

A committed faith (1 Peter 3:13-22)

It's one thing to suffer in the context of doing something bad, but suffering while doing good?

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This 1 Peter reading is full of problems. Not because we don't understand what the writer is saying, but precisely because we do.

The text talks about suffering, and quite frankly, we do not like to talk about suffering in the context of our faith. What is especially problematic is that the writer writes about suffering *while doing good*. It's one thing to suffer in the context of doing something bad, but suffering while doing good? For many of us, this just doesn't make sense.

But for many people of faith all around the world, not only does it make sense, but it is part of the faith journey. For many people of faith, it is part and parcel of what it means to be a faithful witness.

There are people who speak truth to power, who stand with marginalized and ostracized people, who help those who cannot help themselves, who stand for justice, equity, and fairness. They do this because of their faith—and they do it knowing the repercussions that come from this type of faithful witness.

I remember being in my Martin Luther King Jr. graduate seminar, and my professor wondering aloud why King would give his controversial “Beyond Vietnam” speech. In that speech, not only does King challenge the validity of the war in Vietnam, but he also addresses how investment in the war was hurting the poor. From my professor's

point of view, the speech did not make political sense, and it caused King and the movement to lose a lot of support.

As he posed the questions to us, I remember stating that “King was a prophet. He was a person of faith.” As a person of faith, King began to work to end the war in Vietnam and to work on issues that spoke more to the poor and downtrodden. As his priorities shifted, so did his support. While today, many of us commend King and his actions as good, when he died, almost 75 percent of Americans disapproved of him.

As I read the 1 Peter text again, I wonder what type of faith one must have to follow one’s call even if it leads to suffering. I believe it’s a committed faith—one that maintains that through it all, God is still there. And when we have a committed faith, we can weather the storms of life. When we have a committed faith, we find strength and power in what we are doing. When we have a committed faith, fear may still be there, but we know that God goes with us and acts through us. When we have a committed faith, we can stand on the promises and purposes of God.

When we have a committed faith, we can be all that God has called us to be.