



Ready to Give an Answer

What good does it do?—Why keep serving Christ? These questions that seem to underlie Peter’s words of encouragement are not abstract, philosophical exercises that no one ever faces. They are real questions our hearts must confront. Peter challenges the Christians to whom his first epistle was written to **“sanctify the Lord God in your hearts”** (1 Pet. 3:15a). He calls them to make preparation so that they may **“always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you”** (1 Pet. 3:15b). Some, instead of **“defense”** translate this **“answer”** (KJV, ASV, NIV). We need to be able to answer religious error. We need to be prepared to explain why we have **“hope”** in spite of life’s conditions. But if we are to truly sanctify God in our hearts our preparation to give an answer may not just involve questions posed by others, but even the questions we face within. This preparation can help us through persecution—it can help us hold onto **“the hope that is in you with meekness and fear”** (1 Pet. 3:15b).



days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared” (1 Pet. 3:20b) to the disobedient rebels before the flood. *What does that show us about suffering and the flesh versus the spirit?* Jesus’ spirit was alive before and after His suffering. He saved His people **“through water”** before His life and suffering on earth. He saves us **“through water”** after His life and suffering on earth. This can demonstrate to those who experience hardship in the flesh that it is more important to look at our spiritual condition than the condition of our flesh.

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ISSUE

21.2

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

January 13,
2019



Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM
10:00 AM
11:00 AM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Steve Dixon
Ryan Ferguson
Ben Hight
Blake McAlister
Walker McAnear
Ryan Matney
Sam Nunn
Lance Purcell
Justin Smiley
Kevin Wise
Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

“The Eyes of the LORD are on the Righteous” By Kyle Pope

Have you ever come to a point in your life that you asked yourself the question, *What good does it do?—What’s the point?* Persecution can often cause this. It was persecution that led Elijah to cry out to God **“It is enough; now O LORD, take my life”** (1 Kings 19:4, NASB). In Peter’s first epistle, as he wrote to brethren **“grieved by various trials”** (1 Pet. 1:6, NKJV), one can almost hear underlying his words of encouragement these same kinds of questions that seek to make sense of life in Christ. The Holy Spirit through Peter’s words offers answers to all who would ever wonder why service in Christ matters.

The Behavior of the Redeemed

As I study Peter’s first epistle, I can’t help but smile when I notice that like many of us gospel preachers, Peter says **“finally”** when he is actually only about halfway through what he intends to say. We can see chapter three, verse eight as the beginning of his conclusion to this epistle. This summation continues what he has already begun to address—he calls them to proper behavior. If they are truly those who were **“redeemed”** (1 Pet. 1:18) then they must **“be of one mind, having compassion for one another”** (1 Pet. 3:8a). Those who have **“been born again”** (1 Pet. 1:23) must **“love as brothers”** being **“tender-hearted”** and **“courteous”** (1 Pet. 3:8b, NKJV) or as some manuscripts put it **“humbleminded”** (ASV). Their Redeemer, when He **“was reviled, did not revile in return”** (1 Pet. 2:23), so those who follow Him will not return **“evil**

for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing” (1 Pet. 3:9a, NKJV). This may be strange behavior by the world’s standards, but not for “sojourners and pilgrims” (1 Pet. 2:11). They will recognize that they “were called to this” because it is through this way of life that they “may inherit a blessing” (1 Pet. 3:9b). It is this promise of blessing that stands behind all of the Christian’s hope.

Whom Does the Lord Hear?

In the face of hardship, disappointment, persecution, and sorrow it is a hope that one day the child of God may “see good days” that answers the underlying question *Why?—Why keep going?* Peter paraphrases Psalm 34:12-16 to answer this question. The Psalmist puts it in the form of a question “who is the man who” (Psa. 34:12a),

but Peter just asserts “He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit” (1 Pet. 3:10). To see life and “good days” one must “turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it” (1 Pet. 3:11). These “good days” must not be thought of in a limited sense of deliverance in this life. Sometimes, that may happen, but “sojourners and pilgrims” recognize that their hope rests elsewhere. If comfort and ease in this life indicated Divine approval then we would have to conclude that the ungodly, the sinful, and even those who persecute God’s people are actually approved by Him. But who in fact are those who truly stand approved before God? Peter and the Psalmist answer, “the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil” (1 Pet. 3:12; Psa. 34:15-16). The false teaching that an alien sinner can offer the “sinner’s prayer” and by it come into fellowship with God ignores this clear testimony of Scripture. God hears the appeals of His people. Souls must first be among the redeemed in order that His ears might be “open to their prayers.”

