

1st Peter #6 - Living for Heaven in a World Gone to Hell

- Well howdy, we are continuing going through a book of the Bible called first Peter we're in chapter three. If you've got a Bible, find your spot. And for those that are joining us online, it's a little warm here in the Valley, right here in the desert, amen. And if you see the weather report this week, what's the high, this week, 116. I had a friend of mine called and they're like, "Is it hot?" So answer, "Yeah, 116 is hot." It really is hot. I was watching the news the other night and they said "Tonight's low will be 100." I was like, "That's not low. "That is not low at all." And what happened this week is our air conditioning broke in our house. Okay, true or false if you live in Arizona, that's a problem. It's fun right? I was in Alaska preaching a few years ago. They're like, "So does everyone need air conditioning in Arizona?" Answer, all the people who wanna stay alive, yes. They all need air conditioning. It's an essential here. It's not a side item. Now what happens when it gets really, really hot, we get really, really uncomfortable. So what are we looking for? Shade and comfort. That's why we jump in the pool. We go up to the mountains, we turn on the air conditioning and we park our car seven miles away from where we work because there's one pathetic tree and we're trying to park under it. And if you live in the Valley, you know that so much of your life is trying to find a comfortable environment, especially as everything else heats up. And what's true, physically is actually right now, true racially, economically, socially. How many of you right now, the culture, it's not a very pleasant place to be the conversations that we're having. The relationships that we're enduring, the head on collisions that were witnessing not very pleasant. How do we live then in a world that is lost it's mind. And that's kinda where I'm going today. Living for heaven in a world going to hell. And because this is the first time that we've ever lived a life. We think that no one has ever had it as bad as us. And in the first century to whom Peter is writing is a group that's under the auspices of the leadership of the ancient Roman empire. It was the America of its day. They had the biggest economy, the biggest military, the biggest global footprint. And they were in the process of self-destructing and disintegrating. There was political, racial, economic, regional infighting, lots of conflict, self destructive behavior, just like we are witnessing and observing today. Peter alludes to this back in chapter four, verse 12, he talks about the fiery trials we use that language. That, boy they're really turning up the heat. Boy, things are really heating up. That's what he's talking about. The fiery trial. Ultimately we know historically that the city of Rome, that was the headquarters for the Roman empire, it would soon burn to the ground, literally, literally burned to the ground. So everything was heating up and eventually everything was burning down. That's the same situation, sadly, that we find not only our country, but much of the world in, and just like in your home environment, you can't control. Let's say in the place that you live, what the environment is out there. But what you're trying to do is create an immediate environment that is life giving. That is restful. That is hopeful, and that is enjoyable. And how do we do that? Even though the world is going to hell, how do we invite heaven into our home, into our life, into our relationships, into our family and into our church family? And that's exactly where he goes today. And so he starts with this in first, Peter three, that heaven and hell started this life. Lots of people think, well, when you die, you go to heaven or hell, well, while you live heaven or hell come to you, it's a both end. It's not just that you die and go to heaven or hell it's

that where you're alive, heaven or hell come to you. And then eventually you go to one of those, but your life can either invite heaven or invite hell. And a lot of it depends on how we treat one another. So help me get the word out. Let's be nice. Finally, in light of everything, he says, "Here's the grand culmination. "All of you," so no exceptions, "Have." And then he has this punch list of do this, don't do that. "Have unity of mind." We'll get into that, "Sympathy, "brotherly love, a tender heart and a humble mind. "Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling." And this was before social media. So the need is only increased, amen. "But on the contrary, bless, for to this, "you were called that you may obtain a blessing." And they quote Psalm 34. It'd be good for you to read the whole chapter sometime this week. It's amazing. But he says, "For whoever desires to love life," that sounds awesome. "See, good days," I'd take one good day. "Let him keep his tongue from evil. "His lips from speaking to see, "let him turn away from evil. "Do good, let him seek peace and pursue it "the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, "but his ear are open to their prayer. "But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." What he's saying is when all of what is happening out there is just turn up the thermostat, turn up the thermostat, turn up the thermostat. God's people need to be careful and wise not to fall into that same foolish trap that we need to figure out how to turn the thermostat down. Turn the air conditioning on, cool things down because in our relationships and in our interpersonal communication, if we just turn up the temperature for them, the problem is we live there too. And it's very unpleasant for them just as it is very unpleasant for us. So he's gonna start with things that we can do to literally turn up the thermostat, make it less pleasant, make it less comfortable. One he says is repaying evil for evil. Someone does something bad to you. What do you do to them? Do something bad in return. You punch me. I punch you. You hit me. I hit you back even harder. What this is, this is vengeance. This is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. And eventually everyone is blind and toothless. That's where it all ends up, eventually. Are we seeing this in our culture? Conflict, conflict, conflict, conflict. Yes, is it going to get better between now and the election? No, and I don't say that because I'm a prophet. I'm just telling you it's that obvious. You don't need a prophet to tell you that it's going to get worse. And what happens is when someone does something to you and you feel like, well, I have a right to do something to them now where even did they ever feel like we're even? No, if you're like your response was an overreaction. Therefore I need to even the score, this is how things escalate. The temperature in the relationship, the conflict continues. It only escalates. And here's how you know, something is of the Lord. It's a win, win. God loves everybody. So when everybody wins that's of the Lord, you know it's at the flesh or our sinful fallen selfish nature. When it's a win, lose. I win, you lose. You're like, "Heck no, "I'm gonna change the outcome here. "Now I'm gonna do something "so that I win and you lose." That's the flesh, you know something that is evil. It's demonic, it's sinful when it's a lose, lose. See right now, a lot of what's going on in our culture, macro additionally down in our relationships is what, I don't know who's winning, nobody's winning. Everyone's losing, everyone's losing. And that's what happens when you have a culture that exchanges evil for evil and then part of it as well, that's your works. And he talks about your words, reviling for reviling. These are your words. Oh, you said something nasty. I'll say something nasty. You commented on my social media. I'm gonna comment on your social media. You called me a name. I'm gonna call you a name. How many of you fall into this trap in the last 15 minutes? It happens, right? Right now what we're seeing is we're seeing

