

Ye Shall Be Hated by the World
Matthew 24:9

In **Matthew 24:9** our Lord Jesus Christ warned His disciples, saying, “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.”

Indeed, if we are faithful in our mission and ministry toward the world as the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and witnesses of the gospel, then the Lord our God will use us to turn the world upside down spiritually and to draw lost sinners unto salvation through faith. However, there will be many within this world who will respond unto our mission and ministry for Lord’s sake with opposition, anger, and hatred. Thus in **Matthew 24:9-11** our Lord Jesus Christ delivered the warning, “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.”

I. Beware of Men

Now, our Lord did not present this warning as a simple possibility. Rather, He presented it as a definite certainty. In fact, throughout the New Testament we are warned again and again concerning the opposition and hatred of the world against our mission and ministry for the Lord’s sake. In **Matthew 10:16-18** our Lord Jesus Christ gave the warning, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.” Then in **Matthew 10:21-22** He added, “And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.” Herein our Lord instructed us to “beware of men,” to be on our guard against the world, specifically because they most certainly *will* oppose, hate, and persecute us who are the faithful servants of the Lord as we fulfill our mission for the Lord’s sake.

Again in **Mark 13:9** our Lord Jesus Christ gave the warning, “But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.” In like manner, in the parallel passage of **Luke 21:12-13** our Lord’s warning was delivered, “But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name’s sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony.” Then in **Luke 21:16-17** He added, “And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake.”

Yet again in **John 16:1-4** our Lord Jesus Christ gave the warning, “These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.” Herein our Lord revealed that He was informing His disciples concerning this opposition and hatred specifically in order that they might be informed before it happened. This He did in order that we might expect the world’s opposition and hatred, and might prepare ourselves in advance not to be emotionally overcome by it. This our Lord did in order that we might remember that He had informed us in advance, and in order that we might not be spiritually offended when it happens. Even so, in **2 Timothy 3:12-13** God’s Word clearly declares, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”

II. Think It Not Strange

So then, since our Lord has revealed in His Word that the world’s opposition, hatred, and persecution against us as our Lord’s faithful servants is a definite certainty, we should not think it strange when that opposition, hatred, and persecution comes upon us. In fact, God’s Word provides this very instruction in **1 Peter 4:12**, saying, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” Now, for the context of 1 Peter 4:12 the “fiery trial” is specifically defined through the opening line of **verse 14**, “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ,” and again through the opening line of **verse 16**, “Yet, if any man suffer as a Christian.” Thus the “fiery trial” of this context is to suffer opposition, reproach, and persecution as a faithful Christian for the name of Christ. Indeed, we are instructed by God’s own Word not to think it strange when we suffer the “fiery trial” of such opposition, reproach, hatred, and persecution. It is *not* a strange thing or foreign event to the faithful Christian walk. Rather, such opposition, reproach, hatred, and persecution is a *natural, normal* part of the faithful Christian walk. In fact, if such does not ever come upon us at all, we should experience spiritual concern; for in **Luke 6:26** our Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed, “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets.”

As believers we are the disciples of our Master Jesus Christ and the servants of our Lord Jesus Christ. As such, we are called to pursue the faithful Christian walk after the will and ways of our Master and Lord Jesus Christ. Thus a natural principle of life applies unto our faithful Christian walk. It is the principle that the disciple is not above his master, and that the servant is not above his lord. Even so, in **Matthew 10:24-25** our Master and Lord Jesus Christ declared, “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?” Again in **John 15:18-21** our Lord Jesus Christ declared, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying,

they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me." Certainly, the world did reproach, hate, and persecute our Master and Lord Jesus Christ. Thus we should expect that the world will also reproach, hate, and persecute us who are His faithful disciples and servants. This should not be viewed as a strange thing. Rather, this should be recognized as the natural, normal principle and pattern of the Christian life. Since the world opposed and reproached our Master, they will also oppose and reproach us His faithful disciples. Since the world hated and persecuted our Lord, they will also hate and persecute us His faithful servants. We are not greater than He is. Thus we should expect to suffer for Him even as He suffered for us.

