

Living Without Fear
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1 Peter 3:13-18

Opening question: True confessions: Does witnessing ever stress you out? If an UNBELIEVER came to you this morning asking: “How can you hold up under the suffering you’re going through? How can you have peace? Why do you have hope?” How would you answer?

- One of the BEST opportunities we have to tell unbelievers about Christ is when we are going through a time of suffering, IF...we face it with FAITH and HOPE.
- Like it or not...SUFFERING is UNIVERSAL! No exceptions, if we’re human we’ll suffer.
- None of this should surprise us. Jesus told us this would be the case.
- In John chapter 16, Jesus had just told his disciples what was going to happen to Him and the effect it would have on them. His leaving and their suffering. Then he said in John 16:33:

33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Peter wrote in a similar fashion to the scattered believers who received this letter...and to you and me.

For believers in Christ, SUFFERING doesn’t have to STOP US IN OUR TRACKS. We can focus on our HOPE rather than our FEAR because of what Jesus did for us on the cross.

1 Peter 3:13–18 (ESV)

13 Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 15 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, 16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil. 18 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,

- Today’s text is made up of just SIX verses. Just SIX verses...yet, much ground to cover.
- Peter had just finished writing to these “scattered” believers about submitting to authority; wives submitting to husbands; husbands loving our wives. Basically, he has

written about LIVING THE RIGHT WAY. Now, in verse 13 he asks a rhetorical question:

- If you are ZEALOUS (which means EAGER) to do good...who is going to harm you?
- Generally speaking, if we love God; submit to authority; and DO GOOD no one will harm us. BUT...verse 14 begins with BUT...because there is always an exception.
- The people Peter was writing to were LIVING verse 14. They were SUFFERING for being Christians. Peter writes:
- "...even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed."
- **Question: How is it that we will be BLESSED if we should "suffer for righteousness sake?"** That word BLESSED means FORTUNATE; PRIVILEGED; Jesus said in...

Matthew 5:10

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- And he took it even further in

Luke 6:22–23 (NASB95)

22 "Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man.

23 "Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.

- Back to verse 14. After Peter tells us we'll be BLESSED if we suffer for righteousness, he tells us to DO some things.
- **First, what does he tell us NOT to do?** "Have no fear of them, nor be troubled..."
- These scattered, suffering believers must have been thinking: "Peter, do you know what they are doing to Christians these days?" "HOW, can we have no fear nor be troubled?"
- **What does Peter say to DO in the first few words of verse 15?** "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts..."
- **What do you think Peter means by "sanctify Christ as Lord in your heart?"**

The believer is to view Christ as holy, as worthy of reverence because of who he is. To reverence Christ as Lord means to believe that Jesus Christ is in control and that those who come against the believer are not. To have such reverence is to maintain a deep-seated confidence in Jesus Christ as the reigning Lord of the universe (see 3:22). When our lives are centered on Christ, who is in control of the universe, then we are able to respond properly to the uncertainties and inconsistencies of life. — Holman New Testament Commentary – I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude.

Psalms 27:1 (NASB95)

1 The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?

Alexander Maclaren wrote,

“Only he who can say, ‘The Lord is the strength of my life’ can go on to say, ‘Of whom shall I be afraid?’” (Expositions of Holy Scriptures, 16: 42)

- Verse 15: Then Peter instructs us to “always” be “prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you;”
- 1 Peter 3:15 is a verse we should UNDERLINE in our Bibles. I have had friends who claim this part of verse 15 (...always be prepared to make a defense...) as their “life verse.”
- **Question: What is the typical reaction of an UNBELIEVER when they see a Christian going through suffering with grace, peace, and hope?**
- Suffering in a Christian’s life provides an opportunity for WITNESS about Christ.
- Peter says “Always be prepared to give a defense for the REASON for your hope.
- **Question: Note that word REASON. How do we use REASON as an ACTION VERB? How does that apply to this verse? THINK IT THROUGH.** First-hand experience.
- Are YOU prepared to give a reason? Have you sat down with pen and paper and written down what your life was like BEFORE Christ became LORD of your life? Were you angry, fearful, unhappy? Then, HOW you came to salvation. Your conversion story. Then, what your life has been like AFTER SALVATION. Is there peace, joy, hope?
- We’re told it helps to collect our thoughts in those three times of our life so we are ready to share our faith.
- We said earlier that sharing our faith can be a stressful experience.

