

1 Peter 1:3-9
The Heart of a Martyr

John Rogers was tied to a stake and burned alive February 4th 1555. John Rogers was a protestant reformer from England with an unwavering commitment to the true gospel and our Lord Jesus Christ and it cost him his life. Rogers was educated at both Cambridge and Oxford and used by God to bring forth one of the first English translations of the Bible, in a time when such an act was forbidden in England. But this is not what led Rogers to his death.

Rogers was a Roman Catholic Priest who was appointed as Chaplain in Antwerp Belgium, while he was there he met the exiles, William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale, two reformers translating the Bible into English. While in Belgium Rogers was exposed to the true gospel and repented of his Roman Catholic beliefs. Soon there came a time when God appointed a Man to the throne in England who was sympathetic to the reformed truths and Rogers was invited back to England to serve as a minister in London. He saw a thriving ministry until the king's death and Queen Mary also known as "bloody Mary" took the throne. She gave England back into the hands of the Roman Catholic domain and outlawed all protestant teaching. Rogers with steadfast convictions continued to teach that England should stay faithful to the reformed truths. This led to Rogers's arrest. Rogers under house arrest for some time was then taken to prison, put under trial and found guilty of "heretically denying the Christian character of the Church of

Rome and the real presence in the sacrament." After this conviction Rogers was forbidden to speak to his wife about what she and their 10 children should do in light of his pending death. Early in the morning on January 30th, 1555, John Rogers was led from the Clink Prison down a darkened street (all lamps were extinguished to mask the identity of the condemned). Despite orders to convey the prisoner in darkness, Rogers' followers lined the route, lighting the streets with candles and committing prayers for the prisoner as he passed. He was kept in solitary confinement for the duration of his stay at Newgate prison. On the morning of February 4th, 1555, John Rogers was woken from a deep sleep, and ordered from his cell. He was forced to dress as a Roman priest and then publicly stripped of this outfit. Rogers asked for the last time if he could see his wife but was denied. He was led from the prison between 9 and 10 in the morning. Huge crowds filled the streets; witnesses of the gory spectacle took every available spot. Rogers was the first martyr under bloody Mary and no one knew how English Reformers would behave in the face of death, and they could hardly believe that such high Churchmen and dignitaries would allow themselves to be burned for the faith. Of those along the streets were his wife with 10 children and one infant born during his imprisonment. The crowds roared his encouragement and his disdain. The French Ambassador wrote that Rogers went to death, "as if he was walking to his wedding." Once Rogers was tied to the stake he was offered a written pardon

from the queen which would have been executed if he had accepted the Roman Church, yet he remained faithful. Once the fires were lit and his hands became free he gestured as if he was washing his hands in the flames and then stretched his arms toward heaven, where they remained until his Spirit was with the Lord.

Rogers remained faithful to our Lord and the gospel until the very end. What would compel a man to do such a thing? What must have been in his heart? Today I want us to look at the heart of those willing to stand, what do we hold on to when we are faced with losing everything for the sake of Christ?

Today we will examine the heart of a martyr. What is inside of a person that allows them to stand in the face of such pressure?

(formula)

You stand for Christ-----It will cost you something

What goes on inside a person who is willing to do such a thing

Why would someone sacrifice so much?

What is going on in their heart? their head?

The anatomy of the martyrs heart

3 chambers in a martyrs heart

1. Elated Confidence

2. Eternal Perspective

3. Enduring Love

The aim of this sermon is to encourage us to strengthen our hearts in the face of suffering for Christ. Allow this message to examine your own heart, diagnose any weaknesses and strengthen its endurance.

Our Primary Text this morning is 1 Peter 1:3-9

1 Peter was written to saints who were facing escalating persecution and suffering for the sake of Christ. The purpose of the letter was to teach them how to live victoriously in the midst of hostility. Remember this book was written by a man who at one point ran from a little girl and yet ended his life a martyr for Christ. We can learn from God's Word today as we hear from someone who went from coward to conqueror. From missing in action to martyr, from faithless to faithful. It is out of this book we find our focus today.

Read 1 Peter 1:3-9

This passage is most likely a prayer, referencing the nature of those to whom Peter is writing. In this prayer Peter explains to them precious promises they can hold on to and truths they are living by as they face persecution and suffering because of their Christian faith.

