

Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

An Expository Journey Through **1Peter**

1Peter 4:1-6

41- Arm Yourself Also with the Same Purpose- Part 2

December 30, 2018

1 Peter 4:1-6

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, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.

4 In *all* this, they are surprised that you do not run with *them* into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign *you*;

5 but they will 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*.

To the Glory of God

Now we have come to the final "Lord's Day" of 2018. And we find ourselves with one more opportunity to "look over Peter's shoulder", as it were, and try to grasp the enormity of what God the Holy Spirit "moved him" to write down. And, as God's Providence would have it, we have one final moment to examine the Passage that Brother Vern just read to us. Next week, if God is willing, we will take a short "vacation" from our "journey" through the **Epistle of 1 Peter** and we will open the new year with an examination of just what is the "Biblical Gospel". But

this morning-, we want to look again at the first six verses of **1 Peter 4** and try to understand why Peter had such an *urgency* to prepare the saints of his day to suffer, as a Christian.

Now there are many different reasons *why* genuine believers suffer. And the Issue of "Suffering for genuine believers" has, *historically*, been a serious problem for God's people to try to grasp. And as we have already found out, because there is so much inconsistent and contradictory, and just flat out false teaching about this Issue, many of the people who make up the modern Church are very confused about why a Good and Loving God would allow His Own people to suffer. This "journey" through **1 Peter** is my own feeble effort at fixing that problem and to prepare you to be able to believe what the Apostle taught in **1 Peter 3:17**:

For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.

Now the prevailing sentiment among God's people about this in the 21st Century, here in America, is the same as it was back in the 1st Century, that Suffering comes about when we do something "wrong". But most believe and teach today that wonderful Blessings, and amazing Healings, and breathtaking Prosperity comes about when we do what is "right".

And the result of this false Teaching is that the Motivation behind *why* we should struggle to obey the Bible has been warped and twisted and altered. The prevailing Teaching, from many of the Leaders of the modern Church, is that, us receiving temporary and earthly Benefits, like physical Healing and like financial Prosperity, and like a better and easier life down here on earth, is the Motivation behind *why* we should "do what is right". And that belief results in many engaging in a "Divine Trade" with the Almighty. We are willing to struggle to obey, but only because we get wonderful and good things down here.

But that mentality doesn't exemplify the "new loves" and the "new desires" of the truly born-again nature. It simply *energizes* the most carnal inclinations of our fallen flesh. Because who among us would *not* want to have more money? Who *wouldn't* enjoy being delivered from all disease? And who wouldn't serve a "jesus" that doles out Blessings and Comfort like candy?

So, the “odd ones”, the “holy people”, the “pilgrims”, who have *forsaken* a worldly way of life, those “aliens” who no longer belong to this earth, the “scattered ones” who seek for a City, Whose Builder and Maker is God, refuse to dance to the tune of the modern “pied pipers”. And we have, *correctly*, denounced a theology based in exaltation of Man and we have embraced a theology that makes much of God and His Glory.

But, in our effort to reject the babel offered on the Hay, Wood, and Stubble Television Network, many of us have *over-reacted* too far to the other side, and we have manufactured a theology that has no rewards at all, and that has as its Motivation to obey a humanly engineered “Duty” and “Obligation” fueled by Human Will-Power. And all I’m saying is that this “over-reaction is just as *unbiblical* and just as “man-made” and just as wrong as what the Health and Prosperity groups promote.

What *should* be our Motivation is that we absolutely believe what the Bible says, and that we are trusting and hoping that, as we suffer, at least two things will happen:

1. God will be glorified
2. Our Joy will be full

So, *part* of the Motivation that empowers us to continue to obey, even when Obedience causes even *more* Suffering, is that God is made to look glorious when believers suffer without losing Hope. But another Motivation *must be* that we “bear up” under Afflictions, *not* because we are “brave” or “courageous”, but because we have been promised a Joy that is *not* of this world, and a Joy that *exceeds* all our expectations, and we are *absolutely* counting on personally possessing that Joy.

