

Fearless Suffering for Goodness Sake

1 Peter 3:13-17

PART TWO

Introduction

Peter returns to the central theme of the letter: *Christian Suffering*

“Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?” (3:13).

“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer” (3:12).

A defense must be made if for no other reason than lies and falsehood need to be answered.

Truth speaks.

Regarding parties who slander or speak maliciously about Christians:

“In God, whose word I praise, In God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere man do to me? All day long they distort my words; All their thoughts are against me for evil. They attack, they lurk, they watch my steps” (Psalm 56:4-6; NASU).

“For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too” (2 Corinthians 1:5).

Our path to security and peace when the storms of persecution come:

1. Live a good life. Be zealous for what is good.

“Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?” (v13).

Be passionate about doing good in the face of evil persecution.

Righteous living forges the “breastplate” that saves you from the slings and arrows of the Enemy.

2. Be willing to suffer unfair treatment.

“But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed” (v14a).

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12).

3. Have no fear of man.

“Have no fear of them, nor be troubled” (v14b).

Literally, “Do not fear their fear.”

“Listen to me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear not the reproach of man, nor be dismayed at their revilings. For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool; but my righteousness will be forever, and my salvation to all generations” (Isaiah 51:6-8).

“Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13).

Standing firm without wavering in the face of fierce persecution requires strong faith and courage.

“for this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith. For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 3:7-8).

“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1).

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me” (John 14:1).

“Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation” (Isaiah 12:2).

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27).

4. Fear only God.

“but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy” (v15a).

“But the Lord of hosts, him you shall regard as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he will become a sanctuary” (Isaiah 8:13-14).

The main reason people are willing to sin is because *“There is no fear of God before their eyes”* (Romans 3:18).

“Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes” (Psalm 36:1).

“All wickedness flows from a disregard of God.... Since the fear of God is the bridle by which our wickedness is held in check, its removal frees us to indulge in every kind of licentious conduct” (Calvin).

“The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate” (Proverbs 8:13).

“But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God” (Ecclesiastes 8:13).

“the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven” (Genesis 22:12):

"Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

“There is no fear of God at all in this place” (Genesis 20:11).

“the men were very much afraid” (Genesis 20:8)

“Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife" (Genesis 20:3-4)!

The fear of God drives out the fear of man.

“Is not your fear of God your confidence, and the integrity of your ways your hope?” (Job 4:6).

5. Be prepared to make a defense for your faith.

“always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (vv15b).

It is our daily devotion to Christ the Lord that prepares us to witness, in two ways:

1) in *passion* we declare His praises, born out of love for Christ and the lost (heartfelt *doxology*).

2) in *rational* we proclaim His truth, born out of consistent study of His Word (historical *theology*).

6. Treat everyone with gentleness and respect.

“yet do it with gentleness and respect” (15c).

7. Keep your conscience clear.

“having a good conscience” (v16a)

Be sure there is no veracity to their charge against you. Arrogance, hypocrisy, and apathy are the three most damaging characteristics that destroy our witness.

“conscience” one definition has it: “a person’s inner awareness of the moral quality of his actions.”

The purity and integrity of our lives protects the veracity and increases the efficacy of our witness.

“So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man” (Acts 24:16).

“so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame” (v16b).

“For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.” (v17).

“The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him” (2 Timothy 2:11-12).