

**WELL, SINCE YOU ASKED . . .****1 Peter 3:13-22****(Read 1 Peter 3:13-22)**

**INTRO:** If you ask a grandparent about their grandkids you probably need to get ready for an answer that is not at all short and will include plenty of photos. In the old days grandmas and great-grandmas would pull the little photo album of snapshots of their grand and/or great-grandchildren out of their purse and launch into a child by child, accomplishment by accomplishment, photo by photo explanation of the reasons why their grand and/or great-grandchildren are the best, the smartest, the cutest grand and/or great-grandchildren in history. A quick aside here: grandpas and great-grandpas never had a little photo album – they didn't carry purses.

Nowadays, if you ask practically ANY grandparent or great-grandparent regardless of their sex about their grands or greats and they will most likely pull out a cell phone that has its data capacity maxed out with photos of what they are certain are the best, the smartest, the cutest grand and/or great-grandchildren in history – bar none! And if you do ask them – you'd better be ready, because they are ready to tell you.

That is how ready we need to be when someone asks us about Christ has done in our life. Many would say we live in a hopeless world – but that should never be the attitude of a Christ Follower. If Jesus is Lord of your life your hope is at capacity or maybe even running over.

That's why our lives should be a picture of the redeemed life – so much so that people will ask us what makes the difference. And just like a busting with pride grandparent, we need to be ready to tell them why. You see, when they ask – it puts the ball in your court – they asked and now you're obligated to share the Good News that has transformed your life. This, in some way or another, has been a recurring theme in Peter's letter, but that's good, we need to be reminded, OUR LIFE NEEDS TO BE A TESTIMONY! Part of that testimony from the verses we looked at last week – what could called . . .

**The distinct characteristics of Christ Followers**

- This is mainly in verses 8-9 which we looked at last week, but is key to what shows in the life God's people. Let me read it those verses to you again, *Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.* 1 Peter 3:8-9
- We are unified. That is what Peter means by being "like-minded". We agree on one huge thing – Jesus has redeemed us. We have been brought out of lostness into freedom and we serve the same Risen Savior. In short, we are one people. In a divided world, the unity of the people who are truly living for Jesus stands out.
- We are sympathetic. We understand the struggles of life – if we have not experienced it, we at least try to understand. In this country, and our state is one of the worst ones for it, there is a horrific struggle with opiate addiction. It has touched many of us as we have seen loved ones and friends who have been destroyed by it. It's mind-boggling to imagine such self-destruction, but rather than ignoring or worse denigrating those who struggle, Christ Followers are called to strive to understand. After all, how can we help with we just tell people to buck up and get over it when they are in its hellish grip.
- We love one another. This is essential in a world of hate. Brotherly love means that we love one another even when we don't necessary like each other. This is a distinctly Christian attitude.
- We are compassionate. Being sympathetic is good, but it really doesn't go far enough – compassion is putting teeth in our pity and doing something about it. Last year we spent a few months looking at the letter of James and the title of the series was DOERS OF THE WORD – that is what compassion is about – seeing the need, being stirred by the Holy Spirit and doing something about it.
- We are humble. In a world where a prideful spirit is seen as healthy self-esteem, Christ Followers know that our worth comes from the fact that God loved us so much he sent his Son to die for us and not from anything we have done on our own. This humility helps us to understand the down and out and the ones locked into sin of every kind because our vision isn't clouded with our own importance.
- And finally, Christ Followers forgive. We are not interested in retribution or revenge – that's God's to take care of (Romans 12:19-21). Instead Jesus told us to forgive as we have been forgiven because as we forgive other people when they sin against us, our heavenly Father will also forgive us. (Matthew 6:14).

- These characteristics are increasingly rare and because of they will not go unnoticed. As that simple chorus say, *“They will know we are Christians by our love.”* And they just might ask us about it.

- And further. . .

### **Our attitude toward the threats the world produces should make us stand out all the more**

- Peter warns his readers to be ready to suffer for doing good. He writes, *Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened”.* 1 Peter 3:13-14 The language here implies that we need to be passionate lovers of goodness. In fact, in the original language he tells his readers to be zealots for goodness. That means we need to be radical. This is unpopular in our culture – but Jesus didn’t call us to popularity, he called us to faithfulness and discipleship.
- Peter is addressing what has obviously been happening with greater and greater frequency – persecution. And he says that when we suffer it will be with dignity and not with helpless resignation – for one thing, it’s only temporary.
- And this is because our relationship with Christ is of the greatest value – all other things, attitudes and relationships pale in comparison. Loving and serving Jesus needs to be at the top of our priority list. The more we desire to do good, the less fascination we have with wrong and the power it holds.
- So, then, even in suffering Christ Followers are blessed. When the suffering is for Christ, our loyalty to him is obvious and we are sharing in his sufferings. And suffering is temporary – our future is bright in Christ.
- As we’ve been seeing in these talks, people are watching and . . .

