

STUDIES IN 1 PETER (19)

Suffering for Him

1 Peter 3:13-17

We have noted throughout our study of 1 Peter that he is writing to brethren who were facing various trials and likely suffering for their faith. That is why Peter has emphasized our hope, our brethren and the need to be willing to submit. In our text today, we find him focusing on how we, as Christians, deal with suffering for doing good. One source described this text as preparing to suffer for Him, and in reality, there are several things mentioned here that can help us prepare for this.

I. **Suffering for righteousness sake (13-14)**

- a. *Who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?*
 - i. This is the rule of life. Typically, when one is doing good things, no harm comes to them.
 - ii. It is true of governing authorities – 1 Peter 2:13-14, Romans 13:1-4.
 - iii. This is even true as Christians. When you conduct yourself as God instructs within society, the majority will leave you alone. That has been and is Peter's point throughout this letter. Act in such a way that you remove cause to be mistreated or accused of anything.
 - iv. Sadly, we know there are exceptions to this, but it is the norm of life. And history records examples of doing good being rewarded with evil. Governments have persecuted Christians, evil men have exploited the good for their selfish gain, etc.
- b. *But even if you suffer for righteousness sake –*
 - i. The idea of righteousness is righteous living. We are doing that which is right and refraining from that which is not right.
 - ii. It CAN happen. And as Peter is writing, it WAS happening. Thus, he is writing to prepare them for whatever was taking place.
 - iii. We know from history that Christians were persecuted by governing authorities in that time. Rome was often hostile to the Christian faith, both locally and at times empire wide. Christians were falsely accused of many evil things – cannibalism because of the Lord's Supper, atheism because they rejected the majority of gods, rebellion and hatred of mankind because they would not participate in government mandated religious ceremonies, etc. Sometimes it was verbal abuse (lies and slander), but at other times it led to physical persecutions.
 - iv. Peter in this letter is seeking to prepare them for this - encourage them as they faced such.
- c. *You are blessed* in this – namely, God takes note.
 - i. Peter likely quotes from Isaiah 8:12 where he and the righteous remnant are being encouraged to stand firm in the face of threats from their enemies (both within and without). He goes on to encourage them instead to fear the LORD *“And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.”*
 - ii. The point is – do not let the threats and intimidation of the enemies terrorize you and paralyze you so that you do the wrong thing.
 - iii. Instead, you are “blessed” – God takes note and thinks well of you and ultimately will reward you accordingly. Recall Jesus in Matthew 5:10-12 – your reward is great in heaven.
 - iv. WHEN we are facing trials, we must continually live with hope – cf. 1 Peter 1:13 – rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you...

II. **Sanctify the Lord God in your heart**

- a. Sanctify means to set apart or to consecrate. In fact, it from the same root word as holy and saint.

- b. We understand that as Christians we are to be holy.
 - i. Peter has emphasized this – 1 Peter 1:15-16 – be holy, even as He is holy.
 - ii. This is a point of emphasis in the life of a Christian that we will continue to develop throughout this year – including our theme “Closer to God”
 - iii. Furthermore, we have noted that we are to purify our souls (purify is derived from the same word) –
 - 1. 1 Peter 1:22 – we purify our souls,
 - 2. 1 John 3:3 – everyone who has this hope purifies himself;
 - iv. We are a holy priesthood and nation (1 Peter 2:5, 9).
 - v. 2 Peter 3:11 notes that as we anticipate the Lord’s return, we present our lives with holy conduct.
- c. In our text, as we are facing trials, persecutions and whatever else might come our way, a CRUCIAL element is that we be sanctified to God. It is ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY at our foundation.
- d. This is what causes us to remain steadfast and faithful at such times – recall Jesus in 1 Peter 2:21-23 which notes how Jesus suffered and committed Himself to Him who judges rightly.
- e. Notice also it must be “in your hearts” – this has to be deep seated and at the core of our spiritual being – cf. Matthew 5:8 – Blessed are the pure in heart...” 1 Peter 1:22, we love one another fervently with a pure heart, James 4:8 – draw near to God, cleanse our hands and purify our hearts.

