

1 Peter 4:1-19

Intro: We are in the second section of Peter's epistle in which the Apostle Peter discussed some of the benefits, or blessings, which the Holy Spirit gives us when we are called upon to suffer for Christ and the Gospel. This part of the epistle began back in chapter 3, verse 13, where Peter, down through verse 17, pointed out that it will provide us with opportunities to witness to the world. People will be asking us to tell them how we can be happy and peaceful when we are persecuted by the world.

Then Peter mentioned from verse 19 on to the end of chapter 3 that even Christ was an example to us in His sufferings, and also how His death led to the defeat and doom of fallen angels, which He personally declared to them between the time of His death and His resurrection, three days later.

Now, as we move into chapter 4, and continuing on to the end of the chapter we see how suffering is used to produce in us greater godliness, or to use the word that Peter used back in chapter 1, verses 15 and 16, greater holiness.

In the first six verses of chapter 4 that suffering causes us to seek to live more completely "to the will of God." These words are found at the end of verse 2. Or, as it is stated in verse 1, *to cease from sin.* We will never be completely sinless in this life, but it should be true of all of us that the longer we know the Lord, the less sin there should be in our lives, and a greater degree of holiness would take its place. I believe that most of us know in our personal experience, that trials make us turn the light of God's Word inward, into our hearts, and seeing what we see, our own great needs, we long to be more like the Lord.

4:1 Here again we see that Peter used the Lord Jesus Christ as our Example. Peter was with the Lord and the other disciples as they walked from the Upper Room to the Garden of Gethsemane, and he heard the Lord say these words:

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me (John 15:18-21).

Again here at the beginning of chapter 4, Peter referred to the death of Christ. When Christ was in the flesh, *i.e.*, before He died, He "suffered for us in the flesh."

"Forasmuch then" links what Peter was about to say with what he had just written in the last verses of chapter 3. The Jewish world and the Gentile world were united on one point: they hated our Lord. And since He came to suffer for us, those of us who believe in Him, we need to get ready to receive the same treatment. They may not kill us (although many throughout the history of the church, have died for their faith in Christ), but they can isolate us, they can reject us, they can make life miserable for us. We all know that this is true, and this is one major reason that naturally we are very hesitate to speak to others about Christ. But it is inevitable that "in the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). In Revelation 2:9 and 10 we read that the Lord said this to the church of Smyrna:

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

And so we need to expect the same kind of treatment that the Lord received. And it is a part of our protection that we “arm ourselves with the same mind.” Later in this chapter Peter wrote, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you” (1 Pet. 4:12). In fact, we ought to think it strange if we are not having trouble in the world. It ought to be a warning to us. Maybe they don’t see enough difference between themselves and us, so that they even think we are one of them. One of the first things that we need to do, according to a more mature Peter, is to arm ourselves with the expectation that we are going to have trials. The people of the world are not going to like us. Don’t expect them to. If you arm yours with this mind, “the same mind” of the way the Lord was treated. If you are prepared mentally for opposition when it comes, then you won’t be taken by surprise. One thing in any warfare is when one side can take the other by surprise.

How do we arm ourselves? We arm ourselves by daily reading the Word. We arm ourselves by prayer. We arm ourselves by seeking the fellowship of other Christians. We familiarize ourselves with the life our Lord lived “in the flesh.” But this is not something to worry about, or to be depressed about. Instead, we are to rejoice as we see how the Lord uses such trouble in our lives to draw us away from sin. Read about Peter in the Gospels. Then read about him in the book of Acts. And then study 1 and 2 Peter, and you will see some of the profound changes which had taken place in his life, and suffering, much suffering, and bitter tears occasionally, had everything to do with what God was accomplishing in his life. As I have said many times, we are usually most concerned about what we want God to do *for* us, but God is concerned primarily about what He is doing *in* us. Robertson, in his commentary on 1 Peter, pointed out that “hath ceased” is a perfect middle, and he suggested that a better translation would be *to make to cease from sin*. Peter was not suggesting that the job would ever be finished in this life, but that one of the main instruments that the Lord uses to move us along toward perfect holiness when we see the Lord, will be the trials that we go through because we belong to the Lord.

In verse 2 Peter went on to make clearer what he meant by ceasing from sin.

4:2 “That” in the original language introduces a purpose. Notice we have “in the flesh” in verse 1, and we have it again here in verse 2: “in the flesh.” Before we were saved, we lived like everyone in the flesh lives “to the lusts of men.” This word “lusts” is not restricted to sexual lusts (although it includes that), but it has to do with any and all coveting, desires which have to do with life in this world. One reason that Lord in giving the Law to Moses, said, “Thou shalt not covet,” is because we all are coveters by nature. Man doesn’t have time to think about God because he is too busy thinking about himself. He doesn’t pray about his needs; he devotes all of his time and energy determined to get what he wants. This has to do with possessions, positions, pleasures, power. We don’t all lust for the same things, but we all lust. Advertisers appeal to our lusts. And when we get one thing that we want, that does not stop our lusting. There are always other things on our lists. If we don’t have money, we want money. And if we have money, we want more money. Many marriages are built on lust, not love. And so one eventually gets tired of the one to whom he, or she, is married, and he, or she, leaves home and looks for another.

The Christian life is entirely different. Note how Peter expressed it. (Read verse 2.) Trials help us to understand that happiness is not to be found in things. Young people often chafe under the limitations that their parents put them under, but as then, shall I say “we,” as we get older, we wish that our parents had been tougher than they were. The chastening of the Lord that the Bible talks about are those tough circumstances where the Lord is teaching us that we “no longer should live the rest of [our] time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.”

Where do I learn what this new way of life is? Many books have been written about it. Many sermons have been preached on it. *But the original source of information is found between the covers of your Bible.* That is

why you and I read so much about “the commandments of the Lord” in the Bible. Christians are to quit living the way they have wanted to live, and they need to begin to live the way the Lord wants them to live. When the Lord Jesus becomes our Savior, He also becomes our Lord. And we need daily to submit ourselves to Him. We will begin to pray more. Perhaps I should say that we will *really* begin to pray. We soon learn that we can’t live like the Lord wants us to live. The standards are too high. We need His help. Do you remember the relief you experienced when you first understood Philippians 2:12 and 13?

