

October 19, 2025

1 Peter 3:13-17

¹³ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ 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, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

Scriptures for further study:

1 Peter 2:12

1 Peter 3:9

2 Corinthians 4:17

Isaiah 8:12-13

“There is no fatalism in 1 Peter, but instead a realism that recognizes fallen human nature. Furthermore, this type of suffering is not illness nor state persecution but abuse from unbelievers.”

-Peter Davids



Grace and Suffering, Part I

1 Peter 3:13-17

BIG IDEA: Because of God’s future grace in Jesus, we live in this present world of suffering without fear, walking in goodness and humility, ready to give an answer for the hope of the gospel.

OUTLINE

1. The Reality of Suffering

2. The Blessing of God

3. The Response of the Church

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. Have you or someone you know personally who has suffered in their home, neighborhood, club, civic organization, or job for their stance on God’s Word or obedience to God? How did they respond?
2. Thinking about the 1st point of the sermon, The Reality of Suffering. How might believers today experience “soft persecution” in our culture that pressures us to compromise, privatize, or abandon our witness for Christ? Can you share two specific ways you’ve seen or experienced this kind of suffering when standing firm in the grace of God and letting the Gospel shape your decisions?
3. What encouragement and assistance can you provide to someone who is enduring hardships solely for the sake of righteousness, as mentioned in 1 Peter 3:14, 2 Corinthians 4:17, or other biblical passages?
4. Who is Peter addressing in 1 Peter 3:13-14, and what is his main point about the suffering they may face, considering God's ultimate response to it?

“Peter assured believers that nothing can ultimately harm them if they continue to walk in God’s paths, that the pain inflicted upon them now is only temporary, and that they will be vindicated by God on the last day.”
-Thomas Schreiner

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Peter's primary aim in writing his letter is to highlight the grace of God in Jesus Christ as the basis for our living hope...and this living hope is the foundation by which we live differently in a world that is not our homeland. According to Peter, it is our hope in Jesus that causes us to stand firm in faith, a faith that significantly shapes three things: 1) Our identity in the world. 2) Our interaction in relationships. 3) Our response to suffering. Over the last several weeks, we have focused our attention on Peter's call to submission in various relationships...and now we move into his call for how the church should respond to suffering.

Praise to Jesus – Let us lift our eyes to Christ, who is “the Lord” (v. 15) and who secures an imperishable hope even when we suffer. Praise God that no earthly harm can ultimately destroy us (v. 13). Praise Christ for being the true defense of our hope, whose resurrection anchors our confidence. Praise the Spirit for giving courage to endure slander and trials with gentleness and respect.

Repentance through Jesus – Reflect on the reality that the text exposes our sins and fears. Confess fear of people more than God, shrinking back from witness (v. 14). Confess lack of preparedness to give an answer for the hope they have, either through ignorance of the gospel or indifference to the call to explain it (v. 15). Confess when you fail to show gentleness and respect, letting pride or anger distort your witness (v. 15).

Consecration for Jesus –The passage calls us to renewed devotion: to set apart Christ as Lord in our hearts above all fears (v. 15), prepare our minds and hearts to explain the gospel clearly and humbly, live with integrity, so that slander against us may be silenced by good conduct (v. 16), and embrace even suffering as better than sin, trusting God's will (v. 17).

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

These questions are written to aid parents in leading family devotions with their children.

1. What does the word, fair, mean?
2. What does it mean “to suffer for righteousness’ sake”? (This refers to persecution that Christians face when they are punished for their faith in Jesus. This doesn’t refer to consequences of our sinful actions.)
3. What does this passage teach us about the fear that we might have of those who persecute us? (We learn that we should not fear them, because we have Christ on our side.)
4. What does it mean “in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy”? (When we confess Jesus as our Lord, then we are submitting to Him in all aspects of life. When we honor Him as holy, then we are recognizing that He is perfect and has no sin in Him.)
5. How does Peter say that we as Christians should talk with unbelievers about the gospel of Jesus? (In verse 15, we read that we should talk with unbelievers about Jesus with “gentleness and respect.”)
6. Tell your children about your journey with Christ and how your hope in Him has been shaped.
7. What does verse 18 teach us about the result of Christ’s death for our sin and unrighteousness? (We read that His death for our unrighteousness brings us to God. The holy God cannot be in the presence of sin and unholiness. Therefore, we needed a Savior to take our punishment for our sins and give us His righteousness.)

Scriptures for further study:

Colossians 4:6

Hebrews 11:7

Hebrews 12:1

FOR STUDENTS

Scriptures for further study:

Isaiah 8:12-13

Matthew 5:10-12

Romans 1:16

Colossians 4:5-6

Hebrews 10:32-36

1. Peter writes, “Who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?” (v.13). But we know that Christians sometimes suffer even when they do good. Why do you think Peter begins this way? What kind of “harm” is he saying we are ultimately protected from?

2. In verse 14, Peter says that even when we suffer for doing right, we are “blessed.” What are some ways you’ve seen or experienced “soft persecution” for being a Christian (at school, on social media, in your friend group)? How do you think God can use your response to that for good?

