

# 1 Peter 3:13-16

Hope in the storm

*Blessed By Suffering!*



I never once set out to suffer a day in my life. I never said at the beginning of a single day, “I want to be humiliated today”. Yet there has been many a day, especially when I was young, I was humiliated!

\*I always wanted to be an excellent athlete – in fact, my goal was to play professional football in the NFL when I was about the age of 9-11. Things were so simple at that age. But as I got older and competitive sports became mainly preparation/practice, I’m not sure I was prepared for what it would take to be good. I began a day by saying to myself that I was looking forward to the dedication, concentration, the fatigue, the aches and pains, the injuries that it would take to get to the place where I was actually as good as I had envisioned myself being. Yet, in organized sports as a teen, I suffered fatigue and pain and injuries on many a day on that journey!



\*I never wanted wanted to fail at school. My brother and my two sisters were smart. They also had a good work ethic with their homework. Me, not so much. But I also could not imagine myself failing. I had my pride you know! But there were a few tests that I failed, or a few presentations in front of class that I knew were really lame and where I embarrassed myself - where that failure began with not studying adequately or not understanding the material. Teachers back then would try to motivate students by humiliating them in front of the class. But public humiliation made me worse, not better, because it made me mad and increased my frustration!

\*I never set out to be unpopular or to be un-respected among my peers. But it happened that I had a few of those days where I did or said something stupid and then felt that sting! It really hurt – bad!

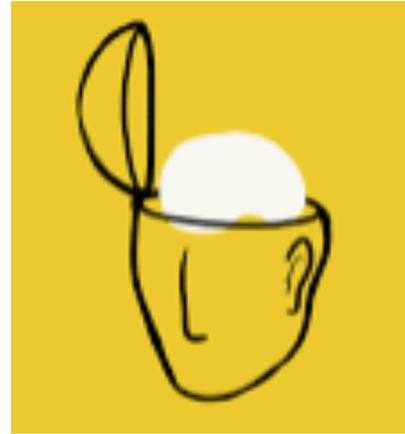
Yet, these painful things had an impact upon my life, my development, and my future! It impacted the man I was to become. Humiliation taught me that I wasn't as big of a deal as I had originally thought. That was an important revelation to me. In fact, it is important for every child to learn that they are not the center of the universe – in fact, that they are quite insignificant in the overall picture. \*You can tell from the way these 20-something Antifa members conduct themselves these days that this is something they never really learned – thus you see some shockingly strange spoiled-child behavior from adults that have the emotional restraint of a 2-year-old – which can be dangerous if a two-year-old resides in the body of a 20-something! An individual truly has to learn how unimportant they are in the cosmos and in this world, before they can really become someone worthwhile, I think. Worthwhile people are born from a place of humility, or they will *never* get to the place where they seem like real people! Our wounds and our failures, and even our tragedies, our disappointments and griefs make us into something special. Our successes make us aware of what we are capable of, but a steady diet of success creates insufferable pride and arrogance. Such a person can possibly be a mover and shaker, but not a person you would want to be friends with! The most successful people are known by the admiration and respect of their family along, with the *loyalty, regard, and affection* of their friends! That element of a person comes from humility. Humility creates empathy, generosity, and kindness. Without humility we are barely tolerable as human beings, and usually not good to be around. But with a mixture of the things that make us humble and the things that make us successful, we can actually become quite nice to be around. That is the way a fallen being in a fallen world works. It can't be all failure and it can't be all success. To use an overused cliché, “*you can't have just sunshine without the rain*”, because just sunshine will surely bring ruin, as surely as all rain!



