

# Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

## An Expository Journey Through **1Peter** **1Peter 3:13-17**

### 36- Suffering for the Sake of Righteousness, Part 2

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November 11, 2018

#### **1 Peter 3:13-17**

**13 Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?**

**14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED,**

**15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;**

**16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.**

**17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.**

To the Glory of God

Now it is probably true that the Issue of Suffering for a believer is the most confusing part of our walk with God. "Why God allows His Own children to hurt and to be persecuted and to endure agony" has baffled many people throughout the Centuries. Many people believe that being in right standing with God will assure that nothing but good and delightful things to come into their lives. That serving God will eliminate most, if not all, of the hardships of this life.

So, when tragedy and sorrow and pain and trouble and sickness and persecution come in, many people think that God is angry with them, and that they have, somehow, failed God. But they're never really sure *why*. They never really know *why* God is mad at them. All they know is that they are hurting, and so, God must have, somehow, been let down.

And it is this mystery that surrounds the Issue of Suffering that gives rise to so much bad and inconsistent and outright false Teaching about *why* God *allows* or even *causes* Suffering to come into the lives of His Own children. And when combined with the reality that far too many of the people, who make up the visible modern Church of our day, don't really know what the Bible actually teaches about this subject, you have a situation where many people, who are legitimately saved, live the majority of their lives in complete confusion over why God has allowed them to suffer.

Now to be sure, all "Suffering" is *not* the same. Having the battery in your car die might be construed as "suffering" in some minds, but it is really not the same as having your child murdered. Not getting a promotion on the job may hurt, but I would suggest that being beaten for your Faith hurts even more. And getting the flu is not on par with having all of your worldly possessions confiscated and your family driven from their homes.

But hurting is hurting, and we really shouldn't spend too much time comparing the level or the intensity of our individual sufferings. Suffice it to say that human beings on this earth go through very hard and difficult times, and many of those "difficulties" are what we would call "unfair", and some of them are even deadly.

But, it isn't as though God has not addressed this subject. Clearly. And repeatedly. Now many people either don't know or don't like what God has spoken infallibly about the Issue of Suffering, but we must agree that God has not been silent. God has been faithful to give us not merely a few passages or a few verses to go by, but God has given us several entire Books of the Bible that were written to help us to put the pieces together concerning the Issue of Suffering. Books like **Job** and **1 Peter** were written specifically to answer the Question:

If I am saved and God loves me, why does He allow me to hurt so badly?

... "Why doesn't God stop it? Why doesn't God just make it so where it isn't so hard?" So, as we examine this Passage in **1 Peter** this morning, I want us to remember that the *immediate* audience, to whom the Apostle wrote, is suffering terrible things at that very moment. These people are *not* sitting in Church on Sunday morning listening to a Sermon. They have been driven from their homes, they have had all

their worldly possession stolen from them, and they have, in every respect, become, "Scattered Aliens". And yet the Apostle was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to instruct these suffering saints on how to suffer *correctly*, how to suffer *well*, and how to suffer *to the Glory of God*.

Now many people in our day get into a real bad place with God because they view Suffering to not be *equitable*. Many, who suffer, would feel at least a little bit better if they didn't have to look at all the "other people" out there who don't seem to be suffering *at all*. But, *especially* when times are dark, it seems that those who suffer can name specific people who *seem* to just be "waltzing through life" with little or no care. And it is this inherent *inequality* of who suffers and how much that causes all sorts of other problems, like bitterness and jealousy and the desire for vengeance.

