

# Sermon Outline

## THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

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### THE GRACEFUL DEFENSE OF HIS HOLINESS (1 PETER 3:14-15)

*Previous Lessons:* (1) The Savior of the World (Jn 4:42); (2) Our Place in the Son (Col 1:15-17); (3) Those of the Divine Image (Gen 1:26-28); (4) Hope for the Nations (Gen 12:1-3); (5) Priestly Kingdom (Ex 19:1-6); (6) The Throne of Forever (2 Sam 7:12-16); (7) The Branch of Jesse (Isa 11:1-5); (8) Repent and Be Baptized (Acts 2:29-38)

#### I. Evangelization and the Subduing of Christ's Enemies

#### II. Some Words on Context

- A. In Acts 2, Peter was the apostle who preached that powerful sermon in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost.
1. Peter proclaimed to his fellow Jews that God has raised Jesus Christ from the dead and exalted him to his right hand.
  2. God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ. And because of that, God wants all people to repent of their sins and be baptized in the name of Christ.
- B. It is helpful to read Peter's letter in light of that great episode in the life of the Church.
1. First Peter was written by someone...
    - a. who had been personally taught by Christ himself;
    - b. who had seen Christ following the resurrection;
    - c. who was also the first to preach Christ soon after the Holy Spirit was given to the Church.
  2. Peter wasn't just any pastor or missionary.  
—He was the Lord's own representative, and part of the foundation of the Church, with the Lord Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone (Eph 2:20).
  3. Peter's instructions are to be treated as the words of Christ himself.
- C. Unlike the situation in Acts 2, Peter's message in 1 Peter was not written to a primarily Jewish audience, but a mostly Gentile one.
1. Peter was addressing non-Jewish Christians, living in the northern provinces of Asia Minor (present-day Turkey) (1:1).
  2. Based on certain instructions in this letter, we infer that Peter was writing to Christians undergoing persecution for their faith.
- D. Yet, Peter's letter has a universal application.  
—It both encourages and instructs Christians everywhere to stay loyal to Christ in the midst of suffering.
- E. Our passage is in a section of the letter (3:13-5:11) that teaches Christians how to live a life of devotion to Christ in the midst of suffering.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) Who was Peter? How does his role as apostle shape the way we respond to his letter? (2) In both Acts 2 and 1 Peter, Peter is preaching the Gospel. But how are the audiences different? (3) What relevance does 1 Peter and its instruction on suffering have for us Christians today?

### III. Have No Fear of Them (1 Peter 3:14)

- A. The apostle Peter states in verse 14: “But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed.”
1. Suffering for the sake of righteousness is a real possibility for the Christian.
  2. To “suffer for righteousness’ sake” specifically means to suffer in the cause of the Kingdom of God and of Christ.
- B. The fact that Christians can suffer “for righteousness’ sake” implies that there are people who hate Christ and those who love him.
1. Christians must not see the world through rose-tainted classes.
  2. While we should not be looking for persecution everywhere, we should be aware that there are those who want to hurt us just because of our faith in Christ.
- C. We need to soberly consider the possibility of suffering.
1. To be joined to Christ is indeed a happy thing.
  2. But the fact that we are joined to Christ also means that we are joined to his sufferings.
    - a. This does not mean that our sufferings are needed to complete the work of Christ.  
—Christ’s cleansing work on the cross is complete once and for all (Heb 7:27).
    - b. This means that the pattern of suffering which belonged to Christ while he was in the world would also be reproduced on us in some way.
    - c. Consider the following passages.
      - i. 1 Peter 4:13: “But rejoice insofar as *you share Christ’s sufferings...*”
      - ii. 2 Corinthians 1:5: “For as *we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings*, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.”
    - d. Thus, there should definitely be in our Christian lives a preparedness for some suffering for our faith.
- D. The Church in Singapore needs to hear the possibility of suffering.  
—As we Singaporean Christians become more and more affluent, *is there still a place for suffering for Christ in our theology? Or have we allowed the ruling ideology of peace, harmony, and prosperity to numb us?*
- E. When we do suffer, Peter says, “you will be blessed.”
1. We are blessed because our suffering for Christ is a sharing in the sufferings *of* Christ (4:13).
  2. We are blessed because, as our Lord said, the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who suffer for him (Mt 5:10).

- F. In view of the blessing that we have when we suffer, what is the one of the first things that God wants us to do *if* and *when* we are threatened for the sake of his name?  
—Peter’s advice is clear: “Have no fear of them, nor be troubled” (3:14).
- G. Throughout history, fear and intimidation are tools that the world has used to oppress the weak.
1. The Christians of Asia Minor had to deal with such tactics one way or the other.
  2. Today, Christians will continue to have to deal with such tactics.
  3. The reason simple: The prince of the power of the air hates our Lord and his Church.  
—John 15:18: “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.”
- H. How exactly do fear and intimidation work in persecution?
1. Fear and intimidation tactics work when they are able to successfully threaten to remove what we most naturally value—our wellbeing.
  2. If the powers of the world can get us to believe that they can take our wellbeing from us, they can exert a tremendous amount of pressure on us—even causing us to conform to their desires.
  3. If Christians are not at least somewhat aware of how fear tactics work, we could be easily pressured into paralysis—and the growth of the Word of God may come to a halt.
  4. Thus, when we are faced with persecution, the first thing to do is to react against our fears: “Have no fear of them, nor be troubled”!

