

I PETER 3:18-4:6
JESUS, OUR EXAMPLE IN SUFFERING!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to I Peter chapter 3 as we continue our in-depth study of I Peter.

Keep in mind that Peter is writing to Christians who have been dispersed throughout Asia Minor for their faith in Jesus Christ. Persecution was the cause of this dispersion, and that persecution was going to continue to grow and grow!

In chapter 1 of I Peter we see Peter speak of our salvation and how we are secure in Christ. We see that all that God has for us and then Peter speaks of trials in the present, what they were experiencing.

And this is how Peter put it in I Peter 1:6-9, **“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith - the salvation of your souls.”**

Persecution was a reality for them, and I see it coming for us as well. So these words of Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, are for us!

You see, as much as the world was coming against them, God was going to use the evil to help these dear saints to grow in the faith. And yes, it is not going to be easy, some will be martyred for their faith, but in the end – ***THE SALVATION OF YOUR SOULS!***

Do you see how important it is to have a correct perspective of things!

And I realize that it is not easy, and some may complain that they are experiencing more persecution than they deserve, whatever that means.

And I think for many Christians today, they have a me-centered reality, it is all about them and having – ***THEIR BEST LIFE NOW!***

For me personally, to be able to serve the King of kings and Lord of lords is the greatest thing in the world, until I stand before Him one day!

My best life is coming when I go home to be with the Lord and now, the Lord is working with you and me, He is working with us down here, so we are prepared for heaven.

That really is what Paul said in Romans 8:18-23, **“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, *eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.*”**

Yes, we do groan in these bodies of flesh, but we await that day when we will receive a new body that will be eternal and will not fade away!

I know, it still does not seem fair that we have to go through all of this. And that is why Peter gives to us, and what I have called our study – ***JESUS, OUR EXAMPLE IN SUFFERING!***

But here's the thing and we are all aware of it. Suffering is not easy, it is not pleasant, but as we will see this morning, as we look to our Lord who suffered for us, may we understand what He went through, and it is not even close to what we go through. I think we need to understand the depth of His suffering.

You see, we are called to suffer for our faith and the way we can do that with joy is to not hold onto the things of this world so tightly, but to lay hold of Christ!

Let me share these words with you that will give you an idea of how some feel about what Christ endured, and it is a wrong picture.

We are told,

Some would say that those who suffer most often suffer first from blind naiveté. Albert Schweitzer thought as much about Jesus, claiming that his cruel death on the cross was nothing more than the unfortunate result of naiveté.

According to Schweitzer, Jesus, the misguided visionary, never saw the sufferings of the cross coming until it was too late:

There is silence all around. The Baptist appears, and cries: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Soon after that comes Jesus, and in the knowledge that He is the coming Son of Man, lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on the last revolution which is to bring all ordinary history to a close.

It refuses to turn, and He throws Himself upon it. Then it does turn, and crushes Him. Instead of bringing in the eschatological conditions, He has destroyed them.

The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great Man, who was strong enough to think of Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to His purpose, is hanging upon it still. That is His victory and His reign.

Peter, however, has been telling a different story. Jesus was vindicated in death. He rose victorious in the spirit and now reigns eternally as the Ascended Son at God's right hand.

According to Peter, naiveté is set aside. Jesus' suffering was not the unfortunate result of an impoverished itinerant's idealistic fervor. Instead, his suffering was by divine initiative.

Persecution was the predetermined pathway for God's Son.

All the Gospel writers concur. The Jesus they present to the world is well aware that his unique work required suffering and service. . . . Repeatedly he told his disciples, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed" (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33).

When Jesus stood before the Sanhedrin on the night of his betrayal, never once did he defend himself in hopes of avoiding the cross. In fact, when he did speak, he intentionally said what he knew would seal his fate (Mark 14:62).

- David R. Helm, 1 & 2 Peter and Jude – Sharing Christ's Sufferings, pp. 127-128

When we stand up for our faith, when we stand against unrighteousness, well, it is as Paul said in II Timothy 3:12, "**Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**"

That is just the reality!

