

The Hope That Is In You 1 Peter 3:13-17

I have been listening to a podcast called “How I Built This.” A guy named Raz (NPR) interviews entrepreneurs and innovators (eg., *Sub-Pop record label founders who signed Nirvana, Shake Shack, Fitbit, Sierra Nevada, Five Guys*).

- Common characteristics in each story: [Most] humble roots, broke/desperate, sacrifice, something people wanted, interesting business models, and remarkable growth.
- If Raz could interview Jesus, who said “I will build my church” — what’s the story?
 - Humble roots, something people want (resurrection from the dead, eternal life with Hlm, with more sickness and death and conflict!), one of a kind sacrifice, an interesting plan (selecting twelve disciples), wild growth
 - Or if he interviewed his early followers — humility, doing good, speaking a message people desperately want/need, but an unusual path to success: suffering.
 - That’s how the church was built.

Upcoming Sundays: Christian suffering, Hope, and blessing

Tertullian was an African church father (155-240ish) who wrote about the paradox of suffering and blessing saying of faithful Christians: ‘**Prison does for the Christian what the desert did for the prophet [i.e., sanctifies]. Call it not prison but the place of renewal. The body is shut in, but all is open to the spirit: it *may roam abroad on the way to God ... The leg does not feel the chain if the mind is in heaven.*’**”

He is also the one who famously said that “the blood of martyrs is indeed the seed of the church.” (in Clowney)

- Peter writes at the beginning of centuries of persecution that the church of Christ would endure.
- He also writes about “the living hope” that fills the hearts of God’s people.
- The suffering of hope-filled witnesses is a story that is still being written today.
- **3:13-ff touches on various aspects of Xian suffering (Christ’s and ours)**

3:13-17

This passage ties suffering to our witness. (I preached from it a few years ago).

Christians are to share their hope with others in all circumstances, and this hope is to be accompanied by a beautiful life of goodness.

Peter doesn’t give us a kind of formula to follow for bearing witness, but rather focuses on the heart and the life of faithful witnesses.

It’s about the “**heart of evangelism and the lifestyle of the evangelist**”

This is where the problem ultimately lies: the heart.

- Some believers have had courses on evangelism; read books on evangelism; memorized presentations; learned how to work the “evangeicube,” and more – **but they still aren’t witnessing!**
- **Why? It’s a matter of *the heart*.**
- **When a young lady gets engaged, it’s amazing how her life/conversations change!**
 - She shows off that ring.
 - She shows pictures of her fiancé.
 - She updates her Facebook status.
 - She begins planning that wedding.
 - She begins to make to plans to fit in that wedding dress! And so on...
 - **Why? She has a new love!**
 - She doesn’t go days and weeks without talking about Mr. Right.
 - She doesn’t have to be forced, or guilted into talking about him. She wants to.
 - Guilt won’t motivate, but beauty will; hope will; love will.; awe will.
 - (Kimberly drove her family crazy talking about me!!!)

We talk about that which we love, treasure, revere, and hope in.

So it is here in Peter. Notice the focus in the text:

- The call to be “zealous” for what is good (have a heart for what is good)
- Verse 15 – “in your hearts” honor Christ as Lord
- Verse 15 – Share your **hope!** Your hope flows from the heart.
- Verse 15 – **Gentleness.** You can only do this by the Spirit. The inner life.
- Verses 16 – having a **good conscious.** Interior life.
- Verse 17 – Being committed to God’s will.

Other important texts in 1 Peter:

- **1:22**, “love one another from a pure heart”
- **3:3-4**, “adorning that’s not external, but the hidden person of the heart”

**When you love Jesus deeply,
your behavior and your conversation will change dramatically.**

**When you love Jesus deeply,
you will share the hope within you,
even though external challenges exists all around you.**

“The inner and outer life are inseparable, for what happens *within* will inevitably be displayed to all, especially when one suffers.” (T. Schreiner)

What kind of external challenges were the Xians in Peter’s day facing & what kind will we face in our day?

Peter’s Context: Hostility to the Gospel

Peter is writing *to scattered Christians across Asia Minor*, who were **facing persecution for their faith**: slander, ridicule, physical suffering & marginalization.

Peter is writing *from Rome*, and it was the Emperor Nero who later put Peter to death, according to tradition. He started a fire in Rome and blamed it on the Christians.