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What does it mean to suffer for righteousness’ sake? (2) What does the possibility of suffering tell us about the nature of the world? (3) What is the relationship between our union with Christ to our suffering for Christ? (4) Does our sharing in Christ’s sufferings mean that Christ’s work on the cross needs to be supplemented by our efforts? (5) How prepared are you for suffering in the cause of the Gospel? (6) How does fear and intimidation work? How may they succeed? (7) When faced with persecution, how must we respond?

#### IV. Honor Christ the Lord as Holy (1 Peter 3:15)

- A. How is it possible for us to act against the inclinations of our self-preserving natures and not be afraid of those who seek to harm us?
- B. This is how we develop backbones in the face of persecution: “honor Christ the Lord as holy...”
- C. What does it mean therefore to “honor Christ the Lord as holy”?
1. To answer that question, we need to consider who Christ was to Peter.
    - a. When Peter mentions Christ the Lord, he’s referring to the same Christ of whom he preached in Acts 2. Christ is...
      - i. the new and rightful king of Israel (cf. Acts 2:29).
      - ii. the Holy One whom YHWH raised from the dead (Acts 2:32).

- iii. the Lord to whom YHWH had promised dominion and victory (Ps 110).
- iv. the Lord who now sits at the right hand of YHWH himself (Acts 2:33-36)
- b. For Peter, Christ Jesus the Lord is not merely the new king of Israel. He is the King of the world who sits at the right hand of God the Father.
- 2. Therefore, to honor Christ as holy is to treat Christ as supreme.
- 3. But there is more we can say.
  - a. The fact that Christ is called “Lord”—a title of YHWH himself—implies that Christ shares in the identity of the one God of Israel.
  - b. 1 Peter 3:14, 15 is itself a rewording of Isaiah 8:12, 13. Compare the two:

Isaiah 8:12, 13	1 Peter 3:14, 15
<sup>12</sup> ‘Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and <i>do not fear</i> what they fear, <i>nor be in dread.</i>	<sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. <i>Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,</i>
<sup>13</sup> But <i>the LORD</i> of hosts, <i>him you shall honor as holy.</i> ”	<sup>15</sup> but in your hearts <i>honor Christ the Lord as holy...</i>

- c. Peter rewords Isaiah 8:12, 13 in such a way that equates the LORD (that is, YHWH) with Christ.
- d. Christ himself is YHWH!
- 4. To honor the Lord Christ as holy is really to worship him as God!
- D. Thus, we are not allowed to fear anything, or any fate, or anyone more than Christ.
 

—If we “honor Christ the Lord as holy,” we will not fear anyone more than Christ. To do so would be blasphemy!
- E. The fear that we give to Christ is not the ugly, cringing fear that we have of something evil. It is a reverential, admiring fear.
 

—When we fear Christ, we will not be broken by the intimidation tactics of others.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) How may we be fearless before those who seek to harm us? (2) What is the significance of calling Christ “Lord”? To whom was the title “Lord” usually applied in the Old Testament? (3) How does Peter adapt Isaiah 8:12, 13? (4) What does it mean to “honor Christ the Lord as holy”? How does honoring Christ as Lord weaken our fear of man?

## V. The Heart of Sacred Honor (1 Peter 3:15)

- A. Peter says that we need to honor Christ as holy “in your hearts.”
- B. According to Jesus, the heart is the origin of our behavior.
 

—Mark 7:20-23: “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, *out of the heart of man*, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality,

theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

- C. What controls a person’s heart controls his or her behavior.
1. If a person’s heart is ruled by sin, focused only on personal wellbeing, he or she could react in self-centered behaviors when pressure comes.
  2. He or she would...
    - justify his or her sinful actions.
    - lie to cover up his or her sins.
    - lash out in anger in violent ways.
  3. If a Christian’s heart is ruled by fear and a desire to preserve his or her own comforts, he or she could shy away from speaking for Christ when the opportunity arises.
  4. Focusing on the heart is key in Peter’s encouragement.  
—If we are to reach a point where we are able to face persecution courageously, we need to deal with our hearts.
- D. If the heart is the control room of our bodies, the One who must control our hearts is the Lord Jesus himself—thus “*in your hearts* honor Christ the Lord as holy...”  
—In order to persevere in our evangelism, our hearts must become the very temples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) Where in our persons are we to honor Christ as holy? (2) What does Jesus teach about the heart in Mark 7:20-23? (3) How could a Christian respond to persecution if his heart is ruled by a desire for comfort and self-preservation? (4) Who must be ruling in our hearts in order for us to show righteous behavior?

