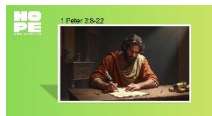




Choose Your Path

1 Peter #6 • July 5, 2026



1 Peter 3:8-22

“Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 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. For

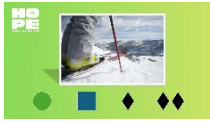
“Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

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

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, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels,

authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.” (1 Peter 3:8–22, ESV)



Choose Your Path

If you ever go snow skiing, you might come upon some signs with different symbols. They might have a green circle, a blue square, or a single or double black diamond. What do those mean?

- Green circle = _____. (Beginner – easy)
- Blue square = _____. (Experienced - intermediate)
- Black diamond = _____. (Advanced - difficult)
- Double Black diamond = _____. (Professional - dangerous)

On the slope, those signs are helpful because they tell you what kind of experience you are about to have. You get to choose what level you’re about to encounter!

Sadly, the Bible doesn’t have such signs. If it did, today’s passage in 1 Peter 3 (as we continue our sermon series walking through this New Testament letter) would put you at a crossroads. Go left, and it’s a green circle; go right, and it’s a black diamond.

I wrestled with this passage as I prepared to preach. I spent time with it. I read it. I thought about it. I did my Greek homework. And I struggled to know which way to go with it, because that’s my burden as the preacher – what passages do I share, what depth should I plumb, who needs to hear something (or who will I offend), how do I stay faithful to the text?

**Side Note: Knowing that weekly struggle, I need you to pray for me, regularly! I need your prayers that I might have insight, that I might have boldness, that I might convey God’s messages without getting too much in the way of Him. I need prayers to have His protection and strength to face the spiritual warfare that I don’t always see but regularly feel. Pray not only for me but for my family. Not only for me but for my staff. Not only for me but for our Elders and Deacons and teachers. Not only for us but for our church to listen and respond!*

With 1 Peter 3, I wasn’t sure which way to preach, so I thought I’d ask you:
Do you want a green circle or black diamond?

(Well, I saw some hands for the green, so I’ll head that direction first)



The “Easy” Path: Be Good, Not Bad

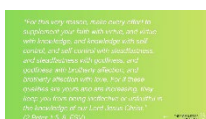
The first few lines of this passage sound familiar. It includes stuff we get in almost every letter in the New Testament, whether the letter is written by Peter or Paul or anyone else. It is “*the list of good behaviors.*”

You’ve heard encouragement like this before! We referenced one example in a famous passage last week.



“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22–23, ESV)

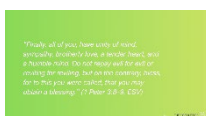
But there are others. Peter himself makes a different list in his next letter.



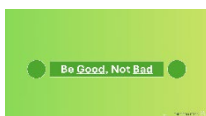
“For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:5–8, ESV)

Most of the New Testament letters share a similar list of good things to pursue, as well as a list of bad things to avoid. Same thing here.

Peter says,



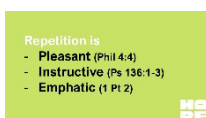
“Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.” (1 Peter 3:8–9, ESV)



Be good, not bad.

That’s green circle stuff if I ever heard it! It’s what we hear all over the Bible. And for good reason! Humans need to hear things over and over again. We need repetition.

- *Repetition* (of good things) is **pleasant**. You like a song or a movie or phrase? Play it again!



- *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.”*
(Philippians 4:4, ESV)
- *Repetition* is **instructive**. The more we say something, the more we remember it.
 - *“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, **for his steadfast love endures forever**. Give thanks to the God of gods, **for his steadfast love endures forever**. Give thanks to the Lord of lords, **for his steadfast love endures forever**,”* (Psalm 136:1–3, ESV)
- *Repetition* is **emphatic**. If you hear something once, it’s not important. But multiple times? There is content we must heed.
 - 1 Peter 2 – multiple verses quoted (repeated) to show Jesus to be our Cornerstone!

