

1 Peter 3:13-17 – Sanctifying Christ the Lord in Our Hearts

¹³ Now ^(S)who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ ^(T)But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. ^(U)Have no fear of them, ^(V)nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but ^(W)in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, ^(X)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 ^(Y)respect, ¹⁶ ^(Z)having a good conscience, so that, ^(AA)when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For ^(AB)it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

Prayer:

Lord, our heavenly Father, we come once again under the reading and hearing of the sacred text, your Word, once for all delivered to the saints. You anointed and guided the holy apostles to write down your Word as your blessed Spirit inspired, led, and guided them. Every word was superintended by your Spirit. Now as we dig into this passage, grant us the guidance and understanding that comes by your Spirit – ingraft your Word into our minds and hearts – continue to transform our lives and conform us more into the image of our blessed Savior. In Jesus' precious name we pray.

The Apostle Peter knew his people well, the people he was pastoring, he was shepherding, and he knew that some of them were being persecuted for their Christian faith, for their belief in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

So Peter, who more than once in his own life had lost courage and denied he knew Jesus and later because of fear of man he compromised his commitment to a salvation based solely on the grace of God, apart from human religious works.

Yet Peter had been restored by the Lord Jesus to his position of spiritual leadership in the early Christian churches and therefore as a forgiven man Peter intended to teach and instruct those believers over whom he had charge, to be faithful to God and not yield to human opinions and pressures which were contrary to God and his will. The pagan world was not friendly to the Christian faith.

What Peter is teaching his people here, and teaching us, is that if we honor Christ as the holy Lord in our hearts, we will be liberated from the oppressive and sinful interference of other humans who would seek to steer us away from Christ and steer us into their theological and moral camps: yank us away from Christ and put us once more into their fellowship of captivity to sin and Satan.

Do you ever feel pressure from friends or family or co-workers to compromise your Christian beliefs and moral standards and yield to their way of thinking and their lifestyle? I think we all experience this kind of pressure from time to time, in one way or another.

But as Christian soldiers in the world, who march under the banner of Jesus Christ, we have to be like that figure in John Bunyan's Pilgrim Progress, we have to be "Valiant for the Truth."

How can we be brave and courageous, living in a world that is opposed to Jesus Christ? Jesus was brave and courageous in our behalf; we, by his grace, need to do the same for his cause, his kingdom, his church on earth. Our passage today, 1 Peter 3:13-17, gives us some solid help. ***How can we be true and faithful Christians?***

I. We need to be zealous for what is good.

¹³ Now ^(S)who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴

There's plenty of evil in the world, but our calling is to be zealous for what is good, not half-hearted or nonchalant for what is good. What is good and wholesome and helpful should delight us and be something we would always pursue.

The Lord Jesus is our example here. In Luke 22:15 he said to his disciples, ***"I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."*** Why was he so eager to eat this Passover meal with them? Well, I think it was because he would be formally instituting the sign of the New Covenant, the Lord's Supper – and it would be the final preparation before his suffering and death. Jesus was eager to eat that meal even though it would lead to his suffering. But his suffering would be the means of securing the salvation his elect and beloved people to himself and his opportunity to fulfill the Father's will and bring glory to him.

Zealous for doing the Father's will, zealous for glorifying God, zealous for doing what is good – let us, by God's help, follow Jesus in these ways. This is a high calling, not an easy calling, but it's our calling as Christian people. But we are not alone in this calling: we have God's Spirit and God's Word and God's people, the church – to aid us, help us, spur us on in this great endeavor, this great adventure of living our lives on planet earth for the glory of God! Hallelujah! What a great and blessed calling we have! So we need to be zealous for what is good.

We go in in verse 14:

¹⁴ ^(T)But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed.

II. Secondly, to be true and faithful Christians we may need to suffer for righteousness' sake.

This "suffering for righteousness' sake" seems to be part of the package that comes with being a Christian.

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, (2 Tim. 3:12)... is what Paul wrote to Timothy.

People sometimes don't like us because of our stand for Christ, for his Word, for his way of life. The darkness prefers more darkness and doesn't want the light to come in and expose its evil. "Just leave me in my darkness" is really what people are thinking. And so they mock and persecute those who are living in the light.

But our situation is not so bad because the text goes on in v. 14 to say that if we "suffer for righteousness's sake, **you will be blessed.**" Yes, the persecution hurts and may even damage us, but there is a reward for those Christians who endure it, a reward that far outweighs any suffering we may have to endure in this life.

Jesus said in **Matt. 5:10** - ¹⁰ (A) "**Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for (B) theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**" Yes, we are persecuted but we gain heaven.

If we can only gain heaven! By God's grace we can endure anything, as we are strengthened by the Lord.

1 Pet. 2:20 - **But (B) if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.**

1 Pet. 4:14 - ¹⁴ (A) **If you are insulted (B) for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory^[a] and of God rests upon you.**

Verse 14 goes on...