all of the conflict come into our relationships. Now we're arguing with our spouse. Now we're arguing with our kids. Now we're arguing with our friends. Now we're arguing with our coworkers. Now we're arguing with our brothers and sisters. And all of a sudden we see that as he articulates it here, the tongue speaks evil in deceit. It's attacking reputations. It's attacking character. It's misrepresenting information. It's maligning of others. Many of the problems that were happening or having right now were happening for the simple reason, just the way human beings treat each other. I mean, civility is dead. Any intent of trying to assume the best or at least restraint immediate judgment is altogether gone. But he's saying, is this, if that's the way it is out there, let's say it's 116 degrees out there. Do you want 116 degrees in your car? Do you want 116 degrees in your house? Do you want 116 degrees in your relationships? You gotta find a way to turn the air conditioning on and not fall into these same patterns, which simply just escalate the thermostat. And it's really, really crucial. We're seeing lots of conflict. And I'm just telling you that I don't think things will be improving anytime soon. And God's children have an opportunity to not let all that is out there affect all that is in their life practically. And it goes on to say, as a result, these are people who do evil against God. And what they're giving into is this sort of mob mentality. And it's nothing new social shaming, cancel culture, mob mentality, nothing new, lots of aggressive pressure so that you will say and do things to appease the mob, which ultimately causes you not to please the Lord. And this is the world that we live in. This is the world that we live in. And so the question is, if this is how people are conducting themselves as the children of God, how should we conduct ourselves so that we're not literally living in what feels like an internship for hell, but we're inviting the culture of heaven into our daily lives and relationships. And it gives us a list of seven things. Number one, unity of mind. All right, this doesn't mean that we agree on everything. How many of you are married? Okay, do you agree with your spouse on everything? You do not. I don't, Grace and I disagree on some things. Okay, so pray for her. She obviously is wrong and has some areas to grow. But she's in process. And so the struggle is real, but I hang in there 'cause I love her. I see you all chuckled, we can have a relationship with people that we don't agree on everything with because even in a church, the only place that people agree on everything is a cult. Just so you know that. If you walk into a place and they're like, "Yeah, everybody agrees on everything." You're in a cold, get out as soon as possible, they're making Kool-Aid. They got white shoes that are your size. It's all gonna go bad. I'm just telling you there's a bad ending. In any group, this can be your family, your friends, or church family. You can have unity of mind without having total agreement on everything. Unity of mind comes around a few things. Number one, the relationship matters more than the issues. It does. It does. Whatever issues are going on. Those are important. But the issue that really is most important is the relationship. And what we're seeing now is on almost any issue, the sort of outrage of the moment, people are burning their relationships to the ground over an issue. And eventually the issue is not going to be quite such a big deal. Therefore the relationships should always be the big deal. Always be the big deal. Another way that we have unity of mind is something that I call open-handed versus closed handed issues. These things are really important. So for us who are Christians, the Bible is true. Jesus is God, forgiveness of sin and eternal life only come through Jesus, secondary issues, political party, where you're out on all kinds of social issues, all of these secondary things. They're not unimportant, but they're certainly not this important because different people who believe

different things, are still gonna be with you in heaven forever. If they agree on these things, therefore unity of mind is, well, these are the things that we do agree on. This makes us spiritual family, we're gonna be together forever. So let's dialogue, let's debate, let's discuss, but not divide over these issues. That's unity of mind. He goes on to talk about sympathy. Sympathy is simply this it's considering the other. It's saying, "I want to understand you so that I can help you." "I wanna understand you so that I can help you." And what happens in our culture, there is just an absolute lack of civility because there is a lack of sympathy. This should be a class in every high school and every college, how to look at it from somebody else's perspective. It doesn't mean that they're right, but it does mean that if you love them, you wanna understand them so that you can help them. And this just doesn't happen. This does not happen. There is no consideration of the other viewpoint. It is simply I take my position and I hammer you. And if you don't change your mind to agree with me, then I continue to hammer you because you're of no value to me. Right, I heard this on social media recently. I had somebody hammer me on my Old Testament view of something. And it was really harsh and intense. And I wonder what it says, so I clicked on it, it was a 14 year old girl in the Midwest. She loves Disney and hammering me, okay. So, and all of a sudden it was like, Okay, what is going on here? I mean, 'cause this Disney princess has really got it out for me. And I click, click. There's some things going on in her life. Like the death of her dad. Okay, maybe she's just having a bad day. And maybe I remind her of her dad. I don't know. But I'm trying to understand why the Disney princess is so upset with me from the Midwest. This hit me some years ago. I was a young pastor and I would see people's behavior, including my own. And I would get frustrated with them, including myself. And then I started to realize, once you get to know somebody, the bad decisions that they're making or the bad ideas that they're believing makes sense to them because of some pain or experience in their past. So there was one gal, I'll give you an example. I was in my, I became a senior pastor at 25. I'll be 50 in October, I'm aging in dog years, if you saw Grace, my line is always, women age like wine, men age like milk. That's kind of where we're at. We both turned 50 this fall, but I was 25 year old senior pastor. And there was this young woman loved the Lord godly gal. Super great gal met this amazing, wonderful guy. He loved Jesus. He adored her. They were like perfect fit. You could just see this was gonna be awesome. They send out their invitations. They order the cake. They schedule the photographer. They put down the deposit for the honeymoon. I mean, everything is nailed down. It's a few days before the wedding and she comes in. She's like, "I'm canceling everything, Pastor Mark. "You don't need to come to the wedding. "We're not gonna get married I'm canceling. "We're not gonna get married." I was like, "Did he do something?" "No, no, he's great." "Well did something happen?" "No." "Are, are you okay?" "Yeah, I'm doing fine." "Okay, I don't understand. "You're great, he's great, together. "This is just gonna be great, why?" And I started asking her, "what's going on?" She says, "My mom's been married and divorced seven times." She said, "In addition to having seven men in my home "that I called dad growing up before high school, "mom also moved in other men who weren't my dad." She said, "I'm just really scared to trust any man. "And I'm really scared to get married. "And I'm scared to bring children into this world "because I don't want them to go through "what I went through." You know what that is. That's brokenness, that needs to be healed. Oftentimes when you get to know who someone is, not just what they believe or how they behave all of a sudden their

