

Good Trouble

1 Peter 3:13-17

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A. Protected (Vs. 13):

1. Who is there to harm - Because we desire to 'love life and see good days...., abstain from evil....., the eyes of the Lord will be towards the righteous, and His ears will attend to their prayer.' Because the Lord has committed to serve us in this manner, 'His FACE is against those who do evil,' so no one can be successful in doing a wide range of harm and injury to us.' Nothing they do to us can destroy us because *"if God is for us who can successfully come against us."* (Rom. 8:31).
 - a) Peter continues (2:13-3:7) in this passage his reasoning that as believers we must be prepared to suffer unjustly for doing good, whether this is in relation to the government, or employers, or husbands and wives, we must be like Christ (2:21-25).
2. Who is there to harm - Peter is reflecting on Christ's suffering (1 Peter 2:21-15), especially after seeing Him pray in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt. 26:26-46) and seeing Christ after His resurrection. Even though it seemed like those who hated Him were allowed to crucify Him, God allowed it for a divine purpose and once that purpose was fulfilled, He was fully restored and blessed in an even more powerful manner (Phil. 2:5-11). No one can destroy us. They may win a battle but not the war (Luke 6:22-23).
 - a) *"And who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?"* -- it is almost as if I am saying *"If God is for you, who will stand against you."* (Romans 8:31)
 - b) If God is on the side of the righteous and against those who do evil, what harm can possibly come to those who do good? The sentiments here expressed can be found across a wide spectrum of biblical literature: e.g., Pss 56:4; 91:7-10; 118:6; Isa 50:9; Matt 10:28-31//Luke 12:4-7; 21:18; Rom 8:31.¹
3. Prove zealous – Who, despite all the adversity they encountered (these believers suffered in every aspect of their lives under Nero's persecution), continue to rise above their circumstances with an eager desire for God. They remained spiritually sober and became refined like pure gold. Unlike Peter, who had to be confronted and restored by Christ (John 21:15-17), these believers persevered in the fight for the gospel (1 Peter 1:3-9, 13-16). In the last days, because of all that Christians will experience, many believers' love for Christ will grow cold (Mt. 24:12).

¹ Michaels, J. R. (1988). [*1 Peter*](#) (Vol. 49, p. 185). Word, Incorporated.

- a) The word “followers” is the translation of a Greek word meaning “zealots.” The verb means “to burn with zeal, to desire earnestly.”²
- 4. For what is good – Clinging to what pleases God and benefits the lives of those around us must be an attitude that possesses our hearts (Phil. 2:1-6). No opposition we encounter should so impact our lives that it spiritually deteriorates us to function in the flesh, so that we live out the old man rather than new man.
 - a) The focus of the passage seems to be on the believer maintaining their integrity despite the persecution they may experience. This persecution is from 2:13-3:7.
- 5. Key verses:
 - a) Rom. 8:31; 12:14-21; Phil. 4:8-9; Gal. 6:9-10; 1 Pet. 2:19-20; 4:15-16.

B. The Good Fight (vs. 14-16; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:6-8):

- 1. If you should suffer for the sake of righteousness – If what evil people do to us continuously creates pain, so long as we, like Christ (1 Peter 2:21-25), continue to be committed to the purposes of God, living by faith and not by sight, the Lord’s FACE is against those doing evil to us (Mt. 5:10-12).
 - a) Once again Peter encouraged his readers with the fact that good behavior is their best defense against unjust punishment and persecution.³
 - b) In 3:18–22 Peter presented the supreme example of undeserved suffering: the crucifixion of Christ. Jesus suffered death on the cross for the sins others had committed. In similar fashion, the suffering of the innocent could be God’s will.⁴
- 2. If you should suffer for the sake of righteousness – If, when people choose to do evil against us, causing emotional, mental or physical pain, we must cognitively and purposefully decide to depend more on the Holy Spirit, who powerfully lives in us (1 John 4:4). As we do so, we demonstrate a faith that transforms us, enabling us to become more like Christ and less dependent on ourselves. *“unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.”* (John 12:24-26; NASB)

²Wuest, Kenneth S.: *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English Reader*. Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1997, c1984, S. 1 Pe 3:13

³Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. 1 Pe 3:13

⁴Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). *Tyndale concise Bible commentary* (p. 691). Tyndale House Publishers.