In fact, this problem is so common that God addressed it several times in His Word. For example, read what God the Holy Spirit "moved along" King David to write down and sing from **Psalm 37**:

**Do not fret because of evildoers, Be not envious toward wrongdoers. For they will wither quickly like the grass And fade like the green herb. Trust in the Lord and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He will do it. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light And your judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who carries out wicked schemes. Cease from anger and forsake wrath; Do not fret; *it leads* only to evildoing. For evildoers will be cut off, But those who wait for the Lord, they will inherit the land. Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more; And you will look carefully for his place and he will not be *there*. But the humble will inherit the land And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity. The wicked plots against the righteous And gnashes at him with his teeth. The Lord laughs at him, For He sees his day is coming. The wicked have drawn the sword and bent their bow To cast down the afflicted and the needy, To slay those who are upright in conduct. Their sword will enter their own heart, And their bows will be broken. Better is the little of the righteous Than the abundance of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked will be broken, But the Lord sustains the righteous. The Lord knows the days of the blameless, And their inheritance will be forever. They will not be ashamed in the time of evil, And in the days**

of famine they will have abundance. But the wicked will perish; And the enemies of the Lord will be like the glory of the pastures, They vanish — like smoke they vanish away. The wicked borrows and does not pay back, But the righteous is gracious and gives. For those blessed by Him will inherit the land, But those cursed by Him will be cut off. The steps of a man are established by the Lord, And He delights in his way. When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, Because the Lord is the One who holds his hand. I have been young and now I am old, Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken Or his descendants begging bread. All day long he is gracious and lends, And his descendants are a blessing. Depart from evil and do good, So you will abide forever. For the Lord loves justice And does not forsake His godly ones; They are preserved forever, But the descendants of the wicked will be cut off. The righteous will inherit the land And dwell in it forever. The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom, And his tongue speaks justice. The law of his God is in his heart; His steps do not slip. The wicked spies upon the righteous And seeks to kill him. The Lord will not leave him in his hand Or let him be condemned when he is judged. Wait for the Lord and keep His way, And He will exalt you to inherit the land; When the wicked are cut off, you will see it. I have seen a wicked, violent man Spreading himself like a luxuriant tree in its native soil. Then he passed away, and lo, he was no more; I sought for him, but he could not be found. Mark the blameless man, and behold the upright; For the man of peace will have a posterity. But transgressors will be altogether destroyed; The posterity of the wicked will be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; He is their strength in time of trouble. The Lord helps them and delivers them; He delivers them from the wicked and saves them, Because they take refuge in Him.

We must realize that our sinful nature doesn't need any help responding to offense. The arsenal of the flesh is well-supplied with counterattacks: like bitterness, despair, biting anger, self-pity, and resentment. And we have a gift of becoming very *creative* in response to the affronts and insults of others. And, all the while, we can usually justify ourselves as we do it.

But what the flesh *cannot* do, in response to reviling, is to bless. The flesh *cannot* trade "goodness for evil", or "love for reviling", and yet this is *exactly* what the Apostle commands:

**1 Peter 3:8-12**

**To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. For, "*THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT. HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT. FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL.*"<sup>1</sup>**

You see, when the Gospel collides with sinful hearts, Peter assures us (and we can certainly confirm) that *some* believers will respond with things like:

- Reviling
- Hateful words
- Hateful deeds

... and nobody has to teach this. We don't act this way because we are *trained to* or *told to*, but because acting this way is *in* us to begin with. Us, responding to somebody reviling us (especially to our face) by reviling back at them doesn't take a knowledge of God's Word or membership in a Church or an infilling of the Holy Spirit or a new nature. It doesn't take any strength or courage to act like this. Any old lost sinner, who knows nothing of God or nothing of God's Word, can act like that.

But how should we respond to being reviled so that Christ looks beautiful? By doing what no lost person can do. By acting in a way that proves that we are filled and we have been forgiven and we are members of Christ's Body.

The Apostle Peter was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to tell us that the Christian's response to reviling is "fearless resilience"; an untouchable *settledness* in the soul that comes from "sanctifying":

### **1 Peter 3:15b**

**... Christ as Lord in your hearts ...**

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 34:12-16

So, in **1 Peter 3:14**, the Apostle teaches that genuine believers do not fear those who revile us, when he said:

**But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED,**

... but, we fear God Who was prepared beforehand to trace the contours of our deepest hope in Christ-like Gentleness and Reverence:

**But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;**

And that means that Christians are *not* desperate to defend themselves. But, with every waking moment, they stand ready to exalt the Glory of God. And this is simply *not* a response that the world expects. And so, in their shame (for having brought about our persecution), it may be that some of them will come to see the Glory we enjoy and share in the Blessing for which we hope.