As we look into the heart of a martyr, that is, someone willing to stand for Christ no matter the cost we see that Peter begins with praise.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,

⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

⁶In this you rejoice,

Peter begins with praise because he knows who God is and reminds us also. This in turn results in Elated Confidence or to say it another way, joyful hope.

This is the first chamber of a martyr's heart, elated confidence.

In order to stand faithful for Christ in the face of persecution and suffering

Peter reminds us of

God's Character towards us

God's actions for us

God's plan for us

God's guarantee given to us

God's protection over us.

In order to be a Christian who is willing to stand for Christ we must remember God's character towards us. **According to his great mercy,** *Mercy* here is not simply "pity," but "compassion", love which is both undeserved by the recipient and which is given expecting nothing in return. In other words, what God does for people is not due to the fact that they deserve to be loved or that they can repay God for his love; it is due to God's kindness, his care, his compassionate love.¹

God has acted on our behalf based on his character not ours. Mercy is what we needed when we in a sinful state stood condemned at the bar of His holy court. Mercy is us not getting what we deserve. We need to remember God has acted on our behalf, compelled by His love for us not our love for Him. God's mercy is our entrance point to a victorious life in the face of suffering.

However, there are some of you in this room who still need God's great mercy. From the day you were born until today your sins have been stacking up, one by one, day by day, along with your guilt, and as of right now you stand condemned before God. Guilty before God for all your sins. God is very clear about what He thinks of your sins, the wrong you've done. God has explained that you deserve to die for your guilt inducing sin. The Bible is very clear on this point. The guilt you feel is real guilt, you are guilty, yet God is a God of great mercy. He has made

¹ Daniel C. Arichea and Eugene Albert Nida, [*A Handbook on the First Letter from Peter*](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1980), 14.

terms of peace and a way for your guilt to be dealt with. For you who have never know the great mercy of God you need it today. The fact that you are here today, hearing this message is a mercy of God. And what you need is to be born again. God's terms of peace are straightforward, your life of sin and guilt needs to be dealt with, it needs to be put to death. God has done this through Jesus Christ, God sent His Son into the world in order to be put to death for your sins and guilt. Your slate needs to be wiped clean. But God does not require of you innocence alone which the death of Christ can offer you, He requires perfection, perfect obedience, which the life of Christ can offer you. Christ not only died to take the punishment for your sins, He lived a perfectly obedient life which was pleasing to God for you as well. God's terms are clear, for those who trust that Jesus died as a sacrifice for them their sins are forgiven but not only that you are looked at by God as having meet His standards because Christ's life work is put on your account. These are the terms of peace and the only terms of peace between God and man. Any other attempt to offer peace will be rejected. If you want to attempt to offer God your good deeds as a means of peace you reject His offer of Christ. It is either Christ or nothing, either you accept Christ lived a perfect life on your behalf and died on your behalf or you try to recompense for your own sins and try to meet God's perfect standard for life, one way guarantees eternal life the other guarantees

eternal death. The humble person will be reconciled to God today through His Son and the fools in here will go on without life.

For those of you who do know this great mercy of God may we never forget it.

Knowing that God has acted on your behalf will give you courage to stand for His Son. Remember that God is for you not because of what you have done but because of His great mercy so why would He ever be against you. Keep that fresh in your mind, God is for you. I know in the face of suffering it may seem that God is against you but we see that He has acted on our behalf out of His great mercy.

He is not against us, He is a good God and for us.

As we look at the first chamber of the martyr's heart there is elated confidence

A joyful knowledge that God is merciful towards us and that God has acted on behalf of us. **He has caused us to be born again.**

First we see God's character towards us now we see His action towards us. For those who know the new birth this is an exciting reminder. God in His great mercy has acted on our behalf and brought us to life never to die again. You were dead in your sins estranged and enemies of God and He brought you to life! He sent the peace offering, He gave the Spirit to give you life, it is no wonder Peter begins with praise, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" We need never forget that God has acted on our behalf.

Next we see God's plans for us. Not only is God's character and action towards us but his plans. "He has caused us to be born again **to a living hope**" What is this living hope? Some of you may be thinking, "I have been born again to a living hope? what's that?" God brought you to life in order to have eternal life. The hope that he had in mind is the eager, confident expectation of life to come in eternity. God is going to remake this world and you have been granted passage to the new heavens and earth. You have a ticket in your hand that grants you access to the world to come. This is in the heart of the martyr; this is a living hope, knowing that as the world collapse around them they are guaranteed access to the world to come. If God has brought you to life He will bring you to be with Him forever, no death, no disease, no temptations, no pain, just the joy of the Lord.