(U) **Have no fear of them, (V) nor be troubled,**

III. A third way we can be true and faithful Christians is not to fear the opponents of the Gospel of Christ.

Even though we may suffer persecution we need not fear our persecutors.

This is because we have a greater fear in our lives than the "fear of man," the fear of other human beings. What follows in verse 15 is, (U) **Have no fear of them, (V) nor be troubled,** ¹⁵ **but (W) in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy.** This idea of not fearing people but instead fearing and honoring Christ the Lord as holy was evidently taken by Peter from....

Isa. 8: 12 ¹² "Do not call (A) conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and (B) do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. ¹³ But the LORD of hosts, (C) him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread."

Other OT prophets echo his same kind of godly fearlessness that God's people should have before evil people:

Jer. 1:8 - (A)Do not be afraid of them (that is, of your countrymen)
(B)for I am with you to deliver you,
declares the LORD.

Isa. 51:12-13 - I, I am he (A)who comforts you;
who are you that you are afraid of (B)man who dies,
of the son of man who is made (C)like grass,
13 and have forgotten the LORD, your Maker,
(D)who stretched out the heavens

Jesus said in Matt. 10:28 - 28 And (A)do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill
the soul. Rather fear him (B)who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

So Christ gives us freedom from the fear of persecutors.

In addition, To be true and faithful Christians we need to...

IV. 15 ... (W)in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy...

“...in your hearts..” – this is a heart issue. This is not talking about material things, but
spiritual things. Things in the heart and mind.

What is vital in a person’s relationship to God is not external rites and practices but
internal reality – deep within the human person, in the core of his or her being, to have a
vital, living relationship with God. Do you have that relationship? If not, you can have it.
Cry out to Jesus Christ and ask him to save you and make you his child. He’s in the
business of hearing such cries and answering them in the affirmative! Yes, he will
receive you. He said, I will in no way cast you out.

Therefore, where we worship does not matter – what kind of building, we don’t even
need a building, but we do need a heart in tune with God, sensitive to God, submitted to
God, to his Spirit.

Jesus told the woman at the well in John 4:23-24

**23 But (AC)the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will
worship the Father (AD)in spirit and (AE)truth, for the Father (AF)is seeking such
people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship
in spirit and truth.”**

**It is not the building but the gathering of people that make a church, an assembly,
an ecclesia. Matt: 18: 20** 20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name,
there am I in the midst of them.

.In our hearts we are to..honor Christ the Lord as holy,

“Honor as holy” is literally “sanctify” ie, to venerate, and adore Christ, thus dispelling all fear of man {Rogers & Rogers).

The KJV says it well,

¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

¹⁵ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. NIV

¹⁵ **but** ^[a]sanctify ^(A)**Christ as Lord in your hearts**, always being ready ^(B)to make a ^[b]defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the ^(C)hope that is in you, but ^(D)with gentleness and respect....NASB

¹⁵ but in your hearts regard^[a] (i.e., sanctify or set apart).Christ^[b] the Lord as holy.. CSB

The Biblical meaning of “sanctify” is to set apart for God’s use. It means to set apart things such as the tabernacle or things in the temple for holy use or set us people for holy use. It can also refer to how we should treat God: we should sanctify him in our hearts, set him aside as holy – apart from human sin.

For example, Lev. 21:8 talks about the priests in Israel, Aaron and his descendants-
⁸ **You shall sanctify him, for he offers the bread of your God. He shall be holy to you, for ^(G)I, the Lord, who sanctify you, ^(H)am holy.**

In Num. 20:11-12- we see an example of where Moses failed to sanctify the Lord, failed to regard him as holy: ¹¹ And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, ^(A)and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock. ¹² And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because ^(B)you did not believe in me, ^(C)to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.”

God is holy. He is set apart from humanity. He is high and exalted above humanity. We need to recognize him as such and set him apart as such in our hearts:

Psa. 99:3 - Let them praise your ^(A)great and awesome name!
^(B)Holy is he!

Psa. 111:9 - He sent ^(A)redemption to his people;
he has ^(B)commanded his covenant forever.
^(C)Holy and awesome is his name!

Ezek. 36:23 - ²³ ^(A)And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. ^(B)And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.

This reality of God's holiness is seen in the Lord's model prayer:

Matt. 6:9 - ⁹ **(A) Pray then like this:**

**(B) "Our Father in heaven,
(C) hallowed be (D) your name."**^[a]

The virgin Mary honored God's holiness:

Luke 1:49 - for ^(A) he who is mighty ^(B) has done great things for me,
and ^(C) holy is his name

We are to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts.

"Sanctify is used in various related ways in the NT:

John 17:17 -

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

Heb. 9:13-14 - ¹³ For if ^(E) the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with ^(G) the ashes of a heifer, sanctify^[a] for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more will ^(H) the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit ^(I) offered himself without blemish to God, ^(J) purify our^[b] conscience ^(K) from dead works ^(L) to serve the living God.

The sacrificial animals used in OT worship did serve as a means of temporarily covering human sin but it was Jesus's blood that really and truly sanctifies us, that really and truly purifies us from sin.

