

Text: 1 Pt 3.14-17

I think we should read our text to start with, then pick up from last week.

1 Pt 3.14-17

Last week we concluded with this:

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.

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

All of this is true. However, if persecution should come, how should we act in response? That is the burden of our text overall, and is our topic for today.

One of the things we saw last week was to see persecution as a blessing or as a favor from the Lord. Hiebert says:

“To consider oneself blessed while suffering persecution is not natural, and so Peter offered practical guidance. The Christian response has both negative and positive demands. Negatively, Christians should not yield to the natural reactions of fear and agitation (v. 14b). Positively, they should keep Christ central in their lives and make appropriate responses to their adversaries (vv. 15–16).”¹

I. Turning away from fear (14b)

A. Literal rendering:

Lit. “the fear of them do not fear neither be agitated”

“The verb means to shake up or agitate, like water in a glass that has been sharply jarred; it conveys the picture of agitation and confusion. In John 5:4 (KJV) the verb is used literally for the troubling of the waters of the pool in Bethesda, and in John 12:7

¹ D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH Books, 1997), 224.

figuratively of Christ's troubled soul. The term pictures the result of yielding to the assault of fear."²

1. The pressure against Christianity is to silence its message
2. The natural reaction to pressure is fear, agitation, but God prohibits it

B. Quotation from Isa 8.11-13

Isa 8.11-13 ¶ For thus the LORD spoke to me with mighty power and instructed me not to walk in the way of this people, saying,¹² "You are not to say, '*It is a conspiracy!*' In regard to all that this people call a conspiracy, **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. The kingdom of Judah under threat from the Northern Kingdom of Israel and from Aram (Syria)
2. Ahaz, king of Judah, feared their threats to depose him and replace him with another man
3. Isaiah spoke against submission to their demands, some of the people spoke against him
4. Our quoted passage is God's message to Isaiah, in the face of antagonism

C. My paraphrase: If you should experience persecution, consider yourself blessed, don't be afraid with their fear.

1. Don't let their threats make you afraid
2. Don't let their fears infect your spirit

II. Exalting the Lord in your hearts (15)

A. Paralleling the message to Isaiah: Sanctify Christ as Lord

1. Isa: It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy
2. To make holy is to set apart, to see as unique, to exalt

² Hiebert, 225.

“The verb here does not mean ‘to purify, make holy,’ but ‘to treat as holy,’ ‘to set apart, enshrine as the object of supreme, absolute reverence, as free from all defilement and possessed of all excellence.’ [Johnstone, p. 234.] He must be set above all other allegiances.”³

B. Christological variance

1. KJV has “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts”
2. The reference to Christ occurs in older mss. and some later mss., and is a more unusual reading
3. The place Christ occupies in the verse is the place of YHWH, “the Lord” in Isa 8.13

The text is supportive of the deity of Christ, but either way, the point for believers is this:

- You are not to fear so as to be silent, you are to make the Lord Holy so as to speak

C. The further instruction of the verse confirms what it means to set the Lord as the Lord of your heart

1. Subject of “sanctify” is plural “you” (from verb form)
2. Plural “ready” agrees with the subject of the verb
3. Following phrase describes who “you” are and how “you” sanctify
 - a. You are ready to make a defense (sanctify)
 - b. You are ready to speak to everyone

Just as Isaiah was to keep speaking in Judah, so we are to keep speaking in the world

4. The only modification: with gentleness and reverence
 - a. The same qualities taught to us in the “submission section”
 - b. Our speech is without fear, but also without pride or defiance

³ Hiebert, 225–26.

III. Keeping a good conscience (16)

A. Looking back to Isaiah

Isa 8.11-12 ¶ For thus the LORD spoke to me with mighty power and instructed me not to walk in the way of this people, saying,¹² “You are not to say, ‘It is a conspiracy!’ In regard to all that this people call a conspiracy, And you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it.

1. The line, “it is a conspiracy” seems to be the line of the people, criticizing Isaiah
2. Yet Isaiah spoke the word of the Lord truly, no conspiracy in his words: his conscience was clear

B. The way we can stand without fear when under pressure as Christians

1. Live in such a way as to make them lie about you to persecute you
2. In this way, your persecutors will bear the shame, not you

Conclusion: the better path (17)

Peter uses the “optative mood” again here (the verb of potential, not probability):

“Peter still does not want his readers to be occupied with an expectation of persecution. While that is certainly a possibility (and in 4:12 Peter is much more direct), it is only such if God wills. And when one knows that his suffering is willed by God, he can endure patiently.”⁴

And when one knows that his suffering is undeserved, he can endure it as a blessed service to Christ, our Lord.

A couple of final words from the commentaries:

“The suffering of God’s people for well-doing is not God’s usual, but His unusual will for them. As living under His grace, His will is involved in whatever happens to us. If He permits suffering, it is for our good. As Luther

⁴ Picirilli, “Commentary on the Books of 1 and 2 Peter,” 177.

remarked, ‘Go on in faith and love; if the cross comes, take it; if it comes not, do not seek it.’”⁵

“Yet we hear persons say, ‘I would not mind being blamed if I deserved it,’ which is very absurd, since it is the deserving of blame which ought to trouble us far more than the rebuke.”⁶

⁵ Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 231–32.

⁶ Charles H Spurgeon, *Spurgeon Commentary: 1 Peter*, ed. Elliot Ritzema and Jessi Strong, Spurgeon Commentary Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 1 Pt 3.17.