

1Peter 3:12-15 – I Must Fight If You Must Reign

TSK, GreekLexicon, Handfuls, Poole, Geneva, Trapp, Robertson, Mercer, Gill, Lenski, Henry, Barnes, INT, Rienecker, Clarke, Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: There are 3 existential battles taking place in the world that you and your children will face in 2016.

1. Muslim leaders have been advocating violent Jihad and Jihad by stealth to take over Western nations and religions – and they admit it. Much of it was planned and written in the early 70's. This is why 14 more Christians were murdered by Muslims in the Philippines this past week.
2. Equally dangerous, we face danger from our political and educational leaders who insist on passing and promoting laws that are antagonistic to the Christian family. This is why saying "Merry Christmas" is not considered a "micro-aggression."
3. There is fleshly living that is overtaking the church – an obsession with personal pleasure and advancement instead of advancing Christ's kingdom. Lusts of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are everywhere. This is why holidays are seen as holy...but the Sabbath is held in contempt.

Yet the church has always had threats. Today you will see a historical example of severe persecution that was happening and about to increase in severity under Caesar Nero's reign of terror on the church. Rome joined the Jewish leaders to wreak havoc on the church. And God wanted his people to fight in his army, but he wanted them prepared.

Our headings are:

Security

Sanctification

Service

Our goals: **That you will realize the reality of the threats to the church and that you will be prepared to neutralize the threats so that Christ's kingdom can advance.**

Security

12 For the **eyes of the LORD are on the righteous**, And His **ears are open to their prayers**; But the **face of the LORD is against those who do evil.**"

1. The Lord promised Divine security in the face of dangers. This promise of protection was almost verbatim from Psalms.

Psalm 34:15 The eyes of the LORD *are* on the righteous, And His ears *are open* to their cry.

And this promise is what you need to **face challenges and unfairness.**

And this promise is what you need to **keep you from overreacting**...and you are likely to overreact!

2. The promised to hear you when you pray...Absolutely! Everyone in trouble likes to have someone to talk with!

1John 5:14 Now this is the **confidence that we have in Him**, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

3. The Lord promised to destroy your persecutors. (He is infinitely good, but also infinitely just.) While the Lord's face shines upon his children with benediction, it is a different matter when the wicked have to meet him face to face.

(Sometimes the word "eyes" is used negatively, it is translated "face" or "anger.")

Leviticus 20:5 `then **I will set My face against that man and against his family**; and I will cut him off from his people, and all who prostitute themselves with him to commit harlotry with Molech.

a. So don't be impatient when you see the wicked proper in their wickedness. Your enemies are God's enemies. Justice on the wicked will come in good time... in God's time. So love the Muslim, love Kathleen Wynne, and love that indifferent person in the church! But if they reject the Savior, he will come and meet them and condemn them to hell.

b. When you know he is good, you can face the fire without fear.

13 And who is he who will (is able to) harm you (by himself) if you become followers of (Christ) what is good?

c. Since verse 12 says that the Lord watches over the righteous to protect them during their persecution, what does Peter mean here? Is he suggesting that no one can harm you? No. Jesus had already said that those who live faithfully can expect persecution. Twelve times Peter mentions "suffer" in this book. David faced harm from Saul. 1Samuel 24.

The meaning is this: No persecutor can harm your soul, and he can only harm your body insofar as Christ permits. So persecution? Yes. But preservation of your soul... and often your body!

He was able to keep Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from Nebuchadnezzar's fire, and Daniel from the lion's den.

2Thessalonians 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard *you* from the evil one.

14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed...

4. Then assuming his people would face persecution, the Lord reminded them they were blessed-a summary of the 3 things.

Matthew 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

5. So practically what type of suffering might you face today?

You may be harassed because you take a stand on what you want to teach your children.

You may not be considered for a promotion because you will not work on Sundays.

You may not get invited to family dinners because you like to pray before you eat.

You might find it difficult for your children to get into universities because you refuse to allow the government churches to indoctrinate your children.

You might find yourself before the Human Rights Commission if you condemn all false religions.

You might lose your charitable tax status if you criticize government leaders.

6. But even if you do suffer, persecution cannot destroy you. Christ will provide your escape or your endurance!

1Cor 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also **make the way of escape**, that you may be able to bear it.

Sanctification

"And **do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled**." 15 But **sanctify 圣化 the Lord God** in your hearts,

1. Knowing what God has promised, he wants you to be prepared so that you are not be afraid or troubled by trials.

Isaiah 8:12 "Do not say, 'A conspiracy,' Concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, **Nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled**. 13 The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; **Let Him be your fear**,

When this sinks in, the threats that come will be nullified.

