

Sanctify Christ the Lord in You

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[0 : 00] The Apostle Peter writes, When you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.
Thank you for this word. Speak to us now, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

You guys be seated. The end of the 8th century BC was a really dark time in the history of God's people in the land of Israel.

Several decades previously, the nation of Israel had been split into two nations, so that you had a northern kingdom, which still bore the name of Israel, and a southern kingdom, which was known as Judah, in whom the kings of Judah ruled.

And so that the southern kingdom really had more of a claim to being the people of God, under God's king, than the northern kingdom. Yet, nevertheless, you have two distinct kingdoms.

[1 : 29] And what made the end of the 8th century such a difficult time, particularly for the southern kingdom, is that the northern kingdom, their kindred, their brothers, had allied with other nations around them to attack them, with the goal of utterly destroying Jerusalem and the nation of Judah itself.

And so you have a king sitting on the throne named Ahaz, faced with what looked in his eyes like an impossible situation, with an impossible decision to make.

Because the armies of Judah were powerful enough to defeat the northern kingdom of Israel, but not powerful enough to repel Israel and its allies.

So that Ahaz, the king of Judah, was faced with the question, do I stand my ground on my own and risk it? Or should he call upon a power to the north, more powerful, more mighty than all of these nations combined, namely the kingdom of Assyria, which at that time was the world's largest superpower, at least in that part of the world.

The problem with calling on Assyria for help is that it would make Judah and Ahaz and all of Ahaz's descendants utterly dependent upon Assyria, and it would make them, in essence, Assyria's servants.

[2 : 50] The servants of a brutal, evil king and a brutal, evil kingdom. It would be as if during the years prior to World War II, if you were a small European nation being attacked by the nations to your east and west and being faced with the question, do we try to stand our ground against these allied nations against whom we have no hope, or do we call upon Hitler and Nazi Germany for help?

Who can defeat them, but then who will in effect own us? That's the situation that King Ahaz faced in the 8th century B.C. And that's the period during which the prophet Isaiah was preaching to the nation of Judah.

In fact, nearly all of Isaiah's prophetic career was during these dark days in the history of Judah. But it was during this particular crisis, this particular event, that the Lord came and spoke a word to Isaiah, a word that Peter, in 1 Peter chapter 3, is applying to the believers of his day and now by extension to us as well.

So before we're able to dive into 1 Peter chapter 3, we need to go all the way back to Isaiah chapter 8 to see God's message to Isaiah before we can see how Peter appropriates that message for you and I.

So I want you to hold your place there in 1 Peter chapter 3 and I want you to turn all the way back in your Old Testament to Isaiah chapter 8. In the midst of this national crisis, the Lord comes and speaks to his prophet.

[4 : 22] Isaiah chapter 8. I'm just going to begin reading in verse 11. It says, For the Lord spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying, Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread.

But the Lord of hosts, Him you shall honor as holy. Let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. He will become a sanctuary, and a stone of offense, and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

In the midst of all of this, Isaiah had been instructed by God to warn Ahaz, Do not ally yourself with the Assyrians. Do not depend upon the Assyrians.

Rather, fear the Lord, trust in the Lord, and He will deliver you from Israel in the north and their allies. He will deliver us if we will but trust in Him.

Do not depend upon the king of Assyria. You are God's servant, not Assyria's servant. To which the king and the others in the palace and others in positions of authority responded terribly.

[5 : 41] So that when God comes to Isaiah, He says, Do not call a conspiracy all that this people calls a conspiracy, and do not fear the things that this people fears. What He's saying to Isaiah is, Isaiah, you are my prophet.

You will not tremble because they cry out conspiracy in your face and say that you are trying to arrange some sort of coup against the king. You will not fear the things that they fear.

You will not fear the armies that are arraying themselves against the city of Jerusalem. You will not be afraid of those things. You are my prophet. You will carry my word. And rather than fear those things, you will fear me.

