

**ALWAYS BE PREPARED TO SPEAK UP FOR CHRIST**  
**Sermon for the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Easter 2026**  
**1 Peter 3:13-22**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Second Reading from before, 1 Peter 3:13–22: <sup>13</sup> **Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup> but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; <sup>16</sup> yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.**

<sup>18</sup> **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, <sup>19</sup> in which He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> 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, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to Him.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We live lives of preparedness. We make plans. We get ready. We look ahead. Big bills coming up? We put money aside and get ready to pay that bill when it's due. Taking time off for a holiday? We plan that holiday and get ready for some relaxation. Want to retire someday? Then we plan to build up our retirement nest and get ready for the day we retire. You get the idea. We live our lives in preparation. Sometimes things don't go to plan, yet we do our best to be prepared.

Today, Peter asks us to be prepared and ready for something else. *What is it?* He writes that we must always be **“prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.”**

There is no doubt we are living in the last days. Read the words of Christ in Matthew 24, and you will see the end is getting closer. Christ speaks of wars and rumours of wars, nation rising against nation, famines, earthquakes, tribulation, and even the murder of the faithful. All these things are happening now, and it is not hard to look around and start to feel depressed. And just when you think things can't get any worse, they usually do! Thank God we are only in this world, but not of the world (John 17:14-16). We are God's children, and so, He has prepared a place for us in His heavenly kingdom. This is the hope that Peter is speaking of, and the Apostle Paul reminds us when he says, *“Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God”* (Col. 3:2). Paul does not despise the things of the earth but realises that this fallen world should not be our focus. So it is for us. Our focus is on our home in heaven, and in that, we hope.

As we await the call from Jesus to enter our heavenly home, we know that there will be opportunities to share our faith with others, and so, we are to be prepared to speak about this truth whenever we have the opportunity. And how do we do this? Certainly not by hammering someone on the head or shoving our religion down their throats. No, we are to speak to others with **“gentleness and respect”** because

nobody can stand evangelism that comes from aggressive, pushy “know-it-all” people. Nobody can stand someone who talks all the time or who puffs up his own denomination by ridiculing other Christian groups. There is a time and place for careful discussion of disagreements among Christian church groups, but a conversation with a fallen-away Christian or a non-Christian is not it. Respect is also of huge importance when communicating Christ across cultures. People will be more inclined to open to your message if they feel respected and not judged according to their culture. It is enough to simply remind them of who they are in Christ, “*who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Tim. 2:4).

Now, the *specific situation* that Peter here has in mind is Christians who are being pressured and persecuted for their Christian faith. Persecution can take many forms. It can be physical and violent in high-risk areas ruled by extremist groups and authoritarian regimes, as found in places like Nigeria or North Korea. Then there is persecution that comes in countries such as Pakistan and China, where state authorities often use laws and surveillance to cripple any Christian activity. Then there is the social and economic pressure that is placed on Christians, such as in some Middle Eastern and Asian countries, who are denied jobs and basic resources.

When Peter wrote his Letter, Christians were a small, misunderstood minority often viewed with suspicion or accused of being “haters of humanity” because they didn’t participate in pagan civic rituals. They were moving from being viewed as a protected Jewish sect to being seen as a dangerous, “illegal” superstition as more and more Gentiles joined them. Because Christianity was a “new” religion and had no ancient ethnic roots, it became an unauthorised, or “illicit” religion. It was making people feel uncomfortable, and they didn’t understand or like it. And so, the Christians would come under scrutiny. People would be watching their every action closely. They would be watching how they conduct themselves. If the Christians messed up, if they slipped up, then that would give people a reason to dismiss their religion, or even to justify persecuting them.

So Peter tells Christians in this situation to watch their conduct and be ready to speak up for the Christian faith. He writes: “**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 honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defence 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 behaviour 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.**”

Now, even though we Christians in Australia are not facing violent persecution or imprisonment for our faith—at least not yet—to some extent, things have not changed from Peter’s day to ours. Today, Christians are still looked upon by people in our culture as being a little weird or strange. The world does not understand our religion. They don’t get it. They don’t like it. We make them feel uncomfortable. We remind them that there is a God in the heavens who is looking down on all of us and seeing how we’re doing. People want to get out from under that. Their conscience nags at them. They’d rather not think about things like God and guilt, sin and death, and what happens after that. And we Christians remind them of all that uncomfortable reality.

So don’t be surprised when the people of this world look for opportunities to make fun of us Christians, or focus on our flaws and foibles, in order to dismiss our faith. “*Oh, those Christians, they’re just a bunch of phonies and hypocrites. Who needs their stupid religion? Who needs their church?*” That’s the attitude of the world around us.

