

1 PETER 4:1-6

Christ, Our Example In Life & Death

INTRODUCTION;

In last week's study of **vs 3:13-22**, Peter stated that it may be God's will that a believer will suffer unjustly as did Jesus, and therefore, is the perfect example of how a believer should respond. In today's study, Peter continues the context of suffering and adds that during the suffering one is to continue to live a holy life---- which has been one of his main subjects throughout this epistle. So, let's begin at **verse 1**, and again, my choice of scripture is from the NKJV.

vs 4:1-2, "Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God."

- ❑ The "Therefore" refers back to all that Peter had discussed in **vs 3:13-22**. That Jesus was our example of enduring unjust suffering in accord with the plan and will of God----and was blessed by doing so(**vs 3:22**).
- ❑ Peter's exhortation to them was to "arm yourselves". The Greek word translated as such refers to a soldier putting on armor as in **Ephesians 6:13**. That verse speaks of putting on one's armor and standing strong in the "days of evil", similar to times of suffering "for righteousness sake" (**3:14**). This is to help one to "stand" strong, be courageous, patient, enduring. This armor is all important, but first, one must be committed to "standing". So, Peter says here that "armor" is required to "stand" up to suffering.

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- Now, Peter describes what that armor should be; “the same mind” (“purpose”; NAS; “attitude”; NIV) of Christ as He responded to His suffering.
 - The Greek word is (1771)* *ennola***; meaning mind, intention, purpose. The only other use in the N.T. is in Hebrews in reference to God’s Word:
Heb. 4:12, “For the word of God is living and powerful...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”.
 - Peter is saying one must “arm” themselves with the intention of Jesus which was His unswerving resolve for God’s will to be done. Recall that was the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane prior to His death;
Luke 22:42, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me, nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done.”
- At this point, Peter states, “for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin:. To understand this requires some detail analysis.
 - The first consideration is that the “for” appears to imply that when the believer endures suffering with the same intent of Jesus, that both would cease from sin. That can’t be Peter’s meaning since Jesus never sinned so the word “ceased” can’t apply to Him. Additionally, we know that as even as believers, we never “cease” from sin, so the word doesn’t apply to the believer either.

* “Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible”

** “Zodhiates Lexical Aids to the New Testament”

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So what does Peter mean?

- Let's consider Jesus first. What did His suffering on the cross produce? **Romans 5** explains how "sin reigned in death" (ie, caused all mankind to physically die). But God's grace conquered sin through Jesus' death , paying God's just penalty for all the sins of all mankind. By this act of atonement for sin, life---not death---eternal life, was made available to all mankind who would believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord. In like manner, He conquered death through His resurrection from death to life, and by this all believers would also be resurrected to eternal life with Him forever.
- What about the believer? Scripture again covers that question by explaining the unique relationship between them and Jesus' death and resurrection. That relationship removed their slavery to the power sin for the believer. This unique relationship is explained in detail in **Romans 6** and I urge you to read it in total. However, I want to point to several verses that are very pertinent to the explanation of "ceased from sin".
 - ❖ As a believer suffers "for righteousness sake" (**3:14**), the believer is being identified with Christ and as such demonstrates one's break from a sinful life style, ie, a life of repetitive, continuous sin. This is how Paul says it in **Romans 6**;

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Rom. 6:6-7, “knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.”

❖ Then in **Rom. 6:11**, Paul says;

Rom. 6: 11, “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Paul says to count on it to be so, then trust the Spirit of God to make it a reality in your life.

□ Then **vs 4:2** adds the result of having “ceased from sin”. The believer should live for and according to the will of God---just as Jesus, our example, did. This is possible through the fact that with our salvation, God also provided the Holy Spirit to be with us, in us, and empowering us to live that way from that time forward.

- Peter has reminded the reader several time concerning the importance of being in God's will;
 - ❖ **2:15**; it's God's will that one does good
 - ❖ **3:17**; again, we are to do good even if we suffer for it.

God know we need reminding so He does it again here. The Christian is

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always better off in God's will whether in suffering or in peace and prosperity. So we should pray for God to be in control of our lives ----just as Jesus did.

(vs 4:3) “For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles---when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.

