

BIBLE STUDY: 1 PETER 3:16-16

The following article is a short meditation about 1 Peter 3:13—16. I have shared this mediation with a group of people in Dutch and then translated it into English for sharing with on the Internet. Let's first take a look at the scripture:

13 And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

13 And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

The “harming you” where Peter speaks of, has two different meanings. In the Greek language this is the word “Ka-Koo”, which could mean: “doing evil”, but also “making angry”.

Perhaps, when the second definition is being applied, the question becomes a little more clear. Who is trying to make you angry, when you are trying to follow Jesus in sharing the message of salvation? The answer to this question, ultimately, is “none”. If Jah is before us, who shall be against us? Still, it doesn't always seem that way. Because, there are people who want to harm you, or make you angry. But there's also something else that Peter is mentioning in this sentence. “If you are following that which is right”. So while you are doing something for Jah, doing good things, you can get enemies. These enemies want to hurt you and make you angry.

14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

Peter knows everything about it. We also know the stories. We can see how sometimes people have to suffer because they believe in Jah. Take for example the situation in babylon: Some civil servant who refuses to marry homosexual people is being refused her job. Someone in Iraq who becomes a Christian after being a Muslim doesn't get asylum in the our country. I think, that we also know stories from our own surrounding. Anyway, the possibility of having to suffer is actually quite big. The Greek verbal form in which this sentence is written, indicates a possibility, not a current situation. Note the word “if”! So it is like Peter is saying, “take care, because the possibility that you have to suffer is there!”. The word that is translated with “happy” (makarios) means: “happy”, but also “prosperous”. You'll often hear people who have to suffer for their faith, but they're still saying that they are happy. The Lord is very close to them. He is going through it Himself, as we can understand by reading the letter to the Hebrews.

Peter calls us not to be afraid for threats and tribulations we sometimes have to experience as a result of our faith. Because the “prosperity” is also there. When there is a mention of tribulation, then there is also a mention of prosperity. If you suffer, you're still prosperous.

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

I've mentioned already, that Peter told us not to be afraid. How then should we counter this fear? I think this is explained in verse 15. By sanctifying Christ within us, and then we also come into situations in which we shall prosper. The word "sanctifying", or "hagiazō" means "to have a deep respect for", or "to acknowledge". Even though some manuscripts are speaking about sanctifying God and not about Christ, I don't think this matters much. We feel the fears in our hearts, and we have to acknowledge, within this same feeling, that Jah is the Almighty Lord. "Be still and know that I am God", says the Almighty in the old testament. While there is a possibility that we have to go through tribulation, we have to keep realizing Who is in charge, Who is the Lord.

And it is possible, while you are in some sort of tribulation, that people start to ask questions. Who want to know "how come" that you believe, that you're moving forward in spite of tribulation. And I think you can interpretate the word "tribulation" freely, I mean it doesn't always have to be the bloody stories about crucifying Christians in Sudan or rapes in the Moluccan Islands, it can also be the "smaller" tribulations that you might experience yourself. People who are scorning at you because of your faith, finding you intolerant et cetera. I think, Peter also calls on us to use all the possibilities that we have, our heart and minds, and therefore: our talents. We have to work on being able to know what to answer. If you think, that the Lord is calling you for something, then you have to study real hard first. Be sure that you know what you are talking about.

And while you are "specializing" yourself, it is quite possible that you become somewhat of an expert. And then you are in real danger of becoming arrogant. Therefore Peter says we have to make real sure what we are talking about, while in the same time, when we have contact with people, we have to be humble and full of respect. One thing not without the other one! "Fear", in this scripture, has two meanings: "fear", but also "the kind of respect you have for someone who you are not married to". I think, that this is a very simple but equally effective metaphor: Socialize with peoples of other faiths as if they are married to a different person.

16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

Not only with respect it is that we have to socialize with other people, but also with a clear conscience. Don't be a hypocrite, but be real! You have to have a clear conscience towards Jah, but, I think, also to our fellow man. It shouldn't be like you are wearing a mask, as you see some Christians do when they are evangelizing.

Peter knows, that you'll have enemies when you are a Christian. That there are people who don't have a clear conscience towards you. Some people are really watching you and speak evil of you. But when you are not participating in it, others will see this, and check it out for themselves. They can hear something about you, but check it out and find that it's not true. And then it happens, that your enemies will be ashamed.

Summary:

- When you follow Christ there will be people trying to make you angry and bring you evil.
- Even when people work against you, it will turn out blessed.
- By acknowledging Christ in your hearts as Lord, and by doing the best you can to skill yourself in that which Jah called you to, while in the same time you show respect for someone as if he was married to another person,
- and by staying real, your enemies will become ashamed.

This meditation has been written by Messiah Dread, March 2002.

It has been downloaded from <http://messiandread.dubroom.org>