**1 Peter: A Safe Haven in the Midst of an Unfriendly World**

1 Peter 3:13-17

**Context**

**1 Peter 3:13-17**—*Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?****14****But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled,****15****but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;****16****and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.****17****For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.*

We know both from the scripture and from life experiences that trouble will come. It is inevitable.

***Job 5:7***—*For man is born for trouble, As sparks fly upward.*

**John 16:33***—These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.*

**Psalm 22:11***—Be not far from me, for trouble is near; For there is none to help.*

**Isaiah 8:22***—Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be driven away into darkness.*

Troubles, hardships, and difficulties come often in waves and in many forms. It may be true that we experience more difficulties today than perhaps in prior generations. It used to be that the trouble you knew was the trouble you experienced.[[1]](#footnote-2) We are not only dealing with our own struggles, but in a media-saturated age, we have increased awareness and therefore increased hardships. We seem to take on far more troubles than we were ever intended to carry.

That said, we have a God who is sovereign over all things and is in control of the whole world down to the smallest detail. There is nothing that escapes His watchful eye.

More than that, He is *in the trouble.* He is *in the trouble* effecting His purposes. God is accomplishing His purposes in and through the trouble.

**Isaiah 14:24***—The Lord of hosts has sworn saying, “Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand.”*

**Isaiah 46:5, 9-10***—“To whom would you liken Me And make Me equal and compare Me, That we would be alike?”...****9****“Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me,* ***10****Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’*

**Amos 3:6***—If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble? If a calamity occurs in a city has not the Lord done it?*

Additionally, He does not owe us an explanation. He does what pleases Him and we are not privy to all of His ways or all of His will because there are things that are hidden.

**Isaiah 45:15***—Truly, You are a God who hides Himself, O God of Israel, Savior!*

**Deuteronomy 29:29***—“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”*

**E.g.** Consider the life of Job

**Side note:** There are things that are clearly revealed to us; the greatest of which is the fullness of who He is in bodily form through His Son, the Lord Jesus.

**Colossians 2:9**—*For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form*

So, we know there will be trouble. We know that God is sovereignly working providentially in the trouble accomplishing His purpose. The question for the audience that Peter is writing to is: how are they to *respond* to the trouble—especially when it escalates to persecution. What do they do with it (in terms of thinking) as well as reacting to it? We likewise need to respond to the same question.

We know that they hated Jesus to the point of killing Him. They will hate His followers as well.

**John 15:18-19**—“*If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.****19****If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.*

**How does the Gospel give the believer**

**hope in a hostile world?**

1. **Do good**

***13****Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?*

1. Peter asks a rhetorical question
   1. Even unbelievers are reluctant to do harm to those who are doing good
   2. What is the type of good he is referring to?
2. *Prove zealous for what is good*
   1. *Prove—*to become, i.e. to come into existence, begin to be, receive being; to come to pass, happen[[2]](#footnote-3)
   2. Believers are “to become” good
   3. They are to live above reproach

**1 Thessalonians 5:15**—*See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.*

**Roman 13:3***—For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same.*

**Philippians 2:14-16***—Do all things without grumbling or disputing;****15****so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,****16****holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.*

**2 Timothy 2:20-22***—Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor.****21****Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.****22****Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*

1. *Zealous for what is good*
   1. *Zealous (*zēlōtēs)—intensity or enthusiasm; one burning with zeal, a zealot[[3]](#footnote-4)
   2. In NT times, there was a radical political party of Jewish patriots, called the Zealots, which pledged to free the Jews from all foreign rule by whatever extreme measures (lying, stealing, assassination) were necessary, even if those efforts resulted in their own deaths.[[4]](#footnote-5)

**Matthew 10:2, 4a**—*Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother…****4****Simon the Zealot*

* 1. Peter is wanting the reader to be zealous for what was good, noble, and right