You will fear me alone. And you will set me apart. Literally, you will sanctify me. You will sanctify me. And Peter picks up on those two instructions.

Do not fear the things that the people around you fear. And sanctify my name. Sanctify me, the Lord. He picks up on those two statements in 1 Peter chapter 3.

[6 : 42] And I want you to turn there. It's an appropriate thing for Peter to pick up on because, as we've seen throughout this letter, the original readers of this letter were facing persecution.

Now, they were not facing the lion's den, as we usually picture in our minds when we think of early Christian persecution. That occurred some decades after Peter wrote this letter. The kind of persecution that they were facing was not all that different than the kind of persecution that you and I face.

They were being slandered by their neighbors and by others in the community. They were being mocked for their faith. They were, at times, facing some political pressure from local rulers and local authorities, but not a broad-scale Roman persecution.

They were facing the kinds of things that I think are common to believers living as strangers and aliens, as Peter calls us, in the world. They were under persecution, slandered, mocked, made fun of.

And so they were living in their own sort of dark days. Maybe not as dark as the days of the 8th century for Isaiah, but dark days of their own. And Peter calls upon this Old Testament passage to encourage these believers and to encourage us as well.

[7 : 54] So let's first look and see the context in which Peter brings this up. He says in verse 13, Now, who is there to harm you if you do, if you're zealous for what is good?

Now, there are two ways to understand that verse. You might say, you might understand it to think that Peter is saying, if you do good, if you're zealous for good deeds and you pursue obedience to God, then you're not going to be hurt.

You're not going to be harmed. And that's one possible interpretation of this particular passage, but I don't think that's what Peter has in mind because of the verses that follow. Because he says, But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake.

In verse 17, he says, It is better for you to suffer for doing good. In chapter 4, verse 19, he says, Let those who suffer according to God's will. In chapter 4, verse 12, Do not be surprised at the fiery trial which comes upon you.

So Peter assumes that these people are going to suffer. So I don't think in verse 13 he's saying, If you're zealous for what is good, if you pursue righteousness, you're not going to suffer. I don't think that's what he means at all.

[9 : 00] In fact, you could just as easily translate this. Now, who will there be to harm you? It's a future tense form of a verb here. Who will there be to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?

I think what Peter means is that ultimately, on the last day, who will there be to harm you if you walk with Christ now in this life? It's similar to what Paul says in Romans.

Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? Paul isn't saying that nobody can charge God's people with things in this life. What he means is, on judgment day, who will bring a charge against you?

No one will. Christ has already paid the penalty for your sins. Your sins are washed away. They are covered. His righteousness belongs to you and counts as yours in God's eye.

No one will bring a charge against God's elect. I think Peter is saying something similar here. If you're zealous for what is good, who ultimately can do you harm? Answer, no one ultimately can do you harm.

[10 : 02] But in this life, verse 14, but even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake. So, ultimately, harm will not come to you because you are zealous for what is good, but in this life, harm will come to you precisely because you're zealous for what is good, for righteousness' sake.

He says, don't worry about that though. Even if that should happen to you, you will be blessed. When? On the last day. You will be blessed.

So, that's the context in which we're finding where he begins in verse, in the middle of verse 14, he begins to quote from and allude to Isaiah chapter 8. It's a context in which Peter is assuring his readers, suffering's going to come to you in this life.

Dark days, clouds will come into your life. Whatever form they may come in. Whether you feel betrayed by a close personal friend, whether there's strife and enmity in your family and in your home, whether you're being ridiculed and mocked directly because of your faith in Christ or perhaps simply because you won't compromise morally and you won't change your lifestyle.

These things are going to happen and because these clouds of persecution and clouds of suffering are going to come into your life, you need to hear something. Here's what you need.

[11 : 23] Have no fear of them, he says, nor be troubled. Now that's a direct quotation from Isaiah chapter 8.

Where in Isaiah chapter 8 we read, it says, do not fear their fear or do not fear what they fear. This says literally, it says, have no fear of their fear here in verse 14.

