

# 1 PETER 3:13-4:11 SERMON OUTLINE

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## 1 PETER 3:13-16

**QUESTION: "WHY SUFFER FOR DOING GOOD?... WHAT HOPE IS THERE IN THAT?"**

### 1 PETER 3:17-18a

**REASON 1: "BECAUSE IT'S BETTER THAN SUFFERING FOR DOING EVIL"**

*Look to Jesus' cross.*

### 1 PETER 3:18-22

**REASON 2: "BECAUSE WE HAVE ASSURANCE IN CHRIST'S VICTORY"**

*Look to Jesus' resurrection & ascension.*

### 1 PETER 4:1-6

**REASON 3: "BECAUSE AFTER FOLLOWING CHRIST'S EXAMPLE OF SUFFERING COMES JUSTICE & SALVATION"**

*Look to Jesus' life.*

### 1 PETER 4:7-11

**"THEREFORE, CONTINUE TO DO GOOD (EVEN THOUGH IT MIGHT MEAN SUFFERING)"**

## 1 PETER 3:13-4:11

Opening prayer

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In 2011, an article in the New York Post told the story of Anita Wooten-Francis, a Christian and a teacher in a Brooklyn Primary School.

She'd taught at the school for 16 years and there'd been no problems with her leading other teachers in a prayer group, or listening to gospel music alone in her classroom, or worshipping between classes, but when George Andrews, a new Principal arrived at the School things changed.

*"He said, 'You can't be praying in my school,' " Wooten-Francis recalled. "He said I was the ringleader in praying."*

*Andrews even made fun of her for being devout, she claims. He'd "constantly" tease her that "he was aware that she and other Christians were praying to have the demons removed from his spirit, but that it wasn't working."*

*In one instance, Andrews criticised Wooten-Francis (who has a disability) for using the elevator and told her to take the stairs. When she protested, he allegedly said, "Why don't you just pray?" Then he laughed.*

*At the same time, she says, the school was going to hell in a handbasket, with school administrators charging students for bake sales "even though*

*no charity received the proceeds," and using money from the school's Special Needs Funds to pay for lunches and parties.*

*After she complained, Wooten-Francis said she was fired on trumped-up charges accusing her of grabbing a kindergartner.*

*"Sometimes I will drop my Bible because my hands go numb and I have no feeling. How in the world am I going to grab a child?" she insisted, referring to nerve damage in her hands and feet from a host of medical problems. "And if you look at the reports, it's not even stated that the kids said themselves that I hit the kid," she told The Post.*

*A teacher, who asked to remain nameless for fear of retribution, described Wooten-Francis as a "fantastic lady" who "gave her life to the kids" and "wouldn't hurt a fly."*

*"I'm a Christian," Wooten-Francis said. "I believe Jesus Christ is my Lord and Saviour... I know that I'm trusting God, and the truth will come out."*

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There are *many, many* other stories like this one—Christians verbally slandered for good works; Christians suffering *unjustly* for doing good.

And it's not even the case that we need to go looking *outside this room* for these stories, because those of us who've lived long enough in the world and who've been forthcoming with those around us about *who we are*... this kind of thing is **almost** to be expected.

But let's not jump straight in with the '*Christian self-pity party*' that we see sometimes, where us Christians engage with the world as though around **every** corner someone or something's going to make us **suffer** because we're so *outstandingly good*! We can't get involved with that because as we pick it back up in 1 Peter 3 and verse 13 we find that we should be a *bit more* level headed about this.

So please turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter 3 and verse 13 and let's read together.

<sup>13</sup> Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? <sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." <sup>15</sup> But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

So, Peter's introducing this new section in his letter with a few *really* important ideas, and he starts by saying, "Wait a minute guys—who's going to **hurt** you for doing **good** stuff?"

It's not as simple as 'do good and you're **making** yourself a *target* and so you're a *gonna!*' Or 'suffering's *coming your way* like a **missile** from the hostile world.' We can't assume that's the case because a **lot** of Christ-like goodness is *appreciated* and even **praised** by the world. So there's no need for us to be *overly* suspicious in that way... **but**, verse 14,

even if you **should** suffer for what is right, you are blessed.

So even if it **is** the case that we suffer for doing good, it's OK... we're *blessed*. Jesus said the same thing in the Sermon on the Mount,

"Blessed are those who are *persecuted* because of *righteousness*... for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

And then Peter fleshes this out further by quoting from Isaiah 8 verse 12,

"Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened."

