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**1 PETER 4 - SUFFERING IN HOPE**

The return of Christ is nearer than when we first believed. It's time for all Christians to stop living for self and become serious about living for God! Jesus suffered and we, too, must be prepared to suffer. We are called to suffer for doing what is right. We can commit ourselves to God, trusting Him to keep us—by any road, at any cost.

**DAY 1** **Read 1 Peter 4:1-19 | Suffering in Hope.** The suffering that Christ endured was due to the righteous life He lived. If we are to follow in His steps, we are to arm ourselves with the same attitude of mind and purpose that Jesus had. We, too, must be willing to suffer; we also have been chosen to live holy lives.

1. Being *armed* means being enabled and empowered through Christ to obey Him in every situation. What does Peter say happens to the believer who has the same mind about suffering that Christ had?

Is Peter saying that suffering cleanses people from sin? No. As it says in 1 John 1:8, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." Peter is not saying that when we suffer for doing what is right we will not stumble or sin again. What he does mean is since Christians have *died in Christ* and are one with Him, we are free from sin's power and penalty. We are finished with sin when our suffering causes us to obey God more faithfully.

2. When believers cease to live in the flesh, for whom do they live?

Peter states quite emphatically that our past experience with sin is enough for us to close the door on the examples he lists here. Notice that he does not go into detail defining these terms. His readers would have understood exactly what he meant. (Note: The word *Gentiles* in this verse is a reference to non-Christians.)

3. According to verse 3, what are the activities in which we as believers are not to indulge? As you write these down, cross reference them using resources you have on hand to uncover the depth of their meaning. Think about the toll they will take on the Christian's life if left unchecked over time.

a. Can you point to anything currently present in your own life that you need to get rid of?

Christians should realize that the attitudes and actions Peter mentions have no place in their lives. He says that non-believers will think it strange that we do not indulge with them. They will even be offended when we refuse to do so.

4. Share a time when you have endured verbal abuse or slander because of your faith in Christ.

Non-believers tend to resent the *convicting purity* of the believer's life. Often without words, just the presence of a believer among non-believers is offensive to them. The resulting effect is often slander towards the Christian. If non-believers can make believers look bad, they tend to feel better or somehow justified in their own sinful behavior. Those who practice an ungodly lifestyle and who point fingers at Christians for refusing to do so seem, at times, to have the upper hand. Ultimately, God will have the last word. He will act on behalf of His own. The time is coming when everyone will give an account to God.

## Memory Verse

So if you are suffering in a manner that pleases God,  
keep on doing what is right, and trust your lives to the God who created you,  
for He will never fail you.

1 Peter 4:19 NLT

Which part of this verse resonates most with you today? How or in what way?

DAY 2

**Read 1 Peter 4:7-11 | Serving for God's Glory.** The fact that God is "ready to judge" means that the end of all things is at hand. The early Christians that Peter addressed in this letter were facing great persecution, needing to take comfort in the fact that their suffering would one day come to an end.

We, too, must realize that Christ could come at any moment! The reality of this truth should challenge us to be watchful and ready at all times.

Peter focuses on four ways we can prepare for Christ's coming. Use these points to determine how ready you are to see Him face to face.

1. **Be serious and watchful in your prayers.** The NIV translates *serious* and *watchful* as clear-minded and self-controlled.

a. How would this be important when engaging in spiritual warfare during prayer?

b. What importance did Jesus place on these attitudes, and why? Read Matthew 26:41 for help with your answer.

c. Peter knew from experience how weak and vulnerable a believer could become when facing temptation without being grounded in prayer. He had slept in the garden instead of praying with Jesus—and when the trial came, Peter denied his Lord. He didn't want others to repeat his mistake, but to be serious and prayed up!

How are you able to maintain a clear head when you pray? Are you watchful for the Lord's return?

2. **Be fervent in your love for one another.** The deepest love one can have is forgiving love. This kind of agape love is the basis for all relationships in the church. It is commanded of us because it is a deliberate decision we make, not a feeling we have. It is literally God's love in action. Its goal is always to seek the good of the other person involved.

a. Why does Peter say it's important to love one another in this way?

b. What similar statement do you find in Proverbs 10:12?

c. Is God asking you to *agape* someone that He has placed in your life? How will you do this?

3. **Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.** Hospitality is a tangible expression of love which Peter commanded the believers to exhibit toward one another. When the banner of love is linked to hospitality, it raises the standard of behavior to a higher level.
- What should the believer keep in mind when extending this courtesy to others? Why would this be important?
  - There are times when demonstrating hospitality can seem more of a duty than a joy. At such times, what should you remember? Use Matthew 25:40 and Mark 9:41 for help with your answer.

4. **Be a good steward of your gifts.** Since every believer has received a spiritual gift from God to use in service to the body of Christ, we are capable of ministering to others. The word *gift* (charisma) means a *gift of grace*. God has blessed us with this grace, giving us the responsibility of sharing our gift(s) with others. What has been given to each individual is to benefit the body as a whole. Through our sharing, we are administering the manifold (many faceted) grace of God in its various forms.

Verse 11 divides the gifts of grace into two broad categories: *speaking* and *serving*. The speaking gifts include preaching, teaching, evangelism, prophecy, speaking in tongues, encouragement, and leadership. The serving gifts include: assistance or encouragement that benefits or contributes towards the needs of those within the body of Christ; healing, miracles, and showing mercy.

Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? If so, how are you using them to serve the body of Christ?

5. If you don't know what gift is yours, make it a matter of prayer and searching the Scripture to find out. For further study, what do you learn from the following?

Romans 12:6-8

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Ephesians 4:4-16

DAY 3

**Read 1 Peter 4:12-19 | Suffering for God's glory.** The Bible instructs us in this passage not to be surprised by persecution or suffering, for both are part of God's plan to bring His children to maturity. Jesus Himself warned His followers, "If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you" (John 15:20). So what should a believer do? Trust God to help you through it. The fire of trial will test your endurance and refine your faith.

1. When you do suffer, in what can you rejoice?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What example of suffering does Peter mention?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Suffering has meaning because as we are tried, we come into deeper fellowship with Jesus Christ. We can rejoice in the midst of great difficulty, knowing that God is in control of every area of our lives—even the painful ones.
  - a. If you are reproached for your faith, what does Peter say about you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What should your response be? What should it *not* be?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. In contrast to verse 16, for what actions should a believer never suffer?

The believer's choices in life should give forth a testimony that identifies them as true followers of Jesus Christ. The reverse of this can also be true. The lack of persecution in a person's life can suggest that their lifestyle choices do not reveal their true identification with Christ.

4. The reference to judgment in verses 17-18 is two-fold: It refers to the trials and sufferings of the believer that have a purifying and refining effect; and it also refers to God judging all individuals according to their deeds. Peter quotes from Proverbs 11:31 to illustrate that, unlike followers of God, non-believers are not part of His refining judgment. The judgment they face is *judicial* and takes the form of punishment. When Christ returns, they will face the fire of His judgment.

a. What word of encouragement does Peter extend to believers in verse 19?

b. Briefly note a personal testimony of God's faithfulness.

DAY **4** **In Touch with Jesus.** This section is intended to be a review of what you have learned and what God has spoken to you this week. Go back over your lesson with a marking pen or highlighter and mark those places and points that stand out to you. Use the margins to make personal notations. Be sure to indicate which points or questions you'd like to share with your discussion group.

1. **Listen** | In what way did the Lord meet you in His Word this week? Be specific.

2. **Learn** | How can you apply this understanding to your daily Christian walk?

3. **Live** | What step of obedience will you purpose to take in your walk of faith?