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at into the following main points. They are,

THE JUST FOR THE UNJUST – I PETER 3:18

THE PICTURE – I PETER 3:19-21

THE FINISHED WORK – I PETER 3:22

SUFFERING AS OUR LORD SUFFERED – I PETER 4:1-2

THE OLD MAN WAS CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST – I PETER 4:3-6

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in I Peter chapter 3, beginning in verse 18 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and look at this topic – ***JESUS, OUR EXAMPLE IN SUFFERING!***

I PETER 3

VERSE 18

First of all, let me say this. There is no other sacrifice, no other way of atonement that God will accept other than what Jesus Christ has provided for us at the cross of Calvary!

And keep in mind that this phrase, “**once for sins**” carries with it the idea “*of perpetual validity, not requiring repetition.*”

Now we don't think much about that today because we are not Jewish. But for the Jews, they were very familiar with the sacrificial system and now here comes the disciples of Jesus and they are telling these Jews that there is no other sacrifice that is needed, Jesus completed the work!

Think about all those years that they were atoning for their sin and killing millions of animals and yet, those animals could never take away their sin, only Jesus could and did! The sacrifice is completed, and the work has been accepted as Jesus has sat down before the Father!

Now I will deal with this point – ***THE JUST FOR THE UNJUST*** - in a minute. But first I want to deal with this sacrifice that was made, the sacrifice that Jesus has made for us.

Remember that Peter is trying to encourage these persecuted Christians to continue on in the faith, to stand strong and to do that He uses Jesus as the example of suffering.

The thing we need to keep in mind is that the work that Jesus did, the suffering He endured does not compare to anything that we have gone through, even if you added them all up!

He is set apart completely from all others in His suffering!

Spurgeon makes this interesting point regarding the heroic suffering of a godly man. He wrote, *“I remember reading, in Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, the story of a man of God, who was bound to a stake to die for Christ; there he was, calm and quiet, till his legs had been burned away, and the bystanders looked to see his helpless body drop from the chains as black as coal, and not a feature could be discerned; but one who was near was greatly surprised to see that poor black carcass open its mouth, and two words came out of it; and what do you suppose they were? ‘Sweet Jesus!’ And then the martyr fell over the chains, and at last life was gone.”*

What is my point?

My point is this. This man had the help of his loving God, sweet Jesus to help him through that time of immense pain and suffering and so do we as we go through difficult times.

But as Jesus hung on the cross, He did not have the presence of God the Father to help Him. We are told that the Father turned His face away from the Son as the sins of the world were placed upon Him and for three hours Jesus not only experienced the pain of the cross but the separation from the Father!

That is why what Jesus went through, His suffering was far worse than anything we will ever face.

Yes, people may endure tremendous physical suffering, but the suffering I am speaking regarding Jesus was this spiritual suffering as the Father turned His face from Jesus! And yes, for the most part, we will never experience the physical pain that Jesus went through, not even close!

And thus, He is our example of how we are to endure suffering, how we are to respond to it, what should be manifested in our lives as persecution comes upon us!

Again, Spurgeon wrote, *“It is almost as if the apostle said, ‘You have none of you suffered when compared with him;’ or, at least, he was the Arch-Sufferer, – the Prince of sufferers, – the Emperor of the realm of agony, – Lord Paramount in sorrow . . . You know a little about grief, but you do not know much. The hem of grief’s garment is all you ever touch, but Christ wore it as his daily robe. We do but sip of the cup he drank to its bitterest dregs. We feel just a little of the warmth of Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace; but he dwelt in the very midst of the fire.”*

Now I have touched on this already but let me ask you this.

How many times did Jesus suffer for our sins?

Only once as He hung on the cross of Calvary and bore the sins of the world and the wrath of God was poured out upon Him, the wrath of God that was for you and me!

Why did He do this?

To bring us to God, to restore that relationship that was broken by sin.

The word **“bring”** was used *“of admission to an audience with the Great King.”*

(Blum).

One writer put it like this as he wrote, *“The verb translated “He might bring (prosagō)” expresses the specific purpose of Jesus’ actions. It often describes someone’s being introduced or given access to another. In classical Greek the noun form refers to the one making the introduction. In ancient courts certain officials controlled access to the king. They verified someone’s right to see him and then introduced that person to the monarch. Christ now performs that function for believers.”*

Another writer put it like this, *“The phrase “bring us to God” is a technical term that means “gain audience at court.” Because of the work of Christ on the cross, we now have an open access to God (Eph. 2:18; 3:12). We may come boldly to His throne! (Heb. 4:14-16)”*

That is what Jesus has done for us and thus, when we refuse to have fellowship with God, we are trashing the work that Jesus has done for us.