Have no fear of their fear. In other words, Peter is saying, don't be afraid of the things that others are afraid of. Do not be shaken by the painful events that come into your life.

Do not be scared away. Do not run away from faithfulness to Christ simply because painful things are happening to you. Do not do that. Do not be tempted to do that.

Just as I said, just as God said to Isaiah, Isaiah, do not walk in the way of these people. Don't be afraid of all the things around you that they're afraid of. So now Peter is saying to us, do not be afraid of suffering.

[12 : 21] Do not be afraid of the dark days the way everyone else around you is afraid. Do not fear those things. But rather, he says, instead, verse 15, but in your hearts, honor Christ the Lord as holy.

But in your hearts, honor Christ the Lord as holy. It's difficult to see because of the way that's rendered in most of our translations. But this too is almost an exact quotation from Isaiah chapter 8.

In Isaiah chapter 8, we read where it says something along the lines of sanctify or honor the Lord of hosts. That's holy.

Literally, it says, the Lord of hosts, him you shall sanctify. It's what it literally says in Isaiah chapter 8. The Lord of hosts, him you shall sanctify. In here, it says, literally, the Lord Christ, you shall sanctify.

The most important thing probably that you need to recognize immediately about this quotation is that if you paid attention when we were reading in Isaiah chapter 8, the word Lord in Isaiah chapter 8 in our English translations is rendered in all capital letters.

[13 : 35] I don't know if you noticed that. Sometimes the Lord in the Old Testament has a capital L and the rest of it is lowercase. But when it's all uppercase letters, that means that the word that's being translated is not really the word Lord, but rather it's God's covenant name, Yahweh or Jehovah.

So that Isaiah is told, sanctify Yahweh. And now Peter, quoting that same verse, applies it to Christ. Sanctify the Lord, Peter's saying, sanctify Yahweh.

That is Christ. So the first thing Peter says right off the bat here in response to the fearful things happening around us, he says, rather than fearing those things, recognize Christ as the Lord, God Himself.

Know that first of all. This is who He is. And until you see Him for who He is, until you recognize who Christ really is, you will not be able to fully sanctify Him in your heart.

He will not in fact be able to do that at all. He is, He is God Himself. And this word sanctify is an interesting term as well because most of the time that we come across the word sanctify, it has the basic meaning of to make holy, to make something holy, to set something apart.

[15 : 00] So that in the Old Testament, a lot of times this kind of language is used of things that are in the temple. So you have all these different things, different altars, different incense bowls, different utensils that were used in the temple under the Old Covenant.

And over and over we read throughout the Old Testament that these things are holy. They are sanctified. And they are sanctified, they are made holy because they are in the temple where the presence of God dwells.

The very presence of God makes those things that surround God's presence holy and set apart automatically. That is why God says to Moses when He appears to Him in the burning bush, take off your shoes because the ground upon which you are standing is holy.

There is nothing special about that dirt. It was just dirt. It was just rocky ground. But the presence of God makes us holy. So what does it mean then if you say sanctify God?

How do you make holy Him who by definition is holy? How do you do that? You don't. The word takes on a whole other connotation here.

[16 : 07] In fact, it's the exact same word that we find in the Lord's prayer. Our Father, Lord in heaven, hallowed be your name. It's the exact same word.

It literally says, Our Father who is in heaven, sanctified be your name. And so what we are being urged to do is to recognize and declare the holiness of God.

When we are commanded to sanctify God, we don't make Him holy. We recognize and declare His holiness. So what Peter says here, the first thing you need to understand if you're going to face the dark clouds of your life is you need to begin by recognizing and then declaring the holiness of Christ as God Himself.

That's who He is. We must recognize it and declare it to others. The sanctifying is the recognizing. It is the bowing in worship.

It is the giving to Him of your heart and life. That's why He says sanctify Him in your hearts. This is not merely an external observance that Peter's talking about here.