actions or their attitudes that make no sense to you. And now you're like, okay, now I understand. It doesn't mean I agree, but I understand. And if I understand you, now I can help you. And what this means is we're too busy trying to win arguments, we need to be worried about winning people. It takes no sympathy to win an argument. It takes a lot of sympathy to win a person 'cause I need to understand you so that I can help you. And what he's talking about here is in the context of relationships, sympathy, he also talks about brotherly love and what this is, this is caring for people who belong to the Lord, Jesus Christ, his spiritual family, like you would members of your own family, that we've got a physical family that we're born into. We have a spiritual family that we're born again into. And the Bible uses this language of loving each other with brotherly love. Any of you ever had any conflict with a sibling? Amen, can we just be honest and say, "Yes," even if they're here with you today, we have conflict with our siblings, right? But what we have is commitment to our siblings that is than a conflict with our siblings. And love simply means this I'm going to seek to do what is in your best interest. That's what love is. And love is not like, does it say like one another? Is it possible to like everyone? No, some of you like, "No Pastor Mark. "I don't even like you." Okay, thank you for illustrating my point. Because liking someone is dependent on them. Like you're like, "I don't like you." Why? "'Cause you're you and I don't like that." Okay, love is not based upon them. But upon him. See, God loves us. He gives us his love so that we can give his love to them. Loving someone has far more to do with him than it does with them. Liking has a lot to do with them. And let me say this. If you get a relationship where you like and love each other, go for it. I'm not against it. My wife, Grace and I'll let you in our little secret. I like her. And I love her, but are there times, even in marriage with the people that we really care about the most that we still love them, but we're having a hard time liking them. If you're engaged, I'm just prophesying your future. This is coming. This is coming. And so liking someone can be intermittent, but loving someone is consistent. You can always love someone. Even if you don't always like someone. How do we know? Because Jesus says to love who our enemies. Do we like our enemies? No, hence enemy. You're like, "I really enjoy my worst opponents in life." No I don't. I love them as God loved me. When I was an opponent of his. Brotherly love, that's how the family of God acts like a family. And so liking someone is an emotional response. Loving someone is a willful response. Okay, there's a difference there. And that love comes from God. He says to have a tender heart, the heart is the seat some center of who you are over 900 times. If memory serves me, correct, the Bible talks about our heart. And what happens a lot of times is people focus on their words and their deeds. I should not say those words. I should not do those deeds. And what the Bible says is if the heart was right, everything else would eventually write itself. For those of you who are parents. Sometimes we're looking at our kids and what we want is their behavior to change. And really what we need is their heart to change. When the heart changes, the behavior changes when the heart changes, the words change. So Jesus says, "Out of the overflow of the heart, "the mouth speaks." That's why the Bible says in Proverbs "Guard, your heart. "It's the wellspring of life. "Everything comes out of your heart." And what he's talking about is that you and I have jurisdiction over our heart. What's the opposite of a tender heart? Hard heart. One of the things that turns up the heat in a relationship and makes everything far more painful than it ought be is a hard heart. We've all been there, right? You ever had a hard heart. So it was like, I wanna talk to you, no. I'm sorry, I don't care. What can I do to make it up to you? Die. That's a