Have you ever thought of it like that?

You should. He died so we could once again have that intimate fellowship with God the Father!

And here’s the thing. I couldn’t save myself because I am a sinner, but Jesus was the perfect sacrifice and He paid in full the penalty for my sins, your sins in order that we can come before God and have fellowship with Him!

The just God, perfect, without sin suffered for us to bring us to the Father, that is love!

In other words – ***THE JUST – JESUS, FOR THE UNJUST – YOU AND ME!***

Now, Peter, as well as other portions of the Scriptures tell us that Jesus died a physical death, but He then was raised from the dead on the third day.

Who raised Jesus from the dead?

Peter tells us the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead – **“being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”**

But in Romans 6:4 we are told that the Father raised Jesus from the dead, **“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”**

But there is one more point I need to make and that is Jesus says that He raised Himself from the dead according to John 2:18-22, **“So the Jews answered and said to Him, ‘What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ Then the Jews said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’ But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.”**

What does all this mean?

It means that the Holy Trinity, the Triune God was actively involved in the resurrection!

Before I move on in our study, think about this for a minute.

Almighty God, the sinless One, the Holy One, no unrighteousness found in Him at all, became sin for us so that we can be sinless before God!

Again – ***THE JUST FOR THE UNJUST!***

As we read on, we will be looking at – ***THE PICTURE!***

VERSES 19-21

This is one of those controversial portions of Scripture and I am going to share with you what I believe Peter is telling us here.

First of all, this was done, I believe, after the death of Jesus but before His resurrection for now He is in glory with the Father.

And Peter tells us that Jesus went down into Hades, the abode of the dead and He preached to the spirits who were in prison.

I do not believe these spirits are human spirits but demons who, during the time of Noah co-habituated with women to contaminate the human race and prevent the Messiah from being born. You can read of this in Genesis chapter 6 as demons cohabitated with women and had offspring.

Why did these demons do this?

Because the Messiah was to be born from a woman and at this point, that is all they knew. So they tried to contaminate the human race so the Messiah could not be born.

And as you read through the Scriptures, as more information comes about where the Messiah is to be born, you see more death and destruction to try and prevent His birth!

What is interesting is that when it speaks of Noah it speaks of him being “**perfect in his generations.**”

The word “**perfect**” comes from a Hebrew root that means “*uncontaminated.*”

In other words, Noah and his family may have been the only ones left on the earth still pure and uncontaminated by demonic inbreeding. Thus, the flood came upon this world to destroy those who were contaminated and sparing Noah and His family!

Along with these demonic offsprings we also see gross sin that was permeating this world and God brought judgment upon it destroying all of creation except for the life that was saved on the ark, the animals and Noah and his family who were not contaminated.

I believe it is these demons that are chained in Hades that will be released during the Tribulation Period spoken of in Revelation chapter 9.

And if you are still unsure about this, the word “**spirits**” is a word that is never spoken of people except if it is qualified, like we see in Hebrews 12:23, “**the spirits of the righteous.**”

Not an easy topic, but I hope that clears that up.

Now, what message did Jesus preach to them?

Not the salvation message because they can't be saved but the message that He preached was that of victory over sin, victory over the enemy!

Keep in mind that the word "**preached**" in I Peter 3:19 is a Greek word that means "*declare*" or "*herald*" an important announcement.

In fact, "*In the ancient world, heralds would come to town as representatives of the rulers to make public announcements or precede generals and kings in the processions celebrating military triumphs, announcing victories won in battle.*"

Now, if Peter was talking about Jesus preaching the gospel, he would have used the Greek verb *euangelizō* ("*to evangelize*").

But he didn't and thus, this was not a message spoken to give these spirits a chance to be saved, but to announce the victory that Jesus has made for us!

Now let me also add this.

In Ephesians 4 we're told that after Jesus died on the cross, He descended into Hades - not to hellfire and torment per se, but to Abraham's bosom - the place He spoke of in Luke chapter 16 - the abode of the believing dead.

And it was there that Jesus preached - *and all heard the wonders of God's grace and His work on the cross.*

No longer is this place known as Abraham's bosom occupied because the captives have been set free.

But for those unbelievers, they await in Hades for the Great White Throne Judgment that takes place after the Millennial reign and all those who have rejected Christ will be cast into the Lake of Fire, outer darkness, eternally separated from God.

