

I Peter 3:13-15
May 28, 2017

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Have you ever done good for someone else, but received undeserved criticism or suffered for it? If yes, do you mind sharing the scenario?

Q: Maybe the closest we can get to this idea is perhaps in the workplace. Have you worked in an environment where the boss or manager was difficult to serve, and you suffered unnecessarily? If yes, how do you continue to do good in spite of undeserved suffering?

Transition: If you're not sure, I think Peter offers an anchor in the form of a mindset. We need to remember the context here. These Christians were under persecution from the Roman government. They were suffering trials of many kinds. They were struggling to stay the course and keep strong in their faith. His audience is perhaps asking an unspoken question, "HOW do we endure unjustified persecution and still show God's love with them?" So Peter presents a foundational idea, which is to "set apart Christ in our hearts" and then let's look at how he unpacks this with **PRINCIPLES** to live by. As we read this text, let's keep an eye out for PRINCIPLES.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.13:

- Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?

V.14:

- But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed (means "highly privileged," not "feel delighted"). **"Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened."**

V.15:

- **But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.** But do this with gentleness and respect,

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.13-14: What is the first principle that you see? [Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.]

Q: How do you just "not be frightened?" [Remember that the fear of the Lord conquers every other fear. No real harm can come to those who belong to Christ.]

Q V.15: What is the next PRINCIPLE that Peter offers? [Set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts]

Q: How do you do this? [It means to turn everything over to Him, and to live only to please Him and glorify Him. It means to fear displeasing Him rather than fear what men might do to us.]

Note: As Christians, we are faced with crises, and we are tempted to give in to our fears and make the wrong decisions. But if we “sanctify Christ as Lord” in our hearts, we need never fear men or circumstances. Our enemies might *hurt* us, but they cannot *harm* us. Only we can harm ourselves if we fail to trust God. Generally speaking, people do not oppose us if we do good; but even if they do, it is better to suffer for righteousness’ sake than to compromise our testimony.

Q V.15: What is the next PRINCIPLE that Peter offers? [We should always be prepared to give an answer for the hope we have in Christ.]

LOOK:

When Jesus Christ is Lord of our lives, each crisis becomes an opportunity for witness. We are “ready always to give an answer.” Every Christian should be able to give a reasoned defense of his hope in Christ, *especially in hopeless situations*. A crisis creates the opportunity for witness when a believer behaves with faith and hope, because the unbelievers will then sit up and take notice. Let’s be ready to give an answer!

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 413–414). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Practice the Lordship of Christ (1 Peter 3:13–15)

These verses introduce the third main section of 1 Peter—God's grace in suffering. They introduce the important spiritual principle that the fear of the Lord conquers every other fear. Peter quoted Isaiah 8:13–14 to back up his admonition: "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord" (1 Peter 3:15).

The setting of the Isaiah quotation is significant. Ahaz, King of Judah, faced a crisis because of an impending invasion by the Assyrian army. The kings of Israel and Syria wanted Ahaz to join them in an alliance, but Ahaz refused; so Israel and Syria threatened to invade Judah! Behind the scenes, Ahaz confederated himself with Assyria! The Prophet Isaiah warned him against ungodly alliances and urged him to trust God for deliverance. "Sanctify the Lord of hosts [armies] Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread" (Isa. 8:13).

As Christians, we are faced with crises, and we are tempted to give in to our fears and make the wrong decisions. But if we "sanctify Christ as Lord" in our hearts, we need never fear men or circumstances. Our enemies might *hurt* us, but they cannot *harm* us. Only we can harm ourselves if we fail to trust God. Generally speaking, people do not oppose us if we do good; but even if they do, it is better to suffer for righteousness' sake than to compromise our testimony. Peter discussed this theme in detail in 1 Peter 4:12–19.

Instead of experiencing fear as we face the enemy, we can experience blessing, if Jesus Christ is Lord in our hearts. The word "happy" in 1 Peter 3:14 is the same as "blessed" in Matthew 5:10ff. This is a part of the "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8).

When Jesus Christ is Lord of our lives, each crisis becomes an opportunity for witness. We are "ready always to give an answer." Our English word *apology* comes from the Greek word translated "answer," but it does not mean "to say I am sorry." Rather, it means "a defense presented in court." "Apologetics" is the branch of theology that deals with the defense of the faith. Every Christian should be able to give a reasoned defense of his hope in Christ, *especially in hopeless situations*. A crisis creates the opportunity for witness when a believer behaves with faith and hope, because the unbelievers will then sit up and take notice.

This witness must be given "with meekness and fear [respect]" and not with arrogance and a know-it-all attitude. We are witnesses, not prosecuting attorneys! We must also be sure that our lives back up our defense. Peter did not suggest that Christians argue with lost people, but rather that we present to the unsaved an account of what we believe and why we believe it, in a loving manner. The purpose is not to win an argument but to win lost souls to Christ.

Raymer, R. M. (1985). 1 Peter. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 850). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

A CLEAR CONSCIENCE (3:13–15)

Persecution occurred, however, in spite of believers' desires to live peacefully and their eagerness to do good. Peter encouraged his readers with the fact that the right response to

undeserved suffering results in blessing. He presented the principle in verses 13–17 and provided examples in verses 18–22.

3:13–14. **Who is going to harm you ...?** The context of Peter’s question makes it almost rhetorical. Though the adversary, through physical suffering or material hardship, would distress those who were **eager** (*zēlōtai*, lit., “zealots”) **to do good**, no real harm can come to those who belong to Christ. For even if suffering should occur, Christians **are blessed** and thus should **not be frightened**. The word here translated “blessed” (*makarioi*; cf. 4:14) was used by Jesus (Matt. 5:3–11). To be “blessed” in this context does not mean to “feel delighted” but to be “highly privileged.” Christians are not to be afraid of what men can do to them (cf. Matt. 10:28). Consequently 1 Peter 3:14 concludes with a quotation from Isaiah 8:12 which, in context, is part of an exhortation to fear God rather than men.

3:15. In their **hearts** Christians are to **set apart Christ as Lord**. 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) Christians should overcome fear by sanctifying (*hagiasate*, “make separate from others”) Christ as their Lord (*kyrion*). As a result Christians should **always be prepared** (*hetoimoi*, “ready”; cf. 1:5) **to give ... the reason** (*apologian*, the “defense” which a defendant makes before a judge; cf. Acts 22:1; 25:16) **for their hope** in Christ. Such an oral defense should be consistent with one’s “set-apart” conduct.