

Confess the Crucified and Risen Christ

1 Peter 3:13-22 • 2022-07-17 • 1 Peter Series "From Cross to Crown"



Have you ever done something good only to have someone lash out at you? That's pretty much the case for one of the pets in our household. My oldest son has a pet hedgehog. His hedgehog makes a point of letting him know when he isn't happy. Sometimes when my son is holding him, trimming his nails, or feeding him the hedgehog will spike him with his quills. When he cleans up after the hedgehog, does it thank him? No, it will grumble and complain. And after he gives it a bath his hedgehog will look at him with his perturbed little eyes as if to say, "If you ever do that again I will murder you."

I'm guessing there are times when you did something good for someone and it felt like you did it for a hedgehog. That's especially true as you live out your life as a Christian. A Christian might try very hard to serve others and to do what is good and kind, but some will still grumble and complain against them, poke at them, or make a point of insulting them. In his letter to the scattered believers Peter says that a Christian might, "*suffer for doing what is right.*" He warns that there will be people who, "*speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ.*" What should we do in the face of such animosity? Today we continue our series through 1 Peter and find our answer. As we travel from cross to crown, we confess the crucified and risen Christ.

Peter begins this section of chapter 3 by asking, "*Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?*" We might expect the answer to be nobody. But the fact is there are plenty who will. Sometimes its just a small nuisance. Recently there was a man who appeared to be experiencing homelessness hanging out near my office. I hadn't seen him before and haven't seen him since. But I did what I normally do and introduced myself then asked if he had any pressing need. He just asked for some water. I also offered him some food which he eagerly accepted. When he said he didn't need anything else I left for an errand. When I returned, I found the empty food packaging and some personal items littered everywhere. It was just a small nuisance. But the response toward good can sometimes include malice. There are times when Christians advocate for the downtrodden but are they trampled over. It seems bizarre, but even though Christians have historically always fed the hungry, dug wells, operated hospitals, founded orphanages, and given care to the sick and dying they are still wrongly accused of being the problem in society. Christians operate pregnancy counseling centers, adoption agencies, and offer programs for parents but they are still wrongly accused of being against mothers. Christians will do good as they honor marriage and the family and yet the world labels them as hateful. Christians will honor authority and the world mocks them. They revere and worship God, but the world says it is a waste of time and money. They love God and love this world more than a little boy loves his pet hedgehog, but still the world pokes at them. One could easily argue that Christians have done more for life with charitable programs, hospitals, and service than any other group. Yet many will still speak against them.

That's why Peter reminds us, "*Even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.*" Brothers and sisters don't do good because the world will bless you for it. It very well may not. It may even speak against you despite the good you do. But do it because you are blessed by God. And no matter what the world around you might say or do, you remain blessed. So, Peter tells you don't fear the attacks against your faith.

How then should we respond to those who speak maliciously against our godly behavior? Peter tells to do more than live godly lives. Revere Christ as Lord in your hearts. And let Christ be heard on your lips. "*Always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope you have.*" Notice Peter doesn't just say be ready to confess Christ to the nice people around you. He says always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you. That means even being ready to speak to the person who has poked at you and spoken against your faith.

But when you explain your faith, do it "*with gentleness and respect.*" You are now very different from the hedgehogs of this world. The world is quick to mock any opinion or idea that is against their own. They don't feel the need to respect anyone who doesn't agree with them. But we are called to confess our hope in Christ as Lord, and to do it with gentleness. When a Christian perceives that someone is lost in the darkness of sin how should they address that person? Should they join the political commentators by labeling that lost soul with a derisive nickname? Is that gentleness? Don't get me wrong. Gentleness doesn't mean overlooking evil and wickedness. But gentleness means that you share Christ without arrogance or pride. It means explaining what Christ has done for the sinner by leading the sinner to repentance instead of shame. Gentleness invites the sinner to come to the refreshing gospel. Gentleness reaches out to the lost so that they can understand what it means to confess hope in Christ as Lord.

And Peter says we should also share our hope in Christ with respect. This word, more literally "fear," is sometimes translated as "respect," meaning respect towards those who ask us about our faith. But it might best be understood as "reverence," meaning in respect towards God. When you present your hope in Christ do you share it with gentleness towards lost sinners and with humility towards God? To fear God means to share your hope in Christ as a sinner. It means to toss out all arrogance and pride before God and let everyone see you are a sinner in need of grace.

