

# 1 Peter 3:13-22

## Verse 13

Last week, you looked at 1 Peter 3:8-12, which described five characteristics of Christians. Verse 13 begins with a “Now” that connects the preceding thoughts with this new section. Now, because Christians are to live that demonstrate love and compassion, even for our enemies, who would want to harm Christians?

Also, note the word “zealous” (ESV) in verse 13. Being zealous means being focused on something to an extreme sense. Zealous is not moderate; it is passionate and radical. In fact, at the time this was written, there were a group of Jewish radicals known as the Zealots. The online Jewish Encyclopedia describes them as “a party opposing with relentless rigor any attempt to bring Judea under the dominion of idolatrous Rome, and especially of the aggressive and fanatical war party from the time of Herod until the fall of Jerusalem...” Now, consider that Peter is using that kind of word to describe how Christians should pursue what is good.

## Verses 14-15a

After asking the rhetorical question of who would want to harm someone zealous for good, Peter introduces the “But.” Peter is writing to Christians who are suffering persecution. So, being zealous for good does not totally ensure a peaceful life. The world is fallen and there is evil in people’s hearts. Some of those people are opposed to good and to those doing good. So, Peter tells his audience that even if they are persecuted, they will be blessed.

Then, Peter cites Isaiah 8:12-13. “Do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.” Except here Peter makes a profound change in the citation. He replaces “LORD of hosts” (in some versions “The LORD Almighty”) with “Christ the Lord.” Stop and think about what that meant to someone with a Jewish background. Jesus is the all-powerful, sovereign God of the Old Testament. This is especially striking in the context of Isaiah 8.

The Hebrew people were told that an invading army was coming as judgment; their nation was going to be overthrown. Yet, Isaiah was telling them that they should not fear the Assyrian army. Rather, they should fear the God who is sending the army as judgment. God was in control of all that was going to happen.

So, when Peter simply replaced “LORD of hosts” with “Christ the Lord,” he was saying two things: 1) What happened centuries before was Jesus’ doing, and 2) What happens now is Jesus’ doing. Jesus is the sovereign God in control of the situation. So, do not fear the Assyrians, because Jesus is in control. And do not fear Nero, for Jesus is in control. And this idea will now be built upon in the following verses.

## Verses 15b-16a

If you live under constant threat of death, and yet continue to live a life of joy and peace, doing good to everyone around you, people are going to be confused. They’re going to wonder what is wrong (or right) with you. So, Peter tells them people may ask them to explain their behavior. When this happens, do it with gentleness toward the nonbeliever, and do it with respect (or fear) for God. Be gentle, because you

are no better than the unbeliever. You're not a Navy SEAL staring death in the face with a raw determination only the strongest among us could muster. You're just someone living by the Spirit. There's no room for pride here. And do it with respect for God because you know that the fact that you're still alive to answer the question is because God wants you to still be alive. And the fact that you have the Spirit to persevere through trials is because God, in his grace, saved you and gave you the Spirit. Answering others in gentleness and respect is how you maintain a good conscience before God.

### **Verse 16**

If you've done the things Peter has told you to do so far, then people will see the truth. You may still be killed. Jesus was killed. But, there were people who knew an injustice was occurring. And similarly, when the slanderers attack you, those who have seen your life will know; the slanderers will be put to shame.

### **Verse 17**

There are two important things here. First, Peter says it is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. Why? Because if you suffer for doing good, you are blessed. Second, if you suffer persecution, it is because God chose you for persecution. This happens, if it is God's will. So, you are blessed because God has chosen you for the blessing of persecution. That only makes sense when you have a Christian view of eternity.

### **Verse 18**

And, of course, this whole process is really just following Christ's work for us and modeling his work to the world.

### **Verses 19-20**

This is a difficult passage. There are two main views. One is that this is saying Jesus spoke through Noah to the people who would be killed in the flood. The second common view is that the spirits are fallen angels. Both arguments have reasons, and it's not something we need to decide. So, to quote Forest Gump, "That's all I have to say about that."

### **Verse 21**

Baptism is compared to being saved through the ark. The flood waters and the baptism waters both represent judgment of sin. But, the baptism doesn't actually wash away sin. Rather, it is an act of faith symbolizing what does take away sins: the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

### **Verse 22**

After his death, burial and resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven and now sits, with his work completed, at the right hand of God. Everything has been given to him; in fact, everything was made for him and by him (Col 1:15-17). So now, we live for his glory, proclaiming his name through our good deeds and faith in his good, sovereign reign.