Thus, our victory is found in Christ no matter what the enemy may throw at us!

And Peter speaks of Noah and those who were saved, eight souls and yes, the flood was real, and it covered the entire earth.

And remember what we are looking at here – ***THE PICTURE!***

Peter is going to make an application about the flood waters.

What we see here is a picture of baptism as Noah and his family were saved as they went through the water.

You see, the floodwaters came and washed away the evil and brought forth a fresh start for Noah and his family.

As we look at the waters of baptism, it is the same general idea, the moving from the old to the new life in Christ!

Now some look at baptism and see it as being necessary for salvation, but that is not what the Scriptures teach.

The washing of water doesn't save us, Jesus does, but there is a spiritual truth behind the immersion of water.

We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and baptism is an outward showing of what has taken place inwardly. You are telling those around you that you have died to sin, that old life and as you come out of the water you are a new creation in Christ!

It symbolizes what has already taken place and is a witness to those around you of that reality!

The word "**baptism**" simply means "*to immerse.*"

And as we come to Christ, immerse our lives into His, we are saved and, like I have said, this immersion in water is an outward act to show an inward reality!

Paul in Romans 6:3-4 put it like this. He wrote, **“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”**

Paul is saying that when we are saved, we are identifying ourselves with Christ and as He was buried in the tomb, we are buried in the waters of baptism.

It is a picture of death, the death of the old life so that as we come out of the waters of baptism, resurrected you might say, we begin a new life in Christ.

Paul put it this way in II Corinthians 5:17, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”**

And in Galatians 2:20 Paul tells us, **“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”**

The outward expression of baptism identifies you with Christ, it is a picture of what He has done in your life. The reality is Jesus, don't substitute the reality with - ***THE PICTURE!***

As we read on, and this is very important for us to understand – ***THE FINISHED WORK!***

VERSE 22

Remember what Peter said to us back in I Peter 3:9, **“not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.”**

In other words, live as Christ has lived, do those things that He would do even if you have to endure suffering, and you will!

You see, Jesus has become our example of someone who suffered greatly for doing good and the blessing He inherited; He was received up into glory and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

And we too will be taken to glory to be with Him one day!

The main point Peter wanted to emphasize was Christ's complete victory over all **"angels and authorities and powers."**

The mighty victory that our Lord Jesus Christ won for us in His death, resurrection, and ascension.

We see this in Colossians 1:16 where Paul wrote, **"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him."**

And again, in Colossians 2:15 Paul wrote, **"Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it."**

Now when it speaks of Jesus being seated at the right hand of the Father what is being shown is that the work has been completed, there is nothing more to add to it. The Father has accepted what Jesus has done!

What work are we speaking of here?

What work has God the Father accepted?

The payment for our sin has been paid in full! That work has been completed!

Paul made that point in Hebrews 10:12-14 when he wrote, **“But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.”**

These Jewish believers understood the ministry of the priests as they offered their sacrifices for sins.

These sacrifices were made daily and repeatedly because they could not take away a person’s sins.

And as they read this letter from Paul, I’m sure they pictured this continual work of the priests in the Temple.

And from these priests and the sacrifices that were being made, Paul moves to Jesus, the greater sacrifice, who not only shed His blood as the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world, but He then sat down showing the work was completed, it was finished once and for all!

And Paul has made that point three times in this letter.

You can look at Hebrews 1:3, here in Hebrews 10:12 and also in Hebrews 12:2.

Why is this so important?

Because the priests never sat down because their work was never finished.

But Jesus has sat down because the work was finished. And yes, Jesus still ministers in heaven for us as our intercessor, but it is this ministry that flows out of His completed work.

Thus, He sat down at the right hand of the Father!

Now, let me ask you this question. ***“How long are you perfected in Christ?”***

Paul tells us ***FOREVER***, which tells me we are secure in our salvation.

John makes that point in I John 5:13, “**These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.**”

And Jesus tells us in John 5:24, “**Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.**”

The work has been completed by Jesus. You can accept that or reject that, but you can't change that fact - ***IT IS FINISHED!***

Our victory is in Christ and His completed work!

Thus – ***THE FINISHED WORK!***

As we read on into I Peter chapter 4 we are going to see – ***SUFFERING AS OUR LORD SUFFERED!***

I PETER 4

VERSES 1-2

Notice how Peter opens this section up, with the word “**Therefore**” which links us to what he is about to say with what he has just said.

