

What if We Are Hated for Doing Good?

[1 Peter 3:13-17](#)

1 Peter, Day 16

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

- 1 Peter 3:13-17, ESV

Some Christians act as if all the hatred the world spews at Christians and the church is deserved, and if we were better Christians and nicer to people, the world would like us. Now, I do sometimes think Christians bring a good bit of disdain on themselves when we are obnoxious, hypocritical, mean-spirited, or overly political. We should have a reputation in the world for being "zealous for what is good" and not being self-seeking or two-faced.

However, even if we were more faithful in following and imitating the humility and love of Jesus, this would be no guarantee that the world would stand and applaud. After all, what did they do to Jesus?

Peter makes it clear that, even if we faithfully honor the Lord and love our neighbors, we may be called on to suffer for righteousness' sake. We may be slandered and despised because we love what the world hates. So, if that happens, what do we do?

For Peter, this was not a purely hypothetical possibility. By the time he wrote this letter, he had already been arrested, beaten, and imprisoned by the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem multiple times. Later, his testimony of the resurrection of Jesus would cost him his life in Rome, when Nero would execute him.

For most of us, any persecution or harassment we face is likely to be minor - teasing by classmates or co-workers, perhaps shunning by family members. Still, how do we respond? Peter says we need to honor Christ in our hearts as holy. In other words, we need to honor Christ above all, remembering who He is and what He suffered for us. Then, we also need to be ready to explain the reasons we have for our hope.

So many Christians, when faced with this low-level social harassment for their faith either cower away or get angry and defensive. When we do this, we either deny Christ or we dishonor Him by getting angry and disrespectful in His name. Instead, Peter counsels us to be ready to give an explanation, a soundly reasoned defense of our faith, and to do so with gentleness and respect.

This calls for some basic training in what is called apologetics, the reasoned defense of the Christian faith. You don't have to become some philosopher or deep scholar, but you do need to use your mind to understand what you believe and why you believe it, so you can give an answer to others - not running and hiding but not attacking either.

If you act like Christ, who always answered His critics with wisdom and gentleness, then the world may continue to attack you for your faith, but it will become increasingly clear how foolish and wrong-headed they are for doing so. So, if the world hates you for loving Jesus, tell them calmly and respectfully why you love Jesus, who He is, and what He has done for you. This may not change their minds, but it will honor Christ - and that's the most important thing we can do.