The Godly Pursuit of the Good Life (Part 2)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 August 2022

Preacher: Jeff Jackson

[0:00] It isn't scripture, but we thank God for people who can write like that so that we can sing the truth back to God. We're in 1 Peter, beloved, continuing verse by verse.

The title of my message for this morning, The Godly Pursuit of the Good Life, which is part two of what we were doing last Lord's Day when we were in the first section here of this passage of scripture, where Peter is writing to encourage a group of persecuted Christians across a wide area that takes in what we know to be about modern Turkey.
And these Christians are under the Emperor Nero. Persecution is ramping up across the Roman Empire. And Peter is writing these people to help sober them in suffering for Christ's sake, to make sure that they're suffering not as a vengeful people, not as a people who are seeking to overthrow the government or rise up with one voice and fight against tyranny, as it were, but to stand firmly and courageously for Jesus Christ, showing great compassion to people who would make themselves their enemies.
It's a hard, hard message, but it's a message from scripture that these people desperately need to hear. The godly pursuit of the good life concerns Peter telling these people, this is what it means for you to pursue the Lord, even as you are living a life that pleases the Lord, especially regarding people who persecute you.
How are we to live under the evil that people do toward us? Let's read the passage together so we just have it in our minds as I make some introductory statements to you here this morning.
[1:55] It's 1 Peter 3, beginning in verse 13. Peter asks, Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?

But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation and do not be troubled.
But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.
And keep a good conscience, so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.
For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right, rather than for doing what is wrong.
[2:58] Now, you and I are created with a desire for approval. Now, I don't know if you knew that, but that is created inside of us, before the fall.

So, the desire for approval isn't necessarily something that has to be sinful, or that was a result of sin in the world. Now, what does that mean?
Does that mean we were deficient in some way? Is that seeking of approval meaning that God made us, and made us in some way incomplete, or there's some type of flaw in us?
We might refer to this desire for approval as the smile of God on our lives. We want that smile and not that frown. And that's okay.
That's a good thing, that we want the smile of God on our lives. Another way we might express this is it's our awareness of God's closeness to us.
[3:55] You and I want to live a life where we have a conscious awareness of being close to God, of being in fellowship with God.

The worst thing about sin, the Bible tells us, is that it separates us from God, and creates this giant chasm between us and our maker, our creator.
And so God becomes our savior as he makes a way to bridge that chasm in the Lord Jesus Christ so that we can no longer live separated from the Lord, but close to the Lord, in fellowship with the Lord.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

It's a beautiful miracle of God's grace in our lives. That's what we want. That's the smile of God. That's the closeness we're after. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve enjoyed this perfect, approval with God.
Now, in that approval with the Lord, they weren't looking to each other for something that only God could give them, and that's where we make mistakes. You and I, because of sin, begin in our lives to look to other people to do for us what only God can do.
[5:10] There's only one savior in the world, and it's not anybody on the earth. It's the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the fear of the Lord in Adam and Eve.

That's how we can understand this. It was a high reverence. It was a great sense of awe that they had in their hearts as they offered worship to the Lord.
Now, for a time, the fear that Adam and Eve knew was perfect. It wasn't a terror that caused them to shrink back from God and cower and hide.
That comes later. This was the fear of the Lord that bowed their hearts in wonderful worship to God. And so it was that closeness that they enjoyed.
That fear, being perfect as it was, revealed and was motivated by their love for God. Satan deceived Adam and Eve.
[6:18] And so they became deceived. They began to speak deceitfully right away. The effect was immediate. And so sin corrupted their fear of the Lord.

And now that fear would be perverted. And much of that fear would be directed toward man. It would go horizontal instead of vertical.
It isn't wrong. I'm not saying it's wrong for us to look to be close to each other. I hope you feel a sense of closeness now to these people in this room who are your blood-bought brothers and sisters in Christ.
That's not wrong. But again, I'll say it this way and then I'll explain it as I go through my message. It is wrong for us to seek in people what we should only be seeking in God.
So just think about that. As much as my wife loves me, it is not my wife's approval that I should be most concerned about in my life.
[7:26] Again, that's where we get into trouble moment by moment. When the approval of people, whatever it is that we're looking for in a certain person, in a certain situation or context, becomes more important to us than the smile or approval of God, and pleasing God in all respects, we start getting in big trouble.

