

Text: 1 Pt 3.14

Tonight, we will look at 1 Pt 3.14. I planned to do more than just the one verse, but found that I had enough to say about this verse that I didn't want to cut it short. So, we will come back here next week to start, then move on to the rest of the passage as the thoughts we find here form the basis for the instructions that go forward.

How likely is it that you will experience suffering for the Lord's sake?

We often read about the persecution various ones experienced in the Bible and contrast that with the relative freedom we experience. Or we read about the story of some spiritual forebear who suffered, but note that our lot is different. The same is true as we consider the suffering of believers in other lands, whether the former Communist dictatorships (or present-day China) or some of the Islamic states presently.

Perhaps the likelihood of persecution isn't exactly the main point of our text, but it is something our text touches on.

Beyond likelihood, assuming you do experience some sort of persecution, what word would you use to describe that experience for a believer?

How about "blessed"?

That is the word our text uses.

Read 1 Pt 3.14-17, text 14a

Proposition: Your life should orient itself around faith in Christ, and living for him, not in fear for self and avoiding trouble.

I. The expectation of suffering

A. The continuity of thought

1. One commentary: "Verse 14 restates the thesis of v. 13."¹
2. He goes on to point out that the "but" is less contrast than clarification²

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, v. 37 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 169.

² Schreiner, 170.

1 Pt 3.13-14 ¶ Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?¹⁴ [Indeed], even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. ...

3. If you are zealous for good, suffering persecution isn't the reaction you expect
4. Lit. opening to verse: “but if and you should suffer” → “indeed if also you should suffer”

B. The possibility of suffering

1. The condition is a “fourth class” condition – “future less probable”
2. Uses the *optative* mood (a very rare construction) – expresses something that is possible (or in the negative, impossible)

“God forbid!” – negative optative, lit. “May it never ever even remotely be!”

3. Here, our passage instructs us to continue in the spiritual frame of mind Peter instructed us throughout (read again 3.14-16)

Wallace: “*Prima facie*, the readership of this letter has not yet suffered for righteousness, and the possibility of such happening soon seems remote.”³

“The use of this construction (optative) points to the fact that suffering is not the expected outcome of zeal for good.”⁴

C. Should you *expect* suffering?

1. Suffering shouldn't be the natural expectation of Christian living (13)
2. Yet Peter himself suffered for his Christian testimony
 - a. Imprisonment, beatings, etc., in the book of Acts (notably Ac 12)
 - b. Later imprisonment and execution (acc. to tradition)

³ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 700.

⁴ Edwin A. Blum, “1 Peter,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Volume 9, John, Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 240.

- c. The apostles all experienced some kind of persecution according to Acts, and most martyrdom acc. to tradition
- d. Our understanding of church history includes many seasons of persecution
- e. Some believers today experience severe persecution

Read a story yesterday about a woman in Iran, a convert to Christianity from Islam, who received three months in prison and 10 lashes for speaking out as a Christian.⁵

“Think about how you’ve deeply loved someone, and whenever you think about that person, you take comfort. You unconsciously smile, and you can endure everything. Then nothing seems so important anymore. Jesus Christ is like that for me. ... I think it’s necessary to say that anyone can be a Christian when the conditions are right. Yet even in the very most difficult moments, I have felt His presence. He gives me peace and makes me feel that I belong to Him.”

- f. Yet we have in our text the language of *remote possibility*
 - 1) Suffering is an unnatural experience because of Christian living
 - 2) Suffering is a real possibility despite Christian living
 - 3) The unspoken therefore: “therefore this is the way you should live considering the possibility...”

But our passage interrupts the condition with a startling exclamation: “Blessed!”

⁵ “Choosing the Hard Path in Iran: Exclusive Interview with Mary Mohammadi,” CBN News, February 14, 2021, <https://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/world/2021/february/choosing-the-hard-path-in-iran-exclusive-interview-with-mary-mohammadi>.

II. Our understanding of suffering

- A. The interjection: a plural nominative adjective, implying a “verb of being” — “Blessed are you!” or “Blessings on you!”

“The suffering of Christians might suggest that the assertion in v. 13 is false. Believers can be harmed, even killed, by opponents. Peter, however, did not conceive of the suffering of believers as contradicting the claim of v. 13. Those who suffer for the sake of righteousness, those who endure opposition because of their zeal for what is good, are ‘blessed’ (*makarioi*; see also 4:14).”⁶

- B. The word echoes Mt 5.10-12

1. Not the blessing of verse 9, “good words”
2. The blessing of the beatitudes: “happy”

Mt 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.”

- C. If you should suffer, consider yourself blessed

1. Suffering for Jesus is a privilege

Ac 5.41 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.

Phil 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. We should look at suffering as, if not happy, at least *favoured* circumstances

“In spite of the broad attempt of scholars to convince us that this word means ‘happy,’ I remain unconvinced. ... If

⁶ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 170–71.

‘blessed’ is not the best rendering, perhaps ‘favored’ would communicate the right idea.”⁷

“To be ‘happy’ in this sense, does not mean to ‘feel delighted’ but to be ‘highly privileged’, the objects of special divine favour (*cf.* Mary’s confession, ‘All generations shall call me blessed’, Lk 1.48). By contrast, when men have to suffer, their natural reaction is not only to feel unhappy, but also to regard themselves as underprivileged, unfairly treated, and objects of God’s neglect or ill-treatment.”⁸

Conclusion:

So, we are to think of Christian living for the glory of our Lord Jesus as the goal of our life.

The possibility of persecution is real, though not a constant worry.

- It should not be our expectation
- Nor, if it comes, will it be constant

Thus, we ought not take the possibility into consideration in preparing ourselves for the way we should live.

Proposition: Your life should orient itself around faith in Christ, and living for him, not in fear for self and avoiding trouble.

⁷ Picirilli, “Commentary on the Books of 1 and 2 Peter,” 174.

⁸ Alan M Stibbs, *The First Epistle General of Peter*, vol. 17, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978), 134.