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

And then when you get over into the fourth chapter of Philippians, you come to verse 13 which essentially says the same thing: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” This is what the Lord had in mind when He told His disciples, “Without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5b). That is true of all life. He gives us the strength that we have. He gives us the use of our bodies. He give us our very lives. This is true of everybody, Christians and those who are not Christians. **Illus:** I once heard of a father who refused to pray with his wife and children before they ate their food. He told them, “I worked to earn the money to buy this food.” And he let them know that if they wanted to thank anyone, they needed to thank him. The Lord often lets such foolish words go unanswered, but in the case of that father it was just a few days later that he was taken seriously ill, and was unable to work.

When the Lord Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, praying. He knew what was ahead of Him. He knew how He was going to have to suffer for sins. And He dreaded it. It made Him sweat drops of blood. But I hope you remember what He said: “O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39).

Peter knew the truth of Galatians 2:20 and also of Romans 12:1 and 2. These are words that each of us needs to make our own. In our Bibles there is truth that we need to know, there are promises that we need to believe, and there are commandments that we need to obey. And we need to love it all. But the Lord measures our love for Him by our obedience to His commandments. Cf. John 14:21 and 23. Commandments in Scripture are both negative and positive, *i.e.*, that which we are not to be, and that which we are to be; that which we are not to do, and that which we are to do. *But it is all in the Word.* Peter’s introductory words in his second epistle declare this very positively. (Read 2 Peter 1:1-8.)

Peter’s emphasis on what we should be and the way we should live continues in verse 3.

4:3 “For” means that Peter is giving more evidence to strengthen the point that he had made in verses 1 and 2. Peter was speaking of “the time past” in any person’s life. Those months or years however many or few they may have been. The words “of our life” are not in the Greek text, but have been added to make it even clearer that Peter was calling upon all of his readers to look back over their lives, to look over the way that they lived before they came to Christ, and to realize that however long it may have been, enough is enough. There is not a single reason that anyone can raise as to why they should have lived in sin any longer. Whatever time we have given to sin, it is always enough, even more than enough. However long or short it may have been, we as Christians regret every minute that we have given to sin and we wish that we had it all back so that we could give it to the Lord. We “have wrought,” meaning that we have fully given ourselves to “the will of the Gentiles,” unregenerate heathen, that which Peter called “sin” in verse 1 and “in the flesh to the lusts of men” in verse 2. Verse 2 looks ahead; verse 3 looks back. “Walked” is not the usual word in the NT for *walk*, but it is a word which speak of being on a journey, that which a person devotes his life to. Everything fitted into that pattern. It did not alternate from bad to good, and then to bad again. But it was all bad. None of it had to do with God; it all resolved around self. And it was a journey that leads the one who travels on that road

to hell. And then Peter mentioned some of the most characteristic sins on that road.

Notice what they are:

- 1) “Lasciviousness” – This is a person who is undisciplined and unrestrained, one who has a total disregard for justice and decency, a cruel person, usually grossly immoral.
- 2) “Lusts” – We have already discussed lusts in verse 2.
- 3) “Excess of wine” – Wine in Bible times was often used when water was not drinkable, or even for medicinal purposes. But in excess it produced drunkenness, debauchery, immorality, and even death.
- 4) “Revellings” – These are times when people get out of control. Riots are an example. People get hurt, often killed. We see evidence of this in sports events.
- 5) “Banquetings” – This is when people go on a drinking spree. Today it would probably include the use and abuse of drugs.
- 6) “Abominable idolatries” – Often idolatry was accompanied by drinking and prostitution and other wicked practices including the sacrificing of children.

From the news that we receive, we are somewhat familiar with all of these. These are extreme cases, but let us remember that Peter was talking about a journey which people take through life without any concern for God or even decency. No one who starts down that path expects to come to what they meet along the way. The farther a person goes, and the longer the time is that he gives to it, the deeper and deeper he goes into sin. Peter wanted his readers to see the dangers involved in living to “the lusts of men.” These are all reasons why we need to be faithful in preaching the Gospel to those who are on that way.

Remember it is in the Bible where sin is really exposed. People who are living on that path believe that they can handle whatever comes along, but no one can. Sin is a slave master, and only Christ can set people free.

4:4 People who are held in the grips of sin, and who often hate the consequences of the way they are living and the journey that they are taking, instead of looking to Christians who are on a different path, one that leads to peace and joy and, ultimately, to heaven, think it strange when people who used to sin with them, don’t do those things anymore, and so they speak evil of them. Leighton translates this verse, “They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation” (p.186). To think anything strange is to be surprised and astonished. “Excess of riot” describes a person who has given himself over to sin to such an extent that it is very unlikely that he would ever be saved. But it is conditions that make 1 Peter 3:15 that much more important. If people steeped in sin are going to be saved, it will be as God uses before them a life that is headed in the opposite direction, toward God. But instead they may speak evil of you. Grudem uses the word, abuse. In spite of all of the evidence to the contrary, you are wrong and they are right. That shows how sin blinds us to its true nature and its results, both for time and eternity.

But Grudem also adds this word of explanation as to why unbelievers attack believers for their way of life rather than repenting of their sins and turning to the Lord:

No doubt because silent non-participation in sin often implies condemnation of that sin, and rather than change their ways unbelievers will slander those who have pained their consciences, or justify their own immorality by spreading rumors that the ‘righteous’ Christians are immoral as well (p. 170).

But there is another event in the future in the future that sinners don’t count on. Peter wrote about that in verse 5.

4:5 They may not want to have anything to do with God now, but the day is coming when they will have no choice. They are going to have to “give account to Him,” to God! And even now He is “ready,” prepar-

ed, for that time of judgment, indicating that it can take place at any time. Robertson said that the correct reading of this expression is, “the one readily judging” (Vol. VI, p. 123). The Bible is good about revealing to us coming events, but not *when* they will take place. Nevertheless, as Leighton has said, “The day(s) has (have) been set” (p. That is one way that God has of telling us that *we* need to be prepared! “The quick” are the living; “the dead” are those who have died. Or, another way of interpreting these words is that “the quick” are the saved; “the dead” are those who are not saved, those who are spiritually dead! For those of us who are saved, there will be “the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:10). This will not be a judgment of our sins. They were judged at the Cross. But this will be a judgment of our works in preparation for the giving of rewards. “The dead” are to be judged before the “great white throne” (Rev. 20: 11-15). This also will be of their works, but with a view to judgment. Christ died for “the elect,” not for every single person in all of the world. Remember that Peter addressed this epistle “to the elect strangers” according to verse 1 of chapter 1.

