"DON'T FLINCH IN THE FACE OF SUFFERING"

I Peter 3:13-17
4-13-2022



INTRODUCTION: Verse 13

***Don't flinch** (retreat, give up or give in) **even in the face of suffering!**

Why should you remain firm in the face of suffering?

Don't flinch in the face of suffering so that:
I. You can be considered "<u>BLESSED</u>" (fortunate)! (v. 14)

Don't flinch in the face of suffering so that:
II. You can turn your crisis into an opportunity for <u>WITNESS</u> (v. 15)

"Don't flinch in the face of suffering so that:
III. You can maintain a "<u>GOOD CONSCIENCE</u>" (v. 16a)

Don't flinch in the face of suffering so that:
IV. You can be a source of <u>CONVICTION</u> (v. 16b)

Don't flinch in the face of suffering so that:
V. You can fulfill <u>GOD'S WILL</u> (v. 17)



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Fox's Book of Martyrs illustrates many who refused to flinch even in the face of the most gruesome torture and martyrdom.

As the book of I Peter clearly indicates, God's people are not exempt from unjust suffering.

One fallacy of pre-tribulationalism is the false notion that Antichrist's persecution equals God's wrath. Note: The Church is promised deliverance from God's wrath (I Thes. 5:9), but never from Satan's! (or Antichrist's)

Jesus said, *"In the world you shall have tribulation"* (Jn. 16:33)

"It is given unto you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1:29) SEE: Rev. 6:9, 7:14

V. 13

The rhetorical question demands the answer "No one." At least (as we will learn), no one usually (there are exceptions).

"Followers" - zealous or enthusiastic to do good

Doing right can keep you out of a lot of trouble with others (this is a lesson especially applicable to our teenagers).

Solomon said, A mischief maker is like one who grabs a dog by the ears (you're going to be bitten!).

Prov. 16:7 - *"When a man's ways please the LORD, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."*

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Why should you remain firm in the face of suffering?

Don't flinch in the face of suffering so that:

I. You can be considered "BLESSED" (fortunate)! (v. 14)

Why would anyone inflict suffering on someone who is living righteous?

"For righteousness sake"

"For righteousness sake" - because you do right (justly)

There is no blessing in being persecuted if you did wrong and are getting what you deserve (I Pet. 4:15 - "But let non of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.")

Two basic reasons why those who live righteously would be opposed:

a. Righteousness is a <u>rebuke</u> to unrighteousness

The reason people would persecute the righteous is because their righteousness is a rebuke to their unrighteousness.

Doing good is a rebuke to their doing bad.
Holiness is a rebuke to impurity.
Honesty is a rebuke to lying, fraud, and theft
Light is a rebuke to darkness.

Lost men, in an effort to extinguish the light that exposes their darkness, strike out at the light.

Do you ever wonder why when you seek to help some people, they get angry? EX: Acts 7)

It is because you have struck a tender nerve. You have hit a sore spot; you have opened a closet; you have exposed a secret. You have uncovered the truth; often the truth hurts.

Righteousness by its very nature is confrontational; it cuts across the grain of the world.

Godliness will generate antagonism, hot emotions, and hostility from the world. "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33)

EX: Savanarola (MacArthur, p. 221)

b. <u>Satan</u> hates righteousness

We have an adversary (I Pet. 5:8) who wants to keep men blind to the truth (II Cor. 4:4), so he incites lost men (who are at his disposal) to stir up opposition to the truth in order to turn men away from the truth (EX: Elymas the Sorcerer - Acts 13:8, 10) (EX: The masters who exploited a demon-possessed girl - Acts 16:19-20) (EX: The unbelieving Jews - Acts 17:5) (EX: The Ephesian craftsmen - Acts 19:27-29)

Persecution is an earmark of Godly living (II Tim. 3:12 - "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.")

It is an inevitable "gift" (Phil. 1:29 - "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake")

ILLUS: The Secret Christian (MacArthur, p. 220)

"More and more, Christians in today's society are going to be accused and lied about. Our personal standards are not those of the unsaved world. As a rule, Christians do not create problems; they reveal them. Let a born-again person start to work in an office, or move into a college dormitory, and in a short time there will be problems. Christians are lights in this dark world (Phil. 2:15), and they reveal 'the unfruitful works of darkness' (Eph. 5:11)." (Wiersbe, p. 414-15)

Ex: Joseph, Daniel, and Jesus Christ.

If Christians were being put in jail for their righteousness, would there be enough evidence is your life to convict you?

"Happy" does not mean "delight" but "blessed" or "highly privileged" (EX: the rejoicing of Peter and John after being flogged - Acts 5:40-41 - *"And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."*)

"Happy are ye" - You are blessed! Why?

1) Because you did right!

