

## “Sanctifying Christ in Our Hearts”

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Scriptural Foundation: 1 Peter 3:13-17, ESV

### Suffering for Righteousness’ Sake

<sup>13</sup> Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup> but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup> For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.

Believers will always be “strangers and exiles” in this present world. That is the identity we have in this world as the result of our adoption into God’s family and as a result of God’s great mercy causing us to be born again into a Living Hope. Paul will say, in Philippians 3,

<sup>20</sup> Our citizenship is in Heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

With this in view we do not expect to be embraced and welcomed by a world that rejected our Savior. Jesus set our expectations when He said, in John 16,

<sup>33</sup> *“In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”*

The Apostle Paul echoes this promised expectation in 2 Timothy 3, when he said,

<sup>12</sup> Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

That is a promise and that is our expectation. Followers of Jesus do not consider it strange when we find the world dislikes us and even persecutes us. In fact, we would think it very strange if the whole world embraced us. After all, the world did not embrace our Lord whom we follow and whom we love. We understand the nature of our Christ-loving faith and the nature of man’s natural rebellious heart are in conflict and all but guarantee suffering for the believer in this age. The message of Jesus clashes with the beliefs of this world and the way of life of the Christian clashes with the way of life of this world. Conflict with the world is inescapable.

So, we recognize if we place Jesus first in our home, in our workplaces, in our neighborhoods, in our schools, and in our hobbies, we can expect to suffer hardship at some point as a result of it.

I love reading the monthly edition of The Voice of the Martyrs because this magazine reminds me of the proper attitude I need to embrace regarding suffering and persecution. This past month, the magazine printed testimonies from Christians in Iran. One of those was from a woman named Minu. She writes, “When I was a Muslim and I saw a cross on someone’s wall, I liked it. I had a longing for it; it was a spiritual longing. I was always looking for the real God. Like most Iranians, I had a special feeling for Jesus, but I didn’t know much because in Iran they don’t let anybody know anything about Jesus. I always thought that if there were one person from God, it must be Jesus.” She goes on to talking about embracing Jesus and then coming to be a witness for Jesus and sharing the Gospel with others, albeit very wisely in a culture which persecutes that kind of Gospel proclamation, “Some of the Christian converts are afraid and would ask, ‘What can we do?’ I would answer them, ‘Fear is not from God. The more you read your Bible and grow in your faith, God’s presence and His Spirit in you will take away the fear from you. This world is cursed and is under the control of Satan, and when you are growing in your faith you might be persecuted. This is a part of the Christian life. When you are persecuted, that is the time that it is important that you stand for Jesus.’ The day after I told one of our groups that, they were all arrested. After they were arrested and tolerated the jail time, they had no problems. When they got out of prison, they had lots of strong testimonies for the others. One man whom God healed was imprisoned and tortured for his testimony. Later, a judge told him, ‘How dare you become a Christian! You are a blasphemer! You are dirty! You are unclean!’ The judge had the guards in court slap him in the

face. Later, another judge whispered in his ear, ‘Tell me how I can become a Christian.’” We see the power of a life willing to suffer for Jesus’ sake!

In our text for this study, Peter gets to the heart of his instruction to his readers who are suffering for Jesus’ sake. Everything previously written has been leading to this central message. He writes to give them God’s perspective on persecution so they will be able to hold onto their faith and glorify God through it. He begins with a word of encouragement so they will have joyful hope rather than anxious fear dominate their soul. This is a word as well for us today which offers joyful hope even in the face of hostility and trouble we may endure for Jesus’ sake.

There will be two ideas we will focus upon. First, God blesses all those who suffer for the sake of righteousness. Secondly, God secures our blessing when we sanctify Christ in our hearts.

The first idea is presented in Verses 13 and 14: God blesses all those who suffer for the sake of righteousness,

<sup>13</sup> Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?

