

Suffering and Living for God –

1 Peter 4:1-6

March 14, 2021

The theme of suffering is one of the biggest subjects in the book of 1 Peter, and it is one that is relevant at all times in our Christian life, but now, as we think about the present state of our country, I believe we can all say that it's more relevant than ever. Peter has a lot to say about suffering in this book, and there's no doubt that he spoke from experience. And so God gives us this book of 1 Peter so we can know how we are to think and how we are to live when we do suffer.

1 Peter 4:1. The word “*therefore*” means that what Peter now says is in view of what he has been saying in the previous vss. First, Peter reminds us that Jesus suffered in the flesh. And He suffered, not just when He was dying on the cross, but during his entire life, and especially during His ministry years. And when you read the gospels, you see specifically how Jesus suffered.

- His enemies were plotting to kill Him, and did at times try to kill Him.
 - They slandered Him, they blasphemed Him, they spoke evil of Him.
 - We read that He had no place to lay His head. He and His disciples were on the road a lot, and didn't have all these roadside inns where they could stay for the night. and didn't have all these nice restaurants where they could get a good meal.
 - And of course, the devil strongly opposed Him, and tempted Him on many occasions.
- Luke 9:21-24, Matthew 10:38-39

And we are to learn from Jesus, and follow His example in this area of suffering. And as we follow Jesus, and live for Him, then we too will suffer. John 15:18-21 - 1 Peter 2:21-23. This also says we're to follow Jesus' example in this area of suffering. And it really is an honor and a privilege that we can suffer for Him. Of course, there is much in the NT about how Paul suffered. When you read the book of Acts, you read how Paul would go someplace and preach, and often times there would be people who would resist him and persecute him.

2 Cor. 1:3-5, 9-10; 2 Cor. 4:7-11 – Now when we live for the Lord, then we suffer, and in 2 Cor. 4 it describes suffering as the “*dying of Jesus*” in our lives. That is, as Jesus suffered, so too we will suffer. That is, we are serving the Lord, sacrificing for the Lord, suffering for the Lord, and all this is what we call the “*dying of Jesus*” in our lives. That is, like Jesus, we're to say no to the flesh, which is the dying of Jesus, and we're to say yes to God, which means the life of Jesus is now being lived out in our lives. Gal. 2:20

- 2 Cor. 6:1-10, 2 Cor. 11:21-29, 2 Cor. 12:7-10. I have read all these verses because, next to Jesus Christ, Paul is the best NT example we have of one who suffered. And you see how he loved the Lord, was sold out for the Lord, lived fully for the Lord, and suffered for the Lord. OT – David (Psalms), Jeremiah (Lamentations)

Matt. 5:10-12. Now when we suffer, we are to rejoice, we are to be glad, not that the suffering feels good, for it doesn't. Suffering for the Lord is one of the most difficult things we go through in life, but it's worth it, for the Lord's sake, for the Lord's work, and this results in eternal rewards. We will experience special grace and blessings in this life, but more than that, great blessings and rewards in the future. 2 Cor. 4:17

And 1 Pet. 4:1 says we are to arm ourselves with the same purpose. When it comes to suffering, we are to have the same mind, the same mindset, the same attitude as Christ Himself. And when it says, "*arm yourselves*," the words refer to weapons and armor, and the idea is that we are soldiers of Christ going into battle, and we are to be resolved, to be committed to the Lord, to be ready to suffer for Him.

But then Peter gives us the big picture, the end result of suffering. As we live for the Lord, as we suffer for the Lord during our life, then sooner or later we will die, and whether it's a natural death, an accident, or a martyr's death, then we will cease to sin. And to be honest, this is something we should really want – I'm not saying we should want to die, but we should want to cease from sinning and that only happens when we die. What a most glorious day that will be when we are no longer sinning, but are living a perfectly holy life. Rom. 7:14-25

- And so Peter is saying that the Christian life in general is a life of suffering, And when this life of suffering is over, then we will be supremely blessed for we will no longer be sinning, we will no longer be fighting against our sinful flesh.

1 Peter 4:2. And so we are to be living for the Lord, and be willing and ready to suffer for the Lord. And suffering doesn't just mean being physically persecuted for Christ, it doesn't just mean being publicly slandered. It means we're living not for ourselves, we're not fulfilling our own lusts, but we are living for the will of God. Now this word "*lust*" means desire, means passionate longing, and it can mean either a good desire or a bad desire, but in most NT passages, like this one here, it means a bad desire, a sinful desire. The point is that we are not to be selfish, we are not to live for ourselves, and for the things we want, and for the things we want to do. We are not to live for our own pleasures, or for fame, or for money - we are to live for the Lord, and specifically, for the will of God. Luke 6:20-26

Psalm 40:8 – "*I delight to do Thy will, O God.*" Rom. 12:2 – "*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*" Eph. 5:17 – "*Do not be foolish but understand the will of the Lord.*" 1 John 2:15-17. Now God's will for your life is spelled out in His word and there's a lot in His word about His will, His purpose for your life. But I'll mention 3 vss. Matt. 6:33, 16:8, 28:19-20.

