



Old Testament: Psalm 110:1-7

New Testament: 1 Peter 3:13-22

A Living Hope – Preparing for Persecution ***“Being Willing to Suffer for Doing Good”***

1 Peter 3:13-22

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In our objection to the growing hostility against Christians, we must not become like those who are persecuting us lest we forfeit our witness to them. As Christians:

- While we have the obligation to stand firm in our Christian convictions, we also have the responsibility to show God’s love, even to those persecuting us.
- Our goal is not to defeat our enemy! Our purpose is to free them from their bondage to sin and Satan.
- Therefore, we must find a way to persevere through the various levels of persecution, protect those we love from the world’s hostility, and proclaim the love of God as evidenced by the cross of Jesus Christ.
- In effect, we must be willing to suffer for doing good!

Peter wrote this letter to Christians who were enduring severe persecution for their expressed faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

- Peter said they were being slandered, treated unjustly, insulted, reviled, and criticized because of their faith.
- Peter reminded them they were **“called to suffer for Christ’s sake.”**
- Therefore, they were to endure it with patience – not returning evil for evil, but blessing those who persecute us.
- Peter admonished them to look at Jesus as their model or example of how they were to endure suffering.

“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.”

1 Peter 4:1-2

1. Be Followers of that which is Good. Vs. 13 – “And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?”

Our first defense against persecution is to have a passion for goodness and godliness.

- There will always be those who are ready to harm those who confess Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.
- However, when someone does something to *intentionally harm* a Christian, the Christian should do something to *intentionally help* their persecutor to see the love of God.
- While our efforts may not change their minds about God, it may “soften their heart” toward the Christian.
- In Romans 12:21, the Apostle Paul said the “divine plan of the ages” is to **“overcome evil with good!”**
- In Matthew 5:43-44, Jesus told His followers: **“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.”**

2. Be Willing to Suffer for doing good. Vs. 14 – “But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed, and do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.”

Even though believers try to overcome evil with good, they are still likely to be persecuted.

- Peter said they should “not be surprised by it.” (4:12)
- Peter said they were “called for this purpose.” (2:21)
- Peter said they should not “fear their threats.” (3:14)
- Jesus said they would “be blessed” as those who shared in the sufferings of Christ. (Matthew 5:10-12)

3. Be Focused on Jesus Christ. Vs. 15 – “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.”

The word “sanctify” means to “set apart,” which means:

- Rather than focusing on those persecuting us, we must focus on the One who suffered for us.

- Rather than being afraid of their persecution, we must be sure we are giving Jesus Christ the glory He deserves.

4. Be Sure of Our Salvation. Vs. 15 – “*And always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and*”

The Greek word for “answer” in the KJV is “apologia,” from which we get our English word “apologetics.” Apologetics is the defense, argument, or explanation of our faith in Christ.

- Every believer should know “what” they believe about the Christian faith and “why” they believe it!
- Many Christians live in areas where they have to defend their faith “formally,” because they are constantly challenged by those who are involved in other religions.
- However, every Christian should be ready to defend their faith in Jesus Christ “informally,” should someone ask the reason for their hope.
- The defense of our faith is not about the happiness and success of this life but about God’s promise of eternal life.

5. Be sure of your conscience. Vs. 16 – “*Having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.*”

God established a courtroom in our minds – “our conscience” – we all stand before the judge of His Holy Word.

- If our conscience is not clear because of our disobedience to God’s Word, or if there are any unconfessed sins or unresolved conflicts, we will not have the firmness of our faith to stand up against the onslaught of persecution.
- If our conscience is clear because of our obedience to God’s Word, having confessed our sins and resolved our conflicts, we can withstand the condemnation of others, because we know that nothing can happen to us that would separate us from the love of God, that is in Christ Jesus.

“This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck.”

1Timothy 1:18-19

6. Be Certain of Christ’s Victory. Vs. 18-22 – “*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit!*”

- Just as God allowed Jesus Christ to suffer to open the pathway for the “unjust” to be reconciled with Him, God may allow us to suffer to reveal our faith to those who are watching us, or to those persecuting us.
- The same “waters” of persecution that will destroy the unbelievers because of their lack of faith, will purify and reveal the faith of those who are “in Christ Jesus!”

I don’t know what kind of persecution is coming against us in the days ahead, but according to God’s Word, it is going to come like the waters of that great flood! Are you prepared?