The assumption Peter has for his reader is they will be a people who are zealous for what is good. He assumes this will be true of every believer. This is an interesting Greek word translated “zealous”. It is not an adjective, but a noun, and if we translate that verse more literally, it would read, “Now who is the one who harms you, if you become a zealot for what is good?” The term “zealot” refers to a person who possesses deep passion or zeal for a specific cause.<sup>1</sup>

In Peter’s day, there was a political sect which called the Zealots. They were fanatical about liberating the Nation of Israel from Roman rule and Roman dominion. They were willing to die for this cause and many of them did. They were much like the radical Islamists who terrorize our world today. The Zealots had lost their moral compass and they were willing to murder and do violence to achieve their political goals. In fact, we will discover in the Gospels, one of the twelve who came to follow Christ was a Zealot, named Simon.

It is possible Peter has this Zealot party in mind as he writes to believers about being Zealots, only they are to be zealots for what is good, what is right, what is true, what is peaceable, and what is lovely. Our zeal pursues good, rather than evil.

When a young man begins dating a young lady, he possesses great zeal for her. He thinks about her, he communicates with her, he looks for ways to spend time with her, he spends money on her, he finds ways to please her, and he is dizzy over this girl. He does not think about other girls. He is single-minded to win this girl’s heart. That is his focus. He becomes a Zealot for this girl! This is the idea behind the believer becoming a zealot for what is good. This prompts the question: Is that you and I? When we think about goodness in this world and our desire to accomplish goodness for the cause of Christ, are we like that young man chasing after that girl? Do we have that kind of passion, that kind of ardor, and that kind of fervency in us to achieve and accomplish good for the sake of the Gospel? This is part of the transformation that God makes when He plants His life in our soul, but we must nourish it and we must feed it.

We must not become satisfied with a life and faith that is somewhat in favor of goodness. We hear of good things happening and we say, “Yes, I am in favor of that. I will vote for that. In fact, I will give fifty dollars toward that.” We must not be “somewhat” excited about goodness so occasionally we will do some good to help those around us who are needy. No, the standard is zeal and we must become a zealot. It is not enough to be in the audience and clap for goodness done by the church or by others, but we need to get into the game and become fervent, passionate, and involved.

One Christian man once said, “No heart is pure that is not passionate and no virtue is safe that is not enthusiastic.” I believe we need more of this holy zeal in Christ’s church. Without it we become very self-focused and very inward in our perspective. Our flesh, ever as a part of Christ’s people, is bent inward and we are tempted to ask: What is the church doing for me? What am I getting out of my involvement here? What do I get from the services and from the people I associate with at church? What is in it for me? This is not biblical Christianity. Biblical Christianity is, first,

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<sup>1</sup> *zelotes*

upward toward God in worship and then outward toward doing good. Peter assumes this will be the case for his readers.

In Verse 13, Peter reminds us we remove much of the world's cause to persecute us when we become zealous for these things. Unfortunately, I believe, much of the scorn heaped upon Christ's church and upon individual believers is earned and merited through bad behavior and through a lack of zeal for what is good. If we live lives that display honor, integrity, loving kindness, helpfulness, generosity, peacefulness and patience, the world will have a hard time and difficulty lashing out at us. He acknowledges some may and some will, but they lose their legitimacy in their attacks upon us. If we live selfish, scandalous lives, we lose our ground of positive influence and we invite scorn, we welcome it, and we deserve it! When we loose our zeal for doing what is right, we loose the high ground upon which God has set us as sons and daughters of His own. I believe we agree there has been way too much scandal in Jesus' church. Only a zealous and sincere pursuit of integrity and love by those who are in the church will restore the church's reputation. Let us be part of that! Let us say, "It is going to begin with me. The restoration of Jesus' reputation, of Christ's church reputation, will begin with me, today."

But, Peter is a realist. As we read the text further,

<sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled...

Peter is a very real world Christian. He understands the world may mistreat us even if we maintain a life which is zealous for doing good and a life of integrity and a life of love. Peter understands people in this fallen world are vexed by Christ and His claims to Lordship, so they are going to be vexed by us when we exalt Him. Peter understands people love darkness rather than the light and Jesus is the Light, so they want to shut Him out because that Light is irritating. They want to remain asleep spiritually, darkened from the Light of God. What are we to do in this case?