- “**Nero fiddled while Rome burned.**”
- "Therefore, to put an end to the rumor Nero created a diversion and subjected to the most extra-ordinary tortures those hated for their abominations by the common people called *Christians*. The originator of this name (was) Christus [Christ], who, during the reign of Tiberius had been executed by sentence of the procurator Pontinus Pilate. (Tacitus, Annales, 15, 44).
- It wasn't true. **They could have sang with Billy Joel, We didn't start the Fire**”

Our Context: Hardness to the Gospel and Happy without the Gospel

This is not a place of hostility, but this is a country that is **increasingly becoming *post-Christian***. It's a country with thousands of....

- ***un-churched people*** -- those who have grown up their whole lives essentially without the church, and no interest in it.
- ***de-churched people*** -- those who have been fringe church goers in the past, but no longer attend.
- We have a lot of both here in RDU.

So we have different challenges than Peter's audience, but we share this similarity: we are both “**strangers**” and “**sojourners**” here.

We shouldn't be surprised by **biblical cluelessness**, lack of interest; nor should we surprised by **mockery, ridicule, or even legal rulings that affect us**.

When it comes to evangelism, all this means that ***we can't leave it to Sunday morning events only – nor reserve it for the professional clergy!***

We must engage people with the gospel in the **marketplaces, in the workplaces, in our neighborhoods, among our families, and recreation places – in our networks**.

Field of Dreams is a great movie, but a bad strategy: If you build it they will come!

We must do evangelism in the everyday course of life where people are.

What does Peter tell us about witnessing in a hard context? 3 principles.

1. Practical Goodness (3:13-14a)

Peter has repeatedly emphasized being known for practical acts of “**goodness**.”

- **2:12** – Beautiful deeds, honorable deeds – can win over some unbelievers.
- **3:1** – women who are married to unbelieving husbands are called to exhibit of good deeds before her husband that he may be won over.

- **3:8ff** – the whole church is called to bless the world

All of these texts speak of the lifestyle of the Christian.

- Our witness involves more than good deeds, but it definitely includes good deeds.

3:13-14a

- “zealous for what is good” (13)
- “suffer for righteousness” (14a)
- He calls it “good behavior” in v. 16, and suffering for “doing good” (17)

A. Have a passion for good deeds (13)

- be “zealous for what is good.”
- Live in ardent pursuit of a vitreous life.
- Not “be on the right side of every debated issue in society”

B. The Possibility of Suffering while doing good (13-14a)

- “Who is to harm you?” (13)
- Obviously, people would harm them, but he’s asking it in an *ultimate sense*.
- The pain you will endure is **only temporary**.
- The question is an indirect reminder of the presence and protection of God.
 - It’s like a **Rom. 8:31** principle. “If God be for us, who can be against us?”
 - People will be against us, **but ultimately they won’t prevail in a true and eternal sense, because God is for us. And he will vindicate his people on the last day.**
 - **Psalm 56** – “What can man do to me?” At one level a lot, but on another, nothing. “This is I know, that God is for me” (56:9).
- **Verse 13** is connected to the previous verse – actually with a word “and” in Greek to begin the sentence. The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous; He will have the last word.
- You may suffer for “righteousness” (14a)
- **Sometimes your good deeds will be used to win people over (3:1, 2:12), but sometimes others will be turned off, and may even become aggressive and try to harm you.** (cf., 1 John 3; John 16).

C. Consider yourself blessed if you suffer for doing good (14a)

- An echo of Matt 5:10.
- “Blessed” not just in the next life, **but now!**
- Faramir in *Lord of the Rings* could have taken the ring, but he didn’t. Sam said, “You show the quality of your character” (para). And he says to Sam, “The praise of the praiseworthy is better than all rewards.”
- The “accolade of God” is better than anything.
 - **The pleasure of God toward us is better than the earthly rewards and the praise of man.**
- Don’t withdraw from suffering because “you will be **blessed**.”

App: Live a life of practical goodness.

- Be a good neighbor; a good friend; a good employee.

- Be devoted to a life of virtue.
- Live to bless people.
- Surprise people with acts of kindness and goodness.
- **Provoke questions from unbelievers by living under the Lordship of Christ, displaying the fruit of the Spirit.**

Many Christians know how to answer questions like, “What must I do to be saved?” But they **don’t know how to start these conversations.**

Here’s a good first step: Live an attractive life under Jesus’ lordship that provokes questions. Sometimes we can ask good questions, sometimes we provoke questions.