I believe that Peter is referring back to the suffering that Christ endured.

Remember what we read in I Peter 3:18, “**For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.**”

Peter is linking the suffering of Christ to the commitment we need to have towards God as we endure through the sufferings we face.

You see, our suffering is not going to exceed the suffering that Christ endured to save us, but like our Master, we will suffer!

Remember what Paul said in II Timothy 3:12, “**Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**”

And yet, in knowing all that, in knowing we will suffer persecution in this life, many times when Christians think of suffering, struggles, difficult times they often see it as a failure, just as the world does!

But that should not be. Why is that?

Because persecution, suffering physical things for Jesus’ sake has a purifying effect upon our lives!

We are not going to stand to be persecuted if we don’t believe what the Bible teaches or our faith in Jesus is not real!

But it is not only because the Scriptures tell us that this is not true, the persecution, suffering is some kind of spiritual failure but look again at the example that Christ has left for us, the suffering He endured on the cross that then led to victory over sin, victory over evil.

It was not a failure or defeat – ***IT WAS VICTORY!***

Thus, in Matthew 16:24-26 we read, “**Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?’**”

One author put it like this in regard to suffering. He wrote, *“God does not promise to carry us to the skies on flowery beds of ease. God does not hand out colorful brochures offering good health, prosperity, wide popularity, and a long life to those who accept Christ. Those who array themselves in such flimsy robes are in for a shock.”*

And maybe it is because Pastor’s, teachers are not sharing the whole counsel of God with them and only telling the people what they want to hear, and when difficulty comes their way, they can’t understand it and sometimes they walk away!

We need to understand that taking up your cross spoke of death; a death to the old life and in that death is victory!

In fact, Peter tells us to **“arm yourselves”** or *HOPLIZO*, (hop-lid’-zo) in the Greek and it speaks of a soldier putting on his armor to prepare for battle! That is what Ephesians chapter 6 is all about!

And we are to put on the mind of Christ, but what does that mean?

Remember what Paul said in Philippians 2:1-5, **“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”**

You see, the mind of Christ is one of servanthood, humility, submission, looking out for the welfare of others, willing to suffer in this life to bring glory to God and obtain the victory!

Think of a soldier who is willing to lay his life on the line to gain victory for the cause; he is willing to die to self!

We are doing the same thing as we place our lives on the line for the cause of Christ, to see the ultimate victory, to bring glory to God!

William MacDonald sums it up like this. He wrote, *“We have been considering Christ as an example of One who suffered unjustly. He suffered at the hands of wicked men for the cause of righteousness. Since this was so, His followers should arm themselves with the same mind. They should expect to suffer for His name. They should be prepared to endure persecution because they are Christians.”*

And I like the way that Warren Wiersbe pictures this for us. He wrote, *“The picture is that of a soldier who puts on his equipment and arms himself for battle. Our attitudes are weapons, and weak or wrong attitudes will lead us to defeat. Outlook determines outcome, and a believer must have the right attitudes if he is to live a right life.”*

I don't think we give that much attention to our attitudes. I am sure most if not all of us are very familiar with the armor of God that Paul spoke of in Ephesians chapter 6, but if you don't have the right attitude, it truly is worthless!

You see, as we put on the mind of Christ, as our attitude is good, then Peter says, **“... for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.”** I Peter 4:1.

Now, how does this dying to self then cause us to cease from sinning?

Some believe it speaks of dying and going to heaven and that is true, we will cease from sinning at that point. But I don't think that is what Peter is saying here.

I believe the more we suffer in this life the more it changes our outlook and sin no longer looks as inviting to us.

You see, we have prepared ourselves for battle, we have put on the mind of Christ, we are focused on doing the will of God and sin is not a focus for us as it once was.

If you are willing to suffer for Christ, why would you let the enemy back into your life to be your friend?

You wouldn't!

As one writer put it, *"Whoever has suffered for doing right, and has still gone on obeying God in spite of the suffering it involved, has made a clear break with sin."* (Grudem)

You see, it *"Depicts the spiritual state of the victorious sufferer. It carries a note of triumph; he has effectively broken with a life dominated by sin. It need not mean that he no longer commits any act of sin, but that his old life, dominated by the power of sin, has been terminated."* (Hiebert)

Paul, in Romans 6:5-7 tells us, **"For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin."**

And from speaking about suffering and ceasing from sin, Peter goes on to say in I Peter 4:2, **"that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lust of men, but for the will of God."**

This should just make sense. We have suffered for Jesus, and thus, we need to be living for the Lord, obeying His will and not ours.