Psalm 64:1 Hear my voice, O God, in my meditation; Preserve my life from fear of the enemy.

Psalm 91:5 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, *Nor* of the arrow *that* flies by day,

You have the assurance of salvation. "When I am afraid, I will trust in you." Psalm 56.

You will feel like a son feels when his father is holding his hand to walk through a dark room.

2. Knowing what God has promised, he wants you to "sanctify him in your heart."

a. We know that "**sanctify**" means to set apart for special purpose-"hallowed." But what **does "sanctify the Lord in your hearts" mean?** The Lord is already holy; you can't make his nature holy. Well "sanctify the Lord in your heart" means the Lord's person and works must envelop your life. The Lord must have **a permanent and the prominent place in your heart**. Everything else must separate. Other affections must be removed and he must sit on the throne. Filth must be separated from you.

b. So how are you able to put the Lord in a permanent and in the prominent place in your life?

Through the Word. The Word must be clearly taught and applied in worship. There must be cross-centered preaching. You must be equipped in and believe God's promises so you can defend them against all enemy's attacks.

Through the Sacraments. The same message of the cross is seen in the sacraments. The sacraments must be fully understood and appreciated, like when you look at your wedding ring and are reminded of your spouse's love for you!

So you and your children must be in worship or you will grow with holes in your sanctification that the Devil can breach.

3. This closeness to God drives away the fear of man and instills the fear of God. And when you fear God you will trust his providence and whatever troubles may come your way.

Service

15...and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

1. With security and sanctification, you must serve him by defending the faith. “Give a defense” is to give an apology – in the old sense of the word – **to defend what you say, rather than make an excuse**, like it is done today. Why be an apologist? Because this will rebuke men of their sins and this will cause men to see the error of their ways and turn to Christ. Your service is about the glory of Christ. The natural thing is to **hide in a corner** when attacked. Here is the call to bravery-being **able and willing** to do it!

2. But who might ask you to defend the faith? Your elders or fathers... to make sure you believe the truth. Earnest seekers... to find Jesus. **But the context here is that you will defend the truth against the persecutors.** The persecutors will mock you for being willing to give up earthly pleasures for some imaginary hope! And you must have an answer for them

3. What qualifies you to give a good account?

a. A solid knowledge of God’s Word and evidence of how God works in creation. You must not rely upon superstition or blind faith.

b. Mental alertness. Your mind has to be ready to expound about life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This means you might have to practice your argument and keep your mind sharp.

c. Ability to show how reasonable your faith is – that it is not foolish...but that those who reject Jesus are the blind, illogical, and foolish ones. You have to know philosophy and argument skills. You have to know what other people believe if you will reject their arguments. **Now this doesn’t mean you have to answer every question that people ask.** Even Jesus did not do that. Once he remained silent until Pilate asked a pertinent question. You see, some people just want to ask foolish questions. You have a lot of these on the internet and their goal is not to learn, but to pontificate.

Sadly, this is where many “covenant” children fall down. They memorized well, but they don’t know how to apply truth. Often they don’t know about other people and what they believe.

4. Your knowledge must be joined with meekness before man and fear before God.

a. This means you will not boast in your own strength and wisdom. This is of utmost importance to the Reformed Christian who knows more than the average Christian. His knowledge, however, can make him arrogant. So he might win the fight, but lose the friend. This is why verse 16 requires that you have a good conscience. Your goal is to honor God and bring honor to him. Do you not sing: **“Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing?”**

b. This means you must be patient and not easily get ruffled and respond in the natural way. You have to learn to respond in a supernatural way. It can only take a few seconds to destroy your testimony and rob God of his rightful honor.

Conclusion

You are secured in God. Nothing can touch you unless it serves God’s purposes. You might be knocked down, but you are never crushed. You are then to set Christ as the center of your life – who he is, what he has done for you. Let him rule your heart with truth and grace. Then serve him. Serve him by testifying to his greatness, goodness and reasonableness, even under persecution, so the world might be saved and he might be glorified.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. You and your children must not lie down and die when pressures reach you. You must **remember who you are and whose you are.** Put the Lord at the center of your life. **Teach your children to delight in God. Then defend and declare who he is and what he has done for them.** You see, when you are prepared then you can stop the mouths of the wicked, confound them, and make them look to Christ.

2. Should I be optimistic about the future - about 2016- in spite of the threats from inside and outside of the church? Absolutely. Jesus said: I will build my church and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. Christ didn't come to make idle promises.

Finally, God always keeps his people – and will take them to heaven one day. The Devil always kills his people – and will take them to hell one day. If you are not a Christian, where do you want to spend eternity? You had better be prepared now. You don't know how much time you have.