To Lordship we now turn...

2. Christ-Centered Reverence (3:14b-15a)

Even if you suffer for doing good, he says, “don’t fear people.”

Proverbs 29:25a: “The fear of man lays a snare.”

- It **enslaves us**. It **traps us**. It **confines our thoughts and actions**.
- It can keep you from bearing witness.

How do you avoid this? **Karate Kid. Fear does not exist in this dojo, does it? They look within/training.**

You fear Jesus more. You reverence Jesus.

Jesus told his disciples on one occasion

⁴“I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. ⁵But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! ⁶Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows. (Lk 12.4-7)

Fear Christ. Reverence Christ. Set apart Christ, the Lord as holy. Be awed by Christ.

In this verse, Peter alludes to **Isaiah 8:11ff.**

- Judah, the southern Kingdom was facing the threat of the northern kingdom, Israel along with what is now Syria.
- And they’re tempted to look to Assyrian instead of the Lord for help.
- The remnant is called to ere to trust the Lord.
- They were to fear the Lord, not man.
- “But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.” (Isa 8:13)
- In the same way, Peter says the church **must not fear persecutors, but must reverence the Lord.**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor who had the courage to speak against Hitler, write about it, and organize opposition against him. The Nazi's imprisoned him and eventually executed him. What made him so courageous? "Those who are afraid of men have no fear of God, and those who fear God have no more fear of men."

App: One of the biggest barriers to our witness: fear of man.

- How do we overcome it? We redirect our fear.
- We understand the holiness of the Lord, and we revere him.
- It's the awe of Jesus that makes a witness for Jesus.

3. Daily Readiness (3:15b-17)

Notice the terms, "always" and "anyone."

- Be ready **everyday to respond to every kind of person.**
- Never a perfect day - We can always find an excuse: "I didn't sleep well," "I got in an argument with my kids/spouse." "It's too hot."
- Be ready. Everyday evangelism says, "Game on."
- Coaching baseball: "This is a ready position..." (Some kids are picking flowers in the outfield! I had a guy get picked off because he was looking at the airplane!)

Peter gives us three things to remember: **our subject, our tone, and our goal.**

A. Our Subject: Hope (3:15b)

"**defense**" is the Greek word "**apologia**" from which we get "apologetics."

While at one level, this does demand some level of study ('reason' calls for logical thought).

But please notice that **Peter doesn't have formal, academic apologetics in mind.**

That is, giving sophisticated answers about the existence of God, the problem of evil, and so on.

- You shouldn't say, "I can't be an effective witness *because I haven't had a sufficient number of apologetics courses.* If I haven't read Wittgenstein or Van Til, so I better keep my mouth shut."
- That's not the idea.
- **He has hope in mind, not lofty arguments.** (1:3; 1:21)
- He has **ordinary conversation in mind** – on the street, over the fence, in a car, in a hospital.
- Now you need to be "prepared" – read Scripture, listen to people's arguments, etc., but this isn't a formal debate, but ordinary conversation.
- Be ready to explain why Christ is more precious than anything.
- Be ready to explain why you have hope beyond the grave.

The ordinary Christian can participate, because all Christians have this hope!

- They can say, "I was blind but now I see!" They can say, "The best is yet to come!"

- The person can on the hospital bed, die in peace and joy, as he or she awaits to see the glory of Jesus Christ.

We are not being told to argue for “the faith” but to defend our “hope.”

- Hope, in the NT, is not wishful thinking, like “I hope there’s college football this fall.”
- Our future hope is assured.
- New heavens and new earth; a new body; no more tears, pain; an inheritance; final vindication; seeing Jesus; etc.
- It’s a certainty for the saint.
- Our hope in the future energizes our lives now.
- Our hope energizes our evangelism!
- Our hope is unique!
 - There is so much negativity and criticism about everything today and so little hope!

It’s in the context of suffering that the believer’s hope shines.

- This hope separates us from the unbelieving world.
- And so some people will ask about it!

This is liberating in many ways because some people read this and say, “I need to be prepared with all the answers to deep questions.” No.

- That’s a good thing to do, but Peter’s emphasis has a different focus – it comes at the heart level.
- You might call it *experiential apologetics* – the apologetics of hope.
- This is not so much about *argumentation* as it is *adoration*.