And Peter has spoken about this already in I Peter 1:13-16 as he wrote, **"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"**

Also, in I Peter 2:11-12 he wrote, **“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.”**

Thus, may we not live to satisfy the flesh but to obey the will of God!

And look at what Peter says next, the perspective he is giving to us, and he wants us to take a good look at this and not go back to those old ways, that flesh life.

Yes, in this life we will face – ***SUFFERING AS OUR LORD SUFFERED!***

But remember – ***THE OLD MAN WAS CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST!***

VERSES 3-6

How true that is, **“For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles . . .”** I Peter 4:3.

I like what Pastor Chuck Smith said about this. He wrote, ***“You get around worldly people and you get uncomfortable because there’s too much of Christ in you to allow you to be comfortable there; but you’ve got too much of the world in you to be really satisfied with just your relationship with Jesus, and so you’re stuck between two worlds.”***

Absolutely!

You see, we have spent so much time in the world that it takes some time for the world to get out of us.

And what we found out is that the world, the things of this world left us empty, we were always searching for more satisfaction, and we just couldn’t find it.

The world left us walking in lewdness or without any moral restraint, which includes sexual immorality.

We lived in lust or seeking to gratify unlawful appetites.

We lived in drunkenness or allowing intoxicating drinks to control our life.

We lived in revelries or out of control parties.

We lived in drinking parties or drinking with the sole purpose of getting drunk.

And we lived in abominable idolatries or all kinds of immoral activities that are associated with idol worship.

The point that Peter is making is that sin stinks.

Thus, as Christians we need to make a clean break from these things and not embrace them anymore!

Listen to what one writer had to say regarding this old life and the new life we have in Christ. He wrote,

Don't overlook the strong contrast between the "*will of God*" (v. 2) and the "*desire of the Gentiles*" (v. 3).

Peter says, "*The time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles.*"

In a certain sense, all believers have in their lives a BC and an AD - before Christ and after Christ [the year of our Lord]. Peter saw "*year one*" as the moment of conversion, officially marked by baptism (3:21).

Before this spiritual birthday, the old person lived out the old course of life - "*sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries*" (4:3).

Peter's list isn't exhaustive, but it paints an ugly picture of many believers' "**BC**" years.

When we consider that most people in the world still live in this "**BC**" period, it shouldn't surprise us that they expect everybody to speak their foul language, follow their distorted mind-set and customs, and uphold their corrupt cultural values.

When we don't conform, they notice.

When we allow our transformation to play out on the stage of life, we will stand out from the rest of the crowd by the fact that we don't participate in their self-indulgent escapades.

- Chuck Swindoll

And this is the problem for us when we turn to Christ and make a break from the lifestyle we had, that our friends and family will come against us. They would rather have us continue down that reckless and dangerous path because they can then continue living in their sin without any conviction because of our lifestyle.

And folks, I have seen this over the years.

I don't even have to say a word at times and the person who is living in sin is uncomfortable around me, the light of Christ comes shining through my lifestyle that I live!

It is as Meyer said, "***It does not matter how your good deeds are received by men. If you are like God, you will find them received with contempt and ingratitude.***"

Exactly. The thing is, don't let their actions towards you change you, may you continue to influence them.

And folks, as we are persecuted by the unsaved for our faith, we see the reality of sin, the ugliness of sin come forth from their lives! And I think in these last days we will see this persecution grow against Christians in this country!

But there is this warning. You see, the tragedy of a lifestyle that tries to gain the whole world, that sells their soul to the Devil, the judgment of God will come upon them!

Now for many, they believe their good deeds will get them into heaven, and yes, they are not perfect, but they have done a lot of good in this life.

If you feel that way you are wrong.

The Bible tells us that none of us do good, none of us are perfect before God and that is the only righteousness that He will accept, perfection.

Now some may then come to this conclusion. ***“Then no one can be saved!”***

Yes, that is true outside of Christ, but in Christ His righteousness can be imputed into our life by faith, we can be saved!

Paul, in Romans 6:23a tells us, **“For the wages of sin is death . . .”**

You see, your good works, your righteousness, which is like filthy rags before a holy God, will bring forth death to you, separation from God!