So, in your experience of suffering (for doing good) don't fear as the *world* does—that is, don't fear God with *hopelessness* as though every *ounce* of suffering you experience is his **anger** or **judgement** against you, but rather (verse 15),

in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.

That is to say, "**Fear Christ!** He is Lord." (And Peter's following the pattern of Isaiah 8 here too, except instead of saying, "Reverently fear **Yahweh** the Lord Almighty," (as it says in Isaiah 8), he's saying, "**Fear Jesus!** He **is** the Lord Almighty **in the flesh!** He's worthy of **all** adoration and praise, and worthy of **all** respect and awe and **reverent fear.**")

And so this 'suffering for doing good' thing... it **matters** how we respond to this.

We know that it's **not** the case that God is punishing us as an enemy, but (still) there's a **lot** at stake. Verse 15,

Always be prepared to give an answer to *everyone* who asks you to give the **reason** for the **hope** that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously *against* your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

This sounds a lot like the pattern we saw last week (doesn't it?)  
*Turn* from sin, *do* good, and expect *amazing* results.

Well, *here*, as we winsomely and respectfully give an **answer** for the hope we have—a *persuasive* and **reasoned** answer for **why** we remain *hopeful* **through** unjust suffering...

those who speak *maliciously* against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

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So, since it seems *highly probable* that we'll experience *suffering* for doing good... what does God have to say to us about that?... What does God have to say to Anita Wooten-Francis in **her** suffering for doing good?...

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In the rest of that article in the New York Post, they go on to explain the legal proceedings as Wooten-Francis took Andrews and the state authorities to court for unlawful dismissal.

Now, I'm *not* saying that's **wrong**, (in fact, based on what we're *told* earthly governments **should** be doing in chapter 2 verse 14, that seems quite *right*), but **is that** the answer? Is *that* the hope we cling to when we suffer for doing good, and if it *isn't*... **what is?**

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From a *worldly* perspective, when we suffer *unjustly* for doing good we're supposed to *stamp* our feet, *make* ourselves heard and **demand** justice!...

And yet...

*"I'm a Christian," Wooten-Francis said... "I believe Jesus Christ is my Lord and Saviour... I know that I'm trusting God, and the truth will come out."*

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You can imagine how Anita's pagan friends would've responded to that! **"What?!"** Where does **that** kind of response come from?... (Well it's not from *this* world)...

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(I think) Peter's *intentionally* **throwing** this question in our face, "What **possible** explanation could we give for the **hope** we have through **unjust suffering**?..."

And for the rest of our time this morning we're going to get some *really* encouraging answers to these **really** tough questions.

So, "**why** suffer for doing good?..."

### REASON NUMBER 1... "**BECAUSE IT'S BETTER THAN SUFFERING FOR DOING EVIL.**"

Verse 17,

<sup>17</sup> It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. <sup>18</sup> **For** Christ died for sins once for all, the *righteous* for the *unrighteous*... to *bring you* to **God**.

||

As far as Peter's concerned 'suffering' is a **guarantee**. No one gets through life in a *fallen* world *without* experiencing suffering—**no one**. The question is: **which** suffering would you *prefer*? Suffering for doing good? Or suffering for doing *evil*?..."

Which, do **you** think, is better? Coming to *salvation* through faith in Christ and suffering for a **while** for doing good, or remaining in your sin and suffering under the **wrath of God** for **eternity**?...

Which is it for you? *Temporal* suffering under a hostile world **now**, or **eternal** suffering under a wrathful God **later**...

We'll suffer one way or another—either *unjustly* for doing good, or *justly* for doing wrong...

Verse 18,

*For* Christ **died** for sins **once for all**, the *righteous* for the *unrighteous*, to *bring you* to **God**.

In Peter's mind it's clear. Jesus is **Almighty God!** He's *holy* and **righteous**—*worthy* of reverent **fear** and **awe**, and **we** are the **unrighteous**, **all** of us—**sinners** and **rebels** who've tried *nothing less* than to **dethrone** God. We **deserve** to *suffer* for doing evil for **evil we have done**...

*But*...

*Christ* **died** for sins **once for all**, the *righteous* for the *unrighteous*, to *bring you* to **God**.

||

Don't **ever** forget... the salvation that's offered to **all** who would repent and put their trust in Jesus... is salvation from the *pits* of **hell**...

