

TITLE: "Faithfully Facing Persecution" (Part 3)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 3:15-16

THEME: *Expect hostility and react with hospitality*

NUMBER: 05081PE3.16-17(77)

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{Read Passage}

We return to a passage entitled "Faithfully Facing Persecution"

Specifically a section of 1 Peter that addresses t/believer's response to persecution.

That word "persecution" carries different ramifications depending on where you live. Being persecuted as a Christian in some parts of t/world, even in ours, carries little weight. IOW - most of us readily admit that we haven't experienced real persecution for our testimony.

Quite different in other parts of t/world. If you go to t/website "Persecution.Com" run by Voice of the Martyrs, you will find fellow believers who are on t/cutting edge, as it were, of persecution. Real P.

They have a section on their site related to recent news & you won't find anything there about t/battle between Clinton and Obama. No mention of the rising cost of gasoline. What you will find are stories like these:

[Pastor Released from Prison](#)

INDONESIA -- On April 27, Pastor Abraham Bentar served two-thirds of his sentence and was paroled. Two years ago he was visiting relatives when he was suddenly attacked by a group of Muslims who beat him mercilessly. They were going to burn him to death but police arrived in time to rescue him from his assailants. However, he was later charged

with blasphemy against the Prophet Muhammad and sentenced to 4 1/2 years in prison.

PHILIPPINES -- Attacker Shoots Two Pastors, Wife; One Pastor Killed

On April 15, Pastor Vic Vicera, his wife, Beth; and another Pastor were shot at when an unknown assailant stormed Pastor Vicera's home in Mindanao, Philippines, and started shooting. Pastor Vicera was killed in the attack leaving behind his wife, children, and congregation. The group had been talking about their plans to minister to Muslim's.

Forty-six Christians Arrested, Two Remain in Detention

CHINA -- China Aid Association reports that the Chinese Communist government recently launched a strategic campaign against house churches in Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

As a result of this campaign, 46 Christians were arrested by Public Security Bureau (PSB) officials on April 13, during a Bible class and worship service in Kashi city, Xinjiang province.

The Christians were mandated to confess their illegal Sunday worship activities and study the government's handbook on Religious Policy.

CHINA -- UPDATE- Christian Bookstore Owner Released from Prison

The man was arrested in August 2007, when he was collecting Bibles, reportedly donated by South Korean churches. The Bibles were intended for distribution to local believers free of charge. During his imprisonment, Heng was reportedly severely beaten by inmates and prison guards.

Couple of headlines . . .

[10 North Korean Students Arrested for Reading the Bible](#)

[LAOS - 8 Pastors Arrested by Lao Police](#)

[LAOS -- 58 Christians Arrested, While 9 Church Leaders Sentenced to Prison](#)

Around t/world today, Xns - your brothers & sisters in X- wake up each morning to face harassment, arrest, torture and death. This is esp. true in nations such as ==>

Afghanistan | Egypt | Libya | Somalia | Algeria | Malaysia | Sri Lanka
Ethiopia | Sudan | Bangladesh | Gaza and the West Bank | Philippines
Syria | Belarus | India | Mauritania | Tajikistan | Indonesia | Morocco
China and Tibet | Iran | Nepal | Tunisia | Burma (Myanmar) | Iraq
Nigeria | Turkey | Parts of Mexico | Jordan | North Korea | Turkmenistan
Kuwait | Colombia | Pakistan | Uzbekistan | Laos | Qatar | Vietnam
|Cuba | Lebanon | Saudi Arabia | Yemen

What do we do?

Do we yawn, shrug our shoulders, *"Well that's somebody else somewhere else. Not me, not here."* Or do we weep for those who are part of our very body, the BOX? Do we remember them, as Heb 13:3 exhorts us to do:

Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

And do we kid ourselves that it couldn't happen to us, or our children? Even as t/hatred & persecution of Xns grows in Western Europe, England. Even on our own continent in places like Canada where Christians & Christian ministries are being threatened for their refusal to accept homosexual behavior? We're not far behind here in America were our religious liberties are being slowly eroded a little at a time.

To one degree or another the world will hate you

It has to be that way. The things of the world & the things of God are at enmity toward one another. Like Jacob & Esau, they're in opposition.

Why James could say, **to be a friend of the world is to be God's enemy** (4:4) - for a Christian it's spiritual adultery. Why John could say, **do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him.** (1 John 2:15)

So John writes in the same epistle ==>

1 John 3:13 **Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you.**

Quickly turn over to John 15 . . .

