

Lesson Six — Christ, Our Example

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In the past two weeks we have looked at some of the instructions and commands Peter gives in light of the future inheritance. This week we will continue to look at how we are to live, and why. Be sure to seek the guidance from the Holy Spirit as you begin this week's study.

Day One — Arm Yourselves with the Same Purpose

Today we are going to begin I Peter chapter four. Remember, as with all Scripture, chapter four falls within a greater context. We cannot understand this portion of Scripture correctly, if we separate it from its context. Would you mind taking a few minutes and rereading the first three chapters of I Peter? Do that first, then read the following passage.

I Peter 4

1 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, **2** so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. **3** For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.

4 And in all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excess of dissipation, and they malign you; **5** but they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. **6** For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.

This passage in chapter four relates to the context found in chapters two and three. Notice in 4:1 you see the phrase “with the same purpose.” This tells us that we are *to arm ourselves with the same purpose* as Christ has. In order to do that, we must know what was Christ’s purpose. What was it? It might be helpful to check out a couple preceding verses in I Peter. They are printed for you below:

I Peter 2

20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. 21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, 22 WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;

Verse twenty-one says that we *have been called for this purpose*. As stated in the passage, to what purpose have we been called?

Now read how Peter follows up this idea in chapter three:

I Peter 3

8 To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; 9 not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

Peter tells us WHY we have been called to this purpose. Why is it?

According to these passages, how do you reconcile the acceptance of unfair suffering? In other words, what is the benefit of suffering unjustly?

Now, having a handle on the very purpose of our having to suffer here and now, let’s see how this can be done. HOW are we capable of such righteous suffering? The first two verses of chapter four explain it, especially when seen on the heels of the last two verses of chapter three. Read it below.

I Peter 3:21-4:2

21 And corresponding to that, baptism now saves you — not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience — through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

1 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

If you understand the intention Peter has in making the statement that *baptism now saves you*, you will go a long way in understanding what baptism does for us. The purpose of baptism in the life a believer is now (always has been, always will be) symbolically a rite of passage, so to speak. It indicates that in baptism, a saved person has died and has been buried with Christ, and has been **resurrected with Him**, in order to walk in newness of life (Ro.3:3ff), in order to walk in the spirit. We are to now reckon our old flesh, the old man, dead and buried. The man of flesh which has a propensity to sin, has been buried, and now we can choose to walk in the spirit, or newness of life. This then, gives us the freedom to walk according to the spirit. And if we reckon our old man (the flesh) dead, we will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. This now saves us...speaking of *the salvation of the soul*, which is the salvation Peter is dealing with in this epistle (3:21; cf. 1:9).

With that understanding, now read I Peter 4:1-6 printed at the beginning of today's lesson. Do you understand better what Peter is talking about? Can you put it into your own words?

Good. See you tomorrow.

Day Two — A Warning of Judgment

Hopefully yesterday's study helped to reinforce your understanding of the role of baptism in the life a believer. (This topic will be discussed more thoroughly in this week's lecture.) Hopefully it also helped you to understand the role that suffering plays in our lives, and how we are no longer to walk the way we used to walk. Today we will see how Peter relates this to the end times and how we are to have sound judgment with this view in mind.

Begin with prayer for the Holy Spirit to be your Teacher once again. Ask Him to give you understanding, and to convict you of any changes you need to make in your life.

Now go back and read I Peter 4:1-6 at the beginning of yesterday's lesson. Then we will read where Peter takes us next:

I Peter 4

7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. 8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint. 10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen

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Verse seven says that we are to *be of sound judgment and sober in spirit*. In other words, don't be foolish about the time we have left. Paul made inference to something similar to the Church at Corinth.

I Corinthians 11:31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged.

Given what Peter says in 4:7, and what Paul says in I Corinthians 11, what do you think we should be careful to do? And why?

For your own benefit, are you doing that?

Are you also doing it for the benefit of others?

Peter says, *the end of all things is at hand*. What do you think Peter wants this thought to convey to us?

In this passage Peter lists six things that we are to do. What are those things?

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

Looking through the list you just made and checking out the text again, make notes next to each item as to *how* or *why* we are to do these things.

Ultimately, what is the goal for our being obedient in these things (v. 11)?

Have you been employing such activities in your life for the serving of others within the Body of Christ?

If so, how? If not, why not?

See you tomorrow.

Day Three — Suffering Equates to Glory

Peter continues his theme of suffering with respect to salvation (the salvation of the soul). As we continue to work through I Peter, continue to ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

We are not to be surprised at our suffering, but we are to see it as a blessing. See if you draw that idea from what Peter writes:

I Peter 4

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. 14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. 15 By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; 16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER? 19 Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

I cannot even tell you how many times I have thought about verse thirteen. I have thought about it for myself, and I have shared it with others. Relating vv. 12 and 13 together, what can you understand?

Verse thirteen reveals the truth that *to the degree that you suffer righteously*, you will share in Christ's glory. Do you understand that? Do you believe that? What does this mean to you?

Look back on the sheets in your Appendix at the first chapter of I Peter and read vv. 10-13. Peter deals with the **sufferings** (which would come in the last days) *of* (lit. *with respect to*, or *for*) **Christ and the glories to follow**. Compare these two passages (4:13 and 1:10-12) and write out your thoughts.