Baptism is Necessary for Salvation

Only a few verses later in this same chapter Peter touches on the point at which one does come into fellowship with God in Christ. He raises it by way of comparison with a point he had made about Noah who was “saved through water” (1 Pet. 3:20). Peter declares, “corresponding to that, baptism now saves you” (1 Pet. 3:21a, NASB). Since the time of the Protestant Reformation, many have rejected the idea that baptism has anything to do with salvation, or is in any way necessary to come into fellowship with God. This was likely due to false doctrines that arose before the Reformation that distorted the scriptural teaching on baptism. Men were falsely taught that baptism could be a sprinkling or pouring of water. In the New Testament baptism is always an immersion symbolizing burial (Rom. 6:1-7). Then, just as now, men improperly baptized babies. The New Testament teaches baptism is for those capable of belief (Mark 16:16). In some cases, in that time baptism was actually forced upon people regardless of whether they believed in Jesus or not. In the New Testament baptism and faith are both necessary for one to “put

on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27). Peter leaves no doubt that baptism is necessary for salvation. Not because it is some meritorious work that earns salvation, but because it is “an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:21c, NASB).

Suffering for Doing Good

The baptized believer can live in the assurance that God sees and is ever conscious of his or her condition. While God sees, hears, and knows all things (Prov. 15:3), in a special sense His eyes are “on the righteous” and His ears are “open to their prayers” (1 Pet. 3:12). So, *what good does it do to serve Christ?—Why are believers allowed to suffer hardship and persecution?* In some cases doing what is right prevents suffering. Peter asks, “who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?” (1 Pet. 3:13, NKJV). If we do good, even to the ungodly, sometimes this will spare us from harm, but Peter continues, “But even if you should suffer” (1 Pet. 3:14a). Remember, our condition in this life is not a guarantee God’s approval. We may suffer, and actually “suffer for righteousness’ sake” (1 Pet. 3:14b). Is that a curse or a punishment? No. When it happens, actually “you are blessed” (1 Pet. 3:14c). Peter says, “it is better” when and if this should happen “to suffer for doing good than for doing evil” (1 Pet. 3:17). The criminal deserves his punishment. When the relationships of the ungodly are shattered, their behavior may well have merited the consequences brought upon their lives. However, when the Christian does good and suffers for it one day all will be vindicated. Their persecutors one day will “be ashamed” (1 Pet. 3:16c), while the Christian who lives with a “good conscience” (1 Pet. 3:16a) can know that he or she will one day “see good days” (1 Pet. 3:10).

The Suffering of Christ

Where is the proof of this hope?—How can we know in the face of persecution we will “see good days”? Peter tells us the very One who redeemed us offers assurance to us of this hope and blessing. He declares, “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust” (1 Pet. 3:18a). He suffered in

the flesh, but attained the resurrection never to die again. His suffering purchased our blessing. He endured this “that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18b). Peter challenges the reader to recognize a different perspective on the flesh and spirit. Jesus was “put to death in the flesh” (1 Pet. 3:18c), but this ultimate demonstration of persecution could not rob Him of the ultimate blessing—He was “made alive in the spirit” (1 Pet. 3:18d, ASV). Christ’s spirit (like our own spirit) lives beyond the death of the flesh. Christ’s Deity made it such that His spirit was active not only after His death, but before His life on earth. Earlier in the book Peter told the brethren concerning the prophets that it was the “Spirit of Christ who was in them” (1 Pet. 1:11) that allowed the Old Testament prophets to declare those things that would come about. It was this same “spirit of Christ” who Peter now explains was working through Noah when “He [i.e. the spirit of Christ] preached to the spirits in prison [i.e. those now held in Hades awaiting judgment]” (1 Pet. 3:19). Jesus didn’t preach in Hades—there is no opportunity for repentance there (cf. Luke 16:19-31). Jesus preached through Noah “in the

