

1 Peter Chapter 4

1 Peter 4:1 "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;"

In light of the triumphant suffering and death of Christ, Peter's readers should also be willing to suffer in the flesh, knowing that it potentially produces the greatest triumph.

We discussed in the previous lesson that it should be our joy to be willing to suffer for Christ, if it be necessary.

Christ suffered the cruelty of the cross of Calvary for us.

We can do no less for Him.

If it be necessary to suffer for Him, we should be willing.

"Arm yourselves with the same mind", means to keep your thoughts stayed upon Him.

When we are willing to suffer in the flesh for Jesus Christ, we have put Him ahead of all that the flesh desires.

The desire of the flesh is where sin originates.

Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

The Christians should be armed (terminology that realizes a battle), with the same thought that was manifest in the suffering of Christ, namely that one can be triumphant in suffering, even the suffering of death.

In other words, the Christian should voluntarily accept the potential of death as a part of the Christian life (Matt. 10:38-39; 2 Cor. 4:8-11).

Peter would have his opportunity to live this principle himself, when he faced martyrdom (see John 21:18-19).

Willingly suffering for Christ in our flesh is putting Christ ahead of everything else.

"Hath ceased from sin":

The perfect tense of the verb emphasizes a permanent eternal condition free from sin.

The worst that can happen to a believer suffering unjustly is death, and that is the best that can happen because death means the complete and end of all sins.

If the Christian is armed with the goal of being delivered from sin, and that goal is achieved through his death; the threat and experience of death is precious (Rom. 7:5, 18; 1 Cor. 1:21; 15:42, 49).

Moreover, the greatest weapon that the enemy has against the Christian, the threat of death, is not effective.

1 Peter 4:2 "That he no longer should live the rest of [his] time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

Live ... to the lusts of men”:

If the goal of the Christian’s life is the freedom from sin which comes at death, then he should live the remainder of his life on earth pursuing the holy will of God rather than the ungodly lusts of the flesh.

My main message, other than the importance of salvation, in these lessons is simple.

We must make Jesus Christ, not only our Savior, but our Lord.

When we make Jesus, Lord of our life, we are not living for the flesh.

We are controlled by Jesus' Spirit.

We have turned our will over to the will of God.

1 Peter 4:3 "For the time past of [our] life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:"

“Lasciviousness ... abominable idolatries”:

Lasciviousness “sensuality” describes unbridled, unrestrained sin, an excessive indulgence in sensual pleasure.

“Revellings” has the idea of an orgy.

The Greek word was used in extra biblical literature to refer to a band of drunken, wildly acting people, swaggering and staggering through public streets, wreaking havoc.

Thus, the pleasures of the ungodly are described here from the perspective of God as despicable acts of wickedness.

Though Peter's readers had indulged in such sins before salvation, they must never do so again.

Sin in the believer is a burden which afflicts him rather than a pleasure which delights him.

Gentiles in the verse above, is speaking of worldly people who have not received Jesus as Savior.

Everyone was like this, before they received Jesus as their Savior.

The will of the world (Gentiles), is to please the flesh and its lust for sin.

All the sins above are caused by lust of the flesh.

Christians are to separate themselves away from this type of life style.

We are to be a peculiar people, as far as the world is concerned.

1 Peter 4:4 "Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with [them] to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of [you]:"

"They think it strange":

The former friends are surprised, offended and resentful because of the Christian's lack of interest in ungodly pleasures.

Christians are in the world, but not of the world.

The things the world calls pleasure does not interest the Christian.

The world lives to please their own flesh.

They cannot understand someone who has ceased to be selfish, and therefore they are always thinking of self.

They speak evil about you, because they do not understand why you are not caught up in this sinful way of life.

"The same excess of riot":

This refers to the state of evil in which a person thinks about nothing else.

The picture here is of a large crowd running together in a mad, wild race, a melee pursuing sin.

1 Peter 4:5 "Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead."

"Give account":

This verb means “to pay back.”

People who have “pursued a course of lewdness” (verse 3), and who “malign”: believers (verse 4), are amassing a debt to God which they will spend all eternity paying back (Matt. 12:36; Rom. 14:11-12; Heb. 4:13).

All of mankind will stand before Jesus to be judged.

Each of us, as an individual, must give an account of the life he lives here on the earth.

The dead in Christ shall rise first, and we which remain shall then be caught up to meet Jesus in the air.

