***Omega: BIB 109***

***1st Peter – Always Be Prepared***

***Lesson 11***

***I. How to Respond to Our Enemies***

🡪 The Roman persecution is underway as Peter write this, and in fact it will get worse under Nero. So Peter is giving the church instructions on how to face the continuing attacks from its enemies.

🡪 1st Peter 3:13-17

🡪 Many of us living in the 21st century may wonder how some of this relates to us, since most of us do no think of ourselves as having enemies. We should remember, though, that Jesus our Lord has many enemies, and His enemies are our enemies. Here is how Peter says we should be ready to face them.

 ***A. Accept the Blessing of Suffering (vss. 13-14)***

1. Verse 13 says, “Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?”

A. What does it mean to be “zealous” (eager, enthusiastic) for doing good?

QUOTE 🡪 William Barclay... “A man may have more than one attitude to goodness. Goodness may be to him a burden; goodness to him may be a bore; goodness may be to him something which he vaguely and sentimentally and nebulously desires, but the price of which he is not willing to pay in sweat and effort.”

B. It is much better, though, to be zealous for goodness. Barclay refers to such zeal as “a passionate love of goodness.”

2. We should note that Peter is not talking about just being good. That should be a given for Christians.

A. We should ask ourselves, “What is my actual attitude toward goodness, toward obedience, toward law-keeping, toward righteousness, toward doing the right thing?

3. Assuming that we are “zealous for what is good,” Peter asks this question: “Who is there to harm you” if you ardently love doing good?

A. Now, the reasonable or sensible answer would be: “Why, no one will want to harm such a person!”

B. The problem, though, is this – and Peter wants us to be prepared for it: when it comes to Christianity, the world is full of unreasonable people! The world is full of people who oppose us and want to harm us just because we take a stand for what is good and right!

C. The actual answer to Peter’s question, then, is: lots of people!

1. Peter is most likely comforting us with the assurance that even the worst persecution cannot destroy what is truly important, i.e., our soul and its relation to God.

 A. Habakkuk 3:16-19 & Matthew 10:28

 B. Romans 8:38-39

4. Vs. 14... Suffering is a possibility. And since it may be a current reality or one that is poised on the horizon – we should be ready.

A. We should note that the suffering blessed by God is suffering for the sake of righteousness. The unrighteous world cannot tolerate righteousness. That is why they are prone to attack the righteous.

 1. Matt. 5:10-12 & Acts 14:22 & 2nd Tim 3:12

5. One way we are blessed is that we have freedom from fear. “Do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled.”

 A. Be ready to accept the blessing of suffering.

 ***B. Sanctify Christ as Lord in Your Hearts (vss. 15a )***

1. Some of our enemies attack religion in general; others more specifically attack Christianity and the Bible. But the greatest enmity and the most focused attacks are directed specifically against our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. In verse 14, Peter cites Isaiah 8:12. Here in verse 15 he continues the quotation by citing Isaiah 8:13a, “It is the LORD [Yahweh] of hosts whom you should regard as holy.” To “to regard as holy” means the same as “to sanctify” or “to set apart”

A. This Isaiah text was originally directed toward the Israelites, of course. They were being told to make sure they were not putting the true God Yahweh in the general category of deities, regarding Him as just another “god” like the gods of the Philistines, Egyptians, or Syrians.

 B. They must set Him apart, & regard Him as the only true God

C. It is very significant that Peter is citing this OT reference to Yahweh as referring to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ !

D. In the OT, Yahweh was not just God the Father, but included the entire Trinity, including God the Son, who became incarnate as Jesus Christ. That Peter applies this text to Jesus thus shows that the Apostles regarded Jesus as divine.

3. Sanctify – Set Apart – Regard as Holy... Jesus and Jesus alone occupies the role of Lord (Ruler, Sovereign) over us. He is not like any other human being; He is not like any other prophet, teacher, holy man, or alleged deity.

A. Our insistence that Jesus is the only Lord is the main thing that generates persecution against us Christians.

B. Down through Christian history, what have Christians been constantly been accused of? Of making Jesus the only true Deity: “JESUS is Lord” – not Zeus, not Caesar, not Allah, not Mohammed, not Krishna, and so on. This has always been the main offense of Christianity.

