

*Has Anyone Asked You To Give*

# A Reason for the Hope

*That Is In You?*

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*1 Peter 3:13-18*

## **I. Who Will Harm You?**

### **A Proper Disposition**

The long and short of what Peter has been writing about during the last chapter and a half is obedience and a proper disposition in obedience; recognizing that, in our lives, we contend with those who are harsh and unjust. A proper disposition, Peter tells us, will yield evangelistic blessings, is commendable in the eyes of God and brings forth, in our own lives, a love of life and good days on the earth. Peter, has been, and continues to address those people or things in our lives which seek to compromise our integrity. What he will emphasize is the spiritual reality that these people or things are truly powerless to rob Christians of their blessings.

### **Robbed of Joy**

I knew a couple who were in the ministry and grew very discouraged because of the behavior of the people to whom they sought to minister. They said the people robbed them of their joy. As I considered these words I came to the conclusion that was not the people who should have been the source of their joy. **“Do not sorrow”**, it is written in Nehemiah 8:10, **“for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”** They became powerless to minister because they were seeking joy in the creature rather than the creator. This isn't to say that we shouldn't seek to be a joy to one another but if we're depending upon the performance of others for our joy it will be difficult to persevere.

### **Who Are You?**

Seeking to encourage a proper disposition Peter writes,

**“And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good” (1 Peter 3:13,14)?**

Peter is indicating that if Christians commit themselves to be followers of good they will find, for the most part, that they will not be harmed for doing good. Much of the angst heaped upon Christians, I have found, is not because they were followers of what is good but quite the opposite.

I don't think I am taking too much liberty to suggest that Peter writes of the detractors and persecutors of the Christian faith as if they are of no consequence. In common vernacular we use the term “who are you?” to denote that we do not consider the person worthy of the position they're seeking to acquire in our lives. Peter may be using it in the same way. If we are seeking to be followers, or imitators, or Christ, why in

the world would we even consider the behavior of people as a deterrent to such a high calling?

## **II. Suffering...A Source of Blessing**

**“But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, *you are* blessed.  
“And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled” (1 Peter 3:14).**

Peter doesn’t put this forth in such a way as to suggest that these detractors have absolutely no power at all. Verse fourteen clearly implies that there are people in this world who are capable of making Christians suffer for their faith. (Suffering was no doubt worse for them than it is for us and it is worse for Christians in other places in the world today than it is for most who hear this message. Nonetheless I suppose there isn’t a Christian on earth, who lives out their faith, who is not subjected to some sort suffering on account of their faith.) But so impotent are those who seek to defame Christians that Peter indicates the very suffering they inflicted (providing it is suffering for righteousness sake and not for unrighteousness) is a source of blessing.

**“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10).**

So confident was Paul of God’s loving and sovereign hand in every detail of his life that he does not merely indicate that he took pleasure through the sufferings but actually in the sufferings.

### **Don’t Be Troubled**

People or things, no matter how evil or dastardly, are incapable of extracting the blessings of God from Christians, Peter encourages us not to be afraid, threatened or troubled. Because of God’s favor toward us in Christ, Peter tells us not to have inward commotion or allow events or people to take away the calmness of our minds. Instead we are to do something else.

## **III. Sanctify God in Your Hearts**

**“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts” (1 Peter 3:15a).**

### **What Matters Most**

As we come to grips with the power, love and sovereignty of our heavenly Father we do not give way to fear or allow ourselves to be troubled. The things that trouble us can reveal what it is in our hearts. Genuine peace, stability and security can only come when the primary seat of our affections belong to God. This is true because He is both our loving Father and the Almighty God. Therefore Peter exhorts us to sanctify the Lord

in our hearts. God is to be set apart as supreme in our affection, in our thinking and behavior. What should matter most to us is the appraisal and blessings of God. We must be careful to avoid the same downfall of many of the Jewish leaders during the time of Jesus who believed in Jesus but wouldn't confess their faith **“for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:43).**

#### **IV. A Reasoned Explanation**

**“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” (1 Peter 3:15b)”**

Peter assumes that this hope will be seen in Christians who must then be ready to give a reasoned explanation to anyone who asks. The reasoned explanation, I believe, is what was just brought forth. In short, the Living God who is the creator of all things, material and immaterial has called me to Himself and saved me by the blood of His Son. He works out all things after the counsel of His will and even the evil efforts of man can in no way circumvent His blessings and affections toward me.

#### **Not Evidences, Philosophies or Gnosticism**

I do not think it is a good and proper use of this passage to use it as a springboard into rationalistic, philosophic, empirical, evidential or gnostic arguments for the existence of God. These things are not biblical and it seems quite foreign to the context. The hope I have is not that Aristotle or science, which may both be valuable in their own rights but are ultimately dubious, somehow validate the existence of God.

I can't imagine Peter or Paul taking any comfort or finding hope in the notion that Socrates somehow validated Jesus. Nor should I use as my reasoned explanation that Einstein believed in God. It is great that (if) he did. He was awfully smart. But Voltaire did not believe in God and he was pretty smart also. We must be careful not to allow our reasoned explanation of our hope to be built on weak and shifting sands.