And when we get a Bible list of good behaviors to copy (plus bad ones to avoid) like in 1 Peter 3...that stuff is important!



It is repetition if the truth that **good behaviors are part of our Christian duty**. They are never done to EARN our salvation – salvation comes from faith in Jesus alone. But ONCE we have salvation, this is part of the new lifestyle and culture we are asked to take upon ourselves. The behaviors don’t pay God back for His free gift – they demonstrate the life He has given us (and are actions that require His ongoing grace to perform!)

The same could be said of another part of 1 Peter 3. This verse gets repeated often:



“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,” (1 Peter 3:15, NIV)

That’s easy to understand, too, right? If you have been saved by Jesus, be ready to talk about it!

- ➔ **Is anyone here unaware that we should be talking about Jesus?**
- ➔ **Do you know that “evangelism” (telling people the Good News of Jesus) is a thing?**
- ➔ **Do you know that you should be able to explain your faith?**

These verses are easy! They are green slope stuff! We all know them, because they've been repeated in countless lessons and sermons and passages.



Easy Becomes Harder

But the “easy” green circle stuff has a lot of side trails that aren’t so easy. They are harder. The green path **acknowledges** the statement; the side trail says, “Let’s **put it into practice.**”

Like James says,



“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” (James 1:22, NIV)

That means I can no longer gloss over the list. Instead, I need to pause and check for each behavior in my life.



“Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.” (1 Peter 3:8, NIV)

Peter uses some great words in the green slopes here that should give us pause. Are we (are you?):

- Like-minded // unity of mind // of one mind
- Sympathetic // feel alongside others
- Love one another // brotherly love // love each other as brothers and sisters
- Compassionate // tender heart (“Good bowels” – different spin if someone says you are full of _____. Lol)
- Humble // humble mind // humble attitude

Which word do you want to consider? Which trail should we explore?

Pick one, and then start asking questions for the sake of *application* (“doing what it says”). Rick Warren, in his book *Bible Study Methods*¹ suggested four factors in creating a good application:



1. Your application should be **personal**—you should write it in the first person singular. Use the personal pronouns *I*, *me*, *my*, and *mine*

¹ Warren, R. (2006). [Rick Warren's Bible study methods: twelve ways you can unlock God's word](#) (p. 41). Zondervan.

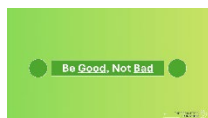
throughout. (*“I need to...”*)

2. Your application should be **practical**—it ought to be something you can *do*. Plan a definite course of action that you intend to take. Design a personal project that will encourage you to be a “doer of the Word.” Make your applications as specific as possible. Generalities can make you feel helpless and produce little action. (*“I need to lose some weight. I need to be more tender-hearted toward the Elders”*)
3. Your application should be **possible**—it should be something you know you can accomplish. Otherwise you will get discouraged. (*“I need to lose 10 lbs. I need to ask regularly how the Elders are doing and pray for the things that are on their hearts.”*)
4. Your application should be **provable**—you must set up some sort of follow-up to check up on your success in doing it. It has to be *measurable* so you will know that you have done it. This means you will have to set some kind of time limit on your application. (*“I need to lose 10 pounds before the end of the month. I need to call one Elder on Friday to ask how they are doing and pray for them.”*)

Each behavior, if you were to really give it some thought, would challenge you and lead to different application. And it will be hard! Warren added some warning as well, reminding us that application is hard because it takes **serious thinking**, and because you and I **naturally resist change**. But also,

*Application is hard work because **Satan fights it viciously**. The devil’s strongest attacks often come in your quiet time when you are trying to apply what you have studied. Satan knows that as long as you are content with merely having head knowledge of the Word, you are not much of a threat to his plans. But as soon as you get serious about making some changes in your life, he will fight you tooth and nail. He hates doers of the Word. He will let you study the Bible all you desire as long as you don’t ask yourself, “Now what am I going to do with all that I’ve learned?”*²

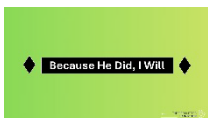
² Warren, R. (2006). [Rick Warren's Bible study methods: twelve ways you can unlock God's word](#) (p. 37). Zondervan.