4. And so Peter says, do not let the Christ-haters intimidate you! Keep on setting Jesus apart as the one and only Lord. Fear Him alone, rather than fearing the persecutors.

 A. Set Him apart in your hearts, not just in your words.

QUOTE 🡪 William Barclay... “In your hearts give Christ a unique place.

 ***C. Be Ready to Defend Your Faith***

1. On what grounds do we as Christians regard Jesus Christ as the only Lord of our lives?

A. How do we know Jesus is Lord, rather than Caesar, or Allah, or Buddha?

 B. What if someone challenges us and says, “Prove it!”

C. We see such challenges and attacks on our faith every day. Some will say, “Well, that’s just the nature of religious faith. You can believe anything you want, since faith and reason are opposites. You can believe all those Christian myths if you choose to do so, no matter how stupid they are.”

 2. The Relationship between Faith and Reason

A. Many Christians have swallowed the lie that faith has nothing to do with reason and logic. This idea is absolutely false, however, and Peter’s exhortation in verse 15b shows this is the case.

B. “Be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.”

C. “Defense” is apologia in Greek, the word from which we get our word “apology.”

1. The connotation of this word – is not “to offer an apology” or “to apologize” for our faith, as if we are ashamed of it.

2. An apologia rather is “the defense which a defendant makes before a judge.” Acts 22:1; 25:16

D. The idea of an apologia is to set forth a reasoned argument as to why what we believe is actually true, or why our hope of eternal life is based on ***facts.***

 1. This word is where we get our concept of Apologetics.

E. Peter is saying that we must be ready to defend our faith to anyone who asks, and not just before a formal tribunal or judge. Rather than being devoid of reason or contrary to reason, the very concept of a defense, an apologia, means that it must be rational, based on reason.

F. This idea is reinforced by another word Peter uses in this verse. He says that, to anyone who asks, we must give an “account” or a reason for our hope. This is the word \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_... which means, “word, reason, statement, reasonable account.”

1. Here it means a reasonable and intelligent statement of our position.

2. This logos is the objective side of our belief and our conviction. We cannot rest our case on the subjective feelings in our hearts, though such feelings may be genuine and valid.

3. We cannot just say... “You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart!”

A. We must be ready to set forth the objective evidence for our faith – something often called “Christian Evidences.”

G. One last point is that Peter prescribes the attitude in which we must set forth our case. *(Contend in Truth and Love)*

1. He says we must give our defense “with gentleness and reverence.” The spirit of gentleness is very similar to humility or meekness; it is confidence without arrogance.

2. The attitude of reverence of course must be directed toward God, but it also includes a respectful attitude toward our enemies.

***D. Keep a Clear Conscience (vss. 16-17)***

1. Finally, in all confrontations and conflicts with our enemies, in verse 16-17 Peter reminds us to keep a clear conscience.

2. How does this conscience work?

A. The conscience does not give us information about what is right and wrong; such knowledge comes from the Bible. The conscience rather is our built-in moral alarm system. It “nags” us when we know we have done something wrong, or when we are considering doing something wrong.

1. As a moral alarm, it works on the same principle as a smoke alarm.

 B. How can we keep our conscience from nagging us?

1. We can disconnect it. 1st Cor. 8:7, 10, 12; 1st Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:5

2. The best way to keep our conscience from nagging us is that we stop doing what is wrong!

3. This is what Peter means here in verse 16a: keep your conscience clear (good, clean) by staying faithful to Christ in the face of persecution.

C. The enemies of Christ may falsely accuse you, or speak maliciously against you, or slander you (16b). But it is your responsibility to make sure that their false charges against you are truly false – that they have no basis in fact.

D. Then if there is any shame that comes out of their attacks on you, it will be their shame, not yours.

3. In verse 17 Peter points us to the “better” way. The word “better” means it is the more noble way. It is also better because it is the way that God blesses.

A. Exactly what does Peter say is the “better” way? Simply this, that if we are going to suffer, it is better to suffer for doing right rather for doing wrong.

4. In any case, whatever happens to us is the will of God (“if God should will it so,” vs. 17).

 A. God’s purposive or prescriptive will

 B. God’s permissive will.[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Entire Lesson pulled from: Studies in 1st Peter – Dr. Jack Cottrell. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)