I'm not worthy of being anyone's God and neither are you. So this is what we want to think about as we move into our text.
As sin corrupted Adam and Eve in that moment, as Satan deceived Adam and Eve in that moment, those two people felt something very dark, very foreign, and very terrible.
Something they'd never felt before. And so what was the result? They hid themselves from each other and even from God because, because a different fear now gripped their hearts.
sin brought the pain of shame and guilt and an unclean conscience into their lives.
[8:42] Now that would plague their relationship with each other and with the Lord. And so it's been since that time for all of us. That's why we need a Savior. We need Jesus.

Desperately. This particular pain has plagued every human being since except for Jesus Christ. Save Jesus. All of us have known the deceiving power, deceptive power of sin and that, that terrible sense of fear gripping our hearts that is not a holy fear of the Lord but a fear that there's something wrong with me and there's something wrong with you.
And as much as I would like to believe that you have the answer and can help me, you're in as bad a shape as I am. When two people get married, they find this out real quickly.
Don't they? Look at this. This is the Jesus Christ who never knew deception, who never knew sin, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit in his mouth and while being reviled, he did not revile in return.
[10:05] While suffering, Jesus uttered no threats but kept entrusting himself to him who judges righteously. That's key. And he himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness for by his wounds you were healed.

That's what Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2, 22 through 24. We've covered that in a previous message. Beloved, because, because God loves us, because God loves you, God does use who and what we fear to reveal to us who and what we are most devoted to.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Let me say that again because this is a key thought for what we want to cover as Peter reveals this theme to us that he's so concerned about. because the Lord loves us, because the Lord loves us, because the Lord loves us, God does use who and what we fear to reveal to us, to show us who and what we are most devoted to.
What we fear has power over us and what we love will define us. Why? Because that's how we were made.
That used to be perfect and sin corrupted it and perverted it. And so now that fear and that love are aimed at things that come back at us in twisted ways.
[11:40] It gets sent out in a twisted way and it hits that mirror and returns back in a twisted way. So you might ask, well, where's the hope? I've already told you. The hope is in a person.

It's in Christ. That's our hope. He's our hope. And he's our blessing. Because God loves us and desires us to wisely fight against the power of earthly fears, he tells us things like this.
He tells us things like this. The fear of the Lord leads to life so that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.
What a thought. The reward of humility humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, honor, in life. Whereas the world would tell you, tit for tat, somebody does it to you, you do it back to them even worse.
Somebody hurts you, hurt them worse. Teach them a lesson. Show them. You're not playing. What does the Lord say? The reward of humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, honor, in life.
[12:51] By the fear of the Lord, one keeps away from evil. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. These are just a few of the admonitions of Scripture about the blessings and the benefits of how the fear of the Lord helps us combat other fears that would lead to evil.

So that would include the evil that you and I might do to other people and the evil that they would do to us. Say, Jeff, I can't control the evil people do to me. No, but you can control how you respond to that evil.
You don't have to give evil in return for evil. And that's what Peter wants. That's what Peter's counseling. Under the persecution of Nero, under the persecution of local governors carrying out the orders of higher authorities, these people are being told by Peter, don't retaliate by returning evil for evil.
That's a tough message. I think that works against our very natures. The godly pursuit of the good life, which Peter is speaking about in our passage, involves you and I in dealing righteously with the fears we are tempted with as we relate to other people.
Peter said it this way if you look at chapter 3, verse 10. The one who desires life, that's the good life, the godly life, is to love and to see good days.
[14:23] The person who wants a good life, full of love, full of good days, full of hope, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking, interestingly, deceit.

He must turn away from evil and do good. He must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears attend to their prayer.
But the face of the Lord is against the one or the ones who do evil. This is Peter's message to us about living the good life. It's why he tells us this, or asks the question, which is rhetorical, who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?
And the answer that comes back is no one. No one. Because you remain in control of how you respond to evil. You can't control what other people do, but you are in complete control and responsible for how you respond to other people as they do evil in your life.
He quickly adds this, but even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed.
[15:41] Which is a crazy thing to think about and to say in the midst of being persecuted by people when they're visiting evil on you. Even if you suffer for righteousness, you're blessed.

