

The Book of 1 Peter Study Guide

Chapter 4

Peter now continues his teaching on sanctification with personal exhortations to his audience.

4:1-6

- v 1-2 His first instruction for these believers is to "arm" themselves with the same willingness to suffer that Messiah exhibited in His physical body. So, by choosing to suffer for doing right shows that a person has resolved to stop living for selfish human passions and to live entirely for the will of God.
- v 3 Peter emphasizes that believers have already wasted enough time during their former unbelieving life, characterized by numerous unrighteous behaviors. The implication is that true sanctification necessitates leaving that former life behind.
- v 4 And when they are successful in doing this, their former friends are surprised and insult or slander them.
- v 5 The mockers and persecutors will ultimately have to stand before God and give an account to Him, as He is ready to judge both the living and the dead.
- v 6 In contrast, believers have vindication through the Gospel. In particular, he acknowledges those who were persecuted and have died, which connects directly to the suffering of the believers at that time. So, Peter is reassuring his anxious readers that even though their loved ones faced human condemnation and physical death, the Gospel they believed was not in vain. They are currently alive in the presence of God.

Peter now shifts from enduring outside persecution to maintaining internal health within the believing community.

4:7-11

- v 7 When Peter writes that "the end of all things is at hand" (near), he was not making a chronological prediction that the world would end in a few weeks or years. He was in agreement with the general understanding that history is divided into two major eras: "this present evil age" and "the age to come." And because the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Yeshua, plus the giving of the Holy Spirit had all occurred, no other major redemptive event needed to happen before Messiah returns. Therefore, the final event is conceptually "at hand" or "right at the door" because it is the very next thing on God's timeline.

In light of this reality, believers must live with the constant awareness that history is moving toward its climax, and that calls for staying calm, alert, and self-controlled, along with an emphasis on prayer.

- v 8 Love covers a multitude of sins because it can forgive, overlook offenses, and prevents

bitterness from fracturing the community.

- v 9 Peter shows the importance of hospitality by commanding believers to offer shelter, food, and safety to one another. This hospitality must be done willingly and without complaining about the cost or burden.
- v 10-11 Every believer has received a unique spiritual gift that must be used to serve others, acting as good stewards of God's varied grace. Those who speak must do so as if delivering the very utterances (oracles) of God. Those who serve must do so using the strength and energy that God supplies, not their own power. And everything must be done so that God receives all the praise, glory, and power through Messiah Yeshua forever.

Peter now concludes the chapter by reframing suffering not as a sign of God's abandonment, but as a direct participation in the sufferings of Messiah.

4:12-19

- v 12 Believers should not look at painful trials ("fiery ordeals") as something strange or unexpected.
- v 13 Instead, we are called to rejoice because suffering connects us directly to Messiah's own pain, ensuring they will experience immense joy when His glory is fully revealed.
- v 14-15 Peter, then, addresses suffering for the right reasons. Being insulted for the name of Messiah brings God's blessing, because the glorious Holy Spirit rests upon the believer.

But Peter also warns that no believer should suffer for doing wrong—such as being a murderer, thief, criminal, or a troublesome meddler. This last term literally means "an overseer of other people's matters." It describes a person who acts like they are the manager, boss, or judge of a situation or life that they have absolutely no right or responsibility to control. But in the Roman empire, it was especially dangerous for believers because it was considered to be social and political agitation.

So, if a believer aggressively tried to disrupt local civic customs, intrude upon household hierarchies, or to police the behavior of non-believers, it caused massive public backlash.

In a more general sense, a troublesome meddler crosses boundaries in several distinct ways:

- Invading privacy by prying into other people's domestic, financial, or personal issues out of sinful curiosity or a desire to control.
- Arrogantly appointing oneself as the judge over an unbeliever's behavior or a coworker's performance when it is not your job.
- Creating unnecessary strife by inserting oneself into conflicts, arguments, or office politics that do not involve you, only to stir the pot.

So when encountering backlash in our lives, this should lead us to ask: Am I actually being mistreated for my values? Or am I facing consequences for being arrogant, argumentative, or difficult to work with? Peter is calling on our public and digital behavior to remain completely blameless.

- v 16 But, if a person suffers specifically for being a believer in Yeshua, they must not feel ashamed, but instead use that name to bring glory to God
- v 17-18 He shows that the necessary judgment of how people live their lives must begin with the household or family of God. Peter reasons that if the righteous are saved only through such difficult purification, the final outcome for those who reject the Gospel will be far worse.
- v 19 Peter concludes his teaching on suffering by exhorting those who suffer according to God's will must commit their lives to a faithful Creator. And in the middle of pain, the ultimate duty of the believer is simply to keep doing what is right