In fact, the person and the gospel of our Master and Lord Jesus Christ shall divide all people into two basic categories, those who receive Him and His gospel and those who reject Him and His gospel. Those who receive Him and His gospel shall come to view Him and His faithful servants with joy and gratitude. However, those who reject Him and His gospel shall come to view Him and His faithful servants with opposition and hatred. Indeed, this division shall even be found with individual households. Even so, in **Matthew 10:34-36** our Lord Jesus Christ gave the warning, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Again in **Luke 12:51-53** He said, "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law."

III. Consider Him That Endured

Yet the fact that our Master and Lord Jesus Christ suffered the world's opposition, reproach, hatred, and persecution before us should not simply move us to expect suffer the same from the world even as He did. In addition, the manner in which our Master and Lord handled this opposition, reproach, hatred, and persecution should serve as an example for us to consider and follow as we face the same. Even so, in **Hebrews 12:2-3** God's Word instructs, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Again in **1 Peter 2:21-23** God's Word states, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Our Master and Lord Jesus Christ is "the author and finisher of our faith." He traveled the course of faith before us and finished that course with absolute perfection. Indeed, He blazed that course before us in order that the way may be clearer and easier for us to travel. Thus we should consider Him, look unto Him, and follow after His steps. Even so, through these two passages we find a number of characteristics in our Lord's example, after whose steps we should follow.

First, we must look beyond the present suffering unto the glorious reward, even as our Lord did. **Hebrews 12:2-3** teaches us that our Lord Jesus Christ endured the suffering of the cross and the contradiction of sinners in opposition, reproach, hatred, and persecution against Himself because of “the joy that was set before him.” Indeed, He set His focus upon the joy of reward at His Father’s hand, the joy of being exalted unto “the right hand of the throne of God.” Thus He was moved to despise the shame and to continue without fainting. Even so, in **2 Corinthians 4:16-18** the apostle Paul gave testimony, saying, “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” Furthermore, in **1 Peter 4:12-13** the instruction and motivation is given, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”

Second, we must not become weary in well doing so as to yield unto sin, even as our Lord did not. **1 Peter 2:22** teaches us that even as our Lord Jesus Christ suffered for righteousness’ sake, He “did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” In like manner, “let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” (See **Galatians 6:9**) Rather, “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” (See **Hebrews 12:1**) Let us “fight the good fight of faith.” (See **1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7**) Let us finish our course. Let us keep the faith. Let us be “stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,” knowing that our labor in godliness “is not in vain in the Lord.” (See **1 Corinthians 15:58**) Let us not develop “an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” (See **Hebrews 3:12**) Let us not become “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” (See **Hebrews 3:13**) Let us not cast away our confidence, “which hath great recompense of reward.” (See **Hebrews 10:35**) Rather, let us have godly patience and endurance, that “after [we] have done the will of God, [we] might receive the promise.” (See **Hebrews 10:36**) Let us “gird up the loins of [our mind], be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto [us] at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (See **1 Peter 1:13**) “As he which hath called [us] is holy,” let us be “holy in all manner of conversation [behavior].” (See **1 Peter 1:15**)

Third, we must not retaliate against the reproach, hatred, and persecution of the world, even as our Lord did not. The opening portion of **1 Peter 2:23** teaches us that when our Lord Jesus Christ was verbally reproached and reviled, He did not revile back, and that when He suffered physical abuse and persecution, He did not even threaten back. Even so, **1 Thessalonians 5:15** gives the instruction, “See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.” On the other hand, **1 Peter 2:19-20** teaches, “For this is thankworthy [worthy of our Lord God’s honor and praise], if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.”

