

Life has a way of testing what we truly believe. Faith easy when everything is going well

- When prayers are being answered, health is strong, and circumstances are favorable.
- What happens when heat is turned up? **When faith is under fire...wartime fox hole**
- What happens when obedience Christ brings opposition, suffering, misunderstanding?

Faith gets challenged in hardships...when the rounds are flying...run to or run from God

Throughout history, God's people have often found themselves in the fire

- Not because they were doing wrong, but because they were doing right
- The strength of genuine faith is not revealed in comfort but in conflict

A faith that has never been tested is a faith that has never been proven

What enables a believer to endure hardship without losing hope?

backs against the wall – When prayers aren't getting answered your way – falling apart

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

2016, *Hacksaw Ridge* told the true story of Desmond Doss, a combat medic during WW2

Committed Christian - **conscientious objector**...mocked, ridiculed by fellow soldiers

Battle of Okinawa – 1945 – Hacksaw Ridge – Overrun by Japanese – Dross saved 75 men

"Lord, please help me get one more." – Grenade – Shot sniper – Medal of Honor...no shots

True Christian character is revealed when obedience to Christ costs something

- In 1 Peter 3:13–17, Peter teaches us how to remain faithful under fire.
- Hardships are inevitable, but faithfulness is possible when our hope anchored in Christ

Big Idea – Respond with hope when facing hardships

Four Truths we should embrace when hardships arise

1. **The Reality of Christian Suffering (13-14)**

¹³Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,

- People assume that if they faithfully follow Christ, life will become easier...opposite
 - While obedience often leads to blessing, it does not exempt believers from hardship
- The Christian life is not a promise of comfort; it is a call to faithfulness when uncomfortable

a. **Christian Suffering Is Possible Even When Doing Good - suffer for righteousness' sake,**

The reality is that living rightly does not guarantee that everything will go rightly

- Throughout Scripture, God's people suffered despite their obedience:
Joseph > Slavery | David > Saul > Kid die | Prophets > Rejected | Jesus > Crucified

Maryland Lifeguard Pulled elderly man from a swimming pool – CPR – Medical Alert – Sued

b. **Christian Suffering Brings Divine Blessing - you will be blessed**

Obedience brings blessing – Sin brings suffering | Many times the obedience is the blessing
'Give to Get' Church – Good and you give God is going to repay you, monetarily, in this life
You do 'Give to Get'...you get is knowing that you are walking in righteousness God's Glory

- This blessing is not necessarily material prosperity or immediate relief
- Rather, it is God's favor, presence, approval, and eternal reward – **Matthew 5:10**
"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The world may see suffering as loss, but God sees it as gain

Believers who remain faithful under pressure experiences God's sustaining grace unique way

Takeaway - Hardship does not cancel God's favor

- **Hardship is not a sign that God has abandoned you**
When difficulties come, resist temptation to measure God's favor by your circumstances
God's presence often remains strongest in the seasons that seem hardest
- **Hardship is often the pathway through which God displays His favor**
God uses trials to shape character, deepen faith, and prepare us for greater usefulness
What feels like a setback may actually be God's setup for His purpose
Romans 8:28 ²⁸And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. – This is either true or it's not...decide

2. **The Response of Christian Witness (15)**

¹⁵but 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,
We have a responsibility...to give a defense to anyone who asks why you hope in Christ

- Every Christian will eventually face moments when their faith is questioned by world
- Sometimes the question comes from genuine curiosity...criticism, skepticism, hostility
Peter saying, 'Don't just survive hardship...use moments as opportunities for the Gospel

Four ways you can use hardship as a powerful tool to share the Gospel

- a. **Remember Christ's holiness** - but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy,
 - Evangelism begins with believing Christ is worth talking about...begins in the heart
 - Peter calling to enthrone Christ in center of hearts and recognize His absolute lordship
 - Before believers can speak for Christ publicly, they must honor Christ privately

Greatest preparation for witness is not mastering arguments but maintaining a reverence

Do you know why I have to talk about Jesus? Because I have to talk about Jesus!

