



1 Peter 3:13-17 Christian Conduct in Suffering

Summary: When you sanctify Christ as Lord you know what is true, do what is good, and endure without fear.

The Christian faith is a durable faith. It exists under favorable conditions as well as hostile conditions. In fact, if anything, favorable conditions tend to dampen our relationship with God, and difficulties tend to draw us near.

And the people Peter is writing to are people who have been through difficulties. They have been [grieved by various trials](#). They have a difficult government, remember Nero is the ruler of Rome at this time. Some of them are actual servants owned by real masters and not all of them were kind. Some of them were Christian women married to Roman men who were allowed to take multiple wives and engage in sexual activity with anyone they wanted. This was their world, a world that rejected the rule of Christ. And this was the world in which they were supposed to worship Christ as Lord.

All of which meant that it was probable, that at some point they would be mistreated for doing good. It was probable they *already had been* mistreated for doing good. That they were, *even now, being* mistreated as they attempted to live a righteous life – that they had fresh wounds on their back from a beating by their master, or a husband who wandered in early this morning and passed out in bed after partying and drinking all night. How were they supposed to react to that? How were they to respond to suffering when all they were trying to do was good?

Well, read with me and we'll see Peter's answer: that when you sanctify Christ as Lord – when you make Him the King of your life -three important things happen: you know what is true, you do what is good, and you endure without fear. So he gets right to the heart of the matter and says:

1 Peter 3:13 And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, *you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled."* 15 But sanctify the Lord God (or some translations read sanctify Christ as Lord – they're both saying essentially the same thing – elevate God above everything else that directs you and controls you) *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;* 16 *having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.* 17 For *it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.*

Peter tells them – sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. We said in many of our previous studies, that we are called to live a life of derivative submission fueled by defiant faith. I submit to the government because I submit to Christ as King, I submit to my master or employer because I submit to Christ as His servant; I submit to my spouse because I am the bride of Christ.

So, Peter says, the key to living well on earth is to sanctify Christ in your heart. Put Him first. Revere Christ. Honor Christ as Lord. Set Him apart as the only one who really, truly, has the eternal authority to tell you what to do, and then, *obey Him*. Exercise your defiant faith – look your circumstances, your desires, your situation in the face and say – yes, I see you, I feel you, I hear you, and you make me want to do one thing, but I will defy you and choose to follow my Jesus instead. When you give your highest, deepest, and strongest allegiance to Christ, you sanctify God as Lord in your heart. You choose Him over every other option.

So how do you do that? How do you look your life, your conditions, your circumstances, your culture, and your community in the eye and say, I choose Christ instead?

Well, part of the answer is, as we have seen before, it starts with knowing what you believe. The Christian faith is a lived faith, it applies to the real world, and it is a durable faith, it applies to every part of the real world under all conditions, but it is also a reasonable faith. There are no fairies or unicorns, the Christian faith is full of things you can, and should, know, understand, and experience.

And so, we're told: [always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.](#)

So let me make three quick points about that: you should have hope, people should ask you about it, and you should have an answer.

First, you should have hope. Peter even said earlier, in Chapter 1:3 that we have been born again and God has given us [a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.](#)

Now perhaps you've heard, and even used, the expression "hope is not a strategy" and the idea there is that hope is a shortcut but it's not a plan, it's not a structural basis you can build anything on. And that's true for blind hope. For wishful thinking. For sheer optimism or desire, I hope I win the lottery and then I can afford whatever I want. But we're not talking about that kind of hope – we're talking about evidence-based hope.

You know that Christ came, and lived, and died. You know that He was buried, you know that He arose again from the grave and now you have the hope that by trusting in Him you will be with Him in heaven forever. It hasn't happened yet, but on the basis of everything else you've experienced, you have reason to believe it's true. And so, you have this living hope and it's expressed in your daily life. The things you know and believe are shaping the things you do.