So to be true and faithful Christians we must

IV. Sanctify or honor Christ as Lord in our hearts.

If we fear Christ, we sanctify him, we honor him, we will not fear people or fear those who would cause us to suffer unjustly for our faith in Christ.

Beale and Carson: p. 1038 "To Fear God and fear no other has bred courage in moral conflict and in Christian witness and has invested in Christian commitment an eternal perspective that is not easily seduced by opinion polls and social fads. This is precisely the kind of spiritual backbone that Peter is trying to build into his readers. At the end of the day, it depends utterly on a view of God that brooks no rivals."

(X) always being prepared to make a defense[apologia]

"Apology, explanation, speech in defense of ...our faith"

To be true and faithful Christians we must

V.)always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you;

2 Tim. 4:16 - ¹⁶ At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. ^(A) May it not be charged against them!

Phil. 1:15-16 - ¹⁴ And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold ^(A) to speak the word^[a] without fear.

¹⁵ ^(B) Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. ¹⁶ The latter do it out of love, ^(C) knowing that I am put here for ^(D) the defense of the gospel.

to anyone...

We should not hold back our gospel sharing from anyone – no one is too lowly in society or too high in society to be exempt from our sincerely sharing the gospel with them. From the yard man to your physician, from the homeless person to the plumber, from the neighbor next door to the vice-president of the bank. We should have the attitude and alertness of Paul: **I have become all things to all people**, that by **all** means **I** might save some. 1 Cor. 9:22

who asks you for a reason

The word “ask” here suggests in ordinary conversation as we go about our daily lives, rubbing shoulders with various people out in the city or in our neighborhood, not a formal defense of the Gospel.

But we need to use reason. Christianity is not unreasonable; it's the most reasonable religion or philosophy on earth.

Christianity recognizes there is a Creator God before whom we all must live and answer, it recognizes the depth and depravity of human sin, it recognizes the necessity of a Savior to rescue men and women from their sin, and it recognizes that the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead proves that he is the Son of God who came to overcome death and purchase forgiveness of sins for his people.

No other religion or philosophy on earth recognizes these facts.

Acts. 17:2-3

And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he **reasoned with them** from the Scriptures, ³ ^(D) explaining and proving that it was necessary for ^(E) the Christ to suffer and ^(F) to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.”

Notice that Paul reasoned with them from the Scriptures. We too, in talking to people, should reason with them from the scriptures.

Acts 18:19 - ¹⁹ And they came to ^(E)Ephesus, and he left them there, but ^(E)he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

Paul would explain to the Jews how all the prophecies in the OT were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth; therefore he had to be the promised, long-awaited Messiah, the one Anointed with the Holy spirit by God, who went about doing good and free all those who had been made captive of the devil.

When people ask us, we need to be able to give reasons for the hope we have in us.

for the hope that is in you; (v. 15)

What is this hope?

Acts 23:6 - It is ^(E)with respect to the ^(E)hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.

Acts 26:6-8 -⁸ Why is it thought ^(E)incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

1 Pet. 1: 3 - he has caused us to be born again to a living **hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Rom. 5:2 - we rejoice in **hope** of the glory of God.

Gal. 5:5 - For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the **hope** of righteousness.

Tit. 1:2 - ² ^(A)in hope of eternal life, which God, ^(B)who never lies, ^(C)promised ^(D)before the ages began

Tit. 2:13 - waiting for our blessed **hope**, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

yet do it with gentleness and ^(Y)respect,¹⁶

Col. 4:6 - ⁶ Let your speech always ^(A)be gracious, ^(B)seasoned with salt, ^(C)so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

2 Tim. 2:25 - ²⁵ correcting his opponents ^(A)with gentleness. God ^(B)may perhaps grant them repentance ^(C)leading to a knowledge of the truth,

Tit. 3:2 - ² ^(A)to speak evil of no one, ^(B)to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and ^(C)to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

:16 ^(Z)**having a good conscience,**

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

1 Pet. 2:12 - ¹² (A) Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, (B) they may see your good deeds and glorify God on (C) the day of visitation.

Matt. 5:16 - ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so (A) that^[a] they may see your good works and (B) give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

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

Alan B. Stibbs (p. 132 "In such circumstances (suffering for righteousness' sake) they should maintain true heart reverence for Christ as Lord and be ready openly to confess their Christian hope."

So how do we honor Christ as Lord in our hearts, how do we sanctify him in our hearts? How can we be true and faithful Christians?

How can we be true and faithful Christians?

- I. ***We need to be zealous for what is good.***
- II. ***Secondly, to be true and faithful Christians we may need to suffer for righteousness' sake.***
- III. ***A third way we can be true and faithful Christians is not to fear the opponents of the Gospel of Christ.***
- IV. ***Sanctify or honor Christ as Lord in our hearts.***
- V. ***V.) always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you;***

By his rich and kind grace, may the Lord help us , in the face of opposers and enemies of the gospel and of Christians, to develop more and more into this kind of true and faithful Christian.

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