I. INTRO:
A. There was a post-punk, husband & wife duo called Timbuck3, that had a 1 hit wonder in the mid 80’s called, "The Future’s So Bright, I Gotta Wear Shades".
   1. Actually, the meaning of the song was misinterpreted as a positive perspective in regard to the near future. It was really a grim outlook to an impending nuclear holocaust. We’ll borrow the phrase wearing our Eternal Shades!

B. If you are a spiritually mature man or woman described in 8-12, then you will get responses from the world.
   1. Some respond positive “that’s a nice thing you’re doing at your church/in Haiti”
   2. Some respond negative “I don’t like you”, or “I want to kill you”.
   3. Some respond w/questions - What motivates you to live such a strange life of holiness & hope?
   4. Some respond - “I wish you’d just stay out of my life of self gratification!”
      a) No matter how they respond, we need to respond...with a life of virtue.
      b) Peter lays out 5 pieces of advice on how we need to respond as Christians.

II. The Future’s So Bright, I Gotta Wear Shades! (13-17)
A. [I] REMEMBER, YOU ARE BLESSED BY GOD! (13,14a)

B. (13) Good - “It is only when a man falls in love with goodness that the wrong things lose their fascination & their power.”

C. (14) Suffering – 2 kinds of suffering we deal with:
   1. Because of our Humanity – we have physical sufferings, sorrow, distress, weariness, pain of body, & death.
   2. Because of our Christianity – we may face unpopularity, persecution, & the necessary discipline & toil of the Christian life.

D. Blessed - Peter reminds us of Jesus’ beatitude in Mt.5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
   1. Anybody could suffer for doing wrong, but Christians must learn to suffer for doing what is right. (www)
E. When we experience unfair treatment, we might think, *What have I done wrong? Or Why is God allowing this?*

1. Peter takes a similar approach that James did, “consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials.” (1:2)

F. So, how can believers count themselves **blessed** by God in light of unfair treatment?

1. **We’re blessed** because God uses this kind of unfair treatment as part of His plan to **strengthen** us.
2. **We’re blessed** because God uses this to **make us more like Christ**.
3. **We’re blessed** because God uses this not to show we are **outside** His will, but it indicates we are **in** God’s will & plan.
4. **We’re blessed** because we can look forward to a **future reward** for enduring such trials.

G. **[2] REMEMBER, STOP WORRYING!** (14b)

H. Do not be **afraid**... **troubled** - or, panic & worry.

1. The background of Peter’s call to avoid panic & worry lies in **Is.8:12,13**.
   a) (12) Do not say, ‘A conspiracy,’ Concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, Nor be **afraid** of their threats, nor be **troubled**. (13) The Lord of hosts, Him you shall hallow; Let Him be your fear, And let Him be your dread.”
   b) Israel was told turn away from your fears & trembling of the pagan nations threatening to undo them. Instead, rely on God’s promises & tremble before Him alone!

I. Don’t give in to **fear**(14b), keep **sight** on Christ(15a)!

J. **[3] ACKNOWLEDGE CHRIST AS LORD!** (15a)

K. (lit.) “Set apart in your hearts Christ as Lord.”

1. It means, turn everything over to Him. Live only to please & glorify Him.
2. It means, don’t be satisfied w/anything less then **the will of God** in your life!
   a) Jn.4:31, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.
3. In contrast to fearing man, simply **revere God**!
   a) Ps.118:6, The LORD is on my side; I will not **fear**. What can **man** do to me?
   b) Peter, again writing from experience, when he had feared a young servant girls 1 statement, you also were with Jesus of Galilee. Peter denied even knowing the Lord.