Before Peter gets into specifics, he opens up a general principle for us: we do not need to fear because God is sovereign and He promises to bless us in the midst of persecution; in the presence of persecutors, God sovereignly is in complete control of all that happens. God often sovereignly allow this world to take away from us the things that are part of this world, such as material goods, jobs, social acceptance, health, liberties, physical life, things which are a part of this world. If we love the things of this world we do not love God, but we rather love what God has created and given to us as gifts more than the Giver. Then the world can hurt us and we have a right to be afraid, but if we love God, who is the Author of life, the Creator, and the One who gives every good and perfect gift, then we need never be afraid because He is in control and He tells us we may have to endure for a time, in His sovereign plan, this world's persecution and affliction, but in the end He will reward us. The world cannot ultimately hurt us and ultimately take away life or joy. Eternity will bring all this to light, but for the present we are called to believe and have faith in God's promises.

Listen to Jesus words in Matthew 5. Peter is echoing Jesus,

<sup>10</sup> *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup> "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

The word "blessed" does not mean that we will be physically comfortable and it does not mean life works out great for us here in the present, but it means we will be honored by God and we will receive this privileged status before God and given great reward. Faith in Christ looks beyond this life to eternity's reward and that is what Peter is calling us to. Where are eyes fixed? Where are they? Are they rooted in this world or are they rooted above where life is and where Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father?

I love the section in Hebrews 11 because it reminds us of a real-world faith and what people throughout the ages have done in response to God's promise in the Gospel,

<sup>24</sup> By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,

<sup>25</sup> choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

<sup>26</sup> He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

I wonder where our eyes are rooted. Are they rooted on what we have now and maintaining that and preserving that, or gathering more, or are our eyes rooted on Heaven which will make all the difference in our attitudes and our actions?

How might a Christian in the United States expect persecution? We can read the story of the Iranian believer and say, "I understand that," but how might we suffer persecution if we are completely sold out for Jesus? I believe, in the United States we are right to be thankful we do not experience the same degree of distress many of our brothers and sisters around the world have to endure. Most of us, in the United States do not endure the loss of possessions, the loss of freedom, the loss of physical comfort, and even the loss of physical life. Many throughout the world today are enduring the most severe forms of persecution, but what about us? If we live our lives completely devoted to Jesus, we should expect still some hostility and affliction and persecution. We can expect to be snubbed and passed over for promotions at work. We can expect to be ridiculed for not laughing at the same jokes and using the same language as the people around us. Young teens can expect not to be welcomed by same gang that is popular and socially powerful.

One example of the kind of mistreatment we can expect is the treatment Tim Tebow, the quarterback for the Denver Broncos, receives from many fans and sportscasters. I do not know if Tim Tebow has a future in the National Football League. I do not know if he is talented enough, but I do know I am so thankful for his faithfulness as a bold proclamation of Jesus as his King and Lord when he says, "That is what my life is going to be about."

This past week, a radio commentator who used to be the quarterback for the Denver Broncos, Jake Plummer, made some comments about Tim Tebow. He said, first and positively, "I think he's a winner and I respect that about him," but then, on air, he said, "I think that when he accepts the fact that we know that he loves Jesus Christ, then I think I'll like him a little better. I don't hate him because of that, I just would rather not have to hear that every time he takes a good snap or makes a good handoff." Plummer is irritated that Tebow talks about Jesus at every opportunity and I believe there are many people who are.

What is our response to Plummer? Do we get angry at him? Are we tempted to write an e-mail to him and say, "How dare you! He is our man, Tim Tebow. You are the big fool. You are the big dummy? You are a has-been. Get over it!" Is that the Christian response? I believe many Christians respond that way and that brings shame to the cause of Christ and it invites greater affliction, greater hostility, and greater persecution when we respond in that way. Jake Plummer is a man who is living in darkness and he needs the Light of the Gospel. That is why he thinks the way he does and that is why he does not want to hear the name of Jesus.

What was Tim Tebow's response? When asked, he said, he was thankful Jake Plummer called him a "winner", then he said, "If you're married and you have a wife and you really love your wife, is it good enough to only say to your wife 'I love her' the day you get married? Or should you tell her every single day when you wake up and every opportunity? That's how I feel about my relationship with Jesus Christ."

At every turn I see Tim Tebow, who is just a young guy by my estimation, he acts with such maturity. He refuses to engage in hostility, evil speaking for evil. He always talks about how he appreciates people and asks if he can talk about Jesus some more. That is the attitude and response which is hard for the world to keep coming after.

