proclaimed his victory.

Interpretation 3: The description of these imprisoned spirits suggests that they are the angelic beings of Genesis 6:1-6 whose disobedience ultimately led to the flood. Jubilees 7:21 – For owing to these three things came the flood upon the earth, namely, owing to the fornication wherein the *Watchers* against the law of their ordinances went a whoring after the daughters of men, and took themselves wives of all which they chose: and they made the beginning of uncleanness. [The Book of Jubilees, sometimes called Lesser Genesis, is an ancient Jewish religious work, considered one of the pseudepigrapha by Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox Churches. Jubilees is considered canonical by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as well as Jews in Ethiopia.]

There are problems with all three of these views. The first doesn't relate to Christ's death and resurrection. The second is strange in that Christ would be preaching to only the spirits of disobedient contemporaries of Noah. Furthermore, the first and second views seem to allow that people might hear the good news and respond to it after their death, which is not found anywhere else in the Bible. The third assumes sexual relations between angels and women.

If one ties this verse to 3:22, the point is then that at his resurrection, Christ proclaimed his victory to the wicked and disobedient spirits that had troubled humanity. As a consequence of his resurrection, Christ now reigns with God and all the spiritual powers have been made subject to him (3:22).

10. Who were the eight people saved in the ark that Noah built? (3:20b) What did God establish with Noah. What was its symbol? (Genesis 6:18, 9:12-17)

Noah, his wife, Noah's three sons (Shem, Ham, and Japheth) and their wives. Genesis 6:18 – But I will establish My covenant (promise, pledge) with you, and you shall come into the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. [Amplified]

God's covenant with Noah was symbolized by a rainbow.

Genesis 9:12-17 – ¹² And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: ¹³ I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. ¹⁶ Whenever the rainbow appears in the

clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.”

¹⁷ So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

Do you think God needed a reminder to remember his covenant with Noah? If not, why is it written as though he did?

**11. What did Peter say that the waters of the flood now symbolize? (3:21)
There is actually a double symbolism here; what is it? (Romans 6:3-4)**

Peter said that the flood water symbolizes baptism, but also that baptism symbolizes salvation. Note that in both instances (flood and baptism), it is the water that saves. In the flood, it also caused the death of the wicked. Stretching the analogy a bit, we could also say that baptism symbolizes the death of sin with Christ’s death but also our salvation with his resurrection. And, indeed that’s what Paul says in Romans 6:3-4 – Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Back when that was written, baptism so closely followed conversion (to believing in Christ) that the two were considered part of one event. So although baptism is not the means by which we enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ, it is closely associated with faith.

12. In Verse 3:21, what is the “pledge of a good conscience toward God” [NIV] or “a response to God from a clean conscience?”

The Amplified Bible enlarges on this verse.

1 Peter 3:21 – And baptism, which is a figure [of their deliverance], does now also save you [from inward questionings and fears], not by the removing of outward body filth [bathing], but by [providing you with] the answer of a good and clear conscience (inward cleanness and peace) before God [because you are demonstrating what you believe to be yours] through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In other words, the act of baptism is a commitment on the part of believers in all good conscience to make sure what baptism symbolizes will become a reality in their lives. Baptism, too, is a public commitment of your faith.

The converse of this verse is also true that only people exercising faith toward God will benefit from baptism. No infant baptism here.

13. Who does Peter say is in submission to Christ? For how long? (3:22, Ephesians 1:21, 6:12, Hebrews 1:4)

Peter says that angels, authorities, and powers are in submission to the authority of Christ. In the ancient world, spiritual beings were widely believed to directly affect the course of affairs on earth. Christians needed to be reminded that

Christ has already won his victory over these spiritual powers, good and bad. It meant to people then and to us today that we need not fear even the spiritual realm.

Angels are spiritual beings created by God to serve Him, though created higher than man. Some, the good angels, have remained obedient to Him and carry out His will, while others, fallen angels, disobeyed, fell from their holy position, and now stand in active opposition to the work and plan of God. The mention of angels is inclusive in Scripture. Depending on the Bible translation searched, these celestial beings are referred to from 294 to 305 times in the Bible. References to angels occur at least 116 times in the Old Testament and 175 times in the New Testament.

Hebrews 1:4 – So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

The terms “authorities and powers” generally refers to evil beings.

Ephesians 6:12 – For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Jesus is over all these beings, good and evil, then, now, and forever.

Ephesians 1:21 – far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Re: Peter 3:10. The Jewish prayer, Elohai N'tzor, recited after the “Amidah,” a central prayer in Jewish liturgy that draws from the same verse as Peter 3:10b.

Elohai N'tzor

My God, keep my tongue from evil, my lips from lies. Help me ignore those who would slander me. Let me be humble before all. Open my heart to Your Torah [first five books of the Bible] that I may pursue Your mitzvot [commandments]. Frustrate the designs of those who plot evil against me; make nothing of their schemes. Act for the sake of Your compassion, Your power, Your holiness, and Your Torah.

Answer my prayer for the deliverance of Your people. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing to You, Adonai, my Rock and my Redeemer.

May the One who brings peace to His universe bring peace to us and to all the people Israel. Amen.