Fourth, we must commit the keeping of our soul unto God our heavenly Father, even as our Lord did. The closing portion of **1 Peter 2:23** teaches us that when our Lord Jesus Christ

suffered the world's opposition, reproach, hatred, and persecution, He "committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Even so, **1 Peter 4:19** gives the instruction, "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." Indeed, God our heavenly Father is a faithful God and Father, who will ever be faithful unto His own dear children. Thus we should entrust the keeping of our souls and our lives unto His ever faithful care, especially in the times when we experience the fiery trials of opposition, reproach, hatred, and persecution for our Lord's sake. Let us ever consider the encouragement of our Lord Jesus Christ from **Matthew 10:29-31**, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." Indeed, let us join with the testimony of the apostle Paul from **2 Timothy 1:12**, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

IV. Rejoice and Be Exceeding Glad

Yet the New Testament provides further instruction concerning our response toward the world's opposition, reproach, hatred, and persecution against us. In **Matthew 5:10-12** our Lord Jesus Christ Himself instructed us to rejoice and be exceeding glad, saying, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Again in **Luke 6:22-23** our Lord gave the instruction, "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets." Yet again in **1 Peter 4:12-16** the instruction is given, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."

So then, why should we "rejoice, and be exceeding glad," and "leap for joy" when we suffer such opposition, reproach, hatred, and persecution for our Lord's sake? First, we should so rejoice because we are experiencing the privilege of joining with Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings. In the opening portion of **1 Peter 4:13**, the instruction and motivation is given, "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." Even so, in **Acts 5:41** the report is given concerning the apostles after they were persecuted by the council of the Sadducees, saying, "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." In like manner, the apostle Paul gave testimony in **2 Corinthians 4:8-10**, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.” Again in **Philippians 1:29** the apostle Paul spoke concerning the privilege both of salvation and suffering that the Lord God has bestowed upon the believers at Philippi, saying, “For unto you it is given [as a privilege] in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.” Second, we should so rejoice because our Lord God is exalted and glorified by our Spirit-filled faith, hope, patience, and endurance. In **1 Peter 4:14** the instruction and motivation is given, “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.” Even so, in **2 Thessalonians 1:3-4** the apostle Paul gave testimony concerning the believers at Thessalonica, saying, “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.” Third, we should so rejoice because we will enjoy a great and eternal reward in heaven for our faithful and patient endurance. In **Matthew 5:12** our Lord gave the instruction and motivation, “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” Again in **Luke 6:23** He gave the instruction and motivation, “Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.” Even so, in **2 Corinthians 4:17** the apostle Paul declared, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;”

V. Be Not Afraid

Yet we are not only instructed to “rejoice and be exceeding glad” when the world opposes, reproaches, hates, and persecutes us for our Lord’s sake. We are also instructed not to be filled with fear over the world’s terror against us. In **1 Peter 3:14** the two-fold instruction is given, “But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.” Furthermore, in **Matthew 10:26-31** our Lord Jesus Christ delivered the instruction three times to fear not, saying, “Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.” Finally, in **Philippians 1:27-28** the instruction is given, “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.”

From these passages we find four truths concerning this matter. First, we must not allow the fear of man to stir up our hearts with trouble. The full instruction within **1 Peter 3:14** is that we must “be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.” Even so, in **John 14:27** our Lord Jesus Christ provided the promise and the related instruction, “Peace I leave with

you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Indeed, we must not let our heart be troubled, but must rest in our Lord’s peace. Second, we must not allow the fear of man to turn us aside from proclaiming the gospel. In **Matthew 10:26-27** our Lord focused upon this truth with His first instruction to fear not, saying, “Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.” In addition, the closing portion of **Philippians 1:27** gives the instruction, “With one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;” and then the opening portion of **verse 28** declares, “And in nothing terrified by your adversaries.” Indeed, we must not allow the fear of our adversaries to prevent us from striving “for the faith of the gospel.” Third, we must not allow the fear of man to eclipse our fear and obedience toward God. In **Matthew 10:28** our Lord focused upon this truth with His second instruction to fear not, saying, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Again in **Luke 12:4-5** our Lord declared, “And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.” Fourth, we must not allow the fear of man to overcome our faith in our heavenly Father’s care for us. In **Matthew 10:29-31** our Lord focused upon this truth with His third instruction to fear not, saying, “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.” Again in **Luke 12:6-7** our Lord declared, “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.” Yet again in **Luke 21:17-19** our Lord declared, “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls.”