4:6 It seems that in this verse Peter was speaking about believers who had died, and possibly, about believers who died as martyrs (witnesses) of their faith. Peter says that the Gospel was preached to them “that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but also that they might “live according to God in the spirit.” It is very likely that, when Peter said “according to God” here in verse 6, he meant, *according to the will of God*, as he had said in verse 2.

The opposition of the world to the way Christians live, is both a confirmation of a Christian’s faith, but it also explains why a Christian receives opposition from the world. But the opposition of the world serves a twofold purpose under the blessing of the Lord. God uses it, or the Spirit uses it for the sanctification of the believer who suffers from the world’s opposition, but it also provides an opportunity for testimony to unbelievers when they see that a believer can rejoice under trials that the world hopes will discourage and defeat, and possibly destroy, the child of God. It is like Joseph told his brothers after their father Jacob died. They thought that then Joseph would get even with them for what they had done to him. Reading in the last chapter of Genesis, chapter 50, and verse 18, we find these words:

18 And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants.
 19 And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God?
 20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive (Gen. 50:18-20).

The brothers’ sin against Joseph turned out for Joseph’s good, and for his brothers’ good, and for the good of all of the Egyptians. This in no way justified what Joseph’s brothers had done to him, but it shows how God in His sovereignty and in His grace, can turn a curse into a blessing.

This proved true also in the death of Christ. The Jews and the Romans were determined to do what was evil in God’s sight, but God turned it all around for His own glory, and for the good of the thousands of Jews and Gentiles who had a part in the sufferings of Christ.

I personally believe that the word “spirit” at the end of this verse should be capitalized, referring to the Holy Spirit. It is only by the power and blessing of the Holy Spirit that we can rejoice when we are persecuted for the sake of the Gospel. Many a person has been saved after seeing how Christians are able to respond when the people of the world deliberately try to hurt them.

So the point in the first six verses of chapter 4 is that one of the benefits we receive when we are persecuted and abused by the world, is that it provides circumstances in which we are enabled to grow spiritually, to become more holy, and to bear testimony to the world regarding the power of the Gospel.

And so what is it that Peter was saying here? Many explanations have been given of this verse. This is an indication, a strong indication, that is difficult to understand. However, the general consensus among the expositors I have consulted, seems to be that Peter was, as I have already, speaking about believers who have died. They heard the Gospel while they were living, and they were drawn to Christ, they were saved, that even though they might die like unbelievers die, that is “that they might be judged according to men,” according to the believers as well as unbelievers leave this life, yet they were saved that they might “live according to God,” or *according to the will of God*, “in, or by, the Spirit (capital S). So, if we know, and believe, that we are going to stand before the Lord as our Judge, this is one of the greatest incentive we have for Living as God wants us to live “in the Spirit,” or, *in the enabling power of the Holy Spirit*.

This is one of the greatest incentives we have for holy living. Once the truth of 2 Corinthians 5:10 grips our hearts, we are going to want to live so that we are doing the will of God. We don’t escape trials as Christians, including the greatest of trials, death, but we know that after we die, we are going to meet our Savior Who will be out Judge, and we want to have His approval and His blessing at that time.

So when the people of the world trying to draw us back into sin, we know that this is not the end of our existence, as some people believe, but we go to stand before the Lord.

I heard on television last night that 37% of the babies who are born these days in America, are born to unwed mothers! That means, to use a word that you don’t hear anymore, they are “illegitimate.” And this is only one example of the way people in American and the world, are displeasing God. Think of the babies that are aborted every day! Think of all of the adultery that is going on which don’t produce babies. Think of the homosexual activity that is going on in our country. People think that they are getting away with these sins, as well as many other sins. But they are not getting away with anything! There is a day of accounting coming. And so, as Peter said, the Gospel was preached, and many before they died knew that they someday would have to stand before God. And so they began to prepare for that day by living “according to God in the Spirit.”

It is easy to be critical of sinners, but we need to remember that if God had not saved us, we might be doing the same sins that people in the world are committing today. What is going to change the situation? It is the preaching of the Gospel. Only Christ can deliver us from the penalty of our sins. Only He can enable us to change our lifestyle. Notice Peter’s words at the beginning of verse 6, “For for this cause was the Gospel preached unto them that are dead.”

4:7 It is easy for us to think that the coming of the Lord is years away. But that is not true. Peter said here, “But the end of all things is at hand.” “The end” means that everything that needs to be fulfilled before the Lord will return, has been fulfilled. The end of life as we have known it here in this world is about to come to an end. But this is another truth that the world ridicules. Peter deals with this attitude in his second epistle. You can see it in 2 Peter 3:1-4:

1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:

2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

One thing that assures me that the Lord is coming, beyond what is said about it in the Word, is the fact that today, throughout the world, there are millions of Christians who still wait for His coming, and are confident

that He is going to come.

Do you know that everything in this life has an “end” – everything? All things are being moved to a conclusion, toward a goal, toward the fulfillment of God’s purpose for this universe in which we live. It may look, even to us who know the Lord, like everything is falling apart. But that is not really true. God is working out all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. 1:11). “The end of all things is at hand.” We know from Scripture that it is not all going to happen at once, but the events which make up the last days can begin today!

What should we do? Panic? Worry? Quit? None of these. We are to “be sober.” This is the verb that is used to describe the demoniac that the Lord healed. Luke tells us in 8:35 that he was “clothed, and in his right mind.” This is a time for clear thinking. It pictures the world as having gone mad. The person who sets his hopes on this world is out of his mind. These are days when we need to think Biblically. That is where we find the truth. The world is off course. It has gone wild. This is how we are to live in these days: “Be sober.” Bishop Leighton translated this word, “self-controlled.” People like that are not very easy to find in these days.

