

1Peter 11-04-29b

Let's resume our study now in 1 Peter 3. We're going to move into verse 18, but I skipped a little bit of verse 16. Having a good conscience that when they defame you as evildoers those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. And we closed the first session talking about the fact that if we do this right it should be something that is pleasant, that is pleasing.

People ought to be glad to see us and ought to be willing to ask us a question and not driven the other way. So that's people who have an interest in God or who fear God. Those who fear God were glad when they saw me.

These others ask a reason for our hope. But there's a third category. There's a third category of people and these are those who are intent upon defaming us.

We're doing everything right. We are living our life to please God. We have sanctified Christ as Lord in our hearts.

We are practicing genuine humility. We are being obedient. We are being submissive where we need to be.

And there are still people who take it wrong, who defame us and speak evil of us. And it says having a good conscience. And it's more than what you might think.

We think, well, conscience is the little voice that tells me you're messing up or not. But having a good conscience means when there is opposition, when there is negative feedback, when there is criticism, when there is judgmental abusive speech about us, we are able to cope with it in our conscience. For example, you are in a situation and you take the high road.

You do what is right. You do what you do because you are living to please the Lord. And it ticks some people off.

I had this happen once. It kind of sticks out of my mind where the government gave us money for a certain purpose because we were overseas doing stuff. And it didn't actually require the money to be spent.

And so guys were just pocketing the money instead of returning it or spending it in the way it was supposed to be spent. And I was really uncomfortable with it. But it put me in a dilemma because if I turned my money back in, it would out everybody else who didn't.

It would say, well, why did the lieutenant turn his money in and these other seven guys did not? And yet I wasn't comfortable. I didn't want to keep it. It wasn't mine.

It was assigned for a specific purpose. And to just pocket it, I thought, wasn't right. And so I was kind of in a dilemma.

And so I thought, well, what was this money given to me for? It was given to me for this purpose. So I went to the person from whom we were obtaining this service and I paid them the money. It was way more than they were asking, way more than they needed.

But that to me, I had done what I was supposed to do. That money was given to me for living expense. This person was who we were renting from.

And so even though he was only asking so much a month, I paid him all of my per diem for housing. I gave him that money because that way I had done what I was supposed to do and my conscience was clear. Well, I still got evil spoken of from the other guys who were pocketing their money because they thought I was somehow, you know, endangering their well-being some kind of way.

And I give you this because it's long ago and old and doesn't hurt anything. But as an example to think about, because what does the scripture say here? Having a good conscience, not just having a clear conscience, but if someone is going to speak evil in your mind, you can process that evil speech, that criticism, that negative judgment and say, I know this is not right and here's why. Our young people who adhere to a biblical set of values in their personal lives, in their dating lives, for example, might be evil spoken of in their academic lives by not joining in the commonplaces of grade-getting and the kinds of underhanded methods to achieve success in classes that are almost ubiquitous in colleges and universities today.

And if somebody has biblical values and they don't participate in that, even if it doesn't hurt anybody but them because they're going the long way around and doing all their own work and taking extra time, they might be evil spoken of because they're looked down upon, they're well, you're holding us up, we're having to wait for you to finish your lab because you're doing all your work yourself and we can't leave until everyone is finished and shame on you and why don't you just cooperate to graduate and so on. Well, this is pressure. This is pressure to conform, pressure to compromise, pressure to yield to the environment around us.

And having a good conscience means I've got the wherewithal to process this situation and vindicate what I have done. I am doing what is right no matter what you say and here's why. Like anything else, this is something to be careful with.

You don't want to be justifying yourself when you are in fact wrong. That's why it says having a good conscience. This word means thinking with.

You know, soon ideas is in there and the idea here is that you're thinking with something. You're not just vindicating yourself. Anybody can do that.

The worst immoral people in the world vindicate themselves and say, well this is just really best for me. I needed this. Thinking with, applying biblical standards in God's Word and coming away saying, I understand your criticism.

I hear your evil speaking, but I am right and I'm sticking to my guns. This is moral fiber. This is the ability to counter negative influence with solid understanding.