So, through this “journey” we are beginning to understand *why* genuine believers are allowed by their Savior to hurt and to be mistreated and to experience terrible disappointments and to be persecuted, and, maybe, even to die. And what we are learning is utterly amazing:

- ✓ Suffering for believers is *not* a sign that God is displeased. All of God’s Anger with us was absorbed by Jesus on the Cross, and God now works, unendingly, for our “Good”.

- ✓ Suffering allows us to prove that Jesus is “better” than *anything* this world can offer us and “better” than *anything* this world can take away.
- ✓ Suffering is the Instrument by which God exposes the remaining traces of sin in us. And by us seeing those fleshly weaknesses, we may, by God’s Grace, change and adopt a new holy way to live.
- ✓ Suffering is the Tool by which God prepares us to share in His Own Holiness.
- ✓ Suffering by a multitude of believers, over an extended period of time, allows the Church to “fill up” what was *lacking* in Christ’s Own Suffering (**Colossians 1:24**).
- ✓ Suffering is used by God as another Means of Evangelism.

In this Epistle, Peter has not been simply saying that we will suffer. No, the Apostle has taught something very odd and very strange, that it is “better”, it is “preferable”, it is “desired” that genuine believers suffer for doing what is “right”. And that simply doesn’t make sense to many of us. Most of us would much rather that Peter teach that it is “better” for believers, who do the right thing, *to not suffer at all!* We would be happy to hear that, if we struggle against the lusts of our flesh to “do the right thing”, that we would find Favor with God, and that God would *reward* our efforts with some nice shiny new toy or an easier life or a buffer from “bad things”.

And so, we are diligently searching the Scriptures to try and find out why Peter said that, and why he went on to say:

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,

So, like I said, there are many reasons why God allows Suffering to come to His Own people. And, last time, we saw that the Bible teaches that God chooses us out from a much larger group, who will *eternally* perish, to forgive us and to make us righteous. Then God “sets us aside”, or makes us “holy”, so we may live in such a way that makes Jesus look magnificent.

But we also saw that the first thing that God does, right after He washes us and forgives us and makes us righteous, is that He then puts us into the Fire. But we found out that *this* Fire doesn’t consume us.

This Fire doesn't destroy us. *This* Fire doesn't annihilate us. No, the Fire that God puts the people that He rescues from the larger group is a *purifying* Fire, a *cleansing* Fire, and a *holy* Fire. The Fire that the *larger* group experiences is a frightening, *all-consuming* Damnation and Judgment type of burning, an *eternal* and a Divine Punishment kind of Fire, where there is *everlasting* Torment and Agony.

But this *other* Fire, this purifying Fire, is temporary. We, who have come to *disbelieve* in Purgatory know that the kind of Fire that makes us Holy is found only in *this* life and on *this* earth. And the only thing this other Fire burns up are all the elements of the dirt that we came from, all the impurities that we grew up with, all the natural and normal inclinations by which we usually operate, that bring Jesus no Glory.

And this is the cry of every genuine believer. We hate our sin and we despise the fact that, many times, what we say and what we do and how we think is vastly different from what we truly believe. And so, we cry out to God to change us, to purify us, to alter our ways and to make us more like Jesus. And this ongoing Process, this life-long Experience, of being *progressively* made to be more like Jesus is called "Sanctification". And it is the Process by which saved people *cooperate* with God the Holy Spirit in being made "holy". And even though many people today either don't know about this amazing Process, or don't think they are a part of it, having more and more sin removed from our lives and becoming more like Jesus, is the *main reason why* God chose us in the first place. The Apostle Paul put it this way in **Ephesians 1:4**:

... He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

Not merely "forgiven", as great as that is. Not merely washed in the Blood of the Lamb, as wonderful as that is. No, Paul says here that the *Reason* God chose us in Himself, before the foundation of the world, was so that wicked, fallen rebels would be...