We could spend a lot of time and energy on the green slopes with this passage! We could invest a lot in the lists as we try to **be good, not bad**.

But one of the great things about skiing is that we can go back and take a different trail. We took the green circle path in the passage...but now we can hop on the ski lift, head back up and take a different approach.

Are you ready for a black diamond?



The “Hard” Path: **Because He Did, I Will**

As Peter moves on, he says some truth that gets pretty deep, pretty fast.



“Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit. So he went and preached to the spirits in prison—those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood. And that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers accept his authority.” (1 Peter 3:18–22, NLT)

(During my prep time, I told Jordan I was preaching from this passage. He just laughed and gave me a raised eyebrow and a knowing smile)

Some of you raised your hands for a black diamond...so I want to ask you, “Why?” Not sarcastically, but honestly. *Why do you want the difficult part of Scripture?* I can guess the answer. My guess is that you don’t want to be complacent and weak, like the believers Paul criticizes in 1 Corinthians 3.



“Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn’t talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in Christ. I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren’t ready for anything stronger. And you still aren’t ready,” (1 Corinthians 3:1–2, NLT)

No one wants a doctor who doesn't know how to read an MRI. You don't want a mechanic who only knows how to change oil. We don't want a chef who has only mastered grilled cheese sandwiches.



And you and I don't (or shouldn't) want to be the part of a church that is content with just green circle slopes. Our church should want more!!!

God gave us His revelation in a book that is challenging, and to master its black diamond drops, each person needs to invest time and attention. You can't come to service once a week (or twice a month) and expect to master the Bible. You need to study it!



- Every person sitting here should be in a **class or educational environment** at least once a week to dig deeper.
 - o **Sunday morning** – 8:30 Class (only 25% of you go 2nd service studies)//10:00 Classes (only 5% of you go to a 1st service study). I challenge you to be there next week (or next hour)
 - o **Wednesday evening** (during school year) – men's, women's
 - o Other **Bible studies**
 - o **Online** individual study
 - o Reading a **book...** etc
- Every person should **know the basics** of what you believe.
- Every person should **read through the Bible**

Why is 1 Peter 3 a tough passage, doctrinally? Because it requires extra knowledge...the kind you can only get through study. It's hard enough when you know; it's flat-out confusing if you don't.



- There is hard stuff related to Jesus **“preaching to spirits in prison”** – you would need to have some ideas about His activity after the cross and how to interpret the word “spirits.”
 - o For my diamond club, there are three main options.
 - (1) One interpretation holds that it refers to the **spirits** of people who have died and that Christ, after his resurrection, preached the Good News to these *spirits*. However, the idea that people might hear the Good News and respond after their deaths is not found elsewhere in the NT, and this meaning of *spirits* is not the most likely.

- (2) A second interpretation sees 3:19–20 as describing Christ’s preaching **through Noah** to people who are now spirits **in prison**. This interpretation does justice to 3:20, but does not fit well in the discussion of Christ’s death and resurrection (3:18).
- (3) In the third interpretation, *the spirits in prison* are evil spiritual beings. Jewish tradition, based on Gen 6:1–3, held that many angels fell in the time of Noah (see also Jude 1:6; 1 *Enoch* 6–10). Peter’s point would then be that Christ **proclaimed his victory over the evil spiritual powers** after his resurrection (cp. 3:22).³
- Short answer: I take position three.



- There is hard stuff related to **baptism** – it “Now saves you”
 - Is this a statement about the primacy of baptism in the salvation process?
 - How do other passages that speak about grace and faith fit with this statement? How does that impact our denominational tradition that emphasizes immersion?
 - Short answer: Despite Peter’s statement, the overall Biblical pattern is to see baptism as *part of the response* to Christ’s salvific work, not the *mechanism that initiates* it.