This is what Jesus did. His own family came out and said, why are you doing what are you doing? His disciples, Peter tried to talk him out of going to Jerusalem and being crucified. Satan came to him and tried to circumvent the plan of God and offer Jesus shortcuts to the kingdom and shortcuts to the throne and shortcuts to getting the attention of his people and he had a good conscience.

He had the ability to answer those objections from a biblical point of view. So when it says having a good conscience, this says something. It means that we don't just attend Bible class.

We don't just listen in Bible class, but we process, we understand, and we incorporate what we learn in Bible class and we use it as a bastion and as a bulwark against negative feedback because we will get negative feedback. We're going to get people misjudging, criticizing, impugning our motives. We are doing this because we have a future hope and people say, you're just doing it for this.

You know, they put themselves in our place. They know why they would do what we're doing and it's for totally selfish motives and so they assign those motives to us. You know, judging others by yourself is often a dangerous thing and that's what they do.

And we don't get thrown, we don't stumble or trip over that sort of thing. We have a good conscience. We have the ability to build a fortification in our mind against that.

That's what having a good conscience is. So that when they defame you as kakopoyon, poyo to make or to do, kakos is evil and it's just literally evil makers. They say you're making trouble, you're a troublemaker, you're an evildoer.

But troublemaker is really a good translation in this context. Poyo to make, to bring into existence, to accomplish and kakos is evil and this is ill winds blowing. You are defamed as a troublemaker.

Those who revile your good conduct in Christ and this is where the good conscience comes into play. We verify, we ensure that our conduct is good in Christ, by Christ, according to the standard of Christ. Although that's not kata here, it's n-e-n, it's in Christ.

We're doing what we're doing in Christ because we have sanctified him in our hearts. And when we are executing good conduct in Christ, they will be kata iskunthosen, which is translated here, may be ashamed. This is not a an extremely common word in the New Testament and what it actually means is put to shame, refuted.

Not necessarily at the time, not necessarily in the group, but they will be shown to be shamefully speaking. And there's a lot of scripture that I could give you in this regard, but I think it's

understandable. Those who revile, those who speak evil of your good conduct in Christ, are going to be refuted.

They will be shown, and this may not be until the day of Christ, maybe nobody knows it but us, but we just keep on keeping on because we're looking at something else. It is better in the unlikely event that it is the will of God to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. And there is a calling from time to time to suffer for doing good.

The Lord Jesus is the prime example of this. And that's what Peter moves to in verse 18. For Christ also suffered once for sins.

And this I could easily digress into one of my favorite topics that came up just this past week. You know, there's a new flurry of discussion over whether or not there's a hell. A guy came out recently with a book saying, you know, I don't think there's a hell, and I don't believe in conscious eternal punishment, and so on.

And this caused a big furor. But the subject of what is the hell? Well, it's a very intriguing one, and we have been down that road several times before. In a nutshell, you have it right here.

Christ also suffered once for sins. Christ is not suffering for sins. Now, why is that? The commonly held view is that people go to hell for their sins, hell being defined as eternal conscious torment.

You did not accept Jesus' payment for your sins. You must pay for your own sins. That's going to take an eternity in conscious living torment.

That's the sort of the standard model. Well, Jesus has paid once for sins. The just for the unjust.

Now, if he did it once, and if the penalty for sins is eternal conscious torment, why isn't Jesus in hell? Instead of going to the cross, why didn't Jesus go to the lake of fire? Why isn't he still there? Because one person paying for their own sins takes an eternity, according to this sort of poorly thought-out view. I myself, if I'm paying for my own sins, it's going to take me an eternity. Jesus apparently accomplished the payment of the sins of the whole world in three hours on the cross.

So, one of two things has to be true. Either Jesus is uniquely able to experience an eternity in the lake of fire multiplied times the total population of the earth in three hours because he's the Son of God, and in some kind of way the magnitude was increased to compensate for the lack of duration, if you get my meaning. Some kind of way Jesus suffered an eternity in hell times however many billions of people have ever lived, all in the space of three hours.

