

Continuing in the Faith

1 Peter 3: 12-17

Following his instruction regarding our Christian character before others, Peter continued to address our faithfulness to the Lord through obedient Christian service. Knowing the adversity and intense persecution many faced, Peter sought to encourage them to persevere in Christ. Remaining faithful would be difficult, but it was not impossible.

For the committed Bible student, Verse 15 is likely a familiar verse. It presents an open and profound challenge to be ready to share our faith in Christ at a moment's notice, with whomever we meet. As I studied this passage I was reminded of the fallacy of a popular phrase that has gained momentum in Christian circles in recent years – Share the Gospel, and if necessary use words. Peter refutes such thinking through this passage. While Christian conduct is absolutely necessary to an effective witness, we must take our faith a step further. As we walk with the Lord, we must also be willing to talk of our Lord. People need to see a committed Christian life modeled before them, but they also need to hear the glorious Gospel of Christ – His death, burial, and resurrection for the salvation of lost sinners.

As we examine this passage I trust it will challenge and encourage each of us to continue in the faith and proclaim our Lord to a lost and dying world. I want to consider the [particular aspects](#) of Christian life Peter discussed as we think on the challenge of: [Continuing in the Faith](#).

I. Our Security in Christ (12-14) – Following his discourse on Christian character, Peter directed his focus to the security every believer has in Christ, regardless of the opposition they face among the world. He mentioned:

A. The Lord's Perception (12) – [For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil](#). Knowing they would face continued opposition and persecution, Peter assured the church they were never alone. The Lord kept watch over them, diligently listening to their prayers. What a blessing to know we are not saved and abandoned to make our journey within our own ability. The Lord continues to keep watch over the church, seeing our struggles and hearing our pleas for help and guidance.

- The Lord is also well aware of those who seek to hinder the church through an effort to hinder the Gospel. Just as the Lord blessed those who seek Him, He also deals with those who oppose Him according to His righteous nature. What have we to fear; the Lord is working on our behalf?

B. The Lord's Peace (13) – *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?*

Peter does not imply following the Lord would remove every hindrance and obstacle they faced. These struggles would continue, but the church could face them with peace knowing they were secure in Christ the Lord. They might face physical and emotional abuse, but their eternal destinies were sealed in Christ. Through Christ they could overcome and enjoy the victory!

- Peter likely also spoke of the benefit of walking consistently with the Lord. While some would continue to oppose them, others would respect them for their faithfulness and consistency. It is possible to gain the respect of others, even if they refuse to embrace the Gospel.

C. The Lord's Provision (14) – *But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.* Knowing their struggles were quite difficult, Peter sought to encourage them in the Lord. Suffering would come, and when it did they could rejoice in the Lord. This doesn't speak merely of happiness or joy, but blessedness through the favor of God. I know that goes against human nature, but in Christ we have nothing to fear. The saved are secure within the body of Christ. The world may persecute our bodies, but they cannot remove us from the loving grip of our Lord. *Matt.5:10-12 – Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. [12] Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

II. Our Testimony for Christ (15-17) – Here Peter spoke of the believer's witness for the Lord through a faithful testimony of His grace. He mentioned:

A. Our Fellowship (15a) – *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.* This is fundamental to overcoming adversity and being an effective witness for the Lord in a hostile environment. We must walk in communion with the Lord, apart from unconfessed sin, seeking a life of purity. This also refers to complete submission to the Lord, giving Him the preeminence in our lives. Our lives would be much more fulfilled spiritually if we were committed to continued fellowship with Christ.

B. Our Faithfulness (15b) – *and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.* You will have to agree that this involves much more than walking upright before others. We must be ready at a moment's notice to share our faith and the basis of our hope with those we encounter in life. I am convinced the world at large is much more interested in our faith than we realize. Many of them long to have the peace and assurance we have, and yet they have never been told how that is possible for them. Aren't

you glad someone took the time to explain the Gospel to you? Where would we be if we had never heard the truth of the saving grace of our Lord? We must be willing to seek and take advantage of the opportunities the Lord provides to share our faith!

C. Our Favor (16) – *Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.* Here we discover the importance of an upright life and a consistent witness before others. Living for the Lord will never be without accusation and opposition, but when accusations are made, we must be living in such a way that others will immediately know they are without merit. As we maintain communion with the Lord, walking in a committed effort to please Him, we can face such accusation with a pure conscious, knowing the Lord will take care of us and vindicate us according to His sovereign will. I was once told by a mentor of mine, “Take care of your character, and God will take care of your reputation.”

D. Our Focus (17) – *For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.* Peter again shares simple and profound wisdom. Serving the Lord never comes with a promise of a life of ease. Those who live godly in Christ will suffer persecution. Peter declared, that given the choice, we should choose to suffer for righteousness instead of being forced to suffer for evil. God in His sovereignty may allow suffering to come into our lives; and if He does, we must ensure that we are called upon to suffer for His glory, not because of sin or rebellion.

III. Our Destiny through Christ (18) – *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.* This thought provides the foundation for everything we’ve discussed today. The provision of Christ on our behalf will allow us to live righteously and present an effective witness to the world regardless of the difficulties we face. Consider:

A. The Substitution (18a) – *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.* Peter reminded the church of the great suffering of Christ on our behalf. The innocent took the place of the guilty, suffering on the cross as He bore our sin and endured the righteous judgment we deserved. Christ took our place, becoming sin and tasting death so we could be forgiven of sin. He provided Himself the atoning sacrifice for the sin of humanity.

- As we consider the agony He bore on the cross, the difficulties we face for our faith pale in comparison. If He was willing to endure all that for us, the least we could do is live faithfully for Him and provide a consistent witness of the hope that we have received.

B. The Reconciliation (18b) – *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.* Sin caused separation from God. Being born in a body of flesh, we all were separated and condemned. We had no hope apart from the grace and provision of God. As Christ bore our sin and paid the debt we owed, He reconciled the believer to God through His death on the cross. He redeemed us from sin and reconciled us to God. The saved by grace are now accepted of the Father because of the sacrifice of the Son. His righteousness has been imputed to our account. We are no more separated and condemned, but redeemed and accepted!

C. The Resurrection (18c) – *being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.* This puts everything we have discussed in its proper perspective and provides unwavering assurance. Christ died on the cross for our sin. They placed His body in a borrowed tomb where He lay for three days. On that third glorious day, Jesus came forth alive – triumphant over sin, death, and hell. We have nothing to fear in Christ. Death is certain for us physically, but it is certainly not the end of the story. Just as Christ rose from the grave in resurrection life, every believer will also be raised from the dead and spend eternity with our Lord and Savior. What have we to fear when death itself cannot separate us from the Lord we serve?

Conclusion: This has been a challenging and convicting passage. It caused me to examine my heart and commitment to Christ. Am I doing all I can for the Lord, being faithful in every situation? Sadly, I have to admit that I fail far too often. What about you? Has the Lord spoken to you today? Are you being a faithful witness for Him? Are you ready to give an answer of your faith to those who do not know Christ as Savior? Maybe you have never responded to the Lord's gracious offer of salvation. You have heard the Gospel today. Why not come and seek the Lord for the need in your life?