[17 : 15] He's not saying do things in your life that will show that you recognize Christ as Lord. What He's saying here is in your heart, in the depths of who you are, recognize, bow down, worship Him.

He is the Holy One. Treat Him in that way. And then as a result of that, fruit begins to grow out of your life.

Now if you're reading this morning in the New International Version, it's a little bit obscured because the New International Version puts a period at the end of that phrase sanctify Christ or honor Christ as holy.

It puts a period there and it gives you another command and says be prepared or always be ready. But in reality there's no period there. It's not like two separate commands, two separate things.

Well, first of all you want to sanctify Christ and then second of all you want to be ready at all times to give a defense of the faith. That's not at all what he's saying. I think what Peter is telling us is that the fruit of sanctifying Christ recognizing who he is and bowing and worship to him in our hearts the fruit that ought to flow out of that is at being prepared to declare his grace to declare his holiness to declare who he is to others.

[18 : 43] In fact, it's exactly what we see just one chapter earlier. You can turn back and look in chapter 2 verse 9 we keep coming back to this verse. I find myself quoting this verse almost every week because I think that it's the central verse in this whole book.

He says, but you are chosen race a royal priesthood a holy nation we're holy because we are the people who dwell in the presence of God a holy nation a people for his own possession one so that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

This is what a holy nation does. This is what God's people do. This is the fruit produced in the life of those who sanctify Christ in their hearts.

But he gives it more detail here in chapter 3. There's four words that I want us to focus on here. The word prepared the word defense the word reason and the word hope.

Prepared defense reason and hope. Let's go backwards through those. Okay? So let's begin with this word hope because hope tells us what exactly is it that we are to be about the business of defending?

[19 : 59] What exactly are we supposed to be proclaiming? We're proclaiming exactly what chapter 2 said. The excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

He has already told us sanctify Christ as Lord or sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts. So now the hope that we are to defend is the hope that we have because of who Christ is.

Understand that when we're about the business of defending what we believe of defending the faith we are not about the business of trying to convince people that God exists.

That's not what we're doing. That's beside the point. Romans chapter 1 says that deep down inside everybody knows that God exists. Those who deny the existence of God are denying the knowledge of God implanted in every human being upon the face of the earth.

It's not our job to convince people that God exists. That's not the task here. The task here is to present Christ in all of his glory, in all of his excellencies.

[21 : 07] that's our task. We're defending the hope that we have in Christ. You can see it in chapter 1, verse 3.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ according to his great mercy he has called us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection Jesus Christ from the dead. Our hope is in every aspect a Christ-centered hope.

We don't have a hope that says if we are good, if we are indeed zealous for what is good, if we're good, we will inherit eternal life. We don't have that kind of a hope. That's no hope at all because it's not possible.

We have a hope that says because of the death and resurrection of Jesus through faith in him we can have eternal life. That's the hope that we have. That's what Peter's talking about here.

It's a very specific Christ centered past rooted in the past, rooted in the death and resurrection. of Christ looking forward in hope to the future of our inheritance.

[22 : 11] That's the kind of hope that we're talking about here. Christ centered in all of its aspects. It's rooted in his death and resurrection. It's hoping upon our future resurrection because of his resurrection. In all aspects, the hope that we're defending is a Christ centered hope.

So we are not about the business of trying to convince people of the peripheral things or even what we may view as foundational. We're not convincing people of those things.

We're declaring the excellencies of Christ in the face of unbelief. That's what we are defending. And then he says though that we are to give a reason for the hope that is in you.

A reason. It's the word logos, which literally means word, but oftentimes it has the meaning of rational or reasonable or spiritual. In other words, it's not a vague kind of thing.

It's not a matter of pitting faith against reason. That's sort of, I think, that's the normal way of operating in our world today.

[23 : 18] That you have two realms of life. You have the realm of the rational and you have the realm of the spiritual. You have the realm of faith. And those two things ought not to collide ever. Those are two separate areas of life.