Here are some other passages that reveal the same truth, with a little different emphasis. (Be sure to understand the word *eternal* <aionios 166>. This passage compares this age with *the age to come*.)

2 Corinthians 4

17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal <166> weight of glory far beyond all comparison <5236>, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal (aionios <166>).

eternal <166>: (adjective) *aionios*, (from the noun form *aion* <165>); perpetual (also used of past time, or past and future as well): — eternal, for ever, everlasting, world (began).

The Greek word “aion” <165>, which can mean:

- 1) a life time: the period of an individual's existence on earth
- 2) a segment of time: such as this present age or the age to come
- 3) a very long time: such as the age of mankind
- 4) perpetuity of time: eternity (especially if it is used in plural form [e.g., Heb. 13:8])
- 5) occasionally *aion* is translated “world” or “universe”

Understanding the context of the use of this word is necessary if we are to understand what the author means by it. There is a sheet in the Appendix (p. 169) entitled “Eternity — Is it Eternal or Age-Lasting?” This sheet may be helpful in understanding the use of this word in various portions of Scripture.

And from v. 17:

comparison <5236>: hyperbole, from 5235; a throwing beyond others, far beyond the normal mark i.e. (figuratively) super eminence; adverbially pre-eminently: — abundance, (far more) exceeding, excellency, more excellent, beyond (out of) measure. (This word is found twice in the text. This implies that whatever is being compared, is beyond comparison. It is beyond comparing it to anything else.)

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Given these definitions to fit with the intent of this passage, what do you think Paul meant when he wrote this?

Here are a few more passages for your consideration:

Romans 8

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

NOTES:

II Timothy 2

12 If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us;

NOTES:

I Peter 5

10 And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal <166> glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. 11 To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

NOTES:

Philippians 3

8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10 that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

NOTES:

Now reread the passage at the beginning of today's work. Why do you think we are to see suffering as blessing?

We'll pick up at v. 17 tomorrow. Continue to pray for your understanding.

Day Four — Entrust Your Souls

This next section of I Peter chapter four may well be misunderstood, *if it is not kept within the context* of I Peter. Many times it is misused or misinterpreted, as it is taken out of its context. So in order to properly interpret this passage, go to I Peter chapter four in your appendix, and read the chapter again in its entirety. Then we will look at these last couple of verses. Read chapter four now. (Remember, repetition and familiarity with the text are excellent teachers.)

What is the subject matter of this chapter (v. 1)?

Yes, suffering. Suffering with respect to what, or for Whom (vv. 5,7)?

Keeping in mind the salvation Peter is dealing with (1:9), read this next passage:

I Peter 4

17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER? 19 Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

What question is being asked in v. 17?

Is this question dealing with faith/belief or obedience?

So the outcome Peter is dealing with is based upon obedience. Do you see that? The outcome of judgment is based upon obedience! The fact is that Peter is dealing with salvation...the salvation based upon faithful

obedience, not upon faith alone. Therefore, Peter is obviously dealing with the salvation of the soul...the very salvation mentioned earlier in his letter in 1:9.

This portion of Scripture deals with the outcome of judgment for two types of people within the same group. It deals with the group within the household of God...and within that household, two types of people — those who are obedient to God, and those who are not obedient to Him. And, by inference, the passage deals with the outcome of judgment for both.

It is interesting how the Holy Spirit allowed Peter to take this Old Testament passage and rephrase it as he did. Read the passage this quote is taken from:

Proverbs 11:31 If the righteous will be rewarded in the earth, How much more the wicked and the sinner!

Both Peter and the author of this Proverb are speaking of the same overall group, but of two different sub-groups. They are speaking of saved people, but specifically those who are obedient, as opposed to those who are disobedient — the righteous, and the wicked.

With this being the quote Peter used, what do you think Peter meant when he said *“If it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become (be the outcome) of the godless man and the sinner (those who do not obey the gospel of God)?* Put this thought into your own words:

What are the recipients supposed to do according to v. 19?

Entrust their *what* to a faithful Creator?

Any thoughts or question on all of this?

See you tomorrow.

Day Five — Wrapping up

Today we are going to finish up I Peter by reading through chapter five. Next week we will begin II Peter, but not before we review what we have learned thus far. So let's wrap it up.

Take your sheet from the Appendix and read I Peter chapter five.

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Based upon what Peter has previously written, he continues his exhortation. First to the elders... Are you an elder in your flock? How does Peter exhort elders?

And then to the younger men... Are you a younger man within your flock? How does Peter exhort younger men?

In the middle of v. 5, Peter exhorts all of us. How does he exhort us? What is the idea of our humbling ourselves?

In v. 8, we are told to be of sober spirit. What does that mean?

Then we are told to be on the alert. Why?

What does our adversary do? And what are we to do about him?

Now will you put v. 10 into your own words?

Then Peter closes and so will I. But before we end for the day, go back to the very first paragraph of Lesson One on page seven and read it. Do you understand now, how Peter knows that once we have suffered, we will be perfected, confirmed, strengthened, and established? It was his personal experience. That's why he knows that we are not to be surprised by the fiery ordeals that we face. Suffering serves a noble purpose in the lives of believers. And believers would do well to recognize the fact and believe that which God has to say about it!