

Persecution & the Christian

Part III: Living Through It

Text: 1 Peter

Introduction:

- 1) What a difficult thing it is to place ourselves in the very setting and in the lives of those Christians in the first century who experienced dreadful persecution for professing their faith in Christ and for proclaiming His saving gospel message.
- 2) We are so far removed from such persecutions as:
 - a. A religious mob greatly angered by the piercing truth about their hypocritical and sinful ways. (They stoned Stephen)
 - b. False accusations about your religious intentions and imprisonment with shackles in a musty, dark, comfortless prison cell.
 - c. Public derision, cruel defamation, and blasphemous statements that pervert the view others have about your Christian life, and make it a mockery.
 - d. Faithful individuals who watched their spouses be carried off by Roman soldiers and burned at the stake for not denouncing their faith in Christ.
 - e. The list could go on...
- 3) Though we do not face such extreme conditions of persecutions as those of the first century, we too encounter trials and tribulations in life that can hinder godly living.
- 4) Persecution, trials, tribulations, and suffering can cause either growth or bitterness and grief in the Christian life. Peter's inspired message appealed to suffering Christians to **commit their souls to Him [God] in doing good** (4:19) in their Christian lives. The same message is just as applicable for Christ-committed living today.
(optional continued intro)
- 5) The focal point of the content within this 1st epistle of Peter is a matter of great concern and exhortation for those Christians who were suffering various forms of persecutions because of their faith.
- 6) Peter, out of much necessity, instructs and encourages these Christians toward maintaining a standard of godly living and commitment to Christ in spite of "fiery trials," because they have been "grieved by various trials." (1:6)

I. FIRST THINGS FIRST – REMEMBER YOUR SALVATION

- A. Read (1:3–9) Remember who supplies Salvation.

- B. Remember its value and worth in your life.
 - 1. Inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you. (vs. 4)
 - 2. Genuine faith – more precious than silver or gold. (vs. 7) You haven't seen Christ, yet you love Him. (Read 1:18–19)
 - 3. This is how you feel about your faith in Christ and your salvation... Inexpressible joy.
 - 4. A faithful life will end in the salvation of your souls. (vs. 9)
- C. Is this how you feel about your Salvation? We need constant reminders. Where your treasure is there your heart will be also. (Mt. 6.19–21)

II. HONORABLE CONDUCT

- A. Be holy in your conduct (1: 13–15). Why should I be holy, especially when such living is the reason for the persecution? (Read 2:11–12)
 - 1. Because God is holy. (1:16)
 - 2. Because of influence. (2.12) Be more concerned about how your actions influence their perception of God.
 - a. Submit to Government. Don't rebel. (2.13–17)
 - b. Submit to masters [employers]. (2.16–20) Appl: persecution by employers. Do not revile... Christ didn't. (2.21–23)
 - c. Wives conduct toward unbelieving husband. Win him without a word.
 - d. It's better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. (Read 3.13–17)
- B. Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. That is the Key. (vs. 15)(Read 4.12–16)

III. FACING THE “FIERY TRIALS” OF OUR FAITH

- A. 2 Tim. 3.12: “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” We must realize that Paul's statement of fact extends to **ALL** Christians.
 - 1. How could an apostle make such a negative statement about the result of Christian living and then expect individuals to continue in a life destined for trials, sufferings, and persecutions?
 - 2. Read previous verses (3.10–11). “...Out of them all the Lord rescued me!”
- B. WE NEED ENDURANCE! Read James 1.2–3 (NASV) “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces **endurance**.”

1. EX: Dad's prayer to God for trials that his faith and patience would be strengthened. (His prayer was answered)
2. Why endurance? Because of the trials that await us in life which threaten to tear us from God and our hope of salvation. (5:8-9)
 - a. Some of those trials we cause by our own decisions. Peter denied Jesus three times.
 - b. Some are brought on by things beyond our control. Job – Satan challenged God as to Job's faithfulness, and Satan accused God of putting a hedge around Job. (that's why God doesn't put a hedge around us... because our faithfulness to God must not be viewed by any as a stability because of prosperity.)
 - c. Shadrack, Meshack, and Abed-Nego. Faced a fire rather than bowing to an idol.
 - d. Satan is at the core of it all.
4. You are kept by the power of God, **THROUGH FAITH** for salvation (1:5)
5. Christ did it, you can do it.

Conclusion: Christ endured suffering, trials, and persecution for us that we may have not just any life, but eternal life in heaven. Will you, in turn, endure hardship for Him... and for the security of your own salvation?