**1 Corinthians 14:12**—*So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.*

**2 Corinthians 7:11***—For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.*

**Titus 2:13-14***—looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,****14****who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.*

**Revelations 3:19***—[*Jesus to His church in Laodicea*] Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.*

Peter’s meaning is not that his readers will thus escape all base treatment and persecution for this is the very subject with which he proposes to deal. Despite all the good which Christians may do, the world does not really like them and is on occasion bound to vent its hatred. What Peter says is that zealousness for the good robs opponents of any real reason for mean treatment of the readers.[[5]](#footnote-6)

* 1. What is the outcome of a “*zealous for what is good*” life?
     1. A life that pleases the Lord
     2. A life that gives God praise
     3. A life that leads to pure living
     4. A life that (conversely) loses its appeal for worldly things
     5. A blessed life
     6. Eternal rewards

1. **Suffer well**

***14****But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled…****17****For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.*

1. *Even if you should suffer*
   1. The contrast is set against a passionate pursuit of goodness
   2. There is no guarantee if you do what is right you will not suffer
   3. Consider Jesus
      1. He did many good things

**Acts 10:38***—You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.*

**John 10:32**—*Jesus answered them, “I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?”*

* + 1. Yet they killed Him

**Matthew 27:22-23**—*Pilate \*said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all \*said, “Crucify Him!”****23****And he said, “Why, what evil has He done?” But they kept shouting all the more, saying, “Crucify Him!”*

**Luke 23:23-25***—But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices began to prevail.****24****And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted.****25****And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will.*

**Acts 2:23***—this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*

* 1. Jesus repeatedly told His followers that they would not escape suffering

**Matthew 10:24-25***—“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master.****25****It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!”*

**Luke 6:22***—Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man.*

**John 15:20***—Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.*

* 1. The message is reiterated by the Apostles

**Acts 14:22**—[Paul and Barnabas, after Paul is stoned, he gets up and they enter the city and preach] *strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”*

**Philippians 1:29**—*For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.*

**2 Timothy 3:12***—Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

**Hebrews 12:3-4***—For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.* ***4****You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin.*

1. *Suffer for the sake of righteousness*
   1. These believers did suffer (**1:1**)
   2. Many early followers of the faith (and since) have suffered

**Acts 5:40-41***—They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them.****41****So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.*

**Acts 7:57-60***—But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him [Stephen] with one impulse.****58****When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.****59****They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!”****60****Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” Having said this, he fell asleep.*

**Acts 8:3-4***—But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.* ***4****Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.*

**Acts 12:1-4***—Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them.****2****And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword.****3****When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread.****4****When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people.*

*Cf.* ***Acts 13:50; 16:20-24; 17:5-9; 26:9-11***

* 1. His working toward righteousness identifies His sovereignty
     + - 1. He rules over all

**Psalms 90:2***—Before the mountains were born Or You gave ward off His hand Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’*

**Ephesians 3:11***—This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord*

1. *Blessing comes with those who suffer persecution*
   1. *How is this true?*

**1 Peter 5:10***—After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.*

**James 1:2-4***—Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,****3****knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.****4****And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing*

* 1. *The long view tells us that our struggles are short-term and are significantly less than the resulting blessing*

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18***—Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.****17****For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,****18****while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

* 1. Therefore, keep the right perspective
     1. We must have eyes of faith
     2. We must not be deceived and short sighted
     3. Know and believe the promises of God will come about
  2. Jesus even warned His saints in Smyrna

**Revelation 2:10***—Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

1. *You are blessed*
   1. *Blessed—*supremely blest; by extension, fortunate, well off; declaration of blessedness[[6]](#footnote-7)
   2. *Here the emphasis isn’t so much on the effect (the blessing of happiness or joy) but more of privilege or honor*

**Luke 1:28**—*And coming in, he [the angel Gabriel] said to her, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.”*

**Luke1:42***—And she [*Elizabeth*] cried out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!*

**Matthew 5:10-12***—“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* ***11****“Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.****12****Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

