

Standing Fast in the Grace of God

“If the Will of God Be So”

Christlike Confidence Under Opposition

1 Peter 3:13-17

In the previous section, believers are called to live together in unity, compassion, humility, and blessing. He showed us what Christlike character looks like inside the church, but then the question naturally arises: *What happens when that Christlike life meets resistance? What happens when doing good does not produce peace?*

Peter has already acknowledged that believers are strangers and pilgrims in a world that does not share their belief. He has taught submission under authority, endurance under injustice, and faithfulness within the home. Now he addresses the broader reality: even when we live honorably and imitate what is good, suffering may still come.

This section does not prepare us to avoid suffering; it prepares us to endure it rightly. Peter teaches that when opposition arises, our confidence must not collapse. *“If the will of God be so,”* it is better to suffer for doing good than to compromise for the sake of ease.

With that in mind, Peter begins in verse 13 with a general principle about righteous living.

I. THE PREDICTABLE PATTERN (VS. 13)

A. This verse is a rhetorical question.

1. The rhetorical question expects a typical answer: “Usually, no one.”
2. This is a general rule of life — doing good does

not invite harm — but there may, and often are, exceptions to the rule.

B. “Followers of that which is good”

1. The word for “followers” (μιμηταὶ) is one that means imitator; follower by pattern.

1 Corinthians 11:1

¹ Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ.

2. This emphasizes pattern, example, and modeled conduct.
3. This speaks of patterned conformity to what is good — visible righteousness shaped by Christ and the Word.
4. Peter is asking, “*Who is likely to harm you if your life is patterned after what is good?*” If your conduct consistently reflects righteousness, you ordinarily do not invite hostility.

II. THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION (VS. 14A)

“But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake...”

A. “But and if...”

1. This introduces a real possibility, not a guaranteed outcome. Suffering for righteousness may still come.
2. Peter is careful not to create a “persecution complex,” or an expectation that suffering equals faithfulness.
3. Some believers that serve God faithfully will not suffer as others do. Suffering is not proof of

spirituality, and its absence is not proof of compromise.

B. "...for righteousness' sake" — this phrase governs everything involved here.

1. This is not suffering for foolishness (4:15), or for sinful conduct, or for abrasive personality.
2. This is suffering because you are doing right, are zealous for good (vs. 13), and are outwardly living for Christ.

III. THE PROMISED BLESSING (VS. 14B)

"...happy are ye..."

Suffering for righteousness brings favor from God.

A. The word "happy" (μακάριοι)

1. This does not mean that we will have emotional happiness, or cheerful feelings when suffering, even though it's translated "happy."
2. It means, as it is translated in the Beatitudes in *The Sermon on the Mount*, to be "blessed" — to be favored by God and in a state of divine approval.
3. So, it is not, *"You will feel good,"* but *"You stand in God's favor."*

B. There is a clear connection to the Beatitudes in this phrase.

Matthew 5:10

¹⁰ Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

C. The question might be, “What kind of blessing is the?”

1. This blessing is not material or public approval, but following the example of Christ (2:21) and alignment with God’s moral order.
 2. So, the blessing is our present standing *before* God and our future reward *from* God.
- When Peter says “*happy are ye*,” he is not saying that we will enjoy the pain, but that when we suffer for righteousness, we stand in the favor of God. The world may oppose us, but heaven approves of us. That is the blessing.

IV. THE PROPER RESPONSE OF THE HEART (vs. 14c-15A)

“...and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts...”

- Though suffering for righteousness places us under divine favor, Peter knows that fear still presses in. So, he now addresses our hearts rather than our circumstances.

A. The negative command — “Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled” (vs. 14c)

1. Peter quotes Isaiah 8, where God told Judah not to fear Assyria, but to fear the Lord instead.

Isaiah 8:12–13

¹² Say ye not, A confederacy, to all *them to whom* this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. ¹³ Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and *let him be* your fear, and *let him be* your dread.

2. “*Their terror*” (φόβος – the English “phobia” comes from this word) doesn’t just mean

physical violence, but included things like intimidation, social pressure, threats, public hostility.

3. Peter is not minimizing danger; he is commanding a different response of the heart and mind toward it.

B. The positive command — “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts...” (vs. 15a)

1. To “*sanctify*” (ἀγιάσατε – to set apart as holy) doesn’t mean to make Christ holy (He already is), nor try to improve His character (it’s already perfect). It means to set Him apart as the supreme authority in your heart.
2. Fear is not eliminated—it is redirected. The question is not, “*Will you fear?*”, but, “*Whom will you fear?*”

Matthew 10:28

²⁸ 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.