... holy and blameless before Him

... and that tells us that, in His absolute Sovereignty, God is orchestrating our Sanctification in every way, to every detail. And it all

is specifically designed by God, just for each individual believer. Because many of the things I need to add to my life, and many of the things I need to cast away from my life, are unique to me. And so, what I need to become "Holy" and "Blameless" may be quite different from what you need. So, the degree to which God controls every single aspect of our Sanctification makes Quantum Physics look like a first-grade primer.

And even though, many times, God can, and He does, use *inanimate* objects to purify us, like the brakes on the car going out when we don't have any money to fix them, or our water-well breaking on a Friday evening when no one is there to fix it, or a downturn in the market, or a company that causes us to lose our retirement, many times, God uses other people to help us to see sin in our lives and to make us holy. And many of those times God uses *evil* people, *wicked* people, people who don't care one whit about God or us. And He uses them to bring about His Will that all of those He chooses will be blameless and holy.

But God doesn't *force* those people to do anything. They do what they do, in persecuting you and in tormenting you and in working to your destruction, because they *want to*. They do what they do, because they *choose* to manifest their hatred of God on you. And yet, there is a profound Mystery concerning the way that God's absolute Sovereignty interacts with Man's choices and Man's decisions. For example, Pilate didn't say to himself, "*I sure want to honor God, so I'll condemn Jesus to die so that all of God's elect can be saved by what God alone does for them.*" No, the Bible says that Pilate couldn't have cared less about Jesus. But he feared that the people would riot, and it would look to Rome that he wasn't able to control the Jews. So, he condemned Jesus so as to make peace with the Jews, which was good for him, *politically*.

And yet, this Roman politician's condemnation of Jesus in a kangaroo court, instigated by the Jewish rulers, was specifically prophesied in the Old Testament a thousand years before He was ever born. And so, it was God's Will that Jesus be captured and brutally tortured, and that He be unjustly condemned and murdered by crucifixion.

And yet, God didn't *force* the Jews to reject Jesus. God didn't sovereignly *make* the Romans beat and murder the only sinless Man, Who ever lived. Every single person, who participated in the most evil

sin in the history of the world, the murder of God the Son, did so because they *wanted* to, because they voluntarily *chose* to, because it *pleased* them. And that makes them fully culpable. And the same thing is true about those who persecute you.

And so, in some way that the Bible doesn't tell us, God's holy, pre-ordained Will comes to pass by using the choices and decisions of evil and wicked men. And God does this without *forcing* them to carry out the evil that is in their hearts. They do what they do against you *not* because they desire to be a part of some grand Design by God to sanctify you, but simply because they hate you and wish to do you harm.

And yet, somehow, God uses this in conjunction with His absolute Sovereignty to cause every single sinner that He has graciously saved to become holy and blameless. And in the Passage that Brother Vern just read to us, Peter says that there are people who will persecute you, who will "malign" you, for no other reason than you no longer participate in sin with them anymore. Read verses 3&4 again:

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, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. In *all* this, they are surprised that you do not run with *them* into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign *you*;

Now the word "**malign**" comes from a Greek word that means: *to speak reproachfully; to rail out against; to slander; to seek to injury another's good name.* ... which is mostly a "verbal" form of Persecution. And yet, this verbal kind absolutely qualifies as a legitimate form of Persecution or Suffering. So, this "maligning" qualifies as part of the means by which we are made holy.

Now many times, we make a distinction between the Suffering that we experience in the 21st Century and the Suffering that the people of Peter's day experienced. And as we make those comparisons, we normally *minimize* what we go through, here in America, against what they went through. And to some extent, there is good reason for that. Because there is a vast difference between being talked about and being physically beaten. There is a difference in being shunned and being imprisoned. And there is a difference in being slandered and being tortured.