This Living hope is also guaranteed by God, **it is through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**. Jesus' resurrection guarantees our resurrection. Romans 6:5 tells us, "for if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be unite with him in a resurrection like his. And as 1 Corinthians 15 declares, Jesus is the first fruits and we will follow.

God's plan not only grants us a living hope but an eternal inheritance guaranteed through the resurrection of Christ. Jesus tells us in John 14:3, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." And in Romans 8:16-17 we see that "The Spirit

himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and if children, then heirs- heir of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.” I don’t know your family situation but throughout the Scripture to be an heir you needed to be part of someone’s household or family. This is given to us as we are united with Christ at our new birth and adopted into God’s family, never to be abandoned or orphaned by God. This inheritance is tied to our living hope and is death-proof, sin-proof, and time-proof. I read this week about a person who was hoping to inherit a horse when the owner died and the horse died first. Your inheritance is kept in heaven for you, it will not die before you get there. As a side this inheritance is not earthen treasure but eternal life that will never fade away.

Lastly, what we see leading to elated confidence in the face of suffering is God’s protection over us. ⁵ **who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.** ⁶ **In this you rejoice,** Those whom God by His mercy has brought to life and given an unfading hope and eternal inheritance guaranteed by the resurrection of Christ God is protection because of their faith in His Son until the apocalypse. The word “revealed” is the verbal form of the noun used in Revelation 1:1 speaking of the unveiling or Apocalypse of Jesus Christ. Peter is pointing us forward to the consummation of the age when Christ will return and establish a global universal kingdom in which

righteousness dwells. God like an impenetrable, inexhaustible army is watching guard over our souls until He His Son takes the throne and we will be with Him in His kingdom. As we study through the book of Revelation know that it is all pointing to the day of Christ's return when all will be put right, He will be enthroned over the earth and we will be citizens in His kingdom. This is a living hope, an eternal inheritance and by God's unassailable power He is guarding your souls for that day.

So what is in a man's heart that will allow him to leave his family, leave his fortunes and leave his comforts in order to stand for Christ? It is an Elated confidence in His God whose Character, actions, plans, protection and guarantee is for them.

But doubt still rises in our frail hearts, It rose up in John the Baptist's heart as he sat in prison and it can happen to you. Peter knew that those to whom he wrote wrested as well so he gave them understanding in dealing with sufferings when they come.

The next chamber in a martyr's heart is an eternal perspective

though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,

⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The reality is suffering for Christ can cause us grief. John Rogers wife and Children supported him as he went to his death yet there was grief. You may face shame, ridicule and dishonor for standing with Christ but know that God has a purpose in it all. You can take comfort that as you stand for Christ under fiery trials it is showing you that your faith is real. You can tell yourself, “I am a Christian” with all the benefits and privileges of a child of God. But if you run every time you have an opportunity to stand for Christ, the genuineness of you faith is lacking. You have a fool’s gold faith. Our current trials prove our faith and as we stand for Christ keep an eternal perspective, knowing that the trials are “for a little while” and that when Christ is revealed you will receive the commendation of your faith, “well done good and faithful servant.” Know that those who will oppose you will often do so on moral grounds. Look at 2:12, “when they speak against you as evildoers.” Those who persecute the church do so on their own moral justification, outrage comes when a person or culture’s morals are confronted. Do not think that in our day our culture doesn’t have morals, they do and they are committed to them so be certain that when they come for you, it will be as an evildoer that must be stopped. The arguments being used today against

Christianity are moral arguments. Hater, bigot, intolerant, unloving, these are moral terms.

In life standing for Christ may result in ridicule, shame and dishonor but take heart that in the life to come, your faithfulness now will be receive with praise, glory and honor. As a victor returning home, the heavens will sing your entrance as you lay your crowns before your king.

As a faithful soldier, steward, family member in the body of Christ, as you cross the threshold from this life to the next you will be received with praise, glory and honor yet with humility of heart you will walk to the foot of your king bow down prostrate before Him and give Him all the praise, glory and honor.