- And the overall point is that we are to carry out God's will and not our own will.

What this means is that we need to say no to sin and temptation, we are not to be slaves to sin, we are not to let sin in any way, shape, or form, control our lives. Ps. 119:133. We are to know that sin is rebellion against God, is spiritually poisonous, is deadly, is fleshly and worldly. And so we are to be slaves to God, and do what He wants us to do, be ones who are carrying out His will for our life. Rom. 6

Now one more thing about this verse – it says that you are *“to live the rest of the time in the flesh... for the will of God.”* Each of you are a certain age, you are in your teens, or your 20’s, 30’s, 40’s, 50’s, 60’s, 70’s or 80’s. And it’s good to think about the rest of your life, and about how long you have yet to live. Let’s say you are 60. Now you don’t know exactly how long you will live – you don’t know when God will take you home. But you can think – *“I may have 20-30 years left in my life, and I want to live all these years I have left for the Lord. I want to live all these years so I can fulfill God’s will for my life.”* Ps. 90:12

1 Peter 4:3. And so for you as a Christian, your years of sinning, your years of living for yourself are over. No matter how old you were when you were saved, the amount of time you lived up to that point in time was sufficient – you had done enough sinning, enough living for yourself. And we have these 2 phrases – *“have carried out... and having pursued”* – meaning we are to use the past tense when talking about our sinful life, we sure don’t want to use the present tense. Chapter 1 of your life is over – and now chap. 2 is being written, and you don’t want to go back and relive chap. 1.

This word *“course”* means conduct, a way of life, a specific path of behavior. And there are six words used here to talk about this sin, and they are all in a similar category. Now there are other lists of sins in the NT which talk about a lot of other kinds of sins. But let’s go through this list that is given us here:

1. Sensuality – this means no restraint, unrestrained sin, unbridled and excessive sin.
2. Lusts – this is the same word we saw in vs. 2, and it’s a general word for evil desires, for its evil desires and passions that drive and lead people to do these sins listed here.
3. Drunkenness – this is also translated debauchery, and it can refer to the sinful habit of being drunk a lot, or it could be used to refer to the effects of drugs, of narcotics.
4. Carousing – this is also translated as reveling or orgies, and it’s oftentimes the result of drunkenness, of wild parties and of people being on drugs.
5. Drinking parties is just what it says – parties where people are drinking a lot, and this happens a lot in this country. And you hear about this happening on college campuses.
6. Abominable idolatries, also translated as detestable idolatry, is referring to those who are consciously worshiping false gods of some sort. Historically - And these are all terrible sins, the kind of sins we see in people who rebel against God, who turn against God, and the kind of sins we hear more and more about in our world today, and in our country too.

1 Peter 4:4. When unbelievers see that you aren't joining with them in these sins, they are surprised, are shocked, and are wondering why you aren't sinning in these ways anymore. Before you were saved, you were their friends, and were running with them, joining with them, for you were committing these same kinds of sins. But now you have done a complete 180, your life has completely turned around. It may be that they are also mad at you, upset at you, for not wanting to join with them in doing what they're doing. But they are so deep in their sin, so blinded by their sin, so enslaved to their sin, and so lost – for the world, the flesh, and the devil are their masters. And it says they may even malign you, which means slandering and saying bad things about you. Eph. 2:1-4

1 Peter 4:5. Now this is the sobering part. The word they is referring to all sinners, all unbelievers who don't repent and turn to Christ for forgiveness of their sins, and it says they will have to give an account to God. And God is the Judge, the perfect Judge, the One who knows everything a person thinks, says, or does.

- This word “*account*” is from the Greek word “*logos*,” a common word that most often is translated as “*word*.” That is, the sinner will have to stand before God and speak to God, give an account, a defense of how he lived his life. Of course, the sinner is guilty, and will be pronounced guilty, and then cast into the lake of fire.
- It says God is ready, He is ready to judge the living, that is, sinners who are now on this earth, and the dead, those who have already physically died. And He is just waiting for the right time, which to be honest, is not very long from now.

This theme of God being the Judge is what every unbeliever needs to know.

- Psalm 98:9 – *“The Lord is coming to judge the earth; He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.”*
- Acts 17:30-31 – *“God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness.”*
- Rom. 14:12 – *“Each one of us will have to give an account of himself to God.”*
- Matt. 12:36 – *“But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.”*
- Heb. 10:30-31 – *“Vengeance is mine, I will repay, And again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ It is terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*