

TITLE: "Faithfully Facing Persecution" (Part 2)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 3:14-15

THEME: *Expect hostility and react with hospitality*

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{Read Passage}

I wear on my wrist a bracelet that was made by believers in a country where Xns face daily persec. 4 their faith. It has t/acrostic BASIC imprinted on it (brothers and sisters in chains). It reminds me to pray for these suffering brethren.

It reminds me of t/history of suffering, a history that's woven its way thru t/NT ==>

5:41 So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.

ACT 9:16 "for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

ROM 8:17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

PHI 1:29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

Common thread - {see underlined}

There is a suffering that comes to all men as a result of living in a fallen world // comes to believers as a result of their relationship w/JC.

JOH 15:20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

2TI 3:12 And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Every year an est. 100,000 Xns around t/world are martyred for their faith. That's over 11 per hour. In t/course of this message, somewhere around 10 of your brethren will die, likely suffering a horrible death, phys. speaking.

John Piper reflected on this a few years ago following the death of missionary Martin Burnham in t/Philippines to his Muslim captors ==> "[We] who are Christians first and Americans second . . . serve the greatest cause in history, spreading allegiance to Jesus Christ for the joy of all people. Missionary Martin Burnham . . . knew that by removing eternal risk, Christ calls his people to continual temporal risk. For the followers of Jesus the final risk is gone: 'There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' (Romans 8:1). 'Neither death nor life . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.' (Romans 8:38-39). 'Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live' (John 11:25).

When the threat of death becomes a door to paradise, the final barrier to temporal risk is broken. When a Christian says from the heart, 'To live is Christ and to die is gain,' he is free to love no matter what. Some forms of radical Islam may entice martyr-murderers with similar dreams, but Christian hope is the power to love, not kill. Christian hope produces life-givers, not life takers.

The crucified Christ calls His people to live and die for their enemies, as He did. The only risks permitted by Christ are the perils of love. With staggering promises of everlasting joy, Jesus unleashed a movement of radical, loving risk-takers. 'You will be delivered up even by parents . . . and some of you they will put to death' (Luke 21:16). Only some. Which means it might be you, and it might not. That's what risk means. It is not risky to shoot yourself in the head. The outcome is certain. It is risky to serve Christ in a war zone. You might get shot. You might not.

Christ calls us to take risks for kingdom purposes. Almost every message of American consumerism says the opposite. Maximize comfort and security--now, not in heaven. Christ does not join that chorus. To every timid saint, wavering on the edge of some dangerous gospel venture, He says, 'Fear not, you can only be killed' (Luke 12:4). And 'Your reward is great in heaven' (Matthew 5:11-12).

Note the great biblical legacy of living risk-takers. Joab, facing the Syrians on one side and the Ammonites on the other, said to his brother Abishai, 'Let us be courageous for our people . . . and my the Lord do what seems good to him' (2 Samuel 10:12). Esther broke the royal law to save her people and said, 'If I perish, I perish' (Esther 4:16). Shadrach and his comrades refused to bow down to the king's idol and said, 'Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us . . . But if not, be it know to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods.' (Daniel 3:17-18). And when the Holy Spirit told Paul that in every city affliction awaited him, he said, 'I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course . . . ' (Acts 20:24)." [cited in World Magazine, July/Aug 2002]

It was Stephen Neil, in his book, A History of Christian Missions, that said, "Every Christian knew that sooner or later he might have to testify to his faith at the cost of his life."

For t/Xns of t/first c. and for so many t/o history, this was a way of life.

Sometimes it came at the hands of false X's & anti-Xns. During t/Inquisition, t/RC CH tortured & murdered 1000s of Xns w/diabolical inventions such as Thumb & Finger Screws; t/The Rack; The Virgins's Kiss; The Judas Chair.

To be a real Christian (a real one) often meant risking one's family, one's possessions, one's life. Why? Because to do so was to gain X!

Does this have anything to do w/we who live in 21st c. America? Piper concluded his article with this:

"In America and around the world the price of being a real Christian is rising. . . . Those who make gospel-risk a voluntary lifestyle will be most ready when we have no choice. Therefore I urge you, in the words of the early church (citing a passage out of 13th chapter of Hebrews), "Let us go to Him outside the camp and bear the reproach He endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come."