Christian, you've been called to carry your cross behind the one who has **died** on it **for you**, and a Christian who carries their cross with a sense of **entitlement** is a Christian who will be *unwilling* to suffer for doing good.

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Hence,

*"Take up thy cross," the Saviour said,  
"If thou wouldst My disciple be;  
Take up thy cross with **willing** heart,  
And humbly follow after Me."*

*Take up thy cross; nor **heed the shame**,  
And let thy foolish pride be still;  
Thy Lord refused not e'en to **die**  
Upon a cross, on Calvary's hill.*

*Take up thy cross, then, in His strength,  
And calmly sin's wild deluge brave;  
'Twill guide thee to a better home,  
It points to glory o'er the grave.*

*Take up thy cross, and follow on,  
Nor think till **death** to lay it down;  
For only he who bears the cross  
May **hope** to wear the glorious crown.*

||

To suffer for doing good... is to suffer with **hope** and in honour of Jesus.

To suffer for doing *evil* is to suffer without hope, in contempt of the cross. To suffer for doing evil is to suffer in offense to the **Gospel**.

||

If you're **not** saved from the coming wrath of God; if you haven't repented of your sins and put your trust in Jesus, *because you're **worried** about the **taunts** of your **friends** or the **disapproval** of your **family**, you've got it all wrong—you've chosen hopeless, **eternal** suffering over hopeful, **temporal** suffering.*

**Today's the day, stop messing about, repent of your sins and take up your cross and follow after Jesus.**

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So (reason number 1) *why* suffer for doing good? Because in **every conceivable** and **reasonable** way... it's **better** than suffering for doing evil.

**REASON NUMBER 2... "BECAUSE WE HAVE ASSURANCE IN CHRIST'S VICTORY."**

Verse 17 to the end of the chapter,

<sup>17</sup> It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. <sup>18</sup> For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He **was** put to *death* in the *body*... but made **alive** by the **Spirit**, <sup>19</sup> *through whom* also he went and preached to the spirits in prison <sup>20</sup> who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, *eight* in all, were saved through water, <sup>21</sup> and this water symbolises baptism that now saves you **also**—not the removal of *dirt* from the *body* but the pledge of a *good conscience* toward **God**. It saves you... by the *resurrection* of *Jesus Christ*, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

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Granted, there's a whole *heap* of puzzles and confusing things going on there, **but**, I *think* we can agree that Peter's *main* point is actually quite straightforward.

He's still providing us with some encouraging truths about *why it is* we can suffer for doing good with **hope**... and *here*, he's simply saying it's **"BECAUSE WE HAVE ASSURANCE IN CHRIST'S VICTORY."**

So let's allow the main thrust of that to **hit** us. Have a look at verse 18 again,

<sup>18</sup> For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He **was** put to **death** in the *body*... but made **alive** by the **Spirit**.

Jesus suffered in his body for a time—even suffering **death!**... but that wasn't the end of the matter... he's **alive** by the **Spirit!**

And then have a look at the *end* of verse 21. He's saying we've been **saved**...

by (that **same**) *resurrection* of *Jesus Christ*, (Verse 22) <sup>22</sup> who has gone into *heaven* and is at **God's right hand**—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

We've got to realise that Jesus' sufferings were of **this** world; **this** earth... and **now** he's at the right hand of the Father in heaven with angels, authorities and powers in submission to **him**.... **and we are saved by this!**—**We have a share in this victory!** (Peter says). *This is effectual to us!*

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Why do we have such **hope** in suffering for doing good?...  
**"BECAUSE WE HAVE ASSURANCE IN CHRIST'S VICTORY!"**

Jesus has *full* and *final* **victory** over *bodily* suffering by his **resurrection** in the **Spirit**... and so will **we!**... (*if* we're trusting by faith *in him*). Try not to lose sight of that as we start digging a bit deeper now into *how* Peter is illustrating this point.

Because, that's actually *all he's doing!* He's just using the illustrations of *Noah and the flood*, and *baptism* to *back up* his main points:

- that Jesus is *victorious*,
- that, yes, it's *hard going* being a small bunch of Christians in a hostile world,
- and that we have a *great hope* of emerging out the other side of it.

So let's have a quick look back at these perplexing verses. Verse 18,

<sup>18</sup> For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to *death* in the *body* but made *alive* by the *Spirit*, <sup>19</sup> *through whom* also he went and preached to the spirits in prison <sup>20</sup> who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a *few* people, *eight* in all, were saved through water.