15:18 -19 **"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."**

A couple of interesting things that flow out of that passage:

- v. 18 First class condition "If" = "since". Expected.
- v. 18 We're to "know" that t/reason is because of our relationship to JC ("it has hated me before it hated you")
- v. 19 The world loves its own and hates outsiders ("if you were of the world, the world would love you, but since you're not the world hates you")
- v. 19 The reason we are not of the world is because X chose us, he plucked us out of t/world so that we would be His possession ("I chose you out of the world"). Of course, therein is our hope. In God's electing grace; in t/person and work of JC.

So we're not surprised that the world, to one degree or another, hates us. We're not surprised when we feel like t/proverbial salmon swimming upstream against t/current of what t/world loves & cherishes.

Greek scholar AT Robertson writes on this passage: "Does the world hate us? If not, why not? Has the world become more Christian or Christians more worldly?"

Back to 1 Peter . . .

We can summarize this passage in 6 words ==>

Expect hostility and react with hospitality.

As a Christian {restate}

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

There are 5 principles that fall out of his passage, principles that will help to equip you to react to persecution for the faith w/grace & wisdom.

We've been on again and off again in this passage going back to April 13. We've had a couple of interruptions along t/way.

Refresh your memory = go back to our first point in v. 13 ==>

A. Remain Faithful (13)

How do we face persecution for X's sake? Be faithful.

1 Cor 4:2 - **it is required of stewards that one be found faithful.**

It's all about what you are pursuing 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?

**And who is there to harm you . . .? [no one]
. . . if you should be zealous in pursuing good?**

a. There's no doubt here - "If you should be" assumes that you are (subjunctive of probable future condition)

IOW - it's a fair assumption to say that true believers in JC will prove to be zealous in the pursuit of good.

b. That pursuit is to be marked by what? Apathy? Indifference? Boredom?

Zeal! - ζηλωτης - "Zealous." This is a Xn life marked by passion. I don't understand dead, sterile, Xns. I don't understand how you can be a new creature in X, know the truth, have t/Triune God making His abode w/i you. And then live a life of indifference. It's oxymoronic. If X has given you abundant spiritual life, you should have something to show for it. You have to have a pulse, a spiritual pulse.

Zealots for JC. Practice Radical Christianity. Radical Righteousness. Spirit-filled, Gospel-driven, Radicals for X.

BTW - that means you will be bold and accurate. I had occasion last week to be witnessed to in the parking lot of t/supermarket by a young man. He handed me a little tract. I told him I was a Christian. He asked me where I went to CH (I told him). He said, *"Well, one thing I like to tell people is that God won't choose you, so you have to choose Him."*

That's t/heresy of Pelagianism (I didn't tell him that). But I did tell him that if it wasn't for God's choice of us, we would all be lost since dead people can't choose anything. Why Jesus said, **"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit . . ."**

I applaud the effort. Would that we be making the same effort at sharing t/gospel w/strangers, let alone those we know. But our effort & our zeal must be engaged w/sound doctrine.

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

1. "What is your Pursuit?"

Same thing in verse 11 {cite}

a. Peter is speaking eschatologically

Another way to put it is that he's thinking in ultimate terms. Yes, someone can punch you in the face, they can call you names (assured, v. 16), they can even kill t/body, but no one can ultimately harm the believer in JC for they cannot kill t/soul.

So ==>

A. Remain Faithful (13)

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

B. Endure Hostility (14a)

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

1. μακάριος - "happy" - "blessed" - "favored"

To be "blessed" is to be a "privileged recipient 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." Don't be so caught up in this life of ease & convenience that you fall prey to thinking, "If doing the right thing means hardship, I'll pass." Not t/right perspective. Not having t/mind of X.

Thirdly ==>

C. Avoid Fearing Men (14b)

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

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

BTW - this idea of not fearing men is also found in v. 13 - it's explicit in t/statement "who is there to harm you." No doubt, Peter's readers in t/1st c. were tempted toward misplaced fear. Fearing men rather than God.

Peter writes ==>

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

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

μη φοβηθητε. Aorist subjunctive of prohibition. Forbidding an action (fear) that may or may not be occurring.

Yet, if we're honest, t/reason why we don't speak out for X more than we do is because of fear. The fear of men.

Interesting, the very thing that might bring us persecution (speaking out for our faith) is that which we are to boldly do as we pursue good & refuse to fear mere men.

Fourth point in facing persecution for Christ's sake (two weeks ago) ==>

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 . . .

I. 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"

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

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".

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 the hope within. That's t/Gospel - Hope - in Christ alone!

b. Peter goes back to the heart in verse 16

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

(1) This is the 2d of 3x that Peter refers to the "conscience"

3:21 ==> "appeal to God for a good conscience"

2:19 ==> "for the sake of conscience toward God endure suffering"

(a) Here in verse 16 it's a characteristic that is to accompany our defense for the hope that is in us

... having a good conscience ...