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Hiebert tells us in his commentary that the verb, “be sober,” is a verb that has to do with drunkenness, not to sleepiness. By this he did not mean that the believers to whom he was writing were subjects of strong drink, but he was warning them not to be affected by the conceptions that people in the world have about the future. The Bible warns us about the future, about conditions in the last days. This is what Dr. Hiebert had to say about being sober:

It is a call to remain alert and self-controlled, in full possession of their faculties and feelings. The eschatological context indicates that Christians should “be free from every form of mental and spiritual ‘drunkenness’ that results from befuddled views and feelings about the future (p. 270).

Politicians (or anyone else) who talk about the future without any reference to God and His will are like a drunken person who is trying to give directions to someone else. Only the situation that Peter has in mind here in this passage, is infinitely more important.

But Peter went on to relate this condition to *prayers*. He used the plural form of the word, not the singular. This means that he was talking about all kinds of prayer – worship, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, and petition, which would be the way that they prayed for themselves. The closer we get to the coming of the Lord, the more we should pray, recognizing how dependent we are upon God, how important it is to know Him, how careful we need to be about sin in our own lives, how earnestly we should pray for our fellow-believers, our leaders, as well as people who do not know the Lord, and how much we should pray for ourselves. The world is not “sober.” And I am afraid that many in the body of Christ are not sober, at least not as sober as we need to be. So this is an exhortation of supreme importance for all of us who know the Lord, especially because we are the only ones who can really pray. Paul’s instruction about prayer in Ephesians 6:18 is very similar to what Peter had to say here. The strongest weapon we have against the Devil, is prayer, prayer having put on the whole armor of God, and keeping it on.

4:8 “Above all things” does not mean that what he was about to say, was more important than prayer, but it amounted to saying that while we pray, we are to give special attention to our love for each other as the people of God. Our different views of the coming of the Lord often divide us. It should always be a subject of discussion, but never one of argument. You can’t really be a Christian without believing that Christ is coming again. That is plainly taught in the Word of God. Take John 14:1-3 as an example. We all are to be “looking for that blessed hope . . .” (Titus 2:13). And it would certainly follow from what Peter had just said about prayer, that we can’t really pray as God wants us to, expecting Him to respond to our prayers, if there is not a

constant love in our hearts for each other.

But Peter was not just talking about love, but he was talking about “fervent” love. “Have” is a present active participle meaning that we are to be continually having this love for each other. This is *ἀγάπην*. And one of the main ideas in *ἀγάπην* love is that we seek the highest good for those we love. We delight in them. We rejoice in their blessing. We weep when they sorrow. We are grieved when they sin. We love to be with them. And all of this includes our fellowship with them in the church. Cf. Hebrews 10:25. A person who stays away from church does not love the people of God *fervently*. This word “fervent” means *stretched out*. It speaks of a constant, unchanging, unending love. We are to love each other at all times and under all circumstances. Leighton says, “deeply.”

And what is one of the reasons that we are to love each other with pure hearts fervently? Because it hides a multitude of sins. What does this mean? Dr. Grudem says,

Where love abounds in a fellowship of Christians, many small offences, and even some large ones, are readily overlooked and forgotten. But where love is lacking, every word is viewed with suspicion, every action is liable to misunderstanding, and conflicts abound – to Satan’s perverse delight (p. 173, 174).

See Proverbs 10:12, “Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.” Cf. Hebrews 12:12-15. And frequently we all need to read 1 Corinthians 13, especially verses 4 through 8a.

As we read the commandments of Scripture, let us remember that the blessing comes, not just in knowing what we should do, but in doing them. We always need to turn the Word of God upon ourselves, upon our own hearts, first!

December 4, 2006

4:9 In the days in which Peter was writing there was a great need for “hospitality.” This word is used only two other places in the NT, and in both of them there are mentioned in connection with the qualifications for elders or bishops. See 1 Tim. 3:2 and Titus 1:8. Literally the word means *lover of strangers*. But the word would apply to anyone who needed housing and food, but particularly of believers. With all of the persecution that believers were experiencing, the need for hospitality would at some times be overwhelming. This, of course, would mean that their own schedules would be interrupted, but probably also for gifts of money if people were on the road traveling. The word, “strangers,” in the plural indicates that there would be repeated opportunities for such hospitality. So it was no insignificant thing that the Apostle Peter was mentioning.

And all of this was to be “without grudging.” We not only must be prepared to help those who are in need, but we must be careful that we do it with the right attitude. Doing things because we have to, does not bring blessing to us, nor does it particularly benefit those to whom we are offering help. This, again, is evidence of love, the desire to help others to meet their needs and to better their condition, what ever that may be. Paul was talking about this when he wrote to the Philippian church, “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Phil. 2:4)

If you are reading your Bible by our Trinity schedule, you are in 1 John now. The Apostle John makes one of the major evidences of salvation, that we love one another. Cf. 1 John 3:14. In Hebrews 13:2 the writer of the book of Hebrews had Abraham in mind when he wrote, “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” The Lord Himself encouraged hospitality in, for example, Matthew 25:35-36:

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger,

and ye took me in:

36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

And then when the righteous ask Him, “When did we see You a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison?” And He will answer them,

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me (Matt 25:40).

When we show hospitality for the people of God, the Lord takes it as done toward Himself.

The inns were rare, and when you would find them, they were not of AAA approved quality. In cases where those in need were without Christ, hospitality became an opportunity to win people to the Lord.

So there is much for us to learn from Scripture about hospitality.

4:10 The Lord has given different gifts to His people. No one has all of the gifts. Some may have more than one. But each one has at least one gift. We learn what those are by serving the Lord, by observing the doors which He opens for us. Our fellow believers are better judges of the gift, or gifts, that God has given us, than we are. One good question for any young man who is trying to enter the ministry to ask himself, is, What do the people in your church think about this? Not everyone is called to preach, or to teach. Not all men are called to serve as elders and deacons. I heard John MacArthur say once that there are many men in the ministry who shouldn't be. But if you are a believer, you have a gift.

According to verse 10 our gifts are to be used primarily with the Lord's people. And we are to be ‘good stewards of the manifold grace of God.’ What is a steward? In the first place he is a servant. In the second place he is a steward who has been entrusted with that which belongs to his master. Joseph, the son of Jacob, in the book of Genesis, was a steward. He was a steward in Potiphar's house. He was a steward in prison. He was a steward over the whole land of Egypt. When Joseph's brothers sold him to some Midianite merchants who were going down into Egypt, they, in turn, sold him to Potiphar who was “the captain of the guard” in Egypt, a high ranking military man. After some time when Potiphar had seen that Joseph was a faithful servant and trustworthy, this is what we read about Joseph:

4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand (Gen. 39:4).