1. *And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled…*

**Isaiah 8:12b-13***—And you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it.* ***13****“It is the Lord of hosts whom you should regard as holy. And He shall be your fear, And He shall be your dread.*

* 1. **Historical context:** In 734BC, the king of Assyria was invading many nations—including Israel, Judah and Aram (modern day Syria). The kings of Israel and Aram wanted the king of Judah (Ahaz) to enter into an alliance with them to defend themselves against Assyria. King Ahaz refused. Instead, Ahaz aligns with the Assyrians. The prophet Isaiah had strongly warned Ahaz to not make ungodly alliances but to trust in the name of the Lord their God. He did not.
  2. It is the same idea for Peter as he’s counseling these believers

**Psalm 118:6***—The Lord is for me; I will not fear; What can man do to me?*

**Proverbs 29:25***—The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted.*

**Matthew 10:28***—Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

* 1. *Do not be troubled*—to agitate, trouble (a thing, by the movement of its parts to and fro); to cause one inward commotion, take away his calmness of mind, disturb his equanimity; to stir up[[7]](#footnote-8)
     + - 1. Remain calm
         2. Also remain determined, resolute, steadfast, immovable, and courageous

**Joshua 1:7, 9**—*Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go…****9****Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”*

**10:25**—*Joshua then said to them, “Do not fear or be dismayed! Be strong and courageous, for thus the Lord will do to all your enemies with whom you fight.”*

Suffering must be viewed as an opportunity to receive spiritual blessings, not as an excuse to compromise the faith before a hostile world.[[8]](#footnote-9)

* + - * 1. Set your affections on thing above

**Colossians 3:2-4**—*Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.****3****For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.****4****When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.*

1. ***17****For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right…*
   1. We accept hardship as part of God’s wise and sovereign plan
   2. It is often His greater plan for blessing
2. *…rather than for doing what is wrong.*
   1. There is a corresponding disciple from the Lord for disobedience
   2. Do not be surprised

***1 Peter 2:20***—*For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.*

**1 Peter 4:15-19***—Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler;****16****but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.****17****For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?****18****And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?****19****Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.*

1. **Sanctify Christ**

***15a*** *but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts…*

1. **Defend Faith**

***15b****…always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence*

1. **Good conscience**

***16****and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.*

When you believe everything is under the control of God, even opposition and disaster, you can face the future with confidence and hope. [[9]](#footnote-10)

**Conclusion**

What if God, in His goodness, wanted to bless you but the blessing only comes through suffering. Are you in?

What if God would be more glorified in your life if you faced greater hardships and greater difficulties. Would you not simply be “OK” with it, but would you eagerly sign up?

To be clear, God does not ask (nor require) your permission before He sovereignly does what will please Himself. He will; thankfully, shape us, mold us, and conform us into His image of His Son in the painful process. Therefore, I do not have to fear the process, but willingly and joyfully submit to it knowing that there is nothing that will be more than I can bear or endure (**1 Corinthians 10:13**).

**Luke 22:42***—saying, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.”*

**Source**

Most of the message and notes come from:

Richard W. DeHaan, Good News for Bad Times: 1 Peter

R.C.H. Lenski, The Interpretation of I and II Epistles of Peter, the three Epistles of John, and the Epistle of Jude

John MacArthur, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 1 Peter

John MacArthur, Securities Against a Hostile World, 1 Peter 3:13-17, Sept 24, 1989, gty.org

John MacArthur, Finding Security in This Troubled World, 1 Peter 3:13-17, May 12, 2013, gty.org

Jerome H Smith, The New Treasure of Scripture Knowledge

[www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org)

1. John MacArthur [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Strong’s G1096 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Strong’s G2207 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. MacArthur, 197. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Lenski, 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Strong’s G3107 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Strong’s G5015 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. MacArthur, 199. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. DeHaan, 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)