But we must remember that the degree to which we suffer, and the means by which we suffer, is according to God's sovereign Decision. We didn't have anything to do with the fact that most of us were born under a Constitutional Republic that doesn't legally *allow* the physical torture and imprisonment of genuine believers. At least, not yet. And those who were born under Governments that are hostile and even violent toward the Church had no choice in that matter either. And so, the degree to which we suffer and the method by which that Suffering comes to us is not in our control. We must understand that God has called us to be faithful, fruitful, and busy under a System that basically allows only shunning and verbal attacks, along with some ridicule, while they have been called to be faithful, fruitful, and busy under a System that allows for much worse.

Pain is Pain. And Suffering is Suffering. And so, we probably don't need to compare Hurt with Hurt. Somebody is always hurting *more* than you are while others are hurting *less*. But *whatever* type or level of Suffering we are allowed to receive is what God has allowed. And *whatever* level that Suffering reaches is what God is using to change us, to make us Holy. Jesus said:

Matthew 6:34

... do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

But notice what Peter said the *Cause* of these people slandering us was:

... In *all* this, they are surprised that you do not run with *them* into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign *you*;

Now the way Peter wrote this tells us a few things:

- ✓ These are people who know us
- ✓ These are people with whom we have sinned at some time in the past

... now Peter lists some very specific sins here:

- ✓ **lusts**
- ✓ **drunkenness**
- ✓ **carousing**
- ✓ **drinking parties**
- ✓ **abominable idolatries.**

... or, in other words, just a normal Friday night. And he groups all of them under two very specific banners. Peter first calls these sins:

the desire of the Gentiles

... and then he says they are....

... a course of sensuality

Now the term "Gentile" technically means anyone who is not born Jewish. And, historically, in the Jewish culture, that means someone whose *mother* was not a Jew. So, even if a person had a Jewish *father*, if his *mother* was not Jewish, he was a "Gentile", and would have to convert.

But under the infinitely superior New Covenant, both a "Gentile" and a "Jew" were defined *spiritually*. The Apostle Paul was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to write:

Romans 2:28&29

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

... so, in the New Covenant, a "Jew" is someone who believes and trusts in the Lord Jesus and in His finished Work, while a "Gentile" is one who *refuses* to believe. A genuine believer would *also* be classified as a "**the seed of Abraham**" or "**the children (descendants) of Abraham**" because Jesus said:

John 8:39

If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham.

... and then He told us what the “**deeds of Abraham**” were:

John 8:56

Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad."

... so those whose eyes are *unveiled*, and who are blessed to be able to “see” or “behold the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ”, and “rejoice”, or “be glad”, or “believe”, *those* are the “children” or the “seed” or the “descendants” of Father Abraham. And the rest are “the children of the devil”.

And this is true, *regardless* of their natural ethnicity, or their nationality, or their culture, or their race or their family genealogy. So, all those who have genuinely experienced the Miracle of the New Birth are true, spiritual Jews, and all those who are yet in their sins are spiritual Gentiles. So, it is very possible that a *natural-born* Jew is a *spiritual* Gentile, while a *natural-born* Gentile could very well be a *spiritual* Jew.

So, when Peter uses the phrase “**the desire of the Gentiles**” to group these particular sins together, he is saying that these sins are what *epitomizes* a “spiritual Gentile”, or an “unbeliever”. Another way of understanding this is to know that a “spiritual Jew”, or someone who has truly been born again, *does not* and *would not* participate in these activities.

Then Peter uses the phrase “**a course of sensuality**”. And this is a common theme that runs throughout the New Testament to describe the exact opposite of what it means to be “spiritual”. Now the word, “sensuality” has to do with the five natural “senses” of:

1. Hearing
2. Seeing
3. Smelling
4. Feeling
5. Tasting

... and these “senses” are what God has created *in* us and *for* us so that we may know and understand what is going on around us. So, using them in that way, the five senses are “good” and are gifts from God. But when trying to comprehend God and the Ways of God and the Word

of God, the five senses are a problem, a hindrance, and a blockage. And that is true because God is "Spirit", and not flesh and blood. God is *not* Human, and is *not* a part of His Own Creation.