And that means your life will look different, you will make different choices because you have different knowledge. You see the same things as people around you, but you don't see them the same way, you see them with an eternal perspective, you see them through a new lens. Through a new filter.

And you understand this if you have used different filters in your camera or phone – certain things become more visible or less visible when you change filters. The filters make certain things fade out and other things pop. The image hasn't changed, the things in the picture is still the same, but they look different because of the filter you've applied. Well, imagine what things would look like if you only had black and white filters or sepia tones and then you applied the gospel filter that revealed all the colors in brightness and clarity. You'd see *the same picture*, and the same things in it, but you'd see them in a new way.

Now think of applying the gospel filter to your life – you see the same things, you're not editing anything out, you're not cropping all the bad stuff out, you're not airbrushing or Photoshopping anything, you're just seeing what everyone else sees in a different light.

That's the effect of gospel hope in your life. You're living in 4k color in a dull grey tone world.

At least, that's the promise, that's the hope, that's the potential. This what your life could be. I don't know if it is, but I can tell you *it could be*.

We're told [always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.](#)

Does that happen? Does anyone see a difference in you and the way you live? Does anyone ask you about it? It used to happen to me a lot more before I went into full time ministry – the Marines I lived with, trained with, traveled and deployed with, they would see the differences and ask about them at the range when we were firing weapons or on deployment or while driving out to get dinner. It was just natural conversation born out of relationships and it opened doors to talk about amazing things.

Does that happen to you? I hope it does. It should. Your life should seem different to the people around you, the people that know you best, the people that see you most. They should notice the differences and out of natural curiosity and connection they should ask.

Didn't Jesus say: [Matthew 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.](#)

But when they do, and they ask you about your faith, what do you say? That's where some of you start to freak out. You think you have to have an answer about the dinosaurs and science, or about other religions, or about sexual ethics, or about the trustworthiness of Scripture, or the closedmindedness of judgment and hell. And you start to freak out a little bit and figure it's best to leave this stuff to the experts – the people who have been to

seminary and have PhDs, and you're just going to go read a Psalm, turn on some Christian radio, and calm down a bit.

But look – that's not what you're asked to do – you don't have to have all the answers. Peter says *be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you* – do you have that? Do you hope in Christ for your salvation? Can you explain that? Can you explain why? Unless you're in a classroom or some online forum, most of the people who are asking you questions about your faith aren't putting you on trial, they're genuinely curious, they really want to know what you think or what you've heard.

Tell them what you know, tell them what you've experienced, and tell them you'll look into whatever other questions they have if they're serious about them.

I don't want to say no one, but almost no one is ever argued into the faith. And it's not your job to convert them anyway, that's God's job. Your job is to live differently, to let them see the hope that is in you, to love them, and to answer their questions when they ask – to be a witness and a testimony.

But if some of those other questions come up, questions you're not quite sure of the answer to, just ask. Ask your Bible Study leader, small group leader, parents, youth ministry leader, any of the ministry leaders, any of the pastors and elders we're happy to help. And parents and leaders, if someone comes to you and you don't know the answer, tell them and bring the question to the pastors or elders. It's not a big deal. There are no shocking questions, no startling new discoveries, you shouldn't feel intimidated by any question. Our faith is capable of enduring examination, nothing is off limits or hidden.

But it is faith, and there's no getting around that. No one, and I mean no one, has a way of looking at the world that doesn't require faith. We all make certain leaps from what we know and can prove over things we don't fully understand or can't fully explain. Don't ever feel intellectually or socially bullied by some other group that sees the world differently, because they have holes in their worldview too.

But if you want to explore some of the questions people have about Christianity, or maybe some of the questions you have yourself, let me recommend four books to you. This isn't meant to be an infomercial, but I want you to know about some resources that can help you follow Jesus. You can find these anywhere and you can get audiobook versions of them too if you say you're not a reader.

