

Resolved

Long Beach Alliance Church • July 17th, 2011 • Pastor Chris Lankford

Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

~1st Peter 4:19 (NASB)

1) Be Willing To Suffer Rather Than Sin

- A) With the word-picture of baptism (transformation) still rich in the mind of the reader (1st Peter 3:21-22), Peter returns to the suffering of Jesus Christ as the ideal example (4:1).
- B) Enduring suffering, like the victorious proclamation of Christ over his enemies (3:19-20), is presented as a strong statement against sin in following God's will (4:1-2).
- C) Remember that Peter has in mind those who are suffering for their faith unjustly (cf. 3:14-17). In this sense, when one suffers for their faith in Christ, they are demonstrating (making a statement) that they are through with sin and would rather choose suffering than sin.
- D) The Christian follows the example of Christ's own suffering, growing and developing in obedience because of suffering, just as Jesus Christ grew and developed (cf. Hebrews 5:8).
- E) Rather than be shocked by suffering/opposition, Christ-followers expect suffering without avoidance!

- F) This is a key to understanding how Jesus Christ could have been "tempted in all things as we are, yet [was] without sin" (Hebrews 4:15; cf. 2:18). Jesus never avoided suffering, choosing relationship with God over all other things.
- G) Rather than succumb to temptation (numbing or avoiding pain), He suffered the fullness of sin's evil effects, even to the point of a humiliating death (cf. Philippians 2:8).
- H) Unlike anyone else in history, Jesus experienced the fullness of temptation and never relented to sin. He showed that His suffering in the flesh was victory over sin, and examples a life which fulfills God's will (1st Peter 4:1-2).

2) The Painful Reality Of Opposition

- A) Peter has gone to great lengths to state that Christians, whenever possible, are to live in a ways that are "good and acceptable" within the culture (2:12-20, 3:1-12).
- B) However, when the values of society are designed to numb the effects of sin, almost always through behaviors which lack self-control, Christians are to be "foreigners" within the culture, fully resolved to living for Jesus Christ.
- C) Peter highlights this kind of a lack of self-control in focusing on behaviors which are self-destructive, and often result in being harmful to others (4:3), even noting the dismay and hostility which Christians can receive when they intentionally withdraw from these activities (4:4).
- D) But there is an encouragement in the midst of the opposition found in the universal application of God's judgment of the living (those who can hear the gospel presently) and the dead (those who have already died and heard the gospel while still living) (4:5).

- E) Even those who have been judged as not measuring up by human standards, if they have embraced the gospel (the measure of judgment), will find true life with God (4:6).
- F) Followers of Christ are called to live counter-culturally in some key areas where popular culture embraces a lack of being self-controlled! Do not be surprised by opposition, it will sometimes be intense! But God will judge, we need not be concerned about justice, God is in control!

3) The End Of All Things Is Near

- A) Often, when we hear the phrase “the end is near,” we think of some sort of apocalyptic doomsday or the “the end of the world is coming,” usually accompanied by a crazy looking guy on a street corner carrying a sign announcing impending doom.
 
- B) However, Peter is probably not as concerned with the end of world, as he is with alerting Christians to the reality that the time in which we live is the final stage in God’s redemptive plan (His salvation plan) for mankind (4:7).
- C) Because we live in these “last days” of God’s redemptive plans, living according to the Spirit of God (4:6) in our lives is of the utmost importance.
- D) Living “with the end in mind” includes a lifestyle of sobriety for the purpose of prayer. We are not controlled by the Spirit of God by simple sobriety from evil things, but we also fill our lives with the good aspects of the unique and wondrous Christian life, especially prayer (4:7), a fervent love for one another (4:8), other mindedness (4:9), and service (giving grace) to Christ’s church (4:10) – and all this for the glory of God (to increase His fame, 4:11).

4) Resolved

- A) Perhaps because Christians were already being persecuted throughout the Roman Empire, Peter refers to the future suffering of Christ’s church in the vivid imagery of a “fiery ordeal” (4:12) which would “test” the resolve of Christians.
- B) But rather than contending for one’s “rights” or advocating a “war/fight” with their persecutors, Christians are to “rejoice” in sharing Christ’s sufferings (4:13)!
- C) Peter warns all followers of Christ to not be surprised when these kinds of events occur (4:12), that in reality persecution is actually a blessing which spreads God’s glory (his fame and name) through your ordeal (4:14).
- D) Be resolved to suffer for the right reasons, for the sake of Christ (4:15-16). There is no shame in suffering for Christ, since it is an indication that we are truly in the final period of time before Christ returns.
- E) The Old Testament teaches that God’s final judgments will begin with His chosen people, and Peter adopts this view in favor of the Christian, noting that the persecutions which are facing people are actually an indication that we are in the final time in God’s redemptive plan (4:17).
- F) In fact, since followers of Christ are following God with great difficulty and persecution, how much more difficult will it be when the judgment shifts from God’s chosen people to those who have never responded to Jesus (4:18)?
- G) Finally, Peter reasons, be resolved to do the will of God, even if it means suffering. In doing so you are entrusting your life to the Creator who is faithful and will not fail you or His good redemptive plan for mankind (4:19).