Our risk is different, but it's still risk

We likely will not face loss of life and limb, but we are likely to face loss of a friendship, hostility from family members, t/scorn of a spouse who hates what you stand for.

Might mean having an unsaved spouse divorce you // having to endure a very difficult marriage while t/world around you cries out, "*You deserve a divorce and a happy marriage.*" But Jesus bids you to risk it all & follow him knowing that you have a great inheritance awaiting you, an inheritance that you cannot risk losing for t/sake of temporal pleasure.

It will certainly mean that faithfully sharing t/gospel comes w/the price of sideways glances & smirks. *"Gee, should I say something about JC? I might make someone uncomfortable, like me!"* Meanwhile, another brother or sister on t/other side of t/globe has just paid for their testimony w/their life! Sorta puts things in perspective.

This is where we land in 1 Peter . . . If I could sum up what this passage is saying in one concise sentence==>

Expect hostility and react with hospitality.

We said that this passage parallels t/previous, vv. 8-12. If you rem., 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 and 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.

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

There are 5 principles in this passage 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. Might be a family member // coworker // a fellow student // neighbor // complete stranger that you are sharing t/Gospel w.
{restate point I.}

We covered t/first two points two weeks ago (by way of review) ==>

A. Remain Faithful (13)

What does that mean?

It means you take up your cross daily to follow X (Matt. 10:38)

It means you endure to the end (Matt. 24:13)

It means you rejoice in hope, persevere in tribulation, devote yourself to prayer (Rom 12:12).

It means you buffet your body and subject it to discipline (1 Cor. 9:27).

It means you press on toward the goal for the prize (Phil. 3:14).

It means you consider the members of your body as dead to things like immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, knowing that these things are idolatry. (Colossians 3:5).

It means you don't love the world, nor the things in the world. (1 John 2:15).

It means you are steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain (1 Cor 15:58).

It means you don't lose heart (2 Cor. 4:1).

It means you don't grow weary in doing good (2 Thess. 3:13).

It means that when you come to t/end of this earthly life, you can say as did Paul and every other faithful saint since ==>

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith (2 Tim. 4:7).

How do you face suffering and persecution?

A. Remain Faithful (13)

Maybe there's a bit of irony here. There will always be those who make a superficial profession of faith in X. And when difficulties & afflictions come, they're gone.

What Jesus said in Matt. 13:21 ==>

That's t/seed that has been cast on t/rocky places in His parable of t/soils (Mat.13). This is t/man who hears t/Word of t/Gospel & receives it w/joy, but there's no real life & so **when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.**

The trials & affliction serves to test t/reality of faith. That's what suffering does. It separates t/wheat from t/tares.

In t/book of Rev., the message to t/CH at Smyrna in chapter 2 ==>

'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.

See same thing in 1 Peter (1:6-7)

A. Remain Faithful (13)

We are known by what we pursue in life. So ==>

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

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

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.**

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 ==>

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, but t/rest of the letter shows that we can expect hostility against us for our faith in JC.

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 Matthew 5

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.

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

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

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

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

Thirdly ==>

C. Avoid Fearing Men (14b)

I. Ask yourself the Question, "Whom do I Fear?"

AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED.

a. No doubt your Bibles mark this part of the verse in some way to indicate that Peter is quoting or alluding to something in the OT

He indeed is. As he did earlier in chapt. 2, Peter is quoting a passage out of Isaiah 8. Turn back to t/OT book of Isaiah . . .

(1) Prophet Isaiah writes from about 740 to 680 BC

(2) He addresses the impending apostasy of Judah

At this time, we have Israel divided into 2 nations or kingdoms. The southern KD of Judah was being threatened by the Northern KD of Israel and Syria who were in an alliance together. Syria & Israel were threatening to remove Ahaz as king of Judah and to install a puppet king in his place.

The king and the nation were filled with fear {read 7:1-2}

What's a king to do? When you're t/King of Judah, you're supposed to trust YHWH! In v. 10 {read vv. 10-14}

God himself provided a sign to demonstrate his faithfulness!

Note verse 16 {read} What land? Syria and Israel. By t/time t/boy would be 12 to 14 years of age, Syria and Israel, t/2 nations that you fear, will be captured. Indeed they were, by Assyria.

