

Lesson 22 – 1 Peter:

II. Believers' conduct in everyday circumstances	2:11 – 5:11
B. Suffering for Christ's Sake:	3:13–4:19
1) Suffering for Righteousness' sake	3:13–17
2) Christ's Suffering and Its Triumphant Consequences	3:18-22
3) A Further Call to Holy Living	4:1-6
4) Practical Demands of Christian Discipleship	4:7-11
5) Further Teaching about Christian Suffering	4:12-19

3) A Further Call to Holy Living: 4:1-6:

“So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you have suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin. You won't spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God. You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy – their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols. Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild and destructive things they do. So, they slander you. But remember that they will have to face God, who stands ready to judge everyone, both the living and the dead. That is why the Good News was preached to those who are now dead – so although they were destined to die like all people, they now live forever with God in the Spirit.”

These verses, like the preceding ones, contain statements that prove difficult for interpreters. There are many different interpretations, some are radically different. The line of interpretation that we will follow says that Peter says that because of Christ's death for them, those who become Christians cannot live the rest of their earthly lives as they did before; and, after death, which they still have to die, they will live eternally before God and have no eternal judgment to face like other men.

Let's look at the sequence of thought in these verses. In the opening phrase there is a reference to Christ's suffering, which was addressed in the preceding verses, particularly in 3:18, that His suffering was human and earthly – meaning ‘in the flesh’, and meant that in His case actually ‘being put to death’. The thought here in 4:1, is that being put to death as He was, is the only form of ‘suffering’ that decisively brings a person's sinning to an end. In Christ's unique case, His death as the innocent substitute, for the penalty due to others. He died unto sin once for all.

He lives eternally as Man (His humanity) unto God (see Romans 6:10: “When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But not that he lives, he lives for the glory of God.”

He died for us, it was the penalty for our sins, since the benefit it procured of a new life in fellowship with God is a benefit to be enjoyed by sinful men on whose behalf He suffered – these facts decisively alter both the way we live now and the prospect or the future before us beyond death. In other words, we ought to face the future with a corresponding new attitude.

First, the intended result of Christ’s death for us is that for the rest of our earthly lives, we should live our days differently, no longer just satisfying our selfish human desires but serving God’s will. The Apostle Paul would say it this way, reckoning ourselves dead to sin but alive unto God, and consequently devoting our bodies to God in service of righteousness. Roman 6:11-13 – “So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus. Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So, use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.”

We are to renounce our old ways and live differently; and when we do our former companions in sin, we will be surprised and may express their displeasure by mocking and reviling us.

Second, when we are reviled this way, we must recognize the different position in which the sinner and the believer stand in relation to God and to His inevitable judgment. For sinners who live in sinful indulgence and idolatry, they have not yet given an account to God, He will judge all sinful people, whether they are alive or not. Not only is there physical death and judgment for sin, but there is also eternal judgment – see Hebrews 9:27 – “And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment,” On the other hand, Christians, even those who have died, those who heard and embraced the gospel of Christ’s suffering for sins on earth, there is not coming day of judgment due to sin. Their sin has been settled and finished here on earth, in the flesh, by Christ’s death. According to God’s purpose in the gospel, believers in Christ enjoy the positive benefit of Christ’s death – the new abiding spiritual life in fellowship with God.

v. 1 – “So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you have suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin.”

The opening phrase refers the readers back to 3:18. It is a reminder that in His human body Christ not only suffered pain; He was actually put to death. This

brought to an end His relation to the sins of men, whose penalty He thus bore in His own body (2:24). He did not die “in sin” or “under sin” but “to sin.” The new life which He was given as Man, when He was first “quickened in the spirit” (3:18), and then bodily raised from the dead, is a life lived wholly devoted to God, and in the enjoyment of full and free access to His presence. Thus, Peter challenges the believers to arm themselves with that same attitude of mind, and as a consequence, live life in a radically different manner. If we are to live in Christ and share in the benefits of His death and resurrection, we must first stop sinning, and secondly, that we should devote the rest of our earthly lives to doing the will of God.

This is personal and individual; we must embrace this new attitude and radical behavior change. We die to sin and are raised in Christ, thus empowered to die to sin and live differently. See Romans 12:2 and Ephesians 4:23:

Romans 12:2 – “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”

Ephesians 4:23 – “Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.”