- a) “Righteousness” here seems synonymous with “that which is good” in the last verse. Christians had often to suffer, not only because of their confession of Christ, but because of the purity of their lives, which was a standing reproach to the heathen. Compare St. Augustine’s well-known saying, “Martyrem facit non pæœna, sed causa.” And be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled. From Isa. 8:12. The genitive may be taken as objective: “Be not afraid of the terror which they cause;” or as subjective, “with the terror which they feel.” The former view is more suitable here.⁵
3. Blessed – When we view the word ‘blessed’ in the verse, we would most likely think of financial resources. To be blessed, especially in these circumstances, is understandably our focus, but it means God is satisfied, like in the case of Job, with our commitment to live by faith. This mindset provides us with His favor, which can be executed in the midst of the awful circumstances we encounter. It also means these circumstances can lead us to eventually prosper (Rom. 8:28; Job), turning our pain into happiness.
- a) *How happy you are* is literally “you are blessed.” “Blessed” (Greek *makarios*) is the same word used in the Beatitudes (Matt 5.3 and following) and is used to describe the benefits bestowed by someone (usually a higher power) to another; these benefits include prosperity, good fortune, and happiness. (See further Newman, “Some translational notes on the Beatitudes,” TBT 26, page 112.) Most translations render the word “happy”; some others have “you will count it a blessing” (*JB*); “that is a privilege” (*Phps*). Rather than the exclamation *how happy you are!*, some languages employ a positive statement with some type of intensive element, for example, “you are indeed happy” or “you are surely fortunate.”
4. Do not fear their intimidation – We are commanded not to shrink back because we are tormented by others’ threats, power, and influence (Peter in reflection 1 Peter 5:9-10).
- a) Peter cites the Greek version of Isaiah 8:12–13. In the Old Testament this refers to the fear of the Aram-Israel alliance (Kings Rezin and Pekah), who planned to remove Ahaz from the throne of Judah in order to place someone there who would join them in their alliance against Assyria. In 1 Peter the statement refers to fear of persecutors.⁶
5. Do not fear their intimidation – We must not allow our past experiences that may haunt us to determine our obedience to faith or to steal our blessings since it can create doubt (James 1:5-8).

⁵ Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). *1 Peter* (p. 131). Funk & Wagnalls Company.

JB Jerusalem Bible

Phps Phillips, The New Testament in Modern English

⁶ Arnold, C. E. (2002). *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Hebrews to Revelation*. (Vol. 4, p. 138). Zondervan.

6. Do not be troubled - We must not allow the pain people seek to inflict to create anxiety, distress, or cause us to become perplexed so that we doubt God's promises. Doubt can arise because of the great mental duress these circumstances can stimulate within us. *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed."* (2 Cor 4:7-9; NASB)
 - a) *Do not worry* is literally "not be troubled" with "troubled" having the meaning of "disturbed," "terrified," (Brc) "frightened," (SPCL) "distressed," "upset." *Do not worry* is frequently expressed idiomatically, for example, "do not let your mind kill you" or "do not let your thoughts run about in all directions" or "thinking about all the things that might happen to you."⁷
7. But sanctify Christ as Lord – Like Christ instructed Peter, we must set Christ apart from all we feel by deciding to abide in His Word (John 15:1-13) rather than our fears created by the intimidation others may seek to create in us. This only takes place when Christ is not just our friend (John 15:13); He is our Lord. He has complete authority and power to reign over all that we may think or feel independent of Him.
 - a) The word "sanctify" is the translation of a Greek word meaning "to set apart." It was used in the pagan Greek religions of the act of setting apart a building as a temple, thus designating it as religious in character, to be used for religious purposes. The word "God" is a rejected reading and "Christ" appears in the best texts. The exhortation is to set apart Christ as Lord in the heart. The word "Lord" is the translation of *kurios* (κύριος), here referring to Christ as the Jehovah of the Old Testament. The word "Christ" is the English spelling of the Greek word *christos* (χριστός), which in turn is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word meaning "The Anointed One," which latter is a designation of the Jewish Messiah. Peter was exhorting these Jews to set apart their Messiah, the Lord Jesus, as Jehovah, Very God, in their hearts, giving first place to Him in obedience of life. The word *kurios* (κύριος) also has the idea of "master" in it. Thus, the second Person of the Triune God was to be lord and master of their lives. He was to be their resource and defender when persecution came.⁸
8. In your hearts – Peter was overwhelmed with fear and the power of the Roman government. He grew up watching these soldiers threaten his people and mistreat them with no consequences. Peter, when placed in the same situation, responded first with commitment to Christ by cutting off the soldier's ear, but he soon succumbed to their overwhelming show of force empowered by the Sanhedrin. So, Peter teaches us