Number one, *Mere Christianity* by CS Lewis. Now I'll warn you, Lewis was a tutor at Oxford, you'll have to stay focused and be committed to make your way through it. It's not high-level academic theory, it was actually written during WWII as a series of radio talks he gave on the BBC, but he is making arguments and you'll have to pay attention as he goes along.

Number two, *The Case for Christ* by Lee Stroebel. He was a reporter who began to investigate Christian claims and eventually came to faith as a result of learning more and more about the historical evidence.

Number three, *The Reason for God* by Tim Keller. I tell people this is like Mere Christianity for the modern generation and what I love about it is, Keller divides the book in two and starts off by saying OK, here are all the problems you might have with Christianity. I hear you. Let me respond to your concerns and questions. And then, in the second half of the book he lays out all the reasons why he believes. This is where I would tell most people to start.

Number four, if you want something fresh off the presses, *Confronting Christianity – 12 questions for the world’s largest religion* by Rebecca McLaughlin. This one is going to cover a lot of the same stuff as the others – in fact, you’ll find certain common themes through all the books because it’s really the same questions that keep getting asked by every new generation and the answers to them don’t really change it all just keeps being refreshed in light of the current cultural moment. So, McLaughlin will speak to things like ISIS and the MeToo movement. If your head is swimming with current cultural questions, this might be a good place to start.

But remember, all these books are ultimately meant to point you back to the same book – the Word of God which is timeless and true for all people, in all places, at all times – and this book points you to a personal relationship with Jesus, the reason for the hope that is in you.

Well, we said when you sanctify Christ as Lord you 1) know what is true, 2) do what is good, and 3) endure without fear

So let’s talk about number two – you do what is good. [You become followers of what is good](#). The word here in Greek is actually zealotes, you become zealous for good. Is that a good way of describing your life? Are you zealous for good, or is your faith more of a burden that gets in the way of what you really want to do? Or is your faith boring, something you do because you kind of feel like you have to? My friend, if you’re burdened or bored with your faith, it’s because you’re not in the game. You’re watching, maybe even cheering a bit every now and then, but not participating. And it’s easy to get up and go get some snacks in the kitchen when you’re just a spectator.

There’s obviously some over lap here with knowing what is true, because you’re living that out, people see the difference in your life, and then they ask you about it. But we need to take a moment and notice that there is a baseline expectation for the Christian life that you will do what is good, *even if you suffer for it*.

There have been seasons in Church history where Christians were persecuted, jailed, put to death for their faith. In fact, it still happens today in other countries. It happened with ISIS, it happens in China, we’ve even seen struggles between churches and the local and state governments here in America over response to COVID restrictions. But as we have seen in our previous studies, God still expects Christians to follow what is good and to do His will, even if they must suffer for it, and to do it all with meekness, reverence, gentleness, with the utmost courtesy for others. [17 For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing](#)

good than for doing evil. Now, as we have said already, this is impossible without depending on the daily presence of God in our lives.

But we also want to be careful about building this doomsday view of the faith. Our passage began by asking: *And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed.*

Christian, your baseline expectation should be that if you do good, life will go well for you. The response to suffering here is a contingency, "even if" it happens, don't worry, because you're eternally blessed. Don't provoke suffering, but don't fear it either. Under most conditions, in most places, living your life under the authority and direction of God will produce peace and goodness in your life and the lives of those around you.

We will all suffer in various ways. Christians will suffer as their community suffers. And we will suffer as part of our humanity – Christians have miscarriages, wither away with cancer, and grow old. But through it all we hold onto to hope and we do good because of what we believe. And then people around us see our hope and ask about which brings glory to God and brings good out of our trials. It has been said, "a saint is someone whose life makes it easier to believe in God."

Is that you? Does the good you do, even under difficult conditions, make it easier for others to believe in God?

Well, that brings us to number 3 – when you sanctify Christ as Lord in your heart you will know what is true, do what is good, and live without fear.

even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." 15 But sanctify the Lord God

When you sanctify the Lord, make Him the cornerstone of your life, you realize you have nothing else to fear. If you truly fear God, reverence God, worship God, you will fear no other.

