

*Sermon: Embracing a Hope-fueled Witness in a Hostile World;*  
*delivered by Ben Panner, college pastor, on July 5, 2020*

***Bible text explored: 1 Peter 3:8-17***

<sup>8</sup>Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. <sup>9</sup>Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. <sup>10</sup>For

“Whoever desires to love life  
and see good days,

let him keep his tongue from evil  
and his lips from speaking deceit;

<sup>11</sup>let him turn away from evil and do good;  
let him seek peace and pursue it.

<sup>12</sup>For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,  
and his ears are open to their prayer.

But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

<sup>13</sup>Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? <sup>14</sup>But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, <sup>15</sup>but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup>having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. <sup>17</sup>For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil. [ESV]

***Review and application:***

1. In Peter’s first letter, how should Jesus’ death for our sins be reshaping how we live? (See *1 Peter 2:24*.)

On what subgroups of the church has Peter focused so far in . . .

. . . 2:13-17?

. . . 2:18-25?

. . . 3:1-6?

. . . 3:7?

2. What (*verse 8*) should characterize how “all of [them]” think?  
How should they relate to those whose status differs from their own?
3. While our tendency is often to focus on *defending* the gospel (*v. 15*), Peter’s is here more focused on *displaying* it. How (*verses 9-12*) can we bless those whose stances are different from our own?  
How can we avoid criticizing them and pray for their good?  
How does the quotation from Psalm 34 affirm ways in which God’s blessing is obtained?
4. Did people in Peter’s day (*verses 13-14a*) suffer for eagerness to do good?  
And how about in our day?  
Why is willingness to embrace suffering (*verse 17*) still a win?  
(See also *1 Peter 4:14*.)
5. Why (*verses 14b-17*) should we accept the cost in suffering that embracing this call involves?

6. *Verses 14b and 15a* reference *Isaiah 8:12-13*, written when Judah was threatened by an Assyrian invasion. How will fearing the Lord free us from the fear of others? (See *Proverbs 29:25*.)

If we've let fear of being ostracized or marginalized prevent us from sharing the "reason for the hope that is in [us]," are we honoring Christ?

7. Are people asking us (*verses 15b-16*) the reason for our good behavior? Are we prepared to gently but coherently explain the basis for our hope? For starters, review how Peter followed through (in *1 Peter 3:18* and *22*).
8. Reflect on this assertion of Francis Schaeffer's in *The God Who Is There*: "In an age of relativity, the practice of truth, when it is costly, is the only way to cause the world to take seriously our protestations concerning truth."