We've covered this from last time. He says this, do not fear their intimidation and do not be troubled. That was last week's message.
We covered all of that in the exposition from last week. What does all of that mean? How are we to respond? The question could come at this point, but how do I actually live a good life for God in a troubled world that gives me so much trouble?
Now the scriptures answer this over and over again in many different places. This is the way Peter chose to address it to his readers. Jesus comforted his anxious disciples by telling them this.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

You'll recognize it. Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. So there's something about where we focus our faith that is critical to our being able to deal with the trouble of the world, particularly as that trouble comes from people.
[16:56] It has a lot to do with my belief. The focus of my faith. We need to be told to live like this in our walk with the Lord because we all struggle with fearing what people can do to us.

And it shows up in many different ways. I've mentioned this to you several times before, even though we haven't gone into great depth about all those different ways, but a surprising one, one that might surprise you is that anger is oftentimes, very often, rooted in fear.
People don't think about that, but it's true. Anger is always a symptom, not a root. Anger is a symptom of something else going on in your heart.
Many, many times that anger is fear. It could be the fear of not being in control. So you learn to deal with people angrily because you want to dominate and intimidate.
It may be the fear of losing something that's important to you, some aspect of security in your life. And so when things aren't working out the way you think they ought to work out, you respond in anger.
[18:16] What's behind that anger? The fear of the loss of. Do you see what I mean? By the way, that's not humanistic psychology. That's Bible. God didn't, or people didn't invent that wisdom.

God did. So we need to be told to live like this in our walk with the Lord because our fear of what people do and can do is behind so much of our struggle with sin.
Now, please keep in mind what Peter is concerned with for us. Because we do live as God's children, we are strangers in this world.
A world that is hostile to Jesus Christ. Those are facts. That hostility will be aimed at you because you are living for Christ.
They will hate the Jesus that lives in you. And that will be expressed in the way that people treat you at times. You say, Jeff, now, do you mean to tell me that when people are wicked toward me or mean toward me or evil toward me that they're consciously thinking, I hate Jesus living in you and so you're going to get it now?
[19:33] No, not necessarily. On occasion, that could be true. But most of the time, people aren't consciously aware that the reason they're struggling with you is because they're struggling with Jesus that lives in you.

Folks, this is why we evangelize. These people are deceived. They're under a cloud of deception from Satan. So we evangelize them.
We speak the gospel to them because it's the good news that helps lift the darkness, exposing it with the light so that they can see their need and what's really going on inside of them.
And in those ways, God then moves in to love them to himself. This is what Peter's talking about in this. Peter is trying to prepare you, prepare me, prepare his readers for the difficult reality that some people will respond to you with evil intent toward you.
Now, if you've lived at all as an adult in this life, you already know that to be true. There are some people who just, just will have it out for you.
[20:48] And there are other people who just seem to go through life making people miserable and enjoying it. Well, that's sin, people. That's terrible.

Here's the rub, though. That's one reality that you and I know is a part of everyday life. I remember raising my kids and as they got older and older and they were able to receive this truth and they began to realize it for themselves and come back to us with things that were hurting them, we raised our kids to understand that they lived in a broken world among broken people as a broken person themselves.
And so these kinds of things were going to happen to them and what they needed to do and concentrate on, what they needed to focus their heart on was, where are you in your relationship with God? Because as these people relate to you in that way, you're going to reveal to them who you really are.
Are you a tit-for-tat person? Because if you're a Christian, you're going to be concerned that you respond to them in Christ. Christ. And so Jeff had to deal with Jeff.
Jeff had to get over Jeff being offended. Jeff had to get over Jeff being spoken to in disrespectful ways or slighted or overlooked or whatever.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[22:09] Jeff had to deal with that. Or it was always going to be Jeff responding to what was coming at me and not Christ in me.

This is the whole mantra behind deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. Which is the heartbeat of the Christian life.
And that's what we're called to. So here's the rub. When people act this way toward you, it's going to make it challenging for you to remain spiritually focused.
To deal with your hurt, your disappointment, your anger, or even your sense of just becoming weary with being treated unjustly.
If you've ever been in any context where this is kind of drug out a little bit, it wearies you. It's draining, isn't it? You wake up in the morning and you've got that thing in your stomach and you're just, ah, I don't even want to go to work today and face this or whatever.
[23:08] You know what I mean. So what happens then in our text in verses 14 through 16 of chapter 3, Peter gives us three directives and these directives are aimed at keeping our hearts zealously committed to doing God's good and to fighting our fears, the fears that pull us into ourselves and away from others because we've been hurt.

