

TITLE: READY TO SUFFER (Part 2)

TEXT: 1 PETER 4:1-11

THESIS: Encourage proper actions & attitudes toward non-Christians and Christians as preparation for the imminent persecution.

INTRO: Peter's topic in this letter is suffering & *enduring* persecution as Christians. A big key to be able to do this is in preparation. This winter has been one of the warmest on record. However a week ago the temp dropped into the teens. The 1st time we felt it was brutal! But the 2nd day wasn't quite as shocking. Why? Because we were prepared for it. We'd experienced it and survived! It's this type of experience we need in Christianity. Preparation & experience make us better at saying no to sin, standing firm in the Word, and enduring any persecution that results (not only enduring it, but enduring it patiently (2:20)).

I. EXTERNAL PREPARATION (outside the church) (v. 1-6):

A. Discontinue evil practices (v. 1-3)

(v. 1) Since Christ suffered in the flesh (died), **arm (equip w/weapons) yourselves with the same mind** (a mind of endurance – putting up w/persecution; suffering wrongfully for God's purpose).

- Why? *Because he that suffered in the flesh* (aorist tense; died- spiritually) *has ceased from sin.*

- We die to sin in baptism (cf. 3:21). We then are raised to walk a new life.

*This thesis sets the tone for the rest of our study – Christians have ceased from sinning (not sinlessly perfect, but having ceased from their sinful ways). This means the old man is gone; dedication to God's way has replaced it (v. 2).

(v. 2) In order that he should no longer live to the lusts of men, *but to the will of God.* This is spiritually sacrificing yourself!

(v. 3) Regardless of how much time you spent doing evil, **it is sufficient! We've spent enough time!**

B. Discontinue evil acquaintances (v. 4-6)

(v. 4) *They think it strange* (shocking) *that you don't run* (plunge headlong; rush together)...*speaking evil of you.*

Most likely, we can all relate to this verse to some degree. *But, even if you weren't *that* bad before you became a Christian (raised in the church), does this mean that your non-Christian friends shouldn't notice any change? Dedication to God and denial of sin *will make you stand out!* If you don't stand out in some way (blending in too much), this is a sign. There is so much ungodly activity all around us that a Christian can't help but stand out.

(v. 5) *Who shall give account...* – non-Christians (specifically those speaking evil of us) will be accountable for their actions, seeing that God *will judge the living and the dead.*

(v. 6) The gospel was preached also *to the dead.* 1) Could refer to the same dead as in 3:19-20, but 2) "*For*" indicates a further explanation of what was just said, so v. 6 *must* be related to v. 5. So *the dead* would then refer to the persecutors of Christians.

- The purpose of the gospel being preached *to them that are dead* (spiritually dead- v. 5) is so, though being judged by men in the flesh, they'll live according to God in the spirit.

- The gospel is for all! Everyone has this opportunity. Christ died even for the persecutors of Christians! So even though they persecute us, we need to have the right conversation. *Remember v. 1, have the same mind as Christ. What if Christ had retaliated? What if he had let himself die, but with a vengeful attitude? What if we fight back at our persecutors? We won't be able to fulfill 3:16. **God wants us not only to endure persecution, but to do it with a godly, caring attitude!

- *This verse implies the suffering Christians have to endure ("*that they might be judged according to men in the flesh*").

II. INTERNAL PREPARATION (within the church) (v. 7-11):

A. (v. 7) *The end of all things is near...*? 1) AD 70 (destruction of Jerusalem) or, 2) Final judgment

1. Not AD 70 – Peter's recipients: **a)** weren't in Jerusalem (1:1) and **b)** weren't practicing Judaism (not dealt with in the letter)

2. Probably final judgment – this would elicit holy living (since repentance isn't possible after this *end*; whereas repentance is possible after AD 70 (at least it would be outside Jerusalem!)).

3. Peter doesn't say *when* the end is coming (nobody knows – Mk 13:32). **Jam 5:8** – *the coming of the Lord draweth nigh* (same word). This is encouragement that, being in the last age, the final end can come at any moment! **BE READY!**

- Be sober (of sound mind; sane; self-controlled – Thayer) and watch (circumspect; discreet; contrasted with sleeping – 1 Th 5:6)

- *Unto prayer* – shows a reliance on God and recognition that we can't do it alone.

B. (v. 8) *Fervent* (w/out ceasing) *agape love in the church.* *Love will cover...sins* (also **Jam 5:20 – "*save a soul from death...*").**

1. Sins **must** be repented of in order to be forgiven by God (**Lk 13:3; Ac 2:38; 2 Cor 7:10**).

2. True agape has positive effects – it will not allow one Christian to watch another Christian sin without addressing it!

C. (v. 9) Be hospitable ("love of guests") *towards each other* (reciprocal) *w/out grudging.* We should *love* helping one another. Don't complain (unwillingly). **Phil 2:14 – *do all things without murmuring.* No credit for it if done insincerely!**

D. (v. 10-11) Use your gifts – this may be in reference to special spiritual gifts, which now have ceased (1 Cor 12-13), or general abilities we each have even today:

1. Use your gifts to help one another (teaching, serving, etc.)

2. Your abilities are a gift from God (**Jam 1:17**). Use them according to His will. This is good stewardship.

a. E.g., *If any speak, as the oracles* (words, utterances) *of God.* This is our authority. This is all I am authorized to speak!

b. E.g., *If any minister* (serve), *do it as of the ability God gives.*

c. Purpose: Proper use of our abilities glorifies God!

CONCLUSION: Peter knows the coming persecution. His purpose is to get these congregations prepared...prepared not only to withstand, but to do it with a Christ-like attitude, remembering that even the persecutors have the right to salvation. This type of attitude will help us through whatever we have to face. As a congregation, are we prepared to suffer...to help & encourage one another through any situation?