

1 & 2 Peter Bible Study

1 Peter 4:1-6

Lesson 13 Notes

“Sin in the believer is a burden which afflicts him rather than a pleasure which delights him.” John Owen

As a quick refresher, as we have studied 1 Peter, we know that he is writing to believers who are suffering greatly at the hands of the Roman government. Suffering is the backdrop and the culmination of that suffering comes in the third chapter vs 18-22, with the understanding that the greatest suffering may lead to the greatest triumph. Jesus Christ would be our example. At the hour of His highest pain, severest persecution, the hour of His death, He was winning the greatest victory the world has ever known.

So Peter’s point...no matter how difficult the hostility, no matter how severe the persecution, understand that what may be the most difficult time, may well be the most triumphant time. There was Christ being murdered on the cross and through that very death, He was triumphing over sin, over Satan, over demons. He was triumphing over death and hell. And we know the judgment of God was satisfied with it all.

Peter says, then arm yourselves with the same idea, the same purpose, the same principle, the same thought. What idea, what purpose, what thought? The idea that you are willing to die for the sake of righteousness, the purpose is presenting your bodies a living sacrifice, holy to God, because that does not conform to the way the world thinks, and in that there is triumph. If you are willing to do what Jesus said in Matthew 10:38-39, and Matthew 16:24-26, take up your cross and follow Him, it implies a willingness to die there too. If you are willing to die for the cause of Christ, then you have armed yourself with the same idea that Christ had when He died. For He died because of the joy that was set before Him. He knew what it would accomplish. He understood the triumph in it. And so must we.

As we look at the end of verse 1, he who has suffered(died) in the flesh has ceased from sin, that is what happened to Jesus. Now Jesus didn’t sin, but His

death on the cross dealt with the punishment for sin, once for all. That gives a believer power, because in Christ there is power over the sin that entangles us. The greatest hope we have is that once this flesh is dead, we will no longer sin!! Because he who has suffered in the flesh(died) has ceased from sin. The point is, the worst that your persecutors can do to you is kill you and if they kill you the battle is over. Remember Peter is speaking to believers who were dying in droves for just being followers of Jesus Christ. If death takes out sin, you'll have courage and boldness and confidence and strength in the midst of any trial. Any difficulty, any persecution, any threat. And then, that kind of attitude will produce the attitude of verse 2, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men. If you are willing to die knowing you shall cease from sin, then you have just taken away the greatest weapon that the enemy has against you. You are free to live the rest of your life in the flesh, but no longer for the lusts of men.

As we are transformed by Christ, our former lives should be so different from what we were like before, that by contrast, our former friends should wonder if we have lost our minds. Even if you were a really 'nice' person, there should be a difference in your thinking, habits and reactions to daily living. Before you lived for yourself, even if you did nice things, they were for you, not for the Lord. Knowing how our life has changed gives us greater opportunity to share with others how much God has shown you mercy, in that you deserved His wrath and death, but you got life instead. Understanding that mercy, we have greater compassion for the lost and their struggle against sin.

We now live a new life hidden in Christ, we no longer represent us or our family, we represent Christ, and the family of God. How we live out our lives is the testimony of how Christ changes a person from the inside out. Sometimes it is the very idea of how this would affect my church and my Lord that keeps me from doing something I am tempted to do.

Note in verse 3, Peter describes that former lifestyle as having pursued a course. You took your life along this course. He's saying that's the way it was, before you came to Christ in your lost condition, you lived in unchecked lawlessness, open, outrage against God, and this is the heart of verses 3-5. He says, you ought to live the rest of the time in the flesh, no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God, because the time already passed is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the pagans or the Gentiles or the nations.

It is hard to watch a change in someone's life when you are still in the throes of the battle and think that life looks pretty good filled with debauchery. When someone actually changes, and leaves behind the 'yuck', it condemns those who continue to live that way, the changed person soon finds a target on their back. How we deal with living out that change is the testimony of Christ in our lives.

1 Cor 4:12-13 and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure;

1 Peter 2:23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;

1 Peter 4:14-16 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. 15 By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; 16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.

The passages above give us instruction as to how to handle those times when we are accosted by those unbelievers who find our new lifestyle threatening.

Peter shows us here that if we are to die to sin, we must remember what sin has done to the world. Not only what it has done to Christ, what it has done to Christians in retarding them from being what they could be, not only what it has done to God, but what it has done to lost humanity too.

We ought to hate sin because it killed Christ. We ought to hate sin because it keeps believers from being what God has intended them to be, perfect, holy, Christlike, free from sin. It restrains us from being what we ought to be. It makes us do what we don't want to do and not do what we want to do. It creates a terrible warfare. We must remember sin has caused, not only what it did to Christ and what it has done to Christians, but what it has done to God and this only by implication. Verse 2 says, that the believer is to live the rest of the time in the flesh, no longer for the lust of men, but for the will of God. What it does to God is violate His will. That's the implication. Peter calls us to realize that we are to do God's will for the rest of the time in the flesh because prior to our salvation

obviously we did everything but the will of God. He contrasts living for the lusts of men and living for the will of God. One or the other. Peter is simply saying by way of reminder that we have to see and understand that sin violates the will of God. And when we live in sin, when we follow the lusts of men, we violate the will of God.

“But they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.” “They shall give account” means “to pay back.” They’ll be paid back. In fact, people who do that, who live like that and who cast dispersions at Christians, who malign believers are amassing a debt to God that they will spend all eternity paying back. They will be required to pay. This verb is a bookkeeping term. God has it on his books and they are going to pay. And they will give account to the one who is ready to judge when they stand at the Great White Throne Judgment. He says this, the one who judges will judge the living and the dead. The living, those presently alive in Peter’s time. The dead, those already dead, they are going to all be judged, all of them. 2 Thessalonians 1:6 “For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus”. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction.” Their day will come. One note in chapter 4 verse 5—the word “Him.” They will give account to Him, who is ready to judge. Who is the judge? Who is the one identified as “Him”? We could say, on the one hand it is God. First Peter 1:17, “If you address as Father the one who impartially judges”; that refers to God, but if we read John 5:22-27, it tells us there that all judgment has been committed to Jesus Christ and so we believe that God will judge them, but God will judge them through the agency of His son, the Lord Jesus Christ to whom He has committed all judgment. What has sin done to the unsaved? It has made their lives debauched, and it has made them the enemies of the people of God. It has thus made them the enemies of God Himself. The enemies of Christ and the objects of an eternal, damning judgment.

Finally, Peter has one last encouragement in helping us to overcome sin and gladly be willing to suffer for righteousness sake, look at verse 6. “For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of

God.” This is a simple and profound verse. “For the gospel has been preached” means the saving message of Jesus Christ. “Even to those who are dead” simply means those who are now dead. He has in mind some believers who heard the gospel and are now dead. Some of them perhaps had been martyred. Maybe some in the association of those two whom this letter was sent had died for their faith in Christ. And so the whole overarching idea here is that the believer, under persecution, under unjust treatment, under punishment, and even death, should be willing to suffer knowing there is triumph. Because though he may die in the flesh as a man, he will live in the spirit according to the will of God.

John Owen

Matthew Henry

John Piper

John MacArthur

RC Sproul