□ Again, the “For” ties us to Peter’s previous statement regarding how a believer should live. In this verse he points now they had wasted a lot of their lives living according to the Gentiles (ie, the world, the flesh) and then gives some specifics of that kind of life.

- One has to wonder why believers who had the Law of the O.T. needed to have sins identified for them since that was the purpose of the Law;

Rom. 3:20, “...for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

However, the Law (10 commandments) were stated at the top-most level of understanding, but man has developed many ways to disobey each of these commandments. There seems to be no limit to what the sinful heart can devise. Peter knew this and identified some of these details for his readers. But if one has doubts about what he means by the “will of the Gentiles”, I would suggest that you study some of Paul’s list as

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found in **Gal. 5:19-21**; **Ephes. 5:3-7**; **Col. 3:5-10**; and **II Tim. 3:1-7**; amazingly they are not all the same. These, like Peter's list are all vivid descriptions of the life patterns of those who don't know Christ---and whose judgements are certain.

(vs 4:4) “In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.”

- ❑ So, what happens after one is saved, having previously lived in the above described life style, and who now have “ceased from sin”?
 - Those you ran with notice the change in you and in what you do, say and desire. And that is great! One should have changed in all the particulars after the Spirit of God has started living in you. You have been “born again”---you are a “new man”---you have done away with your “old man”---you are now walking “in the Spirit” and not “in the flesh”---and you are getting better at it every day by the power of the Holy Spirit working in you!!! (Easy to say; hard to do; because we are still “flesh”.)
 - When those you ran with you notice the changes, they think you and your conduct are strange.
 - In this epistle, Peter has identified 5 possible responses people might have after having noticed how your conduct has changed;

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- ❖ (2:12) glorify God
- ❖ (2:15) be silent in their foolish ignorance
- ❖ (3:1) be won to the Lord
- ❖ (3:16) be ashamed
- ❖ (4:4) speak evil of you

- For any of these responses your responsibility is not to be “holier than though, but to pray that they will ultimately respond in a way that pleases God.
- Let their response be between them and the Lord.

□ Peter will next tell us what happens to those who respond by speaking evil of you.

(vs 4:5) “They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”

- “Payday some day” as a preacher once stated. Peter says they will be held accountable----just for saying evil things about me??
 - Yes, really. God hates sin and loves righteousness and is always just. Listen how Jesus describes the situation;

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Matt. 12:34-37, “Brood of vipers! How can you being evil speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgement. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

- ❑ What does Peter mean by “to judge the living and the dead”?
 - It is always interesting to read how different commentators understand scripture. One I read wrote that Peter was speaking of those who were dead or alive at the time of his writing this letter. How odd. The context is that of their judgement by Jesus, and that doesn't occur until He comes again and we all appear at the “judgement seat of Christ” (**II Cor. 5:10**). Therefore, Pete must be speaking of those who have died prior to His 2nd coming and those who are still alive at that time.
 - To avoid any controversy, I won't mention how the “rapture” fits into this time-line of things.

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(vs 4:6) “For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.”

- ❑ This is another troublesome verse in this epistle. It can appear to speak of a “second chance” for salvation after death. If one understands it this way and brings in **vs 3:19-20**, which also could appear to speak of preaching to the dead (see our previous lesson for an explanation of **vs 3:19-20**). One could possibly conclude that Peter is indeed proclaiming a “second chance” doctrine. However, no other scripture supports such a doctrine, and indeed, all other scripture refutes such teaching. Christ “died once for all” (**Rom. 6:10**) and regarding ourselves, the author of Hebrew says;

Heb. 9:27, “And it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgement.”

All argument is ended. If you haven’t accepted Christ, don’t delay, do it now.

- ❑ So, should one understand **vs 4:6**? There are a number of minor differences of opinions for its meaning. My conclusion is that (a) because we will all be judged as to our response to the gospel of Christ (**vs 4:5**), that (b) the gospel has been preached before to those who are now dead, (just as Peter is preaching to the recipients of this letter) and that (c) no matter how much a believer suffers (being wrongly judged by men in this life) their spirit will ultimately live with Christ forever.

NEXT WEEK

1 Peter 4:7-11

“SERVING FOR GOD’S GLORY”