

1 Peter 4

1 Peter 4:1-6 Living for the Will of God

- v1-2 The Christian must abandon the heathen ways and live as God would have him/her do
 - *Same mind/attitude*--as Jesus was, we can be triumphant in suffering, even to the point of death
 - Reflecting on Jesus' example can help you when you face trials
 - Hold in your heart that **God is always in control** as the world spins towards the end He has determined
 - **2 Thessalonians 1:6-10** God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you ⁷and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. ⁸He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might ¹⁰on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.
 - *Done with sin*--possibilities could include:
 - One line of Jewish thought held that suffering is in itself a great purifier
 - **Psalm 94:12-13** Blessed is the one you discipline, Lord, the one you teach from your law; ¹³you grant them relief from days of trouble, till a pit is dug for the wicked.
 - **Hebrews 12:6** because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son
 - One who's suffered persecution & not denied Christ has strengthened character & faith
 - **James 1:12** Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.
 - ⇒ Persecution quickly burns away chaff in the church
 - One baptized in the Spirit identifies with Christ's sufferings & death--and His victory, which mandates abandoning the rule of sin & pride, replacing them with living per & for God's will
 - We have died to sin's claim upon us & now through the Holy Spirit have power to resist sin
 - *Done with sin*--Greek form of *done* is passive—does not mean *ceased* but *released from*
 - **McGee**: You cannot live the Christian life by following rules. You can live the Christian life only by having the mind of Christ, by having the Spirit of God moving in you to please God and to refrain from those things which bring disgrace to Him.
- v3-4 *Surprised*--unbelievers do not understand & often resent a Christian's different values
 - We may even find old friends hostile once we have accepted Christ and live a new life
 - Have you ever been ridiculed for living a Christian life?
- v5 *Give account*--literally "to pay back" to God the debt of sin they have amassed
- v6 *Who are dead*--some translations have "now dead" which would strengthen the view that this means those who had accepted the gospel while alive, but had died before Peter wrote this letter
 - Though physical death is still a reality for believers & unbelievers alike, all who accept the gospel and die before the Second Coming of Christ will see glory

1 Peter 4:7-11 How We Should Live to Love and Serve

- v7 *Sober mind/spirit*--not be ruled by emotions but, to have an eternal perspective in this life
 - Important to have a steady mind that sees what is important and what is not
 - Cannot pray properly unless we earnestly desire to discover God's will for our life
 - *End*--Greek *goal*; not just the climax but the purpose towards which God has been & is working

- *Near*--the NT often stresses the shortness of time & urgency in following Christ
 - **Romans 13:12** The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.
 - **1 John 2:18** Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.
 - **Revelation 22:20** He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.
- *v8-11* We must show our love for others in our actions of service
 - *v8 Love deeply*--Greek means taut, sustained effort: as a runner outstretching for the finish line
 - Our love must be energetic—demands mental & spiritual energy despite injury and insult
 - *Cover*--we should overlook sins against us & forgive wrongs, for God has forgiven us who believe
 - **Proverbs 10:12** Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs.
 - *v9 Hospitality*--Greek "love of strangers"; means to open one's home to travelers & strangers
 - Hospitality was a highly esteemed trait in ancient times
 - The nearness of the end does not make us withdraw from the world, but to serve even more
 - *v10 Gift*--the Holy Spirit gives in some measure to all believers to enable them for ministry
 - Each of us has something to contribute; our gifts belong to God for His use, not to us
 - There is no gift that cannot be placed at the service of Christ; each gift is to be completely under God's control & used for the building of the church to Christ's glory
 - Not to use our [spiritual] gift is an affront to God's wisdom, a rebuff of His love and grace & a loss to His church. We did not determine our gift, deserve it, or earn it. But we all have a gift from the Lord, and if we do not use it, His work is weakened and His heart is grieved
 - *v11 Should*--effective use of our gifts relies on seeking God's glory & relying on His power
 - Using the gifts from God by the power of God for the glory of God keeps us from pride
 - *Speaks. . serves*--two general, overlapping groupings of ministry functions

1 Peter 4:12-19 Suffering for Being a Christian -- Sharing the Sufferings of Christ

- Peter was no stranger to suffering & provides the perspective Christians must have in the midst of trials
- *v12-16* Peter saw persecution as inevitable, since Christians have different values from the world
 - *v12 Fiery trial*--this letter was probably written about the time of the burning of Rome
 - Peter is calling believers to live obediently and expectantly in the light of Christ's return
 - Jesus could return at any moment--we must be serious & watchful, with a proper perspective
 - Persecution is a test: of one's faith & life--one who compromises values will not be persecuted by the world, but is abandoning the truth & not giving witness as he/she should
 - Anything we must suffer for the sake of Christ becomes a privilege and not a penalty
 - Persecution is the way to glory--the Cross was the way to the crown
 - **Matthew 5:10-12** Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
 - A Christian's goodness can be an offence to a world in which goodness is regarded as a handicap
 - It forces people to look at themselves in ways they'd rather avoid
 - It shows people how far off the mark they really are
 - It refuses to go along with what is acceptable to non-Christians
 - The church is under siege in most cultures of the world yet is actually thriving there! Why?