The second idea is: God secures our blessing when we sanctify Christ in our hearts. Peter is going to give us some specific direction with regard to how we might suffer for righteousness is such as to honor the Lord Jesus and maintain hope and joy. The key command from Peter is found at the beginning of verse 15,

<sup>15</sup> ...but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy...

This is the dominant message Peter is delivering through this entire text. The New American Standard Bible (NASB) version reads, "sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts".

What does it mean to sanctify the Lord in our hearts? It means we honor Him as the most holy, most admirable, most awesome person in the universe. We set Him above everything else so He is on a shelf way above anything else in our life. We do not allow anyone, any thing, or any other gods to come up along side Christ, but there is Christ and we are

sanctifying Him and setting Him apart in our life and in our heart as “the Priority”, the dominant love which drives us and that which we wake up for to seek and to honor. That is what it means to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts as well. It is not external, not words, not actions some people say, but it is real and this is who we are. We fall upon our faces before Jesus, acknowledging Him as Lord, as God, in our lives and we say, “Hallowed by Thy name”<sup>2</sup> each day, “for great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.”<sup>3</sup> God wants our hearts to set aside the priority of our worship, commitment, devotion, admiration, and love for the Lord Jesus. The chief purpose of our life is to exalt Jesus. The chief purpose of our life is to reveal Jesus for the great Savior He is.

How do we do this? Peter offers three ways to honor Christ in our hearts. First, we honor Christ by setting aside the fear of man. God calls us not to be motivated by the threats this world delivers to us, but to be motivated instead by our love and reverence for Christ! At the end of Verse 14, Peter is quoting Old Testament Scripture, Isaiah 8, as he is writing that last part,

<sup>12b</sup> ...and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. <sup>13</sup> But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy.

Isaiah is talking about YAHWAH, the LORD of hosts, God, and Peter takes that passage and pulls it into the New Testament when he says, “honor Christ”. He is indicating the LORD God and Christ are one in the same and they deserve the same kind of honor. He precedes the command to honor Christ as Holy with a call for us not to “fear what they fear, nor be in dread”.

The context of Isaiah 8 is very interesting and helpful. Ahaz the king of Judah is facing a crisis because of an impending invasion of the empire of Assyria which is coming and threatening to wipe out his nation. The kings of Israel and the kings of Syria also know the Assyrian king is a threat to them and they need to join forces. Then they go to Judah, to King Ahaz, and say, “Will you join forces with us?” King Ahaz refuses, but behind the scenes he has another plan. He decides to make a peace treaty with Assyria rather than be wiped out in fighting them. The Prophet Isaiah is warning King Ahaz against creating this treaty and alliance with unholy Assyria, but King Ahaz says, “If I do not do something, my land will be wiped off of the map. What do I do?”

Isaiah’s words to King Ahaz, in this very real-world situation, is, “Do not fear what they (the King of Israel and the King of Syria) fear and do not be in dread. Do not think all is lost, but the LORD of hosts, Him you shall honor as holy. Let Him be your fear. Let Him be your dread.” In other words, Isaiah is saying, “Ahaz, as a prophet of God I have come to tell you, you will be motivated by one of two things: by the fear of man and what he will do to you or by a fear of God. You will either be concerned what man thinks about your actions and the results which will come upon you as a result of their impression of you, or you will think and be consumed by, ‘What does God, the LORD of hosts, think? If anything else happens, I do not want to displease the LORD, the Sovereign God, of the universe.’ Who will you fear?”

King Ahaz feared man and he lost. The principle we learn is: fear and faith are always in conflict. They are oil and water which never mix. Where the fear of man is present, faith in God is absent. Peter’s message, in quoting this Old Testament passage is: Do not make compromises out of your fear of man. Instead, set the Lord apart as Lord. If you have anything to fear, fear getting on the wrong side of Him! Let Him be your dread. Do not be concerned about how people respond to you; be concerned about God’s response upon your life! Peter and Isaiah are both saying, “He is the Lord. Treat Him as the Lord. Do not let yourselves be intimidated. Do not be shaken. Do not be disturbed, but be at peace, knowing the Lord is Sovereign and He is your Refuge. He is your strong tower. When you run to Him you will be safe. He is your Deliverer!” This message for us, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, is we are just as safe in God as all the people throughout all of time have been when they were running to Him to find refuge. We need not fear man. We need not be motivated, as we get up in the morning, by what people will think of us and what they might do to us if we do not act a certain way or speak a certain language. We can be motivated by our honor to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conquering the fear of man and sanctifying Christ in our hearts does not get easier as you age. Young people, I encourage you, settle this battle early and your life will be blessed for it.