Or, guess what? The payment for sins is not eternity in the lake of fire. The payment for sins is whatever it is that Jesus in his humanity experienced on the cross. By the way, the argument that Jesus was somehow a super sacrifice who could cram an eternity in the lake of fire times the total population of the earth into three hours fails because what does scripture say about how Jesus

bore our sins? He bore our sins in his own body on the tree.

What kind of body did Jesus have? Fully human. He wasn't a demigod. He wasn't half-god, half-human.

He wasn't Hercules. He was fully human, necessarily so, and he accomplished that, and obviously deity cannot bear sin. Deity cannot take on sin and pay for it.

Jesus didn't do it in his deity. He did it in his humanity. That's why he had to be incarnate to be the perfect sacrifice for sin.

He couldn't do it in the realms of glory as the second person of the Trinity and say, excuse me for a moment, Father and Spirit, while I go over here and bear the sins of the world for a brief period and I'll be right back. In his deity, he didn't do that. He did it in his own body on the tree.

He did it in his humanity, and the payment for sins, all of the sins of the world, was accomplished during those three hours of darkness on the cross, and when he completed that work, what did he say? Tetelestai, it is finished. There's not some part of the Lord Jesus continuing to suffer for all the sins of the world. So, that leads us to the corollary conclusion that whatever it is people are going to hell for all eternity for, it is not paying for their sins, and scripture tells us in several other places, he is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

And all of the limited, by the way, in Calvinism, they no longer will avow limited atonement. When you start saying, well, don't you guys believe in tulip, total depravity, unconditional election, limited, say, no, no, no, we don't believe in limited atonement. We believe in, and they've got different terms for it, it's special atonement, or it's, there's some other word.

It means the same thing as limited, but they don't want to say limited anymore. So, just be aware if you, you know, run into that, it's now got a new name. But the Calvinist view is that Jesus only paid for the sins of the elect.

The unelect still bear their sins and have to go pay for them in the lake of fire. Well, look at our passage. Christ also suffered hapox, once.

Remember, you find a word in the Bible one time, in Hebrew, Greek, it's a hapoxlegomena. It's a once word, actually a once wordomena, a once word phenomena. Only find it once.

Hapox, it's a hapox phenomena. Well, here, Christ also patho, remember pathos, he suffered. And this itself is an aorist.

I can tell by looking, although I can't get this thing to tell me. Yes, aorist, active, indicative, apothē, hapox, once for sins. He did it once and it's done.

All sins, past, present, and future, poured out on him and judged. The just for the unjust, the dikaios, on behalf of, huper, the adikon, alpha privative, plus righteousness, means no righteousness. In order that he not, he might bring us to God.

This is a reminder, you know, people always talking about the Christ-centered life and that kind of thing, and taking nothing away from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, what did he say? I am the way, no man comes to the Father but by me. Our spiritual life does not have as its destination Jesus Christ. He is the way.

We travel his way. We enter into the holy place through the veil that is his flesh. He brings us to God.

He doesn't say, I'm God, just come to me and you're done. He says, come to me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, I will give you rest. He says, come to me and I will show you the Father.

If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. I am the way to the Father. But we are related to God the Father.

He is the firstborn among many brethren. He doesn't become the Father. And there's kind of a misunderstanding.

Even when people are trying to practice a God-centered faith, they get wrapped up on the Holy Spirit or they get wrapped up in the Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus is the first one to say, the Father is your God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Over and over again in the epistles.

So just be aware. It takes nothing away from the Lord Jesus, but he's the first to say, I am the way. You come to the Father.

Hebrews 11.6, without faith, it is impossible to please him. He that comes to God, God the Father, so that he might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, in his body, but made alive in the spirit. These, by the way, are parallel.

You know, in your English, it says put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the spirit. And it's one of those things where once somebody puts capital S on spirit, nobody feels comfortable changing it back. But the construction is parallel in Greek.

These are both dative, locative, instrumental, and they're designed to be the same. He's either put to death by the flesh and made alive by the spirit, or he's put to death in the flesh and made alive in the spirit. And that is just the way the Greek lays out.

And there's, you know, theologically people say, well, I want to say he's made alive by the spirit and assign the resurrecting power to God, the Holy Spirit. But I'm just telling you that in Greek, it just lays down flat. They're both ends.