VI. Sanctify the Lord God

In **1 Peter 3:14** God’s Word provides two instructions concerning our response toward the world’s opposition, reproach, hatred, and persecution against us, saying, “But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.” Then the opening line of **1 Peter 3:15** provides a third instruction, saying, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.” In the New Testament the word “sanctify” means to set apart for the purpose of God and His righteousness. So then, to “sanctify the Lord God” in our hearts means to set apart the Lord God in our hearts as THE governing authority and priority for our hearts and lives. It is Biblically equivalent to abiding in Christ, and allowing Christ to abide in us. (See **John 15:1-11**) It is Biblically equivalent to being filled with the Holy Spirit, and walking under the directing influence of the Holy Spirit. (See **Ephesians 5:18 & Galatians 5:16-26**) Indeed, this is the very means by which we may face the opposition, reproach, hatred, and persecution of the world “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” (See **1 Peter 1:6-8**) Indeed, this is the very means by which we may face the opposition, reproach, hatred, and persecution of the world without allowing our hearts to be troubled, but with the peace of God “that passeth all understanding.” (See **Philippians 4:6-7**)

Yet what will our sanctifying of the Lord God in our hearts mean in relation to our daily behavior? The four-fold answer is found in **1 Peter 3:16** and in **Matthew 10:32-39**. Having instructed us to “sanctify the Lord God” in our hearts in **1 Peter 3:15**, God’s Word provides the following explanation in **1 Peter 3:16**, “Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.” Herein we encounter the two ingredients of a good conscience and a good conversation (behavior). Furthermore, in **Matthew 10:32-39** our Lord Jesus Christ spoke concerning a godly confession and a godly commitment, saying, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” Let us then consider these four ingredients in the following order – a godly commitment, a good conscience, a good conversation (behavior), and a godly confession.

First, we must maintain a godly commitment. In **Matthew 10:37** our Lord indicated that we must love Him above all others, even above our very family. Indeed, our Lord’s love toward us should compel us and constrain us to love Him back as our very first love above all else, to love Him with all of our heart, with all of our soul, with all of our mind, and with all of our strength. (See **Mark 12:30**) As such, we should no longer love ourselves and live unto ourselves; but we should deny ourselves and live unto our Lord. (See **2 Corinthians 5:14-15**) We should deny ourselves and our own will, take up our cross of submission unto God our heavenly Father’s will, and follow after our Lord’s steps. (See **Matthew 16:24**) We should not seek to save our selves and our lives for our own purposes, plans, and pursuits. Rather, we should seek to lose our selves and our lives for the sake of our Lord’s purposes, plans, and pursuits. This is sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts.

Second, we must maintain a good conscience, both toward our Lord and toward other people. Whereas a godly commitment speaks about our heart’s priority, a good conscience speaks about our inner motivation. Indeed, we should maintain a conscience that is void of sinful offense toward God and toward others. We should avoid any sinful offense against God and against others; and wherein we have committed a sinful offense, we must make it right as quickly as possible. We should maintain a pure motivation and good conscience, “in all things willing to live honestly.” (See **Hebrews 13:18**) We should renounce “the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness [deceitfulness]” in our behavior toward others. (See **2 Corinthians 4:2**) Rather, we should walk “in simplicity [selflessness] and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God” in all of our behavior toward others. (See **2 Corinthians 1:12**) This is sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts.