⁷Arichea, Daniel C. ; Nida, Eugene Albert: *A Handbook on the First Letter from Peter*. New York : United Bible Societies, 1994], c1980 (UBS Handbook Series; Helps for Translators), S. 105

⁸Wuest, Kenneth S.: *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English Reader*. Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1997, c1984, S. 1 Pe 3:15

from his own mistakes by commanding us not to allow our deepest emotions and fears (that may be substantiated from past experiences) to drive us to use our common sense, destroying our commitment to faith.

9. ALWAYS be ready to make a defense to everyone – When brought before magistrates or our enemies, we must use the Word of God as our argument, knowing that Christ promises to have our backs (1 Peter 3:8-12; Rev. 12:9-10). We must live with this in mind because Satan is *“like a roaring lion seeking to devour us”* (1 Peter 5:8), therefore we must keep the armor of the Lord on continuously (Eph. 6:10-18) girded up, our minds renewed (Rom. 12:2) because the Spirit of God only brings back to our remembrance (John 14:26) what we have taken the time learn (John 16:13). Like a good lawyer or judge we must always be ready.
 - a) The words “give an answer” are the translation of a Greek word used as a legal term in the courts. It means literally “to talk off from,” and was used of an attorney who talked his client off from a charge preferred against him. He presented a verbal defense. The exhortation is to Christians to talk the Bible off from the charges preferred against it, thus presenting for it a verbal defense.⁹
 - b) But those who believe in a whole Bible, rather than a Bible full of holes, are admonished not to remain silent in the face of this attack by Modernism, but to defend the Bible against these false charges by presenting a verbal defense for it, refuting the statements of the destructive critic.¹⁰
10. Give an account – Peter was well taught by Christ. He clearly knew that Christ was going to die and none of His disciples were going to be lost; all His assets were taken care of (account). Christ repeatedly thought him not to fear from the first time He met him (Luke 5:1-11). When confronted, Peter could have communicated his inward thoughts and feelings intelligently. Instead, Peter responded based on his own feelings and understanding when he cut the soldier’s ear off and cursed before those who were warming their hands. When tried, Christ spoke from God’s Word, and being Christ, He was completely ready to give an account of all God asked Him to do. Christ assets (His disciples, mother at the cross) and liabilities (His disciples) were represented perfectly to the point where Christ, on the cross, would say, *“it is finished”*.
 - a) Hope is the grace on which St. Peter lays most stress; it lives in the hearts of Christians. Christians ought to be able to give an account of their hope when asked, both for the defense of the truth and for the good of the asker. That account may be very simple; it may be the mere recital of personal experience-often the most convincing of arguments; it may be, in the case of instructed Christians, profound and closely reasoned. Some answer every Christian ought to be able to give.¹¹

⁹Wuest, Kenneth S.: *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English Reader*. Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1997, c1984, S. 1 Pe 3:15

¹⁰Wuest, Kenneth S.: *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English Reader*. Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1997, c1984, S. 1 Pe 3:15

¹¹ Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). [*1 Peter*](#) (p. 132). Funk & Wagnalls Company.