The Bible says that God is "Holy". Which means that God is entirely "separate" and different and distinct and other than all that has been made. When God took on flesh and became Man, that was the *first* and *only* time that God became a part of all that has been created.

So, the main criteria *about* God, and our relationship *to* God, is *not* about what we can see or hear or taste or feel or smell, but:

Hebrews 11:4

... without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

... so, Faith trumps the five senses. Now that is not to say that Faith is *irrational*, or that the *stranger* something is, the more spiritual it is. No, because the Bible also says:

Romans 10:17

So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Now God *could* have distributed Faith to the elect anyway He wanted to. But He didn't. He chose to grant Faith by a very specific method:

Faith comes from hearing

... which is a part of the five senses. But wait. Notice that it isn't merely "hearing" alone. It is...

Hearing by the Word of Christ

... but notice carefully that it isn't merely "hearing the Word of Christ", but:

Hearing BY the Word of Christ.

So, this is much more than literally hearing the Gospel being preached with your natural ears. The word “**by**” here has to do with the “Cause” or the “Catalyst” or the “Origination” of something else. So, it is the “Word of Christ” *itself* that is the *Cause* or the *Catalyst* or the *Origination of this kind* of “hearing”. And this confirms what the Apostle Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 1:21**:

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

Now notice the phrase “**the foolishness of the message preached**”. Paul said it was the foolishness of the message preached that was the “Means” by which God saves His people. But notice two things:

1. It isn't the action of Preaching alone
2. These people already believe

Now I love the King James Version of the Bible. First of all, it is a very reliable English translation, and, secondly, it united the Christian Church throughout the world for over 300 years. And I don't think we will ever see that again. But sadly, the KJV, didn't do a good job of interpreting this verse. In the KJV, it says...

... it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

... but that is *not* what the Apostle Paul originally wrote down in Greek. The Apostle didn't say it was the “**foolishness of preaching**”, but rather, it was “**the foolishness of the message preached**”. The KJV *incorrectly* emphasizes the human action of Preaching, *in and of itself*, while the *correct* emphasis is on the foolishness of the *Message* that is delivered to the people through the “Means” of Preaching.

Now I'm not just “splitting hairs” here. This is a *real* distinction that forces the reader to understand that Salvation is more about the Message than it is the one who preaches that Message.

All of this serves to say that there is a wondrous Miracle that happens when the Message that is deemed to be “foolish” by the world is *heralded* weakly and frailly and clumsily through the lips of utterly unimportant “clay pots”. God the Spirit takes the Message, the one

single Biblical Gospel, and He "makes it alive" in the ears of His chosen elect. And so, they hear to believe, Yes. But they hear *supernaturally*, they hear *miraculously*, they hear *spiritually*. And those who hear like *this* live!

True, genuine, biblical "Spirituality" always has, as its focus, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Glory of His Name. Sensuality is the opposite of all this. Sensuality is the exaltation of Man and the glory of his name. Now, over the centuries, Sensuality has been defined in mostly sexual terms as it glories in "flesh" and "feelings". And that is fundamentally true. But in recent years, Sensuality has also taken on an even more *devious* position, as a *substitute* for Biblical Spirituality.

Today, it is common to hear people comment on how they "feel" versus what they "think". We define almost *everything* today in terms of feelings, which are entirely *subjective*, instead of Reality, which is always *objective*. This is what I mean when I refer to the "emasculatation" or the "feminization" of the Church or the Culture. And it is a form of sinful Sensuality. And it is the radical departure from defining everything by objective, cognitive, reasoning and embracing subjective "feelings".