Bill Hybels wrote a book entitled: Just Walk Across the Room: Simple Steps to Pointing People to Faith in Christ. Hybels recommends talking to God in a way that might give us some relief from that stress:

“My life is in your hands, God. Use me to point someone toward you today — I promise to cooperate in any way I can. If you want me to say a word for you today, I’ll do that. If you want me to keep quiet but demonstrate love and servanthood, by your Spirit’s power I will. I’m fully available to you today, so guide me by your Spirit.” Sometimes, the end result of praying this prayer is that the Spirit allows me to have a spiritual conversation that tells of a loving and righteous God who created all things, who has a purpose in mind for all people, and who is actually hoping to relate with them as they walk through life. Other times, the Spirit simply prompts me to serve and love and listen to the needs of those who are far from God. The key is this: my objective is not to contrive ways to “get someone saved”; rather, my objective is to walk when he prompts me to walk, talk when he says to talk, fall silent when I’m at risk of saying too much, and stay put when he leads me to stay put. If I can lay my head on the pillow at night knowing that I have cooperated with the promptings of the Spirit that day, I sleep like a baby.” — Just Walk Across the Room: Simple Steps Pointing People to Faith by Bill Hybels

- Back to 1 Peter 3:15
- Peter said “Always be prepared to give a defense...” Unfortunately, some Christians think he said “Always be prepared to START AN ARGUMENT!”
- End of verse 15: Peter said... “yet do it with gentleness and respect,
- **Question: Have you ever seen someone do just the OPPOSITE...witness WITHOUT gentleness and respect? What is that like?**
- It’s been said: “No one ever came to Christ at the end of an argument.”
- We WIN people to Christ...we don’t ARM WRESTLE them to Him.
- “Gentleness and respect...the NASB says “with reverence”

William Barclay said something good about this:

“That is to say, any argument in which Christians are involved must be carried on in a tone which God can hear with joy...the tone should be the tone of love.”

- Peter didn’t just say to WITNESS with “gentleness and respect.” Verse 16:
- 16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.”
- **What does it mean to have a “good (or clean) conscience?”**

Warren Wiersbe writes:

Conscience may be compared to a window that lets in the light of God’s truth. If we persist in disobeying, the window gets dirtier and dirtier, until the light cannot enter. This leads to a “defiled conscience” (Titus 1:15).

- Having a clean conscience just means our WALK needs to match our TALK.

Quoting William Barclay again:

A ‘saint’, as has been said, ‘is someone whose life makes it easier to believe in God.’”

Let’s summarize: Always be PREPARED...have a REASON for the hope we have...do it with GENTLENESS and RESPECT in a manner PLEASING to God and LIVE IN A WAY so that our LIFE matches our TESTIMONY...our WALK matches our TALK.

- Verse 17, Peter says...
1 Peter 3:17–18 (ESV)
17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.
- In verse 18, Peter points to the ULTIMATE example of this.

18 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 this ONE VERSE, Peter sums up what Jesus did for mankind on the cross.
- **Question: Why do you think “suffered once” is significant?**
- His death was SUFFICIENT. It is finished!
- “...the righteous for the unrighteous,” His death was SACRIFICIAL

- “...that he might bring us to God,” His death RECONCILES man to God.
- “...put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,” His RESURRECTION guarantees ETERNAL LIFE for all who TRUST Him as Savior and LORD.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- If we are HUMAN, we WILL suffer. No exceptions.
- If we are a Christian, we MIGHT suffer because of our faith in Christ.
- No matter what kind of suffering we face, if we look to Christ as Lord of our life, and BELIEVE He IS who He says He is and will DO what He says He will do, we can face suffering with CONFIDENCE and not ANXIETY.
- We also need to remember that UNBELIEVERS are watching us when we suffer.
- Suffering for a Christian is an opportunity to witness about Jesus’ work in our lives.
- We need to BE READY to give a REASON for the HOPE we have in Christ.
- We need to do it with GENTLENESS, RESPECT, and LOVE.
- Remember, we WIN them to Christ...not WRESTLE them to Him.
- Finally, one of the most POWERFUL elements of winning people to Christ is LIVING with a CLEAN CONSCIENCE. Making sure our WALK matches our TALK.
- Then we can just point them to the truth of verse 18: Jesus died ONCE for all mankind in order to RECONCILE us to God. And His RESURRECTION guarantees ETERNAL LIFE to all who trust in Him.