

## 6.20.21 ~ 1Peter 3:13-17

Living on a planet is risky, but the longer it is until the Lord returns, the more dangerous it becomes for those living in a troubled world that has become hostile toward families, marriages, and children, especially those who are trying to live for Christ.

Christians are becoming one of the top enemies of this godless world. In **John 16:33**, Jesus told His followers, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

The closer it gets to the Lord's return, the more corrupt God's enemies become: moral perversion, crime, terrorism, disease, adverse weather, and a news media that is opposed to God and to those who want to serve Him. This world is in big trouble!

NASA seeks to find life on other planets because humans are destroying this one; global warming is the catch phrase being used, as if this planet is going to be destroyed by the irresponsible and greedy actions of its inhabitants.

But it is not going to be destroyed by mankind, it will last until God is through with it. **Genesis 8:22**, "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease," (see **Ecclesiastes 3:1-13**). Look, when God is done with this earth, it will be burned up (**2Peter 3:10**), "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up." **13**, "But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."

We, God's people have nothing to fear and everything to gain, even though genuine Christianity (based on the gospel of Christ) is an endangered species in a world that hates God and those who genuinely belong to Him.

In **John 15:18-20**, Jesus declared, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. 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... ..If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. In this world you will have trouble, but I've overcome the world."

Jesus goes on to say (**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."

**1Peter 1:3-4** says, "[We are] born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for [us]."

**1Peter 2:9-12** says, "We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." We are set apart as "a people for God's own possession," for He "called [us] out of darkness into His marvelous light," making us His own children; and that clearly distinguishes us from everybody else on this planet. We are citizens of God's Kingdom in heaven, while living on this earth for His glory.

So, how should we respond to the tribulation, persecution and trouble we will experience in this world?

Read **1Peter 3:13-17...** We are to live for the purpose of proclaiming the excellencies of the One who saved us, while realizing that the world opposed to God is going to resent us, seek to marginalize us, and try to silence us. Because of Christ we are at war with the godless world around us, a world full of unbelievers needing to be saved. And who has been tasked with sharing the good news with those who oppose Christ? You and me, and all those who belong to God through Christ by faith.

In **Matthew 5:44** Jesus tells us to "love [our] enemies and pray for those who persecute [us]." In **Romans 12:14**, we are commanded to "Bless those who persecute [us]; bless and do not curse."

**Matthew 28:19-20**, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

**2Corinthians 5:20**, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

We are here to be witnesses of the good news of the marvelous message of forgiveness for sins and eternal life through Jesus Christ. And we are to do that in a world that is hostile toward Jesus Christ and those who follow Him.

Look, we don't like the world the way it is now, and it is only going to get worse, much worse. The world that is opposed to God and those in it who reject Christ, are going to continue to attack God's Word, God's character, and God's Church.

Honesty, dignity, integrity, morality, love, kindness, compassion, these are words of a past time and yet also of a future time, when God will make everything new; until then, (**Romans 12:9**) we are to hate what is evil in God's eyes, and we are to cling to what is good by God's standard; all the while, we are not to become anxious, fearful, angry, disabled, or vengeful.

Look again at **1Peter 3:13...** This is not some profound teaching, it is just "rubber meets the road" theology, i.e., people have a harder time hurting those who are doing good things, as opposed to those who do bad things. It's not as common even for hostile people to persecute those who are devoted to being a benefit to our society.

But we must not get bitter or defensive or angry just because this world is infringing upon our freedoms and our comforts; instead, we are to continue doing that which is good (**1Thessalonians 5:15**), "See that no one repays evil with evil."

We aren't to let the persecution and hostility, of this anti-Christian culture, lead us to become resentful, bitter or vindictive (**Colossians 4:6**), "Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person," (**Luke 6:31**), "Treat others the same way you want them to treat you."

Look again at **1Peter 3:14...** Even if you're doing what is good, even if you're a kind, unselfish, benevolent person, it could still happen that you will suffer for Christ's sake.

Look back at **1Peter 2:21-24**, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, He who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting *Himself* to

Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”

The probability that you will suffer for the sake of Christ is pretty high; and in fact, it really is a privilege, and therefore you need to expect and to be willing to suffer.

Jesus not only died in our place on the cross, bearing the punishment of God for all our sins, but He also served as an example for us to follow. We aren't to get angry or become vengeful, but instead, to commit ourselves to God, as those who are greatly blessed.

What does it mean “to are blessed?” Well, this does not mean to merely be happy, but instead, that you are very privileged, having received heavenly honor. We are blessed to suffer for the sake of Christ (**Matthew 5:10-11**), “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad for your reward in heaven is great. In the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

We are privileged to receive persecution that is directed at Christ, leading to an eternal reward, like the prophets who suffered before us. We are to face this godless and hostile world by staying devoted to doing that which is good, making it more difficult for people to want to persecute us. But when it happens, we are not to fear them. We must be courageous and bold, as well as righteous and holy, and we are always to be zealous for doing good (**2Thessalonians 3:13**), “do not grow weary of doing good.

Look again at **1Peter 3:15...** To sanctify Christ as Lord in your heart, means you don't fear what the world fears. Rather than fearing those who persecute you, or fearing the Devil himself who is behind the persecution, we are to honor Christ, adore Christ, to give Christ the awe and the reverence He deserves.

With the knowledge of Christ set apart in your heart through the presence of the Holy Spirit, you are to serve as an ambassador of Christ, always ready to defend the gospel and the hope we have been given now and forever in Christ.

**2Colossians 2:8**, “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”

When people say to you, “Why do you keep on proclaiming this message? Why don't you just go along with the culture? Why are you speaking out against abortion? against gay marriage? against premarital sex and adultery? Why not just go with the flow? I'll tell you why, because the cultural “flow” is sewage full of immorality, pornography, profanity, degenerate sexual behavior, the murder of babies, and a hatred for God.

Look again at **1Peter 3:16...** Peter says, “Whenever you defend what you believe, or why you behave in such a manner, by following the Word of God and submitting to the Lordship of Christ, you are giving testimony to the power of God!

As Christians, we have the propensity and the provision to do that which pleases our Lord, even if those who do not like us because of Christ slander us and condemn us, our own consciences will defend us. We are not here to please this godless world, we are here to serve God, and we should do so with a clear conscience and with willful intent.

Look, we all know right from wrong (**Genesis 3:22**), "Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil.'" When we do what we know is wrong, we are convicted in our heart of the wrong doing (**Romans 2:15**), "their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them."

We are sinners saved by grace, and even Paul struggled with knowingly doing that which went against his own conscience, just like we do (**Romans 7:18-19**), "I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want." **21-25**, "I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully agree with the law of God in the inner person, but I see a different law in the parts of my body waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin, the law which is in my body's parts. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin."

**2Corinthians 5:17**, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

**Galatians 5:16-18**, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law." **25**, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."

When people say to me, "Why do you live the way you live?" I should respond with, because I know there is life after death and that God has prepared a place for me in heaven that will be so glorious it is incomprehensible.

**Isaiah 65:17**, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind."

**Revelation 21:1**, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away," **4**, "and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

Look again at **1Peter 3:17...** It is much better that we suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong; and as aliens [strangers] in this world (**1Peter 1:1**), we must remain devoted to that which is good, that which pleases God, living out and proclaiming the message of salvation, while also being willing to suffer for Christ's sake (**Matthew 5:10-11**), "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad for your reward in heaven is great. In the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Pastor Mike  
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