

“Suffering in Good Conscience”

I Peter 3:13-22

Context: Peter’s encyclical was written to a small population of Christians in ancient Asia Minor who were seen as suspect by the Romans. Suspicion arose because rebirth from the life-changing Word of the Lord resulted in putting on lifestyles that reflect Christ’s nature. Chapter one describes the call to recipients of the letter to live as ‘side dwellers’ separated from the world’s perishing constructs. As God’s elect they were called to participate in a God-empowered transformation by willfully coming “under the hearing” as His chosen unto eternal salvation. In Chapter two, Peter describes what God-empowered transformations looked like. Chapter three explains godly living in relation to family, fellow-believers, and within our unbelieving community.

Pivotal verse: Stand firm in the true grace of God (cf. I Peter 5:12).

I. Suffering in repose – I Peter 3:13-15

Peter explains two responses in the unlikely event that those living virtuous lives are targeted by oppressive rulers. The first uses an example of the Remnant’s call to internal repose under impending invasion of the Northern Kingdom. The second is a call that gives an explanation of their repose, that is, their eager expectation of God’s release from such suffering.

2. Suffering in Good Conscience – I Peter 3:16-17

The ‘good conscience’ serves as a God-given, God-informed innate faculty that (1) judges the inherent good or bad intent behind an action and (2) determines obligations in light of that judgment. A good conscience presses itself out in Christ-like habits of life that expose just how base the defamers of Christ’s disciples truly are, even when that exposure might result in oppression.

3. Enlivened unto Good Conscience – I Peter 3:18-22

Oppressed believers are to endure their suffering in the resurrection power of the Spirit as shown by Jesus Christ’s sacrificial example. A conscience enlivened and raised from its inactive dead state is reflected in a lifestyle that eschews habitual sin. It is a lifestyle that sometimes may bring suffering (1) from without from an unbelieving world or (2) from within via temptations that still buffet the believer at times.

For Further Study:

- Sometimes an Old Testament passage is used by a New Testament author to emphasize a common thread experienced in both testaments. When this occurs, the Old Testament passage should be considered for the common thread. How do you know when an Old Testament passage is being cited? Where do you find the reference? What is that common thread found when comparing I Peter 3:14 with Isaiah 8:12?

- As a **Bible study method**, look up the New Testament word translated as “conscience” using [Bible hub](#) or in the [Vines NT Dictionary](#) (cf. 1 Peter 2:19; 3:16, 21). Give an example of exercising a mistakenly sinful conscience for a self-constructed good (i.e. Acts 8:1ff). What does exercising a ‘good’ conscience look like when searching your heart in order to receive communion (i.e. I Corinthians 11:26-32)?

- I Peter 3:21 speaks of baptism as saving a person. Explain the sense in which baptism saves a person through both a good conscience and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Transformation exercise:

In preparation for next Sunday’s communion, still yourself each night and ask the Holy Spirit to bring Scripture to reveal if repentance and forgiveness are needed for anything during the day.