The sign had a near and far fulfillment. Near - was immediately fulfilled within the family of Ahaz. A maiden had a child, a son. Far fulfillment was, of course, messianic. So Matthew quotes this v. in 1:23 of his Gosped as being fulfilled in t/virgin birth of JC.

Emphasis for Ahaz (and for us) Trust in God's promises. He is faithful.

(3) So we come to verse 11 {read 11-13}

In Isaiah 8 God tells the people not to fear the plot hatched by Israel and Syria (conspiracy to take control of Judah). They are to fear only YHWH and trust in him alone. He's t/one who is sovereign over all t/affairs of men.

Daniel 2:21 “And it is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men, And knowledge to men of understanding.”

(4) Back to 1 Peter 3 {read vv. 13-14}

Peter applies it thus ==> Just as t/faithful remnant in Judah had enemies in t/days of Ahaz, so you have those who are hostile against you because of your faithfulness. Just as Judah was tempted to fear, so you may be tempted to be afraid. But don't. Don't fear what they fear. Don't be in dread. Don't be intimidated. The Lord is sovereign // holy. Fear him alone.

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

C. Avoid Fearing Men (14b)

1. Ask yourself the Question, "Whom do I Fear?"

AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION . . .

μη φοβηθητε. Aorist subjunctive of prohibition. Forbidding an action (fear) that may or may not be occurring. Lit. "do not fear the fear." Gk. word φοβος is used 2x.

2. Some question (I've gone back & forth on this) as to how this is to be translated

a. As you might suspect, Peter is actually quoting the LXX (Gk. text of the day) and not the Hebrew

If we compare the LXX to Peter's quote we note a few subtle changes. In the passage from Isaiah, the 'fear' related to 'the conspiracy' - the threat of Syria. Don't fear what the people fear. Here in Peter, t/'fear' relates not to an outside concern, but t/people themselves. Don't fear them.

NASB - don't fear their intimidation

ESV - Have no fear of them.

C. Avoid Fearing Men (14b)

"Fear God and not man."

John Knox. "Here is one who never feared the face of man."

. . . AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED.

ταρασσω - another aorist subjunctive of prohibition. Word that describes being agitated, doubting, uneasy.

John 14:1 "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me."

14:27 "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

Fourth point in facing persecution for Christ's sake ==>

D. Defend your Hope (15-16)

First word==>

But . . . Strong contrast - don't do this (fear), rather do this (what) ==>
. . . sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts . . .

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

a. That "answer" looks in two directions: inward and outward

(1) Note where it starts - in the heart

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

(a) What does that mean?

Doesn't mean that you make Jesus Lord. He is Lord. You can't make himself something He was, is, and always will be.

(b) Verb "sanctify" - ἁγιάζω - "set apart as holy"

Do you know where this same word is used in similar fashion? Matt. 6:9. God's priority is His holiness. "Our Father who is in heaven, holy be your name."

This means you recognize and affirm w/your heart who He is. He is who He is; that doesn't change. Xns recognize who He is and are to live accordingly.

(c) This is our central confession

Ask yourself, "What simple statement sums up best what true Xnty is all about?" "What is our creed?" "What sums it all up?" ==>"JC is Lord."

Romans 10:9 "if you confess with your mouth Jesus as" what? "you will be saved."

Phil. 2:11 "every knee will bow and every tongue confess Jesus is what? "Lord"

i. What does that mean?

I wish we had time to go there, but John MacArthur has done an excellent study on what it means that JC is Lord & how that relates to us as δουλοι (as slaves).

In fact, MacArthur contends that t/counterpart of κυριους (Lord) is δουλοι (slaves). He also demonstrates that t/word δουλος (slave) means just that & it is misleading to translate t/word "servant" or "bondservant" as most every Eng. translation has done.

JC is Lord means that He is God / Master / Sovereign.

Again note Isaiah 8:12-13==>

12 "You are not to say, 'It is a conspiracy!' In regard to all that this people call a conspiracy, And you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it. 13 "It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy. And He shall be your fear, And He shall be your dread.

Who is the object of sanctity or fear in Isaiah? YHWH! Who is the object of fear and sanctity here in 1 Peter? Christ! "Christ as Lord" = "Christ as YHWH".