After that comes the judgment.

“Give account to him that is ready to judge the quick (living), and the dead”:

God is prepared in His time to bring the living and the dead, all generations, before Him to give an account of their deeds (Rom. 14:12).

All the unsaved, (currently alive or dead).

Those guilty of walking in wickedness (verse 3), will be summoned before the Great White Throne to face the judge, Jesus Christ (John 5:22; Revelation 20:11-15).

Those who have not chosen Jesus as Savior will be sent to eternal damnation.

Those who live for Jesus will inherit eternal life in heaven.

It is Jesus Christ who is Judge.

1 Peter 4:6 "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

“To them that are dead”:

The preaching of the gospel not only offers a rich life (3:10), a ceasing from sin (verse 1), and a good conscience (3:21), but also an escape from final judgment.

Peter had in mind believers who had heard and accepted the gospel of Christ when they were still alive, but who had died by the time Peter wrote this letter.

Some of them, perhaps, had been martyred for their faith.

Though these were dead physically, they were triumphantly alive in their spirits (Heb. 12:23).

All their judgment had been fully accomplished while they were alive in this world (“in the flesh”), so they will live forever in God’s presence.

In the passage above, the two were separated into the living (those who had heard the gospel and received Jesus as their Savior), and the dead (those who had not heard nor have ever received Jesus as Savior).

To be condemned to hell, they must reject Jesus as their Savior.

That is why it is so important for all to hear the good news of the gospel.

They must choose for themselves whether they will be condemned to hell, or that they will live eternally in heaven.

Jesus passes the judgment, but actually we make that decision for ourselves.

Those who receive Jesus as Savior must live the godly life, walking in the footprints that Jesus left for us.

1 Peter 4:7 "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."

“The end of all things”:

The Greek word for “end” is never used in the New Testament as a chronological end, as if something simply stops.

Instead, the word means a consummation, a goal achieved, a result attained, or a realization.

Having emphasized triumphant suffering through death, Peter here begins to emphasize triumphant suffering that comes through the second coming of Christ (1:3; 2:12), which is the goal of all things.

He is calling believers to live obediently and expectantly in the light of Christ’s return.

“Is at hand”:

The idea is that of a process consummated with a resulting nearness; that is, “imminent.”

Peter is reminding the readers of this letter that the return of Jesus Christ could be at any moment (Rom. 13:12; 1 Thess. 1:10; James 5:7-8; Rev. 22:20).

“Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer”:

In the Apostolic Age, as now, there was a constant expectation that the consummation, or the end of the age, was at hand.

That is as it should be.

Believers should always conduct their lives with seriousness, watchfulness and prayer, for no one knows the day or the hour when Christ may return.

This implies here to not be swept away by emotions or passions, thus maintaining a proper eternal perspective on life.

The doctrine of imminent return of Christ should not turn the Christian into a zealous fanatic who does nothing but wait for it to occur.

Instead, it should lead the believer into a watchful pursuit of holiness.

Moreover, a watchful attitude creates a pilgrim mentality (2:11).

It reminds the Christian that he is a citizen of heaven only sojourning on earth.

It should also remind him that he will face the record of his service to God and be rewarded for what stands the test at the judgment seat of Christ, which follows the return of Christ to rapture His church (see 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 4:1-5; 2 Cor. 5:9-10).

Every generation since the time of the crucifixion of Jesus, has felt that the coming of the Lord was near.

It is even more apparent today that we are living near the coming of Christ.

Peter's instruction, in face of this, is to get serious about God and stay ready.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you in every decision you make.

A mind victimized by emotion and passion, out of control, or knocked out of balance by worldly lusts and pursuits, is a mind that cannot know the fullness of Holy Communion in prayer with God (3:7).

A mind that is fixed on His return is purified (1 John 3:3), and enjoys the fullness of fellowship with the Lord.

1 Peter 4:8 "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

“Fervent”:

This means “to be stretched,” “to be strained.”

It is used of a runner who is moving at maximum output with taut muscles straining and stretching to the limit (1:22).

This kind of love requires the Christian to put another's spiritual good ahead of his own desires, in spite of being treated unkindly, ungraciously, or even with hostility (1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Philippians 2:1-4).

The word that was translated charity here is the same word translated charity (in 1 Corinthians chapter 13).

It means God's kind of love.

The kind of love spoken of here is unselfish love.