3. Verse 15 tells us to “honor Christ the Lord as holy” in our hearts and always be ready to give a reason for our hope. What does it practically look like to honor Christ as Lord in your everyday life? What is your reason for hope?

4. Peter says we should explain our faith with gentleness and respect. Why is the way we talk about Jesus just as important as what we say? How does our tone and attitude reflect the heart of the gospel?

5. Verse 16 talks about having a good conscience, even when people slander us or talk badly about our faith. How does living with integrity and kindness help silence critics of Christianity?

6. In verse 17, Peter says it’s better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. Why might God allow suffering in our lives even when we’re being faithful? How does this passage encourage you to stand firm even when it’s hard?

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. When it comes to witnessing, notice that Peter combines the importance of words and deeds, the verbal proclamation or defense of the faith combined with right actions, i.e., “doing good” (v.13) and having “good behavior” (v.16). (See again how Peter combines these things back in 1 Peter 2:9, 12.)

Question: How is this a powerful combination? What happens when you have one without the other?

2. Peter also addresses the importance of Christians being gentle and respectful as we defend our faith; i.e., not just what we say but how we say it.

Question: Why and how is this posture vitally important to hold?

3. Peter says in verse 15 that Christians should always be ready and prepared to give an answer as to what we believe and why.

Question: Do you currently see yourself as ready and prepared? If not, how can you get better prepared and equipped?

4. Peter encourages believers not to be fearful of those who might disagree with or even be hostile to Christianity. He also challenges believers to go beyond passivity and neutrality, instead inviting Christians to an active and positive engagement with non-believers.

Question: When it comes to the work of evangelism, would you as a Christian describe yourself as: a) fearful, b) neutral/passive, c) active and engaging others?

5. If you are a non-believer, what are some of the questions you may have about the Christian faith? What are some of your biggest obstacles? If you do not yet believe, is it because you can't believe, or is it because you won't believe? Are you sincerely seeking to understand things more fully? Are you willing to allow Christians to explain things better to you and listen to their defense?

Living Hope: How God's Glorious Grace in Jesus Shapes and Empowers Us by the Spirit to Live with Gospel Grit in a Foreign Land.



Daniel in the Lion's Den by Briton Riviere, 1872

About the Artist: Briton Rivière, a British painter known for his animal paintings, particularly those featuring dogs and wild animals with deep emotion and dramatic flair, came from an artistic family. His father, William Rivière, was a drawing master and art teacher. Rivière initially studied at the University of Oxford, drawn to literary and historical themes, but later developed a fascination with animals and became renowned for his ability to imbue them with emotional depth and narrative presence.

About the Artwork

"Daniel in the Lion's Den" (1872) depicts the biblical story with lifelike lions, a popular and symbolic theme in Victorian England. It explores faith under trial, divine protection, and moral strength against tyranny, themes that resonated with Victorian audiences during a time when Christian values and moral courage were emphasized.

In Riviere's painting, Daniel's calm, unarmed demeanor symbolizes absolute trust in God. His gaze suggests prayer, hope, or spiritual communion, not fear. He represents the righteous man steady in the face of evil. The lions, though fierce, are subdued, a miracle of restraint. Riviere doesn't show angels or supernatural intervention; the restraint is invisible, spiritual. Some lions are relaxed, others alert, suggesting the tension between nature and divine command. Each lion has a distinct personality, reflecting the mystery of creation. The focused light on Daniel recalls God's presence in darkness. The murky den symbolizes the unknown, death, or temptation, yet Daniel remains untouched. Unlike dramatic biblical scenes, there's no movement or violence. The silence emphasizes Daniel's victory through trust, countering 19th-century action-heavy storytelling with a meditation on spiritual endurance.

1 Peter and Daniel in the Lion's Den

This painting, based on a biblical scene, helps us understand the overall theme of the New Testament letter. 1 Peter teaches Christians that as God's elect, they are called to live holy lives of faithful witness, enduring suffering with hope rooted in God's grace, while embracing their Gospel identity as a holy, royal priesthood in a hostile world. Like Daniel in the Old Testament, we are strangers in a distant place. Jesus told his disciples and us in the Gospel of John that we are "not of this world." Hebrews reminds the church that "this world is not their permanent home." Even within 1 Peter, God's people are called "sojourners and exiles."

Like Daniel, the darkness of this broken, sinful, and fallen world is always present. While we may never face a physical lion, Peter's first letter tells us that our enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, and the spiritual forces of evil are ever present. Yet, like Daniel, we must face the opposition with a Gospel poise, knowing that which is unseen is more powerful than what is seen and against us. Peter uses the language of "standing firm" in God's grace as we encounter all forms of darkness.

Church, may we see the beauty of 1 Peter in its overall message: God's glorious grace leading us to Gospel grit as sojourners in a dark world. But may we not just perceive its beauty but also embrace God's unique calling in these words: stand firm!