hard heart. That's a really hard heart. You're in a bad place. What would you like to do for date night? Date someone else, hard heart. Hard heart. You guys get the illustration here? It's hard heart. You know you're dealing with someone that has a hard heart when you're like, "There's nothing I can do. "It's not gonna make any improvement." You and I have jurisdiction over our hearts. Sometimes you've got a broken heart. Sometimes we got a fearful heart. The Bible talks a lot about the heart. What he says is that what we need to have, before going to have any sort of health in our relationships is what kind of heart, tender. So we say, "But you don't understand." Okay, what I do understand is this that God has access to your heart and that God could change your heart. So one of the great prayers in the Bible is we go to God and he gives us a new heart, a new heart. And this is where before you deal with them, sometimes you gotta take your heart and you gotta bring it to him. Lord, I know if I go talk to them right now, it ain't gonna be good Lord. I know if I say what I'm thinking and feeling it's going to be literally shooting them in the soul. So God, here's what I need. I need you to help me have a tender heart so that when I go to them, I go then to them with your heart, okay? God's heart toward us. Is it tender? It is, it is always tender. The God of the Bible never has a hard heart toward his children. That's why we can always run to him and never be afraid of him. It's not like I don't know who I'm gonna get today. He may be just really done with me. No, he's always got a tender heart that our God has a tender heart. And he has access through the Holy Spirit to change our heart. And if you are having a hard time in relationship with someone, because your heart is hard before you work on that relationship, you need to bring your heart to God and really have that relationship with God, prepare your heart for your relationship with them. Now, the reason we don't like this is because it means that we can't just say and do whatever the heck we want. But if we do, we get the world we live in. And none of us is enjoying that either. He talks about a humble mind, a humble mind and a humble mind means I may not agree with you, but I'm willing to listen. I'm willing to consider and I'm willing to learn. Now, it doesn't mean at the end that I will agree with you, but I've heard you I've considered you. I've respected you. And then whether or not I agree with you is not contingent upon whether or not I treated you with any dignity value and worth. Okay and a humble mind says this. I could be wrong. And let me just say right now, it doesn't matter what news outlet you listen to. There is not a humble mind. Some of you like, "No, no, no. "My channel, those are the humble minded people." No, they're not. They're not open to the possibility that they may be wrong on a few things. And that's true of every perspective because all we have right now is deep polarization, deep political division. And as a result, everybody picks a position, doubles down, quadruples down. No one is willing to consider maybe everything we're saying, is it right? Maybe everything we're believing, isn't entirely accurate. We're open to correction. Because as soon as you say, "You know what, I might've been wrong "or that may not be right." Then the war begins. And then they want to push you into a place of total surrender and retreat. So you hold your ground, but you may be on the wrong front of the battle. This is where the Christian needs to just practice humility of mind. And say, "You know what I'm willing to learn. "I'm willing to consider. "I'm willing to possibly be wrong, "willing to possibly be wrong." In addition, he says, "To endure evil deeds and reviling words." And what he's saying is this. When someone does evil, don't do evil. When someone says something that is reviling, don't return with reviling. How many of you, you're a counter puncher by nature like me. And this is just an old habit. This is just your habit. If they hit

you. You hit them back. They say something. You say something. What he's saying is don't do that. Respond to him, not to them. How many of you have said something in the heat of the moment that ultimately longterm 'caused you a lot of pain that could have been omitted. Had you just restrained your tongue any of you ever posted something. And then the Holy spirit shows up 15 minutes later. Like, "That was a dumb idea." But then it's too late because there it is. Some of you are like, "Pastor Mark, I've Googled you. "You've done this a thousand times." I know, that's why I'm giving you this illustration. Please prevent the pain that I've endured 'cause I love you, but we've all done this, right? What does this do to a marriage relationship? What does this do to a parenting relationship? What does this do to relationships within the family of God? Turn up the heat, turn up the heat, turn up the heat. Here's what I don't need. When it's 116 degrees outside a furnace, right? All we're doing is just literally taking the fire and the heat and the flames of hell and pulling them up into our relationship so that we make that person uncomfortable. But the problem is we live there too. It's a miserable place to be. That's what people are missing. And that's what Peter is teaching. And then he says, instead "To do good and bless others to do good "and to bless others." To do good and to bless others. How do you know that you have forgiven someone? You can bless them. How do you know that you're loving someone? You can bless them. If I came to you, I just want the Holy spirit right now to bring to mind someone, all right do you have a face? Do you have a name? You're like, "Oh, not them." Okay, then it's for sure them. That's who we're talking about, right? You're like, okay, bless them. You're like "I do, no, no, not them. "Does bless mean stab in the Greek?" No, no, it doesn't, bless them. Bless them. You know that you love someone when you bless them because you remove yourself from the center and you let them be at the center. I'm not going to do what is best for me. I'm going to do what is best for you. You know that you've forgiven someone when you can bless them because God not only loves us and forgives us. We know that he loves and forgives us because he blesses us. God has blessed me richly. It's where I know that he loves me and he's forgiven me. Sometimes blessing someone is doing something that benefits them at your expense. Sometimes blessing someone is speaking well of them. When you could speak ill of them, sometimes blessing someone is not saying or doing anything. It's just like, you know what? I'm gonna absorb that. I'm not gonna respond. I'm not gonna say anything. I'm not gonna do anything. Right, you punch me. I'll take the punch. Not gonna say or do anything. And this is exactly how Jesus Christ lived his life. Let me ask you, if you hear something of the character of Christ here, unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love a tender heart, a humble mind, enduring evil deeds and reviling words. Doing good and blessing others is that the character of Jesus Christ? It is, therefore it should be the character of Christians who bear the name of Jesus Christ and where he goes from that is he says that if we will live the way that Jesus lived by the power that Jesus lived, the power of the Holy spirit, there are five things that God promises. If what we say is, "Okay, God, I'm not gonna respond this way "and turn up the heat. "I'm gonna respond this way. "And I'm gonna turn on the air conditioning "in these relationships." Number one, he says, "God will help us love life." How many of you are not loving life lately? Any of you not loving life, I'm not, but you know what? God says that if we will obey and follow him, we can love life's. So let me tell you this. This is a true story, out there. I'm not really loving life, but in my home with my family, I'm actually loving life. The temperature out there, 116 temperature near me, 70. It's actually a really enjoyable place to be. I can't control the