Some scholars will say that the phrase “For if you have suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin” is a reference to the purifying effect of physical suffering. If a Christian suffers humbly for Christ that his heart is purified and disengaged from sin, that his heart is weaned from the world and its ways. But others say that Peter is challenging Christians to enter into a life a renewed life as a consequence of Christ’s suffering and not of their own suffering. Could it be that physical suffering is like discipline for the believer to wean from sin and bring sin’s continuance to an end???

v. 2 – “You won’t spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God.” This is a striking statement in this verse, but it indicates the ultimate purpose of Christ’s suffering and what should be the Christian’s proper response. This verse indicates the mind with which Christians should arm themselves to face life from now onward. This verse also indicates what should be the positive consequence of ceasing from sin. It indicates the principle or rule that Christians earthly life should be governed by – the will of God, not our own lusts and desires.

In this verse, there are two singular nouns that stand in sharp contrast with two plural nouns. The Christian life, if lived rightly, can enjoy a unity and an integration that is impossible for sinners. There is only One true God and for His

people He has only one will. By contrast sinners are distracted and pulled first one way and then another way to satisfy their sinful desires and appetites.

v. 3 – “You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy - their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols.” Here, Peter notes that the Christian’s earthly life is divided into two parts:

- 1) “In the past” – before conversion, v. 3.
- 2) “The rest of your lives” – after conversion, v. 2.

Peter is saying that the Christian should not use any part of “rest of your lives” doing things that you did “in the past.”

In those pre-conversion days, life was spent NOT doing the will of God but rather deliberately doing the will of godless men. Here, Peter bluntly describes forms of licentious physical indulgence and also the improper and misdirected religious worship. Peter’s language implies that these are the things which his readers formerly did and shared in, but they don’t do any longer. The things listed are sins against decency, excess of drinking and the resulting lawlessness of unlawful acts that followed that broke the laws of nature and conscience. These things were even condemned as improper by human judgment.

v. 4 – “Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild parties and destructive things they do. So, they slander you.”

These former friends could be referred to as godless men, and they think it strange or they are genuinely surprised that you the new believer have become Christians and they no longer keep company with them or participate in excesses. The parties turned into wild riotous parties, and they were wasteful and produced unlawful behavior. The phrase “they slander you” indicates one way in which Christians would suffer for their doing good!

v. 5 – “But remember that they will have to face God, who stands ready to judge everyone, both the living and the dead.”

Peter reminds the readers that no one can escape this final accountability or answerability to God for the words and actions of their earthly lives. Note the phrase “ready to judge everyone” – this reminds us that it is God’s essential character to exercise judgment – exercise justice with perfect knowledge.

See Deuteronomy 32:4 – “He is the Rock; his deeds are perfect. Everything he does is just and fair. He is a faithful God who does no wrong; how just and upright he is!”

Peter gives us a comprehensive summary of God’s certain future judgment of all men, no matter whether they are alive or already dead. We see this also in Acts

10:42 and 2 Timothy 4:1, and then it is found in the creeds of the early Christian Church.

Acts 10:42 – “And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of all – the living and the dead.”

2 Timothy 4:1 – “I solemnly urge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who will someday judge the living and the dead when he come to set up his Kingdom:” God’s judgment is part of the full gospel or truth about God’s purposes for men in Christ, and Christ is appointed to deal with all the affairs of men, particularly their sin. Thus, those who do not receive Him as their Savior, must face Him as their Judge.

v. 6 – “That is why the Good News was preached to those who are now dead – so although they were destined to die like all people, they now live forever with God in the Spirit.”

Peter notes that the preaching of the Gospel not only offers men the benefit of ceasing from sin and living differently for the rest of their earthly lives, see verses 1 & 2 - “So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you have suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin. You won’t spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God.”

It also offers them the benefit of escaping judgment and entering into fuller spiritual life after death. Sin must be judged either here or here after. Sinners who do not respond to the gospel invitation must face judgment hereafter as seen in verse 5 – “But remember that they will have to face God, who stands ready to judge everyone, both the living and the dead.”

Those who do respond to the Gospel invitation find that the judgment due to sin is completed here in the flesh, through the judgment that Christ suffered and bore for them. The last remaining sting of sin that they must suffer is the death of their sinful and mortal earthly bodies. After their death lies the spiritual quickening and entrance into fuller life.

This is why the gospel was preached during their earthly lives to mortals who have since died physically. When these people embrace the gospel, the judgment due them as sinners is fully accomplished in this world, in the flesh and in the spirit, so here and after death they enter into life and by Christ’s physical death and spiritual quickening (resurrection), they are truly brought into God’s presence, see 3:18 – “Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.”