If we look at the word "conscience" itself, we can get a better idea of what it means.

(2) Greek feminine noun συνείδησις

Made up of 2 words: prefix συν (together with) & t/word εἶδεναι (to know). What it means is, "to know together with one's self." Personal conviction of that which is true.

"Conviction that guides Conduct."

(3) I want you to think about this idea of having or keeping a good conscience & turn over to 1 Timothy chapter 1

But the goal of our instruction is love: from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

"Sincere faith" (same phrase used by Paul in 2 Tim. 1:5 when Paul tells Tim. that he is mindful of the "S.F." that dwells w/i him.

. . . a sincere faith.

(a) What does that mean?

I can tell you what it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean that so long as you are sincere, it doesn't matter what you believe. That's not even logical. Yet that's the common view as it relates to anything that falls under the general category of "religion" today. "We all have the truth." Really? Even tho your claim to truth and my claim to truth doesn't in the least match up? Yet, they're both true? It's more logical that no one is right than to say everyone is.

(b) Sincere faith can be understood in two ways

Subjectively & Objectively.

i. Objectively:

Sincere faith is 1 that's orthodox. It's a belief in THE faith. That is, t/body of t/truth of t/Gospel. A sincere faith upholds the truths of t/Trinity; Upholds what we call "the doctrines of grace" / sola scriptura / sola fide / sola gratia / solus Christus. {expand upon?}

That's t/objective, immutable truth that makes up a sincere faith.

ii. Subjectively:

A sincere faith is one that's a real or genuine faith. True efficacious, saving faith. The faith of Eph. 2:8 {cite}

(i) Both of these are necessary

You can have an objectively sincere faith & still be lost/hellbound (James 2:19). And you can't have a subjectively sincere faith apart from truth. IOW - there's no salvation for those w/a heretical theology.

So there's love, a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith.

(c) Look at verse 18 {read 18 and 19}

keeping faith with a good conscience...

i. Keeping means "guarding" or "preserving"

"Guard or preserve the faith"

To not do that is to fall prey to that which happened to Hymenaeus and Alexander (end of the verse) ==>

... suffered shipwreck with regard to their faith.

Their faith == lit. "The" faith. No possessive p.n. there, just t/def. article.

You can't keep t/faith subjectively if you're not keeping objectively. BTIM - what we believe is as essential as the fact of our believing!

(d) Again, we find faith & conscience linked together

1:5 ==> "a good conscience and a sincere faith"

1:19 ==> "keeping faith and a good conscience"

3:9 ==> (deacons) "holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear c."

(e) Again, what is the "conscience?"

A God-given inner device that reacts to and guides behavior. It either accuses a person or excuses them. Your consc. isn't infallible, but always a good rule for the Xn to not violate.

The statement "let your conscience be your guide" is only true in as much as your conscience is guided by truth.

Why Calvin referred to a bad conscience as ==>

"...the mother of all heresies" (Cited in Stott, 57).

IOW - heresy, lies, perversions of truth, find their origin in a warped conscience.

See that in t/2nd half of v. 19 (false teachers of Ephesus)==>

...which some have since rejected and suffered shipwreck with regard to their faith.

Note the contrast here ==> Between a true believer who is an active soldier fighting the good fight (v. 18) & sham Xn that eventually makes a shipwreck of his/her faith.

Calvin called these pseudo-Xns those who==>

"...tarry in but a fleeting awareness. [like trees] not planted deep enough to put down living roots."

For the true believer, how the words of Hebrews 9:14 ring true! ==>

how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Back again to Peter . . .

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B. Endure Hostility (14a)

C. Avoid Fearing Men (14b)

D. Defend your Hope (15-16)

Part of that *απολογία* or defense is

[sanctifying] Christ as Lord in your [heart] . . . v. 15

And

having a good conscience . . . v. 16

For t/believer, a good conscience is that which is informed and guided by t/faith once for all delivered to the saints. A conscience sensitive to t/HS & guided by truth.

This speaks of integrity. Richness of a redeemed life.

"Nothing speaks louder or more powerfully than a life of integrity. Absolutely nothing! Nothing stands the test like solid character. You can handle the blast like a steer in a blizzard. The ice may form on your horns, but you keep standing against the wind and the howling raging storm because Christ is at work in your spirit. Character will always win the day. As Horace Greeley wrote: 'Fame is a vapor, popularity an accident, riches take wing, and only character endures.' There is no more eloquent and effective defense than a life lived continually and consistently in integrity. It possesses invincible power to silence your slanderers." [Swindoll, 144]

That's what this is about. Silencing slanderers.

... so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

c. Know what this means?

"Good conscience trumps bad intent."

