

1 Kefa 3:13-16

Undeserved Suffering ~ Part 1

In my last post, we learned that we are commanded to **Do No Evil**. In this post, we explore the topic of **Undeserved Suffering**. This passage flows naturally from our last post covering **Do No Evil** (3:8–12).

¹³ For who will hurt you if you become zealots for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you do suffer for being righteous, you are blessed! Moreover, don't fear what they fear or be disturbed,

Kefa alludes to the language of Isaiah 8:12-13, where **God** assures the prophet that he need not fear what the rest of his people feared but should trust in **God** alone.

¹⁵ but treat the Messiah as holy, as Lord in your hearts; while remaining always ready to give a reasoned answer to anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you - yet with humility and fear,

We should always be prepared to share our testimony (*hope*) that we have in the Messiah. Charles F. Stanley has this encouragement:

You don't have to seek a listening ear. God will bring open ears to you as He leads, and He will give you the words to say under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. ¹

¹⁶ keeping your conscience clear, so that when you are spoken against, those who abuse the good behavior flowing from your non-ion with the Messiah may be put to shame.

Verses 15 & 16 tell when, how, and to whom a **Believer** should proclaim the **Gospel**. David Stern ² shares the following advice:

1. When should you proclaim the Gospel - and when not?

Although you should always be *ready to give a reasoned answer*, you need to speak only when someone *asks you to explain the hope you have in you*. Not everyone asks. **Believers** who feel compelled to introduce the topic of their faith into every conversation with a non-**Believer** can relax!

On the other hand, if someone wants to hear about the faith, a **Believer** should not remain silent. The relationship between words and deeds in witnessing to your faith is that your actions, attitudes, and lifestyle are to show non-**Believers** that the **Ruach** is at work in your life so that they begin to ask questions.

When they ask such questions, you should be ready to give a reasoned answer. You cannot carry out the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19–20) without both aspects of witness - words and deeds. Words without deeds are empty and hypocritical, as **Kefa** recognizes when he writes that we must *keep a clear conscience* and display *good behavior*. But deeds without words do not explain what people need to know about **Yeshua** to be saved.

There are times when one should not wait to be asked. Sometimes it may be necessary to proclaim the **Gospel** to people who do not want to hear it. There may be no possibility of delay; the urgency of the situation may compel witnessing.

¹ Seeking His Face Devotional, October 23.

² Jewish New Testament Commentary

2. How should you proclaim the Gospel to those who want to know?

With *a reasoned answer*. A reasoned answer draws on objective evidence and uses rational arguments. More than that, a reasoned answer about **Messianic** faith must be consistent with Scripture; and, it should actively use Scripture.

A reasoned answer *may* include such subjective aspects of your personal testimony about how much better you feel since knowing **Yeshua** or ways in which **God** has blessed you, for these things are facts concerning you. But it *must* deal primarily with the facts that concern everyone, including your questioner - **God** exists, **God** made us, we sinned, we are under sentence of death, **God** sent **Yeshua** to atone for our sin, **God** resurrected him, he is coming back, we must trust in **God** and his Messiah to be saved and have eternal life, Israel's national salvation comes only through **Yeshua** the Messiah.

It would help if you did it *with humility and fear, keeping a clear conscience*. How tempting it is when engaging in evangelism to set humility aside! After all, aren't your answers right and theirs wrong? (It is tempting to think so.) One reason for being humble is that you should be embarrassed by the fact that the lives of even the most saintly **Believers** fall short of their preaching, let alone the lives of the worst! We preach a **Gospel** of perfection, and none of us is perfect. Therefore, if we are without humility, we contradict our own message.

The *fear* we should have is not that the person we are talking to will react negatively to our message. Our job is to proclaim the truth of the **Gospel**; whether he receives it or not is his responsibility (Ezekiel 33:7–9). Nor are we to fear persecution, as **Kefa** reiterates throughout this letter. Instead, we are to fear **God**, who holds us to accountable.

Keeping a clear conscience. You keep your conscience clear by displaying only the *good behavior flowing from your union with the Messiah*. As noted, this is the "deeds" side of your witness.

3. To whom should you proclaim the Gospel?

To *anyone who asks you about the hope you have in you, Jew or Gentile*, young or old, poor or rich, since everyone needs salvation (Ro 3:23) and no one comes to the **Father** except through **Yeshua** (John 14:6).

Some people who ask questions have hardened hearts (see Ro 9:17–21), resist the **Gospel** with all their might, have no intention of accepting it, and are not interested in reasoned answers. Proverbs 26:4–5 offers this seemingly contradictory advice:

*"Do not answer a fool according to his folly,
lest you become like him yourself.
"Answer a fool according to his folly,
lest he be wise in his own eyes."*

The former verse means that you should not let yourself be dragged down to his emotional and spiritual level by engaging in a heated but fruitless debate. The latter tells you that even though an opinionated person is not open to changing his mind, he should be shown that his ideas are not as unassailable as he thinks. Moreover, both verses are taken together also imply that when a reasoned argument is of no avail ("My mind is made up, don't confuse me with the facts"), you should confront the objector or heckler differently altogether.

True Confession: I put this post together more as a reminder to myself. I don't often get an opportunity to witness to non-**Believers**. Now that I am retired, most of my contacts with other people are with **Believers**.

My next post will cover more ground when we learn more about **Undeserved Suffering ~ Part 2** in 1 Kefa 3:17-22.