So we retreat and draw in and that's, no, Peter, no, don't do that. The first thing that we looked at, the first directive that we looked at from last time, that's what I just said, three directives aimed at keeping our hearts zealously committed, that's the pursuit of the good life, doing God's good, and then fighting those fears.
The first one from last Sunday, trust the character of Christ. In other words, be courageous. That was the sermon last week. Trusting or counting on the character of Christ is the promise that we've received from the Lord.
And lo, I will be with you always. Always. It's the promise that Jesus just gave us. Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God.
Believe also in me. Folks, that's counting on the character of God. We're counting on the character of God to be what God says he is. I will be with you.
[24:39] The I am of the universe is with you. Look, I don't care what you face. The very first and most foundational truth that you and I need to plant our feet in when we're in this kind of trouble in life is that God is.

And God is with me. Me. When we skip that one, we find ourselves trying to manipulate and control everything else.
Don't let yourself forget there's a sovereign God in the universe who has chosen to reside in you in the power of the Holy Spirit. Wow. That means that God's character is intact.
God's universe is intact. And this situation in your life is not going to disrupt the world. It may be disrupting your little world, but it isn't disrupting his.
And he's in control. Now I know when we're hurting and when we're suffering, one of the last things we want to have Christians say is, well, now remember, God's in control. I know, I know, I know, but I'm hurting.
[25:53] But that is a great place to start. This was the message from last week, as I said, and this is where Peter begins. It's interesting.

He begins his counsel here so that we're passionately committed to doing God's good. Set our heart there. Count on the character of Christ. Trust in the character of Christ.
And set your heart to do God's good. Don't try to redefine it. Manipulate it. Control it. Set your heart to do God's good. More on that in just a moment.
So this is Peter's first command to us about what's going to help us fight the fears and anxieties. that manage to pull us into ourselves and away from trusting God and then away from serving other people.
So don't fear man or what man can do to you. Be courageous in the Lord. This isn't raw human courage. This is the courage that comes from counting on the character of God.
[26:58] Boy, that'll plant your feet. All right, what's number two? This is for today then. Number two, set Christ apart as Lord. That's what Peter tells us in 1 Peter 3 15.

In other words, be fearful. But we need to define what those two things mean. What does it mean to set Christ apart as Lord? What does it mean for me to be fearful as I do that? Look again with me at our text in chapter 3.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. Do not fear their intimidation. Do not be troubled. That's count on the character of God.
Verse 15, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.
That's where we are now. Set Christ apart as Lord. Be fearful. Now, folks, anytime we speak or act, we are doing that from our hearts.
[28:03] The mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart and we act or we behave based on what our hearts most desire. These are principles from scripture that help define you in the way you behave as a human being.

You need to know these things and hold on to them. It will help you combat all the nonsense out there that wants to blame everybody but you for what's wrong with you. I'll tell you what's wrong with you from scripture.
You're what's wrong with you. And you just need to get over that and run to Christ. Christ knows what's wrong with you and he gave himself on this cross in order to save you from you, friend, not from this big bad world.
He died to save you from you because it's your sin that sends you to hell, not your wives, not your kids, not your co-workers. Christ died to save you from you.
That's what we mean by that. So anytime we speak, anytime we act, we're acting out of our hearts. In other words, our behavior reflects our heart's desire, our will, or what we treasure most in life.
[29:23] I can show you this. I can give you some more ideas about this. This is all helping us to understand what does it mean to set Christ apart as Lord. Well, the first thing you need to understand is how your heart operates.

Your mind, your will, and your emotions. Your will is the desire factor of your life. That's how you act. Your will always acts on what you want most.
All right? So look at this with me. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. That's Matthew 6, 21.
What we treasure, what we desire most in our heart, will define the way we live. In that moment, it can be moment to moment. What you want right now more than anything else in this moment may not be what you want 24 hours from now most.
that may shift depending on circumstances. That's what we want to deal with. Because my love and devotion to Jesus shouldn't be carried along by circumstances.
[30:30] That should be a growing fixed reality for my heart that's unaffected largely by what other people are doing or what's coming at me. So that the number one response of my life, no matter what's coming at my life, is I love the Lord Jesus and want to please Him in all respects.