What Peter is saying to his hearers is, “**Don’t give them ammunition.**” Don’t give the world extra reasons to dismiss Christianity by doing wrong and bringing shame to the name of Christ. It’s going to

be bad enough anyway for Christians living in a hostile world. *Don't make things worse with your bad behaviour.*

And this is a reminder for us, too. How are we living out there in the world? Is our behaviour bringing praise or disgrace to the name of Christ? Are we living any differently from the people of the world? We should be. The Holy Spirit makes a difference in the way we live. Love and good works are the fruit of a living faith. But if we behave in a way that people say, *“If that's how a Christian lives, if that's how the people of that church act, then I don't want any part of it”* —in those cases, we are giving a negative witness to our Lord and His Church. If so, then we need to repent of our sin and return to the Lord for His forgiveness and His help to do better. And He will do it.

But even when we are conducting ourselves in a way that befits the Christian life, the people of this world still will be looking at us a little sceptically. So we return to Peter's words to always be **“prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.”** Are you prepared? Are you ready to speak up if someone were to ask you about the hope you have as a Christian? You should be. Why? Because you have been baptised. You are saved and thus ready to speak.

You have been baptised. Into what? *Into Christ's death and resurrection* (Rom. 6). You have been joined to Jesus, connected to Him in Holy Baptism. Your life is all bound up with His. And this is good. In fact, this is great! It means everything to be connected to Jesus. Without Him, you have no hope, you have no future. Only death and the grave and eternal separation from God would lie in front of you. You would be the walking dead right now, apart from Christ. But with Him you have everything going for you, all the stuff that really matters: peace with God, forgiveness for your sins, the Holy Spirit working in your life, the sure hope of everlasting life to come. All this and more is what you received when you were baptised into Christ.

And so, you are saved. Jesus says so. *“He who believes and is baptised will be saved”* (Mark 16:16). Or, as Peter puts it in our text today: **“Baptism... now saves you.”** Yes, here and elsewhere, the Bible teaches the saving power of Holy Baptism. The main thing in baptism is what *God is doing*. *God acts* in and through baptism. That's why we call it a sacrament. *God is working to save us from our sins, unite us with Christ, and bring us to new and eternal life.*

Peter compares the saving waters of baptism to the flood of Noah's time. Noah and his family were saved through the waters of that flood. Peter says they were **“brought safely through water.”** The water saved them by separating them from the corrupting influence of the unbelieving world around them. The water saved them by separating them from the destruction that God was pouring out on the evil world.

So it is for us, in the waters of Holy Baptism. **“Baptism... now saves you.”** It gives you a good conscience before God, Peter says, **“through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”** All your sins have been washed away. You stand clean before God, with a clear conscience, and it's all because of what Christ your Saviour has done for you.

It always comes back to Jesus. Notice how Peter grounds everything in Christ: **“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God.”** That's what Jesus did when He died on the cross for us. Jesus was perfectly righteous, with no sin of His own, and yet He suffered death for us, in order to bring us to God, righteous by way of forgiveness. That's what Jesus did for us by His atoning death on the cross.

And what did Jesus do next? Peter continues: **“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.”** This is talking about Christ's bodily descent into hell. After Jesus died, and before His resurrection, at some point during that time, Jesus descended into hell to proclaim His victory over hell and the devil. Yes, Christ's victory and authority extend over death and Hades, so that the devil has no more power over us. More good news!

And then there is the resurrection itself. The victory has been made known and witnessed, and is now proclaimed for all to hear! **“The resurrection of Jesus Christ,”** Peter writes, **“who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to Him.”** Notice how Peter here basically has taken us through what would become the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed. For in this text Peter has hit on all these points: that Jesus Christ our Lord *“was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.”*

This is how you have the hope you do. *It’s all centred in Christ and in what He has done for you and what He has in store for you.* This is the Christian faith. This is the Christian hope. This is what you have been baptised into. This is how you are saved.

This, then, is why and how you are ready to speak. Just tell the people about Jesus. Speak the Apostles’ Creed if you can’t think of anything else to say. It’s all there, you know: Who God is, and who He is for us. The heavenly Father, who created us and cares for us. God the Son, Jesus Christ, the One who died and rose for us, to bring us to God and to give us eternal life. The Holy Spirit, who quickens our faith in Christ and keeps us close to Him and draws us into the life of the church.

And so I ask you again, one more time: Are you ready? Are you ready to speak up about your Saviour and the Christian faith and hope? I hope so, because you’ve got so much going for you! You’ve got so much to speak about and share. For you have been baptised. You have been saved, and that, in turn, makes you ready to speak. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.