III. **Always be ready to give a defense (an answer) for the hope that is in you**

- a. **ALWAYS** – this is something we ought to prepare for and be ready to defend at a moment’s notice. Live so that you can defend the hope that is in you. NOTE: If you are living in sin, acting in an ungodly way you are in no condition to give a defense.
- b. *Give a defense* – the Greek word is ἀπολογία, (apologia) from which we get our English word apology, though we know this is not speaking of apologizing (being sorrowful) for something. This is a word that means to defend your faith – WHY you are living as you are. Jude 3 calls for us to contend earnestly for the faith. When we speak about *apologetics* (the study of and making the case for our faith), that is what we have in mind.
- c. *To everyone who asks you* – recall this past week addressing evangelism (Ken McDaniel). Are we concerned about the lost? Are we concerned enough to make preparation to answer the foundation of our faith? And while we live in a time where it seems no one is looking, we know that deep down someone is. When the opportunity presents itself, will we be ready?
- d. *A reason for the hope that is in you* –
 - i. The word for reason here is the word λόγος (logos). It is a word that means to speak, presenting a message (as opposed to merely uttering a sound).
 - ii. This is one who justifies or makes the case for why he believes what he believes.
 - iii. This is presenting the simple gospel of Jesus as the motive for what you do. One source (the Bible sense Lexicon – Logos Software) describes it as a narrative account. You “tell your story”, perhaps giving a verse or two to defend it.
 - iv. Worthy of note, this is NOT saying you know how to answer everything. This is about WHY you live as you do.
- e. *With meekness (humility) and fear (reverence)*
 - i. We must guard against arrogance - 1 Peter 5:5-6, Romans 12:3, etc. Matthew 5:5 – Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. One approach to that promise is that with meekness we win others. That is a truth! No one likes being around an arrogant person. Remember the boastful Pharisee who prayed – Luke 18:10-14
 - ii. We must temper our lives with PROPER fear – fear for God, rather than men – Matthew 10:28 – we fear God who has the power to destroy body and soul; Hebrews 12:28-29. In context, this TOO is a reminder against arrogance or cowardice as we defend our faith (Matthew 10:32-33, Revelation 21:8, etc.).

IV. Having a good conscience

- a. We need to guard our conscience to make sure it guides us in the right direction
 - i. Romans 2:15 – our conscience can bear witness of us and to us. In context, here it accuses or excuses.
 - ii. Romans 13:5 – we are subject to governing authorities for conscience sake
 - iii. Hebrews 10:22 – in Christ, our hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies are washed with pure water.
- b. When you are living right, you KNOW that no matter what happens, you are ok. When you are SURE of your faith, you are ok – 2 Peter 1:10 speaks of making your “call and election sure...”
- c. Furthermore, consider one who is living impure, and their conscience is bothering them. Would such be willing to endure sufferings and dangers for the Lord? This is incentive to live godly.
- d. Your good conscience will contradict and expose those who defame you as evildoers. When you KNOW you are right, you do are not concerned about what they say or how they treat you. This is the confidence we need.
- e. Perhaps, they will even be shamed – your righteous living can also possibly cause them to be shamed, knowing who you really are OR being exposed in such a way that they are shamed. ALSO consider that you never know if your godly behavior will eventually turn one to Christ – see Romans 12:18-21.

V. Why are you suffering?

- a. Vs. 17 notes that it is better, if it be God’s will, to suffer when you do good rather than when you are doing evil. When you suffer for doing evil or acting foolishly, then you are getting what you deserve (e.g., Romans 6:23 – the WAGES of sin, recall the penitent thief on the cross – Luke 23:40-42 – we are getting what we deserve, Galatians 6:7-8 – you reap what you sow, etc.)
- b. Many today will live recklessly and irresponsibly, and then they want to play the “victim card” when they face the consequences. AND, many do this spiritually as well – they live in rebellion to God’s will, but when the consequences come they cry foul or injustice. Some even cry persecutions. Friends, it DOES NOT work that way – either in the world or with God.
- c. But suffering, when you KNOW you have done right, often builds up determination to continue to do and be what is right. You can have the confidence that God knows what you are going through and WILL avenge you – see 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9.
- d. We will further develop this in another lesson (1 Peter 4:15).

Peter, while in this letter has dealt with suffering for our faith, our context in this lesson finds it developed in greater detail. Peter will have much more to say as we continue our studies. But the ultimate point for us is this: When we face sufferings and troubles in this life, do not give up. Endure! Galatians 6:9 summarizes this well, *And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.* How are you dealing with your trials in Him? Are you preparing for them? Think about it!