

Outrageous Hope – Extravagant Joy

Despite a Hostile World

Week 6 - 1 Peter 3:17-22

You will recall that Peter was addressing Christians who were being persecuted for their faith. Hostility was escalating into hatred and many believers were suffering, even to the point of death, for the cause of Christ. Despite a hostile world, Peter makes it clear that we can live above life's circumstances by wholly entrusting ourselves to The Shepherd and Guardian of our souls!

I. Christ Our Sanctification-1 Peter 3:13-17

Peter opens this section with a rhetorical question, “Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?” A life passionately devoted to the Lord will result in personal holiness and practical righteousness. This is in keeping with Peter's theme for holy living. Generally, most people recognize good intentions and respond in like manner. Remember, Christ is the “stone of stumbling and a rock of offense” (1 Peter 1:8). His people are not to give offense! We are called “to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15). However, being zealous for the Lord is certainly no guarantee against suffering. Peter reminds his readers, “If you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed” (1 Peter 3:14).

The word “blessed” means “privileged or honored” as one who has received God's divinely-endowed favor. Suffering = blessedness. Such a divine enigma!

We would like to believe we can protect ourselves and our families from suffering by following Christ. This simply is not biblical. Jesus was perfect, yet a hostile world eventually killed Him. He made it clear that believers cannot presume to escape suffering if their Lord did not! Beloved, following Christ does not make us immune from suffering. In reality, it is often the cause. And learn this. You cannot mature your way out of the reach of suffering! Suffering, to some degree, will (most likely) come to all believers. Persecution may not come to us, but if it does “do not fear . . . and do not be troubled” (1 Peter 3:14). Submission and total trust in the perfect purposes of the sovereignty of Jesus Christ produce fearlessness, resolve, boldness, and fortitude to triumph even in the most crushing of situations.

How then shall we live despite a hostile world? “Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts” (1 Peter 3:15). This admonition from Peter is the crux of the entire epistle. When Christ is Lord of our lives, we will walk in obedience to His Word, dependence on His Spirit, and confidence in Him. He will have free reign to accomplish His perfect plan in and through us. This is the essence of faith: obedience, dependence, confidence in Him. It's all wrapped up in Jesus!!!

When believers **sanctify Christ as Lord in their hearts**, they affirm their submission to His control, instruction, and guidance. In so doing, they also declare and submit to God's sovereign majesty and demonstrate that they fear only Him. . . Believers who **sanctify Christ** set Him apart from all others as the sole object of their love, reverence, loyalty, and obedience. They recognize His perfection, magnify His glory, extol His pre-eminence, and submit themselves to His will, with the understanding that sometimes that submission includes suffering.

John MacArthur
(1 Peter, p. 200)

Such living will result in opportunities to share our faith. Therefore, we must be ready "to make a defense to everyone who asks [us] to give an account for the hope that is in [us] . . . with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15). The word "defense" means to make a formal defense in a judicial courtroom and is the word from which we derive "apologetics". Given an opportunity to speak for Jesus, we are to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) while keeping a "good conscience" and a living a life marked by "good behavior in Christ" (1 Peter 3:16) for the glory of Jesus.

"We are to be equipped to give a defense, explanation, or apology of our faith to anyone who inquires-to share the hope or expectation of our great salvation. Yet to do so necessitates a life that is noticeably different from that of the world." (*Outrageous Hope Extravagant Joy*, p. 121).

Without question, sin causes suffering. But not all suffering is the result of sin in our lives. God either allows or ordains suffering in the lives of His people. "It is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong" (1 Peter 3:17). Suffering for doing what is right has a refining effect, it serves to break our affection to the things of this world, and it causes us to long to see Jesus! The psalmist wrote, "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes. The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces" (Psalm 119:71-72).

II. Christ Our Sacrifice-1 Peter 3:18a

In order to shore up the sagging spirits of the mistreated and maligned saints, Peter reminds them of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ's undeserved suffering achieved God's sovereign purpose, providing redemption for the world (see John 3:16; 1 John 2:2). At the heart of the gospel is the fact that Jesus "died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). Peter is holding out Christ's death on the cross as the supreme example of suffering for righteousness sake. Surely, these suffering saints could draw comfort from His example.

III. Christ our Security-1 Peter 3:18-22

The saving action of Jesus Christ is not confined to His death alone, but also to His resurrection. God “has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). Between His death and resurrection, Christ “went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison” (1 Peter 3:19). The phrase “made proclamation” means “to announce or herald.” Jesus announced His victory over sin, death, hell, Satan, and his demons. All created spiritual authorities and powers are subject to Jesus Christ! He is Lord indeed!

Jesus defeated the powers of evil through the cross. Now, in Christ, we share in this victory and are saved from sin and death, just as Noah and his family were kept safe in the ark. Although this passage has generated much debate, it appears Peter is using the historical account of Noah and his family as an analogy for the salvation Christ provides. Noah passed through the waters safely because he and his family were safely secured in the ark, an Old Testament picture of Jesus Christ. At the moment of salvation, we were spiritually placed into the body of Christ. Among other overwhelming spiritual truths, we were sealed “in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance” (Ephesians 1:14). Our sin debt was paid in full (see Colossians 2:13-14). We were fully and freely forgiven (see Psalm 103:10-12; Hebrews 8:12; 10:17). This provides us with “a good conscience,” knowing we have a right standing before God.

We have further assurance of the eternal nature of our salvation “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21) because He is “at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven” (1 Peter 3:22). We have been made “alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:5-6). The devil may tempt you to doubt your salvation, but he cannot steal your salvation “for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3). Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me . . . My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand” (John 10:27; 29). Seated in heavenly places. Secure in the Father’s hand. We are safe and secure.

At this moment, Christ is at the right hand of God and we are in Christ!! He is our sanctification. He is our Sacrifice. He is our Security. Such knowledge should fill us with Outrageous Hope and Extravagant Joy!