### **As others observe our dedication they will be curious**

- Peter says to always be ready to give an answer for the hope you have within you – are you ready? Could you share your faith if you had to? Peter points there are three characteristics to your explanation of your faith:
- Your explanation must be reasonable and real – it can’t be something that someone else has told you – it must be your own story. Canned presentations never have the impact of “the real thing”.
- Your explanation must be gentle – so often the gospel is presented with an air that causes the hearer to stop listening – almost like “Only an idiot wouldn’t believe!” It is true that Christianity is the only way to God, it is the only way to eternal life, it is the only way to true peace and joy, but it is not obnoxious and we shouldn’t present it that way.
- Your explanation must be reverent. Some of the most damaging testimonies of the faith have been those of theologians as they argued over the faith. Others have flaunted their doubts about the faith like it is some kind of badge of honor. This does a disservice and it is not reverence. The gospel does not need to be argued. A principle to remember here is that we don’t need to shout about the gospel – it’s true. Lies need to be shouted. Truth just must be told – a still small voice will do the trick.
- Sometimes, we have to say very little at all because our explanation must be simply lived out. Let those around you see your faith as you carry it out day to day – that’s the best testimony. One of my favorite quotes and I don’t know who said first, is, *“A saint, is someone whose life makes it easier to believe in God.”* Make it easier for people to believe in God by what they see in you.
- And then we have some verses, specifically verses 19-20, that have caused a lot of puzzlement ever since Peter wrote them. As I see them, they give us . . .

### **The basis for all we do is in what Christ did for us**

- Peter again addresses suffering and he reminds us that if we suffer, it is only what Christ did for us previously.
- And then he points out that Christ died once for all. Sin is what interrupts our relationship with God. It walls us off from his grace and something needed to be done about it – once and for all. So Jesus went to the cross, for us! It doesn’t need to be repeated. In the Old Testament there needed to be sacrifices for sin – year after year. And then Jesus came as the perfect sacrifice – one time. No more sacrificing of bulls or sheep or goats or sparrow. His sacrifice was good enough.
- Jesus died for our sin – no matter what our sin, his death covers it. We didn’t deserve it but he did it – it was the just for the unjust – someone has said, *Only forgiveness without reason can match sin without excuse.* Christ died for **YOU!!!** He sacrificed himself to restore our relationship with God.

- This brings up these difficult verses – What does it mean that he went and preached to the “imprisoned spirits”? Well to me it means two things. The grave could not hold a sinless person. Even if Jesus had the sin of all humanity for all of history on him as he went there – the grave could not hold him. As Christ died on Good Friday he took the sin of all humanity to hell and then he left it there three days later when he rose from the dead. And while he was there he preached the gospel. That is as good as I can figure until I can ask Peter about it some day in glory.
- But this I know Christ’s resurrection was once and for all a complete triumph. Easter Day is the most glorious day in all of history because Satan was once and for all defeated.
- Finally, speaking of that resurrection, Peter talks about how . . .

**Baptism is a visible “let me tell you why” we have the hope we have**

- I often said that baptism is an outward sign of an inward change in the life of a believer. (Tell about Lisa Miller’s baptism)
- Peter points out that baptism does not wash off dirt – and the point is, it doesn’t even wash away sin. What it says is *My sins have been washed away and I’m testifying to that today*. It also says that I am dead to the old life and being raised with Jesus in the new life of the resurrection.
- Peter says that Noah and his family were delivered to safety through the cleansing flood and so is the Christ Follower. In baptism we are testifying to the change Christ has brought in our life by been buried in him and raised a new creation. In a way then we are ready, like Noah and his family, to start over and begin a new and improved generation.

**Conclusion** – Our life must be a testimony to what Christ can and will do if we will only ask him. Our life must make people curious and even envious so that they ask what has made the difference. And when they do, the ball is in our court and we can say “Well, since you asked. . .” Amen.