To be an effective witness, you need more than a syllogism on paper; you need a song in your heart.

- To be a good witness, you need to adore Jesus.
- You need to be filled with hope!
- This is empowering because every believer can do this!
- Grandma with no formal theological training can radiate with contagious Christian hope!

Unbelievers may not understand our theology,
but they can identify our hope.

(As well as other virtues like love, joy, peace)

App: Get hopeful!

One of the most powerful ways we will ever commend Christ to others is when we suffer. (cf., Rom 12:12)

Our hope sustains us in suffering,
and our hope shines in suffering.

- When life hurts, and dreams fade, we can still abound in hope because of what Christ has done for us, and all that Christ has for us.

- We have a glorious hope to be excited about!
 - Our glorious hope is not returning to normalcy. But Jesus Christ coming again, bringing a new heavens and new earth.
 - Our glorious hope is not in the next presidential election! But the coming of the King of Kings.
 - Our glorious hope is not in structural changes in society.
 - To be sure, you should vote; and it's reasonable to want to return to normal! And we should work to promote change that will allow people to flourish.
 - But normalcy will not be heaven. There will still be death, disease, conflict.
 - But in heaven there will be no more death, no more diseases, no more social conflicts; no need to lock your doors.

This world needs to hear of this hope!

B. Our Tone: Gentleness (3:15c)

We must proclaim Christ in a Christly manner.

We are to share this hope with gentleness and respect (or better-rendered, “reverence” – reflecting the previous thought of revering Christ).

- So we don't share our hope with haughtiness, but gentleness.
- We don't share our hope with ugly defensiveness, but with humble reverence.
- Col 4:6, teaches us just this, right? To speak with grace seasoned with salt...
- **Winning a person not an argument**
- Look at who is writing this! Peter! What happened to him? The gospel transformed him. He became a gentle man.
- The gospel makes us warm, gentle, patient, approachable.

App: Pursue gentleness.

- A gentle, gracious tone is persuasive.
- “the gentle tongue breaks the bone” (Prov 25:15)

C. Our Goal: Faithfulness (3:16-17)

We should want to be faithful witnesses first and foremost for the glory of God!

16: Maintaining a good conscious

Peter says believers should strive for maintaining a good conscious when responding to unbelievers.

We do this in two ways:

- (1) **Living a faithful life in the midst of trial and suffering. This would demonstrate your hope. “This is discipleship: knowing how to follow Jesus in any situation.” (Vanhoozer)**
- (2) **By responding to their questions with the right content and tone.** This is a defense of your hope.

“**Might be put to shame**” – I take this in the eschatological sense.

- We aren't called to shame people or embarrass people.

- Scripture teaches that on the last day, it won't be the faithful who are shamed, but those who have rejected Christ.

17: Suffering for doing good

We will not be exempt from suffering – slander, rejection, etc – but we must not respond to that suffering with evil. No we must take the high road.

Being maliciously slandered doesn't give us a license to speak in the same way.

It will be hard to respond with a gracious tone in these occasions, but in these occasions, **it is most important that we do so.**

“Better to suffer for doing good” – Again this looks to the future.

- **It is better to suffer now for doing good than it is to suffer on the Day of Judgment because you have practiced evil your whole life.**
- For the believer, this life is as hard as it will ever be!
- There will be no suffering in the future!
- Live with a living hope in the glorious vision of the things to come for the redeemed!

App: Pursue faithfulness.

- Some people will respond in faith to the gospel, and others will not.
- Some may actually persecute you.
- But our call is to be faithful, and leave the results to God -- to maintain a good conscience before God.

After all, this is what Jesus did – suffered for doing God's will (3:18).

- No one suffered more unjustly.
- **This idea lies at the heart of salvation is the heart of Christian ethics.**
- Our salvation – 3:18, that he might bring us to God.

We follow in the steps of Jesus.

- He went about doing good.
- He suffered in view of glory to come.
- He was the Gentle Savior, who tells the weary to come to him and find rest.
- Through our faith in him, we become new creations, and are now empowered by the Holy Spirit to shine as lights in this dark world.
- May we live and speak out of an overflow of love for the Savior.

-Pursue goodness.

-Revere Jesus, don't fear man.

-Be filled with gospel hope. And be ready to share your hope with those you encounter.

