

FULFILLED CHRISTIAN LIVING IN A PAGAN WORLD
"Part X: Constructive Living In Today's 'At Risk' Society"
(1 Peter 4:7-19)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

The world's society is in trouble today!

From the same sex! One young man was humiliated on national television by a male neighbor who told him there that he was infatuated with him. After the show, the amorous individual wrote a love note to the neighbor, and that man got so furious that he purchased a shotgun and killed the admirer. **Our American society is in trouble today from the media on down!**

(3) Just weeks ago, a nerve gas attack struck 12 Japanese underground rail commuters dead and sent hundreds to the hospital. This week, they had problems with chlorine inhalation, creating world concerns about commuter service vulnerabilities to terrorist attacks.

(4) Then, on Wednesday in Oklahoma City, at nine o'clock Central Standard Time, when the Federal Building held over 550 people at their desks, including a day care center filled with small children, a blue van filled with explosives and a timing device exploded, knocking 40% of the building into a collapsing death trap of human carnage! It was the worst terrorist attack in history on American soil, an act performed by people with viciously twisted values. In fact, other terrorist organizations in the Middle East stridently disclaimed any association with the bombing, calling it senseless! **Even our nation's President asked people to "pray" because of the tragedy! He also stated that "nobody in America is absolutely safe from terrorism anymore!" Our world's society -- our AMERICAN society is at risk today!**

Well, why? What's going on? What can we do about it?!

(We turn to the "need" section of the message . . .)

Need: "As epitomized in Wednesday's Oklahoma City catastrophe and its long-term nationwide emotional and mental fallout, we live in perilous times! What's going on?! Why?! What's the answer?!"

- I. **Society's CURRENT abusive behavior that imperils innocent people was predicted in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 for the Church's last days!**
- II. **Peter addressed the Church's needs for such a time in 1 Pet. 4:7-19:**
 - A. The phrase "The end . . . is near" (NIV) uses the Greek word *engiken* ("draws near") to refer to Christ's return, **B.K.C., N.T.**, p. 853.
 - B. Thus, Peter's address in 1 Peter 4:7-19 applies to **our** needy times!
- III. **We examine his instructions to us who are "at risk" in today's society to see how we can be CONSTRUCTIVE (as follows):**
 - A. Constructive living in today's "at risk" society begins by intercepting satanic activity behind our social ills, 1 P. 4:7.
 1. Peter's charge to be "clear-minded" and "self-controlled" so we can "pray" (NIV) mimics Christ's former charge to him on resisting satanic activity, Mtt. 26:41; Lk. 22:31-32; cf. Ep. 6:11-18!
 2. Thus, the believer must view social troubles today as being fueled by demonic pressure, and counter it by prayer! (1 P. 4:7b)
 - B. Because today's social problems are satanically fueled, constructive living takes lovingly and supernaturally edifying Christians affected by social decadence, 1 Peter 4:8-11!
 1. Believers today must lovingly salvage fellow Christians polluted with evil by freely forgiving those who repent, 1 Pet. 4:8.
 - a. The phrase "covering . . . sins" in v. 8b depicts a lamb's blood covering sin on the mercy seat, **B.K.C., O.T.**, p. 926 (Pr. 10:12).
 - b. Thus, our "covering a multitude of sins" means freely forgiving repentant fellow Christians, **Ibid., N.T.**, p. 853.
 2. Believers must lovingly share material goods with other Christians depleted by today's unstable economics, 4:9; 1 Jn. 3:17f.
 3. Believers must lovingly minister with their spiritual gifts in God's way to edify other Christians against emotional and mental afflictions from today's social abuses, 1 Peter 4:10-11:
 - a. Every Christian has at least one supernatural enabling for building up the inner man of fellow Christians, 4:10a; Ep. 4.
 - b. Each one should use his ability for other believers as good stewards of the grace of God, 1 Peter 4:10b!