- b. **Build your readiness** - always being prepared to make a defense
 - 'Make a defense' comes from Greek word 'apologia' – Believers prepared explain faith
 - Christian witness not be careless/uninformed - What we believe and why we believe it
Knowing gospel clearly - Basic biblical truth - How Christ has changed our lives | **BOOK**
Medic does not wait for an emergency to begin their training...give everyone paddles
Witnessing opportunities often come unexpectedly, but readiness is developed intentionally
- c. **Understand the audience** - to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you
 - Focus is not on giving information but on addressing the specific person who is asking
 - Effective witnesses listen before speak – Know concerns, fears, objections of people
Christian witness is not delivering the same speech to everyone
 - It is bringing eternal truth to the specific person before us...pastor called to preach
Jesus: Nicodemus vs Samaritan Woman | Disciples vs Pharisees | Pilate vs Herod
Doctor does not prescribe the same medicine to every patient...diagnosis the condition
- d. **Speak with charity** - yet do it with gentleness and respect
 - We live in culture where people often believe loudest voice wins | **View - Cats in sack**
 - Social media, political debates, everyday conversations can become hostile and divisive

When we defend our faith, our manner matters as much as our message

Goal of Christian witness is not winning arguments but winning people | Bees w/ honey
People may reject the gospel message, should never reject because of an unkind messenger

The Truth of the gospel is offensive...we must share it with Truth and Love

Warren Wiersbe - "Truth without love is brutality, and love without truth is hypocrisy."

Takeaway - Hardship drives us to witness more boldly

Deepens Our Dependence on Christ - Creates Opportunities to Explain Our Hope

First two of our Truths we should embrace when hardships arise...recap and transition

3. The Reputation of Christian Character (16)

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

- A Christian's testimony is one of the most powerful tools God uses in a watching world
- People may reject our message, argue against our beliefs, or criticize our convictions
- It is difficult to argue with a life that consistently reflects Christ

When facing hostility our response is not to attack critics but to maintain a godly character

The reputation of Christian character is built over time and destroyed in a moment

Steve Lawson – Trinity Bible Dallas – One Passion Ministries – 73 women her 20's – 5 years

a. **Christian Character Produces a Clear Conscience** - having a good conscience,

Conscience = God-given inner witness approves what is right & condemns what is wrong

Some conscience we all share together and some differ person to person

- All of us have: Cheat spouse | Different: Entertainment – Holidays – Education – Dress
- Violated your Christian conscience is sin | Violate someone else's Christians conscience sin

b. **Christian Character Endures False Accusations** - so that, when you are slandered

- Peter assumes that believers may be slandered simply because they belong to Christ
- Early Christians falsely accused: disloyal citizens, troublemakers, and enemies of society
- Today mocked biblical convictions, misunderstood for faith, criticized for standing truth

Watching news: Hate Homosexuals – Are Sovereign Citizens – Believe in a Flat Earth

When criticized: Refuse retaliate - Continue doing good - Trust God defend your reputation

c. **Christian Character Silences the Critics** - those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. - God often uses godly conduct to accomplish what arguments alone cannot

Takeaway - Hardship strengthens our testimony

Reveals Our Faith - Refines Our Character - Recommends Our Savior

4. The Reminder of God's Sovereignty (17)

For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

- This verse does not explain every "why," but it does establish every "Who."
- God is still ruling, even when life feels unfair - if that should be God's will

God's sovereignty does not always lead us away suffering, always leads us toward righteousness

God's sovereignty does not always remove the pressure—but it always clarifies the path

Two kinds of suffering Peter mentions: Suffering for doing evil - Suffering for doing good

All suffering in this world has been allowed or ordained by God for your good

- Job suffered, not outside God's permission - Joseph betrayed, God still orchestrating.
- Jesus crucified, "according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23)

Takeaway Hardship never escapes God's perfect control

a. **Practice Peace in God's Providence**

- Hardship feels chaotic, anchor heart in reality that nothing is random in God's hands

b. **Preserve Perspective in Painful Seasons**

- Hardship can distort vision and make suffering feel meaningless
- God calls us to interpret pain through His sovereignty, not our emotions

c. **Pursue Purpose through Providential Trials**

- Because nothing escapes God's control, no hardship is wasted
- Even suffering is a tool for refining character and advancing God's mission in your life.

Instead "Why is this happening?" ask "What is God forming in me through this?"

Our faith is under fire – In a fox hole getting shellacked

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Big Idea – Respond with hope when facing hardships