That is the payment for your good works – ***DEATH!***

But Paul goes on to say, **“. . . but the [free] gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** Romans 6:23b.

Thus, outside of Christ you will face the judgment of God and end up in the Lake of Fire after the Great White Throne judgment for eternity!

But Jesus has given to us eternal life with Him and all we must do is receive the free gift by faith!

Thus, don’t run with them, with the world and its influences, let us live **“for the will of God.”**

Remember what we read in Galatians 2:20, **“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”**

May we live accordingly!

Now here in I Peter 4:6 is another controversial passage, and we have to be careful and interpret it according to what the rest of the Scriptures are telling us and what the context is in this portion of Scripture.

There are those who believe that when a person dies, they get a second chance, and the Gospel will be given to them, and they can be saved.

If that is true, then it doesn't matter when you get saved because everyone is going to get saved, at least that is what they believe!

Please understand that Peter is not speaking about giving those who have died outside of Christ a second chance to receive Jesus because that would be contrary to the Scriptures.

Paul tells us in Hebrews 9:27-28, **“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”**

Then what is Peter talking about?

There are two possibilities that can apply here.

Some scholars interpret Peter's statement is a reference to those who are *spiritually* dead or those who are not saved and are **“dead in trespasses and sins.”** (Ephesians 2:1)

Remember, context, context, context!

I believe that Peter was reminding his readers of the Christians who had been martyred for their faith. He is speaking of persecution and how Jesus is our example of how to deal with this persecution.

I think, from the context, that Peter is speaking of those who have already been martyred for their faith. They have already heard the Gospel message when they were alive and received it, it was preached to them when they were alive.

And thus, Peter is telling them not to be afraid of death because it has no power over them anymore.

In other words, **“those who are now dead”** at the time Peter was writing this epistle, but alive when the gospel was preached to them.

And remember, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. (II Corinthians 5:8)

In fact, as we read already, what Paul said in II Timothy 3:12, **“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”**

Yes, even some will die for their faith, so we should not be surprised as persecution comes our way because of our faith!

Now here is the thing and maybe it will help us see that Peter is speaking of being martyred for our faith, some have died for their faith.

If Christ came and gave His life for us to save us, His death was not in vain but brought about a great victory.

For us, as we are persecuted for our faith, as some are martyred for their faith, it may bring life to those who are dead in their sin as they see our faith lived out to the point of death.

You see, even in death it can bring forth life!

Let me share with you a few examples of what a witness these martyrs left behind, those that gave their lives for their faith.

Polycarp, venerable bishop of Smyrna was a personal friend and pupil of John the Apostle. When he was age 86, he was urged by the Roman proconsul to reproach Christ and be set free.

“Eighty and six years have I served Him and He never did me any injury. How then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?”

The proconsul said: **“I have respect for your age. Simply say, ‘Away with the Atheists’ and be set free.”**

Polycarp solemnly said ***“Away with the Atheists”*** – pointing to the pagan crowd.

He joyfully went to the stake, thanking God for counting him worthy to be numbered among the martyrs.

- Paul Lee Tan, Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, 3344

John Huss, the courageous pastor of Prague, was arrested, condemned, and sentenced to be burned by a church council in 1415. When Huss heard his sentence pronounced, he fell to his knees and prayed, ***“Lord Jesus, forgive my enemies.”***

Then when he was chained to the stake, he prayed, ***“In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed.”***

Then flames snuffed out the life of **“The Morning Star of the Reformation.”**

- Paul Lee Tan, Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, 3345

The persecutors of Bishop Hooper, at his martyrdom, offered a pardon upon his recantation, saying: ***“Consider that life is sweet and death is bitter.”***

“True,” said he, ***“but the death to come is more bitter, and the life to come is more sweet.”***

- Paul Lee Tan, Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, 3347

And you can read Foxe’s Book of Martyrs and see how millions of Christians have given their lives for their faith and the example they left as they were put to death.

In saying that, may we not lose sight that not only in death are we to be a witness of Christ, but also in our everyday life, we are to live out our faith!

Look at what we saw this morning.

THE JUST FOR THE UNJUST!

THE PICTURE!

THE FINISHED WORK!

SUFFERING AS OUR LORD SUFFERED!

THE OLD MAN WAS CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST!

May we follow our example, Jesus Christ in how we live out our faith even when we face intense persecution!