

Our Defense  
April 6, 2025  
Allen Power

1 Peter 3:13-22

Opening: Why do unsaved people often ridicule followers of Christ? Why do they often paint all Christians with the broad brush as “hypocrites?”

The main theme of book of 1 Peter might be stated as how Christ-followers can live with hope and holiness in the midst of suffering and persecution. In Peter’s day persecution of Christians could mean torture or death. In some parts of the world that is still true. For most of us persecution isn’t a matter of life or death, but we might face discrimination or ridicule for following Christ. What we all need to know is how we should LIVE in order to silence their ridicule and help them see Christ.

To stay on schedule, we are jumping into this book at chapter three. It can be confusing to start in the middle. It is like walking up on a conversation already underway, starting a movie after thirty minutes, a series on episode three, or reading a letter beginning at page three. That is where we find ourselves in our new study of Peter’s letter (epistle) to early Christians who were suffering for their Savior. Let’s attempt to get some context for what we’ve missed in the first two chapters.

First, let’s see what you know about the Apostle Peter. What words come to mind when you think of Peter? What was his personality like? What was Peter’s big failure as a Christ-follower? How did Jesus respond to that? How does that encourage us? Why did Jesus change Simon’s name to Peter? What did Jesus say about Peter’s role in Christianity? How did Peter die?

Now, let’s catch up on the first two chapters of Peter’s letter to early Christians. Here is a summary of what Peter wrote in the key verses in those two chapters:

- **New Life in Christ** – His followers are reborn through God’s mercy and Jesus’ resurrection, promising eternal hope and an eternal inheritance.
- **Faith and Joy** - Trust in Christ brings salvation forever and joy in this life.
- **Holiness** - Believers are called to reflect God’s holiness in all aspects of life.
- **Spiritual Growth** - Hunger for spiritual nourishment (His word) to mature in faith.
- **Spiritual Identity** - Christians are living stones and holy priests in God’s temple.
- **Our Mission** - God’s chosen people are to proclaim His goodness and light.
- [Extra Credit! Read on your own: 1 Peter 1:3–4, 1:8–9, 1:15–16, 2:2, 2:5–6, 2:9]
- Peter was writing to Christian refugees scattered in Asia Minor (Turkey) who were suffering under harsh Roman rule.
- Jesus said his saints would suffer: *“If they persecuted me, <sup>h</sup>they will also persecute you.”* (John 15:20)<sup>i</sup>
- How did Jesus say a saint should live in the midst of suffering?

- Jesus said, *“Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* (Mt. 5:12) and to *“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...”* (Mt. 5:44)
- Peter picked up Jesus’ themes as he wrote to these suffering saints:

**1 Peter 2:12 (NLT) — 12** Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.

**1 Peter 2:15 (NLT) — 15** It is God’s will that your honorable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you.

**1 Peter 2:17 (NLT) — 17** Respect everyone, and love the family of believers. Fear God, and respect the king. [Submit to Roman rule]

- In **1 Peter 2:21** Peter said, (NLT) — **21** ...God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps.
- The point of Peter’s letter was to offer encouragement to these suffering saints.
- As Peter said in **1 Peter 1:6 (NLT) — 6** ...be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while.
- That brings us to chapter three of this letter. How should Christ followers live in a world that doesn’t understand our faith and often resents us because of it?
- I’ve outlined chapter three with these ideas:
  - Counterintuitive Conduct
  - Clear Reasons
  - Courteous Responses
  - Clean Windows &
  - Confounded Enemies
- First, Peter calls us to conduct that is counterintuitive.

**8** Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. [These words describe how Christ-followers should BE.]

- Unity is not uniformity. Think of a choir, difference voices but one piece of music.
- Sympathy – *“Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.”<sup>ii</sup>*
- Love other Christ-followers like you would love a brother or sister.
- *“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”<sup>iii</sup>* (Eph.4:32)
- Humble spirit - *“...not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less.”<sup>iv</sup>*
- Next, Peter wrote about how a Christ-follower should ACT.

**9** Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

- Not only giving up revenge but asking God to bless those who hurt us.
- *“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.”<sup>v</sup>* (Ro 12:14).

**10** For “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit;

- Avoiding: gossip, slander, profanity, deception, exaggeration.
- Psalm 141:3: *"Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; <sup>v</sup>keep watch over the door of my lips!"*<sup>vi</sup>

**11** let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.

- No explanation needed, but it is hard to do. We LOVE to argue and fight, right?
- It is important to realize we can only live in this counterintuitive way through the power of the Holy Spirit living in us.
- We might say, *"But Peter, if we live like this people will run right over us!"*

**12** For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." [God will settle the scores.]

**13** Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?

- In general, this kind of counterintuitive conduct shouldn't cause us harm.
- Why would those who don't know Christ resent us for living this way?

