

PETER

The Cost, the Profit, the Security

April 28, 20013

- I. Be Holy In All Your Behavior With A Holiness Like God's Holiness
 - A. **I Peter 3:13-18** . . . Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? [14] But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, [15] but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; [16] and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. [17] For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. [18] For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.
 - B. Today, I want to talk about the cost of living a godly life, the profit gained from living a godly life, and the security promised for living a godly life. But before we get to that, there are several other things I want to point out from this portion of **I Peter**.
 - C. Pray
- II. Some General Truths To Consider
 - A. **I Peter 3:15b** . . . always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;
 1. The specific situation referred to here is that of unbelievers observing you, a known Christian, being humbly submissive and respectful in the face of mistreatment. And as a result of observing this behavior in you, they ask **why and how** you do it. Of course, they may be the ones who are mistreating you, or they may be supporting the ones who are mistreating you, which adds a significant degree of difficulty to giving a well-explained, gentle, and respectful answer.
 - a. But Peter addresses this increased difficulty with the exhortation to go into these situations having already thought out the Christian truths and principles driving our behavior, and also having worked out the wording of our answer.

- b. And of course, prior preparation enables us to answer quickly when such a question comes at an unexpected time, or when we are forced to answer under pressure.
2. Added to this is the need to remain humbly submissive, calm, and respectful while answering, which often requires going into these moments spiritually, mentally, and emotionally prepared to do just that. This humble and calm demeanor is important because the spirit in which we answer such questions is just as much a testimony for the reality of our faith in God and the willingness of our obedience to Him, as the answer itself.
3. The point here is that we are called by God to prepare ahead of time for those situations where we must explain the reasons behind what the world deems perplexing and unnatural behavior. And we are to explain ourselves to them in the same humble and respectful way that we are behaving toward those who mistreat us.

B. **I Peter 3:16** . . . and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

1. The exhortation here is to live such a godly life that your conscience has no reason convict you. And this infers two things:
 - a. **First**, it infers that the natural condition of a Christian is that of having a good conscience. In other words, the normal Christian's mindset is to have nothing to do with sin and everything to do with righteousness – which naturally nurtures a good conscience.
 - b. **Second**, by saying you are to **KEEP** a good conscience, Peter is inferring that in this type of situation you will have to put forth a significant effort to keep doing what is right. Why? Because when you are being mistreated by those who ought to be treating you well – such as the government, your employer, and your spouse – it is all too easy to return to old, sinful behavior. Therefore, keeping a good conscience will take work on your part.
2. So how do we keep a good conscience when we are spiritually weak and prone to selfishness and sin? By putting in a reasonable effort to continue growing in the Christian faith. By being vigilant against thoughts, feelings, urges, desires, and temptations that turn us away from God and toward self or the world. And by quickly repenting, confessing, and getting back on track with God and man after doing what we know is wrong.

3. Now, when we keep a good conscience, that is, when we go through these kinds of times as God is instructing us to go through them, then this sets up a situation where those who are mistreating us and speaking evil against us will either be put to shame or ultimately feel ashamed for what they have done to us.
 - a. However, if we are sinful in our behavior toward them, two things will happen that will remove their reason to be shamed or feel ashamed.
 - b. **First**, they will see us as hypocrites who live by a double-standard and are therefore no different from them, which in turn will be reason enough for them to overlook or justify their sinful behavior, even while they are committing it.
 - c. **Second**, our sinful behavior toward them will become undeniably evident at the Judgment Seat of Christ, so that those who mistreated us will have no reason to feel ashamed for their behavior since, as it turns out, they are no worse than us.
 4. Therefore, for sinners to feel ashamed over their treatment of us, we must live a God honoring, righteous life which our conscience can approve.
- C. The last truth I want to address before looking at the cost, the profit and the security of living a godly life has to do with persecution.
1. There is a difference between being persecuted because you prove zealous for what is good, that is, because you are living a godly life, and being persecuted because you bear the label “Christian.”
 2. From the earliest days of the Roman persecution of Christians down to today, Christians have been persecuted for either or both reasons. Let me explain.
 3. In countries like Egypt or Iraq, Christians are mistreated and even persecuted simply because they bear the label of Christian, regardless of their behavior.
 4. In our country, many unbelievers see Christians in general as intolerant toward some of the things they hold dear, with the big three being abortion, homosexuality, and same sex marriage. In response to this intolerance, there is a growing resistance to some of the influence Christians have had in society, and growing intolerance toward Christians as a group – even to the point of mild forms of persecution.
 5. Now without question, the Christian position on these three issues is a stand for God and righteousness. Yet it is also true that though

Christians in general still take a strong stand on these three issues, enough of them live so much like the world in other ways that if they would move to the world's position on these three issues, the world would embrace them as friends. The point here is that when we are persecuted for standing against these three things, it is because we bear the label "Christian."

6. In contrast to this, Peter – and Jesus before him – tell us that some will be persecuted for righteousness sake, that is, for living an uncompromisingly godly life in so many ways that even if they are not singled out for the big three, they will be singled out for doing an honest day's work in a setting where others expect to get away with doing less, or telling the truth in a setting where fudging the truth is expected, or paying their taxes in a setting that could get their employer in trouble for not declaring to the government wages they've paid, or pulling building permits when doing home remodeling even though it adds to the cost, or choosing not to take sides in a church split over some teaching or theological position that has nothing to do with exalting God or living a holy life.
7. The point here is that Christians can experience persecution, whether it be from bearing the label "Christian" or from living such a godly life that the way they live is either offensive or a threat to unbelievers. However, Peter's reference to persecution has to do with living a godly life – that is, being humbly submissive and respectful in the face of mistreatment.
8. I want to ask three questions, even though I know none of us can control how any other Christians live. However, my questions are intended to encourage serious thought and prayer about these things.
 - a. Why are Christians not known for being humbly submissive and respectful in the face of ill-treatment, so that those who want to fight for their rights, and those who like getting even would turn against us just as have those who support abortions?
 - b. Why are we not known for our honesty in business and paying taxes so that dishonest employers or those who pay workers "under the table" as it were would never hire a Christian, just like those who support homosexuality would never let a Christian join their political action group?
 - c. Why are we not known as being intolerant of any prejudice toward any people group so that those who are biased toward this religious group or that ethnic group would despise us just as much as those who support same sex marriage despise us?

