

1Pet 3.13-17—How to Honor God in Suffering

Doing good is the best way to avoid suffering, v.13

- I. There are two ways to look at v.13, and both are truthful.
 - A. A life of overcoming good with evil, blessing those who curse you, and doing good to those who do evil to you (all that Peter's been calling us to) is its own natural preservative from harm.
 1. As a general rule, doing good to others is a good way to avoid receiving evil from others.
 - B. But in context (cf. v.12), the real reason the good life is good and blessed, is not because no man does a good man harm, but rather because the eyes of the Lord are on the man who does good and His ears are open to his prayer.
 1. And who is there to harm you when God is for you?
 2. This is Peter's version of Rom 8.31 and Ps 118.6.

Those who suffer for Christ's sake are blessed, v.14a

- I. But it gets better. Not only is there no *man* who can harm you when God is for you, but when God is for you, not even *harm* can harm you, because those who suffer for Christ's sake are *blessed by God*, cf. Mt 5.10-12.
- II. Why are those blessed who suffer for doing good?
 - A. Because it's an honor to suffer for the cause of Christ, Acts 5.40-41.
 - B. Because those who suffer with Christ on earth will assuredly reign with Christ in heaven, Rom 8.16-17.
 - C. Because God uses our sufferings to conform us to Christ, Rom 8.28-29; Heb 11.35b. Whatever men and Satan hope to accomplish by their persecutions of us, God always uses it to accomplish our sanctification and growth in holiness.
 - D. Because we're shown to be the companions of the Lord's prophets and apostles who likewise suffered for righteousness' sake, Heb 11; Mt 5.12.
 - E. Because all our sufferings in this world have a wonderful way of weaning us from worldliness and keeping our affections on things above. Suffering keeps it fresh in our minds that this world is not our home.
 - F. Because of the rich supplies of grace that are particular to suffering times, 2Cor 1.8-9; 12.9-10. No condition is so well suited to show how blessed a believer is in Christ as a suffering condition.
 - G. Because suffering can't touch our happiness. Unlike the wicked, who place their happiness in things below, our happiness is in Christ and our treasure is in heaven, Ps 73.25-26; 1Pet 1.3-5. By our sufferings, we may be imprisoned, tortured, and even killed, but, by our sufferings, we cannot be made miserable—because we are blessed by God, not only in spite of our sufferings, but also on account of our sufferings, Acts 5.40-41; 7.55-60; 9.15-16.

1. The great work of a suffering Christian is to believe what God says is true—that he is blessed—and to look upon himself and upon his crosses as God does: as an honor and a blessing.

How to honor God in suffering, vv.14b-17

- I. Do not be afraid of men or of what they can do to you, cf. Mt 10.28.
 - A. For we have a God who protects us, cares for us, answers all our prayers, and works all things together for our good, and whose blessing is upon us, Rom 8.35-39.
- II. Sanctify the Lord in your heart, v.15. This means bowing before Him in worship and trust as the GOD of our sufferings.
 - A. We must give Him no less praise in the midnight of sorrow than in the midday of peace, because regardless of our circumstances, He is the same and His steadfast love endures forever, Ps 136. Moreover, a God-praising heart is immune to the fear of man.
- III. Fix your eyes on the inheritance in God that'll surely follow all your suffering, v.15. This is what the hope refers to in v.15: to the promise God's given us that we have a home in heaven with Him and His Christ, held in reserve for us until we're ready to receive it, cf. 1.6.
 - A. When we fix our eyes on the glory that's ours in Christ, it puts all our suffering into proper perspective, 2Cor 4.8-5.1.
- IV. Be ready to give an answer for your conduct under suffering, v.15. One of the great opportunities afforded God's people in their suffering for Christ is that it raises the world's questions.
 - A. Why do you turn the other cheek? Why do you not fear suffering but instead fear sin? Why do you prefer the favor of God to the favor of men? Why is Jesus and His cause worth suffering for, and even dying for? When we answer these questions, testifying to God's love and the joy we have in Christ (cf. 1Pet 2.9-12), we bring honor to Christ and glory to God.
 - B. And the blessed result of such a godly response to suffering is that it'll silence our adversaries, v.16; 2.12, 15.
- V. Continue in a course of doing good, even if it leads to suffering at the hands of men, v.17.
 - A. It's a great honor to God when we walk in His ways no matter what may befall us and thereby show that He is our blessedness and that the happiness we have in Him is something the world cannot take away and with which it cannot compare.

Let us heed the call of this passage by preparing for suffering and resolving, that by His grace, we'll honor Him in our suffering.