And so in Numati, if this was Numataz Hagios here, you'd have a whole different thing, but it doesn't say holy, it just says in the spirit, put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which you have by whom in your English. And, you know, I'm sorry for whatever theological trains are running into brick walls here, but I'm just translating what's in the text. Put to death in the flesh, made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and preached to the Numasi, other spirits, in prison.

You see how this kind of makes sense. If he's made alive in spirit and in the spirit, he goes and testifies to spirits in Phoulake, in prison. Verse 20, who formerly were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah.

And it's interesting that God has the same makrothumia, the same patience that we are enjoined to have. Makrothumia is one of the exhortations that we commonly have. The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace.

Makrothumia, long-suffering. And the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was prepared, in which a few, that is eight souls, were saved through water. Also, and you notice there is, has no Greek counterpart there, also antitupon, also antitype, which now saves us.

Baptism, not the removal of filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience, agathēs, sūn, aidēs, seōs. Remember up above, giving an answer, meekness and fear. We have a, having a good conscience.

Baptism is the answer of a good conscience toward God. Well, this is quite a lot to digest here. We're, Peter has made an allusion to many things, and it's tantalizing, because in the gospel accounts, you have Jesus on the cross, you have the various Gospels, and when you collect them together, you get the seven sayings of the cross, I thirst, and woman behold your son, son behold your mother, and father forgive them, they know what they do, and so on, and culminating with, it is finished, and he dismissed his spirit.

Then we have the account of the visits to the tomb, we have the resurrection, the appearance of the angels, and so on. But here, Peter says, here's something that went on after Jesus died. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, and in spirit, he went and did this testifying to spirits in prison.

Well, this is a subject I'm not going to attempt to address in the remaining five minutes we have tonight. Let me instead leave that for next time, where we will cover it in detail, and just close with one final thought. Overview.

Peter has been on this road in this section of the letter, and he says, submission is the key. God has put structures in place, and we should respect them for his sake. We sanctify Christ in our hearts, and we operate with an eye on the heavenly future, with an eye on the eternal future, with

an eye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and we don't look for our vindication, we don't look for our recognition, we don't look for our value in the things of this earth.

We get that, we've got that, and we also know how. How can I do this in the heat of the moment, when I want vindication, when I want justice, when I want recognition, when I want satisfaction, when I want something out of this situation, how do I do it? Well, it is that good conscience that we build. It is the contest between physical reality, the reality fed to our brains by our senses, and eternal reality that we are aware of in our souls.

And it's a contest. Which one is more real? If the return of Jesus Christ, and the judgment seat of Christ, and the potential for blessing and reward is real to us, those letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, to him that overcomes I will give, and we say you know what, that's the vindication I want, that's the recognition I want, that's the personal satisfaction I want, is Jesus Christ looking at me and saying well done thou good and faithful servant. It boils down to how strong is my good conscience, how conscious am I of that good, that eternal good, and how powerful is that, how strong is that compared to my human enmeshment, my human entanglement in the world, my investment in this argument, my investment in this situation, my feeling of angst or dissatisfaction or desire for some sort of result.

That's the contest. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age. And that's the investment in these situations.

The powers of darkness like nothing better than for us to get so wrapped up in the movie that we forget that we're sitting on the couch. And we startle and people throw their popcorn all over the room when the guy appears from behind the door. We jump, we're so enmeshed we forget it's a movie, it's on a flat screen, it can't come out and hurt me, why is my heart rate up? Because we get involved, we become immersed in this thing that is not as real as our living room and the people around us.

Well, it's a contest of realities, it's a contest of perceptions, it's a contest of strength. How do you develop a strong, good conscience? By doing just what you're doing right now. This is the beginning.

We get at the truth of God's Word by whatever means. Bible class is a great way, it's a provision of God and it's a wonderful thing, but it's not enough by itself. If you're trying to operate a good conscience and pit it against investment in this world by doing nothing more than Bible class twice a week, you will fail.

And I can tell you now that that's your old problem. If all you're doing is coming to Bible class and saying, I don't understand why I'm not prevailing and having victory in these circumstances, because Bible class was never intended to be all you need to win in that contest. Meditation.