temperature out there, but I can control our environment. He goes on to say, number two, "That you'll see good days." You know what? People really don't believe there are any good days coming. Most pastors, I know they're like, "I'm gonna preach revelation." They just given up, man, there are no good days. We're just gonna set it all on fire and hope Jesus comes back before they put the mark of the beast on us, through the vaccine. And then, shirtless. I mean nobody thinks there's good days coming, right? Some of you are like, "But there's an election." That's not gonna be a good day. I'm just telling you right now. If you wanna love your life and see good days, you've gotta live differently and you need to change and not wait for everyone else and everything else to change. It says you can enjoy peace. You know what we're seeing right now, a record, lack of peace. People are freaked out, frustrated, self-medicating, self-destructing, drugs, alcohol, depression, anxiety, online addiction. People are stuck at home. How do I know? I can't even get on the Wi-Fi in my neighborhood, I can't. Everybody's just binge watching, looking for bad news, freaking out. There's no peace. There's no peace whatsoever. What he says is if you wanna love your life, have some good days and enjoy some peace. You're gonna need to invite God into all your relationships and circumstances. Because if you're waiting for everything out there to change, you're gonna die before it all gets straightened out. Number four, that God will answer your prayers. Wouldn't it be nice if he had some help right now? Any if you tried to get customer service during COVID, this isn't in my notes. We already recorded last night. So I could say whatever I want this morning, I called the bank and they're like, sorry, we can't answer the phone. There's COVID. I was like, I know you're all in India in a call center. So, why can't you answer the phone? I went into the bank and I was like, "Can I get some help with this?" They said, "Yeah, you're gonna need to fill out these forms." I was like "Okay, can you give me the forms?" They're like, "Sorry, we can't send emails. "There's COVID." I was like, "Who got COVID through an email, right?" This literally happened to me. I was on the phone the other day for two hours for customer service. "Sorry we have long wait due to COVID." Okay, I'll wait for somewhere guy named COVID. That's not a problem for me. So I wait for two hours after two hours. Here's what it says. Goodbye and hung up. I kid you not that's what happened to me. You know what, here's the good news. If you live in the will of God, you can make requests of God and God actually hears and answers, okay. When the Bible says that God is a servant part of what that means is there is customer service, that if you make a request of God, that he wants to hear and answer that, and actually help you. Unlike everyone in everything else on the earth right now. And it says that he will deal with the evildoers. And sometimes we think, well, God, look what they're saying. Look what they're doing. Somebody needs to say and do something. God's like, "I got this, heal up, stop being crazy. "You work on you, I'll work on that, okay?" I'm happy to report that actually in my home and in our church family, it's actually a pretty healthy, enjoyable season. And out there it's only gonna get crazier. So where he goes with that, is he talks about the opportunity amongst the misery, and he's saying that your worst misery is your best ministry. See right now, lots of people are experiencing misery. And for the Christian, our hope is, well, let's use it for ministry. First Peter three, 13 through 17. "Now who is there to harm you. "If you are zealous for what is good. "But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, "doing the right thing, you will be blessed. "Have no fear of them nor be troubled. "But in your hearts honor, Christ, the Lord is Holy. "Always being prepared to make a defense." The word there is apologia. It's the word that

means to make a defense in the original language. We get something called apologetics from that. They have objections. There are answers to the Christian faith. "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," Christian, does it say if you are slandered, no. You know when you're going to be slandered? Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. That's when we're gonna be slandered, right now, if you listen to the news in the public discourse is there are a lot of nice things being said about the church, Christianity, Jesus and the Bible? No, no slandered. That is far more accurate. "When you are slandered. "Those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to "shame for it is better for suffering to do good. "If that should be God's will than for doing evil." What he's saying is this everything out there, 116 degrees, in our family and in our church family let's turn on the air conditioning. Let's not start a fire in the fireplace. So what I'm saying is these principles that Peter is giving start with the people who are closest to you, your spouse, your kids, your coworkers, your extended family, our church family. And eventually your sphere of influence includes those who are non-Christians that you know, that are observing your life. And what he's saying is this, there are two ways to get in trouble. As a Christian. One is to do what everyone else is doing. Who does that get you in trouble with, God. The other is to do what God says, and that gets you in trouble with, everyone else. The question is not, will you get in trouble? The question is, who will you get in trouble with? And what will you get in trouble for? See some of you are people pleasers. Let me just say this. The Bible says, and I'm quoting it. "You cannot please God, and man," you can't. So if you're a people pleaser, you just sort of need to have the funeral for your people pleasing. And then you gotta decide I'm gonna offend him or I'm gonna offend them. And what he says is there's not only two ways to get in trouble. There are two ways to respond, when you get in trouble. One is to pull into your heart. Fear of them, fear of them, fear of them means you're worried about what they're gonna say. You're worried about what they're gonna do. You're worried about what it's gonna cost you. This is our whole cancel culture, social shaming. This is just the constant buzzing of the swarm on social media and in media, just coming together to see who we can pressure so that they will deny what they believe that they will change what God has said, that they will make adjustments and accommodations to avoid some sort of inconvenience or pain. On the other side. The second option is to honor Christ in your heart. So either fear of them or honor for him. And if you honor Christ in your heart, what it means is my highest commitment is to Jesus. Now there are people who love Jesus and people who love to use Jesus. Those who love Jesus when they are facing pressure and problems from them, they remain loyal to him. Those who love to use Jesus, but don't really love Jesus. As soon as the price gets too high here, they cease being loyal to him. We're seeing great apostasy, falling away, denial of biblical Christianity and denial of Christ. And it is simply for this reason, there is more fear of them than honor for him. And let me just tell you this it's cowardly and coward is not a fruit of the spirit and coward is not an attribute of God. I was reading in revelation recently. It talked about all the people who don't make it into heaven. And one of them is those who are cowards because you can't be a Christian and a coward. And what a coward does, a coward cowers out of fear of them and a Christian honors out of love for him and in the middle. How many of you, this feels like a vice that's squeezing right now. Does it feel that way true or false? I don't mean to wake you up from your nap, but I would appreciate

some feedback, okay. This is not the librarians for Christ support group. This is a church meeting, okay. So are you feeling the squeeze?