## VI. Always Ready to Defend the Faith (1 Peter 3:15)

- A. Honoring Christ in our hearts must be accompanied by the following attitude: “...always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you...”
1. If honoring Christ is what keeps us loyal to him, then being prepared to make a defense is the outward expression of that loyalty.
  2. Honoring Christ is not just about being unafraid in the face of persecution—it’s also about reaching out in kindness to the same people who threaten us.
- B. The word for “make a defense” is *apologian*.
1. The word “apologetics” comes from this word.
  2. Apologetics is the response of the Christian faith to non-Christian thought.
  3. While apologetics has grown into a formal discipline within theology, Peter calls all Christians to be ready to defend their hope in Christ.
- C. To be ready to make a defense involves two things.
1. Each Christian should know *what* it is that we believe, the basic doctrines of the Christian Faith, doctrines that we find in the Apostles Creed.

2. Each Christian should know *why* we believe what we do.

*Are you ready to speak in defense of your faith in Christ?  
Are you able to give an answer for why you believe in Christ?*

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What must accompany our honoring of Christ in our hearts? (2) What does it mean to be ready to make a defense for our faith? (3) What situations would you be required to speak in defense of your faith in Christ?

## **VII. But with Gentleness and Respect (1 Peter 3:15)**

- A. Yet, *how* we make our response is also important.  
—Peter says that we are to make our defense “with gentleness and respect.”
- B. Why does Peter talk about “gentleness and respect” at this point?  
—Perhaps Peter realizes that some Christians may use their relationship to the sovereign Christ as grounds for arrogance, as an excuse for civil disobedience.
- C. But acting with arrogance would be a wrong response to the lordship of Christ! Why?
  1. All earthly authorities have been ordained by God himself (Rom 13:1).
  2. All human beings, even pagans, are still in the image of God—and so deserving of respect.
- D. So having Christ as Lord does not mean we can disrespect unbelievers.
  1. Instead, quite the opposite: Having Christ as Lord means that we can now show gentleness and respect even to those who hate us.
  2. Arrogance and rudeness are often driven by insecurity.
  3. But since we have put our hope in Christ our God and Protector King, we can actually have the courage to respond with grace and dignity to those who oppose us.
  4. Thus, the gentleness and respect of which Peter speaks are not signs of weakness, or fearful man-pleasing.
  5. Rather, they are signs of nobility and strength  
—for only those with such strength in them can afford to show such compassion to their enemies.
- E. What then does it mean to show “gentleness and respect” to those who oppose us? Here are some suggestions.
  1. Praise and thank our persecutors for the good they have done for us.
    - a. This is especially needed if our persecutors are family elders, community leaders, or civil magistrates.
    - b. We want our leaders to recognize their God-given authority over us.
  2. Show warmth and cordiality even to those who hate us.  
—Even if we do not invite them home, we invite them to talk with us peaceably.
  3. Continue to love our friends and family members who reject us.

—Don't make our love and friendship conditional on their accepting our faith.

4. Never attack the persons themselves!
  - a. At no point in our evangelism must we engage in sarcasm or trade insults.
  - b. If our conversations do go toward debate, do not criticize the persons—simply address the ideas.

The point is this: *Even if others attack us for our faith in Christ, we may not use the same tactics against them. We don't answer fear and intimidation with fear and intimidation. Rather, we allow our gentleness and respect and holy conduct do the talking.*

- F. Peter says in 2:15, “For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.”  
—If we show gentleness and respect instead of anger, fear, and reverse-intimidation, we earn the right to speak the truth to our non-Christian friends.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) How does God want us to go about defending our faith? (2) Why could be a reason Peter talks about “gentleness and respect” at this point? (3) Why does the supremacy of Christ *not* mean that his servants can act with arrogance toward earthly authorities? (4) “Having Christ as Lord means that we can now show gentleness and respect even to those who hate us.” Discuss. (5) What are some ways you can show “gentleness and respect” to those who presently oppose you for your faith?

## VIII. Graceful Defenders of the Faith

**This is how God subdues the enemies of his Son today. It is not through the arrogance of Christians. It is not by Christians seizing political power and forcing non-Christians to obey Christ. It's not necessarily through thundering, scolding sermons either. Instead, it's by Christians speaking out for Christ from a posture of reverence for Christ and respect for others.**

- A. Of course, the threat of persecution does complicate things.
  1. It's easy to speak graciously for Christ in the safety of your Bible study group (or the pulpit!).
  2. It's quite another to do that when you are afraid or angry at those who seek to hurt you.
  3. In the heat of persecution, we may be tempted to either speak for Christ in a harsh way, or not even speak for Christ at all!
- B. The only way to speak about Christ with dignity, with respect and gentleness, under threat of persecution, is if we ourselves come under the control of Christ.  
—True apologetics begins when we honor Christ the Lord as holy in our hearts.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) How does God subdue the enemies of Christ today? (2) How does the threat of persecution make it hard to speak for Christ gently and respectfully in your own life? (3) How can we gain the strength to speak for Christ with dignity and respectfulness?