"[we sanctify Christ as Lord] not by making him holy, which need not, nor cannot be, he being essentially, infinitely, and perfectly holy; but by declaring and proclaiming his holiness, as the seraphim in Isaiah's prophecy, and the four living creatures in the Revelation did; and by glorifying of him, praising and applauding all his perfections, and among the rest, this of his holiness, and giving thanks at the remembrance of it; which he has so much displayed in the works of creation, providence, redemption, and grace." [Gill]

It always starts in the heart. We recognize that we are bankrupt sinners in need of grace. We forsake our sin for the cross. We serve JC as His slaves.

**(2) Then we do what? We look outward (2d half of the v.)
... always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you the reason for the hope in you—**

(a) Be ready to make an ἀπολογία - "apology" (reasoned defense)

Legal, courtroom sort of language. Paul, before the Jews in Acts 22 ==>

1 "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense which I now {offer} to you."

1CO 9:3 My defense to those who examine me is this:

We are to be equipped, when we're asked (asked by whom? - by those who would be hostile to us - don't miss t/context). Equipped to give a defense, for what?

... the reason for the hope in you—

Our hope is in the Gospel, in Christ alone! Cf. 1 Peter 1:3-4.

HEB 6:18-19 18 in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a {hope} both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,

... yet with gentleness and fear.

G. toward men; F. toward God.

2TI2:25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,

On Thursday a group of us went to see the Ben Stein movie, "Expelled." It's a superb movie (if you haven't seen it, I would encourage you to do so - in fact let me know if you're going I'd like to see it again). Not to give away too much, the movie uncovers, among other things, t/almost Fascist atmosphere that exists in academia when it comes to Darwinism. There is a refusal to even entertain t/notion that ultimate origins came about as a result of anything other than naturalistic phenomenon. IOW - There is no "intelligent designer" there is "no God."

Stein interviews Richard Dawkins & some other atheistic evolutionists who doggedly contend that the idea of God is foolishness. At the end of the movie, Stein is sitting across from Dawkins. He asks him, "If you were to put a % on t/existence of God what would it be?"

Dawkins fidgets and says, "I don't know, something like 99%." Stein replies, "You're not sure. So it could be less than that." (maybe). It could be 47%. (No). "But you don't know."

Dawkins says, *"I do know this. The concept of the Judeo-Christian God cannot exist because if He did we know from the Bible that He is capricious, engages in t/slaughter of innocent people. In short, this God is evil."*

Insightful! This is Romans 1 in action ==>

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

This is what it means to suppress the truth! // that which is known about God is evident to them! How can someone who is an atheist stand in judgement of God and say that He is evil! How can an atheist say anything is evil! By what standard? There is no standard. All we are is mud!

At t/end of t/interview, Stein asks him, "Where did it all begin?"

Where did we come from?" How can abiogenesis occur? "We don't know." "Could it be that there is an intelligent designer?" At this point, Dawkins is obviously struggling. He says, "It may be possible." "It could be that a higher intelligence seeded this planet with life." This is a laughable theory of "panspermia" - where space aliens did it.

Begs, t/? "Where did they come from?" All it does is put the question back 1 step. I liken it to t/RC doctrine of t/Immaculate Conception - Mary was conceived w/o sin and lived a sinless life (Assumption). This was an attempt, not only to deify Mary, but to explain how a sinful woman could give birth to a sinless savior. All it does is push t/? back one step. How did her mother and father, both sinners, conceive a sinless Mary?

ISW - How can something come from nothing. Basic logic, folks.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 **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,**

Here is the key question: "Which worldview makes human experience intelligible?"

Where is common ground? How is it that what we both believe (torturing children, for example) makes sense? Which worldview underlies this belief, the believer's or the unbeliever's?

Which philosophy of reality, knowledge, and ethics can take human experience intelligible? Which can make sense out of our life's experience?

The proof of the Christian worldview is that, without it, you could not prove anything

One reason why it is logical to believe in the God of the Bible is the impossibility of the contrary. Apart from Him one could not believe in anything.

There are four philosophical issues/questions that are true of every culture. These are questions that philosophers have been addressing for thousands of years and only a Christian worldview can adequately answer them.

1) Moral Absolutes (Ethics); 2) The Uniformity of Nature (possibility of science); 3) The possibility of Universals and Laws (logic); 4) Personal freedom and dignity.

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D. Defend your Hope (15-16)