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1 Peter 4

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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Bible
at Home

Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

1 Peter 4.

INTRODUCTION: during Peter's generation the readers of this first letter of his were confused and discouraged by the persecution they were encountering because of their faith. Peter exhorted them to stand strong, repeatedly reminding them of Christ's example, the riches of their inheritance in him, and the hope of his returning again to resurrect them to eternal glory. He explained how Christians should respond when they suffer because of their beliefs. Peter is called, the "apostle of hope." His primary message is to trust the Lord, live obediently no matter your circumstances, and keep your hope fixed on God's ultimate promise of deliverance. Suffering is to be expected, but it is temporary and yields great blessings for those who remain steadfast. Peter wrote this letter in the mid-60s A.D.

Topics.

- Christ suffered in the flesh; arm yourselves with the same way of thinking.
- Whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.
- Live for the will of God and not in the flesh or for human passions.
- The Gospel was preached to those who are dead.
- Love covers a multitude of sins.
- Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes to test you.
- Sharing in Christ's suffering.
- Judgment begins at the household of God.

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The previous chapter: Peter in the previous chapter spoke of wives with unsaved husbands, of Christian woman whose adorning is on their external appearance and told husbands to show honour to their wife. He said the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and that it is their prayers that God hears. Then he talked about suffering for doing-good, of Jesus proclaiming the Gospel to the spirits in prison and of water baptism corresponding to Noah the flood and the ark.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

1 PETER 4:1

Christ Suffered in the Flesh, Arm Yourselves with the Same Way of Thinking.

- **1 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.

The words "Arm yourselves," carry the idea of armour. Armour is put on for attacking or protecting in battle. The idea of Peter here is that that our state of mind would be such that it is ready to meet persecution, trials, conflicts, and the troubles, hardships and temptations of life with the same fortitude of mind that the Lord Jesus had. The meaning is that we would be ready to die rather than compromise or forsake our faith. This

mindset is the strongest defence against our enemies and the troubles, hardships and temptations that entice us to forsake the Lord or turn bitter against God. Readiness to die for Christ's sake will give the best security of faith and guarantee eternal victory. Peter is saying Christ was willing to suffer for the glory of his heavenly Father and for the love of those separated from God; therefore we should likewise arm ourselves with the same mind and be ready to suffer for Christ in the same manner that he suffered for his heavenly Father's glory and for ours.

Whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin: the words, "Has ceased from sin" (v1) cannot mean that those in Christ can attain to a perfect state of sinlessness, if any of us could fulfil every detail the law demands and attain to the perfect standard of God's holiness not only would it mean that there would be no-need for grace but also that Christ died for no-reason. Added to this John in his letter to Christian brothers and sisters wrote:

- If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:7-10).

The following are the four most common interpretations of the words, "Has ceased from sin," means:

1. They have stopped living a lifestyle of sin and living to gratify the flesh (self, ego pride, lust and greed etc.).
2. Those in Christ have ceased from being chargeable with sin (i.e. they are judged as if they had never sinned, as criminals are counted as free men when they have suffered the penalty of the law for their crime). Likewise, Christ through his death and resurrection has set those who belong to his family free from the judgment of the law, to condemn to eternal death, and in this sense, sin ceases to have any power over those in Christ.
3. Some say that the words "ceased from sin" do not refer to the existence of indwelling sin in a believer; the deliverance from the burden of sin upon a believer; the continual war with sin in a believer or the slips and falls by sin, and into sin of a believer. But rather to the cessation from the guilt and the punishment due because of sin and from its dominion, slavery and bondage through the death of Christ and the power of God's grace since all in Christ's family are in God's eyes counted as being without spot or wrinkle or any such thing because they trust in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ to save them and not their own self-effort or religious works.
4. The words "For whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, could be stated, whoever has died (with or without Christ) has ceased from sin. This interpretation flows with the following verse since Peter is basically telling his readers not to wait until they die to be without sin, but live now as though they had already died and ceased from sin.

It would serve no purpose to argue or quarrel over which of these interpretations are what Peter had in mind since none of them are doctrinally incorrect and all can be applied.

1 PETER 4:2-3

Live for the Will of God and Not in the Flesh or for Human Passions.

- **1 Peter 4:2-3:** so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. ³The time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in, sensuality, (lasciviousness in KJV) passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.

The words "Living in sensuality" (v3) do not only refer to unlawful sex, orgies, adulteries (acts of sexual deceitfulness, infidelities, disloyalties and betrayals), incest, paedophilia, having multiple sex partners or using the opposite sex to fulfil one's own selfish lust and such like things, but also embrace the idea of living to gratify self, ego and pride (the flesh) with excessive worldly wealth and riches and indulging oneself in the opulent luxuries of this world. The King James Bible uses the word lasciviousness which means, wantonness, extravagant and wasteful, it carries the idea of self-indulgence and being wasteful with what one is given while wantonness is an old fashioned expression for showing disapproval, (i.e., a wanton woman has sex with a lot of men) and carries the idea of causing harm or damage for no reason. This idea behind the words "Living in sensuality" (v3) can be applied to any lifestyle that lives life simply to gratify the cravings of the flesh (self, ego, pride, and greed) for the things of this world or to sexual indulgences (i.e., selfishly using others to gratify one's own sensual passions).

