

TITLE: "Faithfully Facing Persecution" (Part 1)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 3:13-14a

THEME: *Expect hostility and react with hospitality*

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DATE: April 13, 2008

On Friday night I brought Giana over w/me to the office. Rem. she's 6. She picked up a CD that was on my desk & it was a software program which containing the works of John MacArthur. Most of you know J.M. as 1 of the most gifted expositors of our era. There's a pic of him on the CD jacket. Giana asks me, "Who is that?" I tell her, "Well, honey, he's a preacher like daddy." She thought a moment and replied, "Is he as good as you?" (Phil J. and the RTC)

{Read Passage}

Safe to say that throughout the history of the church true believers have been subject to persecution

Simpler terms - t/normal reaction of t/world to Xns has been one of hostility.

That H. can take different forms & shapes. At 1 extreme (true in many countries today) being a Xn can cost you your life.

Doubtful that any of us today living in USA will face that level of H. That's not to say that we won't face H. at all . . . There is P. that stops short of phys. harm. P. of rejection // discrimination (workplace) // mockery // enduring t/abuse of X-rejecting men who not only reject us, but reject & blaspheme that name by which we have been called.

That's nothing new

The roots of hostility are go back centuries, even millennia.

Francis Schaeffer, writing in the 1970s, observed==>

"In ancient Israel, when the nation turned from God and from His truth and commands as given in Scripture, the prophet Jeremiah cried out that there was death in the city. He was speaking not only of physical death in Jerusalem, but also a wider death. Because Jewish society of the day had turned away from what God had given them in the Scripture, there was death in the *polis*, that is, death in the total culture and the total society.

In our era, sociologically, man destroyed the base which gave him the possibility of freedoms without chaos. Humanists have been determined to beat to death the knowledge of God and the knowledge that God has not been silent, but has spoken it the Bible and through Christ--and they have been determined to do this even though the death of values has come with the death of that knowledge.

We see two effects of our loss of meaning and values. The first is degeneracy. Think of New York City's Times Square--Forty -second and Broadway. If one goes to what used to be the lovely Kalverstraat in Amsterdam, one finds that it, too , has become equally squalid! The marks of ancient Rome scar us: degeneracy, decadence, depravity, a love of violence for violence's sake. The situation is plain. If we look, we see it. If we see it, we are concerned.

But we must notice that there is a second result of modern man's loss of meaning and values which is more ominous, and which many people do not see. This second result is that the elite will exist. Society cannot stand chaos. Some group or some person will fill the vacuum. An elite will offer us arbitrary absolutes, and who will stand in its way?"

[Francis Schaeffer, How Should We Then Live?, 226-27, cited in MacArthur, 1 Peter,196]

So, sinful men attack t/very thing that gives life meaning: God and His Word. In erasing these absolutes, they create a culture of chaos as society cannot operate w/o standards. So men make arbitrary standards & become a law unto themselves. See it in OT Israel. See it today.

What about those 1st c. believers to whom Peter wrote?

They faced t/same sort of degeneracy, decadence, depravity, love of violence that Schaeffer refers to. They also faced hostility for their faith.

In many ways, the kind of persecution Peter's readers were under is similar to what we might experience ourselves. Ridicule, Derision, Discrimination, Mockery, Slander. That which stops short of physical violence.

This has been the norm

Could even say that it's to be expected.

2 Timothy 3:10-15 10 But you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord delivered me! 12 And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Let that sink in ==>

And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Why? Why should we expect hostility from the world? Why is it, as one writer observes, that ==> ". . . it is likely that in the coming years Christians everywhere will face increasing hostility from the civil authorities and from unbelievers at the personal level." [MacArthur, 1 Peter, 196]

Why? Why should we expect hostility from the world?

JOH 3:19 And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.

Darkness hates light. Sin hates Righteousness. Fallen depraved men who revel in their sin hate t/Holiness of God.

JOH 12:46 "I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness."

EPH 5:8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light

1PE 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

What is the only thing that stands in the way of the secularists' utopia of a society free from moral law?

A nation where one can marry whomever (2 men, 2 women, 1 man & 5 women)? // homosexuality/lesbianism are freely accepted? // Abortion is totally unrestricted? // free sex is freely practiced? // transvestitism & transgenderism are applauded? // prostitution & recreational drugs are legal? // where there are no absolutes???

Only thing that stands in t/way is t/source of absolutes - God, His Word, & genuine believers. Goes back to what Francis Schaeffer said.

As our culture becomes more & more secularized (greater darkness), we can expect more & more hostility against t/light for which we stand. We're to be salt in a saltless world. What happens when you pour salt into a wound?