#### **Jesus Loves You**

I believe it is also a mistake the mystical approach of a well meaning young man who approached me in the mall a number of years ago and said, “Jesus loves you.” I asked him how he knew. He answered, “Because he is in my heart.” That might have meant a great deal to him but it meant nothing to me.

#### **Hope in God's Word...A Heroic Example**

My hope is much more sound than these types of things. My hope is in the word of God itself and what it says about the power, love and blessings of God upon those whom He has called to Himself. I am reminded of the Christian teenager at Columbine High School. As her friends were being shot the gunman turned toward her and asked if

she still believed in God. She said “yes” and he took her life. Apparently the terrorist thought he could wreak enough havoc to shake her faith but the hope she had was greater than all the evil that surrounded her. Within minutes her hope was fully realized and no doubt his damnation.

### **Meekness and Fear**

Peter tells me I am to convey this message with meekness and fear. Not only is the message important but the temperament of the person delivering the message. First, Fear should be present whenever we are handling the word of God. It reminds me of the words of Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones when an illness gave him an opportunity to sit and listen to men in the pulpit of his church for about a year. He wrote,

**“I can forgive a bad sermon, I can forgive a man almost anything if he gives me a sense of God, if he gives me something for my soul, if he give me the sense that, though he is inadequate in himself, he is handling something that is great and glorious, if he gives me some dim glimpse of the majesty and the glory of God, the love of Christ my Saviour, and the magnificence of the gospel. If he does that, I am his debtor, and am profoundly grateful to him.”**

I believe these words are good words, not merely for preachers, but for anyone who would seek to give a reason for the hope they have.

Meekness is also a requirement. This is a slightly different word than the one we discussed in verse four regarding wives. The Greek word for meek is very difficult to translate. ‘Meek’ may be close but there is a common assumption that a man is meek because he cannot help himself. In this respect meek is equated with ‘feeble’. But the Lord Himself was meek because he had the infinite resources of God at His command. It is said that,

**“The meekness manifested by the Lord and commended to the believer is the fruit of power. Described negatively, meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest; it is equanimity (calmness) of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because it is not occupied with self at all.”**

### **Awesome Power = Meekness. My Daughter’s Safety**

Christians can be meek in their defense of their faith because they know that awesome power of God is at work. God does not need us to get all stressed and worked up. That doesn’t add to His power at all. I took my two year old to the beach. She started wandering from our little camp. As she got farther away I assessed the potential danger of her situation. She was a certain distance from the water and a certain distance from the bike bath and a certain distance from me. I was able to remain calm, not because she was completely out of my control and there was nothing I could do about it anyway

but quite the opposite. I knew that I could reach her before she could get herself in harms way. Christians can have meekness because they know that nothing is beyond the pale of their Father's love and power.

## V. Good Conscience

**“Having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed” (1 Peter 3:16).**

### Getting Out of the Way

Peter calls Christians to the cultivation of the fear of God and meekness before God and men and a good conscience. A good conscience is the idea of distinguishing between what is morally good and bad, prompting to do the former and shun the latter, commending one, condemning the other. Peter writes, **“that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.”**

I find one of my biggest goals in defending the Christian faith is to get out of the way. When I am seeking to put forth the word I often feel like that guy who takes your side in an argument who, because of his method and presentation, you wish would just be quiet. We should seek to live in such a way that all accusations leveled against us (and those accusations will come) be unfounded and a certain type of shame<sup>1</sup> be brought to those who revile your good conduct. It really gets down to the next verse.

### Suffer For Doing Good

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

Suffering for doing good will yield great things in the kingdom of God. Suffering for doing evil won't. By the way, Peter adds, “if it is the will of God” because suffering for the sake of suffering means nothing. So playing the martyr is just that...playing. And it will yield no genuine benefits and is nothing more than an insult to true martyrs. But to lovingly persevere through difficulties and sufferings for the Lord's sake and to do so without grumbling and complaining is precious in the eyes of God and brings glory to His name and people to Christ (2:12; 3:1,2) for it is the imitation of Christ Himself. Peter writes,

## VI. The Ultimate Example

**“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:17,18).**

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<sup>1</sup> Hopefully a shame that will ultimately bring them to Christ.

It is my prayer that every week when we gather together – every day as we seek our Lord – we come into a greater understanding and appreciation of the depth of our sin and lawlessness and the height of His grace and righteousness. It is only when we begin to grasp the vastness of this expanse – when our minds begin to reel pondering His unmerited favor toward ‘me’ a wretched sinner deserving the blackest darkness of His wrath and disfavor – it is then that we begin to discern His call regarding our behavior toward others.

And I do pray that you know His favor. I do hope that you have placed your trust in the only one who can truly bring you to God. He was put to death but was made alive. And He was the firstfruits. For those who trust in Him there is no second death. But like Jesus, death will be followed by life and life everlasting.