

# Out with the Old in with the New

Preparing to Suffer as Christ Did

I Peter 4:1-11

<sup>1</sup>Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, <sup>2</sup>so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. <sup>3</sup>For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. <sup>4</sup>With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; <sup>5</sup>but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. <sup>6</sup>For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

<sup>7</sup>The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be self-controlled and sober minded for the sake of your prayers. <sup>8</sup>Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup>Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. <sup>10</sup>As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: <sup>11</sup>whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Peter continues to press in on the fact believers will have to suffer for their faith. As elect exiles, Peter reminds believers to arm themselves for battle. The world is hostile to the gospel and those who trust Christ for salvation and so it will be necessary to be ready for instances of conflict (I Peter 1:13). Not only should we expect trials as exiles, but we should expect trials because of the example Christ sets.

Peter has just explained in I Peter 3:18-22 the pathway to victory is a road paved with suffering. The reassurance we have is Christ's story does not end in gloom. He died, but God, through the Spirit, has made him alive again and seated him at the right hand with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Still, we live in the already and the not yet. Christ's victory is our victory to enjoy now, but only within the tension that comes from life in the body as we await our exit into eternity. As we look at what has occurred in our personal salvific history and measure it against the present suffering we experience as a result of our faith in Christ, we increase our confidence to face the future.

Not only we have the confidence to face the future, but we will understand the responsibility we have to serve one another. Times are difficult and the future at times seems bleak, but God supplies strength to us to strengthen one another for His glory. Let's see these wonderful truths unfold in Scripture.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Pe 4:1–11.

## Exposition

### Past Time (I Peter 4:1-3)

- A. The testimony of suffering in the book of I Peter
  - a. **I Peter 2:21, 23**  
*For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.*
  - b. **I Peter 3:18**  
*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,*
  - c. **I Peter 4:1**  
*Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,*
  - d. **I Peter 5:10**  
*And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*
- B. Suffering is an inescapable reality for those who no longer desire to live according to the passions of the flesh, but instead, according to the will of God.
- C. ARM yourselves with the same way of thinking
  - a. Greek word: **ὀπλιζομαι**: to prepare, with focus upon the process of equipping—‘to prepare, to make ready.’
  - b. This word is only found here in the New Testament
    - i. Similar advice Paul gives to the churches in Ephesus.
      - 1. **Ephesians 6:13, Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.**
  - c. This image should not birth in our minds the idea we are on the defense. Instead of being reactive, we should proactively prepare ourselves through our focus on Christ.
    - i. Truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, helmet, the Word of God
    - ii. Every piece of the armor Christ provides
      - 1. I am the way the truth and the life
      - 2. Christ suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous
      - 3. Peace I leave with you, peace I give to you, not as the world giveth
      - 4. He is the author and finisher of our faith
      - 5. The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost
      - 6. In the beginning was the word...and the word was made flesh and dwelled among us and we beheld his glory as the only begotten son full of grace and truth
- D. Suffering in the flesh is a sign we have ceased from sin and seek the will of God
  - a. Peter earlier alludes to the fact suffering and God’s will are at times connected
    - i. **I Peter 3:17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.**

- b. The flesh is contrary to the Spirit which leads us to the will of God. We have victory over the flesh through our faith in Christ.
  - i. **Romans 6:1-2, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?”**
  - ii. **Romans 6:6-7, “We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin.”**
  - iii. **Galatians 5:24, “And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”**
  - iv. **Colossians 3:3, 5 “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God...Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.**

E. John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin*

Not to be daily employing the Spirit and new nature for the mortifying of sin is to neglect that excellent succor which God has given us against our greatest enemy. If we neglect to make use of what we have received, God may justly hold his hand from giving us more. His graces, as well as his gifts, are bestowed on us to use, exercise, and trade with. Not to be daily mortifying sin is to sin against the goodness, kindness, wisdom, grace, and love of God, who has furnished us with a principle of doing it.

### Present Time (I Peter 4:4-6)

- A. Time has run out for doing things to please the passions of our flesh like the Gentiles do.
  - a. Peter uses a vice list to describe the activity of unbelievers (pagans) which are common in the New Testament
    - a. **Jesus: For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, <sup>22</sup> coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. <sup>23</sup> All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.<sup>22</sup>**
    - b. **Paul: Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup> But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. <sup>3</sup>**
    - c. **Paul to Titus: For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. <sup>4</sup>**
  - b. Definition of words in I Peter 4:3.
    - a. Sensuality - **ἀσέλγεια**: behavior completely lacking in moral restraint, usually with the implication of sexual licentiousness—‘licentious behavior, extreme immorality. In some languages the equivalent of ‘licentious behavior’ would be

<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mk 7:21–23.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, Ro 13:13–14.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, Tt 3:3.