I don't think we have *any* reason to assume Peter's talking about a *chronological time sequence* in these verses.

So, (what I mean is), verse 18, Jesus *died*, *then* he was *raised* by the Spirit—the *same* Spirit *through whom* (*in the past*) he went and preached to the unsaved *human* spirits of Noah's day (verse 19).

That fits with what Peter says in his *second* letter when he calls Noah a '*preacher* of righteousness' and it fits with what he's said in chapter 1 and verse 11 of *this* letter, when he says that the Spirit of Christ was at work through the *Old Testament* prophets.

I also think that *this* understanding makes good sense of what follows,

(So it's the *Holy Spirit*... verse 19) <sup>19</sup> *through whom* also he went and preached to the spirits in prison <sup>20</sup> who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a *few* people, *eight* in all, were saved through water.

Peter's readers *must've* been going, "Yep... we get *that*." Just as *Christ* was preaching repentance through *Noah* to a *deeply sinful* world and only a *tiny* group were saved, he's *now* preaching the Gospel through his faithful believers to a *hostile* world, and *they too* feel like an insignificant minority... *but they too* will be saved, and this salvation comes with the *seal* of *baptism!*

Verse 21,

<sup>21</sup> and *this* water (*the floodwaters*) symbolise *baptism* that now saves you *also*—*not* the removal of *dirt* from the *body*... but the pledge of a *good conscience* toward *God*. It saves you by the *resurrection* of *Jesus Christ*, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

How can we, a *small* group of believers in a *hostile* world, *suffer* for doing good with *hope*?...

**"BECAUSE WE HAVE ASSURANCE IN CHRIST'S VICTORY!"**

Just look at what your baptism **represents!**—a **sharing** in the resurrection of Jesus and a new life of repentance with a **clean conscience** toward **God!**...

(If it's the case for **you** that you're trusting in Christ and you're walking in **newness** of life but you're **putting off baptism**—this **beautiful** symbol of the **Gospel**, **please** come and talk to me—and expect to be **urged** and **encouraged** to be baptised!

||

The *next* reason Peter gives us for having *hope* through unjust suffering—**REASON NUMBER 3...** is **"BECAUSE AFTER FOLLOWING CHRIST'S EXAMPLE OF SUFFERING COMES JUSTICE & SALVATION."**

As we follow Jesus' example in suffering for doing good, we know that God's justice and salvation will have the last word.

Chapter 4 verse 1,

<sup>1</sup> *Therefore*, since Christ suffered in **his** body, arm **yourselves** also with the same **attitude**, because he (or she) who has *suffered* in his (or her) body is **done** with sin.

He's saying that when we *follow* the **example** of **Christ** and when we're willing to *suffer* it's as though the *engine room* of sin in our lives has been *destroyed* and, verse 2...

<sup>2</sup> As a result, he (or she) does not live the rest of his (or her) earthly life for **evil human** desires, but rather for the *will of God*. <sup>3</sup> For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery,

(indulging in sinful sexual behaviour with reckless abandon).

lust,

(feeding the intense desires of our flesh—through **pornography**, for example—whether it's hardcore content on the internet or a Bonds advertisement plastered on the side of a bus).

drunkenness,

(the abuse of alcohol to the extent where self-control is impossible).

orgies,

(the blatant **cheapening** of sex to nothing more than a casual party game).

carousing,

(binge drinking).

and detestable idolatry,

(the adoration of *all* those things that are placed over God—the things that occupy our fantasies... money... sex... power).

Boy, aren't you glad you don't live in a time when **that** was the kind of list of common sins that came to mind?

Can I put it to you that this isn't *all that* far from the movie programme at our cinemas?. Or can I suggest that this isn't *all that* far from the track listing of a Lady Gaga album?.

It's staggering (isn't it?) These are **exactly** the kinds of sins that we'd be ridiculed for abstaining from, and while we might not be **living** in them... to our shame we might be **entertaining ourselves** with them.

||

Verse 4,

<sup>4</sup> They think it *strange* that you do not **plunge** with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap *abuse* on you.

They think it **strange** that you don't dive **headfirst** off the *bow* of the *ark* into the **churning floodwaters** below and they *verbally abuse* you for it!

There's an element here that we just need to be **real** about—by *abstaining* from these sinful acts we're **denouncing** them and we're seen to be **disapproving** of **all** those who do them. Can we agree that verbal abuse is *hardly* a surprising outcome of suffering for doing this kind of 'good'?!

