

Your Life Before the Rest of the World

1 Peter 3:13-17

Introduction – Having exhorted us as to how we are to live with one another in the previous verses, Peter now turns to our witness to the rest of the world. Our lives are to be consistent with our words, and our words outwardly with our hearts inwardly. Our allegiance to Christ is to be obvious, as must be our delight and hope in Him and His promises for us regardless of the circumstances of life.

Your Life, For Better or Worse – Summing up our life, we are always under the blessing of the Lord God, if we are His children.

Zealots of Good (v13) – There is quite a bit of talk about persecution and trials for believers in this book. Some of that is because of the time in which Peter is writing. He says here that the ‘normal’ course of events should be that Christians, being zealous followers of what is good, would not bring harm to themselves in most cultural situations. You should be the best neighbor anyone could ever wish for.

A Blessing in Either Case (v14a) – And so you are blessed if they receive you for all your good works, and you are blessed as well even if they do persecute you because of your faith. This is what Jesus taught us as well (Matt 5:11-12). Who can believe this? Only those who believe what Peter has been proclaiming throughout the epistle – God’s sovereignty is exhaustive in every area of our lives, and He promises that in everything He ordains for His children, there is blessing (Rom 8:28).

Where Your Heart Rests (vv14b-15a) – God has always acted this way with His people, because God has always been God.

Isaiah 8:12-13 – is quoted here. This passage is in the middle of a long prophesy by Isaiah during the reign of King Ahaz of Judah. Syria and Israel had allied against Judah, and Ahaz, instead of seeking help from the Lord, built an alliance with Assyria, kept his country’s economy strong, and introduced even more idolatry.

Peter’s Application – Do not fear the terror or threat before you, but rather set apart Christ in your heart. Those two commands go together, for together, they keep you from idols. With childlike confidence that He will keep His promises, we hope in God and hallow His name as our Deliverer, Savior and King.

The Heart – This is not, as we might think, talking about our emotions separate from our intellect (head and heart). The heart is the place of all of the inner-man, his intellect and emotions, as opposed to our outward actions or words (see Gen 6:5, Prov 23:7, Matt 15:8). To sanctify Christ in our heart is to declare His Lordship over all of truth and knowledge, which affects the next command.

And Always Be Ready (vv15b-17) – Having Christ sanctified in your life and attitude, you are prepared to always be ready to give a defense for the hope that is in you.

A Defense – The Greek word is apologia, which is where we get our word apologetics, which is a reasoned defense against an accusation. While there are those who make their living in apologetics, this instruction is to all Christians. You are to be prepared in all you say and do to be able to give a reason for the hope that is displayed in your actions and words.

The Reason – This is not simply a call to be able to give your testimony. Your answer is to be doctrinal, incorporating the teachings of the gospel, and in the context of this letter, of Peter’s teaching (1:3-5, 17-21, 2:9-10, 21-25). God is sovereign over all. God has called us out of darkness into His light to be His people. God has provided an atonement for our sin in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God has made us heirs, and all that occurs in our lives is under His watchful care and blessing.

Where is the Reason From? – We must reason from the Scriptures. We may not reason to the Scriptures, because that begs the question. If we have sanctified the Lord God in our hearts, then there is no room for neutrality in truth. When you defend the faith this way, you are simply acknowledging what God has said is true; the unbeliever in one sense knows God and knows the truth (Rom 1:18-23)

With Meekness and Fear – Being that confident of the truth gives us no license to be arrogant about it. The truth itself humbles us – we were lost without Christ and without the grace of God opening our hearts to Him. While we are not to fear man, our fear before God keeps us from thinking too highly of ourselves.

Having a Good Conscience... (v16f) – This phrase generally describes one who knows where he stands before God, inside and out. It describes the Christian life, the life of faith and works that flow from that faith. It describes the hope we have in the precious blood of Christ, His promises placed upon us, His completed work of forgiveness, and the mark of His hallowed name upon us. Our life and lips declare this hope, because this hope has been powerfully placed in us by God Himself.