Third, we must maintain a good conversation (behavior). Now, in the context of **1 Peter 3:16**, the word “conversation” refers to all of our interaction with life. Thus it encompasses not only our manner of communication, but also our entire manner of behavior. Whereas a godly

commitment speaks about our heart's priority, and a good conscience speaks about our inner motivation, a good conversation speaks about our outward behavior. Just as the Lord our God and heavenly Father is holy, even so we should be holy "in all manner of conversation." (See **1 Peter 1:15**) Thereby we should maintain all of our conversation (behavior) in such a manner that it will bring attraction upon the gospel of Christ. (See **Philippians 1:27**) Yea, we should always have our conversation (behavior) to be honest (with godly integrity) among the lost world, so that even when they speak against us as if we are evil doers, they might be brought to shame for falsely accusing our "good conversation in Christ," and might even by the testimony of our good behavior be brought to glorify God through faith in Christ. (See **1 Peter 2:12; 3:16**) This is sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts.

Fourth, we must maintain a godly confession of our Savior Jesus Christ unto the lost world. Whereas a godly commitment speaks about our heart's priority, and a good conscience speaks about our inner motivation, and a good conversation speaks about our outward behavior, a godly confession speaks about our gospel witness. In **Matthew 10:32** our Lord Jesus Christ indicated that we should confess Him before men, and that He would then confess us with honor as good and faithful servants before God the Father in heaven. Yet in **Matthew 10:33** He also warned that if we are ashamed of Him and deny Him before then, then He will be ashamed of us and deny us as faithful servants before God the Father. (See also **Luke 9:26; 12:8-9**) Even so, we should hold fast our Lord's name, hold forth our Lord's gospel, and not deny the faith, even in the face of the world's opposition, reproach, hatred, and persecution. We should not be ashamed "of the testimony of our Lord," but should willingly be partakers "of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." (See **2 Timothy 1:8**) This is sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts.

VII. Be Ready Always

In **1 Peter 3:14** God's Word provides two instructions concerning our response toward the world's opposition, reproach, hatred, and persecution against us, saying, "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled." With the opening line of **1 Peter 3:15**, God's Word provides a third instruction, saying, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." Finally, with the closing portion of **1 Peter 3:15** God's Word provides a fourth instruction, saying, "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." In this instruction we find a four-fold responsibility.

First, we must be walking and living in godly hope. The instruction of **1 Peter 3:15** indicates that we must be ready to answer those who might ask the reason for the hope that is in us. Yet others will never ask us concerning the reason for our hope, if we are not actually walking in hope. Even so, we must "gird up the loins of our mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto [us] at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (See **1 Peter 1:13**) In our daily walk we must be "rejoicing in hope" and "patient in tribulation." (See **Romans 12:12**) This must especially be true in times of reproach and persecution for our Lord's sake. When we can rejoice and be exceeding glad in the face of opposition, reproach, hatred, and persecution, the world will recognize that we are living in hope. When we can be at peace in heart, without fear or trouble, in the face of opposition, reproach, hatred, and persecution, the world will recognize that we are living in hope. They will see that we do not fear death

because we possess a hope of everlasting life at home with our heavenly Father. They will see that we do not fear reproach and persecution because we possess a hope in the everlasting grace, mercy, and care of God our heavenly Father. Our heart of hope will be displayed before the world through our spirit of joy and peace and will be rooted in our hearts through a settled faith in the Lord our God, the God of hope. Even so, our godly hope, joy, and peace is all empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. Thus in **Romans 15:13** the apostle Paul expressed his prayer for the believers at Rome, saying, “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”

Second, we must be always ready to give answer concerning our hope. As we face the world’s opposition, reproach, hatred, and persecution with godly joy, peace, and hope, some who observe that joy, peace, and hope will be brought ask for its foundational reason. For this reason we must always be ready to provide the Biblical answer, for thereby lost souls may be brought unto personal faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Yet this readiness must not simply be an intellectual readiness. Rather, it must be a Spirit-filled readiness. It must be a readiness that is guided and empowered by the filling influence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Even so, in **Acts 1:8** our Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” In like manner, our Lord Jesus Christ declared in **Matthew 10:19-20**, “But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” Again in **Mark 13:11** our Lord Jesus Christ declared, “But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.” Yet again in **Luke 22:14-15** our Lord Jesus Christ declared, “Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.” Even so, we must ever walk under the filling influence of the Holy Spirit in order that we may ever possess a spiritual readiness to give answer for the hope that is in us.