This love is not because of what it might bring in return, but is a love so great that it loves the unlovable.

Give and it shall be given to you.

God forgives those who are quick to forgive others.

God knows you have love one for another, when you are charitable to others.

Jesus said, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it also unto me." You cannot do anything directly for God.

The only way you can do for God, is by doing for His people.

"Charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (quoted from Prov. 10:12).

It is the nature of true spiritual love, whether from God to man or Christian to Christian, to cover sins (Rom. 5:8).

This teaching does not preclude the discipline of a sinning, unrepentant church member (Matthew 18:15-18; 1 Cor. 5).

It means specifically that a Christian should overlook sins against him if possible and always be ready to forgive insults and unkindnesses.

1 Peter 4:9 "Use hospitality one to another without grudging."

"Use hospitality one to another":

The Greek word means "love of strangers."

Love is intensely practical, not just emotional.

In Peter's day, love included opening one's home and caring for other needy Christians, such as traveling preachers.

It also included opening one's home for church services.

Scripture also teaches that Christians should be hospitable to strangers (Exodus 22:21; Deut. 14:28-29; Heb. 13:12).

Hospitality was actually a necessity in those days.

The ministers who were travelling from town to town had to stay with the people they were ministering to.

We find a very good example of that in the following Scriptures.

Luke 9:1-5 "Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases." "And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick." "And he said unto them, Take nothing for [your] journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece." "And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart."

Look at the terrible thing Jesus said to do, if the people the apostle stayed with just not receive them at all.

"And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them."

1 Peter 4:10 "As every man hath received the gift, [even so] minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

“Hath received the gift”:

A spiritual gift is a graciously given supernaturally designed ability granted to every believer by which the Holy Spirit ministers to the body of Christ.

The Greek word (charisma), emphasizes the freeness of the gift.

A spiritual gift cannot be earned, pursued or worked up.

It is merely “received” through the grace of God (1 Cor. 12:4, 7, 11, 18).

The categories of spirituals gifts are given (in Rom. 12:3-8 and 1 Cor. 12:4-10).

Each believer has one specific gift, often a combination of the various categories of gifts blended together uniquely for each Christian.

The abilities that the Lord has given each of us to minister with are not our own ability, but a gift of the Spirit that has been given us of God.

This is called gifts of the Spirit.

These gifts will be given to us several at a time as we need them to minister with.

“Minister the same one to another”:

Spiritual gifts were used, not for the exaltation of the person with the gift, but in loving concern for the benefit of others in the church (1 Cor. 12:7, 13).

“Good stewards”:

A steward is responsible for another’s resources.

A Christian does not own his gifts, but God has given him gifts to manage for the church and also His glory.

That is what Christians are today.

We are keepers of the grace of God toward man on this earth.

Here’s a few Scriptures on the gifts of the Spirit. To get the whole picture, begin with verse 1 and read all of it.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." "And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord." "And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;" "To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;" "To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another [divers] kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:" "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

“Manifold grace of God”:

This emphasizes the vast designs of God for these gifts.

1 Peter 4:11 "If any man speak, [let him speak] as the oracles of God; if any man minister, [let him do it] as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

“Speak ... minister”:

Peter is implying that there are two categories of gifts: speaking gifts and serving gifts.

Such distinctions are clear in the lists (in Romans 12 and 1 Cor. 12).

The message is not our own.

We are speaking for Jesus Christ, if we are Christians.

We are like ambassadors for Christ.

We represent Him to the unsaved world.

We are sent by Him, with His message, to reconcile the world to Jesus Christ. An "ambassador", just represents the one he is sent by.

They do not get the glory for the job they do.

The glory goes to the person who had the plan that sent them to negotiate.

Since it is not our message, that we bring, it is not our glory for that message, but the glory goes to God.

The praise should go to Jesus Christ and the Father.

He is exalted ruler for all of eternity.

The "Amen" means, so be it.

It is as if this statement is a prayer.

1 Peter 4:12 "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:"

“The fiery trial”:

Peter probably wrote this letter shortly before or after the burning of Rome and at the beginning of the horrors of a 200-year period of Christian persecution.

Peter explains that 4 attitudes are necessary in order to be triumphant in persecution:

1. Expect it (verse 12);
2. Rejoice in it (verses 13-14);
3. Evaluate its cause (verses 15-18);
4. Entrust it to God (verse 19).

