

1 Peter 3:13-4:6 - Suffering for Doing Good

Would you rather... be unfairly sentenced to jail even though you did nothing wrong, or be given the same sentence, but as a fair punished for a crime you had committed? Why?

1 Peter 3:13 - 22 contains a number of well-known and important sentences that catch our attention, as well as some very confusing comments (in the second half) which catch our attention even more! However, as the saying goes, it can be easy to “miss the woods for the trees”. It’s important to bear in mind the overall point that Peter is making in this section and how this fits with the broader themes of the letter.

Read Verses 13 to 17

What ‘big idea’ is Peter making in verses 13-14a, and in v17?

Why are you blessed if you suffer for doing what is right?

Consider v14b and 15...

Why does Peter say ‘Do not fear what they fear or be intimidated’?

What alternative does he urge?

Giving a Reason for your Hope...

In verses 15 and 16, what does Peter say it should look like for Christians to witness to the gospel?

Consider...

⇒ what gives rise to the opportunity? (how does it connect with v14b-15a?)

⇒ what is the form of the witness?

⇒ what is the manner of our witness?

⇒ what is the outcome?

Dig Deeper...

How does verse 17 sum up both this section (v13-17), but also the whole section from 2:11 till this point? (consider how it relates to some of the key points through this section)

Read verses 18-22

There are some big theological truths and also some theologically confusing statements in this section! But, considering verse 18a in particular, *what do you think is the main reason Peter mentions the suffering and resurrection of Jesus here?*

Verse 18 is often singled out as key verse to explain the gospel. Why do you think that is?
(Consider: How does each phrase help you to understand and explain the good news of Jesus?)

Peter speaks of the suffering, the preaching, the resurrection and the exaltation of Jesus in this section. *How might his comments encourage us to keep going and be willing to suffer for doing good and witnessing to Jesus?*

Read Chapter 4, verses 1-6

What new point is Peter making in verses 1-2, and how does it pick up and develop the argument of 3:13-18?

How does verse 2 help us understand what it means to be 'finished with sin' in this context?

In verses 3-5 Peter once again anticipates that our holy behaviour as Christians will stand out as different and confronting, and will probably lead to being ridiculed by others. *How does he encourage us to stay strong in these verses?*

Note: Verse 6 can be as confusing as 3:19-20, but the most straightforward meaning is that Peter is simply highlighting the importance of the gospel having been previously preached to people who are now dead (whether as OT Jews through the preaching of the prophets, or NT believers), so that they might live forever (like God) even though they die now (like humans).

Reflect & Pray...

* How does this passage contribute to your understanding of what it means to follow Jesus?

* Have you personally suffered for 'doing good' (sacrifices involved in repenting of sin, witnessing to Jesus, enduring ridicule or slander for holy living)? What does / would help you to keep going?

Dig Deeper: Preached to the spirits in prison??

It's hard to draw confident conclusions about how we should understand verses 19 and 20, and it can be hard to see how it all relates to Peter's broader argument.¹ You may wish to review how these verses were explained in the sermon, and discuss any questions you have together.

Despite the difficulties, we can note that the following connections in these verses to our own situation as Christians:

1) like Noah (and Jesus, in his preaching), we are called to focus on obeying God and witnessing to his judgement regardless of how people react, and

2) we know that ultimately we will be saved by God's mercy through the resurrection of Jesus, in the midst of his judgement, just as Noah was saved from judgement in the ark.

How might these points be an encouragement to Peter's readers and to us?

Consider verse 21...

➔ What is meant by 'the pledge of a clear conscience' toward God in the context of Baptism?

➔ Explain the relationship between: Baptism, Faith, Salvation and the Resurrection of Jesus