In the same way, suffering makes the best Christ-followers! I really doubt if any of us have woken up in the morning and thought, “*Oh boy, another day. I hope I get to suffer for Christ today!*” Yet some days develop difficulties or sufferings that we never could have anticipated! They just do! And some days we must suffer for Christ. If we never have any days like that, we are soft. Suffering drives home our core convictions. It sets apart Christ as “**Lord**”! When we are willing to stand up and identify as a Christ-follower publicly knowing we are going to take the ridicule, the contempt and demonization, the discrimination, and the slander, **and feel honored in doing so**,.. that’s a true Christ-follower! You don’t have to question the true nature of the faith of such a Christian! There is one that has proven that in their heart they have “**set apart Christ as Lord**”! In their heart, Jesus is #1, and as He suffered and died for them, they are willing to suffer or even die for Him! They have put Him above themselves! Where does this word “Lord” come from? \*During the feudal system of the 900s until the 1500s, the Kings ultimately owned and owned and controlled the land throughout their kingdoms, and so they would give powerful families a very large tract of land in his kingdom, usually as awards for loyalty or for great acts of valor or prowess during an important battle. The King never totally relinquished control over these lands. He could take the land away if he so chose and give it to someone else. But for the most part, Kings honored their land grants so that the other land grant owners would remain loyal. These land grant recipients became the Lords, or local rulers, and as a group they became the ruling class, the aristocracy, the royalty who controlled large tracts of land and manors – and who also controlled the people who lived within those land grants, who tended the crops raised on their small plots of land and swore allegiance to the Lords. In turn, the Lords swore allegiance to the Kings and served them. These Lords and the people of their territories fought endless wars of defense and aggression for their kings in which a great many of them died while honoring their sworn oaths to do whatever their King or Lord had commanded. If a man gave his life for his sworn Lord while carrying out his Lords commands – it gave his family honor and set up his son to carry on in his stead and thus perpetuate his family’s hold on their fiefdom, or land holdings - along with the wealth in taxes and fees that they obtained from the 100s or even thousands of poor peasants that farmed on their property. But these peasants also gave their loyalty and their lives to carry out the commands of their Lord. So when the Authorized King James English translation was created in the 1600s, the Greek word means **master, sire, magistrate** – (judge), or **magnate** - (powerful and wealthy person of business).<sup>4</sup>



So it made sense for the translators to translate the Greek word into “*Lord*” as a feudal lord was **all** those things in English society. The apostolic admonition here in vs. 15 is that Christ-followers owe Christ their *everything* and should reciprocate by giving Him everything in return if called upon to do so! In that context comes the next section. “*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have*”. How do we defend and promote our “*Lord*”? The vast majority of the time we do it verbally/intellectually! This is where the idea of **faith** in the church has taken a wrong turn. The general impression of faith is that it is the act of believing something that is unprovable – something that cannot be intellectually defended in any significant way. Nothing could be further from the truth! That is a shallow and dangerous perception of faith! Under that definition a person could believe anything without evidence! They just have an impression or a feeling that it is true, without having to verify it in any way. \*I once had a discussion with a man who had attended a “camp-meeting” where a guest speaker, a man known as a “faith healer” was claiming to heal all kinds of maladies during the meeting. His most dubious claim was that he was healing teeth – that fillings were heating up and dropping out of mouths onto the floor as the holes in teeth were healed by his command. I asked this person if he had looked around on the floor for the fillings this faith healer had claimed were there – after all, there would have been a lot of fillings represented there that night, and the floor, by rights, should have been covered with little silver fillings. He proudly proclaimed that he did not look - that faith meant that he should just “*believe*”! I could not convince him in any way that that is actually NOT what faith means – that such a belief makes people into “suckers”, dupes, marks for con men to fleece – which, of course, we see happening to millions of people in churches across America and to millions more within their television audiences. These gullible people send in their money so that these “evangelists” can rake in millions for another private jet, or another mansion, or another luxury car! No, faith is cerebral! I’ve been saying it for months during the course of this sermon series. Christianity is as simple as a child’s faith, yet it is as complex as a thinking person’s game! We must know what the scriptures teach, and know what we believe about what it teaches, or we will be set up to believe anything – set up to be duped by the unscrupulous. Satan himself is The Unscrupulous One and he will exploit our gaps in knowledge and understanding! It could even be something not current - a scam from centuries ago that has evolved into church tradition – without scriptural basis – yet is ongoing. No, the only thing we can rely upon are the scriptures! They are the one thing which are uncorruptible. But anything of human origin is not to be trusted. Anyone who would add to what is in scripture – who would embellish what God has given us, is not to be trusted, and that’s a fact!