11. Give an account for the hope – We must be ready, with Christ firmly established in our hearts, to provide a record of His faithfulness to us (David said I killed a lion and a bear so he can face Goliath). Even though our circumstances may seem bleak because of how Christ faithfully served us in the past, we can expect Him to do the same in the present. So we can have confidence, trusting the Lord to deliver us from our enemies.
 - a) But in addition to meekness and fear, the defender of the Faith must have a good conscience. Vincent translates, “having a conscience good or unimpaired.” The words “that whereas they speak evil of you” can be rendered a little more accurately, “that in the matter in which ye are spoken against,” that is, in the matter of Christianity and one’s testimony to it by life and word, these critics of the Bible may be put to shame in that their misrepresentation of Christians and of Christianity will be shown to be wrong. The words “falsely accuse” are very strong in the Greek, namely, “to spitefully abuse, to insult, to traduce.” The words “good conversation” refer to the Christian behavior of the recipients of this letter, the word “conversation” having the meaning of “manner of life or behavior” when the A.V. was translated. Today of course it means “talk.” This behavior was in Christ in the sense that He was the center and the circumference of all their thoughts, words, and deeds.¹²
12. With gentleness – We must not allow the pain inflicted by others to cause us to become vengeful. Scripture teaches us that we can be angry without sinning (Psalm 4:4; Eph. 4:26-27). Our response toward those who willfully come against us should not be marked by malice, aggression, or contention. Instead, our commitment to keep God’s Word above our feelings – by sanctifying Christ as Lord in our hearts - should lead us to exercise strength under control. This allows us to respond according to the Spirit rather than allowing circumstances to move us to react in the flesh.
13. Reverent; fear – phobias – The mindset that keeps us in a spirit of gentleness is a constant reflection on who we are before God. Our desire to respect His presence within us (Eph. 3:15-21; 1 John 4:4) should create such a consciousness of Him in us that our adversity grows us spiritually rather than deteriorates our Christian maturity.
 - a) Fearing God, which entails strict obedience and loyalty toward God, the kinds of behavior that show proper reverence for God’s worth, rather than fearing any human force, is the path to safety. This would mean making a fearless, though winsomely gentle, confession of Jesus and positive testimony to His gifts and goodness in the hostile situation the Christians find themselves in (see Matt. 10:26–28, 32–33). deSilva, D. A. (2005). 1 Peter. In C. A. Evans & C. A. Bubeck (Eds.), *John’s Gospel, Hebrews–Revelation* (First Edition, p. 306). David C Cook.

¹²Wuest, Kenneth S.: *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English Reader*. Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1997, c1984, S. 1 Pe 3:16

14. Keep a good conscience – We must constantly cling to “sanctifying Christ in our hearts” allowing Him to govern our thoughts, attitudes, and responses. When Christ remains our focus, even in the face of brutal treatment or unjust circumstances, our desire is to please God rather than react according to our feelings. This commitment enables us, like Christ (something Peter witnessed); to endure suffering without becoming corrupted by the actions of others. This disposition eventually causes those who accuse us to be put to shame.
- a) Our word “conscience” comes from two Latin words: *con*, meaning “with,” and *scio*, meaning “to know.” The conscience is that internal judge that witnesses to us, that enables us to “know with,” either approving our actions or accusing (see Rom. 2:14–15). Conscience may be compared to a window that lets in the light of God’s truth. If we persist in disobeying, the window gets dirtier and dirtier, until the light cannot enter. This leads to a “defiled conscience” (Titus 1:15). A “seared conscience” is one that has been so sinned against that it no longer is sensitive to what is right and wrong (1 Tim. 4:2). It is even possible for the conscience to be so poisoned that it approves things that are bad and accuses when the person does good! This the Bible calls “an evil conscience” (Heb. 10:22). A criminal feels guilty if he “squeals” on his friends, but happy if he succeeds in his crime! ¹³
 - b) As a believer studies the Word, he better understands the will of God, and his conscience becomes more sensitive to right and wrong. A “good conscience” is one that accuses when we think or do wrong and approves when we do right. It takes “exercise” to keep the conscience strong and pure (Acts 24:16). If we do not grow in spiritual knowledge and obedience, we have a “weak conscience” that is upset very easily by trifles (1 Cor. 8). ¹⁴
15. In the thing in which you are slandered — After Christ’s death and resurrection, those who accused Him were constantly exposed as those who spoke thoughtless evil words against Him. Peter preached, exposing this during Pentecost (Acts 2:22-4). What they say may sound true, and they may convince others to follow them, but in the end God’s truth will prevail.
16. Those who revile your good behavior in Christ - Those who constantly hurl insults, threats, and make false accusations towards us are ultimately opposing a Christian lifestyle that has brought blessing and benefit to those around us. This is because, regardless of how others treated us, we remained committed to “sanctifying Christ in our hearts”. Peter again reflects on the good works of Christ that blessed all those who came before Him (John 14:8-12). This makes those who slander us with accusations become more vividly exposed than if there is some truth to what was said.
- a) Christians were slandered as “haters of humankind” (because they would not go to pagan festivals and parties), traitors to the state (because they called Christ and not