### **1 Peter 3:16**

**And keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.**

We must realize that the Christian's Hope is a steel taproot in the soul. And the Bible teaches that Suffering actually *produces* this Hope. Read what the Apostle Paul was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to write about this in **Romans 8:19-25**:

**For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our**

**body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.**

Now some hardships are simply embedded into the crust of life in a fallen world. These are the "Common Sufferings" that are shared by all Mankind (saved or lost), like sickness, disappointment, personal cruelties, and death which drive us all to the only Anchor strong enough to hold us. But beyond these common types of Suffering, genuine Christians often face very *peculiar* hardships and difficulties that are *caused* by the very Hope we cling to *in* those difficulties.

The lost, pagan world rewards "Hope in Christ" with persecutions, insults, reviling, resentment, dismissal, and sometimes even martyrdom. Nevertheless, though the Christian's Hope may itself be the very Cause of Hardships, this does not bring the root to disgrace, it actually proves its strength all the more.

This glorious spectacle, Hope, which sustains through any trial (that is brought on by the Hope itself), looks very *peculiar* to a world filled with roots which cannot withstand even everyday trials. And this is *why* Peter tells all Christians:

**... always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you ...**

... we must always be ready, because the world *requires* an explanation for the spectacle of strong, solid, and invincible "Christian Hope". Because the firmness of the Christian's Hope is not only the *deepest* Comfort in our own trials, but it is also a powerful testimony to a world filled with weak and rotting roots.

For example, when we pray the "Lord's Prayer", the very first petition we make is:

**Matthew 6:9b**

**... Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.**

And this tells us that the very *first* Priority in the Heart of Jesus is the "Name" or the "Reputation" or the "Glory" of His Father. And by telling us *not* to pray like the heathens, and by telling us *not* to use

"meaningless repetition" in our Prayers, and by instructing us to **"Pray, then, in this way"**, Jesus made hallowing God's Name to be the very first Priority of His followers. So, we pray, first and foremost:

*"Father, cause Your Name to be "hallowed", Cause Your Reputation to be "sanctified", Cause your Glory to be known and enjoyed in the Church and all over the world; work, Lord, with sovereign Power to bring hearts to the place where they will hallow Your Name."*

Now the word **"hallow"**, that Jesus used in **Matthew 6**, is the very same Greek word that Peter used in verse 15 of this text when he said:

**... but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts ...**

So, the Apostle instructs us to *hallow* Christ as "Lord" in our hearts. Because Jesus is "God-with-us". Jesus and the Father are "one"; they are of the very same "Essence" or "Substance". So, "hallowing the Name of God the Father" and "sanctifying Christ as Lord in our hearts" is the same thing.

But what exactly does it mean for Peter to tell us to "hallow" or "sanctify" Christ as Lord? It means to regard Jesus as the holiest Being in the Universe. It means to regard Jesus as "unique" and "one of a kind", without peer or rival, in Purity and Rectitude and Goodness.

So, we are told that when Suffering comes to our door, we are *not* to merely "hang-on" hoping to survive. But at that very moment, we are to put Jesus in a category all by Himself in our hearts. We are to regard Jesus as being in the highest place. We are to see Jesus as the greatest Value, the most supreme Treasure, and we are to afford Jesus, at the very hour of our Suffering, the greatest admiration, because He is the most cherished Prize and the One you esteem and honor and love the most, out of all persons and all things in the world!