- ‘to live like a dog’ or ‘to act like a goat’ or ‘to be a rooster,’ in each instance pertaining to promiscuous sexual behavior.<sup>5</sup>
- b. Passions - **ἐπιθυμέω<sup>b</sup>**; **ἐπιθυμία<sup>b</sup>**, **ας f**: to strongly desire to have what belongs to someone else and/or to engage in an activity which is morally wrong—‘to covet, to lust, evil desires, lust, desire.’<sup>6</sup>
  - c. Drunkenness - **οἴνοφλυγία**, **ας f**: drunkenness, implying the consumption of a large quantity of wine<sup>7</sup>
  - d. Orgies - **κῶμος**, **ου m**; **πότος**, **ου m**: drinking parties involving unrestrained indulgence in alcoholic beverages and accompanying immoral behavior—‘orgy, reveling, carousing.’<sup>8</sup>
  - e. Drinking parties
  - f. Lawless idolatry – disgusting worship of idol gods
- B. The world thinks it strange when Christians do not “plunge” into the same immoral way of living.
- a. We must remember we are strangers and exiles...this world is not our home.
  - b. Pagans are surprised that believers do not participate in what they consider to be normal cultural activities; in response they criticize, defame, and revile believers and thereby also the God they worship.<sup>9</sup>
    - a. State-sponsored persecution is not in view here...the believers are afflicted by family and friends who detest their divorcement from debauchery.
    - b. There are several modern-day occurrences of persecution because of one’s convictions
      1. Black Lives Matter vs All Lives Matter
      2. The American Flag
      3. Social Justice vs. Social Gospel
- C. Those who malign the faithful also malign the God in whom they trust...an action which will incur judgment in the eschaton (the last day).
- a. They will give account – this is courtroom language
    - a. Matthew 12:36, “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give **account for every careless word they speak**,”<sup>10</sup>
    - b. **Hebrews 13:17. “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do**

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<sup>5</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 770.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 290.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 772.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 772.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 204.

<sup>10</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 12:36.

***this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.***<sup>11</sup>

c. ***Revelation 22:12, "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done."***<sup>12</sup>

b. Your faithfulness to God matters and those who practice evil will be assessed and condemned.

D. The gospel was preached to the dead

a. Who are the dead? (various answers)

a. Spiritually dead – rejected because Peter does not use this terminology to refer to those who are spiritually dead

b. Physically dead – rejected because v. 13 does not refer to preaching the good news, but instead announcing judgment and v 6. does not refer to Christ preaching, but instead, preaching about Christ. Finally, the Bible does not teach repentance after death.

b. The correct interpretation

a. **For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit. (NIV)**

#### Future Life (I Peter 4:7-11)

A. The end of all things

a. Peter adds weight with further conversation concerning Christ's return

i. ***Romans 13:11-12***

***<sup>11</sup> Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. <sup>12</sup> The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.***<sup>13</sup>

ii. ***Hebrews 10:23-25***

***<sup>23</sup> Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup> And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, <sup>25</sup> not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.***<sup>14</sup>

B. Our present responsibility considering our future expectation

a. Be self-controlled/sober-minded

b. Prayers

i. Instead of losing your head in the face of trouble...keep a balanced outlook

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<sup>11</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 13:17.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, Re 22:12.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, Ro 13:11–12.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, Heb 10:23–25.

- c. One-another care
    - i. Love one another earnestly
      - 1. I Peter 1:22, <sup>22</sup> Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, <sup>15</sup>
    - ii. Love covers a multitude of sins
      - 1. This does not mean one's love atones for the sins of another.
      - 2. The verse does mean when you love you overlook, as much as you can, the fault of others
        - a. ***Proverbs 10:12, Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.***<sup>16</sup>
    - iii. Hospitality
      - 1. Romans 12:13, <sup>13</sup> Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. <sup>17</sup>
    - iv. Gifts are employed to serve others
      - 1. How can we serve one another?
        - a. Providing meals
          - i. John 12:12 – Martha serves while Jesus is reclined at the table with Lazarus.
        - b. Visiting those in prison
          - i. Matthew 8:15 – Jesus gives a parable about love of neighbor
        - c. Financial support
- C. As we serve one another we bring glory to God.

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<sup>15</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Pe 1:22.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, Pr 10:12.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, Ro 12:13.