How many times have we looked at it? Psalm 1. The guy who doesn't walk in the counsel of the ungodly or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of the scornful, his delight is in the law of the Lord and in his law he meditates day and night, evening and morning and at noon, while I pray and cry aloud. I will reflect what I know. I refresh it.

I enhance it. I focus on it. I keep it.

People always say, well, keep it real. Keep it real. I don't know what that means in that context, but I know what it means in our context.

It is real, but is our grasp of that reality sufficient? Is it living enough? Do we refresh it? Do we nourish it? Do we cultivate it? Do we feed it? Do we build it up? Do we make an effort to keep the spiritual realities alive? That's our good conscience. Having a good conscience. You can't fight for heaven if you're busy fighting for the last word.

You can't invest in eternity if you're all invested in the moment. You just can't. How real are these things? It's not enough to hear it and say, oh yeah, I remember that from last Friday.

It has to be something we think about all day long. How did Daniel, when the king's edict came down and the enemies of Daniel, he was doing good by praying to God in heaven, and they spoke evil of him. They said he's seditious.

He's subversive. He's a bad influence. They talked Nebuchadnezzar into making that edict that you can't pray.

What did Daniel do? He used to sit by his window and look toward Jerusalem and pray. It would have been easy to compromise. It would have been easy to say, well, you know, what if I just don't sit by the window today when I do my prayers? I'll look forward to the day when Jesus says, go into your closet to do your prayers.

I'll go into my closet. They won't be able to accuse me if they can't see me. And Daniel almost defiantly sat in his window and did his, by the way, verbal praying.

This wasn't the days of silent prayer, and I'm just gonna look soulful. Nobody will know I'm praying. You know, evening and morning and at noon will I pray and cry aloud, and he shall hear my thoughts.

He shall hear my voice, says the psalmist. And Daniel vocalized his prayers. That's how they could accuse him with success and have him, you know, arrested.

But what was real to Daniel? He certainly knew how the king executed malfeasance, misfit criminals. He knew how that went, right? He knew exactly that these people were watching him, could see him down below his window, and he sat there and he prayed out loud to God in defiance of the king's decree. How could he do that? Where did the power come from? God and

the things of God were more real to Daniel than lions, fires, anything the king and his enemies in the royal court could throw at him.

Well, where do you get that kind of strength? You know, we have that song, Dare to be a Daniel. Where does that strength come from? We build it over time. We listen to the teaching of the Father of God.

We put our faith in that truth, and we meditate on it. We think about it. We pray it through and to God the Father frequently during the day, and we keep it fresh.

We keep it alive. We keep it real, if I can use that phrase. That's how it is done.

That's what Peter is saying here. It is the answer of a good conscience toward God. Baptism, spirits in prison, we'll do all that next week, but he begins and ends this.

It's bracketed by that good conscience. That's what a good conscience is. It's a fortified conscience.

It's an active conscience. It's one that is grasping eternal realities by faith. Faith, it is the evidence of things not seen, substance of things hoped for.

How do you make an insubstantial thing substantial? Well, you've got to put some effort into it. You don't just wait for the clouds to part. So after all is said and done, when we have these exhortations and these commands and these examples in Scripture of how we should live and how we should be, my question is always, well, that's great, but how? What is the means? Well, that's the means.

That's the means. And we discover for ourselves as we pray and as we meditate on the truth of God how much more vital and how much more living and powerful the Word of God is, situation by situation, conversation by conversation, challenge by challenge. And we begin to see and feel that power enabling us and ennobling us to fulfill all of God's plan and purpose in our life.

Let's close here in the Word of Prayer and we're going to look at this very interesting episode in the life of Christ that Peter alludes to next time. Father, thank you for the truth of your Word. Thank you for the power that you have made available to us to live a supernatural life through the presence of your Spirit and through the presence of your Word in our souls.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will remind us and encourage us and impress us with these things so that the time that remains to us in this life will be well spent and well invested and we will reflect your glory and the glory of the Lord Jesus to the maximum extent now and in the ages to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.