L. How do we prepare ourselves for trials & tribulations that come from a hostile world?

1. Not simply by **hardening our minds** or **steeling our wills**, but by **immersing ourselves in righteousness** before God & man.
2. That’s the Christians **finest armor** against the attack of persecution.
M. [4] ALWAYS BE READY TO GIVE A DEFENSE!  (15b)

N. Defense /Apologia - to give an account; or to provide legal testimony.

1. Where we get the field of Apologetics.
   a) We often think of the PhD’s who can argue atheists & unbelievers into silence.
   b) Those who can explain arguments for the existence of God; can fire off 3 responses to the theory of evolution; & can explain where Cain got his wife.
   c) I appreciate men & women who have given their life work to this...but this doesn't get us off the hook. Every believer is called to have an answer/give a defense!
   d) “Apologetics 101 begins not with having the right answers to others sceptical challenges, but w/having the right lifestyle to raise the right questions!” Swindoll

2. We are not to roll over, but defend!...but not really defend our-selves here, but defend our-Hope!
   a) Hope - Once again the emphasis is on Hope.
      (1) His outlook was ever on the future; & Christianity was to him a prominent, important, & celebrated hope.
      (2) Christ alone is the source of hope in hurtful times. He alone provides a solid basis for hope in the midst of suffering.

O. It’s Seizing The Offensive at the right time and in the right way!

1. Like Stephen “And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.”

2. Like Paul w/Felix “Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.”

3. Like Paul w/Festus “Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!" But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason.”

4. Like Paul w/Agrippa “Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”

5. Each of the dying martyrs spoke powerful words as they breathed their last!
   a) Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna to the proconsul, “86 years I have served Him & He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?...You threaten me w/the fire that burns for a time, & is quickly quenched, for you do not know the fire which awaits the wicked in the judgment to come & in everlasting punishment. Why are you waiting come, do what you will.”
6. **Seizing the offensive:** This morning sitting in Starbucks parking lot doing my devotions; J.W.’s were sitting in their car. They always wait & jump out & come up to windows there. I thought I’d beat them to it. (story...)
   a) We need to *Seize the Offensive*, w/o being offensive!

**P. A reason -** It should be **Reasonable.** [We are to have a reason, not an *excuse*]
   1. Our faith must be 1st-hand discovery & not 2nd-hand story!
   2. It is truly the tragedy of the modern church that there are so any members who if they were asked, could not explain what they believe nor why they believe it!
      a) You must go through the spiritual sweat & mental struggle of **thinking out your faith**!

**Q. Meekness** - Don’t share your faith with *arrogance*, or w/an heir of *superiority*.
   1. Don’t be a **know-it-all**! [This isn’t your big chance to show all you know! *[Scratch where they itch!]*]
   2. Don’t make someone to be a **fool** or **naïve** if they do not agree with you.
   3. Don’t try to **shove** it down their throats.
   4. Don’t ever think you’ll **debate** someone in to the kingdom.
      a) We are **not** called to **win arguments**, but to **win lost souls** to Christ.
   5. Do use gentleness, love, a listening ear, sensitivity, a word of wisdom/ knowledge, discernment in giving a defense!
   6. (Francis de Sales) “Nothing is so **strong** as **gentleness**, & nothing so **gentle** as **real strength**.”


**S. Having a good conscience:** Remember, the conscience is that *internal judge* that either accuses or excuses our actions.
   1. The only compelling argument is the argument of **the Christian life**!
   2. Let him meet criticism w/a life which is **beyond reproach**, a life that does **rightly**!
      a) **Cowardice** asks the question: **Is it safe?**
      b) **Consensus** asks the question: **Is it popular?**
      c) **Conscience** asks: **Is it right?**¹

¹ Martin Luther King, Jr.
3. I like Wiersbe’s illustration of the conscience being like “a window” that lets in the light of God’s truth.
   a) If we persist in disobeying…the window gets dirtier & dirtier.
   b) This leads to a defiled conscience (Titus 1:5); to a seared conscience (1 Tim. 4:2); & ultimately to an evil conscience (Heb. 10:22)
   c) Saints…Keep your window clean! - So God’s Word can shine in; & for the world to peer in.
   d) “A saint is someone whose life makes it easier to believe in God!”

T. “In a hostile & suspicious world it was inevitable that the Christian would be called upon to defend the faith he held & the hope by which he lived.” (Barclay)
   1. Christian, look for those open doors to witness. You don’t have to wait for persecutions & sufferings!
   2. Q: How many people have you made homesick for God?
   3. A lot of evangelism today is telling people what things they have to give up!
      We need to tell them to "seek first the kingdom of God," and then they will get new & better things; and the old things will drop off by themselves!

U. Prayer: Lord, our Future Hope is So Bright, we Gotta Wear Shades.