

**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 1<sup>st</sup> time we felt it was brutal! But the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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?