

The Right Christian Response to Unjust Treatment 1 Peter 3:13-17

Introduction:

The structure of 1 Peter leading up to 3:13:

The **salvation** secured by Jesus: 1 Peter 1:1-2, 10-11, 14-15 2:1-3, 9-12

The necessity of **submission** to authority: 2:19-21

The call to **suffering**: beginning at 3:13

The overarching question of 3:13-17: how should a Christian respond to malicious treatment by a community and possible abuse by state officials?

1. The attitude of ordinary people toward good Christian living, 3:13

Question #1 Who is there to harm you? verse 13

This rhetorical question anticipates the answer, “Generally, no one.”

Peter’s point: very few people are inclined to harass or mistreat neighbors who live “zealous for what is good”.

This passage focuses on the responsibilities Christians have for cultivating Christ-honoring conduct even in the face of societal mistreatment.

Question #2 What is the ‘good’ Peter was referring to?

Most Americans have a common idea of what is “good”. But there are still influential people who are hostile to the values that Christianity teaches.

2. How to respond as a Christian to unjust treatment

A. The first component of a Christian response—see it for blessing, v 14a.

Peter concedes that suffering is possible even when doing what is right.

Question #3 How can you be blessed if you suffer on account of righteousness?

The Christian’s greatest blessing is the power to live rightly before God in the midst of a broken. Christ makes this possible.

Blessing also means authentication of your faith by an opponent.

B. The second component of a Christian response—fear not, v. 14b.

A reference to Isaiah 8:12. Don’t let the intimidations of your spiritual foes diminish your confidence in Christ’s power and care.

Peter’s antidote to fear: put your focus on someone more powerful than your enemies, v. 15

Question #4 How do you overcome the natural intimidation of threats or unjust treatment? Answer: honor Christ as Lord in your heart?

This honoring involves an inward reverence for the cosmic supremacy of Christ? Note: 3:22

It means a serious regard for your status as an ambassador of Christ.

C. The Third component of a Christian response—be ready to explain your faith, verse 15.

The Greek word, “apologia” refers to a defense of the Christian gospel. made to authorities—but not an “apology” for Christian beliefs.

The emphasis: “always be ready” and “respond to anyone who asks” indicate a general situation not primarily a civil investigation.

Question #5 What is “the hope in you that you must be ready to explain?”

The hope of the gospel is our confidence that Jesus commands the universe. And faith in Him puts a certainty in our hearts that He can fulfil His promise to bring us home to Him in glory.

Question #6 When and why would anyone ask you this question?

Suffering is a condition that grabs peoples’ attention—especially when it is seen to be endured without anger, reproach, or despondency.

D. The fourth component of a Christian response—be gentle and respectful, Verse 16a..

Question #7 Why is it important to talk about how Christ is my hope with a demeanor of gentleness and respect?

Because arrogance and belligerence are turn-offs.

And avoid hypocrisy, verse 16 b..

Question #8 Why is it necessary for me to keep my conscience clear?

To have credibility. People can’t dismiss your testimony about Christ when they see consistency in what you claim and how you live.

Question #9 How can my witness about my hope in Christ put to shame people who slander my pursuit of right living?

In time, it becomes obvious who the jerk is when someone keeps badmouthing one who displays a patient, humble, kind, and upright life.

3. A Summary principle, verse 17.

Question #10 Why would it ever be God’s will for me to suffer for doing good?

If you are suffering because you are humbly, but openly standing for godliness, you can know that God is behind it and with you in it.