Idolatry: not only embraces worship of idols, but also carries the idea of hero worship meaning the worship of men or woman whether religious or secular simply because they are greatly talented, gifted or famous etc. It is when we idolise a person to such an extent that they possess our hearts, minds and thoughts.

NOTICE: drunkenness is an act of the flesh, but that does not mean that drinking alcohol is. A Christian man having a cold beer after a hard day's work is not sinning nor is a man who takes his wife out for a romantic dinner and buys a bottle of wine. It is the excess of alcohol that God is warning against for obvious reason; it lowers a person's willpower and inhibitions and can lead to behaviour that a person may regret the next day and for some, for the rest of their lives (i.e., maiming or killing a person because of drunken driving).

Live for the will of God: the will of God in this context is to deny the passions of the flesh, (referring to the lower nature) and live to glorify God and bring a good testimony to Christ and the Christian faith.

1 PETER 4:4-5

Judging the Quick and the Dead.

- **1 Peter 4:4-5:** With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; ⁵but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead (the quick and the dead, in the KJV).

Those who live to gratify the passions and lusts of the flesh through excessive sexual activity, drunken parties and lawless behaviour etc., cannot understand how those in Christ find happiness and joy without joining in what they consider to be the only means of fun, excitement and happiness. It is surprising to those who do not know the love of Christ that people can have fun and joy without partying and indulging in the sinful pleasures and luxuries of the world to gratify the cravings of self, ego and pride etc., (the flesh).

Christ will judge the living and the dead: those who will give account refer to those of the previous verse who are not only dishonest, immoral and full of self-indulgence, but who also do harm and speak against Christ and those who belong to him. The following verses show that the words, "The living and the dead" is a common phrase to denote all who will be brought before Christ for judgment.

- Christ commanded us the apostles to testify that God has appointed him to be judge of the *living and the dead* (Acts 10:42).
- Christ Jesus is to judge the *living and the dead* (2 Tim. 4:1).

To calm the minds of God's people, and make them sit easy under all criticisms, mocking, slanders and persecutions and not to think of avenging themselves, Peter encourages them to commit themselves to Christ who will judge righteously. Peter is encouraging those who face trials and opposition to face them with patience and never feel that they are forgotten or attempt to avenge themselves, because the Lord will vindicate them when he returns and calls to judgment those who have harmed or wronged those who belong to God's Kingdom in any way.

1 PETER 4:6

The Gospel was Preached to those who are Dead.

- **Peter 4:6:** 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.

Some have mistakenly thought this verse means that the Gospel was preached to those who have died. Based on this verse they believe people die and then have the Gospel preached to them so that they may live eternally as God does. But this grossly erroneous teaching goes against the entire teaching of the Bible. Certainly, Peter is talking about those who have already died, but he is referring to those who though now dead had the Gospel proclaimed to them when they were alive. Peter does not mean they had the Gospel proclaimed to them when they were dead or after they died, rather he is referring to people who are now dead, but had the Gospel preached to them prior to their death.

The following verses show that the dead have no consciousness:

- It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment (Heb. 9:27).
- Those who go down to the grave do not hope for your faithfulness (Isaiah 38:18).
- The living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten (Eccles 9:5).

These verses show that verse six could read, "This is why the Gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, that though judged in the flesh when they were alive the way people are, they might have lived in the spirit the way God desires people to do. For further information concerning the dead, see the title:

- Resurrection (What happens when we Die?).
- In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Live in the Spirit the way God does: (v6) carries the following two ideas:

1. That they might live eternally.
2. That they might live in the fruits of God's Spirit (i.e., love, compassion, kindness, grace, mercy and be always ready to forgive etc.).

1 PETER 4:7-10

Love covers a Multitude of Sins.

- **1 Peter 4:7-10:** The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. ⁸Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

The end of all things could apply to:

- The end of the Levitical priesthood and the ceremonial law.
- Rome's soon destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple.
- The end of Jewish life as Israel has known it for over four-thousand years.
- The end of this present age.

NOTICE: in the previous verses Peter told those who belong to Christ to set their mind on being prepared to suffer and deny the flesh and here states, "Love covers a multitude of sins" clearly showing that Peter does not expect that the body of Christ will be free of sin, in fact he is telling brothers and sisters in Christ to earnestly keep loving one another even when such circumstances exist.

Hospitality: means being fond of having guests it carries the idea of showing the same kind of affection that one has for a friend to a stranger or neighbour. It means welcoming and treating others as a dear friend and to be an entertaining host even to strangers.