And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Years ago I read a story about one of the 17th or 18th c. itinerant preachers who rode the countryside of England. He went several days w/o 1 bit of hostility against t/Gospel. He thought, "Something's wrong." "I must be doing something wrong. I'm not eliciting any negative response." Shortly afterward, while preaching, he was attacked by a group of angry men throwing stones at him. He rode off rejoicing that he had been worthy to suffer for the name of Christ.

Go back to the passage {read from Greek Text}

If I could sum up what this passage is saying in one concise sentence:
Expect hostility and react with hospitality.

In many ways this passage parallels t/previous - vv. 8-12.

If you rem., our main idea for those 5 vv. was ==>

Partakers of grace give evidence of grace. Graced people are to be gracious people.

This passage takes that idea & expands upon it

In vv. 8-12 we are exhorted to be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, humble. We're not to return evil for evil. IOW - when someone attacks us we're not to respond in kind. Rather we are to give a blessing. We're to pray for and be gracious to those who hate us, knowing that we are heirs of great blessing.

We're to watch our speech (v. 10), we're to turn away from evil and do good (live lives of perpetual repentance), seeking peace and knowing that God's favor is upon us even as his face is against evildoers.

Now we come to verse 13

Peter picks up on these thoughts and expounds upon them in greater detail (as any good preacher would do!).

I. A Ready Defense: Facing Persecution for Christ's Sake (13-17)

Over next few weeks I'm going to give you 5 principles that will help you to respond in a X-like manner to those who would react w/hostility to you as a result of your testimony. {restate point I.}

A. Remain Faithful (13)

Stay t/course. Don't grow weary in well-doing. Run t/race w/endurance. Remain Faithful.

And who is there to harm you if you should be zealous in pursuing good?

1. Ask yourself the Question, "What is my Pursuit?"

And who is there to harm you if you should be zealous in pursuing good?

a. "If you should be" assumes that you are

(1) Subjunctive of probably future condition

Assumption is that they will be zealous. After all, faithless Xns aren't subject to hostility. Remember t/condition: "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

Sham Xns are exempt. No one minds a supposed Xn who isn't able or willing to live a godly life, to be light in a dark world. That sort of Xn seamlessly fits right into t/world.

b. We're to be ζηλωτης - "Zealots"

Nobody likes a zealot w/one exception (what's that?). Another zealot! You will run t/risk of being called by t/world some sort of "religious fanatic." That's what I thought as a lost 18 y.o. w/a comfortable religiosity. *"You don't have to be a fanatic."* I hated fanatics. In some ways, I hated my father back then for being a zealot. Fact is, he was simply being a Xn!

(1) Within 1st c. Israel there was a religious / political party known as "the Zealots"

They were charact. by their often misguided, and unrighteous zeal.

These Zealots were called by Josephus the 'fourth philosophy' among the Jews (BJ 2. 117; Ant. 18. 23). The group was founded by "Judas the Galilean," who led a revolt against Rome in AD 6. They opposed taxation by Israel to a pagan emperor. They contended that this was spiritual treason.

These "Zealots" were sometimes known as "Assassins." Jewish nationalists who armed themselves w/concealed daggers (dagger-men). They would assassinate any whom they considered enemies of t/nation.

As Luke records it in Acts 21 TAP was thought by t/Romans to be one of their number. One of them asked him "[are you not] the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?"

(2) Peter takes this imagery of Jewish Assassins&reverses it

This is being zealous, not for the pursuit of evil, or Jewish nationalism (sorry John Hagee), but being zealous in the pursuit of good. This is not to carry a dagger to defeat t/enemies of God's KD, but to carry t/Gospel.

It's to be recognize, as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 10 ==>

3 [that we don't] war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

Zealots for JC. Radical Christianity. Radical Righteousness. Be about Radical Righteousness. Be a Spirit-filled Radical for X.

1. "What is your Pursuit?"

Parallel to verse 11 {cite}

2. Peter asks the question:

And who is there to harm you if you should be zealous in pursuing good?

a. Question is, "What does he mean by 'harm'?"

Does this mean, as some commentators take it, that if you live an obedient righteous life, you won't suffer persecution?

"There is something about a meek, upright, holy carriage that is apt, in part, to free a man from many evils to which the ungodly are exposed. Your pure and harmless deportment will bind the hands of your enemies and sometimes somewhat allay and cool the malice of their hearts, so that they cannot rage against you as they might otherwise." [Robert Leighton, 148]

(1) I don't think that's what this means

And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

It doesn't even follow from what Peter has already written and will write: 1:6-7; 2:18-20; 4:12-13; 5:8-10 {cite}. That doesn't sound like a group of people exempt from harm.

(2) I believe that Peter is thinking eschatologically

Another way to put it is that he's thinking in ultimate terms. No one can ultimately harm the believer in JC.

"If you love the good, you will suffer no loss, because whatever you may be deprived of in this world, you will never lose God, who is the true Good." [Augustine, cited in Schreiner, 170 f.n.]