- In good times, the church seems to become stagnant and complacent. In hard times, the church seems to grow and be strengthened. Why is that? C. S. Lewis once observed, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”
- **Tertullian:**¹ “the blood of Christians is seed” -- later loosely interpreted as “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”
- *v13 Participate*--those persecuted for doing what is right share a special camaraderie with Christ
 - *Overjoyed*--exult & rejoice with rapturous joy, knowing that your reward is certain
 - *Glory is revealed*--though presently glorified in heaven, Jesus’ full glory will not be revealed on earth until His Second Coming
- *v14 Insulted/reproached*--insulted & mistreated for one’s commitment to & association with Jesus
 - *Rests upon you*--God’s presence rests upon and strengthens believers who are suffering
 - Recalls Stephen in **Acts 6:15**: “they saw that his face was like the face of an angel”
- *v15 Busybody/meddler*--the range from criminal or murderer to this covers a lot of ground & degree
 - A unique, hybrid Greek word from words for *belonging to another & looking upon or into*; literally, looking upon or into that which belongs to another; could include: 1) cast covetous eyes upon, 2) be too interested in other people’s affairs, 3) interest in things alien to a Christian life
 - Recurring NT theme: suffering brought by wrong-doing is not laudatory or excusable
- *v16 Christian*--originally a derisive term, followers of Jesus came to love this label & adopted it
 - *Not be ashamed*--suffering for Christ brings glory to God, witness to others & growth in Christ
 - **Galatians 6:17** From now on, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.
 - **Philippians 1:29** For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him,
 - **Philippians 3:10** I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,
 - *Praise/glorify*--How is this possible to give praise & thanks in the midst of suffering?
 - **James 1:2-4** Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.
 - **2 Corinthians 12:7-10** or because of these surpassingly great revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
- *v17-19* God will judge His children for rewards & all others for their punishment
 - *v17 Judgment*--not condemnation, but purging, chastening & purifying of the church by God
 - Peter felt it was all the more necessary for Christians to do right because judgment was nigh
 - **Matthew 7:13-14** Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.
 - *Cross*--the people of the day were stunned when Jesus said His followers were to “take up their cross;” they knew just how agonizing & degrading that was & couldn’t grasp how the Messiah would require it

¹ Tertullian: born 145 A.D., converted to Christianity ~185 A.D.; Roman lawyer known as the father of Latin theology, wrote in defense of Christianity against persecution from without & heresy from within; had “enormous influence in the early church” (from GotQuestions.org)

- **Mark 8:34** Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.
- *v18 Hard for righteous to be saved*--though their salvation is assured, God disciplines His children
 - **Bible Knowledge Commentary**: Peter is not teaching that salvation is earned through personal trials or works, but simply that those who are saved are not exempt from temporal disciplinary judgments which are the natural consequences of sin
 - **Hebrews 12:7** Endure suffering as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?
 - **Proverbs 11:31**: If the righteous will be repaid on the earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!
- Some believe that God will save everyone, yet Jesus said many times this would not be so
 - **John 3:18** The one who believes in Him is not judged; the one who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.
- *v19 Entrust/commit*--“to deposit for safe keeping” with one whom had a sacred duty to return the deposit; how much more would a deposit be sacred to God? Jesus used the same word on the cross
 - **Luke 23:46a**: Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”
- *Faithful Creator*--as Creator, God knows best the needs of His beloved creatures
- ⇒ Christians should: 1) expect persecution (and not be surprised by it); 2) rejoice in the midst of difficulty; 3) evaluate the cause of suffering; and 4) entrust their lives to God
- ⇒ **MacArthur**: A pure, powerful church will inevitably provoke a hostile reaction from the satanic world system. Successful Christians and churches will make waves, and the world and Satan will retaliate with persecution. God has always used suffering to perfect and purify His people and to demonstrate the sufficiency of His grace. It’s only when we don’t trust in His sovereignty or don’t understand His purposes that we are apt to experience worry; fear, and anxiety when things go wrong.
- ⇒ Reflect on what sobers you most & encourages you most as you consider the truths taught in this passage