

Grace, Mercy, and Peace are yours from God our Heavenly Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[Apologies]

You’ve been taught to say it before, and you’re probably familiar with saying it at the end of arguments, fights, or after you’ve made a mistake. A newly married man will probably receive the advice that the two words he should memorize are: I’m sorry. No matter where or how you learned it, apologizing is a critical part of society together. When someone wrongs you, you want an apology! After you’ve accidentally stepped on someone’s toes or insulted someone unknowingly, you have to apologize. Some of us even have the difficult circumstance of apologizing too much. You and I have been taught to apologize in many and various ways for a great many wrongs that we do.

Sadly, in the world that you and I live in today, there have even been calls for us to apologize for holding to our Christian beliefs. You don’t have to look too far to find critiques of Christianity or Christians on the internet or in your newspaper. Maybe you’ve seen other Christians behave shamefully and felt the need to apologize, “I’m sorry, not all Christians are like this”.

Peter understood that Christians were not going to be popular in the sinful world that you and I live in. In his letter that you and I read today; Peter highlights the suffering that the people of God will go through for the sake of Jesus Christ. However, the people that Peter is writing to have a much more drastic situation than some bad press on Facebook. The Early Church faced beatings, imprisonment, slander, abuse, loss of property, or even loss of life. Peter says to them, “For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.”

[Suffering]

Suffering. That's a word you and I are more familiar with. While it's true that there are many degrees to suffering, you've experienced suffering before. I'm not talking about the small inconveniences or difficulties, but the times where you feel this weight in your heart, a drag in your step.

A father loses his wife and kids in divorce.

A mother loses her job.

A young man is trapped in depression.

A girl worries no one will love her.

Suffering in our world is something that you and I are familiar with. Suffering is something that our Risen Lord is familiar with.

[The Righteous]

Peter writes, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit." Christ suffered. He took the nails in his hands and feet. He wore the crown of thorns, was spat on, was abandoned. The Lamb went uncomplaining forth. This Righteous One, died for you and for me, the Unrighteous.

[Baptism]

All so that you would be won for Him in Baptism. Peter writes, "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you...". Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you are won for the Lord Jesus Christ. But this baptism begins with being baptized into the death of Christ. The drowning of the Old Adam.

This Old Adam is the original sin that you and I were born with. It's the sin that makes us enemies to God. Therefore, we sin daily and fall short of the glory of God. The Old Adam daily wants to run further and further away from our Lord Jesus Christ who came to make us whole. This Old Adam is the one who wants to drive us towards suffering.

This sin makes you and I feel as though we are gods and so we get to make the choice. Drowning the Old Adam is not easy. It makes you and me feel like maybe we're missing out on the "fun" that the world can offer. After all, what's the problem with a little bit of drunkenness?

Sleeping around for a few years?

Skimming a bit from the top?

A little white lie every now and then?

Thus, the Old Adam tries to convince you. Leave Jesus in the grave. This is way more fun, without all the "guilt and the rules" you can finally be the person you want to be! You can finally, "Live your best life!". The Old Adam lies.

That little bit of drunkenness? Loses a man his wife and kids to divorce.

Skimming a bit from the top? Lost a woman her job.

A little white lie every now and then? Traps a young man in depression.

Sleeping around for a few years? Leaves a girl wondering if she'll ever be loved.

So, you and I don't *avoid* the Old Adam. You drown him. Daily. With Confession and absolution. Because in the waters of Baptism, Christ didn't die so you could die to a "fun life", he rose again so you could truly live. You are baptized into the life of Jesus. This Baptism saves you.

Not later, but *NOW*.

[Alive]

Peter writes, "But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear, nor be troubled,". This new life is not one that is devoid of suffering, but Peter challenges you and I to suffer for righteousness' sake. Suffer, not because of the sin that you and I desire and can't have, don't suffer because you can't go out and do the things that you want to do. Don't suffer because you want things to go your way and nobody is agreeing with you.

Don't suffer under the yoke of the Great Deceiver. He is a fraud whose only goal is to see you suffer and lose faith. Suffer for the Gospel. Suffer because you can't bear to imagine that there are those who haven't heard the good news.

Christ is Risen!

Satan will mock you for believing this. He will cause you to suffer on account of this truth, he'll try to make you doubt, the Liar will point you to your own sin and failures. The Great Fraud will tell you, "This Hospitality isn't for you, you can lie, and you can pretend that you're part of the family of God, but I know what you're really like. There's no way Christ would welcome someone like YOU."

So, give Him an apology. A Greek apology. An *apologia*

[**Apologia**]

This is what Peter writes as, "always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you,". *Apologia*, or, apology is not the classic, "I'm sorry," but is a defense. This defense is fully founded in your hope. The hope of the resurrection. The same hope you and I were baptized into when mercy came flooding into our lives. When Christ threw open the doors to heaven for you and for me. The faith you and I have been baptized into is nothing to be sorry for. This faith is the one sure thing you and I should be willing to suffer for. Christ suffered so you and I could become children of God, but he didn't just suffer. He rose. He went into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him. He rose to make YOU God's own child. May you recall in times of suffering the words of hymn 594 the third stanza.

"Satan, hear this proclamation: I am baptized into Christ. Drop your ugly accusation; I am not so soon enticed. Now that to the font I've travelled, all your might has come unraveled, and, against your tyranny, God my Lord, unites with me!"

So be it.

Amen.