And we can see this in the new so-called "Sexual Revolution" which seeks to define even something as basic as the sex of human beings by how each individual "identifies", rather than the clear biological reality of XX or XY chromosomes. And what is even more insidious is that more and more Governments around the world are seeking to *force* the general population (under penalty of law) to use so-called "non-offensive pronouns" when addressing these confused people. It is simply a "socially acceptable" effort to *replace* godly, biblical *Spirituality* with sinful, carnal *Sensuality*.

And one of the methods of co-opting this Conversation is in how it is being framed. For example, historically, the Church has been able to condemn the *actions* of people (Sin) while seeking to maintain love and hope for the individual. So, we could condemn their sin, while still reaching out in love to rescue the individual from his certain Destruction through Repentance and Salvation.

So, we attacked "*what they were doing*", but *not* "*who they are*", a human being made in the Image of God. But, very craftily, many who seek to not only *normalize* sinful Sensuality, but to energetically *promote* it, have shifted the Discussion by insisting, "*This is who I am*."

And you can't condemn who I am." And this has put many within the modern church back on their heels.

But this new-found impotence by the modern church is only true because many of its members have lost sight of two primary Doctrines of the Bible that we need to revisit over and over again, if we are going to successfully refute this latest effort of attacking Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, and defend the irrefutable Reality that the one, true and living God made them uniquely Male and Female on purpose:

1. The Doctrine of God (Who God is)
2. The Doctrine of Man (Who we are)

... without understanding Who God is, in His magnificent Glory, along with all of the particulars of His pristine Nature and Character, we cannot even begin to imagine how insulted and offended God is by our constant rebellion, and how our sin belittles His Glory. And so, God demanding that "creatures of the dirt" should cease from sin and worship Him sounds so strange to those who know not the Word of God. And so, they replace the Glory of God with human efforts like "Socialism" and "Food Justice" and "the dignity, honor, and beauty of same-sex couples". And God is dishonored.

But without us also comprehending how devastating the Fall really was, in every area of our existence (including our will), we simply cannot fathom how *sinful* our sin really is, and how *deserving* we are of Eternal Damnation. And the result of not knowing who we are results in all sorts of damnable heresies that promote things like "Self-Esteem", "Self-Help", and "Self-fulfillment". And we sink lower and lower into our fallen State.

But the combination of a biblical understanding of God (Theology), along with a biblical understanding of Man (Anthropology), will allow us to truly see just how magnificent Grace really is, and that it is the only game in town.

And so, Peter teaches here that one way that lost and evil people are used by God to bring Suffering to His people is by the fact that we no longer "**run with *them* into the same excesses of dissipation**". And so, Peter says:

... **they malign you**

... they persecute us by *verbally* attacking us and shunning us and spreading false rumors about us and slandering us. But what satan is doing through them is *not* the final word. Because satan is *not* supreme. The Roman Government is *not* supreme. The Federal Government of the United States is *not* supreme. Evil men are *not* supreme. God is supreme. And God's Will is supreme. And God's Desires for His people are invincible and irrefutable and undefeatable. And so, the Apostle goes on to say:

1 Peter 4:5

... but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

And that means that nobody gets away with anything. It is not true, as it sometimes appears to be, that evil people prosper while God's people suffer. That is not what is happening. Your eyes are fooling you. And you have forgotten what the Bible teaches.

What is happening to all who refuse to repent is that God is ready to:

2 Corinthians 10:6b

... punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

So, every human will stand before God, and they will all:

2 Corinthians 5:9b

... be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Every act, every thought, every word spoken, every frame of mind, every belief, and every plan of Man will be *adjudicated* by the great Judge, either on the Cross in Salvation or in Hell through eternal Damnation. And there will be no outstanding accounts.

And it is partly attributed to the absolute Terror that this Reality brings to every human, whose mind has not become darkened by reason of sin, as to why all of the sins that Peter mentions here are in our distant past. But it is also why we preach with such passion and

conviction, begging people to repent before it is too late, because the Apostle Paul said:

2 Corinthians 5:9a

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men...