**14** But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, **15a** but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy,

- Even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't worry or be afraid of their threats. Instead, worship Christ as Lord of your life.<sup>vii</sup>
- Then Peter called on these early Christians to become the first "apologists."

**15b** ...always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; [Verse 15 is a great memory verse!]

- Counterintuitive conduct can cause questions: *"How can you seem so peaceful when people treat you badly? How can you have so much joy and hope in the middle of the mess you are in? How can you resist seeking revenge?"*
- When the questions come, we must be able to state CLEAR REASONS for the hope we have in Christ.
- The Greek word for "defense" is *apologia*. This is where we get the term "apologetics." It doesn't mean apologizing for Jesus.
- It means giving an answer or reply.<sup>viii</sup> The NLT renders it: *"...if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it."*<sup>ix</sup>
- Why must we be careful with that term "give a defense?" How can misinterpreting that word defense go wrong?

**15c** ...yet do it with gentleness and respect,

- We need both CLEAR REASONS and COURTEOUS RESPONSES when people ask why we have HOPE amid suffering.
- *"No one was ever won to Christ at the end of an argument."* (Anonymous)
- Several months back we gave a handout about how to share your faith story. I've attached it to the notes.
- In summary: we need CLEAR REASONS, COURTEOUS RESPONSES. We also need CLEAN WINDOWS. Let' me explain what I mean as we look at verse 16:

**16** having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

- I love the illustration Warren Wiersbe gives of our conscience:

*“Conscience may be compared to a window that lets in the light of God’s truth. If we persist in disobeying, the window gets dirtier and dirtier, until the light cannot enter. This leads to a “defiled conscience” (Titus 1:15). A “seared conscience” is one that has been so sinned against that it no longer is sensitive to what is right and wrong (1 Tim. 4:2). It is even possible for the conscience to be so poisoned that it approves things that are bad and accuses when the person does good! This the Bible calls “an evil conscience” (Heb. 10:22).”<sup>x</sup>*

- The old saying, “*Let your conscience be your guide*” is misguided. Our conscience should only be trusted if it is informed by God’s truth.
- We keep the “window” of our conscience clean through obedience to God.
- Peter said if we will live that way, even when we are “slandered” our “good behavior in Christ” will put the slanderers to shame.
- In other words, a CLEAN WINDOW (conscience) will lead to CLEAN CONDUCT and CONFOUNDED ENEMIES of Christ.
- We don’t use that word “confound” much.
- It means to be confused or perplexed but it also means “to prove wrong. Historically, it meant causing someone to feel “ashamed or abashed.”<sup>xi</sup>
- There is an old saying, “*A clear conscience is a good pillow.*”
- We might say living obediently based on a conscience informed by God’s word gives us a GOOD WITNESS for Christ.
- Peter summarized this section with these words:

**17** For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.

**18** For 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,

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- This section of 1 Peter is a great CHECKLIST of the kind of Christ-like life we should live. It would be worthy of reading each day next week to help us spot areas of our conduct that need to be more counterintuitive to a watching world.
- Counterintuitive Conduct, Clear Reasons, Courteous Responses, Clean Windows & Confounded Enemies.
- Living the Christ-like life described in verses 18-11 of this chapter is counterintuitive to those who don’t know Christ. We can only live that way through the power of the Holy Spirit living in us.
- If we will live that way people may ask why? When we are asked about our hope (especially amid suffering) we must have clear reasons for that hope. That means explaining what Jesus has done for us.
- That hope must be explained not with arguing but with courteous responses.
- We can live and share this way if the “window” of our conscience has been cleaned by obedience to God’s word so His light can shine in our lives.

- This kind of living will confound and confuse the enemies of God so much that their slander of us and Him will be put to shame.

---

<sup>h</sup> ch. 16:33; 1 Cor. 4:12; 2 Cor. 4:9; 1 Thess. 2:15; 2 Tim. 3:12

<sup>i</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Jn 15:20). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

<sup>ii</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Ro 12:15). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

<sup>j</sup> [2 Cor. 2:7, 10]; See Matt. 6:14

<sup>iii</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Eph 4:32). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

<sup>iv</sup> The phrase "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less" is widely attributed to C.S. Lewis but is a misattribution. While Lewis did not write these exact words, they effectively summarize his teachings on humility from Mere Christianity.

<sup>v</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Ro 12:14). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

<sup>y</sup> Mic. 7:5

<sup>vi</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Ps 141:3). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

<sup>vii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (1 Pe 3:14–15). Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>viii</sup> Swanson, J. (1997). In *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (electronic ed.). Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>ix</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (1 Pe 3:15). Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>x</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 414). Victor Books.

<sup>xi</sup> <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/confound>