

A Living Hope

A Study in First Peter

LESSON FOUR

Prayerfully read through 1st Peter, chapter four.

Peter once again begins verse 1 with the word, **therefore**, just as he did in chapter two. Here, Peter refers back to Christ's suffering, described for us in 1 Peter 3:18. Christ suffered unjustly, "the Just for the unjust" who "being put to death in the flesh" was "made alive by the Spirit." **Therefore**, because Christ suffered for us, we are to approach our own suffering with the same "mind."

- 1) Read carefully over **verse 1**. Write down Peter's instruction to us as to **the response** we are to have toward suffering. What does he tell us to do?

- 2) The word "arm" yourself, is of course, a military term. Peter uses this term to remind us that we are in a spiritual battle, a battle that includes suffering. Look up **Ephesians 6:13** and write out that verse below.

- 3) Christ has provided us with everything we need to **arm ourselves** with the **mind of Christ**. From **Ephesians 6:14-18** list the pieces of that armor.

- 4) The last part of **1 Peter 4:1** says that "he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." What do you think this means? Read the following Scriptures to help with your answer. **Matthew 5:29-30; Matthew 16:24; Romans 6:6-7**.

- 5) **1 Peter 4:2** further clarifies how suffering and sacrifice are used by God to purify our faith. Write the verse down below.
- 6) Peter isn't saying that we will never sin, but that sin is no longer what we "practice." Our priorities in life have changed. Our attitudes in life have changed. And our desires in life have changed. Looking at **verse 3**, Peter now describes some of the activities we used to engage in, things that used to rule our lives. As we look at this list we may immediately think, "I've never engaged in any of those things!" But when we look closer at this list and the meaning of these words we find that we did, indeed, engage in much of this kind of a mindset. What does the **first part** of **verse 3** tell us "we have spent enough of our past lifetime" doing?
- 7) What do some of these things include, according to the rest of the verse?
- 8) The word "lewdness" or some translations say "lasciviousness" means "without personal or moral restraint; unbridled excess; wantonness or wasteful." Looking at the rest of these words, we see a similarity of their definitions. Thoughtfully look over this list and the brief definitions.

Lusts – A strong desire and longing for what you do not have – especially for thing "forbidden."

Drunkenness – Drinking to excess (*without restraint*).

Revelries – Loud, boisterous festivity, rioting.

Drinking Parties – Parties where drinking to excess is the goal.

Abominable Idolatries – Unlawful Worship; anything you put before your worship and love of God.

We may not have engaged in these particular practices, but we all once lived for ourselves, for our pleasure, for our own pursuits before we surrendered our hearts to God.

- 9) Peter tells us in **verse 4** that some of our suffering comes in the form of the reaction of others, once we've turned from living for self to living for Christ. What does **verse 4** say about this?
- 10) Have you experienced this kind of suffering? Are there sacrifices you've had to make in the way of relationships since coming to Christ?
- 11) Peter reminds us that, as painful as some of these rejections are, often from those we once considered good friends, there will be a day of reckoning. Read **verse 5** and record it below.

Verse 6 can be a bit confusing when we first read it. Who is Peter talking about and what does he mean? The verse starts out with Peter saying, "**For this reason.**" For **what reason?** Peter has just been talking about the suffering of persecution believers often go through. He has just stated that those whose company we once enjoyed in selfish living, can turn to speaking evil of us now that we have come to Christ. Many commentators believe "the who" of this verse are those who were in "Abraham's Bosom" having died in faith before Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Others believe Peter spoke of those of his contemporaries who had been martyred for their faith. Though they were unjustly judged by the world, they are now alive to God. In either case most all agree that the Gospel was preached to them as a declaration of victory for the completion of Christ's work of salvation.

David Guzik states: “Peter has already told us that Jesus preached to the *spirits in prison*, preaching a message of judgment (1Pe 3:19). Apparently during this same time Jesus also preached a message of salvation to the faithful dead in Abraham’s Bosom (Luk 16:22) who anticipated the work of the Messiah for them. This preaching *to those who are dead* was not the offer of a second chance, but the completion of the salvation of those who had been faithful to God under their first chance. In doing this, Jesus fulfilled the promise that He would lead *captivity captive* (Psa 68:18 and Eph 4:8) and He would “*proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound*” (Isa 61:1 and Luk 4:18). It may also be that Peter here had in mind those in the Christian community who had already died, perhaps even dying as martyrs. If this is the case then Peter used their heroic example as a way to encourage his suffering readers to also be faithful.”