And strangely, Peter gets very specific here. When Suffering comes our way,- we are to *especially* admire Jesus' Lordship (Sanctify Christ as Lord). So, as we are mistreated by evil men, we are told here to stand in awe of Jesus' absolute Lordship over the entire Universe, and Who is Sovereign even over the men, who are imposing the Suffering on us! Read again the Passage in its proper context:



**Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. *AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED*, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.**

Clearly, Peter is not talking about how we should act in Church on Sunday morning. Peter is talking about how we are to behave ourselves when Suffering comes. And, at that moment, we are to bow before Jesus' sovereign Rule. We are to tremble with joy and gladness at the Majesty of the Lord Who says:

**Isaiah 44:6-8**

**Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me. Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it; Yes, let him recount it to Me in order, From the time that I established the ancient nation. And let them declare to them the things that are coming And the events that are going to take place. Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced *it* to you and declared *it*? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any *other* Rock? I know of none.'**"

... so, "hallowing" or "sanctifying Christ as Lord in your hearts" is the kind of honoring that you give to a great and wonderful and righteous King. So, Peter says, "*When Suffering comes, sanctify Christ as Lord, as King!*"

But what in the world does "hallowing", or "sanctifying" Christ as Lord have to do with the other concerns of this text:

- Being zealous for doing Good
- Suffering, if necessary, for Righteousness' sake
- Being fearless and gentle and reverent
- Giving a defense of our Hope

... the Answer is found in verses 14b–15:

**... DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts...**

In other words, "sanctifying Christ as Lord in your heart" is the *alternative* to fearing Man. So, Peter is saying, "Don't fear Man, but sanctify Christ as Lord!" And that means that there is something about "godly Fearlessness" before the threats of Man *that* brings great honor to Jesus Christ as Lord. What is that? Why does godly Fearlessness sanctify Christ? The Answer is given when we keep reading, verse 15:

**"... Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you..."**

... so, Peter says, "**Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts**". *How?*

[By] **always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you...**

Sanctify Christ in your hearts, by giving a credible defense of your Hope to the very people who are inflicting Suffering on you. But how is Christ "sanctified" or "hallowed" through a good defense of our Hope? The answer seems to be:

Jesus *is* that Hope

... Jesus is the very "Ground" of our Hope. And He is the ultimate "Goal" of that Hope. And so, when our Hope looks strong and real and powerful, *especially* when we suffer, our Hope makes "Christ the Ground" and "Christ the Goal" look magnificent. So, Jesus is "hallowed" and He is "sanctified" and He is "honored" when we show that our Hope in Him is absolutely unshakable. And that is *best* done when we suffer.

Now I realize that most people will reject what I'm saying out of hand. And they will reason to themselves, "*But Brother Blair, I don't want to have to suffer in order to make Jesus look magnificent. I would rather Jesus just deliver me out of my Suffering and prove to be Strong that way.*"

And I'm with you. I pray and hope that none of us will ever have to go through any of this. I pray that God will move and keep us safe and happy and secure, and that *none* of us will ever taste of any of this. But Peter did. And the people to whom this Epistle was originally written did. And countless millions of other believers did. And countless millions more are suffering right now. And these people loved God as much or more than we do. And they didn't want to suffer like this either. But they did. And so, God the Holy Spirit "moved along" a man, who walked on water with Jesus, to write this down. And it is now in the Bible. And it is in the Bible, because, if God chooses to glorify Himself through our Suffering, we will know how to behave in that hour.

And I want you to mark it in your hearts today that this has *nothing* to do with being brave or courageous. Psyching ourselves up so we can be "tough" doesn't bring any Glory to God. This has to do with average and ordinary people, who have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth, having a rock-solid Hope in the absolute Sovereignty of God, and that *whatever* God "causes" or whatever God "allows" is *working together* with all the *other* things that God has sovereignly *caused* and *allowed* so that two things will be true:

- God will be glorified
- Our Joy will be full

... and that *includes* our Suffering. So, Jesus Christ being "hallowed" or "sanctified" as "Lord" in our hearts, as evil men are allowed by our Good God to inflict horrific and unfair Suffering upon God's people, so that the very people, who hurt us, may see our great and unshakable Hope, and have a real and tangible demonstration that Jesus is *better* than anything that this world can offer us, and He is *better* than anything that evil men can take away from us. Peter says *that* takes precedent over everything else! So, when Peter says:

**... DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts...**

... the way this godly Fearlessness sanctifies Christ as "Lord" is because godly Fearlessness shows that our Hope is unshakable. Fearlessness in

the face of Suffering is a clear testimony that our Hope is real. And since Jesus is both the Ground and the Goal of our Hope, this radical Fearlessness honors Him, it sanctifies Him, it hallows Him, because it demonstrates the unique Worth and Value of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, what we need to understand is that this entire Passage is about “unshakable Hope”, and the way that this Hope helps us to “hallow” or “sanctify” Jesus Christ as Lord in our hearts. So, the *primary* Issue in what Peter says here (and in our own individual lives) is “sanctifying”, “hallowing”, and “honoring” Jesus Christ as “Lord” in our hearts. And the *secondary* issue is the Hope that Jesus’ sovereign Lordship gives us, with all its effects, that *proves* the supremacy of the infinite Worth of Jesus to a lost and dying world.

So, suffering like this, with unshakable Hope, and through this Hope (godly Fearlessness) sanctifying Jesus as the absolute Lord over the Universe, is actually all about Evangelism. Us, demonstrating this godly Fearlessness, in the face of terrible Suffering, gives great credibility to the Gospel that we preach. And that is why Peter said we are to demonstrate this unshakable Hope:

**... with gentleness and reverence**

.. so, *more* than being set free, *more* than having our pain and agony lifted, Christians pray for souls to be saved. So, even as we are persecuted and reviled, we respond with both Gentleness and Reverence, knowing that, if God had not had Mercy on us, we very well might have been the ones *inflicting* the Suffering on the others. Now look again at verse 16:

**And keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.**

Now there are at least two different ways we can understand what Peter is saying here, one negative and one positive:

1. We are to maintain our Trust and Hope in God, even when we are being slandered, so that our Hope and Fearlessness may sanctify Jesus as Lord.

2. We are not to yield to the temptation to lose Hope due to the enormity of our Suffering.

... and one feeds into the other. So, not as we sit safely in Church on Sunday morning, but at the very moment when our "Good behavior in Christ" is being slandered we do *not* respond to their attacks by using the carnal weapons of the lost world. But we maintain our unshakable Hope in God that since God is absolutely Sovereign over everything, all the time, these people would not be able to slander us unless God had allowed it. And if our Father, Who loves us, has allowed evil men to slander our Faith and Hope and Trust in God, then the Promise of a God, Who cannot lie, is that He is busy, working this "bad thing" together with everything else that He has sovereignly allowed or caused for the greater "Good" of the Glory of God, and ultimately the fullness of our Joy as well!

And this is why I tell you that deep and profound Truths that are hard to teach and hard to grasp, like the Absolute Sovereignty of God, are not issues that only concern Theologians, but they are very practical and very "down to earth" and very useful when the trials of life come our way and when Suffering comes to our door.

This amazing Fearlessness, in the face of certain Punishment at the hands of evil men, is *not* based in blind superstition or some ancient myth about some Divine Being. It is a rock-solid Hope in the integrity and veracity of sacred Scripture and Faith that when Jesus said:

### **Matthew 28:18b**

**... All Authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on Earth**

... He wasn't kidding. So, please bear with me as I bring all this together for you. There are four main Points about how our unshakable Hope (Fearlessness) and sanctifying Jesus Christ come together:

1. Christ is sanctified or valued as Lord by a *fearless* Hope.
2. Christ is sanctified or valued as Lord by a *well-defended* Hope.
3. Christ is sanctified or valued as Lord by a *gentle and reverent* Hope.
4. Christ is sanctified or valued as Lord by an *active and zealous* Hope.

... in other words, the two cords that *tie up* the Contents of this Passage and hold them together are:

- A. The cord of Christ's infinite Value
- B. The cord of our Hope in Him

Now, please, don't miss the main Point in all the details. The main Point is that Jesus Christ is sanctified in our hearts when He is central in our Hope. And *nothing* illustrates that better than when God allows us to suffer. So, when we get up in the morning and think:

“Today the ultimate Purpose of my life is to hallow the Name of God. ‘Hallowed be Your Name’. So, the main Reason I exist is to show the Value of Jesus to others, *especially* when my Faith and Hope in Him are reviled.”

