

1 Peter 3:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

Peter asks rhetorical question about suffering for righteousness. "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (kai tis ho kakōsōn hymas ean tou agathou zēlōtai genēsthe). "Followers" (zēlōtai) means zealous imitators, enthusiastic pursuers. The logic: generally speaking, those zealously doing good encounter less opposition than evildoers. Most people respect virtue even if they don't practice it. However, verse 14 acknowledges exceptions—sometimes righteous suffer. The point: zealous goodness normally provides some protection, though not absolute immunity from suffering.

Historical Context

Peter's question reflects general principle: societies usually reward virtue or at least tolerate it, making righteous less likely targets than criminals. However, this isn't absolute—Christians faced persecution precisely for righteousness. Peter balances realism (some suffer for righteousness, v.14) with encouragement (righteous living normally brings protection). Early church observed this dynamic: many Christians lived peaceably, respected by neighbors; others suffered violently. The difference often depended on local authorities' attitudes and accusations' credibility. Christian virtue sometimes won respect and protection, other times provoked persecution.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does zealous pursuit of good generally provide protection while not guaranteeing immunity from suffering?
2. When have you observed that godly character earned respect even from those who don't share your faith?

Interlinear Text

Kαὶ	τίς	ό	κακώσων	ὑμᾶς	ἐὰν	τοῦ	ἀγαθοῦ
And	who	G3588	is he that will harm	you	if	G3588	of that which is good
G2532	G5101		G2559	G5209	G1437		G18
μιμηταὶ	γένησθε						
followers	ye be						
G3402	G1096						

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 16:7 (Parallel theme): When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

1 Thessalonians 5:15 (Good): See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

Romans 8:28 (Good): And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

3 John 1:11 (Good): Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

Psalms 38:20 (Good): They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow the thing that good is.

Proverbs 15:9 (Parallel theme): The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

Romans 13:3 (Good): For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

1 Corinthians 14:1 (Parallel theme): Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

1 Timothy 5:10 (Good): Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

Ephesians 5:1 (Parallel theme): Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;