You want His approval more than anything else. You fear His judgment more than anyone else. We're all trying to please someone, it might even be yourself – you're trying to meet all of your own expectations for performance, for your family, for retirement. But we're all looking to some standard. We're all judging ourselves by something and we want to know we're OK.

The problem is that creates tension – we want to good with God and also be accepted by our friends. We want to be pleasing to God and also be in a relationship. We want to be pleasing to God and also get ahead. On and on it goes, there is no rest for the man or woman or teen or young adult who wobbles between the fear of God and the fears of the flesh.

If you find yourself struggling with discontent, battling with anxiety, anger, or depression, those are all different symptoms of something happening deeper inside – they're indicators

that you're afraid of something happening or not happening that you can't control. And I can almost guarantee, they don't come from trusting too much in God, from fearing or revering, or worshipping Him.

Now, I'm not surprised you struggle with those things, and you shouldn't be either, there are all kinds of reasons to be anxious, afraid, frustrated, angry, or depressed, but there's also the fear of the Lord that gives us tremendous strength to fight back against all of them.

The apostle Paul was no stranger to difficulty, danger, hatred, persecution, uncertainty, and inability to control his circumstances, and yet, he was able to say:

1 Cor 12:10 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.

King David endured many similar difficulties, he was hunted by his own king, and yet he wrote:

Ps 56:11 In God I have put my trust;
I will not be afraid.
What can man do to me?

Again, you can live in the fear of God, who sent His son to die for you, or you can live in fear of men who will draw you away from God.

Which will it be?

Who or what will you sanctify in your heart as Lord? Who or what will be the driving force in your life? Who or what will shape your opinions, and form your hope?

We're going to celebrate communion now and it's a great time to consider these things. To consider what they mean – we have a piece of bread that is meant to remind us that Christ gave his body for us – that He came to earth, put on flesh, and walked among us, and then laid down His life as a sacrifice to save us from our sin. We have a cup of juice made from crushed grapes, reminding us that He was crushed for us, pierced for us, that his dark red blood poured out for us. And it was all meant to bring us to God. To give us hope.

Jesus did good, and suffered for righteousness's sake. He did the will of His Father, and suffered for doing good rather than doing evil.

Now He asks us to come to Him, confess our sins, receive forgiveness, and reorient our lives – to no longer live for our self-determined goals, preferences and desires, but to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts and to live for Him by His grace and with His strength; to be filled with hope which is so attractive to others that they ask questions about our lives.

Let's pray.



Application and Discussion Questions

1 Peter 3:13-17

Christian Conduct in Suffering

Summary: When you sanctify Christ as Lord you know what is true, do what is good, and endure without fear.

- Have you ever suffered for doing good or choosing righteousness? What happened?
- Consider your entire life, has it been filled with more blessing or suffering?
- Do you believe that “even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, *you are blessed?*” What makes this easy or difficult to believe?
- In your own words, what does it mean to “sanctify the Lord” or “sanctify Christ as Lord” in your heart? What makes it hard to do this?
- Which is the most difficult for you in light of your current circumstances: knowing what is true, doing what is good, or enduring without fear?
- Review Titus 2 – what connections and similarities do you see with Peter’s instructions here to citizens, servants, and family members?
- Would you say your life has a solid foundation of hope? Why or why not? Where are the areas where you struggle with this? Where are the areas that come easily?
- Do people ever ask you about the hope that is in you, do they ever ask you about your Christian faith? Can you share about a time when someone asked about your faith, what happened?
- What questions do you have about the faith? What would you like to learn about?
- What questions do you think the people in your life have right now about the Christian faith? Do you feel competent to answer?

Good books for those with questions about the Christian faith:

Mere Christianity by CS Lewis.

The Case for Christ by Lee Stroebel.

The Reason for God by Tim Keller.

Confronting Christianity – 12 questions for the world’s largest religion by Rebecca McLaughlin.