-Trust God to make things right, no need to take it things into your hands 2:20-23, 4:12-19

Those standing for Christ until the end keep an eternal perspective

The final chamber in a martyr's heart is enduring love

Those willing to stand for Christ no matter the cost have an enduring love for Christ.

⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,

⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

At the heart of one who is willing to stand for Christ even to the point of death is an enduring love. Verse 8 was written by the man to whom Christ asked the most intimate question that strikes at the heart of every person. Do you love me? This question above all else is the dividing line between those who belong to Christ and those who do not, do you love me? A love for their risen and returning Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is needed to stand for Him until the end. We see here Peter commending the saints he is writing to for their love, faith and overflowing rejoicing in their hearts. He reminds them of the great news, that because of their faith, which is testified by their love for Christ, they will see its end result, the salvation of their souls.

Have you lost your first love? Has the lust of the flesh, the pride of life or the pressures of this world choked out your love for Christ? Return to Him today, seek Him, spend time with Him in the Word, pray to Him, confess Him, proclaim Him, serve Him, you will not be disappointed.

We also see that the big faith of the saints Peter was writing to resulted in inexpressible praise, their situation was bad from the outside yet inside they had a glorious joy that could not be explained by their circumstances.

So as you are called to stand for Christ may you have a joyful confidence in God's goodness towards you, an eternal perspective in the here and now and an enduring love for Christ that will carry you to the end.

The three chambers in a martyrs heart are an

Elated Confidence

Eternal Perspective

Enduring Love

While in prison, Rogers wrote some advice to his children day before his death, which was reprinted in the *New England Primer*, America's first educational reader. Following is an excerpt:

Give ear my children to my words Whom God hath dearly bought,
 Lay up his laws within your heart, and print them in your thoughts.
 I leave you here a little book for you to look upon,
 That you may see your father's face when he is dead and gone:
 Who for the hope of heavenly things, While he did here remain,
 Gave over all his golden years to prison and to pain.
 Where I, among my iron bands, enclosed in the dark,
 Not many days before my death, I did compose this work:
 And for example to your youth, to whom I wish all good,
 I send you here God's perfect truth, and seal it with my blood. ...
 Abhor that arrant whore of ROME, and all her blasphemies,

And drink not of her cursed cup, obey not her decrees.
 Give honor to your mother dear, remember well her pain,
 And recompence her in her age, with the like love again. ...
 Beware of foul and filthy lust, let such things have no place,
 Keep clean your vessels in the LORD, that he may you embrace.
 Ye are the temples of the LORD, for you are dearly bought,
 And they that do defile the same, shall surely come to nought.
 Be never proud by any means, build not your house too high,
 But always have before your eyes, that you are born to die. ...
 Seek first, I say, the living GOD, and always him adore,
 And then be sure that he will bless, your basket and your store.
 And I beseech Almighty GOD, replenish you with grace,
 That I may meet you in the heavens, and see you face to face. ...
 Though here my body be adjudg'd in flaming fire to fry,
 My soul I trust, will straight ascend to live with GOD on high.
 What though this carcase smart awhile what though this life decay,
 My soul I hope will be with GOD, and live with him for aye.
 I know I am a sinner born, from the original,
 And that I do deserve to die by my fore-father's fall:
 But by our SAVIOUR'S precious blood, which on the cross was spilt,
 Who freely offer'd up his life, to save our souls from guilt;
 I hope redemption I shall have, and all who in him trust,
 When I shall see him face to face, and live among the just.
 Why then should I fear death's grim look since CHRIST for me did die,

For King and *Caesar*, rich and poor, the force of death must try.
 When I am chained to the stake,
 and flames girt me round,
 Then pray the LORD my soul in heaven may be with glory crown'd.
 Come welcome death the end of fears, I am prepar'd to die:
 Those earthly flames will send my soul up to the Lord on high.
 Farewell my children to the world, where you must yet remain;
 The LORD of hosts be your defence, 'till we do meet again.
 Farewell my true and loving wife, my children and my friends,
 I hope in heaven to see you all, when all things have their end.
 If you go on to serve the LORD, as you have now begun,
 You shall walk safely all your days, until your life be done.
 GOD grant you so to end your days, as he shall think it best,
 That I may meet you in the heavens, where I do hope to rest.

Rogers' widow returned to Germany with her fatherless flock. It is probable that at least two of his sons became prominent Protestant leaders in England and America.