There will be people out there who will revile or slander you for your good behavior in Christ.

(1) "Slander" is from the verb καταλαλεω - κατα + λαλεω

"to speak down upon or against, to speak evil of, to defame, to slander"
Descriptive Present. Continuous.

Expect hostility and react with hospitality.

Don't give the unbelieving world any handles on which to grasp you. We should be like greased pigs when it comes to accusations of evil. Like water off a duck's back

We're not like the Jews of whom Paul writes in Rom. 3 (name of God is blasphemed among t/Gentiles because of you).

Your not slandered, & your Lord not defamed due to sin, but for
... your good behavior in Christ ...

If you do so, those who slander you will be what? put to shame.

(2) Frequent theme of the OT - especially in the Psalms

Those whose trust & hope is squarely in God will not be put to shame, but, on the other hand, those who oppose them & their God will be.

PSA 6:9-10 The \Lord\ has heard my supplication, The \Lord\ receives my prayer. All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly dismayed; They shall turn back, they shall suddenly be ashamed.

PSA 25:2-3 O my God, in Thee I trust, Do not let me be ashamed; Do not let my enemies exult over me. Indeed, none of those who wait for Thee will be ashamed; Those who deal treacherously without cause will be ashamed.

PSA 40:13-16 Be pleased, O \Lord,\ to deliver me; Make haste, O \Lord,\ to help me. Let those be ashamed and humiliated together Who seek my life to destroy it; Let those be turned back and dishonored Who delight in my hurt. Let those be appalled because of their shame Who say to me, "Aha, aha!" Let all who seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee; Let those who love Thy salvation say continually, "The \Lord\ be magnified!"

PSA 44:6-8 For I will not trust in my bow, Nor will my sword save me. But Thou hast saved us from our adversaries, And Thou hast put to shame those who hate us. In God we have boasted all day long, And we will give thanks to Thy name forever. Selah.

JER 17:13-15, 18 O \Lord\, the hope of Israel, All who forsake Thee will be put to shame. Those who turn away on earth will be written down, Because they have forsaken the fountain of living water, even the \Lord\. Heal me, O \Lord\, and I will be healed; Save me and I will be saved, For Thou art my praise. Look, they keep saying to me, "Where is the word of the \Lord\? Let it come now!"

Let those who persecute me be put to shame, but as for me, let me not be put to shame; Let them be dismayed, but let me not be dismayed. Bring on them a day of disaster, And crush them with twofold destruction! #

(3) Interesting side note ==>

Comparison Between 1 Peter 2:12 and 3:16

Verse	Text (my translation)	Anticipated Result (of the Christian's good behavior)
2:12	Keep your behavior excellent among the pagans, so that in whatever they accuse you as evildoers, they may see your good works and glorify God in the day of visitation.	<u>Salvation</u> for those who slander
3:16	having a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.	<u>Shame</u> for those who slander
<i>Perhaps the "shame" of 3:16 will prove to be what God uses to bring some of those who slander you to the "salvation" of 2:12. Compare wives with unsaved husbands in 3:1-6.</i>		

But it all comes down to this: the hate us and our God will either repent & glorify God on that day, or will cover in shame before him.

Cf. 1 Peter 4:3-5

E. Yield to God's Will (17)

1. Ask yourself the question, "Why will I Suffer?"

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

Basic premise: Unjust suffering is always better than deserved suffering. Suffer for doing right is wrong, but it's good. Suffer for doing wrong, is right/expected, but it's bad. Cf. 4:13-16.

What we have is a reiteration of 2:20 - Same theme / warning /
{read 2:20-21a}

Another thing in common is the appeal to God's Will.

For it is better, IF THE WILL OF GOD SHOULD SO DESIRE, that you suffer for doing what is right than for doing what is wrong.

For in these words he reminds us, that if we suffer unjustly, it is not by chance, but according to the divine will; and he assumes, that God wills nothing or appoints nothing but for the best reason. Hence the faithful have always this comfort in their miseries, that they know that they have God as their witness, and that they also know that they are led by him to the contest, in order that they may under his protection give a proof of their faith. [John Calvin, commentary]

"For all things are ordered by the will of God, even all the sufferings and afflictions of the saints . . ." [John Gill]

There are times when God may desire that we suffer for righteousness sake. After all, isn't this what Christ did? Note verse 18 and the connective ὅτι. {Read 3:18a}

1PE 4:19 **Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.**

Like the patriarch, Job, who suffered according to God's will, entrust yourself to He who is faithful. And do right . . .

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2. **E**ndure Hostility (14a)
3. **A**void Fearing Men (14b)
4. **D**efend your Hope (15-16)
5. **Y**ield to God's Will (17)

What's that spell? **READY**

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