But, as with every *step of the way* here in 1 Peter, there's **hope**—hope for *justice* and hope for *salvation*.

Verse 5,

<sup>5</sup> But *they will have* to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

(Hope for *justice* for all those who've suffered *greatly* under *slandorous pagans*)... and then verse 6,

<sup>6</sup> For *this* is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead so that they **might** be judged according to *men* in regard to the *body*... but **live** according to **God** in regard to the *spirit*...

**This** is why we **need** the Gospel even if we've suffered **all our lives**, and **even** if we've suffered *to the point of death* as Christ did, *though* while we *might* be judged according to *men* in regard to the *body*—that is, they'll have judged us, verbally abused us, maybe even physically assaulted us *in the body (in this life)*, the **Gospel** says we might **live**... according to **God**... in regard to the *spirit*; in regard to **eternity**.

||

Suffering for doing good **may** look *completely weak* and *hopeless* to pagans around us but if they **only knew** the **hope** we have in the **Gospel**, (and we *must pray* that they *would*), well then, perhaps the likes of Anita Wooten-Francis would be *better understood*—

Suffering for doing **good** and then saying you're trusting in **God** for the truth to come out?... **Absolutely!... 100%!... "BECAUSE AFTER FOLLOWING CHRIST'S EXAMPLE OF SUFFERING... COMES JUSTICE & SALVATION."**

And *that's why* (in the last chunk for this morning), Peter says, **"THEREFORE, CONTINUE TO DO GOOD (EVEN THOUGH IT MIGHT MEAN SUFFERING)."**

Verse 7,

<sup>7</sup> The end of all things is near.

(By the way, that **doesn't** mean Peter expected Jesus back **that afternoon**—he's just saying, "Look, because we're in the *last* age of God's salvation plan—because we're in the **Church** age..."

**Therefore...** be *clear minded* and *self-controlled* so that you can pray.

(That is—if we're to live out Christ's victory and example we must guard our minds so that we can pray as he did). Verse 8,

<sup>8</sup> Above all, *love* each other *deeply*, because love covers over a **multitude** of sins.

(Not that **our** love can **wash away** sins, but that *deep, Christian* love... is *enduring* and *long-suffering* love—love that *forgives* wrongs and covers over a **multitude** of sins.

And note the *robust 'loveliness'* of the church here!—we've *already* seen that believers who suffer in their body are at work **killing** sin in *their* lives, and **here** we see believers who are quick to *lovingly forgive* the sins of **others!** The church is to be **covered** by love.

Verse 9,

<sup>9</sup> Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

(If the world in its hostility is *driving* you **away** from certain places, offer each other the *safe haven* of your *home*—let **yours** be the home the **church** meets in, *even if* that makes you more of a target in society).

Verse 10,

<sup>10</sup> Each one should use *whatever* gift he has received to serve **others**, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. <sup>11</sup> If anyone *speaks*, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone *serves*, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in **all** things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

(In whichever way God's gifted you to serve the church, let's get on with sharing the grace of God with each other in a godliness of *speech* and *service*; of **word** and **deed**).

And...

To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

I realise that that's a heavy meal this morning. **Please** don't miss the forest for getting lost in the trees. Peter's key point *all* along has been:

**"WE HAVE GREAT HOPE IN SUFFERING FOR DOING GOOD."**

Things might not be so bad for us *right now*. Perhaps we've **never** really suffered for doing good and perhaps 1 Peter's been challenging us about that fact... But the time *may* come when we're in Anita Wooten-Francis' shoes—**suffering** for doing good and looking for **hope**.

*Remember...* in times like that...

*Look to Jesus' cross...* It's better to suffer for doing *good* than for doing *evil*.

*Look to Jesus' resurrection and ascension...* He's **triumphed over** suffering for doing good **through** resurrection... and so will *all* those who are his.

*Look to Jesus' life...* His is the example of a life worth following where there's amazing triumph after suffering for doing good.

And so just **keep** doing **good**, even if it means suffering for it... because there is **wonderful** hope for those who suffer for doing good.

The New York Post article that has been quoted in this sermon manuscript can be found at:

<http://nypost.com/2011/05/22/teach-im-devout-kicked-out/>

The hymn that has been quoted in this sermon manuscript is "Take Up Thy Cross, the Saviour Said." Written by Charles William Everest, 1833 (public Domain).