

## Suffering That Glorifies God 1 Peter 4

### 1 Peter 4 Introduction

- Early in the book of Acts, the Jewish council in Jerusalem commanded the apostles to stop preaching and teaching Jesus in the city.
- Peter and the other apostles refused to stop.
- They were arrested and brought before the council again.
- After some discussion, we can read result of that at the end of Acts 5.
  
- I've been in plenty of prayer times where someone has thanked the Lord for our freedom to worship freely.
- Sometimes, I've been the one to do so myself.
- There is a difference between Peter, the other apostles and us at this point.
- We essentially thank the Lord that we don't have to suffer for His sake.
- They thanked the Lord when they did.
  
- They counted it a privilege, *"rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name."*
- This book has been all about suffering well as a Christian.
- This chapter continues that main theme.

#### **For our suffering to glorify God we must:**

**1. Entrust ourselves completely to Him.**

**2. Do good, whatever the consequences.**

### 1 Peter 4 Outline

- I. Live for the will of God. 4:1-6
- II. Be loyal to fellow believers. 4:7-11
- III. Brace yourself for fiery trials. 4:12-19

#### **Live for the will of God. 4:1-6**

- 4:1-2 It truly takes a death to separate us from a life of sin.
- Peter is telling us to arm ourselves with precisely this mindset.
- Paul said something similar in Romans 6:8-12.
  
- 4:1-2 Peter forces us to ask the question:
- Which is more important to us?
  - Obedience
  - The desire to avoid pain

- 4:3-4 Peter knows there are a number of former pagans in his audience.
- Their lives were once filled with all the things Peter lists here.
  - Three of these vices have sexual overtones.
  - The other two involve excessive drinking.
- Regardless of how much or how little of these things you have done – it’s already enough.
  
- 4:3-4 With our new life in Christ, we should begin looking with fear and revulsion at that lifestyle that may have once fully absorbed us.
- Likewise, those who are still absorbed in that life will look with disdain at our holiness.
- Unsaved people cannot understand what we experience when we put our trust in Jesus and our lives begin to change.
  
- 4:5 This really puts it in perspective.
- People in Peter’s audience were facing false accusations and criticism.
- Some of them may soon have faced accusations that would bring them before judges and magistrates.
- It would be deep encouragement to know that God would be the final judge of all.
  
- 4:6 Let’s be sure not to misunderstand this or we can end up with some crazy beliefs.
- Norman Geisler points out:
  - *“This is an unclear passage, subject to many interpretations, and no doctrine should be based on an ambiguous passage like this. The difficult texts should be interpreted in light of the clear one and not the reverse.”*
  
- 4:6 There is no hope held out in Scripture for salvation obtained after death.
  - For example Hebrews 9:27.
- Death is final, and there are only two destinies – heaven and hell.
- That is Peter’s basic point in the previous verse which is a warning of final judgment.
  
- 4:6 Therefore, it is best to understand this to refer to “those who are now dead who heard the gospel while they were alive.”
  - “was preached” is past tense.
  - “are dead” is present for Peter as he writes.
- Judged according to men in the flesh refers to physical death, the judgment that comes to us through Adam and the Fall.

**Be loyal to fellow believers. 4:7-11**

- 4:7 The whole New Testament stresses that we should look forward to the Lord’s return.
- The early church lived with the expectation that Jesus might come back in their lifetimes.
- Yet Peter doesn’t encourage a wacky imbalanced focus on end-time events.
- He expects us to be serious and watchful.

- 4:7 Being serious and watchful or self-controlled and sober-minded (ESV) uniquely prepares us for prayer.
- Peter does not think of prayer as a state of ecstasy or some kind of trance.
- He sees it as sober, direct, fully engaged communication with the Lord.
- Prayer ought to be serious business.
  
- 4:8 Peter is likely thinking of Proverbs 10:12.
- Wayne Grudem has this to say:
  - *“Where love abounds in a fellowship of Christians, many small offences, and even some large ones, are readily overlooked and forgotten. But where love is lacking, every word is viewed with suspicion, every action is liable to misunderstanding, and conflicts abound – to Satan’s perverse delight.”*
  
- 4:9 Christian love should be fervent.
- Christian love should be forgiving.
- Christian love has very practical effects.
- We should open our homes to others – without griping about it, as Peter adds here.
- Hospitality was essential in the early church.
- Inns were usually unsavory places and Christians often couldn’t afford them.
  
- 4:9 In our world, hospitality can be easily avoided and no one may ever notice.
- Still, having people into our homes, whether for an hour over coffee, or longer stays such as giving a room to a visiting missionary, can be a wonderful form of ministry.
- The Pastoral Epistles of 1 Timothy and Titus tell us that hospitality is essential for elders in the church.
  
- 4:10 Peter’s wording implies that each Christian has at least one gift that can be used for the benefit of the church.
- We may have more than one spiritual gift, but we will not have less. No one is “gift-less.”
- Gifts vary from person to person and even vary somewhat as we mature in our faith.
- So we all serve, but not in the same way.
  