- [Crowd] Yes. Yeah, all of a sudden it's like, I don't wanna say anything. I don't wanna do anything. I don't wanna post anything. I don't wanna like anything. Okay, well then you're part of the silent problem. Oh my Gosh, so doing nothing got me in trouble. Unless you put up the hashtag you're against the hashtag. Oh my gosh. Squeezing, squeezing, squeezing, squeezing, squeezing. What that causes is misery, but the opportunity is ministering. 'Cause everybody's looking okay, what are they gonna say? What are they gonna do? How are they gonna respond? And what he says is that ultimately under that pressure of misery is an opportunity for ministry. If the Christians respond differently than those who do not have Christ, then it proves that what we believe about Christ is actually true. It makes a difference in our life. Martin Luther says it this way, "Where the battle rages, the loyalty of the soldier is proved." Everybody's tough in bootcamp. Everybody's tough in bootcamp. It's on the battlefield where we find out who the real soldiers are. Right now our culture is at war political, economic, social under it all ultimately is spiritual. There is a battle and the loyalty of the soldier is proved in battle. So a couple of things that he gives us and the Bible says "To endure hardship as a good soldier." Number one, your worst misery is for your best ministry. When you're feeling that vice squeeze between here's what the Bible says. And here's what the world says. Here's what God tells me to believe. Here's what the world tells me to believe. Here's what God says, that he requires regarding how I behave. And this is how the world wants me to behave under that pressure, there is great opportunity. There's great opportunity. I believe that this is one of the greatest and most strategic times in the history of our nation for the forward progress of the gospel of Jesus Christ. 'Cause here's what I believe everything but Jesus fails work. And so right now, if you're like, "No, no, no. "I trust in our political system." Well, that's adorable. "Hey, the economy is gonna V." No, it's not gonna V, it's not gonna V. And if it does, it's not gonna V for you. So either way, you're in trouble. Anyone who is trusting in anyone or anything, but Jesus, ultimately what he says is will be put to shame. It doesn't work. And so while everyone is trying everything and everything is failing everyone. If the Christian stays with the Bible and Jesus, ultimately Jesus always works. Not that we get the life that we want, but that we become the people that God wants us to be. Okay, number two, your Christian convictions will be tested in life's battles. I'm just telling you that our culture is going to continue to trend further and further away from biblical Christianity. Now there will be those who wave the Jesus flag, but they don't love Jesus. They love to use Jesus for their cause. Christ is not their cause, but their cause is a means by which they use Christ for their cause. That ultimately the situation that we find ourselves in is that it is now fashionable. It is now popular to be against Bible teaching Christianity, true or false, just online. Just I double dog dare you, this week on social media say "I'd like to post some things about sex in the Bible. "It's only for married people." Get a helmet in the cup. It's gonna start. And marriage is only for a man and a woman. And there is such a thing as a man and a woman just start in Genesis one, two, just start just page one. Like there's one God, there's a man. There's a woman. They have different bathrooms. They got married and they had a relationship and no one else should, you're gonna get blocked on social media. We're gonna hit that in Romans one come back on September 12th. It's gonna be fun, at least for me. Okay, so number three connect before you

correct. This is the hard part. We wanna win arguments, not people. Our goal is to win people, not just arguments. You can win an argument without connecting. You can't win a person without connecting. All of what he's saying previously is okay, don't act like this act like that. Have a humble mind, have sympathy, love people. Don't talk trash, don't name call that's how you connect. So that then you can correct. He says, "Honor Christ as Lord in your heart. "And then give a reason for the hope that is within you." What he's saying is, as people get to know you and they know that you care for them and they have their best interest, ultimately at heart, which is always Jesus and eternal life and a life in the meantime, by the power of the Holy spirit, that's always what's best for people that ultimately they will be more able to hear from someone who has connected with them. Particularly if what is being communicated is correction for them. How many of you have tried to discipline someone else's kid? You ever done this? You ever seen just a total naughty brat? but you didn't know the kid, you walked up, you're like somebody's gotta parent this kid. True or false. That kid doesn't tend to respond because there's no connection. And you've gotta connect before you correct. Adults are just like kids, unless I know you and I know you love me. I'm probably not going to listen to you. So the reason why we connect before we correct is not so that we can enable, not so that we agree. Not because we're people pleasers and we have fear of man, and we don't wanna have any conflict or heaven forbid step on anyone's feelings. But ultimately, because we want the best for them. And that means there will be some correction in their life to come to understand Jesus and the life that he gives. And I want you to know that I love you so that when I correct, you know that my correction for you is out of love for you. Not to defeat you, but to serve you. Number four, live your faith, then explain your faith. The problem is, is if you speak your faith, but you don't live your faith, ultimately no one is going to listen or respect you. How many of us know that religious person, and to some degree have always been, we've all been that religious person where you're telling people to do things that you're not doing. I remember this is a brand new Christian. I had a Bible study, they were telling me, he's like, "When you're married, you should pray for your wife." I was like, "Do you pray for your wife?" He was like, "Well, you know." So no. 'Cause she was with him. If she wasn't there. What do you think he would have said? Oh, praise the Lord brother. Don't tell people to live a faith that you're not living, live that faith in front of them. And then invite them to live that faith with you and explain it to them so they can, okay. It's a lot easier to have Christian convictions than it is to have Christian disciplines. It's a lot easier to commit to something than to live for something. And somebody says is live your faith and then explain it. And as you live your faith, people will act. He says to give an answer to everyone who asks, what does that presume and assume people know you, they're watching your life ask. Sometimes they're like, "Hey, your wife doesn't hate you. "How do you do that?" Well, his name is Jesus, yeah. Okay, your kids. They're sober and working a job and not posting horrible things about you on TikTok How do you do that, answer? His name is Jesus. You went through a really difficult season and you didn't self-medicate or self destruct. And actually it seems like you're doing pretty good. How do you do that? His name is Jesus. It's living your life. And here's the thing, your witness, your testimony. If you're a Christian, isn't just all your victories. It's some of your defeats and struggles as well. So that they're like, "Okay, so you and your wife almost got divorced "and now you're happy." Okay, now my ears are open. How do you make that pivot? 'Cause my wife's got some paperwork, she wants me to sign. Okay, so you had a strong willed,