Are you prepared to give an answer? Do you always do it with gentleness towards the people around you and with reverence towards your God? Or does the way you confess your faith sometimes come across as arrogant and proud?

What Peter envisions for your life is that you follow Christ from cross to crown. Christians are called to be part of the royal priesthood of believers. They live godly lives in thanksgiving to God. They love God and love all people. They hate sin and don't let it become lord. No, they have set apart Christ as Lord. They love and serve him. And as they find the world mocking them, eventually that unbelieving will have to pause and wonder, "What makes you tick? You don't fight back like everyone else. Why the continual gentleness and reverence?"

Brothers and sisters, fellow foreigners, we follow Christ from cross to crown. We go through trials and sufferings on our way to the promised gift of glory. And we do it with a whole new attitude. We recognize that at times it is God's will for us to suffer, even for doing good. If you are thinking, "there is nothing good that can come out of my suffering for doing good," look at Jesus! Look at the good that came about through his suffering. His humiliation led to exaltation for us all. How true that statement is in Christ: "*Even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.*"

Peter spends the rest of this chapter explaining how Christ suffered for doing good but remained blessed. In fact by his suffering, he blessed us all! Peter gives us the reason for the hope we have. To do that he follows each part of the the Apostles Creed regarding Christ. He describes Christ's journey from cross to crown. "*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body...*" Jesus only did good. He healed. He fed. He had compassion. He reached out to the lost. He preached the truth in love. He proclaimed forgiveness of sins. But he suffered while doing good. That suffering was more than any we have ever faced. He was spoken against and slandered. He was beaten and bruised. He was crucified. We confess the holy righteous Son of God who came to suffer and die for sinners!

But Peter shares the reason. This is the hope we have: Christ suffered for sins. It was for us and our sins that he suffered. And this is the hope that we have: the righteous one suffered for all the unrighteous. He is holy. But all of us are not. But he took our place. It is a beautiful exchange of the holy one dying for an unholy world. And this is the hope we have: Christ did this to bring us to God. By his suffering and death we have been brought back to God. We confess the crucified Christ who won the total victory over sin!

But Peter goes on to include nearly every statement in the Apostles Creed about Christ's journey from cross to crown. "*(Christ) was made alive in spirit.*" This means the same one who suffered in lowliness is now glorified. He bodily rose and was made alive again. We confess the living Christ who won total victory over death!

After being made alive Christ went and made a proclamation to the imprisoned spirits. This is why we confess in the Creed "He descended into hell." He didn't descend to further suffer. This was part of his victory parade. And he didn't come to give the devil and the souls of unbelievers a second chance. He came to make a proclamation of his victory. This is our hope: our Lord is lord of all. Not even the devil and all the forces of evil can defeat him. We confess the crucified Christ who proclaimed his total victory over evil!

Peter then goes on to speak about how God rescued Noah. The world spoke against Noah for 120 years. But in the end Noah and all with him in the ark went from cross to crown. God rescued Noah and all who trusted in his promised means of rescue in the flood. Peter says the way God rescued Noah through the flood and the ark is a picture of the way God rescues us today. Twice here Peter says, "*Baptism saves you.*" And we don't look to the means itself for salvation. We know that the power isn't in the water. The power is in the working and promise of God. Baptism saves in that it connects us to Christ and his resurrection. All who believe and are baptized will be saved. They have a pledge from God that their conscience is clean. It was Peter who said, "Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children for all..." This is our hope: baptism is a gift of God that saves all who believe. This clear confession is found in another ancient creed, the Nicene Creed, "one baptism for the forgiveness of sins." We confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins!

And our hope goes on! We confess Christ rose to life, proclaimed his victory, commanded us to baptize and teach all nations, and then he ascended into heaven. Jesus has "gone into heaven and is at God's right hand." Before he sent us to make disciples by baptizing, he said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Afterwards they saw him ascend into glory. He now sits on his throne as Lord. He rules over all for us. We confess the exalted Christ, crowned in glory at the father's side, ruling over all things!

We are blessed. Even if while doing good the world tries to poke at us, we remain blessed. Christ is Lord. He suffered, died, rose again, descended into hell in victory, gave the gift of baptism for forgiveness, and ascended into glory. He went from cross to crown. Our certain hope is that we will follow him who did this all for us. He did it to bring us to God. And he brings us through our trials, our crosses, and all pains, to a resurrection glory before his throne. So, when we do good and bear up and continue to do good, we will be ready to explain to this world why. We confess the crucified and risen Christ who went from cross, to crown. In grace we will follow where he has gone.