- 4:10 Our gifts are a mark of God’s grace.
- *“God has entrusted us with His wonderful grace, and we are to be stewards of that grace. A steward is one who oversees the resources of another. So I am to oversee the resources of God’s grace and to show God’s grace to others using the gifts God has given me to minister to others.”*
  - *Chuck Smith in The Word for Today Bible*
  
- 4:11a Peter divides the various gifts into two broad categories:
- The Bible lists several “speaking” gifts which include preaching, evangelism, teaching, prophecy, praying in tongues, etc.

- There are also “serving” gifts that would include just about everything else.
- All gifts must be exercised in the power of the Spirit and in accordance with God’s Word.
- 4:11b Peter closes off this section with a spontaneous doxology – a formula of praise.
- Think about it:
  - Peter knew Jesus personally as a man.
  - Here he honors Him with words that are only fittingly used toward God.
  - Peter had obviously come to a clear awareness of the deity of Christ.
  - Jesus Christ is worthy of our worship.

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**Brace yourself for fiery trials. 4:12-19**

- 4:12 Chuck Smith has good things to say here in his *Word for Today Bible*:
  - *“It is interesting that our first reaction to a heavy trial is to think something strange is happening to us. We don’t understand why God’s people have to suffer ...*
  - *When I love someone, I want to save them from suffering ...*
  - *“God does love us, but ‘whom the Lord loves He chastens’ (Heb. 12:6). While others might be able to get away with things, God won’t let us get away with them because we’re His children, and trials are one way that God purifies His children.”*
- 4:13 We identify with Christ’s death as we die to our sin.
- We identify with His sufferings as we rejoice in our present trials.
- When His glory is revealed, we will be glad with exceeding joy.
- This is a hard lesson, but the Lord wants us to learn to rejoice in our sufferings now.
- 4:14 We should consider ourselves blessed when we are “reproached for the name of Christ.”
- Don’t expect to be admired for your faith.
- In fact, expect the opposite.
- The *Alexamenos Graffito* was discovered on an ancient underground wall in Rome in 1857.
- It dates back to the days of the early church.
- 4:15-16 Christian = “follower of Christ”
- (Not “little Christ” as some have said.)
- Peter denied Christ three times.
- He knew what it was to be ashamed of Jesus.
- Now, later in life, with a clearer vision of what is truly important, he sees suffering as a Christian as an opportunity to glorify God.

- 4:17 house of God
  - Think back on what Peter said in 2:5. about our being built up into a spiritual house.
  - In Ezekiel 9 God speaks of bringing judgment on Jerusalem because of its sins.
  - That judgment began at the temple.
  - Every once in a while God decides it's time to do some serious housecleaning.
- 4:18 Peter quotes Proverbs 11:31.
  - The righteous does not come before God with any intrinsic or natural merit.
  - No one is saved except by the blood of Christ.
  - Even the righteous feel the fiery pain of God's disciplining and purifying processes.
  - What about those who are lost?
  - It will be a fire of eternal destruction.
- 4:19 This verse sums up the teaching of the entire letter of 1 Peter.
  - Christians do not suffer by mere accident.
  - They are not subject to a collection of random uncontrollable forces.
  - The bottom line is that they suffer "according to the will of God."
- 4:19 On the surface this may seem harsh.
  - Upon deeper reflection, there is no greater comfort to be found.
  - If our suffering is part of God's good and perfect will, then we may assume it will be limited in both its intensity and its duration.
  - The limits of our suffering will be set by God Himself and will be only for our good.
- 4:19 commit or "entrust" (ESV)
  - Maurer defines this as *"to hand over something of value to the care of another."*
  - God is the Creator who has given us life in the first place.
  - He is faithful and, therefore, He can be trusted.
  - Peter H. Davids explains:
    - *"Doing good despite the consequences is how one lives out the entrusting of oneself to God."*
- 4:19 commit or "entrust" (ESV)
  - This is the word used by Jesus to describe the giving up of His life as He died on the cross.
    - See Luke 23:46, Jesus quoting Psalm 31:5.
  - Jesus suffered and died according to the will of God. As a result He procured our salvation.
  - As we experience our own personal suffering, are we willing to commit our souls to a faithful Creator, doing good while trusting in Him?

## 1 Peter 4      Conclusions

- Peter and the apostles thanked the Lord that they were counted worthy to suffer for His name's sake.
- Each and every day there are Christians someplace in this world who are suffering for the name of Christ.
- Their devotion ought to inspire us.
- We should resolve to love our Lord with that same kind of commitment.
  
- But suppose we don't suffer especially badly for Jesus' sake this week.
- How are we to express the love of God that we desire to cultivate in our hearts?
- Consider 1 John 4:20-21.
- We can start, as Peter tells us, by loving one another fervently here and now.
- We can show hospitality, and use our gifts for the benefit of others.
  
- These may be the areas in which we see room for application immediately.
- It may be inconvenient and may even hurt.
- But then we need to ask ourselves what is more important.
  - Obedience
  - The desire to avoid pain.
- Let's take a few moments in closing to consider 4:7-10 slowly once again.

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