

## 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? <sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." <sup>15</sup> 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; <sup>16</sup> having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. <sup>17</sup> For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.**

Now, the reason that we are looking first at the verb “**sanctify**” is because once again it is in the imperative mood, aorist tense, and active voice. For Peter, this is the most important verb in this passage. It governs and controls the emphasis of the passage and all of the other verbs become secondary to it. So once again, this word “**sanctify**” is in that very rare parsing which means that it is the controlling verb in this entire section. Being in the imperative mood, active voice means that setting Christ apart is something that the actual believer has to personally do. This is not a mere suggestion or recommendation. To the contrary, Peter sees this as an absolute necessity, a command that is to be taken seriously and obeyed.

Peter’s second encouragement to the believer is to always “**be ready to give a defense**” of their faith to anyone who asks them to do so. However, that can never happen if they are not fully committed in their mind and heart to Christ as the Lord of their life and know that they will be faithful to Him no matter what the particular cost may be to them personally. It is virtually impossible for someone to passionately defend something which they are not really ready to defend. There are many professing Christians who know the right answers to the Christian questions, but they really have no intention of meaningfully sharing Christ with anyone. They do not want to be drawn into the tension that discussions about someone’s salvation generally produce. They simply are not prepared to “**give a defense**” of what it is that they say they believe because they themselves are not fully committed to Christ. They have never really sanctified Him in their hearts as Lord. They want to be lord and for Christ to play the Savior role. I am convinced that the nominal Christian has never really counted the cost of what it means to be a fully devoted follower of Christ. In some ways, we could say that they simply have not “**sanctified the Lord God in their hearts**”.

Then thirdly, in v16 Peter tells his readers that they have to maintain a “**good conscience**”. No believer can have a “**good conscience**” in their life if they do not have an unconditional commitment to the Lordship of Christ over their life. Once again, this is not presented as an option or a suggestion. So, the foundational principle and truth that regulates these two verses is the word “**sanctify**”. Nothing else works spiritually if the believer has not reached a place in their life where this aspect of their life has been given a priority. God does not appear to be overly inclined to use people who have no meaningful faithfulness or commitment to Him, and eventually that lack of spiritual commitment to the person of Christ makes its way down to their children. What the parents excuse in moderation, the children will excuse in excess. If the parents commitment to Christ is minimal, the children’s commitment to Christ will be negligible at best. I know of parents today who drink a beer a day and their children are already taking drugs and smoking pot. Their sons and daughters are already sexually active. It is inevitable in

a world that makes light of that which is sacred and relishes and embraces that which dishonors God. Please remember that those who are spiritually uncommitted to Christ in their hearts for the most part have no meaningful spiritual usefulness. They will not be used by God. So, this aspect of not being “**afraid**” or “**troubled**” when suffering comes is directly related to sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts, with the secondary aspects of being ready to give a defense of Christ to everyone who asks us about our hope, and maintaining a good conscience, both before God and men.

One of the strong elements related to the word “**sanctify**” is the idea of the believer deliberately and intentionally setting themselves apart for God’s purposes to be achieved in them and through them.<sup>1</sup> In order for that to occur, the believer has to understand that his behavior will ultimately be the most significant indicator as to whether or not he has in reality honored God in a way that is meaningful. It means that he has to turn away from anything that he knows would be dishonoring to the Father and to the gospel of Jesus Christ. He has to separate himself from anything in his life that would dishonor Christ in some way. It means that the believer has to purify his life of spiritual and moral impurities and those things that are unclean before God. The primary instrument that God uses to do this in the believer’s life is the actual Word of God. He speaks of this in [Ephesians 5:25-26](#) of how Christ sanctifies and cleanses the church through the Word of God. [John 17:17](#) is probably the key text for this when it says “**Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.**” The simple point is that if a person is going to separate themselves unto God and set their life apart so that they can be useful and honoring to Him, then their life must have a very consistent and meaningful relationship with the Word of God. The way that the Holy Spirit makes someone useful in His kingdom is through obedience to the Word of God. However, if a person does not spend time in the Word, then no matter how sincere they may appear, they have no foundation upon which to build their commitment to Christ. I have known people who have been in church for 50 years and do not have a clue as to how to defend their faith, share the gospel, or what the Christian life is even about. They are ignorant of deeper spiritual realities and what they hear makes no impact whatsoever on their life once they leave the church on a Sunday morning. However, through their obedience to the Word of God the Holy Spirit is able to take the believer’s life and set them apart. It must be appreciated that being sanctified for usefulness in God’s kingdom is not something that just kind of happens in a spiritual vacuum – not at all. God has designed a specific process, and that process is intimately woven into the Word of God and into His church.

The opposite of the idea of setting ourselves apart for God is that of having our life stained, polluted, defiled, and corrupted by other things that are dishonoring to Christ. In reality, God wants the believer to understand that their life is to be devoted to God in such a way that they have a “sacred” usefulness for God.<sup>2</sup> It is not that they may every once in a while, do something for God – not at all. It is the idea that their life is constantly something that God can use in a sacred way that reflects His holiness and purity. That is why the word “**sanctify**” carries with it the metaphorical idea of being clean in a moral sense, of leading a pure life.<sup>3</sup> I.e., a believer has not sanctified Christ in their heart if they are still leading an immoral and impure life.

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<sup>1</sup> Strong,

<sup>2</sup> Zodhiates, 69.

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All throughout the Scriptures it should be obvious to the reader that God set people apart so that they could do His will. He set apart the temple, the Holy Place, the utensils in the temple, the priests and the priesthood so that He would be honored and glorified. He called people like John the Baptist and separated Him for His use from his mother's womb. So, if a person is actually going to achieve the kind of usefulness in their life that God desires, then they must withdraw themselves from fellowship with the world and worldly things and devote themselves to the things of God.<sup>4</sup> James says that “**friendship with the world is enmity with God**”. The ultimate example of setting oneself apart for God is Christ Himself. He set Himself apart so that individuals like us could be redeemed. So, the effect of His actual separation to the Father is something that should always have an immense impact on the believer.<sup>5</sup> The more that the believer reverences Christ in their life, the deeper will be their actual separation unto the Father. If Christ turned away from those things that would have dishonored the Father, then certainly we as believers are called on to do the same.

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<sup>4</sup> Zodhiates, 69.

<sup>5</sup> Vine, 990.