And that's the highest aim of my life and heart. And that's not going to change no matter what you do to me. If you ever have to look into the face of someone that you love more than you love anything else in this world beyond the Lord Jesus and have to say this, I love Jesus more than you, you'll know exactly what I mean.
I love Jesus more than you. I love Jesus more than you. is that true? Is that true in your life? Where your treasure is, your heart will be also. So we can say that our behavior is our heart in motion. What we do is the expression of what's in our heart.
look at this verse. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good. That's a holy lifestyle.
[31:47] And the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil, an unholy lifestyle, for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart. Everything that you say originates in your heart, in the inner core of who you are.

You're just simply expressing with your mouth who you are, what you value, what you desire, what you treasure. So when Peter tells us, when Peter tells us to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts, beloved, he is truly taking the issue of our zeal and our fear right to the heart of the matter.
sanctify is literally to make holy or to make sacred. To make Christ sacred, holy to you in your heart as Lord.
Jesus is Lord. Period.
Whether we believe it or not, whether we own that reality or not, whether that's personal to me or not, Jesus is Lord. Amen? Amen. That's right.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[33:12] That's right. But here in our text, Peter calls on us as God's people to treasure Jesus as Lord in our hearts and as Lord over our hearts.

So that we set Jesus apart as more worthy of our hearts than anything else in our lives.
hearts. So it is a call to devotion set in motion. Do you see that? This isn't a warm fuzzy. This is a commitment of your heart that produces this wonderful zeal for seeing God pleased in everything that you say and do so that your entire life is defined by this overflow of devotion to Jesus Christ and your desire to see him honored.
You're tripping over yourself to give God glory in all that you say and do in your life and it doesn't stop. It ramps up when people turn the heat up on you.
This is Peter. Right when we think that we can put Jesus in the back seat and step forward and then get ready to let you know something now.
[34:35] We bring Jesus forward and we say no this is not about me. They're using my name. They're looking into my eyes. They're calling those things to me.

They're saying those things about me. They're threatening me in these ways. But it's not about me because Christ lives in me and I don't want anything in this world in my life to eclipse Christ in me.
Now I'm just saying Peter recognizes this isn't just wisdom. Peter recognizes this is where you and I are most challenged. This is when we're most tempted to put Jesus in the back seat and say I got this.
And you don't. You don't. And beloved you are not the only one that will suffer if you take matters into your own hands. Peter doesn't want that and so he's telling these persecuted people many of them will lose their lives following this.
They will. History has borne it out. Church history. Many of these people are going to be martyred. Peter is one of them. The author of our book is one of them.
[35:47] History and tradition tell us that he was crucified upside down for his faith. Now this is the man who drew his sword and cut a man's ear off to defend Jesus.

And now this man's being crucified upside down. No sword. No anarchy. This is so powerful.
When this grips your life in your heart you'll you'll find such peace. You'll find so much calm from anxiety and so many of the things that plague us in this life.
Devotion set in motion. In every moment and circumstance of your life something or someone is acting as Lord in your heart.
And you will follow what is Lord of your heart in that moment and circumstance. That's what you'll follow. It's another way of saying this is what you're giving your worship to.
[36:57] Only Jesus Christ is worthy of being our Lord and Master. So Jesus is most worthy of our worship our loyalty our love.

So when Peter referenced Isaiah chapter 8 verse 12 he did that up in verse 14 of 1 Peter 3 but even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness you are blessed.
Here it is. Do not fear their intimidation and do not be troubled. He's quoting from Isaiah 8 12. That was last week's sermon. Here's what he quoted.
And you this is from Isaiah and you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it. We covered that last week but then Isaiah quickly adds this to that sentence.
Look at this. It is the Lord of hosts whom you should regard as holy. Notice that regard as holy. Folks that is set apart Christ as Lord in your heart.
[37:58] Regard as holy and he shall be your fear and he shall be your dread and then this beautiful reality then he shall become a sanctuary.