... when you say that, will the next feeling that rises in your heart be one of “Burden” or one of “Relief”? Does the Destiny to live for the hallowing of Christ's Name feel like a terrible “Weight”, or like “Wings”?

And this is the very *core* of Biblical Christianity. This is the underlying Purpose for all that God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit has done in our lives:

To make our Obedience to Jesus a *Glad* Obedience

And I will tell you, that if you don't get this, you have missed the main Reason why God saved you in the first place. Now I realize that this flies in the face of a generation that has grown up on a “Me First” diet, and with Teachings that promote the inherent worth and value of Man. But, this is Bible, and *that* is why it is so strange to the world.

We must understand that there are many competing religions in the world today. But the one that promotes Man at the expense of God is the *main* competitor with Biblical Christianity here in America. Because Biblical Christianity is *always* “Christ-exalting, at the expense of Man”, while the “man-made religion of the feel- good crowd” is always “Self-exalting at the expense of Jesus Christ”. And the feel-good, pop psychology, religion of the false prophets of our day looks at what Peter

says here as a *terrible* Burden. But Peter saw it and he personally experienced it, as Wings!

The Christianity that Peter describes in this Passage is very “Christ-exalting” rather than “Self-exalting”. It’s very different, for example, from the writing of Virginia Satir, who wrote an essay called, “My Declaration of Self-esteem,” and says, among other things:

“I am me. In all the world, there is no one else exactly like me. Everything that comes out of me is authentically mine because I alone chose it . . . I own me, and therefore I can engineer me—I am me, and I am OKAY.”<sup>2</sup>

The Apostle Peter says that the way to exalt Jesus Christ as Lord is to hope in Him. So, the exquisite Beauty of Biblical Christianity, and what sets it apart from all the other man-made religions and human philosophies, is that Christianity *alone* offers a Savior Whose Glory and Weightiness are demonstrated and upheld by sinners hoping in it.

We must always remember that Biblical Christianity does *not* call us *first* to work for God, but to hope in God's Work for us. And that Hope is always *first*. And that Hope is the *main thing*. Jesus Christ is hallowed in us by our hoping in Him.

So, when you wake up in the morning and remember that your Destiny is to hallow the Name of God, we must also remember that Jesus is hallowed *first and most* by our Hope, rather than our labor. He is hallowed *first and most* by our trusting Him to help us with our day. He is hallowed *first and most* by our childlike Confidence that He will keep His Promises. The infinite Value of Jesus Christ is exhibited *first and most not* by backbreaking toil, but by banking our Hope in Him. So, Biblical Christianity is always *first and most* “Wings”, never “Weight”.

On the other hand if I believed in this other “religion”, that I alone choose everything that comes out of me, that I can invent new things within me, that I own me and can engineer me, if I believed in that “religion” I would go into total despair with the excruciating Weight that it puts on me:

- ✓ To clear my *own* Conscience
- ✓ To forgive my *own* Sin
- ✓ To find my *own* Meaning

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<sup>2</sup> Virginia Satir; <https://www.lecturesbureau.gr/1/my-declaration-of-self-esteem-1080/?lang=en>

- ✓ To uphold my *own* Cause
- ✓ To carry my *own* Burdens
- ✓ To protect my *own* Life
- ✓ To overcome my *own* Fears
- ✓ To heal my *own* Wounds
- ✓ To secure my *own* Future
- ✓ To comfort myself in my *own* Death

... what a crushing Weight this false religion puts on the backs of those who are deceived by it! And the only "redemption" offered in this religion is the pitiful ceremony of repeating in front of the damning mirror:

You're OKAY! You're OKAY! You're OKAY!

... it is truly a very hard way to live. But it is even a *harder* way to die.