Peter often follows t/verbatim teaching of Christ.

Matthew 10:28 “And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Paul follows a similar thought in Romans 8

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written, “For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor

things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Message to the church of Smyrna in Rev. 2:10 ==>

"Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

As I said earlier, it's doubtful that any of us is going to have to pay that ultimate price. Our definition of "harm" may take on a different nuance. When you mocked, or slighted, or ridiculed, know that no one can harm you. No one can steal your prize. Nothing can separate you from X's love. After all, You are one of X's elect! One of His chosen ones! He doesn't choose you to lose you. Impossibility.

So ==>

A. Remain Faithful (13)

Second principle for Facing Persecution for Christ's Sake ==>

B. Endure Hostility (14a)

But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, [you are] blessed.

Expect hostility and react with hospitality.

1. Here we have the first of two instances of the rare optative mood in this passage (v. 17)

a. There are 4 "moods" in the Gk. lang.

1) Indicative (used to make a statement); 2) Imperative (used to express a command); 3) Subjunctive (used to express a probability); 4) Optative (used to express a possibility - even something that's unlikely).

(1) Again, some commentators (notes in study Bibles) ==>

are going to say that the use of the optative shows that Peter didn't expect his readers to face persecution or suffering. But we've already seen from t/entire context of 1 Peter that this isn't the case.

b. Why the optative?

Scholars believe this to be a literary device to show a hypothetical situation and to strengthen the argument.

(1) Here's the thought ==>

Those who do good are 'blessed' *even* in suffering. Verse 17 (where t/optative is used again) ==> it is 'better' *even* when the will of God permits, to suffer for doing right rather than wrong.

(2) Peter is giving a hypothetical example

He's not commenting on whether or not this will be the case. We've already seen that he expects expect hostility.

But even if (hypothetically speaking) **you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, [you are] (what??) blessed.**

2. μακάριος - "happy" - "blessed" - "favored"

a. Same word used 8 successive times on Matt. 5 {turn there}

Beatitudes. Jesus preaching to the multitudes (His SOTM). Beg. in v. 3 going to verse 11, what is the first word?

3 “**Blessed** are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 “**Blessed** are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 “**Blessed** are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 “**Blessed** are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 “**Blessed** are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

8 “**Blessed** are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 “**Blessed** are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10 “**Blessed** are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 “**Blessed** are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me.

12 “Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

"blessed" = "privileged recipients of divine favor." (cf. "grace").

It's to know the truth of verse 12 and the hope that's there. It's to likewise be driven by the truth of vv. 10-11.

3. Ask yourself the Question, "What is my Perspective?"

Can you accept the fact that the result of living for X is, at times, going to result in suffering? In persecution? In hostility? Can you say, *"That's okay. I'm blessed."* Or are you so caught up in this life & t/pragmatics of thinking, "If doing the right thing means hardship, I'll pass." That's not having t/mind of X. (characterizes "tares" cf. Matt. 13).

a. What is your perspective? {cf. 1:3-9}

We have a couple of guys in t/CH that have a desire do what most of us would like to avoid - knocking on doors to share t/Gospel. In this day, in this culture, that means enduring hostility. Means getting doors slammed in your face // being on t/receiving end of a string of profanity. What's their perspective to be? *"Well, we thought this would be fun, and it's getting to be a bummer, so let's not do it anymore."* OR ==.

11 "Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. 12 "Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

(1) This applies in all sorts of situations

Whenever you take a stand for JC & His Word & you experience pain or loss, you are blessed.

Could be a CH that takes a stand against sin or false teaching & as a result of their stand for t/Gospel some members leave.

Could be a wife who tells her unsaved husband, *"No, I can't do that. I would be sinning against my Lord"* and as a result endures his wrath.

Could be an employee, who, in taking a stand for JC loses a promotion, or even his job.

We live in a sinful world and we have to remember that the darkness hates the light. Doing good won't always be easy!

(a) Sometimes we ask, "Why is it that those who don't do good seem to experience the blessing?"

The church down the street that waters down the truth ==> they're 800 people and growing, putting up a new sanctuary, but you stand firm & remain a CH of 40.

Could be t/guy that engages in immoral business practices & steals business from you. And he's padding his pockets & driving a new car & you're driving t/old beater trying to make ends meet.

Could be a husband that dumps his wife, & he runs off w/the other woman. They're on a cruise in the Caribbean & you're at home trying to rewrite your 'old college resume'

You scream out inside, "This isn't fair Lord!"

You're not alone. The Psalmist felt that way. Rem. Psalm 73?

(b) Psalm 73:1-20, 25-28 {read}

3. Ask yourself the Question, "What is my Perspective?"

a. We are so preoccupied with this life!

We are preoccupied with health and safety and security. Not to trivialize those things, look at where the focus really is!

13 And who is there to harm you if you should be zealous in pursuing good? 14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, [you are] blessed. . . .