A sanctuary. sanctuary. Now please don't miss this. Regarding Christ. Just as Isaiah said this is why Peter chose this text.
Regarding Christ as holy in our hearts is Peter's heavenly counter to the earthly fear and anxiety that would rob us of showing our love and devotion to Jesus as our sanctuary.
This is why you and I get so worked up. This is why in our country probably around the world the anti-anxiety medication industry is multi-billions of dollars.
And please don't hear your pastor trashing you if you're on anxiety medication. Okay? I'm not. I love you so much. And I do believe that people need to have medication in order to be able to deal with symptoms so that they can face off with the realities of these principles and take them into their heart and begin to learn to trust Jesus and lean on the Lord Jesus and move through life with the Lord Jesus.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[39:23] Not fearing all these things that lock us up, draw us into ourselves and cause us to be hyper vigilant about life. We just never know where it's going to come from and so we live that way.

We begin to look that way. We relate to people that way. We're always askance. It's hard to do this when you're doing like this inside you.
You may not actually look like that but inside that's Jesus loves you. It's hard. And people sense that.
They want to know when you're like that. Well, where's your hope? What are you trusting in? He, he shall be your fear.
He shall be your dread. Then he shall become a sanctuary. People, people who see this marvelous heavenly activity of your heart as it shows up in your behavior.
[40:37] They will be stunned by it. Now they may not register that to you but they will be. And so Peter tells us we all need to be ready to tell them about Jesus as the true treasure of our hearts.

Now I know that people have used this verse and I think contextually it can pass. I just don't want us to miss the main idea of the context of this passage.
People have used this verse to talk about how all Christians need to be ready to be an apologist. All Christians need to be able to defend their faith. Okay, I don't know this is the best text for that even though it might read that way to you.
Contextually what I want to point out to us is this. But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope.
They're going to see this response to them. It's not tit for tat. It's not full of you and full of defensiveness because it's based in the hope and treasure of your heart in the Lord Jesus.
[41:48] And that's why he says yet with gentleness and reverence that you don't want to tarnish that response of hope that you're giving to them by not retaliating against them, not making them your enemy on your side of things.

Gentleness and reverence will help carry that out. And so the defense that you're making is the defense of good behavior that stuns them and now you're ready, you're in a position to answer them in the occasion that you hope they will say, look, what is it with you?
I mean, I actually had a guy do this with me a couple years ago. He was out in my front yard and this guy had been just going after me, just full of anger, just a man full of anger.
And one day we were out there and it was probably the hundredth time I had said to him, I am not your enemy. I literally said that to him. I'd said it to him many times before, I am not your enemy. You know, please, please let me show you that I have your best interest at heart in what I'm doing here. And we can work together and we'll work this out.
[43:07] And he said something else and something else and it finally led to me having to tell him why I hadn't done something that I had committed to do months before.

I had gotten real sick. I had been diagnosed with a tick disease at that time and it was really working on me. And then they had found precancerous cells in my lips.
And so I was being treated for that and it was miserable. It raised these big old whelps all over my lips and inside my mouth. The medicine did. So I couldn't do it. Well, I wasn't looking for sympathy. I just told him that because he had me on the spot now and I needed to let this man know. I'm not overlooking. And as soon as that happened, his shoulders sank, his head went down and he said, man, here I'm out here ragging you out and giving you such a heart.
He admitted it that he was targeting me. And you telling me you got all this going on in your life. Man, I don't even know what to say.
[44:11] And he turned around and walked off and went back to his house. Now, I wish I could tell you the story ended well after that. It didn't. But you can't control what they do.

But you can control what you do. Now, when your witness and testimony for Jesus is the most important thing to you in that, you can get yourself behind yourself and put Jesus forward and that's where you want to be.
And this is what Peter is encouraging us to do. But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope.
The hope. He is your hope. So you're sharing Christ. He's the hope. Your behavior to these people would be an anomaly, right?
It's something weird. It's different. It's strange. It's confusing. It might even make them more mad. I've had that. But you aren't reacting in fear and selfishness.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[45:18] Your hope hope in Jesus steadies you so that you're made to stand for Jesus as the sanctuary of your heart.