The more you study, the easier it is to have those types of discussions. And even if you think, “*Who cares about the details? I just love Jesus*”, the ability to have those types of discussions can play an important role in answering the questions others have about your faith (see 1 Peter 3:15). You can respond without an “*Ummmm...I don’t know*” and give others an excuse to dismiss your weak system of beliefs... or you can build confidence and give them pause as they think about what you just dropped on them!

It helps others, but it also helps you.

After wrestling with those verses, I was able to see how they fit in with the whole conversation Peter has been having. They aren’t random theology

³ [*New Living Translation Study Bible*](#) (1 Pe 3:19–20). (2008). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.



topics he threw in. Instead, they supported the theme that Peter has been sharing all along: **Christ is our example!**

He is our example in **suffering**. He is also an example of **proclamation**. Jesus' **experience** descending and proclaiming shows that He knows what it is like to share with a hostile crowd. Like us, he has been among those who doubt. Yet, at the end of that difficulty, where does he end up? Glorified! Like us, there is hope at the end of His mission.

“Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers accept his authority.” (1 Peter 3:22, NLT)

It fits with Peter's theme that “life is hard, but there is hope!” At the end of our suffering and trial here, we will experience the fulfillment of the hope we have now! Jesus is our example.

The truth of this tough passage is that **Because Jesus Did, I Will! He is my example in suffering and proclamation, so I will follow His lead!**

Black diamond folk, we could talk more later... in a class or a conversation. But the more you can intelligently wrestle with a passage, the more you'll get out of it!

Closing

Church, I want you to be able to go down any path that a passage throws at you. I want you to cruise on the bunny slopes, and I want you to enjoy (or at least survive!) an adventure down steep and rarely traveled terrain.

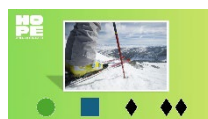


“I rejoice in your word like one who discovers a great treasure.” (Psalm 119:162, NLT)

Don't be content with the level you're at. Spend time wrestling with passages to understand them. Think about their content as you read and after you read, giving yourself time to come up with personal, practical, possible, and provable applications.

Don't rely on your minister alone for insight and guidance. Don't just listen to his stories of what happened on the double black diamond.

Ski the slope yourself! Navigate the Word with confidence!



Prayer

Invitation

Invite you to join a class or small group or study

- On your connection card (fill out anyway!)
- Write a note – we can talk about your next steps...

Sermon Notes

The “Easy” Path: **Be Good, Not Bad**

(Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Peter 1:5-8; 1 Peter 3:8-9; Philippians 4:4; Psalm 136:1-3; 1 Peter 3:15)

Easy Become Harder

(James 1:22; 1 Peter 3:8)

The “Hard” Path: **Because He Did, I Will**

(1 Peter 3:18-22; 1 Corinthians 3:1-2; 1 Peter 3:22; Psalm 119:162)

Sermon Discussion Questions

- Do you prefer to skim the surface of Bible passages or dig deeper? What does “deeper” look like to you?
- Read 1 Peter 3:8-9. Write down the list of behaviors on paper. Define what each means. Give an example of each.
- On the surface, this list basically says, “Be good, not bad.” Why is good behavior a part of the Christian life? How do our works relate to our faith? Consider passages like Ephesians 2:8-10 in your response.
- Why is it important for the Biblical writers to repeat such lists of behavior? Are we that prone to error?
- Choose a word from 1 Peter 3:8. How would you put this quality into practice and develop it? Think of ways that are person, practical, possible, and provable. Which will you do this week?
- Why is Satan content to let us know the Word as long as we don’t implement it?
- Read 1 Peter 3:18-22. Is there anything confusing about this passage? Refer to a study Bible or commentary. Read what some of the experts say about it.
- What would change in your life if you consider Jesus to be your example, both in how you suffer and how you proclaim His victory?
- Are you part of a Bible study class or group? When does it meet? What are you studying now? If not, when will you join one? Call the church for options.