Learned about a young man whose father is a pastor in Dansville. This man is a member at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis (John Piper). He and his wife, their two kids along with another young family are going to Afghanistan as missionaries.

Holy Spirit has placed a burden within them for a certain people group there, and they're going to plant churches. In Islamic Afghanistan. That's 100x more perilous than working t/night shift at a convenience store in E. St. Louis! These dear saints understand that. Man told a friend of mine, *"Of course, we'll be in danger. In fact, there is a likelihood that we, including our children, will lose our lives there. But if we aren't willing to go, who will?"*

John Gill ==>

"[nor can the men of the world harm you]; who hate and persecute the saints; these can do them no real harm; they cannot hurt their grace, which shines the brighter, being tried and proved in the furnace of affliction; they cannot destroy their peace and comfort by all the trouble they give them; all the harm they can do them is to their bodies; they can do none to their souls; and even all the evil things they do to their bodies work together for their good . . . " [Gill, commentary on 1 Peter]

"even all the evil things they do to their bodies work together for their good . . . " One thinks of the reformers, men like William Tyndale who was burned to death under t/author. of the RCC. Likewise, John Huss who died singing a hymn, even as his body was turned to ash. And John Wycliffe who was condemned posthumously, his body exhumed, burned to powder, and thrown into t/river. And yet, these men were blessed!

(1) Luther called it "the evil genius of the Gospel"

That there could be blessing in such difficult, even terrible circumstances.

Some historians mark t/date of 1521 as t/year that saw t/first "official" martyrs of the Reformation.

At that time, persecution against Xns in / around Germany had intensified under t/reign of t/newly crowned Pope Clement VII.

In Antwerp, the Augustinian convent had become a stronghold of Gospel preaching. Many came to saving faith in X.

That was not to be tolerated, and in October, 1522, orders were given that t/convent be destroyed and that all those who opposed Rome be imprisoned.

Luther was saddened upon hearing the news: "The cause that we defend, is no longer a mere game; it will have blood, it calls for our lives."

Inquisitors combed the area looking for Christians. Eventually, Three men were arrested: Esch, Voes, and Lambert. They were taken Brussels, and there, the inquisitors demanded that the three men recant:

THE INQUISITOR.- "Confess that you have been led astray by Luther."

THE YOUNG AUGUSTINES.- "As the apostles were led astray by Jesus Christ."

THE INQUISITORS.- "We declare you to be heretics, worthy of being burnt alive, and we give you over to the secular arm."

Fearing for his life, Lambert's faith wavered. Remaining silent during the inquisition, he requested and was granted four days' respite. Meanwhile, the other two men were condemned to death.

On July 1, they were led to the place of execution. Once again, the inquisitors who had accompanied them demanded that they recant. The young men refused.

The inquisitors asked that the two men be allowed to stand facing the pyre, hoping that the fear of such a terrible death would break them. The condemned men stood for an hour, singing Psalms, stopping only to testify to the crowd, "We will die for the name of Jesus Christ!" Finally, the inquisitors gave the signal for the wood to be ignited.

Historian Merle D'Aubigne describes what happened next:

"While the flames were ascending slowly, a heavenly peace filled their hearts, and one of them went so far as to say: 'I seem to be lying on a bed of roses.' The solemn hour was come; death was near: the two martyrs cried with a loud voice: '*O Domine Jesu! fili David! miserere nostri!* O Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us!' They then began solemnly to repeat the Apostle's Creed. At last the flames reached them, burning the cords that fastened them to the stake, before their breath was gone. One of them, taking advantage of this liberty, fell on his knees in the midst of the fire, and thus worshiping his Master, exclaimed, clasping his hands: 'Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us!' The flames now surrounded their bodies: they sang the *Te Deum*; soon their voices were stifled, and nothing but their ashes remained."

The execution had lasted four hours. But what of Lambert? His friends were now martyrs. He was the most fearful and wavering. Soon, however, within the darkness of the dungeon, his troubled conscience drowned out his fears and God granted him strength. Clinging to the Gospel, he stood fast and was martyred like his brethren.

As is so often the case, persecution brought revival. Luther rejoiced. "Christ is gathering some fruits of our preaching," said he, "and is creating new martyrs."

He commemorated the death of the three martyrs with a hymn. And soon the air was filled with voices singing:

No! no! their ashes shall not die!
But, borne to every land,
Where'er their sainted dust shall fall,
Up springs a holy band.

Though Satan by his might may kill,
And stop their powerful voice,
They triumph o'er him in their death,
And still in Christ rejoice.

13 And who is there to harm you if you should be zealous in pursuing good? 14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, [you are] blessed. . . .

What's your perspective?

I. A Ready Defense: Facing Persecution for Christ's Sake (13-17)

A. Remain Faithful (13)

B. Endure Hostility (14a)