

6 Steps to Turn Suffering into Witnessing (1 Peter 3:13-17)

I. Do good (3:13)!

- A. Who is there to harm you?
 1. Christians were in threat of harm.
 2. Harm = to suffer emotionally or physically (Acts 18:10).
 3. “Research indicates that conservative Christians face discrimination in academia. ... Academics with socially conservative perspectives wind up with lower-status academic positions even when controlling for their productivity.”¹
- B. Prove zealous for what is good
 1. Good (1 Pet 3:11; 2:12)
 2. Zealous = enthusiastically committed Good things to do:
 3. Then the chances of someone harming you are diminished (2:15).

II. Recognize you are blessed (14a).

- A. Sometimes believers will suffer, simply because they are doing good (1 Pet 4:16).
- B. Christians are blessed when they suffer for being righteous (Matt 5:10-12).
 1. We are grouped with the prophets.
 2. We understand Jesus (Phil 3:10).
 3. We will be rewarded (1 Pet 4:12-14).

III. Overcome fear (14b).

- A. You might suffer for righteousness.
- B. Overcome fear.
 1. The Prophet Isaiah warned King Ahaz against ungodly alliances and urged him to trust God for deliverance (Isa. 8:12).
 2. Do not fear your enemy.
 - a. Fear = frightened (1 Pet 3:6)
 - b. Intimidation = terror (Isa 8:12)
 - c. Troubled = stirred up (John 11:33)
 3. Why can we not fear when we are persecuted?
 - a. We know man can only harm our body (Ps 118:6).
 - b. God takes care of our soul (Luke 12:4-5, 20).
 - c. Suffering Christians are to entrust themselves to God (1 Peter 4:19).

IV. Revere Christ (15a)!

- A. Paraphrase of Isa 8:13a
 1. Switching Christ for “himself”
 2. “the LORD himself you must revere” (Isa 8:14 LXX).
 3. “The Lord Christ you must revere” (1 Pet 3:15).
- B. Jesus is to be honored as Lord God (Mat 6:9).
 1. Peter’s change reflects the situation his readers faced.
 2. They were persecuted because of their allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord.
- C. Sanctify = to treat as holy.
 1. We are to fear displeasing Him more than we fear what others might do to us (Ps. 118:6).

¹ George Yancey, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/anti-christian-discrimination-america/>, April 23, 2021.

2. Peter failed when he feared the enemy and denied his Lord.

D. “We sanctify the Lord God in our hearts when we with sincerity and fervency adore him, when our thoughts of him are awful and reverend, when we rely upon his power, trust to his faithfulness, submit to his wisdom, imitate his holiness, and give him the glory due to his most illustrious perfections.”²

V. Explain your hope (15b)!

A. See persecution as an opportunity to spread the good news.

B. Be prepared to explain your hope (Luke 21:14-15).

C. Give a defense (*apologia*) formal or informal (2 Tim 4:16).

D. Give an accounting.

E. Enjoy your hope.

1. “Unbelievers will recognize by the way believers respond to difficulties that their hope is in God rather than in pleasant earthly circumstances.”³

2. Hope distinguishes Christians from non-Christians (1 Thess 4:13).

3. We have a certain expectation of a positive prospect (1 Pet 1:13).

4. Hope affects our life (1 Pet 1:3)

a. “The hope that animates believers will become so evident that unbelievers will ask for an explanation.”⁴

b. *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (AD 155)⁵

F. Temper your explanation with gentleness and fear (Col 4:5-6).

• The purpose is not to win an argument but to win lost souls.

VI. Keep a good conscience with good behavior (16-17).

A. Maintain a good conscience to shame slanderers.

1. “A ‘good conscience’ is one that accuses when we think or do wrong and approves when we do right” (Acts 24:16).⁶

2. Shame slanderers.

a. False accusations: traitors to Caesar, rebels to masters, insubordinate to husbands.

b. Shamed: Loyal, respectful, submissive

c. Peter had been shamed.

d. *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 7⁷

B. Avoid wrong by doing right (16).

C. It is better to suffer for good rather than for evil (17).

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2429.

³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 175.

⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 175.

⁵ https://ccel.org/ccel/polycarp/martyrdom_of_polycarp/anf01.iv.iv.html, copied April 21, 2021, from *The Apostolic Fathers*, The Martyrdom of Polycarp, 9.3; 11.2; 14:1-2.

⁶ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 414.

⁷ https://ccel.org/ccel/polycarp/martyrdom_of_polycarp/anf01.iv.iv.html, copied April 21, 2021, from *The Apostolic Fathers*, The Martyrdom of Polycarp, 7.1-3.