- 12) As we come to **verse 7** Peter states that “the end of all things is at hand.” Peter’s letter comes before the great destruction of Jerusalem and the persecution of Christians that came with it. The expectation of that destruction may be what Peter is referring to, however, the early church certainly believed that Christ’s return could come at any moment, and many scholars believe that may be what Peter is referring to. Peter will remind his readers in **2 Peter 3:8** that with the Lord, one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. As we look at the signs of our times, many Christians feel we are in the last days, but we also know the truth of what Peter says in **2 Peter 3:8**, and Jesus reminded us in **Mark 13:32** that no one knows the day or the hour except for the Father. Certainly though, we all know the fragility of this temporal life we are living, and whether we are anticipating Christ’s soon return, or the end of our own short lives before we see Jesus face to face, what does Peter say in **1 Peter 4:7** that our response should be to the truth?

- 13) Having a serious attitude towards prayer is an instruction given to us throughout God’s Word. Along with that, Peter again focuses in on **love** toward one another being our highest priority. In **verse 8 through 11** Peter begins to describe what that love should look like. What motivation does he give us in **verse 8**?

- 14) What’s one of the ways this love is to express itself according to **verse 9**?

- 15) In **verse 10** Peter points out **two very important truths**. First, he confirms the truth that **each one of us** has been given a **gift** by the Holy Spirit. Second, he clearly tells us the **purpose** for which we've been given these gifts. According to this verse, what is that purpose?
- 16) According to **verse 11** what is that supposed to look like, and what is the **main focus** of our ministering supposed to be?
- 17) In **verses 12 through 19** Peter once again turns his attention on the **suffering Christians**. In **verses 12 & 13** he tells us how we are to respond to the life's fiery trials. What does he say in these verses?
- 18) All of us go through trials in this life. And it is clear from Scripture that God uses the trials we go through to test and purify our faith. Look up the following verses and next to each, **write out the benefit** described by the trials of suffering.

Romans 5:3 & 4 -

2 Corinthians 12:9 & 10 -

Hebrews 5:8 -

James 1:2 & 3 -

James 1:12 -

- 19) Read **1 Peter 4:14-16**. Peter describes in these verses the difference between suffering for our faith and suffering for bad behavior. What does Peter say our perspective should be in **verse 14** if we are suffering for the name of Christ?
- 20) What did Jesus say about this in **Matthew 5:10-12**?
- 21) Looking at **1 Peter 4:15**, Peter gives a list of offenses we might suffer for, which include severe offenses and what we might consider minor offenses. List them below.
- 22) All of the above behaviors are certainly things a follower of Christ should never do. Are you surprised that being a “**busybody**” is mentioned with the other things in this list? What do these other verses say about this subject and how seriously the Lord looks at it?

Psalm 50:20 & 21 -

Proverbs 11:13 -

Proverbs 26:20 –

2 Thessalonians 3:11 & 12 -

1 Timothy 5:13 –

- 23) In contrast, **1 Peter 4:16** tells us there is no shame in suffering as a Christian. What does the verse say we should do in this matter?
- 24) As we come to our last three verses in this chapter, Peter tells us in **verse 17** that the time has come for judgement to begin in the household of God. So as not to be confused by Peter's meaning, we need to be clear that as Christians, Christ has already paid the penalty for our sins. Peter has already established, however, that this doesn't mean that because we are Christians we are free from life's trials and sufferings. He also established back in **1 Peter 1:6-7** that God uses our trials and sufferings to perfect our faith. Turn back to those verses and write down **1 Peter 1:7** below.
- 25) If God allows trials and sufferings in the lives of those who have come to trust in Him, and He uses those for the purpose of perfecting their faith, what questions do the second half of **1 Peter 4:17 and verse 18** ask? Write those questions down below.
- 26) Looking at **verse 18**, it isn't that our salvation is something we have to work hard to earn. It is a free gift of God's grace to all who come into a saving faith and trust in Christ as the Savior and propitiation for their sins. But that doesn't mean the Christian life is an "easy" life either. What do the following verses teach us about being Christ followers?

Matthew 7:13 & 14 -

Mark 8:34 & 35 -

Luke 9:62 -

David Guzik states: “Peter’s sobering application is clear. If this is what God’s *children* experience, what will become of those who have made themselves His enemies? How can they ever hope to stand before the judgment and wrath of God? Christians can rejoice that the sufferings they face in this life are the worst they will ever face throughout all eternity. We have seen the worst; those who reject Jesus Christ have seen the *best* of life their eternal existence will ever see.”

- 27) Read **1 Peter 4:19**, the last verse of our chapter. “**Therefore...**” *because of all this...* What does **verse 19** tell us to do?
- 28) To “**commit**” something to someone is to **entrust them** with it for safe keeping. The word is an “accounting term” such as depositing your savings into a bank, trusting it will be secured. Peter tells us to **commit our souls** to God, with the trust and confidence that He is our faithful Creator. Regardless of what circumstances we may face, we know that our souls are kept safe in God’s hands. Look up and write out **Romans 8:18** below.
- 29) What was your greatest take away from chapter four of our study?

This study was written and prepared by Shawn Van Hook, 2023