III. The Cost, the Profit, and the Security of Living A Godly Life

A. The cost of living a godly life –

1. **I Peter 3:13-14a** . . . Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? [14] But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed.
2. There is a personal cost to living a godly life, for to do so we must willingly deny ourselves, die to our fleshly desires and felt-needs, discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness, put on Christ-likeness, not just once, but day after day, remain vigilant against temptation and any resurgence of our flesh, protect time for the study, memorization, and meditation of scripture, and pray without ceasing. These costs are there even if we are not persecuted for righteousness sake.
3. However, the cost of living a godly life that I want to address today has to do with the world's response to our godliness. For example, Jesus faced those who wanted to throw Him over a cliff, trick questions, rejection from family members, and physical abuse ending with being crucified. But His obedience to His Father cost Him more than this. He had to leave His heavenly home and divine existence in order to live here as one of us. While here, He had to give up His will in order to do His Father's will. And though the pain of being beaten, having his beard pulled, and being crucified was more than any of us have faced, He paid the cost of being forsaken by God in His death.
4. Now, not every Christian will pay a price like Jesus paid or even what it cost those mentioned in Hebrews 11. But should a cost be demanded by the world, we will have to pay it if we are to remain faithful to God.
 - a. Certainly, many of Christians will be slandered, taken advantage of, rejected, made fun of, put down, and things of that nature.
 - b. Some will earn less money, only be hired for menial jobs, denied the freedom to live wherever they want, and be cut out of the political process.
5. The point here is that there is a cost to living a godly, righteous, holy life, day after day, because the world will exact some price from us.

B. The Profit Gained From Living A Godly Life

1. **I Peter 4:14a** . . . But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed.
2. With God, those who are willing to pay the cost of living a Christian life, receive the reward of living a Christian life.

- a. Returning to Christ as our example, He not only was rewarded with being raised from the dead – to never die again – for dying in our place, He was raised to the right hand of God, made the conquering victor to whom all will ultimately bow, made the head of the church, and given the church as His bride – just to give you a beginning picture of the profit He gained from living a godly life.
 - b. Peter affirms that we, like Christ, will gain great profit from living a godly life. For example, we receive a living hope with a promised inheritance which is imperishable. We are protected by the power of God for eternal salvation. We are given the status of Chosen Race, Royal Priesthood, and Holy Nation. Our prayers are answered and God continually looks out for our good – providing what we need and protecting us from harm. And in the end, we too, like Christ, will be raised to the eternal presence of God, never to die again.
 - c. And yet, I have not mentioned the profit of spiritual growth that comes from pursuing a faithfully godly life in the face of hard times and persecution. For those who gain this level of godliness, just rising to this level is of such value that it can be profit enough.
3. Now the profit I have pointed out may not seem like much when compared to the costs required to receive the profit, but let me remind you of two things.
 - a. **First**, Paul writes that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us (**Romans 8:18**). So obviously, he saw something in the rewards and profit that made the cost seem negligible by comparison. If you do not see what Paul saw, look again with the prayer that God will make clear what he saw.
 - b. **Second**, the profit gained from living a godly life is best seen for its true worth from the perspective of living a godly life. The degree to which we are clinging to the world is the degree to which the profit from godliness will not seem worth gaining compared to freedom from the costs of living a godly life, here and now.
 4. The point here, however, is that the cost of godly living is far offset by the profit gained. May we not just see this truth as truth, but may we treasure the promised rewards, for since they are of a more spiritual nature, they are worth more than anything in this world or of this world or that this world can give us.

C. The Security Found in Living A Godly Life

1. **I Peter 3:13, 14b-15a** . . . [13] Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? [14b] And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, [15a] but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts.
2. The “Who” of verse 13 is asking if there is anyone here on this earth who can harm you for living a godly life?
 - a. If we take the word “harm” as referring to persecution of any sort and possibly death, which may include a very painful death, then surely those of this world can harm us.
 - b. But if we understand “harm” as that which touches our soul or is able to rob us of the presence, the love, the tender-heart, the eternal protection of God, and eternal life, then surely there is no one of this world who can harm us. This is our security!
3. Jesus put it this way: “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (**Matthew 10:28**).
4. Paul said it like this: “If God is for us, who is against us? [32] He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with [Christ] freely give us all things?[35] Who will separate us from the love of Christ?[38] For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (**Romans 8:31-39**).
5. The point here is that we are secure in God. Regardless of what the cost is of living a godly life, and there will be costs, we are perfectly and completely secure in God. No one on this earth can take away or keep us from receiving what God has for us!
6. And this is one of the reasons we are to set and keep Christ over our hearts as Lord – for when we do, we are perfectly and eternally secure!

IV. Conclusion

- A. No one among us will live a godly life without paying some cost. But neither will anyone among us live a godly life without receiving profit that makes the cost seem insignificant by comparison. And through it all, what is eternally valuable to us is completely safe and secure.