

1 Peter 3:13-17

1Pe 3:13 (NKJV) **And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled."** ¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;* ¹⁶ having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. ¹⁷ **For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.**

This morning, we want to begin a new section – [1 Peter 3:13-17](#) which deals with the believer's willingness to suffer for doing what is right. V17 seems to summarize this idea best when it says,

1Pe 3:17 (NKJV) **For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.**

If we read v13-14 correctly, the obvious conclusion is that there will be times in the believer's life when they may suffer for doing the right thing. The conjunction "**But**" that begins v14 is the key. It implies that to "**suffer for righteousness sake**" may very well be a reality for the believer. I.e., there may certainly be times in every believer's life when doing the right thing will cost them something. The cost is variable, and certainly not quantifiable. It may be a small cost to the believer, or it may cost them their lives. Obviously, if we do that which is wrong, most likely we will suffer some kind of unpleasant and negative consequences. However, when we do what is right and suffer for it, that becomes the much more difficult side of suffering. I am sure that the average person believes that if they do that which is right that they should not have to suffer for those actions, but obviously, that is not always the case. For those who are Christians, this reality is coming more and more into focus.

Contextually, [1 Peter](#) is the primary book in the New Testament relative to a believer suffering because of their faith in Christ and for what Peter calls "**for righteousness sake**" in [1 Peter 3:14](#). Anyone who is experiencing suffering "**for righteousness sake**" is someone who certainly needs to be grounded in the truth so that they do not faint during that suffering and deny Christ. It is easy to trust Christ in the safe setting of an American church, but in many parts of the world being in a church is a very dangerous scenario. History is replete with stories of professing Christians who came under severe persecution and ultimately abandoned their personal faith in Christ to escape persecution and suffering. So, Peter's encouragement to these believers in v14 is that they not become "**afraid**" or "**troubled**". Now that sounds simple on paper, but in the face of actual suffering, it is not necessarily something that is easy to embrace. In order for someone to not become "**afraid**" or "**troubled**", there are several things that Peter says are vital for the believer to have. It is one thing to tell someone to not be afraid, but quite another for someone to not be afraid when the fiery trials begin to impact their life in a very negative way. I remember watching a video of a family of believers in Iraq who were being persecuted by ISIS, and the ISIS rebels took their little baby, placed him on the floor, and began to kick and step on the baby until the parents relented of their faith – which they never did.

So, the first thing that Peter says in his encouragement in v15-16 is that the believer must honor the Lord God in a certain way. He says that the believer is to "**sanctify the Lord God**". Some of the other translations say to reverence Him (RSV), to exalt Him (ISV), to deeply honor Him (ESV), and to simply set Him apart (AMP) in their life. In the overall context of [1 Peter](#) it specifically refers to giving Christ

His rightful adoration, exaltation, worship, loyalty, and obedience to His preeminent will for their life.¹ This aspect of what it means to “**sanctify**” cannot be minimized in any way because of religious, cultural, or personal preferences. Too often we make God after our own image and how we want Him to be, and in that process we remove from Him the glory and honor and reverence that is clearly His. In a very simple way, the Christian life actually does not and cannot make sense, nor can the believer’s lifestyle work, if in reality the believer have not set Christ apart in an increasingly reverential way. No wonder the Greek word for “**sanctify**”, or “*hagiazō*”, is derived from the Greek word that means “**holy**”. If Christ has truly been set apart in the believer’s life, then what that implies is that they have given Him the control of their life. Martin Luther stated that the individual has reached a place in their life where no matter what God may actually allow in their life, be it good or bad, be it shame or honor, be it prosperity or hardship, in all of those things they consider it all to be good because behind it all they are able to see the hand of God.

Without this strategic element of sanctifying the Lord God in the believer’s life, the individual’s strength and courage to remain faithful during the midst of severe testing will be greatly diminished. Setting ourselves apart for God’s use is as much of a process as it is an event. The idea of sanctifying the Lord God in a person’s heart is not something that they can just do one day when things become difficult. If we wait to do so until the trials and the pressures and the sufferings come to us, then in reality we will be deeply grieved and disappointed at what God may be allowing in our life. Ultimately, we will find ourselves blaming God and questioning both His love and His wisdom. So, to the contrary, this is something that must become settled in the person’s mind and heart way before the difficulties or sufferings arise. It is similar to making a wedding vow to someone. You make that vow and allow the development of your marriage to be deeply rooted in that decision that you confessed before God and before others at the wedding ceremony. The vow was a one-time commitment that should govern how the marriage is perceived and it is the initial point of setting oneself apart for your partner. In the context of [1 Peter 3:15](#), it appears that Peter is not primarily expressing that Christ is Lord (which should be clearly understood by the believer), but rather he is stressing the secondary side that the believer is to set Christ apart in their heart and to reverence and honor Him as Lord. Listen carefully. When someone actually sets Christ apart in their heart, what happens is that the reality or lack of reality of that decision will inevitably be displayed to others in their life. Our life is a like a book that is easy to read. People know whether or not we are committed to Christ, His Word, and His church. They know whether or not we truly love our mate, or whether or not we are genuine followers of Christ. They know whether or not we are honest and people of integrity and character.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Peter*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Publishers, 2004.

¹ MacArthur, 200.