¹³Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. 1 Pe 3:16

¹⁴Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. 1 Pe 3:16

Caesar Lord and also because they refused to worship the genius of the emperor), and immoral (because in pagan eyes their warm love for their “brothers and sisters” was thought to be sexual and it was even rumored that they ate flesh and drank blood at their meals, which was thought to have come from infants they had slaughtered).¹⁵

17. Shame – The Lord is just. Although those who crucified Christ appeared to have succeeded, His resurrection vindicated Him, and His ministry continued powerfully through the disciples. In the end, all those who accused Him falsely were disgraced. This reality became evident when many of the Jews who heard Peter’s message at Pentecost, were “pierced in the heart” (Acts 2:13, 37). If we function with Christ “sanctified in our hearts” the same will be true for us.

C. Blessed (vs. 17):

1. First Peter 3:17 is an effective summary of the content of 2:15, 19-20.¹⁶
2. It is better if God should will it so – It is more superior and of greater benefit to us (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10; 3:21) if God allows us to experience suffering in this manner while we keep a good conscience.
 - a) Peter is not encouraging believers to seek out situations in which they will experience suffering. Instead, he is saying that believers should make certain that when they suffer it is the result of having been faithful to God rather than because they have done evil (2:19, 20). if it is the will of God: Suffering may be part of God’s perfect and wise plan for a believer (Matt. 5:10–12).¹⁷ if the will of God be so— rather as the optative is in the oldest manuscripts, “if the will of God should will it so.” Those who honor God’s will as their highest law (1Pe 2:15) have the comfort to know that suffering is God’s appointment (1Pe 4:19). So Christ Himself; our inclination does not wish it.¹⁸
3. You suffering for doing what is right – It is more profitable or advantageous when experiencing pain from evil actions when we make every effort to discipline our lives to deny ourselves by ‘sanctifying Christ as Lord,’ so that while under pressure we keep doing good deeds. “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 “For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it.” (Matt 16:24-26; NASB) This also gives an

¹⁵ Arnold, C. E. (2002). [*Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Hebrews to Revelation*](#). (Vol. 4, pp. 138–139). Zondervan.

¹⁶ Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:850

¹⁷ Radmacher, Earl D. ; Allen, Ronald Barclay ; House, H. Wayne: *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*. Nashville : T. Nelson Publishers, 1999, S. 1 Pe 3:17

¹⁸ Jamieson, Robert ; Fausset, A. R. ; Fausset, A. R. ; Brown, David ; Brown, David: *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. Oak Harbor, WA : Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997, S. 1 Pe 3:17

account of our hope in Christ Jesus. Christ believed in His resurrection, ascension, and glorification and can therefore say, *"Father forgive them for they know not what they do."*

4. Doing what is wrong – There is absolutely no benefit, here on earth or in heaven, to behave with no respect for our Christian values. It does not lead to the Lord's blessings on earth or in heaven. *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great"* (Mt. 5:10-12)