Two verses later we read this concerning Potiphar:

6 And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat (Gen. 39:6).

Joseph was Potiphar's steward. He did not give all that he had to David, but he made Joseph his overseer to take care of all that he had.

But Potiphar's wife was a problem. She was attracted to this Jewish teenager, and tried to get him to go to bed with her. But Joseph steadfastly refused her, and this is what he said to her:

9 There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? (Gen. 39:9).

Joseph withstood what must have been a great temptation because he was his master's steward, and he intended to be faithful to Potiphar, and, above all, faithful to God!

Well, eventually Potiphar's wife told her husband a lie about Joseph, saying that Joseph had tried to seduce her. For this Joseph was cast into prison.

Well, what happened to Joseph in prison? The jailor soon found that he could trust Joseph. And so the jailor

made Joseph his steward. Listen to what the Bible tells us about Joseph in prison:

21 But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.

23 The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper (Gen. 39:21-23).

This was no small, insignificant thing that the jailor did because in those days, if a prisoner escaped, the jailor was put to death. So the jailor put his life in Joseph's hands.

But this is not the end of the story. You will remember that Pharaoh's butler and baker were put into prison because there had evidently been an attack on Pharaoh's life, and one or both of them were to blame. On a certain night both the butler and the baker had dreams, but they didn't know what their dreams meant. Joseph was able to interpret their dreams, and his predictions came true. The baker was hanged; the butler was restored to his position. Joseph asked the butler to remember him to Pharaoh, but the butler forgot all about Joseph for two full years. Then Pharaoh had a dream. In fact, he had two dreams. He called his wise men, but none of them could interpret the dreams. *At that moment the butler remembered Joseph.* Joseph was brought from prison to stand before Pharaoh, heard his dreams, and the Lord enabled Joseph to interpret them. They both meant the same thing. Egypt was going to have seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine. When Pharaoh knew that he needed someone to prepare for the years of famine, he quickly turned to Joseph. Now listen to what the most powerful man in the world said to David at that time:

39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

42 And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;

43 And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.

44 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt (Gen. 41:39-44).

Horatio Alger never conceived of a story like this. Sometimes "truth is stranger than fiction." This all really happened.

Joseph is a great example of a steward. God made him a steward to Potiphar, an Egyptian army officer, to an Egyptian jailor, and finally to the king of Egypt, Pharaoh. Potiphar made Joseph a steward over all that he had. He didn't give it to him, but he made him responsible for all that he had. The jailor did the same thing. We are not told that he got paid for what he did, just the position he had: the jailor's steward. But who would ever have thought that Joseph would go from jail to the throne in one big jump. He was faithful in small things, so God made him ruler over many things.

God has bestowed His grace upon us. It is by God's grace that we are what we are, whatever that may be. And we are stewards of His grace. What we have by the way of possessions and spiritual gifts, we have received from God. They belong to Him, and are to be used for Him. And they are to be used for the Lord by ministering "one to another." Let us pray daily that the Lord will make each one of us "good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

Before we leave this verse, why is the grace of God spoken of by Peter as "manifold"? The word actually

means *in different colors*. The grace of God is manifested to each of us in many different ways. It is by grace that we are saved. It is by grace that we are strengthened to face our trials. (Peter spoke of “manifold temptations,” or trials in 1 Peter 1:6.) It is by God’s grace that we are what we are. The subject of the grace of God is unsurpassed in Scripture. It is seen in everything that God is, and that God does. We must not be jealous because God’s grace is given in a different way to someone else. We need to be thankful for the grace that He has given, and continues to give to each one of us.

4:11 One place where we all want to see the grace of God is in the way we speak. This is a verse for pastors and Bible teachers and missionaries, but it is not limited to them. It is a verse for all of us. The words in Greek would be better translated, If anyone . . . It is a verse for Christian parents as they speak to their children. It is a verse for children as they speak to their parents. It is for all of us. And what a blessing it would be if we all would keep this in mind, and speak accordingly! Hiebert says that there is nothing in this verse which limits the speaking to speaking in church. It means anywhere that we speak we are to “speak as the oracles of God.” The Greeks used this word as the message of one of the gods. The NT uses it of the OT. Here it would refer to the whole revelation of God, the OT and the NT. In all of our teaching, in opinions we that we express, in advice that we give, we are to speak the truth of the Word of God. Hiebert quoted a man by the name of Brownson who said that we are messengers, not improvisors (p. 276).

But we not only serve the Lord by the way we speak, but we serve Him by what we do. Here Peter used the Greek verb from which we get our word *deacon*. It is the same verb that is used in verse 10 and translated “minister.” In one sense of the word, and perhaps the main way in which it is used in Scripture, we are all ministers. We minister with our hand, with our feet, with our prayers. Every day we minister to each other. Husbands minister to their wives; wives minister to their husbands. Parents minister to their children; children minister to their parents. Often children minister to children. We minister to friends, and we minister to strangers. But it is all to be done with “the ability which God giveth.” Regardless of how long we have known the Lord, or how well we know Him, we can never minister effectively to others without the wisdom and power which God alone can give us. We need the Lord’s help every minute of every day. We must never try to go in our own strength. We are to go in His strength. And His strength is ministered to us “through Jesus Christ.” And God has ordained it this way for two reasons: 1) so that we will not boast about what *we* have done, and 2) so we will give all of the glory to God.

Both the word translated “ability” (ἰσχύος) and “dominion” (κράτος) are Greek words meaning *power*. According to Thayer the first is power as an endowment, which would have to come from God; the second is manifested power, and this word is used chiefly in the NT of God. The “ability” is an inner, enabling power given by God; the “dominion” is the subsequent display of that power resulting in external evidence of the blessing of God upon the ministry of His people. God works in us, and then He works through us. We need to give our constant attention to the first, what He is doing in us, if we are to expect the second, that He will work through us. F. B. Meyer said that this which Peter wrote about here should be “the master-motive which should inspire our lives” (p. 149). This is to be the grand objective of every Christian’s life, “that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to Whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever,” lit. *unto the ages of the ages, or for all of time and all of eternity*.

