

March 17, 2024

“Defending Our Faith”  
Lesson 2

1 Peter 3:8-17

### **Intro**

Many individuals in Scripture suffered persecution. The various ways they reacted to this persecution is helpful to us today, instructing us about how we too can deal with persecution. The letter of 1 Peter is primarily a response to the suffering of believers. Peter can give them first-hand knowledge about this topic, as he was present when Christ suffered and he himself also suffered persecution for his walk with Christ.

### **Read 1 Peter 3:8-17**

1. vs. 8: Peter gives five descriptions of what believers are to be like / act like

They are to be “like-minded”

This refers to the unity believers are to have about the faith

They are to be sympathetic

We are to care for another’s situations as if they were our own

They are to love one another

As members of God’s family, they are to love each other as family members

They are to be compassionate and humble

Being compassionate is to care about another’s life

This term is similar to being sympathetic and loving

Being humble is thinking more highly of others than of yourself (Phil. 2:1)

2. vs. 9: Peter continues with specific behaviors that believers are to engage in

The first is about how we respond to being treated poorly, either physically or verbally

He says, “Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult”

This is the natural way, to treat others the way they have treated us

But this is not the pattern we see in Scripture or from Jesus Himself

Jesus faced mocking and insults, yet said nothing against his abusers

Multiple places in Scripture carry this same message for our behavior

(Prov. 20:22, Matt. 5:39, Rom. 12:17-19, 1 Thess. 5:15)

Instead, we are called to “repay evil with blessing...so that you may inherit a blessing”

It isn’t enough to refrain from giving the same back that we got

We are to have “holy reactions” in the face of evil

3. vs. 10: Here Peter tells believers to “keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech”

He tells them this because this is the natural reaction to being mistreated

We want to tell that person exactly what we think of them and their behavior!

But Peter says our tongues should not speak evilly or deceitfully when we are attacked

4. vs. 11: He calls for believers to “turn from evil and do good”  
This phrase shows two things, but they are the same thing  
To turn from evil is to do good  
The way to avoid evil is do instead do something good  
It sounds easy, but can be challenging if that’s not one’s normal reaction  
Peter says to “seek peace and pursue it”  
Seeking and pursuing are the same action—going after something
5. vs. 12: One big reason Peter encourages this behavior is that God notes what His followers do  
Peter says “His eyes are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer”  
God is aware of what people are doing; He notes our words and actions  
God also notes the actions of the evil, and turns away from them
6. vs. 13: Peter asks a rhetorical question here, one where the answer is considered obvious  
“Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?”  
The obvious answer is “no one”  
Therefore, continue to do good  
However, there is persecution and suffering happening, which he addresses next
7. vs. 14: Many believers Peter writes to were experiencing suffering  
He has just reminded them that they should do good; it is usually rewarded by others  
Here he acknowledges that some are suffering—someone is harming them for their good  
Peter reminds them of the proper attitude to have in these circumstances  
They are to remember that they are “blessed”  
Blessing comes from a clear conscience when obeying God’s word and commands  
Blessing has come because their sins are forgiven  
No matter what else happens, blessings are present in both these situations always
- He concludes the verse telling them “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened”  
Suffering may indeed occur, but do not be afraid of those who oppose them  
God is to be feared, not man  
God will bless those who are faithful, and will punish those who oppose Him
8. vs. 15: Peter here gives a command for how believers need to deal with these tough situations  
The first is to “revere Christ as Lord”  
They (and we) are to do this in our hearts  
We are to hold Him as holy in how we think of Him and relate to Him  
Then we are to be “prepared to give an answer to everyone”  
Why do we believe the things we do? We are to have an answer ready for this  
Peter uses the word “hope”—we believe because of the hope we have in Christ  
He also notes that people will ask Christians why they believe as they do  
When this happens, God has given us an opportunity to plant or water seeds  
We get to tell another why we believe as we do  
We are told to be ready to do this always

9. vs. 16: Peter here encourages having (keeping) a clean conscience

Our consciences serve as a moral alarm system

When it rings, we are helped to think and act in ways that please God

Peter says that if we act according to our consciences, we will make our attackers ashamed

They will see that we have been acting rightly, and they have not

10. vs. 17: Peter calls on believers to act rightly at all times, to do good

But he notes that it may happen that right behaviors cause suffering from opposers

His advice: act rightly anyway

“It is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil”

If you do evil and suffer for it, that is appropriate and correct

If you do good and suffer for it, you still acted rightly in doing good

God is allowing the suffering for some purpose you may not currently know

Application: Few if any of us who live in the United States have suffered the kind of persecution that the people receiving Peter’s letter had suffered. That doesn’t mean his instructions don’t apply to us. On the contrary, they apply the same, and possibly even more. If they were suffering physical abuse for their faith, and Peter encourages them to continue doing good, we who suffer primarily verbal abuse (if even that) should likewise continue doing good. God is in control, and what He allows in our lives is meant for our growth. We are called to stay faithful to Him through whatever challenges we are called to suffer.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for always being with us in all situations. Help us be attentive to Your Spirit as we encounter and deal with challenges and trials. Fill us with peace and humility that we might meet the trials successfully, and let you work through us to complete your will in this world. In Jesus’ name, Amen.