That is verified to have happened continually in church history where faith has been misconstrued to be a feeling rather than a verifiable, justifiable, tangible belief system that can be defended successfully! Unbelieving men and women have taken advantage of millions that hold to faith being an unfounded intuition. Therefore, unless it can be well-established that it is corroborated through the scriptures, it has to be, at the very least, held suspect! The apostolic admonition is that we be *“able to give an answer to anyone who would ask of us”*. If you cannot give a reason based in scripture, you could be in trouble, even in trouble with God whose Spirit has warned us through this passage! He will hold us accountable for being led astray when there is no reason for it. He hand delivered His world to us for this very purpose, with the express intention that we avail ourselves of it – that we come to know it by reading it, and learning it by applying ourselves to studying it and even memorizing it! This is the knowledge of God that makes us wise, that guards our hearts, that arms us to fight the battles of God! \*I will never forget my admiration for my father when I was a child because he was unafraid to take on my uncles and men at our church when they would try to make a stand on some of their hairbrained theologies. I remember that they would be gathered in a circle of chairs, arguing their aberrant theologies, and my dad could not disguise his disapproval, even outrage at some of their strange aberrations and rabbit trails, and he would set them straight with the scriptures. He knew a fuller spectrum of scripture than they did, so he would win hands down – at least in my eyes. I loved watching his passion for accuracy. It inspired me to want to be like Him in this way! Even as a child it seemed vitally important to avoid avoidable error in the handling of the scriptures. So as a child I listened to the sermons, and I listened at the Wednesday evening bible study, and listened and participated fully during Sunday School and youth group! The basis for what I know now was learned in years 4-10! That passion for God’s word was vitally important in the formation of the man I would become and one of the major motives that drives me as a pastor yet today! I have a deep love for the unadulterated truths of the Bible!



Now, Peter reminds us that our conduct in defending the truth is as important as being able and willing to defend the truth in itself. **“But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience.”** Someone should not be able to discount what we say and malign us *or* the truth just because we lost control and misbehaved in the way we delivered the message! We are told by the Lord and His apostles that if we are to claim to be a Christ-follower, then we must obey Him! He tells us to deliver the message with gentleness and respect! So we don’t have any choice but to do so! Anger, rage, hatred, malice, revenge, bad attitude, belligerence, obstinacy, sullenness, pettiness,.. these and more negative human characteristics like them are all elements of our past! Sometimes we feel like indulging them because they are strong impulses, but to us they are disobedience and disobedience is sin, and sin drives a wedge between us and our Lord. Angry Christians are not healthy Christians and not wise ones either. We are not wise when we are ruled by uncontrolled anger! Anger and hatred – if we indulge ourselves and let them get the best of us – will take the place of the beautiful fruit of the spirit. You cannot have **love and hate** co-existing in one person! You cannot have **joy and rage** existing in the same Christ-follower! One is given up or the other, one always wins and one always loses - because the two cannot co-exist in the same mind and heart! The hate, rage, enmity, bad attitude, are spoilers, taking over and ruining our usefulness to God – making us unwise, unpredictable, and often going rogue – going our own way and justifying ourselves all the way along. Then, as if that wasn’t bad enough, Satan gets his fangs into us, injecting his poison and sickening our hearts and minds with ungodliness! We cannot afford to give Satan these openings to exploit our weaknesses. I see too much of this. It is discouraging to see Christians lives falling apart! So the Holy Spirit has admonished us today. We are to conduct ourselves with intelligence, but also gentleness and respect toward everyone – not faking it but truly surrendering our attitudes, emotions, actions, reactions, to the Lord Jesus Christ! Then we have no obstacles to our relationship with Him. **HE** is our Master, and we are committed to obeying him, and therefore committed to denying ourselves so that we CAN honor and obey Him! It is vital for us to do this if we are to ever make any substantial headway in accomplishing His purposes in this world.

