

“HOW TO DO BEST THROUGH ALL THIS UNREST”

Introduction

-I don't think it's too hard to prove that things are really messy right now. I'm not talking about the snow, sleet and ice that's on the snow, salt, slop and glop that's going to be caking on to the undercarriage of our cars, or any other nuisance related to this weather event we are experiencing here in South Central Pennsylvania. I'm talking about the elevated societal unrest we are experiencing right now in real time. And I don't need to take time here to recount what's happened over the past couple of weeks; you know. And what can be particularly challenging for us as followers of Jesus is that we have a different worldview and way of life from the people of this world that can trigger them to become angry towards us and retaliate against us.

-Here in the new year, we have been talking about what the Bible says concerning several “Timely Topics” and our biblical stance could trigger the people of this world to become even angrier with us. On January 4, Communion and Footwashing Sunday, we talked about Christian unity. We need to be united with all followers of Jesus but not with those who claim to be followers of Jesus but are false professors of the faith. Pastor Greg Hensch came to us on January 11, the first Sunday after the Epiphany of our Lord to show us how we can take a stand against the scourge of Human Trafficking. Last Sunday, Human Relations Sunday, we talked about immigration and borders. Christians are to “Bless Sojourners” while the government “Sustains Borders.” Today we were going to recognize Sanctity of Human Life Sunday but we will save that for next week. In addition to these timely topics, we as Christians maintain biblical worldview concerning gender; God created a binary of two genders. We affirm biblical, New Testament Natural Marriage, that is that God's will is that marriage is to be between one man and one woman. And we maintain a biblical view on race—that is, that God made from one man every nation of mankind, meaning that there is only one race. This renders the world's racist theories unbiblical. And the list goes on.

So far in our nation's history, Christians have lived in relative safety and security. But what if that were to change? What if society as a whole turns against us? Again, today we are going to talk about “How To Do Best Through All This Unrest.”

Let's Read 1 Peter 3:13-17

¹³ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?

¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

First Point: Keep this mind - Generally speaking, do good people won't harm you (v. 13)

-This is generally how things work. When you do good things for others and bless them, they probably aren't going to come after you. So that's why Peter offers this rhetorical question, “Who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?” Generally speaking, people are not going to harm us for being zealous for what is good.” So, yeah, generally if you do good, people will probably leave you alone.

Second Point: Be aware that you could suffer for righteousness' sake (v. 14a)

-The verse begins, “BUT!” When you see that word, it means “Pay attention – a change in thinking is coming.” Here's the change:

-“Even if you should suffer” – That phrase “should suffer” in the original Greek is a verb what is in the “optative mood.” What does this mean? In a nutshell, the optative mood expresses a contingency, often in the form of a wish or a desire. Sometimes, as we see here, it's used to express a

consequence in the future of an unlikely condition.

-As an Illustration: *For example, if you accidentally drink out of another family member's cup when you're having supper together, you'll most likely be o.k. but if they don't realize they're carrying a stomach bug, you could catch it too. So, even though it's unlikely, you COULD get sick by drinking from another family member's cup.*

-So, it could happen. You could suffer for doing the right thing. Now since Peter was writing to a group of Christians who were being persecuted for their faith the unlikely thing was more likely to happen to them. And seeing the world that we are living in today, this could happen to us. We as followers of Jesus could suffer even though we are doing good.

-So, what do we do if that happens?

Third Point: If you do suffer for righteousness' sake, do this: (vv. 14b-16)

-v. 14b - Remember that you're going to be blessed

-Peter doesn't exactly say, but we can determine that the blessing will come from God. It obviously doesn't come from the one who is persecuting you. And other Scriptures give us a clue into the nature of this blessing

-In Matthew 5:11-12 which is part of Jesus's sermon on the mount, he said, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

-As an Illustration – *Several years ago, some men in our church helped a member of the community who was not a part of our church move to a new place. Our men did a great job! But even though they did, this person griped and complained the whole time. In a mild way, our guys suffered for doing good. So, was that a rewarding experience for our guys? Yes, it was! The reward didn't come from her, but it was still rewarding because our guys could lay their heads down at night knowing they did a godly thing and they can rest assured that a reward is coming their way when they get to heaven!*

-The reason we do what we do isn't necessarily so that we get a pat on the back from people. We do it because it's the right thing and honors the Lord.

-vv. 14b-15a - Have no fear of them but in your heart honor Christ as Lord (vv. 14b-15a)

-An effective alternative to fear is to focus attention on something OR someone else! Instead of fearing those who are coming after us, we honor Christ. To honor Christ is to believe that He, not our human opponents is truly in control of human events. This helps us have a strong inner confidence in Christ as Lord and King.

-1 John 4:4 says, "he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."

-In John 16:33, Jesus says, "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

FOURTH POINT: Be prepared to give a defense for the hope that is in you (vv. 15b-16)

-v. 15a – Be prepared to give a "defense"

-Peter is probably anticipating persecutors looking to the Christians they are going after and asking them, "Why do you believe this stuff? Why do you keep on doing what you're doing in Jesus' Name even though we told you to knock it off? Why?" Since that is the case, Peter is saying, "You be ready to give a defense or an answer."

-This word "defense" or "answer" is the Greek word, "apologia." This is the key verse and inspiration for the practice of "Christian Apologetics." Now if you've never heard of this subject of "Apologetics" before, let me give you a very good definition from the textbook, Apologetics at the Cross:

"Apologetics is the practice of offering an appeal and a defense for the Christian faith." They then add, "In other words, apologetics, through word and deed, answers both why a person can believe (that's the defense) and why a person should believe (that's the appeal)."

--NOW, even though the context Peter is calling for Christians to offer an answer or defense for their faith is within seasons of persecution, notice that he says, "Always being prepared" to do that. Now if

you're thinking, "I don't know if I can do that – give a defense or an answer for my faith," My response to you would be, "Yes you can!" Here's how:

- Give your testimony why you believe
- Tell a story about how God did something great in your life
- Do good deeds and making it clear that you do it because you are a follower of Jesus.
- All of these entail giving an apologia, a defense or an answer for your faith.

Let me be clear that if you share your testimony or something good God did for you, you're being an apologist. The only way we can go wrong is if we say or do things contrary to Scripture. And on that note: Keep this in mind -- Whatever you do:

Vv. 15b-16a) Do it with gentleness and respect having a good conscience (vv. 15b-16a)

That's part of the defense of our faith – defending our faith and doing it respectfully towards the other person and knowing in our consciences that we did that. It shows a very different picture than the world shows!

V. 16b - AND do it so that our Christ-like behavior shames our opponents (v. 16b)

Putting our opponents who are persecuting and insulting us to shame is not good in and of itself and it's not our goal. It's not like we are thinking, "I really want that person who is coming after me to feel really guilty and ashamed of himself so therefore I am going to be the best and the humblest apologist the world has ever seen!" No, but if they are ashamed of themselves by our defense and conduct, it can help to silence their slander and make them open to the Gospel!

FIFTH POINT: Remember that it is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil (v. 17)

So, if it is God's will for us to suffer for doing good, let's remember that it's a lot better to have to suffer for doing the right thing than to suffer because we did something wrong like a crime and therefore have to suffer because we truly do deserve it.

IN CLOSING

Peter is very clear: The odds are that if we do what is right, nobody's going to bother us. But it is possible that we could suffer for doing what is right for Jesus' sake. That being the case, always be ready to give a defense and an answer for the hope that lies within you. Our testimony, even though we are suffering, may bring our opponents to Jesus. And that makes the suffering worth it all. Amen.