stubborn, difficult, really problematic kid. And now you have a good relationship with them and they've made the pivot. Okay, so you get this. So I'm there. So how do I get there? What it is, is it's living your faith openly and honestly the only perfect Christian is Christ. And so what we do, we talk about our imperfections and how our perfect God does perfect work through imperfect people. And that's the hope that lies within us. That's the hope that lies within us. And then lastly, he says, "Let the message of Christ be offensive, "not the messenger." How many of us have confused this? Has Pastor Mark ever confuse this? Has the messenger ever been offensive? Don't laugh that loud. Because what we can sometimes think is, does the Bible say that the message of Jesus Christ is offensive. It is an event. Yeah, 'cause here's what people go like, "What's the problem?" You are. Oh, well that's offensive, amen. Because we like to think that they're the problem. And the truth is we're all part of the problem. And Jesus is the solution. No, no, wait. I'm on the good group. No, no, no. Everybody's just varying kinds of the bad group. Jesus alone is good. That's where Jesus, the message of Christianity. It's offensive. Now what we don't wanna do is take the offensiveness out of the truth of Jesus, but we don't wanna be offensive in delivering the offensive message. And sometimes I have done this, totally guilty, right? Just pull out the flame thrower. I told him the truth. You did, congratulations. You melted them to the ground to prove the love of God. Nice job, that was amazing. That was great. When you told them Jesus loved them and then you set them on fire. I'm not sure they got your first point. Have we done this? Do you ever do this with relatives you're frustrated with? Say yes, say yes, the message is offensive. The messenger should not be. So ultimately heaven and hell start in this life. Your worst misery is for your best ministry. And then he closes reminding us. Christianity is about Christ. It's about Jesus. It's about Jesus. For Christ, first Peter three 18 through 22. "For Christ also suffered," everybody right now. "Let me tell you about all of my suffering I have endured." Okay, let's talk to Jesus. And let's examine all this suffering you have caused. "Christ also suffered once for sins, "the righteous and one for the unrighteous and "everybody else that he might bring us to God," 'cause we're not gonna get to God on our own. "Being put to death in the flesh." There's the cross, "But made alive in the spirit, "rose from the dead in which he went and proclaimed "to the spirits in prison. "The days in between he proclaimed his victory "because they formerly did not obey. "When God's patience waited," we'll deal with this guy, "In the days of Noah while the Ark "was being prepared. "And which a few that is eight person's "his little family were brought safely "through the water, baptism," death, burial, resurrection, "which corresponds to this now saves you not as a removal of "dirt from the body," not just getting wet, "But as an appeal to God for a "good conscience through the resurrection "of Jesus Christ who has gone into heaven "is at the right hand of God. "With angels, authorities and powers, "having been subjected to him. Here's what Peter is saying. The Christian needs to stay on message. The Christian needs to stay on message. The message is Jesus Christ. God become a man live without sin died in your place for your sins. The righteous for the unrighteous, his body went into the grave, his body then rose from the grave. He has ascended into heaven. He is today alive and well seated in glory. Coming again to judge the living and the dead. That's the message. And everybody wants to change the message. Pastor Mark, let's talk about race. Great, let's talk about Jesus 'cause every race needs Jesus. Well, Pastor Mark, let's talk about masks. Great, let's talk about Jesus 'cause the people with the masks and the people without the mask, they all need Jesus. Hey Pastor Mark, let's talk about

politics. Great, let's talk about Jesus 'cause the Democrats and the Republicans need Jesus. Hey Pastor Mark. Let's let's talk about the economy. Great, let's talk about Jesus 'Cause the poor and the rich need Jesus. Hey Pastor Mark, let's talk about the vaccine. Okay, great, Let's talk about Jesus 'Cause whether or not we get a vaccine or whether or not we take a vaccine, we're all gonna die and we need Jesus. I'm not saying that other things don't matter, but I'm telling you that one thing matters most. And it's the message of Jesus that our world has got a lot of problems and he's the only one who's gonna fix it. And so he tells us about Jesus. I like this, by the way, I get excited about this. In a world of bad news, nice to have some good news. Jesus suffered for our sins. Jesus is righteous. Everyone else is unrighteous. Whatever cause you're on, whatever hashtag you've got, whatever parade or protest you are in, you are part of the problem. And he alone is the solution. Jesus is God who became a man to bring men to God. Jesus died for your sins. Jesus rose for your victory, Jesus rules over your eternity. And what he's saying is if God can save Noah and his family there's hope for you and your family. So let me close with the story of Noah, crazy story. First man to sin. Let me just ask this. Have you received Jesus? Have you have you so busied yourself with all that is going on in the world that you have ignored the world that never ends? Are you so consumed with personalities and politicians that you have neglected to make your decision about Jesus Christ? The most important decision you ever make is about Jesus. The most important part of who you are is the soul that is made for a relationship with Jesus. The most important day of your life is the last day of your life. If you don't know Jesus, you need to give yourself and your sin to Jesus. And the story of Noah is that if God can save Noah, God can save you. And if God can save Noah's family, God can save your family. The story starts all the way back in Genesis. Our first two parents, Adam and Eve's sin, Adam sins, all of humanity is descended from him. We're all sinners and rebels and selfish and foolish by nature and choice. God makes a promise that despite sin, he would send Jesus, the son of God to defeat the dragon and to deliver those of us who have fallen into sin. And then God waits 1,600 years. How many of you right now? You're sick of it? I'm sick of it. Sick of what? It, what's it? Everything, how many of you are sick of it? 1,600 years. And it says in Genesis six, that God looked at the human race, everybody on planet earth. And he saw that the inclination, the deepest longings and desires of their heart were only evil all the time. Does that sound familiar? Anybody who thought of evolution, wasn't dealing with reality. We're not getting better. We're not getting better. Things are not getting better. People are not getting better. The inclination of their heart was only evil all the time. And here's what it says. "It grieved God," God looked at the world and was just like, "This is exactly the opposite of what I wanted. "And all of these foolish, rebellious, "selfish people are self-destructing, "they're destroying themselves. "They're destroying their marriages. "They're destroying their families. "They are destroying their communities. "They're destroying their cities. "They're destroying their nations. "This is not what I made them for. "This is what our enemy has recruited them for." And everyone, everyone was evil. And it says that there was a man named Noah who found favor. It's the Hebrew word for grace in the sight of God, God looked and said, "Everybody is awful. "I guess I'll love that guy and save him." And he did. And then he goes to Noah and he says, this "I'm gonna finally bring judgment. "Finally bring judgment through water. "It's gonna a flood in 120 years." How many of you, if God came to you and said, "I'm gonna deal with everything in 120 years?" You wouldn't feel better. People lived longer then, there was

