

1 Peter

Week 7: Responding to Opposition with Hope -- 1 Peter 3:8–22

There is a question people ask in many different ways, sometimes out loud, sometimes only with their eyes. They ask it when they watch a believer absorb an insult without firing back. They ask it when a Christian keeps showing kindness to someone who has been cruel. They ask it when a person loses a job, a friendship, or their reputation for doing what is right, and somehow does not become bitter. The question is simple: why? Why do you live like this? Where does that come from? Peter says we should always be ready to answer that question, because the way we respond to opposition can make people genuinely curious about our hope.

This passage begins with a portrait of the church as it ought to be: unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, a humble mind. Then Peter says something that turns the world's logic upside down. Do not repay evil for evil or insult for insult, "but on the contrary, bless." When someone wrongs you, your calling is not to get even but to bless, because you yourselves were called to inherit a blessing. The Christian breaks the chain of retaliation that keeps the world trapped, and answers evil with good.

Peter is realistic about what this costs. He knows his readers may suffer for doing right, and he tells them not to fear or be troubled, but to honor Christ as Lord in their hearts, "always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." And he adds the part we so easily forget: do it "with gentleness and respect." A good answer given in a harsh spirit is no witness at all. The goal is not to win the argument but to commend the Savior.

Then Peter anchors all of this in the deepest truth of the gospel. Christ also suffered for sins, "the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." He was put to death in the flesh and made alive, and He is now at God's right hand, with angels and authorities subject to Him. And right in the middle of this, Peter says something about water and an ark and baptism that has shaped how the Lord's people have understood salvation ever since. So read this rich passage slowly. It moves from how we treat a rude neighbor all the way to the throne room of the risen Christ, and it shows that our hope under pressure is no small thing.

Group Discussion: Peter says not to "repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless" (v. 9). Blessing those who wrong us cuts against every instinct. Why is this so hard, and what kind of impact does it have on others, and on us, when a Christian actually answers evil with blessing?

Personal Reflection: Peter says to "always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you," yet to do it "with gentleness and respect" (vv. 15–16). If someone asked you this week why you have hope, how ready would you be to answer? And would your tone draw them in or push them away?

Study Questions

1. Peter describes the marks of a healthy church: “unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind” (v. 8). Why are these qualities essential to the life of God’s people, and what do they reveal about the kind of community Christ is building?
2. Peter commands, “Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless” (v. 9). Think of someone who has wronged or insulted you. What would it actually look like to bless that person rather than retaliate or withdraw? What is holding you back?
3. Peter quotes Psalm 34 to ground his teaching: the Lord’s eyes are on the righteous and His ears open to their prayer, but His face is against those who do evil (vv. 10–12). How does this Psalm shape the way we speak, seek peace, and trust God when we are wronged?
4. Peter says, “Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit” (v. 10). The tongue is where retaliation usually shows up first. Where does your speech most need taming right now, in gossip, sarcasm, complaining, deceit, or harsh words? What would guarding your tongue look like this week?
5. Peter says, “Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy,” and then be ready to give a reason for your hope (vv. 14–15). How does honoring Christ as Lord in our hearts free us from fear, and what is the connection between settling Christ’s lordship within and being ready to witness?
6. Peter calls us to give our defense “with gentleness and respect,” keeping a good conscience (vv. 15–16). When you talk about your faith, or defend it, is your tone gentle and respectful, or does it sometimes become defensive, superior, or combative? What would gentleness cost you in a specific conversation?
7. Peter writes, “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” (v. 18). What does this verse teach about the purpose and the uniqueness of Christ’s suffering, and what does it mean that He suffered to “bring us to God”?
8. Peter says Christ suffered “to bring us to God” (v. 18). The whole point of the gospel is restored nearness to God. Honestly, how near to God do you actually live day to day? What keeps you at a distance from the God Christ died to bring you to, and what step would close that gap?
9. Peter says that the salvation of Noah’s family through water “corresponds to” baptism, “which 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” (vv. 20–21). What does this teach about the meaning and place of baptism in salvation, and how do we understand Peter’s plain statement that baptism “now saves you”?
10. Look back over the whole passage. Peter calls us to a tender, united church life, to bless rather than retaliate, to witness with gentle confidence, and to rest in Christ who suffered to bring us to God and now reigns over all. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you

through these verses. What is the single truth from 1 Peter 3:8–22 you most need to carry into this week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Psalm 34:12–16, the source Peter quotes on guarding speech and seeking peace; Romans 12:14–21, blessing persecutors and overcoming evil with good; Acts 2:38, repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins; Romans 6:3–4, baptized into Christ's death and raised to new life; Colossians 2:11–13, buried and raised with Christ in baptism