

"The Believer's Suffering"

Part 6

1 Peter 3:13-5:14

Introduction: As believers we are to be completely different than the world. From the day of salvation we are no longer who we were before salvation.

2 Corinthians 5:17-18a

¹⁷ Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

¹⁸ And all things are of God,

Before salvation we were under the constant control of the flesh.

Ephesians 2:1-3

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

² Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

³ Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

But as we have considered many times, our flesh has been stripped of his power by the cross.

Romans 6:6-7

⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

⁷ For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Now as we follow our Lord, we no longer need to submit to the desires of the flesh but instead we can be controlled by the Holy Spirit Who was given to us the moment of salvation. It is therefore so very important that we are under the control of the Spirit when we face suffering. If we are not under the control of the Spirit, then our flesh will

lead us into bitterness and retaliation. When this happens we hinder the Spirit and thus keep Him from showing forth the life of Jesus Christ in our lives.

In 1 Peter 4 Peter is instructing his readers concerning the attitudes which they must have when they face suffering. Last week we looked at the first attitude that Peter addressed.

Serving God in Difficult Times

A. Attitudes that Glorify God

1. An attitude of commitment.

Notice 1 Peter 4:1

We are called to have the very same commitment to the Lord in suffering as what Jesus had to the Father in His suffering. We are to arm ourselves with the same mind that Jesus had.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

² *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Notice 1 Peter 4:1b-2

Here Peter reminds us that we have been crucified with Jesus Christ and therefore the power of sin has been broken and for that reason the practice of sin has been broken as well.

Now let us consider the next attitude that Peter mentions.

2. An attitude of wisdom.

Notice 1 Peter 4:3

The idea here is that we wasted more than enough of our lives living for the lusts of the flesh before we were saved. We all lived like the world but now it is time to live as Christians. We have only a certain number of days left in our lives and so we must make sure we use them to count for the Kingdom.

Psalm 90:3-12, 17

³ *Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.*

⁴ *For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.*

⁵ *Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up.*

⁶ *In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.*

⁷ *For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.*

⁸ *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.*

⁹ *For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.*

¹⁰ *The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*

¹¹ *Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*

¹² **So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.**

¹⁷ *And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: **and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.***

Moses came to understand that life goes by so quickly and therefore we need wisdom to use our time to count for eternity and Moses prayed that the Lord would use the work of their hands.

James 4:13-15

¹³ *Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:*

¹⁴ *Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. **For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.***

¹⁵ For that ye ought to say, *If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.*

Notice 1 Peter 4:3 again.

We are to turn from our past and we are to live for God. The sad thing is that many believers think they have missed something in the past practices and so they often return to them. They want just a little taste of the world then they say they will commit to full surrender. What a dangerous choice! Many believers do not understand that they can very easily get caught up in addictions and in so doing they bring great harm to their testimonies.

Let us briefly consider the list of sins that Peter mentions here.

- **Lasciviousness** - This is unbridled lust. Living with little or no self-control.
- **Lusts** - This is the desire for what is forbidden.
- **Excess of wine** - This is drunkenness.
- **Revellings** - This would refer to late night parties and immorality.
- **Banquetings** - This is drinking parties.
- **Abominable idolatries** - This is the worship of false gods.

This is what these believers were once involved in, and we can see that they were no different that what we were like. Man has certainly not progressed over time. Getting back to Peter's thoughts, these were practices of the past and that is where they needed to stay, in the past. This is NO PLACE for a believer to be living.

Notice 1 Peter 4:4

The unsaved of the world do not understand the change in a believer's life. They see it as strange that we do not do what we used to do. They see nothing wrong with people destroying their lives with alcohol or unbridled lust. They actually see that kind of life as real living. So when we are changed by our Lord they see that as very strange. Let us be reminded that our worldly connections see everything through worldly eyes. They do not see the spiritual.

2 Corinthians 2:11-15

¹¹ For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

¹³ Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

¹⁴ But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

¹⁵ But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

Notice 1 Peter 4:4 again.

The world will often slander the believer for his or her change of life style. This brings to mind the Words of Jesus in Luke.

Luke 6:26

²⁶ Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Notice 1 Peter 4:5

Peter now reminds his readers that those who slander them will one day stand before the Lord. They shall not escape the judgment of God. They may think they will escape because they compare themselves with others but that is not God's standard.

Romans 2:1-6, 16

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

² *But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.*

³ *And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?*

⁴ *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

⁵ *But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;*

⁶ *Who will render to every man according to his deeds:*

¹⁶ *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.*

Notice 1 Peter 4:6

This is a verse that has caused much confusion. Some people have gone so far as to use this verse to teach that after people die they get a second chance at salvation. But we know this is not true and there are many verses that would prove that teaching wrong.

This verse is meant for encouragement for Peter's readers. They were suffering for their faith and they were under great persecution.

The believer's who had died before them had heard the Gospel and were saved. They had died and some were then persecuted and put to death. They were therefore judged by man in the flesh, but they are living before God in spirit. Man may have killed their bodies, but they were saved and so their spirits are now with the Lord.

Notice the words of Dave Roper on this verse:

"He is not saying here that the Gospel has ever been, or ever will he, preached to dead people. That is not the point. It was preached to living people who by the time Peter wrote this had passed away, perhaps from natural causes, or who had been slain in the persecutions which broke out around this time. They were judged in the flesh, according to men. Men felt that they had dispensed with them in the flesh, had put them away. They were gone, dead. But they are alive in the spirit, according to God. And Peter says this is why we preach the gospel -- because, though men may die in the flesh, their spirits can live eternally in fellowship with God. If you have a friend whom you lead to Christ, and he dies, you can rejoice because you know that 'though he was judged in the flesh according to men, he is now living in the spirit according to God.'"

Conclusion:

2 Corinthians 5:8

⁸ *We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*