a lot more candles on the cake. 120 years. So Noah, here's what I'm gonna ask you to do son, build an Ark, a big boat, 1.4 million cubic feet. Large enough to house 520 railroad cars shaped like a modern battle ship. Okay, Lord, who's gonna help.? You got a few sons, figure it out. Question, where does Noah live at this moment? He lives in Arizona. He's in the middle of the desert. He's nowhere near water. If you're new here, you just moved. Anytime you go out to eat, do not order the seafood, do not. The water is so far away. It'll never be fresh, amen. He's in the middle of the desert, building a huge boat. My question is where does this kid get the wood? He keeps going up to Prescott. He keeps coming back down. This is complicated. Most commentators believe that to that point, it had never rained on the earth. This is faith, right? Okay, in 120 years, it's gonna rain. All right, Lord, what's rain? So when I take the water down here, I put it up there and then I put it back down there, but it's not as well organized. Okay, that's a flood, okay. What I need you to build is a boat. All right Lord, what's a boat? It's like a house that floats, okay. Who's gonna help me? A couple of sons. How long is this gonna take? 120 years. What should I do in the meantime. Preach repentance of sin. The Bible says that he was a preacher of righteousness for 120 years, Noah got up, did the Billy Graham thing. All of you who would like to turn from sin and come to salvation and God, please come forward 120 years preaching. How many people walk the aisle, zero. Here's what I'm telling you. You ain't got it that bad. And then in the middle of it all, everybody was making fun of Noah. Just like right now, everybody's gonna make fun of you. He's crazy, he lives in the desert. It's never rained, what the heck is a boat? Oh yeah, it's gonna flood any day now 120 years later, just like today. Oh, there isn't gonna be judgment of fire. These Christians are crazy. They believe in an old book. Oh, serpent got people to eat fruit. And then a Virgin had a baby and he rose from the dead and he's coming again on a cloud. Sure, that's what it is. And then what happened? Drop of rain. Huh, that's weird. I've never seen that before. Then, there's a few more. And then it keeps raining and it keeps raining and it keeps raining. And eventually God tells Noah and his family. It's time to get in the Ark. It's time to pull the door up. I think God actually shut the door himself. If memory serves me correct. And then all of a sudden they feel the boat floating, it's rising. And the wind is howling and the lightning is thundering and the waters are rising. And it says that Noah and his family were saved by faith. They entered into an Ark and then what they would have heard on the outside of the Ark. People beating on the door. But it's too late. Let me tell you this. Just as there was a judgment of water, there will be a judgment of fire. Just as everyone thought that Noah and his family were crazy. Everyone thinks we're crazy. Just as the rain came. So the fire's coming and just as they, by faith entered into the Ark, we trust that Jesus Christ is our Ark by faith. We enter into Jesus Christ and we trust him to deliver us from judgment to life on the other side. And let me close with this we'll bring the band up at this time. And I'll pray for you. 'Cause I love you. Men give me your heart, give me your ear. Why or how was Noah's family spared? Because Noah led them. If Noah didn't lead them, they would be like every other family. The only difference between Noah's families and those other families that all perished was that they had a father who loved the Lord. LiveD by faith was not perfect, but led the family. There's a big debate in our culture right now about how much government we should have, how many police officers we should have, how much military we should have I'm for all of it. But I'm telling you, we would need far less of it. If we had more good, godly spirit filled faithful fathers. You and I need to understand that the problem in Noah's day was resolved by a man.

Having faith in God, his wife aligning with him, their children, following them in faith to the Lord. Now I don't know what's gonna happen to this world, but here's what I do know. If you men will love the Lord. If you men will lead your families, then God will provide a way to save you and your family from the coming judgment. If he could save Noah, he could save you. If he could preserve his family, he can preserve yours. Father God, thank you for the scriptures that they are timeless. Therefore they are always timely that they are perfect. Therefore they are always perfectly fitting. And God, we acknowledge that we live in the days of Noah, that we live in the days of Peter, that we need the faith of Noah. And we need the clarity of Peter. God, as we come to worship now. We claim this to be a Holy place. We claim this to be an outpost to the kingdom, spiritually, racially, and economically we say that this is a place where we come to enjoy your presence, a comfortable life giving environment that protects us from that scorching heat that surrounds us in culture and the flames that are coming for judgment. In Jesus good name, amen.