I truly fear God. And I am literally terrified to fall into the Hands of an angry God. Because I believe the Bible and I understand how angry God is with sin. And I also understand how determined God is to vanquish all unbelievers and damn them with unquenchable fire. And that Fear, that Reverential Respect, motivates the way I live my life, and it changes what I do, because it has changed who I am. It made a football jock, who never read a book in High School, very willing to park his "double-wide" in a chair for 60-70 hours every week, until my feet and legs ache with pain. All so I can proclaim to you the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ, rightly and fully every week. And so, that Fear makes me one of the wisest men on earth.

And, finally Peter says,

1 Peter 4:6

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*.

Peter says he preached to everyone, even those who have, at that time, already died. And he was so focused on preaching, because he knew that it was the one, single "method" or "means" that God had chosen by which sinners are recused from hell.

And what is amazing is that he says here that some believed that nobody ever thought would. And, evidently, some very well-known evil people of that day had truly heard the Gospel and repented and had become Christians, because Peter said:

... though they are judged in the flesh as men ...

... so, these are people who had a reputation and who were *routinely* judged by other people as being "evil". And, in context, the Apostle was

probably referring to some who were well-known for indulging in the sins mentioned back in verse 3. Yet, Peter says here:

... they may live in the spirit according to *the will of God*.

Now this *could* mean two different things, both of them good. This *could* mean that these people had died as believers and were now in the Presence of God, "living in the spirit according to the will of God". But it could *also* mean what I think verse 1 means. That these people have "died in Christ" and have forsaken sin, and are now earnestly striving for biblical Holiness. Many people, in fact, many people that I love and respect, have taught that when Peter said in verse 1:

... 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,

... that he was talking about people, who had died, even as Christ had died. So, the phrase "**Christ has suffered in the flesh**", and the phrase "**he who has suffered in the flesh**", are referring to both Jesus and other saved people having died. But, I respectfully disagree with them. And the *reason* I disagree, is because of what Peter says in verse 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.

So, this is talking about people who are going to live the remainder of their days on earth "for the will of God", and no longer for the "lusts of men". But *why* are they going to do this? What is the *Catalyst* or the *Motivation* behind *why* these people are forsaking sin and living as best as possible to the Will of God? Because of what Peter says in verse 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,

So, don't let the phrase "**he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin**" throw you. It doesn't mean "sinless perfection". Peter is NOT teaching that those who "suffer in the flesh" arrive at a state of

"sinlessness" on this earth and in this life. But what he *is* teaching here is that suffering is a Tool, a blessed Gift, that enables us and empowers us to:

... live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God

... which is how Peter defines "cease from sin".

So, the "bottom line" is that Peter was "moved along" by God the Holy Spirit to teach that Suffering is not some random, accidental freak of Chance. And he is also teaching that Suffering is not controlled by the men who are initiating it. Peter is teaching us that, in His absolute Sovereignty, God has allowed Suffering to come to His people in various forms. So, God will grant that some believers will be *physically* abused, while He will allow others to be *verbally* attacked. And we will be persecuted for various reasons, some political, some through Governmental action or law. And some Persecution will come to us out of jealousy or bitterness that our holy lives makes those we used to sin with very uncomfortable. And so they will talk and they will slander and they will malign.

But, through it all, God is very busy at work, sovereignly allowing every bit of our Suffering, using the wicked choices of evil men in His Sovereign Plan to purify His people and make them able to share in His Holiness. And so, when the heat is on, when the battle is hot, we need to prepare ourselves, to arm ourselves. And we need to remember our Elder Brother who also suffered in His Flesh. And what will be the end of all this Suffering? Will the Church be defeated? Will Christians be annihilated? No, the outcome of our Suffering, whether verbal or physical, will be that we will:

... live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God

... why?

... because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

...and that tells us that the Suffering that we dread so much is one of the most precious Gifts that God can give to us.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.