So, don't miss the *main* point: Biblical Christianity is a Christ-exalting Truth. And Jesus is exalted *best* by being trusted. He is hallowed in us *primarily* by our hoping in Him. And that is very Good News indeed.

So, what all have we learned from the Apostle Peter today? We have learned that Jesus is sanctified or valued as Lord by a "fearless Hope". Peter said:

***DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED,***

... so, we are told over and over again to put all our Hope in the Promises of God. Because this Hope is the foundation of "godly Fearlessness", *especially* when we suffer.

But we have also learned that Jesus is sanctified or valued as Lord by a "well-defended Hope". The Apostle said:

**Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you**

Jesus is not honored by *groundless* Hope. If someone says to me, "*Why do you hope in Christ for Forgiveness and for Help and for Eternal Joy,*" and I answer back, "*I don't know*", or "*No good reason, I*



*just heard this in Church as I grew up", or "Well, it seems like a good gamble," or "Everybody's got a religion, and I decided to choose Christianity", if I answer like that, then Jesus is *not* sanctified in my heart. He is *not* hallowed and He is not honored. In fact, answering one of life's most important questions like that proves to everybody who knows me that Jesus is the biggest Fraud in the Universe and whoever trusts in Him- is foolish.*

Christians say that Jesus is our Hope all the time. We say it, we sing it, we pray it, and we teach it. But if we don't know *why* He's our Hope, we are of all men most to be pitied. I tell you that Jesus is *not* honored by "groundless Hope". Only a "well-defended", "well-thought out Hope" sanctifies Jesus.

But we also learned that Jesus is sanctified or valued as Lord by a "*gentle and reverent Hope*". Peter wrote:

**... always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence**

We have all noticed in politicians, preachers, teachers, and maybe even in ourselves, that sometimes, the *less* sure you are of your point, the more strident and loud you become in defending it. Yet the Bible tells us that, frequently, the Prophets and Jesus Himself lifted up their voices and cried out the Truth with great conviction.

So, there is a blessed "Serenity" that comes with deep, well-grounded, and settled Conviction. And that is the *kind* of Hope that sanctifies Jesus as Lord in our hearts. There is a calmness and tranquility that hallows the Name of Jesus by demonstrating His great rock-like Stability in our lives.

And finally, we learned that Jesus is sanctified or valued as Lord by an "*active and zealous Hope*". At the beginning and the ending of this Passage, Peter calls us to be zealous for good deeds, even if it means suffering.

### **1 Peter 3:13**

**Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?**

### **1 Peter 3:16b**

**... your good behavior in Christ ...**

### **1 Peter 3:17**

**For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.**

You simply *cannot* read the Bible, with any degree of honesty and come away with the notion that God wants His people to be passive or inactive. Maximum Joy is *never* obtained through sloth and empty days. When we bank our Hope on Jesus and joyfully turn our Future over to Him, He doesn't go to work instead of us, He goes to work *inside* of us. Jesus doesn't give us "freedom" *from* good deeds, He gives us freedom *in* good deeds.

So, in the same way that He takes the sting out of Death, so, too, He takes the futility out of our work. He calls us to:

### **1 Corinthians 15:58**

**Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in* vain in the Lord.**

... so, our labor is *never* futile. The God of the Universe stands behind it. And God is *in* our work. And He is *over* it. He *inspires* it. He *sustains* it. And He will *reward* it. Jesus said, His Yoke was easy and His Burden was light. Therefore, we are to be *zealous* for good deeds; we are to be *actively engaged* in "doing good" because *that* is the way we experience *most* of Christ's Sufferings and find the *most* Satisfaction in Him. So, an *active and zealous* Hope shows the Value of Jesus.

Dear friends, the great central heartbeat of Biblical Christianity is that Jesus Christ, the Savior and Lord, is exalted and hallowed and sanctified by the happy Hope that His people put in Him. And He shines all the brighter when our Hope is fearless and well-defended and gentle and active and zealous for good deeds. And that is true, *especially* in Suffering.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.