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 6:9

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 96:4

The second way we honor the Lord Christ is: We honor Christ by being ready to defend the reality of His hope,

<sup>15</sup> ...but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...

As believers, we are not immune from the pain this fallen world dishes to humankind. We are like everyone else in this regard. We do not have a “special” protection. God does not promise us that. Despite what television evangelists might communicate and teach, we are not immune to disease, physical, car accidents, growing old and weak, losing our jobs, diagnoses of cancer and heart disease, brokenness in relationships within their families. We are not immune to these kinds of griefs. These are a part of this fallen world, and yet Peter’s message is this: in spite of all of this, believers can maintain and hold onto joy and hope in the midst of this.

As people who are born again, we are born again into a living hope, so we are not despairing, dejected, despondent, or depressed by this world’s fallenness, but Christ strengthens us. The assumption Peter makes is the world, when they notice we are enduring the same kind of sufferings and afflictions they are enduring, but that we are enduring it with hope, is going to look at our life and see the different way we respond to the difficulties in life and they will scratch their heads and say, “I wonder how they seem to be holding it together? I wonder why they seem to be at peace when I am a mess. I wonder why they seem to have such a hopeful attitude about the future when my expectation is pretty dismal.” Peter anticipates them to ask, so he says, “Be prepared and be ready to give an answer for the hope which is within you.”

Always be prepared to give an answer to those who do not know of Jesus’ Lordship! Always be ready to share this is the call. Peter is making a call for us to be witnesses, evangelists, and messengers of this Good News. We have answers and there is reasonable truth upon which we are founding our life. Our life as a Christian is not based upon fairy tales and make believe, but on the reality of a real Savior. We are not sticking our head in the sand, pretending everything is going to be okay, even though we know that is not going to become true. Our faith is not groundless, but it is firmly rooted and grounded in the foundation of the resurrected Lord Jesus!

If someone approaches and says, “Hey, why do you take that Jesus stuff so seriously anyway?”, what answer can we give? There is a two-fold answer on the way we are prepared to which I believe Peter is pointing. First, we are prepared when we live a life that is deeply satisfied in Jesus, that there is a reality behind that and it is not just words. If we do not have that the second will not matter. Secondly, we are prepared when we are able to give a logical, reasonable explanation of the Gospel.

In the first answer, a life deeply satisfied in Jesus is our greatest apologetic; it is our greatest defense of the Gospel. Without a life delighting in Jesus, no logical answer we give to advance Jesus will be fruitful. This world is not asking the question: Is it true? The first question the people around you are asking, when they think about the Gospel is: Does this work? Is it real? It does not matter if it is true or not, but is it real? They are looking for that answer through your life. Does this person walk their talk? Do they act in courage for Christ or do they fear man like the rest of us? Are they consistent in treasuring Heaven or do they love the things of the earth like we do?

Friends, we will not be prepared if we are not living a life which reflects our absolute joy and delight in Christ. If we say Jesus is our greatest treasure, but live in ways which give priority to other treasures and think in ways which contradict that claim of Jesus’ lordship, the world is not interested in anything we have to say. Be ready, Peter says, to give in answer for the hope that is within you by sanctifying Christ in your hearts as Lord and as holy.

Paul was ready to give an answer for his hope to the Philippian church, in Philippians 1,

<sup>21</sup> For me to live is Christ and to die is gain!

That was Paul’s answer! The reason for his hope is because for him to live was all about Christ. That is where he found his joy, delight, satisfaction, and purpose, and if he died that would only be gain because then he would get to see the Christ he longed to see. Are you ready to give an answer to a friend who asks you about the hope Jesus offers?