And then Peter did an unusual thing. He added the word, “Amen.” It is the same word in English, Greek, and Hebrew. It is the word with which we commonly end our prayers or doxologies. It means *so be it, or may it be*. *Undoubtedly this is because Peter was expressing his words to be received by the Lord, and understood by his readers, to be his prayer for them*. As with Paul’s prayers, so with Peter’s, it is essential that we actually present them to God, but it is important, too, to let the Lord’s people know how we are praying for them, and what our burden for them is.

There is nothing that will strengthen believers in times of testing, and encourage them to keep on, than for them to forget themselves and to be consumed with a desire that “in all things” God would be glorified through His Son Jesus Christ. That is God’s will “in all things,” in all of our lives every day that we live, whatever our circumstances might be. When God is glorified, our hearts are filled with joy and peace and praise to Him.

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If we look carefully back over verse 11 we will see that all that God has ordained for the ministry of his Word, whether it be to one person, or to a hundred, or to a thousand, there is nothing about it in which we can take the glory. All of the glory goes to God! And we need to remember this. It is all designed to humble us, to make us thankful, but to remember always that the glory goes to God, and not to us. Glorifying God produces a greater degree of godliness in our lives.

4:12 Here the Apostle Peter emphasizes a point that he has referred to before, but here he does it to indicate that how we respond to the trials that come our way, is another way that the Lord has of making us more godly. See 1:6-9 and 2:12, and verses 20 to the end of the chapter where he is speaking to servants who may have difficult masters. And then 4:1 and 2.

“Beloved” – Peter only used this affectionate title twice in 1 Peter (here, and in 2:11), but he used it six times in 2 Peter: once chapter 1 (v. 17), five times in chapter 3 (vv. 1, 8, 14, 15, 17). In one of these, 3:15, he used it of Paul, “our beloved brother Paul.” It is a noun formed from the verb ἀγαπάω. The word for beloved is ἀγαπητός, only it is plural and so it has an -οί ending. He was addressing all of the people of God. They were all dear to him. He sought their spiritual good. The Apostle John would say that this is evidence that Peter really loved the people of God, the children of God, and so as it is with anyone else who really loves the Lord’s people, this can be taken as an evidence of Peter’s salvation. The same principles of Scripture apply to all believers equally, whether it be an apostle or a little child who really knows the Lord.

“Think it not strange” – This is the same word that Peter used in verse 4, except for the fact that in verse 4 Peter was saying how unbelievers were taken by surprise when a person who had sinned with them, didn’t sin with them anymore. In the same way Christians might feel that now that they know the Lord, trials and temptations should be a thing of the past. Maybe they have come out of a lot of trouble because of the way they were living before they were saved, but now that their lifestyle is different, and they want to please the Lord, the good life should be all good. At the beginning of this chapter Paul told them to arm themselves with truth that since the Lord had a most difficult time on earth, they should be prepared to receive that same kind of bad treatment that He received. You will remember that there was a time when Peter thought that the Lord should not have to suffer. When the Lord spoke of dying, Peter rebuked him and assured the Lord that the Lord’s enemies would never be able to put Him to death. And when the Jews came to arrest the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter took out his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus. It was like Peter was saying to the Jews, “If anyone is going to suffer, you are, but not the Lord!” How mellowed and wise the Apostle Peter had become!

But he was telling his “beloved” fellow-believers that they were not only not to be taken by surprise by trials, but they were not to be surprised that the trials often became fiery. This would mean that they hurt. But Peter must also have been thinking of the benefits that come to our lives through trials. Faith is strengthened by trials. We know especially of one time in Peter’s life (and the other apostles were with him) when by the grace of God they were able to practice what he was preaching here. We find this in Acts 5. Peter and the other apostles had been arrested by the Jews and, after beating them, and warning them not to speak anymore “in the name of Jesus, the apostles were released. What was their attitude? Did they threaten to sue their persecutors? No, this is what is recorded in Scripture about their attitude?

41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ (Acts 5:41-42).

Kenneth Wuest has an interesting comment in his commentary on the epistle of 1 Peter concerning “fiery trials.” The word “fiery” is used in the Greek translation of the OT, the Septuagint, is rendered in Proverbs 27:21 as “a furnace.” The verse says this: “As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise.” The same word is found in Psalm 66:10, “For Thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us as silver is tried.” Vincent, another Bible expositor translates that verse with these words: “Thou, O God, has proved us: Thou hast smelted us, as silver is smelted.” So Dr. Wuest says:

The word means literally “a burning,” but is used in these passages to refer to a smelting furnace and the smelting process in which gold or silver ore is purified. These sufferings which the recipients of this letter were undergoing constituted the smelting furnace in which their lives were being purified (pp. 118, 119).

Wuest also pointed out that the word happened is a good translation in the phrase, “as though some strange thing happened unto you.” It speaks of the way things come together in a person’s life, strange,” as though as by mere chance. But it is as Wuest explains, But nothing just happens in the life of a Christian. Even this suffering for righteousness’ sake is all within His plan. It is used of God to purify our lives from sin (p.119).

4:13 But we do not take pleasure in the suffering itself. We rejoice in what God is accomplishing in us through the suffering. The most glorious example of suffering for the will of God, is to be seen in the experience of our Lord. Think of what was accomplished by His suffering. Think of how greatly God was glorified. But think also of what God does in our lives through the trials that come our way. We have not yet been told that we are not to preach or teach in the name of the Lord Jesus, but every trial, regardless of the form it may take, is designed by God to produce good results, good as God counts God. But in particular if we are reproached for Christ’s Name we can be happy.

The verb “rejoice” which comes at the beginning of verse 13 in the KJV, come in the middle of the verse in the Greek text. Peter was speaking primarily about the troubles that come our way because we belong to the Lord. There is a twofold problem with us as Christians. The first is that we know and love Jesus Christ. The second is that our lives as Christians are a rebuke, and, actually, a condemnation of the way people live in the world. And people in the world don’t like that. They criticize us for being goody-goodies, or “holier than thou,” but if we are walking humbly with the Lord, seeking to please the Lord, we are going to have some difficult times. But we are to rejoice, and keep rejoicing. The joy of the Lord and our joy in the Lord, is our strength. See Neh. 8:10.