So that you have people who are perfectly happy affirming what they believe to be a rational view of the origins of the world that is in complete contradiction to the Bible, while at the same time at home in that church singing the praises of the one who contradicts everything that they claim to believe throughout the week.

That won't work. It will not work. They're not two separate worlds. We live in one world of ideas. And we are either right or we are wrong.

There's truth and there's falsehood. And Peter says that you can give a reason for the hope that is in you. That doesn't mean that we can rationally prove the gospel.

It doesn't mean that. In fact, I'm convinced, Doug and I were just talking just before the service about this, I'm fully convinced that the only truly ground and basis for rationality, for logic, for logic, is the gospel, is a biblical worldview.

[24 : 45] You cannot really have logic and reason apart from a biblical worldview because there's no ground upon which to base it. There's no ultimate reality to whom to appeal.

If there are permanent, fixed laws that govern the universe, who established those laws? From whence did they come?

They don't come out of nowhere. You cannot have a fully rational view of the world, a logical, coherent worldview apart from the gospel of Christ.

When Peter says give a reason for the hope that is in you, what Peter is assuming is that it is the lordship and the godhood of Christ himself who we have sanctified and recognized as the Lord who gives order to the world around us.

He gives it order, he gives it meaning, he gives it purpose. The reason for the hope that is in you is simply to point out the reality that it's only in Christ that the world makes sense.

[25 : 56] It's only in Christ that things fit and that we can make sense out of the world around us in no other way. This does not mean, I don't think, that we all have to be scholars in order to do this.

I don't think that this means that we all necessarily have to read every book on how to defend the faith and every book on how to address this issue and that issue and all those sorts of things.

I don't think that's necessarily what it means. I think it means that we do need to know things. We need to have information in our minds. We especially need to know the word of God. We do need to know things in order to give a reason for the hope that is in us.

But we don't have to all be intellectuals because remember the hope that we are proclaiming is the very excellency and godhood of Christ himself. You don't have to be a genius to do that.

You just have to keep pointing people back to him. You just have to keep pointing people back to the coherence of the word of God. You don't have to be a genius.

[26 : 59] Amen. You keep coming to Christ. You keep pointing people to Christ. You keep showing them the absurdity of everything outside of Christ. And then he says that we are, take a look there, always being prepared to make a defense.

this is not, this is not purely, this is not purely an offensive offense approach to proclaiming the excellencies of Christ.

We do want to, we want to be actively out in the world trying to share the gospel. In fact, I mean, my whole job revolves around that. I spend most of my week preparing and getting ready to get up here and proclaim the word of God to you.

That's, that's most of what I do. That's, that's me on the offense with the gospel, with the word preparing to do it and going out and doing it. And we do that at times. There are times when we have opportunities and things that we're doing in the world where we're on offense going out taking the gospel.

We ought to be about that business. But what Peter has in mind here is being ready all the time to make a defense to anyone who asks you.

[28 : 13] so that there will be times when your way of living, when your way of thinking, when your worldview comes into conflict with your family members or with your coworkers.

And it's in that moment that you're ready to give a defense. It's at that moment when you, when you begin to answer their questions so that you can, you can examine your life really well and see if you're setting Christ apart as holy, if you're sanctifying him very easily, right here.

Do there ever arise in your life moments in which people question your faith because it results in a radically different lifestyle than everyone else?

Hear that question. Are there moments that arise for you at work or in conversations with your neighbors or with your friends or with your families?

Are there moments in which the difference between the way that you think about the world and the way that you live your life is so radically different from the way that they do things that they are caused to ask why?

[29 : 29] Because, because that's the natural fruit. That's the natural overflow of a person who sanctifies Christ each day in their heart. And if that's the case, we need to give a defense, but we need to be always ready.

That's the last thing he says, always prepared or always ready. This means that there can't be moments when you're, when you are, when you're off your game spiritually out in the world.

