

9. 1 Peter 4 of a Verse by Verse Study of James, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter

1 Peter 3 begins with the word *therefore*. We learned in chapter 2 that *therefore* draws a conclusion based on what transpired in previous verses. In this case, the logic of chapter 4 proceeds from the final words of both chapters 2 and 3. 1 Peter 2:23-24 concluded:

23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

Chapter 3:21-22 concludes with how this suffering saves us, which is by his resurrection, “It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.” The stage is set for chapter 4 to apply the lessons of Christ’s suffering to our every day lives.

Christians, Armed with the Same Attitude as Christ

4:1 Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. 2 As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. 3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do – living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. 4 They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. 5 But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

Chapter 4 begins with the statement of an eternal principle—one that will always be true. “He who has suffered in his body is done with sin.” We are to arm ourselves with this attitude of Christ. “As a result,” we learn that we are not to live the rest of our earthly lives for human desires. We are to live for the will of God. Think of the time we, Christians, have lost, living like the pagans. Peter states these sins of paganism clearly. Pagans live in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and detestable idolatries. Christians are to have nothing to do with these.

Our pagan acquaintances will think we are strange. They will think it is strange that we do not plunge right into what Peter calls “the same flood of dissipation.” They will abuse us. However, they will give an account to the Lord who will judge the living and the dead. This thought was also stated by Paul in 2 Thess 1:6-10:

6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and 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. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on 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.

The gospel is preached now to those dead spiritually so that they may be converted from the body of sin and live according to the spirit of Christ. The dead today, like the dead in Noah’s time of chapter 3, have every chance to turn from sin. Peter will summarize this idea in 2 Peter 3:8-9:

8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

God loves saint and sinner alike and wants everyone to be saved. John 3:16 teaches, “16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but

have eternal life.”

Christians, Clear-minded and Self-controlled

7 The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. 8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 9 Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Just as the previous verses condemned the sinful acts of pagans, these verses state the appropriate Christian behavior as the end of all things comes upon us. One can hardly improve on the language of Peter as he states what we must do:

- Be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.
- Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.
- Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.
- Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.
- If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.
- If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides.

Before leaving these verses, which are self explanatory, note that when we speak, our opinions and ideas are not worth anything unless they reflect the **very word of God**. We are not to suppose or imagine what God, Christ, the apostles, and the prophets thought or felt or might have said. We are to use the scriptures and speak the very words of God. They are complete according to 2 Tim 3:16-17: “16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Since the scriptures thoroughly equip us, we do not have to try to make them better – an impossible task.

Christians, Suffering and Praising God

12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. 16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

“Do not be surprised at the painful trial,” shows that Christians are to expect persecution. There is nothing strange about it. The scriptures establish this expectation throughout. John quoted the Lord in Rev 2:10, who taught, “10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.” Paul treated persecution as the norm in the lives of Christians in 2 Tim 3:12, “12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” However, these persecutions will never separate the Christian from the love of Christ, according to Rom 8:35, “35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?”

If we share in Christ’s sufferings, we will be overjoyed when he comes. It is a blessing to be insulted for the name of Christ. The Spirit of Glory and of God rests on us. However, Christians should not suffer as murderers, thieves, any kind of criminal, or meddlers. We should willingly suffer as Christians and we should praise and glorify God who blesses us to wear that name.

The Christian, Judged and Saved

17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And,

*"If it is hard for the righteous to be saved,
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"*

19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

Judgment begins with the family of God now, since we are to be judged by the gospel. This is not a mysterious standard sprung on us at the last day. Rev 14:6-7 declares the details of this judgment:

6 Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth – to every nation, tribe, language and people. 7 He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."

The rhetorical question, "What will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" received its answer in 2 Thess 2:8-10:

8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on 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.

Proverbs 11:31 is another rhetorical question. "How hard is it for the righteous to be saved?" one might ask. The righteous are only saved by the blood of Christ, as we saw in 1 Peter 1:18-19, "18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." Rom 6:23 clearly separates wages of sin from the gift of God, " 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The last verse of the chapter draws the conclusion for those who suffer: "Those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good." If we suffer as Christians let us turn our heads and hearts to God, trusting Him as the faithful creator, and let us continue to do good.