And people don't understand where that kind of hope, courage, and steadiness comes from. It's otherworldly. So of course they don't understand. So you need to be ready that it might get worse before it gets better, if it gets better.
In my case, it didn't get better. You are called to a ready steady. Can you think of that? You are called to a ready steady. I'm ready.
You ever seen people who play sports? When the moment comes, they're in their athletic stance. They're ready. Right? They're ready for something to happen. They're not standing there like this. If you see that out in the outfield, you'll see the big hook come. somebody else will be out there who wants to be out there. You're called to a ready steady in the face of fearful things which people do to you so that you can show them what a treasure Jesus is to you and can be for them.
[46:38] Jesus can be the sanctuary of your heart too, brother. Let me tell you. The steadiness that you see in me, it's not me. It's Jesus. How so?

What are you talking about? I'm talking about a person, a relationship. Sin, disease is my heart, diseases me and I need help with that and I have no cure and neither do you.
The only cure that we can know is the cure that God provided in his son Jesus Christ. Jesus came and died on the cross to pay the penalty for your disease, your sin, your separation from God.
And so, brother, God is calling you in love to believe in Jesus Christ, to put your faith, hope, and trust in him and not you, to repent of your sin, to turn away from evil in your life and follow Christ.
Would you be willing to do that? it's just that straightforward and some of them are going to look at you like you've got four heads and some of them are going to maybe, maybe say tell me more.
[47:47] But most people say this without saying it, show me more. And they want to know if they can derail you and unsteady you. They do.

They want you to be a failure because you being a failure justifies theirs. Again, this isn't psychology, this is Bible. I hope you're seeing that.
So this entire scenario is taking place that I've been describing in the heat of battle. When people are trying to intimidate and scare you into their brand of believing and living.
That's what they want. They want to scare you, intimidate you into being like them. People don't like the anomaly. They just want you to get in line with them and move and just keep.
No. When I came to Christ, I started swimming upstream. But instead of making these people your enemy, instead of reacting to them the way they would act in their sin toward you with hopelessness and selfishness, you respond out of a heart resting in Jesus.
[49:03] That's the sanctuary part, isn't it? To set your heart apart for Christ as Lord means that you're more concerned about ministering to Jesus and ministering Jesus than putting yourself forward.

Well, this is why Peter tells us to carry Jesus' heart of a submissive sufferer into the moment. Look with me again, if you would, at 1 Peter 2, 21.
This is why Peter is holding out Jesus as our example in these scenarios. For you have been called for this purpose, 221, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps.
He committed no sin. He didn't speak deceitfully or wickedly. Right? Hope, the hope Peter speaks of is focused faith.
So you need to be ready to defend your hope, your focused faith in Christ as your Lord with gentleness towards them and reverence towards Jesus. This is why he puts that in there.
[50:21] Because as we turn to minister back to these people who are giving us all this grief, we need to remember that we need to do it, not through clenched teeth or whatever else or a posture of we need to be concerned about ministering the gentleness of Jesus.

That's why Peter said Christ is your example. When Christ went to the cross, we don't have anything in scripture that tells us he went to the cross grumbling under his breath.
He didn't do that. he laid down on the cross and willingly gave his life and he changed the world. He changed the world.
So your best weapon against earthly fear in your pursuit of doing godly good is to fear the Lord. So each of us need to fix our hearts on the person of Jesus as our greatest treasure in life.
our greatest treasure in life. What I'm talking about here is a growing God awareness.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[51:38] Are you with me? A growing God awareness. A God consciousness. A fear of the Lord awareness. Awareness. And that governs your life at every moment.

Jesus is with you. That's the character of God. And you are with Jesus in mind, body, heart, soul, and conscience. Give me just a few more moments.
We'll do this one. Keep a clean conscience in Christ. That's where Peter goes next. In verses 14 and 15, help us succeed in keeping a clean conscience.
conscience. So Peter's counsel here builds on itself. Very similarly to how Paul does when he gets into his epistles, the last half of his epistles particularly, and it's line upon line, principle upon principle.
Well, what does Peter mean by conscience? Puritan Richard Sims defined conscience this way. Your conscience is your soul reflecting upon itself.
[52:45] Your soul reflecting upon itself. Your conscience is your inner ability to assess right or wrong. This is, I thought this was a good and helpful quote from Dr.