In the second answer, God calls us to offer a logical, reasonable explanation of the Gospel. Peter uses the word “defense” or the Greek word *apologia*. It means an apology, a defense, a rational argument, or a reason. Our defense includes a reason or a logical explanation for our hope. Peter calls us to explain rationally what we believe and why we believe it; to be able to articulate the Gospel in such a way an unbeliever who does not know the Gospel will be able to understand it and know it is not based upon fairy tales and make believe. Are you ready in that way? Can you communicate with an unbeliever what you believe and why you believe it? Our primary resource is Scripture. Other books are helpful, but the more we know Scripture the more rational, logical, reasonable explanation we will be able to give of the Gospel and be able to articulate it. Peter tells us to be prepared. We will need to do some work ahead of time to prepare for this because this is what God calls us to in this world and in this life.

If you should say, “Pastor, I do not know if I can articulate the Gospel message,” understand there are two truths. First, sanctify Christ in your heart. Secondly, study God’s Word to know the answers. I will tell you, if that is your concern and that is your desire, e-Mail me, phone me, or talk to me afterwards and say, “I want to know what I can do,” and we, as a church, will take that responsibility to set resources in your hands to be able to equip you for that very calling.

Notice Peter adds “with gentleness and respect.” Peter is not calling us to trounce unbelievers in a debate. In fact, that often does more harm than good, to use scornful words in response for scornful words. There are many scornful words in this arena of the attacks upon the Christian faith, particularly by the new atheists. Our response is not scornful words in return, but it is with gentleness and it is with respect for them as a human being created in God’s image and we should treat them in that way.

In the third way we honor Christ by keeping a good conscience,

<sup>16</sup> ...having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

A good conscience is God’s gift to us. A good conscience tells us either we are walking in obedience to God or we are about to take a step of disobedience and rebellion toward Him. A good conscience is one that is accurate and reliable and clear. However, there is a warning, because not everyone has a good conscience and not every Christian has a good conscience. Some have defied their conscience because the truth is every time we turn away from our conscience’s promptings that conscience is affected. Scripture describes it as being “seared”, a hot iron being placed against the skin of that soft conscience. At first we feel guilty, but the effect is, when it heals a callous so it is not as tender.

A good conscience is such a precious gift. Young people, in particular, I urge do not undervalue the treasure of a good conscience because it protects you and it helps you to maintain God’s blessing in your life. How many young people have seared their conscience so now they are able to live a life without their conscience speaking to them? The lack of pain is not pleasure in this case; it is destruction. We honor Christ by maintaining and keeping a good conscience.

I personally believe hostility toward biblical Christianity is mounting within the borders of our nation. I see it almost every time I open a news page. I do believe, we, as Christians, will experience more difficulty from this world as time passes and I wish I did not believe that. That is my belief about the spiritual trajectory of our nation, unless the Lord sends a revival among His church. Some of that hostility is merited and it is earned by a church which has brought shame upon herself through her behavior and through her words. Some of that hostility is because the culture around us is spiraling into moral and spiritual darkness, but the point is we believers need to be ready for what may be ahead for us.

Someone may look at these instructions we have considered about sanctifying Christ in our hearts and refusing to fear man and about being prepared to make a defense and about having a good conscience. Perhaps you are looking over your life and say you have failed in all of these areas and have not set Christ as holy. You say you have acted in the fear of man and have blown it there. You say you have failed to be prepared to give a reason for the hope in you and you have violated your conscience. Perhaps you are despairing it is too late for you. Let me give you a word of encouragement: this word Peter gives is such a word of grace.

Think for a moment about Peter writing these words and over the course of his life what he might be thinking about in his life. I believe as he is writing he is taken back to the courtyard scene: a little girl comes up to him and asks, “You are one of His disciples, aren’t you?” “No!” A failure to sanctify Christ is hard, the fear of man, a lack of readiness, and a bad conscience is all there. As Peter writes he is writing a word of grace.

We shoot ahead to the scene along the sea shore where Christ says to him, “Peter, do you love me? Feed my sheep.”<sup>4</sup> And, after you have been restored, strengthen your brothers and let them know there is hope.”

There is hope for a different future, but we must submit our lives to Christ and say, “I am going to honor Christ and sanctify Him in my heart as Lord today.”

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<sup>4</sup> John 21:15-17