

## Set Apart Christ as Lord

### 1 Peter 3:8-22

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. **9** Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. **10** For

“Whoever desires to love life  
and see good days,  
let him keep his tongue from evil  
and his lips from speaking deceit;  
**11** let him turn away from evil and do good;  
let him seek peace and pursue it.  
**12** For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,  
and his ears are open to their prayer.  
But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

**13** Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? **14** But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, **15** but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, **16** having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. **17** For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

**18** For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, **19** in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, **20** because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. **21** Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, **22** who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Peter was originally writing to strangers in a strange land. They were spiritual exiles who, on account of their faith in Christ, were experiencing opposition from those in society and the government. However, Peter told them that their suffering didn't mean they were wrong to follow Christ. Rather, suffering for their faith confirmed their identity in Christ. As they conform their lives to the example of Christ they should not be surprised to receive the same hostile reaction that He did. Nor should we! As Americans, we typically have a strong aversion to suffering. We sometimes become gripped with fear and anger. Once gripped with fear, our gut reactions are usually to “pull back” from culture or to “pay back” culture. However, Peter tells us that the appropriate reaction is to “bless back.” It is when we “bless back” that we fulfill our calling to reflect Christ in a broken and hostile world. In our passage, Peter gives us a blueprint for how we are supposed to live as blessings in a world that is against us.

#### I. **We are called to love our neighbor (vv. 8-9)**

In the previous section, Peter taught us that wives make themselves beautiful to their husbands when they adorn themselves with the character of Christ. In verse 8, Peter addresses the Church and says she makes herself beautiful to the world when her members adorn themselves with love. There are two aspects to this adorning. First, Christians must love each other with family affection. Their shared commonality in Christ must transcend every other loyalty and together, they must function as an actual family. This family love serves not only for their benefit in a hostile environment, but it also is their chief way to show the rest of

the world that Christ is alive. Secondly, the Church must love even their enemies. Following the command of Jesus in Matthew 5:44, Christians reflect Christ when they “bless back” their persecutors rather than “pay back.” The principle is that the life of a sinner saved by grace is marked by grace. Rather than seeking to retaliate, the Christian seeks the welfare and good of those who oppose them.

**II. To stay faithful in our calling, we must set Christ apart as Lord (vv.13-17).**

In verse 13, Peter says that if we simply live our calling, we will defuse much hostility. However, Peter knows that even if we love others well, we will still suffer on account of Jesus’ name. Jesus Himself said the nations will hate us on account of Him (Matt. 24:9). Thus, to keep from being controlled by the fear of man, we must set our eyes on Christ, revering and trusting Him as Lord. We set Christ apart as Lord when we revere Him, trust Him, and give reason to others for why we hope in Him. Furthermore, it is when we set Jesus apart as Lord that we experience freedom from the fear of man. Paul says “if God is for us in Christ, who could be against us?” Being secured in Christ, we don’t have one thing in the world to be afraid of!

**III. To remain hopeful as we live out our calling, we must have a heavenly perspective (vv. 18-22).**

As we see today, the early Church saw that many of those who committed evil against them were getting away with it. Much more, it seemed as if they were actually prospering in life. Peter then gives us the hope we need as we follow Christ. First, he tells us we must set our eyes upon the model of Christ’s victory. The model of this world is “glory now, destruction later.” As we see in verse 18 and Phil. 2:5-11, the model of Christ is rather, “humiliation now, victory later.” The way of Christ led Him to the cross, and then to His victorious resurrection and glorious ascension. As we see in 1 Cor. 15, that will also be true of those who die in Christ. Jesus didn’t stay in the grave, nor will those who trust in Him. We can suffer with hope because in our sufferings we will be victorious because Christ was victorious. One of the reasons Peter mentions Noah in this passage is to show his congregation that this pattern has always been the model of God’s people. What we learn from Noah’s life and this passage is what Paul teaches us in Romans 8:18 “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory to be revealed to us.” We must not view life through the lenses of the world, but rather through the model of Christ. Second, we must cling to the power of Christ’s victory. The reality is we will all fail in suffering for Christ’s namesake. Peter failed mightily in his own life to do just that. Thus we must rest in the truth conveyed in verse 18. The righteous One died for the unrighteous. He died ONCE for ALL our sins to bring us into fellowship with God. As we rest in the power of His victory, we will be able to rejoice in our sufferings, face evil, and even love our enemies as we await our imperishable inheritance in heaven as princes and princesses.

**Discussion Questions**

1. How do you typically respond to suffering for following Christ? Is your gut reaction to “pull back” or “pay back” those who have caused you to suffer?
2. Do you agree with Francis Schaeffer that the world will not listen to the Church if she does not exhibit community?
3. How does the way Jesus engaged culture and dealt with His enemies inform or challenge you about the way you have gone about those same things?
4. What are practical and wise ways you can love your enemies?

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5. How would your life, conduct, and words be different if you really did not fear anything because you knew that the worst possible scenario cannot actually happen — that you cannot lose God's love for you?

### Going Deeper

1. What is it about our family love for one another and our shared commonality in Christ that serves as a beacon of hope to the lost and hostile world?
2. What are things you have made priority in your life that have brought about unnecessary division in your relationships with other Christians?
3. How does the model of Christ's victory encourage you to suffer for doing good?
4. The same man who tells us to rejoice in our suffering, to honor Christ, and to love our enemies is the same man who attacked his enemy, tried to convince Jesus to not go to the cross, and denied Jesus three times. What changed for Peter?