

## EXPOSITION OF I PETER

### Message #14

### I Peter 3:13-17

When you are a believer in Jesus Christ and then all of a sudden get hit with a string of negatives for no explainable reason, the immediate tendency can be to run, growl, grumble and accuse God or complain against God. This kind of reaction, which tends to be so normal for all of us, loses the flavor of the glory of God and as a result we lose rewards and aren't much of a grace reflector.

When a child of God lives in this world, which is dominated by Satan, there is no doubt that there will be times the believer will suffer. Sometimes it won't matter how nice you are, how peaceful you want to be or how willing you are to do good. Persecution, suffering, attack, in one way or another, will eventually come into your life. It may be on your job, in your family, in your neighborhood, in your community or perhaps even in your church. When this kind of thing happens it is critical that the believer really zero in on Jesus Christ. That is exactly the way the Apostle Peter saw it.

We come now to the third major section of the book that runs from **I Peter 3:13 to 5:11** and the subject is the hostility and suffering that the believer faces. **If you and I are to be an award winning grace reflector, there is a certain amount of suffering and hostility that will come into our world. God will bring it into our world.** This is the kind of suffering that suffers for the sake of righteousness. Now what Peter says to believers in this section is this:

**THE BELIEVER WHO SUFFERS FOR THE RIGHT REASONS AND RESPONDS WITH THE RIGHT RESPONSES WILL BE GREATLY USED BY GOD AND WILL RECEIVE WONDERFUL BLESSINGS FROM GOD.**

We all need a good dose of this passage and there are things we all can learn and apply. In this section, Peter presents at least seven key truths and principles about suffering:

**PRINCIPLE #1** – You will not usually be harmed by others if you prove yourself to be one who does good. **3:13**

This is a good point to know - generally speaking if you are a good person, you will not have a bunch of people who are out to hurt you and harm you.

The grammar and syntax of this verse is very intriguing. **First** of all the word “harm” (κακοω) means to afflict, to ill-treat, to torment and to hurt (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 227). **Secondly** the word “good” (αγαθος) is one that refers to an inner goodness that is outwardly manifested and is excellent by God's standards (Smith, p. 2). Before each of these words is an article “the”, which means God wants something specifically identified. Now the text is written in a way that asks a question, “Who is the one who will harm you if you do good.” The obvious answer is no normal person would. If you do good to a person, generally speaking that person will not seek to hurt you. In fact, people will like you.

Normally if you do what is right and good, no one will want to harm you or will desire to do wrong or evil against you because you will be liked and appreciated. In fact, if one does seek to harm you, he is acting in a very unnatural and perverted and satanic way. For example, if you pay your bills on time, the banks will typically favor you and give you a high credit rating. If you are gracious and kind to others, very few will want to hurt you.

However, what I also understand this to be grammatically saying is this - if you are zealous for manifesting the goodness of God and the grace of God, the specific one who will seek to afflict you and torment you will not be other people, but the evil one. If you do find yourself under attack, you may know that the source is Satan.

Now the “if” clause in this verse is third class conditional and further substantiates the point. If you are zealous for that which is right according to God, there is a very real probability and possibility that most people won’t harm you for being a kind grace reflector. So if you do find yourself under attack you may know that the evil one is the one behind it. You are not being attacked because you are bad; you are being attacked because you are connected to Jesus Christ and are good and that leads you to high honor in heaven.

If you do something good for someone and come under attack for it, you may know with certainty that you are the target of Satan. He is the one behind the attack and when you stay faithful you may know that you are under direct assault from him.

**PRINCIPLE #2** – If you do suffer for the sake of doing what is right you are blessed . **3:14a**

Now the “if” clause in this verse is fourth class conditional, meaning it is the less probable condition (Dana & Mantey, p. 290). The meaning here is that if you pursue good the chances are good that you won’t have people trying to hurt you, but in those rare instances that you do, you may know you are a blessed person.

The word “suffer” (πασχω) is one that means to be the recipient of some type of misfortune (Smith, p. 348). Now you will immediately notice that the suffering here is not for doing “good” but for doing what is “righteous.” The difference between the words “good” and “righteous” is that this word specifically has in mind the objective righteous standards of God. Doing good is more internal and more subjective and doing what is righteous is more external and objective. This suffering is due to the fact that you are lining up your life with the Bible. If you suffer some satanic attack for this reason, you may be happy because you are truly a blessed person of God and you may know that your “reward in heaven is great” (Matthew 5:10-12).

**PRINCIPLE #3** – You should not fear or be troubled by any intimidation. **3:14b**

When we find ourselves the target of attack, our first reaction is typically one of panic and worry. But Peter says, calm down. Don’t worry. Don’t be afraid. Don’t be intimidated. Don’t let fear and terror grip you.

The word “fear” and “troubled” both come from the same Greek word from which we get our English word “phobia.” This is the kind of fear that is so paralyzing that it makes you want to run and to flee, and get away from the problem or pressure. Peter says, you don’t need to run, you don’t need to be afraid, just calm yourself down. Even when people are trying to intimidate you, don’t let them succeed.