Proverbs 29:25

²⁵ The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

3. This goes to the logic of Isaiah’s directive: do not fear their threat; fear the Lord instead.
4. There’s a Christological weight to this phrase. Peter takes Isaiah’s reference to the LORD (Yahweh) and applies it to Christ.

C. “In your hearts”

1. He's not saying to sanctify Christ publicly first. He is saying to sanctify Him internally.
 2. This indicates settled conviction and the sovereign authority of Christ over fear.
- Outward testimony (vs. 15b) comes out of an inward conviction. Once Christ is sanctified in the heart, the mouth is prepared to speak.

V. THE PREPARED TESTIMONY OF HOPE (VS. 15B)

"...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:"

A ready, reasoned, gentle defense.

A. "Be ready always" (ἔτοιμοι)

1. This means to be prepared, ready at hand, in a state of readiness.
2. It implies a settled understanding of what we believe, thoughtful conviction of why we believe it, and a spiritual awareness of the needs of others (discernment of when to speak).

B. "To give an answer" (ἀπολογία) — where we get the English word "apologetics."

This is not staged debate; it is a reasoned explanation when hope under suffering draws questions.

C. "To every man that asketh you"

1. Interesting thing to notice here: Peter assumes that their conduct would invite inquiry and that

their peace under pressure would cause curiosity in those around them.

2. The “apologetic” demonstrated here is not only verbal initially, but behaviorally first.

D. “A reason of the hope that is in you”

1. This isn’t about defending politics, or preferences, or traditions. It is explaining our hope. “Hope” in 1 Peter includes:
 - a) Living hope through the resurrection (1:3)
 - b) Inheritance reserved in heaven (1:4)
 - c) Future glory (1:7)
 - d) Confidence under suffering (3:14)
2. It answers the question, “*Why are you not shaken like everyone else?*”

E. “With meekness and fear” — this guards the whole command.

1. “*Meekness*” (πραΰτης) — gentleness, controlled strength, not harsh or combative.
2. “*Fear*” (φόβος) — reverence before God; seriousness about representing Christ.
3. This prevents the arrogant apologetics that some show; defensive hostility; or a self-righteous tone (Col. 4:6; 2 Tim. 2:24-25).

Colossians 4:6

⁶ Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer

| every man.

- Readiness of mind, however, is not enough. Our words must be supported by a life that cannot be justly condemned. That brings us to the importance of a good conscience.

VI. THE PROTECTION OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE (VS. 16)

Integrity that silences accusation.

A. “Having a good conscience”

1. The structure of the phrase implies continuous possession of a clear conscience, ongoing moral integrity, and internal awareness of right conduct before God.
2. This is more than a good reputation in the world; it is inward moral clarity (2:19).

| Hebrews 13:18

¹⁸ Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

3. The reason a good conscience matters is it stabilizes the believer and strengthens our confidence before God.

B. “That...they may be ashamed”

The shame here is moral exposure of those accusing, not their guaranteed repentance. This points to what’s already been given in 2:12 (that they may glorify God) and 2:15 (silence the ignorance of foolish men).

C. “Your good conversation in Christ” — conduct rooted in our union with Christ.

- Ultimately, our confidence does not rest in the fairness of men, but in the will of God. Peter once again lifts the eyes of the reader from human hostility to that of divine providence.

VII. THE PROVIDENTIAL PURPOSE (VS. 17)

Better to suffer for good if God so wills.

A. “For it is better...that ye suffer for well doing” — better morally, spiritually, and eternally.

B. “If the will of God be so”

1. The Greek (εἰ θέλει τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ) carries the idea of *“If God should will it.”*
2. This does not mean that God, in any way, delights in suffering or approves of injustice, but that He governs even unjust circumstances with His providence. (See 1:6; 2:21; 4:19)
3. Important note: Peter is not saying that God approves of injustice. He is saying that God governs even unjust circumstances. He permits righteous suffering within His providential design.

C. “Than for evil doing”

1. Two kinds of suffering: consequence from sin (“do the crime, do the time”) and opposition for righteousness.
2. This protects against romanticizing suffering or assuming all hardship equals faithfulness.

Conclusion:

Peter prepares us for the possibility that righteousness may bring suffering, but he does not leave us fearful. He calls us to sanctify Christ in our hearts, to speak of our hope with gentleness, to maintain a clear conscience, and to trust that suffering for doing good is never outside the will of God.

Our confidence is not that we will avoid hardship, but that God's providence governs it. *"If the will of God be so,"* it is better to suffer faithfully than to compromise for comfort.

In our next message, we will see Peter showing us that Christ Himself has already proven that truth.