- c. However, these gifts must be used properly: since the gifts are basically either "speak" or "do" roles (Acts 6:2-4, Ibid., p. 854), (1) those who "speak" must use God's words and not man's, v. 11a; (2) those who "do" service must rely on God's supply (*choraygei*, M. & M., *Voc. of the N.T.*, p. 689) and not what man provides **or others will not be helped who live in today's "at risk" society**, 1 P. 4:11b!
- C. Because today's social problems are satanically fueled, constructive living takes our adjusting to persecution spiritually :
1. The believer today must expect religious opposition, 4:12.
 2. He constructively **faces** it by joyfully accepting it as his privilege to join Christ in His suffering **and resulting glory to come**, 1 Peter 4:13-14; 2 Cor. 4:17-18; Mtt. 5:11-12.
 3. If he suffers due to his own **faults**, the believer adjusts accordingly by repenting to improve his welfare, 1 Peter 4:15,17-18.
 4. He constructively offsets the emotional, mental, and physical **costs** involved in facing unjust persecution by faith as follows:
 - a. He must see suffering as God's permissive will, 19a!
 - b. Therefore, he should entrust his human frailties (*psuchas*, T.D.N.T., vol. IX, p. 617ff) to God to be a dependable Creator and hence dependable Sustainer of them so that he can afford to act righteously while suffering, 19b!

Application: *To flourish in today's troubled, decaying society, it is IMPERATIVE that we (1) believe on Christ for salvation to become indwelt by the wholesome, supportive, God, the Holy Spirit, John 7:38f with Gen. 1:2c & Acts 1:8. (2) As believers, we must (a) confess our sins that break fellowship with and empowerment by that Spirit! (1 Jn. 1:9) (b) Then rely on him ((a)) to counter satanic fueling of social ills by prayer, ((b)) to edify others afflicted by today's world by spiritual gift ministries ((c)) and to stay functional under persecution by faith in our Creator's sustaining provision! Otherwise, we will be vulnerable to the ruin that others face in today's "at risk" society!*

Lesson: *Since today's social problems are satanically generated, and the STAKES of the spiritual conflict will keep rising the closer we get to Christ's Return (1 Pet. 4:7a; Rev. 12:12), constructive living today is ours only through addressing life from God's perspective!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the solution . . .)

On the tombstone of a 95 year old woman buried in Bridgeport, Connecticut these words appear: "She hath done what she could."

This woman was accidentally blinded as an infant by a country doctor's application of poultice to her eyes. Her father passed away while she was a small child. She married at the age of thirty-eight and her only child died as an infant. After 25 years of marriage, she was widowed and lived 32 years as a widow. If anyone ever had cause to be discouraged and depressed, a victim of hard times around her, it was this woman who is buried in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

However, she accepted Jesus Christ as her Savior from sin and decided to do "what she could" for others around her. She learned to read Braille and eventually taught. She worked as a member of the New York Institute for the Blind for 11 years.

One afternoon in 1873, while visiting with her good friend Mrs. Joseph Knapp, wife of the founder of the Metropolitan Insurance Company, Mrs. Knapp played a tune and asked her blind friend what it said. Suddenly, the blind lady "smiled and rose to her feet, announcing: 'It says, Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine, Oh what a foretaste of glory divine!'" Mrs. Knapp wrote down the words as her blind friend spoke them all off effortlessly to her. Other hymns followed from this woman without eyesight: "Tell Me the Story of Jesus," "Praise Him! Praise Him!" "Draw Me Nearer," "Near the Cross," "Take the World, but Give Me Jesus," "To God Be the Glory," "Rescue the Perishing," "He Hideth My Soul," and "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior." In all, the blind woman wrote 8,000 hymns, 14 of which we have in our Nepaug Church hymnal!

Ideals book of Hymns of Faith & Inspiration, p. 100, summarizes this blind lady's impact on our American culture as follows: "**Fanny Crosby's resolution to enjoy life and to be appreciative of her many blessings was translated into a full and active life, one that would contribute to the religious heritage of the United States in a remarkable and lasting way.**"

So can we . . . so can we!