2) Because you are like Jesus (v. 18)

3) Because such treatment confirms to you that you are right and that there is a real devil (adversary)

4) Because this is an evidence of your salvation (4:14)

5) Because you are upholding a faithful testimony

"Be not afraid" - The only one to be feared is the one who can take body and soul and cast it into hell fire (Mt. 10:28 - *"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.")*

"Neither be troubled" - disturbed, shaken, upset

Don't flinch in the face of suffering so that:

II. You can turn your crisis into an opportunity for <u>WITNESS</u> (v. 15)

"But" - in contrast to focusing on fear and trouble in our hearts, we need to have our hearts set apart (from worry) for the Lord God.

Don't be obsessed with fear but with your God!

"Sanctify the Lord" - Peter alludes to Isaiah 8:13 - *"Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread."*

"Be ready" - be prepared

"Always" - in good times and bad

We are not prepared (*"ready")* to give a witness if Christ does not have a special place in our hearts; or if He has been crowded out by worry or fear!

"An answer" - (*apologia* - we derive "apologetics") - to give a <u>defense</u> for what we believe and why we believe it.

The word referred to "a defense presented in court."

When we face suffering without flinching (giving up, retreating, quitting), people will want to know why and how we do it.

"What make you tick," they will ask. "Give us a 'word' concerning the confidence you have." "What would you be willing to suffer such injustices for?" they will inquire.

With ***"Meekness" -*** gentleness (not the harshness with which we are treated) (*"A soft answer turns away wrath")*

With ***"Fear"*** - not a fear of the one's we are speaking to (v. 14 says not to be fearful of them), but ***"fear"*** (deep reverence and respect) for <u>God</u>.

--A fear to <u>displease</u> Him
--A fear to <u>err</u> in our handling of His truth

"An arrogant, belligerent attitude usually turns people away." (Barbieri, p. 68)

How we say what we say is often more convincing than what we say!

Turn your crisis into an opportunity for witness; when we unflinchingly endure such, then the world will "sit up and take notice" of what we have to say.

"Don't flinch in the face of suffering so that:

III. You can maintain a "<u>GOOD CONSCIENCE</u>" (v. 16a)

"Having" - present tense, meaning: possessing or maintaining

"A good conscience" -

The conscience functions based on the truth it has and basically either <u>accuses</u> (says "no") or <u>excuses</u> (says "yes") as to whether or not something is right (Rom. 2:15).

Example: Like a <u>judge</u>, the conscience either approves or disapproves based upon the moral knowledge (law or standard) it has available.

1) The <u>Law</u> (standard) ---- 2) The <u>*Judge</u> ---- 3) The <u>Verdict</u>

Example: Like a <u>referee</u>, the conscience receives the <u>rules</u> from the rule book and sends a message to our thoughts (reasonings), saying either:

"Fair" or "Foul"
"Safe" or "Out"
"Yes" or "No"

1) The <u>Rule book</u> ---- 2) The *<u>Referee</u> ---- 3) The <u>Call</u> or <u>Decision</u>

When you unflinchingly do right, you have a *"good conscience."*

Don't defile or de-sensitize your conscience!

Beware: A conscience can be <u>defiled</u> (Titus 1:15) or <u>seared</u> (I Tim. 4:2) by deliberately violating its promptings

1) Defiled= Stained, polluted, impure (the conscience does not function <u>right</u>)

2) Seared= Cauterized; made insensitive, numbed (the conscience does not function <u>at all</u>)

"A clean conscience makes a soft pillow" (Spurgeon)

Don't flinch in the face of suffering so that:

IV. You can be a source of <u>CONVICTION</u> (v. 16b)

When you do right despite the insults, threats, and mistreatment others throw at you, such good conversation (lifestyle) which is only possible *"in Christ"* will put the opposition to <u>shame</u>!

(Convicting coals of fire will be heaped on their heads)

When we respond like Christ to our enemies (Mt. 5:44), their harsh treatment for no just cause will put them to shame (convict them of their sin), and perhaps lead to their salvation.

Don't flinch in the face of suffering so that:

V. You can fulfill <u>GOD'S WILL</u> (v. 17)

"The will (desire) of God" - sometimes it is God's <u>will</u> that we suffer (4:19).

Why would He allow it?

--To show us that our faith is genuine (Ja. 1:3)

--To refine our faith (purge out dross) and produce maturity in us (Ja. 1:3b)

--To make us a shining testimony for His glory

(others will come to know Him; nothing is as compelling as a Christ-like way of living, responding, speaking, doing, and suffering. He is the ultimate model of being just and yet suffering - 3:18).

"The blood of the saints [i.e. which seeped into the ground] is the seed of the Church."

It is no glory to suffer patiently for wrong doing (2:20); but to suffer patiently for doing right glorifies God and fulfills His will.

CONCLUSION:

"Inscribed on Martin Luther's monument at Worms, Germany are his courageous words spoken before the church council on April 18, 1521: 'Here I stand; I can do no other. God help me. Amen.' His conscience, bound to God's Word, gave him the courage to defy the whole established church!" (Wiersbe, p. 414)