**PRINCIPLE #4** – Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. **3:15a**

Now this is a critical key to survival when suffering in that we set apart Jesus Christ as Lord in our hearts. Now this is a direct admonition to make Jesus Christ Lord of our hearts, Lord of our lives and **this admonition is given to believers not unbelievers**. There are some very theologically misguided people who try to tell unbelievers that they need to make Jesus Lord of their lives. The unbeliever needs to make Jesus Savior of their souls. Making Him Lord of your life comes when as a believer, you discover you need His help in the midst of your hurt and trial. The unbeliever needs to believe Jesus is the Lord (Romans 10:9) and the believer needs to make Him the Lord of his life after he has believed.

One of the ways we do this is by prayer. We ask the Lord to be Lord of our lives when we are hurting and suffering. We ask Him to be Lord over the situation. We ask for His help, for His grace and we turn the entire situation and circumstance over to Him.

Now the point is, when you are being attacked for righteousness sake, you acknowledge in your heart the supremacy and the majesty and the sovereignty of Jesus Christ. When you find yourself under attack, make sure the first thing you do is put Jesus Christ on the throne of your heart.

**PRINCIPLE #5** – Always be ready to make a defense for the hope in you. **3:15b**

Actually the only way we can be hurt when suffering is when we hurt ourselves and lose hope in God.

This portion of this verse has been used by many to promote personal evangelism. Years ago I took a course on evangelism and this was a key verse given about witnessing. Now I think witnessing is our personal responsibility, but when you carefully look at this verse, there are two things often overlooked: 1) The context is that you are personally suffering and maintaining a real hope in God that is seen by others; 2) You are asked by others about your hope in the Lord and you aren't the one doing the asking.

Apparently one thing God will do with you is give you an opportunity to defend truth. Now the word for defense is the Greek word (απολογία) from which we get our English word "apologetics." The word means to give a defense of something. In this context, you are giving a defense of the hope that you have when you are hurting and suffering. One of the things God can do with us when going through times of hurt and hardship which we don't deserve, is to use us as an effective witness for Him.

When you are being mistreated for no good reason and you maintain a hope and confidence in God and you commit yourself to being good and righteous, you make a powerful statement to others. In fact, Peter qualifies the way we are to defend our faith; with a gentleness, not an obnoxiousness, and with a reverence for God.

**PRINCIPLE #6** – Keep a good conscience by your good behavior so those who are slandering you may ultimately be put to shame. **3:16**

Dr. Wiersbe said when you have a good conscience, when you are suffering, it will:  
1) Fortify you; 2) Give you peace; 3) Remove fear (*Be Hopeful*, p. 86).

Now we get a good glimpse here as to how these attacks come against one who is “in Christ” and that is through verbal attack. The way Satan will try and hurt you, if you are faithful, is by raising up people who will slander you and revile you. The word “slander” means to speak evil of someone and the word “revile” speaks of verbal attack that is more vicious. Satan attacks God’s people by hurling evil and hurtful words against faithful people. There is nothing that can drain you or damage you more than words of people. When we were on vacation I spotted and purchased a little magnet in a shop that sits on the riverfront in Savannah Georgia that says: “Be sure brain is in gear before engaging mouth.” There is much wisdom in that statement because words can do great damage.

Peter’s point here is that when people are speaking damaging words against you, nothing can shut the mouths of those who slander you quicker than your faithful integrity. When you maintain your commitment to righteousness and doing good and you keep your hope in the Lord, when you are being verbally assaulted, you will eventually bring those who did such things to shame. God will bring them to shame.

God wants us to maintain our “good behavior” even when we are under verbal assault. Notice the “good behavior” is “in Christ.” If you are not “in Christ” you cannot do any good works.

**PRINCIPLE #7** – It is far better to suffer by the will of God for doing right than to suffer for doing what is wrong. **3:17**

No believer should ever suffer for doing evil and no believer should ever be shocked if he suffers for doing good.

There are some very distorted people who suggest that it is not the will of God for a believer to suffer. Well, Peter says right here it is the will of God. In fact, He emphatically says in Greek, “the will of the God.” Suffering is part of the “university” of God and He uses it to train us, and develop us to bring glory to Him, just like His Son did. God uses all things for good in our lives including suffering by His will.

One of the greatest examples of one who suffered by the will of God was Job. Job was attacked by Satan under the permissive will of God, but when all was said and done, Job had been molded by God and was tremendously blessed by God.

Sometimes God will permit us to undergo some verbal assault and attack so that we may demonstrate our faithfulness to bring to shame those who are slandering us. Now when we do wrong, we expect to suffer, but the real shocker is when we suffer for doing right.

When you are suffering, God will rarely let you completely understand why. So you may as well stop asking that question and start trusting Him. When you find you are suffering:

- 1) Consider yourself to be blessed by God.
- 2) Don’t run or quit.
- 3) Don’t panic or fear.
- 4) Make Jesus Christ Lord of your life and situation.
- 5) Be ready to give a good witness.
- 6) Keep your conscience good and clean.