“Some strange thing happened”:

Meaning to fall by chance.

A Christian must not think that his persecution is something that happened accidentally.

God allowed it and designed it for the believer's testing, purging, and cleansing.

We know there are trials that face us all.

It is not how many trials we have or even how bad the trials are that counts, it is how we handle the trials.

If you look through the Bible at all the prophets and men and women of God, you will find they all faced trials.

It is not unusual for trying times to come.

It rains on the just and on the unjust.

It is important how we handle that problem.

1 Peter 4:13 "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

The Christian who is persecuted for his faith is a partner in the same kind of suffering Jesus endured, suffering for doing what is right (Matt. 5:10-12; Gal. 6:17; Phil. 1:29; 3:10; Col. 1:24).

“When his glory shall be revealed”:

Believers who are persecuted for their faith are partakers of the same kind of suffering the Savior endured for obeying and serving God with faithfulness, loyalty and love.

When Christ returns, we shall “appear with him in glory” (Col 3:4).

While Jesus is presently glorified in heaven, His glory is not yet fully revealed on earth.

All will rejoice, but especially those who have been persecuted and martyred will more fully understand “that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18).

“Glad also with exceeding joy”:

That is, exult and rejoice with a rapturous joy (James 1:2).

A Christian who is persecuted for righteousness in this life will have overflowing joy in the future because of his reward.

Such an awareness of future joy enables him also to “rejoice” at the present time (Luke 6:22).

These are problems that come from serving the Lord, spoken of here.

Joy in suffering now is the earnest of the great joy of the redeemed at the revelation of that glory which they now see through a glass darkly.

God cannot trust all of us with suffering for Him.

Some would fold up under great trials.

Others get stronger in that trial.

When the suffering is in the name of the Lord, it should thrill us that God can trust us with that big a problem.

1 Peter 4:14 "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy [are ye]; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."

“Reproached for the name of Christ”:

Insulted and treated unfairly for being a representative of all that Christ is, and for the public proclamation of the name of Christ (Acts 4:12; 5:42; 9:15-16; 15:26).

“Happy are ye”:

Not a general, nondescript happiness so much as a specific benefit, in the suffering triumphantly for Christ shows God’s approval.

This is speaking of being persecuted for the fact that you are a Christian, or because you are working for Christ.

We find that when we love God enough to be persecuted for Him, He will greatly reward us.

“Spirit of glory”:

That is, the Spirit who has glory, or who is glorious.

In the Old Testament, the glory of God was represented by the Shekinah light, that luminous glow which signified the presence of God (Exodus 33:14 – 34:9).

“Resteth upon you”:

When a believer suffers, God’s presence specially rests and lifts him to strength and endurance beyond the physical dimension (Acts 6:8 – 7:60; 2 Cor. 12:7-10).

The suffering of Job, in the Old Testament, was great.

He did not turn against God.

He became even more faithful during the problem.

We know there was a time when God said, it is enough.

God mightily blessed Job; in so much that his later state was better than it had been before all the troubles came.

Read the book of Job to get the full impact of this.

1 Peter 4:15 "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or [as] a thief, or [as] an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters."

“As a busybody”:

Someone who intrudes into matters that belong to someone else.

Peter is dealing with matters that would lead to persecution, such as getting involved in revolutionary, disruptive activity or interfering in the function and flow of government.

It might also refer to being a troublesome meddler in the workplace.

Generally, a Christian living in a non-Christian culture is to do his work faithfully, exalt Jesus Christ, and live a virtuous life, rather than try to overturn or disrupt his culture (2:13-16; 1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 3:11).

1 Peter 4:16 "Yet if [any man suffer] as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."

“Christian”:

In the early days of the church, “Christian” was a derisive term given to those followers of Christ (Acts. 11:26; 26:28).

Eventually, followers of Christ came to love and adopt this name.

There is no shame in serving God.

Even if a person is imprisoned for the cause of Jesus Christ, he should not be ashamed, but count it his duty to uphold Christ.

We should count it an honor to be allowed to suffer for Christ.

1 Peter 4:17 For the time [is come] that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if [it] first [begin] at us, what shall the end [be] of them that obey not the gospel of God?

“Judgment ... house of God”:

Not condemnation, but the purging, chastening, and purifying of the church by the loving hand of God.