Gift: in this context refers to gifts that can be used for the benefit of others such as a miraculous or spiritual ability or qualification, hospitality, counselling, encouragement, helps, teaching the ability to offer financial support and such like things. Peter is saying that no gift should be used to boost our own ego and pride or to exalt ourselves, but to benefit others in whatever way we are able. No-one in Christ should ever think they are without gifts that can benefit others since we all have the ability to encourage and be friendly and to show kindness and to make people feel accepted. It is when we look at the cross that we see the greatest gift that can be given, which is God's gift of unconditional love manifested to all mankind through the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). We are all created with a need to be loved and accepted thus the greatest gift of all gifts are not supernatural gifts, but the gift of showing others in whatever way we are able love and acceptance.

A natural family and the family of God: in a natural family, children go astray, fall short of their parent's expectations and yet the family is bonded together, why, because love covers a multitude of sins. This is how it should be in the family of Christ, because it is very likely we are all, at some stage going to fall short of each other's expectations. There is no-doubt we all fall far short of God's holiness, but in His love and grace manifested through Christ to us God has covered our sins, likewise we should show the same love and grace toward our brothers and sisters in Christ's family.

1 PETER 4:11

Do everything so that God maybe Glorified through Jesus Christ.

- 1 Peter 4:11: 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.

No-matter what it is that we do whether amongst the body of Christ, at work, in the home, out socialising on the sports-field etc., all our behaviour should be such that it honours God and brings a good testimony to Christ and the Christian faith.

1 PETER 4:12-16

Do not be Surprised at the Fiery Trial when it comes to Test You.

- **1 Peter 4:12-16:** Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

The words, "Fiery trial" in this context most likely refers to Rome's destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple in 70 A.D. but it is in no way limited to this, but can apply to any crisis in life that affects a brother or sister in Christ with overwhelming hardship and suffering.

NOTICE: Peter does not say rejoice in the actual suffering, but rejoice because whoever endures suffering will have no regrets when Christ's glory is revealed. It is very much like a pregnant woman who after suffering enormous labour pains not only immediately forgets them when she holds her new-born child in her arms, but has no regrets. Likewise, it will be with all who endure suffering for Christ's when he returns as King of kings and Lord of lords and crowns them with an eternal crown of everlasting glory.

Sharing in Christ's suffering: the previous verses were about Christians being mocked and slandered because they would not take part in parting drunkenness and sexual indulgences and verses fourteen onwards are about Christians being insulted for the name of Christ and about living a lifestyle that is pleasing before God in contrast to being accused of wrongdoing. Therefore, the suffering Peter has in mind is suffering because of our faith. When we like Job of the Old Testament continue to praise and worship God through these kinds of sufferings, we should rejoice for three reasons:

1. The Spirit of glory and of God rests upon those who endure suffering because of their faith in Christ, this means God's heart, His mind, His passion, His love, is upon them
2. Those who stand for Christ under suffering circumstances are by their faithfulness to the Lord declaring to the world the love and glory of God in their hearts and in their lives.
3. Christ notices all who are enduring for his sake and will reward them accordingly when he returns.

The words, "If anyone suffers as a Christian, let them not be ashamed" (v16) means if we are suffering let it be because of our faith and good behaviour and not because of wrongdoing.

NOTE: the words, "Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you" (v12) can by extension be applied to any trouble, hardship and crisis of life that may come upon us since these troubles have the potential to turn us bitter toward God and forsake our faith. This is why troubles and hardships are spoken of tests of our faith because whether they are persecutions or hardships of life, they both have the potential to cause brothers and sisters in Christ to forsake their faith.

1 PETER 4:17-19

Judgment Begins at the Household of God.

- **1 Peter 4:17-19:** For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" ¹⁹Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

Here is the glory and justice of God, judgment begins with those who are in his Kingdom. The words "If the righteous is scarcely saved" refer to those in Christ and immediately takes the mind of the ardent Bible student to the following words of Paul in his letter to the Corinthians:

- If anyone builds on the foundation (the Lord Jesus Christ) with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, they will receive a reward, but if anyone's work is burned up, they will suffer loss, though they themselves will be saved, but only as through fire (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

Peter is saying if the righteous referring to those saved by faith in Christ and by God's grace are scarcely saved to eternal life what will be the judgment of the wicked who deny God and are without grace? The answer to this question would be that they will be cast into the Lake a Fire a symbol of eternal death (i.e., total extinction). This is why Peter says that those who are saved by God's grace should completely trust their eternal future to God, but while they wait for the Lord to return do-good, meaning they should be law abiding citizens and not only treat their brothers and sisters in Christ with respect, kindness, decency, mercy and grace, but also those outside of God's Kingdom.

Trusting that God is faithful and trustworthy is not about:

- Trusting God will deliver us from suffering that comes from serving Christ.
- Trusting God will deliver us from our troubles or hardships in life.
- Trusting God will make us prosperous, rich and wealthy.

Certainly for some God may do anyone of these, but the primary focus of trusting God that Peter has in mind is trusting God to keep His promise that he will save us to eternal life and everlasting glory because of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, despite the sinful aberration and dysfunctions that dwell within us.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.