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The words, “inasmuch as,” should probably be translated, *in so far as*. As Peter would go on to say, we are not to do the wrong things. See v. 15. We can’t rejoice in those things. But if we suffer because we belong to Christ, and because we are seeking to be righteous in the way we live, then we are to rejoice. We are “partakers of Christ’s sufferings,” not because we add to His work on the Cross (that is already complete and finished), but we partake in His sufferings because we suffer for the same reason that Christ suffered throughout His life before He went to the Cross, the reason why, from a human standpoint, He was eventually crucified.

Notice that Peter speaks again here about the coming of the Lord: “when His glory shall be revealed.” They

might not be able to rejoice fully in the present in the present, while their sufferings are going on, but still they rejoice, and can rejoice in anticipation of what it will mean to them when the Lord returns.

Peter continued with this thought in verse 14.

4:14 To be “reproached,” is to have people saying bad things about us, to make false accusations and malign us in other ways because of “the Name of Christ.” They seek in every way to *insult* us because of “the Name of Christ.” As the Lord predicted, they hate us because they hated Him. “The Name of Christ” means all that He was, all that He did, all that He claimed to be. Christ means Messiah. Christ means Deity. They hated our Lord because of the relationship that He had with God, especially that God was His Father, and that He knew God and had been with God. So when we stand for all that it means when we side with the Lord Jesus Christ, they hate us. They reject us. They mean to put a halt to all that we seek to do to spread the truth about Christ and especially the meaning of His death on the Cross: the Gospel.

But if they reproach us, we are to be “happy” (our Beatitude word again – “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matt. 5:10-11).

At this point Peter quoted from Isaiah 11:2

One detail about this verse is that all three members of the Godhead are mentioned. The word “spirit” is not capitalized in the KJV, but it should be. The Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of glory and of God.” Although those who have sought to interpret this expression, it clearly is a statement of the Deity of the Holy Spirit. God’s glory is His Deity. The Lord’s glory is His Deity. And the same is true of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was given to believers to abide with them forever. And so the hope and comfort of believers who were suffering for the sake of the Gospel, were to rejoice that “the Spirit of glory and of God “resteth” (present and continually) upon you.” The Holy Spirit does not come and go with us as believers. He abides with us forever, regardless of what our circumstances might be. The Holy Spirit *rests* us. That is why we can have peace when we are being persecuted. Cf. Matthew 11:28-30.

Two things were happening when they were being persecuted:

- 1) While the enemies of Christ were speaking evil of the Lord,
- 2) In the lives of believers He was being glorified.

The Apostle Paul spoke of rejoicing when he had referred to what people were doing against him:

14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death (Phil. 1:14-20).

Verse 15 is a warning.

January 29, 2007

4:15 The context, as Wuest said, means *to suffer reproach*, following what Peter had just said in verse 14.

To “suffer reproach,” as I have pointed out in verse 14, means to have bad things said about us. Hiebert used the word *insulted*. Christians can suffer reproach for doing the will of God, but we must not suffer reproach for doing the wrong things. For the Apostle Peter to mention such sins as he did here must mean that such sins must have characterized their lives before they were saved. It is difficult for us to imagine what terrible lives many of these people lived before they were saved. Not all of the sins applied to all of the people, but these sins must have been present in enough of them that Peter felt constrained to mention them.

Peter was teaching here that true salvation means often a radical change in a person’s behavior. A Christian cannot go on sinning. We may sin, and often do, but, for example, with respect to a murderer, the Apostle John said in 1 John 3:15, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” So a professing Christian who commits murder is not a true Christian. Associating murder with hate, shows that, as some commentators point out, attacking a person’s character is a form of murder.

Judas Iscariot is described in Scripture as a “thief.” See John 12:6. It was not what he did just once without repeating it, but was a way of life to him, and showed that he was not a true child of God. Stealing what belongs to someone else is a way of life for a lot of people, but it has no place in the life of a true child of God.

Next Peter mentioned an “evildoer.” He used this word also in 2:12 and 14, as well as in 3:16. He is the only NT writer who used it. This was a wrongdoer from a Scriptural standpoint, but Peter must have had in mind any lawless deed that the government would take action against. This thought is in 2:14.

But then, along with these major sins, Peter mentioned “a busybody in other men’s matters.” It wouldn’t fall into the same category among most people, but it does with the Lord. On the other hand, the fact that it is mentioned with those other sins might suggest that this is the kind of action that might provoke some intervention by the government. This person is often the kind who gets involved in other people’s affairs although he has not been asked to do so, and usually he neglects his own business. When the Apostle Paul said, “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Phil. 2:4), he was not encouraging busybody activity, but simply that we should not be so occupied with our own affairs that we forget to pray for others, or forget to encourage them. But we need to be careful about the attitude that we have to know everything that is going on with everybody.

4:16 In this verse Peter returned to what he had said in verse 14. The words “any man suffer” are not in the original text. The Greek simply read, “Yet if as a Christian . . .” The translators were right in adding the words “any man suffer” because it is obvious that this is the idea the Peter had in mind.

This word “Christian” which has become so prominent a title for the Lord’s people in our day, is only used three times in the NT. It is found first in Acts 11:26, then in Acts 26:28, and finally here in 1 Peter.

Suffering as a Christian is not something that we are to be ashamed of, but it is an occasion for which and in which we should glorify God. An illustration of this is found in Acts 5:41 when the Jewish authorities had apprehended the apostles because of their ministry. Gamaliel intervened on their behalf. But before they let the apostles go, they beat them, telling them that “they should not speak in the name of Jesus.” Then Luke, who wrote the book of Acts, tells us the attitude that the apostles had as they departed:

41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ (Acts 5:41-42).

They felt honored that they had suffered in that way for their Savior.

In the NT the people of God were called disciples, saints, believers, children of God, etc., but Robertson pointed out in his commentary that the name “Christian” was in common use in Rome. It was the title given to the worshipers of Christ by the Gentiles. It means *a follower of Christ*. Thayer says that by the second century it was accepted by the Lord’s people as a title of honor. Fausset said that this term shows that the Jews no longer looked upon Christians as a Jewish sect. The Jews generally did not use the term because they did not believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the Christ. And so the Jews called them Nazarenes. Evidently the people of Antioch were known for giving people nicknames. That is where this title originated, but it was originally intended as a term of reproach. That is probably why Peter used it here when he was writing about reproaches.