Third, we must provide the Biblical reason for our hope. So then, what is this Biblical reason? In **Colossians 1:27** God’s Word reveals the answer, saying, “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Again in **1 Timothy 1:1** the apostle Paul revealed the answer, saying, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope.” Our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ is our hope. Our Lord Jesus Christ in us is our hope of glory. Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord Himself is the reason for the hope that is within us. Therefore, when we are asked the reason of the hope that is in us, we must preach the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior and must preach His glorious gospel of salvation.

Fourth, we must provide this answer “with meekness and fear.” The instruction of **1 Peter 3:15** states, “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.” We must never look down upon lost sinners with arrogance. We must never strive against lost sinners with selfish anger. Rather,

we must ever be burdened for lost sinners with godly compassion. Indeed, according to **2 Timothy 2:24-26** we “must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” Yea, our speech must always be “with grace, seasoned with salt,” in order that we may know how we ought best to answer each and every individual. (See **Colossians 4:6**) Furthermore, we must ever maintain a reverence and godly fear toward the authority of our Lord in sending us forth to preach His gospel, toward the name of our Lord in its place of exalted honor before the world, toward the compassion of our Lord in seeking for lost souls to be saved, and toward the gospel of our Lord in its power to save lost sinners.

VIII. Love Your Enemies

Indeed, we must “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh [us] a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” However, what should be our behavior toward those who are not at all interested in the reason for our hope, but who only delight in reproach and persecution against us? Toward the fiery trial of reproach and persecution itself we are to rejoice and be exceeding glad, and not to be filled with fear or trouble of heart. Toward the Lord our God we are to sanctify Him in our hearts as the THE governing authority and priority for our hearts and lives. Toward those who enquire we are to be ready always to provide the Biblical reason concerning our godly hope. Yet what should be our response toward those who are simply committed unto reproach and persecution against us? In **Matthew 5:44-45** our Lord Jesus Christ gave the answer, saying, “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” Herein our Lord delivered a four-fold instruction concerning four aspects of our response unto our persecutors. This four-fold instruction includes our loving attitude toward them, our kind communication toward them, our helpful action toward them, and our spiritual burden for them.

First, we must love our enemies in our attitude toward our persecutors. We must not develop an attitude of vengeance toward them. (See **Romans 12:19**) We must not purpose to work any ill against them. (See **Romans 13:10**) Rather, we must ever maintain an attitude of longsuffering and kindness toward them. (See **1 Corinthians 13:4**) Indeed, we must ever maintain an attitude of self-sacrifice and service toward them.

Second, we must bless them that curse us in our communication toward our persecutors. Out of our loving attitude toward our persecutors, we must communicate blessing, rather than reproach, toward them. When others speak evil against us, we must not return such evil speaking back against them. Rather, we must render blessing unto them in return for their evil speaking and bitter reproach. (See **1 Peter 3:9**) Furthermore, when others persecute us for our Lord’s sake, for righteousness’ sake, and for the gospel’s sake, we must not develop an attitude of complaining against them, but must maintain a communication of blessing toward them. (See **Romans 12:14**)

Third, we must do good to them that hate us in our action toward our persecutors. When we see our persecutors in some occasion of need, we must not refrain from helping them. Rather, we must show compassion upon them and help them in their time of need. We must give of our time, of our material possession, and of our very selves in order to help them. Indeed, quoting the instruction of Proverbs 25:21-22, **Romans 12:20-21** declares, “Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Fourth, we must pray for those who spitefully use us and persecute us with a burden for our persecutors. Indeed, we should pray for their eternal salvation with an earnest burden for their souls. We should pray that the Lord our God might be gracious unto them in drawing them by His Spirit unto faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal salvation. Furthermore, we should pray for their personal welfare with a true burden of their person. We should pray that the Lord our God might be gracious unto them in helping them in their time of need.