It is far better and more important for kingdom work to endure suffering as the Lord purges and strengthens the church, than to endure the eternal sufferings of the unbeliever in the lake of fire.

And, if God so strongly and painfully judges His church which He loves, what will be His fury on the ungodly?

The "house of God" is speaking of the believers in Christ, or the church.

We know that God expects our lives to be clean.

Jesus is coming back for a church that is without spot or wrinkle.

God will shake the church, so that those who are playing church will be shaken out.

Only the true believers in Christ will remain.

We Christians must remember, that to whom much is given, much is required.

Christians must separate themselves from the world and its lust.

We are to live wholesome lives as an example for the world to follow.

God must begin at the church, because we are in full knowledge.

God judges his own in the hope they will turn from their evil ways back to Him.

The church is the bearer of the Light to the darkened world.

If the Light of the world becomes dark, the darkness would become great.

We know that the Christians are sons of God.

The answer to what the end is for those who do not accept Jesus as Savior is simple but harsh.

They are headed for an eternity in hell.

1 Peter 4:18 "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

(Quoted from the LXX of Prov. 11:31), and reinforces the point that if the justified sinner is saved only with great difficulty, while enduring suffering, pain, and loss, what will be the end of the ungodly (2 Thess. 1:4-10)?

The word "scarcely" indicates to me that the Christian has more to do than walk the isle of a church and go and be baptized in water to be saved.

Salvation is a daily walk through life with Jesus.

The temptations of life must be overcome each day of our life.

To be the righteous, you must have, at some time in your life, accepted Jesus as your Savior.

This would cause you to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

The righteous scarcely being saved, indicates to me, it is possible to walk away from God and not be truly saved.

Here is what Jesus said in the parable of the soils:

Matthew 13:20-22 "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;" "Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."

This does not mean just committing a single sin would cause you to be lost.

It means to me turning away from God and choosing to go back into your sinful way of life.

The ungodly and the sinner will stand before Jesus to be judged lost.

1 Peter 4:19 "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls [to him] in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

"Commit the keeping of their souls" or "Entrusting" which is a banking term meaning "to deposit for safe keeping."

Many believe inflicting suffering upon themselves is pleasing to God.

This is not what this Scripture is saying.

This says if you suffer from outside causes for the will of God, you are pleasing the God who created you.

Mark 13:13 "And ye shall be hated of all [men] for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

There is a battle to be fought.

We must fight for Jesus even until death if we are to be a good soldier fit for the kingdom.

“Faithful Creator”:

Peter uses the word “Creator,” to remind the readers of this letter that when they committed their lives to God, they were simply giving back to God what He had created.

As Creator, God knows best the needs of His beloved creatures (2:23; 2 Tim. 1:2).

1 Peter Chapter 4 Questions

1. Verse 1 says to arm ourselves with what?
2. He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from ____.
3. What does "Arm yourselves with the same mind" mean?
4. What are we doing when we willingly suffer for Christ?
5. He no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lust of men, but to the _____ of _____.
6. We must not only make Jesus our Savior, but our _____.
7. When we make Jesus Lord of our life, we are controlled by what?
8. What is the will of the Gentiles?
9. What are the sins in verse 3, caused by?
10. Why do the worldly people think Christians to be strange?
11. Christians are ____ the world, but not ____ the world.
12. Who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the _____ and the _____.
13. Who is the Judge?
14. Who are the living and the dead in verse 6?

15. What must a person do to be condemned to hell?
16. Have _____ charity among yourselves.
17. _____ shall cover the multitude of sins.
18. What chapter in 1 Corinthians has to do with this kind of charity?
19. How can you do something for Jesus?
20. Why was hospitality even more important about the time this was written than now?
21. What were they to do against those who would not receive them?
22. What are the Christians called in verse 10?
23. Whose ability do we minister in?
24. Describe the job of the steward.
25. What are some of the gifts of the Spirit that are possible to receive.
26. If any man speak, let him speak as the _____ of God.
27. We are like _____ for Christ.
28. What does an "ambassador" do?
29. Why should they not think it strange that they will go through a fiery trial?
30. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, what rests upon you?
31. Who, in the Old Testament, became even more faithful with trials he endured?
32. There is no glory or praise in being punished for _____ you have _____.
33. Judgment begins at the _____ of _____.
34. Who is the house of God?
35. If we are to be a good soldier fit for the kingdom, what must we do?