“Let him not be ashamed.” Archbishop Trench in his *Synonyms of the New Testament*, said that the idea of shaming a person, or of making a person feel ashamed, was to keep him from doing something because of the trouble that it would cause him. That is why we as Christians don’t witness more than we do. We don’t want to lose friends, or cause people to think less of us. We need to be like the early Christians who counted it an honor to suffer for the Lord, “on this behalf.”

4:17 This verse begins with the word “for” in the KJ translation. The Greek word is ὅτι, and could be, and probably should be translated, *because*. Peter explained in this verse why he had been exhorting the people to be happy and not to be ashamed because of the troubles that had come upon them from the world. The Devil wants to silence us, and, if he can, he will draw us into sin to ruin our testimony, or he will make us ashamed of our message so that we will not talk to anyone about it. The world has the same effect upon us. However, we need often to be reminded of the fact that “greater is He that is in us, than He that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

Let me remind you of what Peter wrote back in the seventh verse of this chapter. (Read 1 Peter 4:7.) Many Christians wonder about a verse like this. “The end of all things is at hand.” This obviously means that the end of the age is “at hand,” just around the corner, so to speak. And yet over two thousand years have gone by since Peter wrote these words. How could “the end” have been “at hand” then? And what are we to think about it now?

Well, these are not easy questions to answer, but I will try.

In Peter’s second epistle, he wrote this in chapter 3, verse 8:

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

God inhabits eternity, as we have learned in our memory work from Isaiah 57:15. In the light of eternity a thousand years is like nothing. It is like a day in our timing. So in the light of eternity the Lord Jesus has only been away two days. Therefore, every generation is to live in the expectation of “the end of all things.” This does not mean that it is all going to end at once, but it is going to end. Heaven and earth are going to pass away. We don’t know when the Lord is going to return, but we are to expect Him at any time. So one thing that we learn from God’s dealings in the past, is that when He is preparing a special work, He begins in the hearts of His people. True spiritual awakenings indicate that. In fact, what we learn from the Bible is that God

is always concerned about the way His people are living because His normal way of eventually dealing with those who, as Peter said here in verse 17, “obey not the gospel of God,” is to work in the hearts of His people first and continuously.

Peter was writing to a group of Christians who were having a hard time. They were being tried severely for their faith in Christ. The Lord was dealing with His people in a special way to bring them to a much greater state of holiness, so that their lives would have a greater impact upon people who have not obeyed the Gospel. Regardless of who we are, and where we are spiritually, none of us is yet as holy as the Lord, and so there is room for improvement in all of our lives. “The house of God” here is the Church, the body of Christ. See 1 Peter 2:5. Also Hebrews 3:6.

If you are reading your Bible through, you have just finished the first part of the book of Exodus, the story of the Lord’s deliverance of His people from Egypt. But you will notice that before the Lord brought the plagues upon Egypt and the Egyptians, He brought the children of Israel into a time of great affliction. That is the kind of thing that Peter is referring to here in verse 17. The trials are not necessarily because of the sin of the people, but trials have a way of focusing our attention on our own lives and making us desire to be more holy in our daily lives. This was the beginning of Peter’s exhortations to the people of God. See 1 Peter 1:13-16. See also 1 Peter 1:22; 3:1.

Now if it begins in us, or lit. *from us*, “what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?” Do you remember that when the Lord called Peter and Andrew to be His disciples, He said, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19). Well, here in the fourth chapter of Peter’s first epistle we find him fishing for men. And he wanted those believers who were under trial to see that the primary purpose of these trials was their own sanctification, but that this in turn would have a greater impact upon those who still had not obeyed the Gospel. To obey the Gospel is to believe in Christ.

How often do we give serious thought to those who “obey not the Gospel of God”? The Lord Jesus Christ came from heaven, to humble Himself to become a Man that He might die to save sinners from going to Hell, the place where we all deserve to be. Nothing in this world is more important than for people to hear the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that they might believe the Gospel, and be saved.

But look at verse 18.

4:18 Note the connecting word, “And.” This means that it is a continuation of verse 17. We have a question in verse 17, and here is a related question in verse 18. Both questions point us to the destiny of those who depart from this life without Christ.

The word “scarcely” does not mean that we can just barely make it into heaven, but it means *with difficulty*. The Christian does not escape trials, but what about “the ungodly,” the person who has no place for God in his life, who does not give God the reverence to which He is entitled. And ungodly person shows nothing but contempt for God, for Christ, for the Bible, and for Christians. Where will he “appear”? What is his destiny? It is hell, eternal hell, and total separation from God.

4:19 This is Peter’s version of Paul’s word in Philippians 2:12-13:

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

“Wherefore” suggests a conclusion, a summing up of what Peter had been writing. The Christians are

described here as those who “suffer according to the will of God.” They had obeyed the Gospel, but it did not mean that the way to glory was easy. But we not only have a great Savior, but we also have a great Keeper. Peter was coming to the end of this epistle on the same note which he sounded at the beginning. Cf. 1:3-5, but especially verses 4 and 5. The trials may be fiery and the road to heaven rough, but we need to continue “in well doing,” not in evildoing.

Is the Lord sufficient for us through all of the trials of life? He is “the faithful Creator.” Have you noticed how in the OT God is remembered as the Creator when there is a need for power? We have this also in our memory verses. Cf. Jer. 32:17,

17 Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.

And He is “a faithful Creator.” He cannot fail us, and He will not fail us. Cf. also 1 Cor. 10:13.

But what does Peter say that we are to do? We are to “commit the keeping of our souls” to Him. This word commit is the word that the Lord Jesus used on the Cross when He said, “Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46).

This word “commit” is a banking expression. It is what you are doing when you deposit you money in the bank. Peter used the present tense of the word, which indicates what the people to whom he was writing were to do right away, and to keep doing it continuously. We are secure in our salvation because our faithful Creator is keeping us, but we will be happy in this security if we are constantly committing our souls to the Lord, recognizing that only He can keep us. Cf. Jude 24-25.