MacArthur about conscience. The conscience entreats us to do what we believe is right and restrains us from doing what we believe is wrong. You see that we believe?
That's key. What if your conscience is ill informed and you're believing the wrong thing? Well, then your conscience isn't going to go off when you do a wrong thing because you've convinced yourself it's right.
And you're training your conscience to believe that. Conscience is a human thing. Your conscience is not the voice of God, folks. Those are two very different things because your conscience can inform you in the wrong way.
God will never do that. It is a human faculty that judges our actions and thoughts by the light of the highest standard we perceive.
[53:51] That's why Jesus needs to be set apart as Lord in your heart. He needs to be the highest treasure and standard and measure of your life.

If the highest standard we perceive is setting Jesus Christ apart in our hearts as our greatest treasure, God will be informed and be guided by our love and loyalty to Jesus.
So we're educating our conscience to go off whenever there's anything going on in our life that would be displeasing to Christ. A wooga, a wooga, it goes off. Rightly so.
And then when we're walking in a way that pleases the Lord and honors the Lord and reflects well on Jesus, our conscience is saying, good, good. You see, no shame, no guilt, good.
But I should feel ashamed and guilty when I'm disparaging Jesus. I should feel that. Don't let the world tell you that shame's a bad thing. Shame is something that should drive you to the throne of grace in confession and repentance.
[54:58] So that once again you're putting Christ forward, you're fellowshipping in closeness with God. That nearness and dearness to God has become precious to you again. This is what Peter wants us to cultivate.

I just don't want you to miss what's behind what he's saying here. How will keeping your conscience clean before your accusers help you fight fear, shame, guilt, anger, the things you're tempted with?
Here's what he says. Look at the text. So that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.
In Christ. The key here is not your conscience. It's your heart treasuring Jesus. So that your conscience is operating to do good on behalf of Jesus.
Folks, people are going to come into your life. They're going to say mean and hurtful things to you. They're going to be slanderous.
[56:11] About you to other people. They're going to slander you. Peter says that they're going to slight you. They're going to lie about you. They're going to call you names.

They may even campaign against you. This is where you're going to face your greatest challenge of love and self-denial. But in the last half of verse 16, Peter gives you hope.
He tells you the outcome of God's guarantee. When you keep a good conscience as you treasure the Lord Jesus above all things. What does he say? Look at that. Those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.
But notice that good behavior in Christ part. You can't let that go. That's why Peter tells us over and over again in this epistle. Suffer for doing what is righteous.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

Not for being a murderer and a thief or whatever his list is. Right? Suffer for serving Jesus and keep a clean conscience in that thing.
[57:18] There's power in that. There's calm in that. There's meekness in that. There's hope in that. Beloved, verse 17 reads this way.

For it is better if God should will it so that you suffer for doing what is right rather than doing what is wrong. You can see that verse 17 is simply a restatement of answering verse 13.
Who's there to harm you? For doing or proving zealous for doing what is good. No one. This is a summary of Peter's main idea of how you and I can pursue the godly good while turning away from fear, turning away from anxiety.
Those are the things that draw us into ourselves. So count on the character of Christ as opposed to focusing on you and on the wrong done to you.
That's a dead end street. Set Christ apart as Lord in your heart so that you treasure him and value his view of you far above what others say and think of you.
[58:33] And then keep a clean conscience in Christ, holding Jesus as your highest standard word by which you measure what you think, say, and do.

And then when the great accuser uses people to attack you, you'll respond to them in the fear of Christ and not in the fear of them.
That's what we want. Let's pray together. Father, your word is true. Your word is good. And we thank you, almighty God, for the truth that you minister to our hearts because we do live in a world that is full of evil.
And thank you so much that we can see here at least an important part of your prescription for living holy lives because you are holy.
We are to be holy. And it's hard to live like that, God, when people are attacking us and when we're tempted to fear what people can do to us.
[59:41] So help help us to turn our hearts more and more and nurture our hearts day to day in resting in you. Help us to turn to these verses like this and hold them in our minds and in our hearts so that we can rehearse these truths as we face the lies of the accuser.

I pray for my precious brothers and sisters here today, my brothers and sisters in Christ. And I pray and ask your blessing on them, God, that you would help them and minister to them in their hour of need as they face off with these difficult and troubling things in life.
May they know your peace and count on your character. May they set the prize of their hearts to be Jesus. And may they nurture a clean conscience in doing what is good and pleasing to you so that their accusers will be put to shame and there'll be no substance at all in what they're saying.
May you receive all of the glory and honor. It's in Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host