You cannot have, you cannot, cannot have moments where you are not sanctifying Christ in your heart. You cannot have days because on those days you will not be prepared and you will not be ready.

Always ready. Which means always sanctifying Christ in your heart. Always, always doing that. Always recognizing who he is. And that's a very difficult thing to do.

I don't throw that out at you assuming that that's something that's going to be very easy just because we're followers of Christ. I set that before you as a goal for you every day. Wake up in the morning and let the first thing that you think be has given me breath again.

[30 : 38] The Lord of the universe, the maker of all things has given me breath again so that I might today proclaim his excellencies in the dark world.

It takes, it takes a resolve every morning when you wake up, every morning when you leave the house to go to work or go to school, wherever it is you go for the day, every time you sit down at a table to have lunch or dinner with a group of friends, it takes, it takes you in your mind in those moments constantly throughout the day recognizing and being thankful and grateful to Christ for who he is and all that he's done for you.

And when you're in that, when you're constantly doing that and recognizing and giving thanks, then you're always ready. It doesn't mean you always have all the answers because sometimes you won't have the answers to particular questions and challenges that they make.

But again, that's not the goal. The goal is to proclaim the excellency of Christ. You can do that when you don't really know the answer to specific questions. You can do that because ultimately what we want people to recognize is not that we have superior answers.

Ultimately, our goal is not to convince them that we're smarter than them and that we know more than they do and therefore they ought to bow before the sheer weight of our intellect.

[32 : 06] Ultimately, we want to proclaim the lordship of Christ so that they might bow before the weight of his excellence. That's, that's the goal.

And then he gives us a couple of instructions. Before we close here, very practical instructions here on what your attitude ought to be as you go about this business of defending the faith.

He says that we should do this with gentleness and with respect. Two distinct things here.

Now, I know it appears that those are, those are both ways in which we treat people. But if you translate this literally, it's with gentleness and fear.

With gentleness and fear. One of the things that we've seen as we've walked through this letter is that fear, Peter always commands us to direct our fear toward God.

[33 : 06] And even in the passage in Isaiah, which Peter is working off of here, Isaiah is commanded to only fear the Lord. He shall be your fear. So that, so that here, one of the primary motives, one of the, one of the things that's moving us and directing the way in which we defend the faith is not a fear of people.

It is a fear of God. Fear of God. That goes back, all the way back to this recognizing who Christ is. This fear of him ought to drive and shape the ways in which you hold these kinds of conversations.

You never compromise. You never fall back. You never give in because the judge of all the earth is watching and listening. And he knows. But there is something here about how we ought to think of those to whom we are defending the faith before whom we're defending the faith.

He uses this word, gentleness. And to do it with gentleness directed toward the people, fear directed toward God.

So in the midst of this non-compromising, refuse to give in, refuse to deny the truth of the gospel, in the midst of that, there is still a gentleness and a love that we direct towards those to whom we are talking.

[34 : 34] To proclaim the excellencies of Christ is not to beat others down. It is to lift their eyes to something greater.

See that? We're not trying to convince them that they are the worms of the earth. We're trying to convince them that those sinners they may be. There's a greater reality. There's a savior.

There's a God who walked among us and bled for us. And we want to gently and lovingly point them to Him.

In all that we do, in all that we do, that's our goal. And in the middle of dark days, when the storm clouds do come upon your life, whether they be as big and bold as those that Isaiah faced, or whether they be minor things happening in your life and your family, whatever they may be, Peter says, sanctify the Lord Christ.

Because, verse 17, it is better to suffer for doing good if that should be God's will than for doing evil.

[35 : 54] Suffering is coming. It's coming into your life. It will happen. I don't know when. You may be in the middle of it now. It may hit you tomorrow. For five years from now, suffering is coming.

It comes to all of us. We live in a fallen, broken world. And it's going to happen. The question becomes, will you suffer because of your own wrongdoing, or will you suffer because you sanctify Christ in your heart?

of yours from now? of yours from now?