

Sunday, December 4, 2022 pm

STUDIES IN 1 PETER (36)

Committing Our Souls to Him

1 Peter 4:17-19

Tonight, we continue our study of 1 Peter. We have been addressing suffering for the cause of Christ. We have noted this is a recurring theme in this short letter. In essence, you could say it is Peter's primary message. He is giving direction concerning how to prepare for coming persecutions. WE have noted in recent studies that this message is very timely concerning the increasing hostilities in our nation and the world toward true faith. We are experiencing the verbal assaults of 1 Peter 4:1-4, etc. In our last lesson, Peter was clear that if, and when, we face suffering, it needs to be "as a Christian" and not because we are evil doers. He noted, if we are suffering for our faith that we glorify God and not be ashamed. Today, we find a reason behind that disposition. NOTE: This is Peter's final appeal dealing directly with suffering, though it will be mentioned again in 1 Peter 5:9.

I. Time for judgment to begin (17)

- a. *The time has come for judgment* – we know that God's judgment is still yet future.
 - i. We are here and thus we know He has not yet returned. But we also know that He can return at any moment – 2 Peter 3:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, etc.
 - ii. So how was it time for the judgment of God to begin? God's judgment can be carried out in many ways. God's dealing with His sinful people in the Old Testament and with other nations are a judgment, just not the FINAL judgment (e.g. Isaiah 3:13-14 – where the warning is YHWH is about to judge His people).
 - iii. The emphasis can also be on, "now it is time" – Peter could be calling these brethren to action. "It is time for you to take your stand". God is watching and will respond accordingly. Consider Romans 13:11-12 - *And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.*
 - iv. Ultimately, God is watching what we do (everyone) and going to judge accordingly – e.g. Romans 14:10-12 – note that we will each give an accounting. John 5:28-29 – the hour is coming – the good and evil alike. Also Revelation 20:12-15 – each judged according to His works.
- b. *If it begins with the house of God* – likely a reference to the church. This is the audience Peter is writing to. God is watching to see how those who belong to Him are going to respond to the sufferings they are facing, and about to endure. A point I see in this is that we have hope. We have secured our salvation. The only question is – will we remain faithful? Even during the challenging times?
 - i. Hebrews 10:35 – *Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.*
 - ii. Hebrews 3:14, *For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,*
 - iii. Acts 14:21-22, *And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."*
 - iv. Galatians 6:9, *And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*

- v. Colossians 1:21-23 – Paul reminds these brethren of their former state and now their reconciled state through Jesus, *if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.*
- vi. 1 Corinthians 15:58 – be steadfast and immovable... *knowing your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*
- c. *What will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel?* This is rhetorical. The answer is obvious. If the godly have to remain faithful, it is obvious those who outright reject the gospel are going to pay a price for their unfaithfulness as well. I believe in this Peter is reminding these brethren that God knows what is going on. 2 Thessalonians 1:8 speaks of the fate of those who do not obey the gospel. We will revisit this in a moment.

II. Scarcely saved? (18)

- a. Possibly taken from Proverbs 11:31. The NKJV reads, *If the righteous will be recompensed on the earth, How much more the ungodly and the sinner.* Solomon's point is likely that your actions render results. OBVIOUSLY, our text reads differently. BUT it is very close to the LXX (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible). This is an OT text that agrees with what we discussed in vs. 17.
- b. How are the righteous "scarcely saved"?
 - i. The idea of scarcely can be "rarely". The Greek word is found 6x in the NT, where the NKJV translates it *scarcely* 3x, (the other 2 times: Acts 14:18 – Paul and Barnabas could "scarcely" restrain the people from offering sacrifices to them. Clearly it means "with difficulty"; and Romans 5:7 – "scarcely" for a righteous man will one dare to die. Here it can mean scarcely or "rarely"), and the other 3x it is "*with difficulty*" (Acts 27:7-8, 16 – all addressing attempts to save the ship Paul was on that wrecked on the way to Rome). BUT this does not seem very promising. While we have seen the righteous can fall away, we should not be living our lives with little hope.
 - ii. The NASB translates it "*with difficulty.*" The idea of the word is typically a reference to difficulty. That fits the context better, as well as the actual word. Consider we are dealing with Christians facing persecutions (suffering as a Christian). That is NOT an easy thing to endure. Peter has been alluding to this as he has dealt with sufferings all throughout this book.
 - iii. Peter's point is that even among believers, it will be difficult for them to secure their salvation (not *barely* as we sometime think of this word).
 1. A point I see in this is that sometimes, the godly walk away from God rather than facing the world's difficulties – especially torturous persecutions.
 2. I think of Hebrews 10:25ff – they abandoned their brethren
 3. Demas – 2 Timothy 4:10 who forsook Paul;
 4. Jesus' warning in Luke 9:62, and passages like – John 12:42.
 5. Revelation 2:10 finds the call to "be faithful until death..."
- c. *Where will the ungodly and sinner appear?* The answer, they will NOT. They will be eternally separated FROM God – Matthew 25:41. Many texts remind us of the fate of the wicked. Again not 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10, Matthew 25:46, Romans 1:18 speaks of the wrath of God being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Romans 2:5-11 also speaks of this judgment.

III. Commit your souls to God (19)

- a. *Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God –*
 - i. While we may not understand it, God allows suffering, even among the righteous. Many wonder why God allows suffering in the world, especially of the righteous and innocent. It is not the purpose of this lesson to address that (I have in times past), but suffice it to say that suffering can bring out good, especially in the righteous – it makes this world less attractive

(Philippians 1:21-23), it can produce traits that make you better (Romans 5:3-5), it makes us more appreciative of what we do have, it teaches us to trust in God, etc.

- ii. BUT, the expression can also mean we are suffering because we are doing the will of God.
This very much fits our context (suffering as a Christian).
- b. *Commit their souls to Him* – this is the call and challenge. Determine that you are going to remain faithful. But the word can also mean that you entrust yourself to the care of another. Jesus used this word in Luke 23:46 as He was dying, *“Into Your hands I commit My Spirit.”* WHEN you are facing sufferings for His cause, do not quit, but rather, “double down” or anchor yourself in trust to Him. Consider Paul in 2 Timothy 1:12.
- c. *In doing good* – we continue to do that which is right – letting God determine what is good.
 - i. Again Galatians 6:9, do not grow weary in doing good...;
 - ii. 1 Peter 2:15 – by doing good, we put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; Some 7 times in 1 Peter we have noticed, “doing good”.
 - iii. Romans 2:7 speaks of eternal life awaiting those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor and immortality.
- d. *As to a faithful Creator* – a reminder that God made this world, all that is in it and He is in control.
 - i. Man, especially the worldly, does not care about your righteousness. In fact, he often despises it. And he despises God. That’s the point Peter has been making. ARE YOU going to give in to Him for temporary gain and relief?
 - ii. OR, are you going to trust in God who made this world, gave you His word and promises of eternal reward if you remain faithful to Him?
 - iii. Peter, is giving us reason to trust in God. It may not be easy to do, but in the end it reaps the much greater reward.
 - 1. Hebrews 6:10, *For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*
 - 2. Revelation 14:13, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on...
 - 3. 2 Corinthians 4:16- 5:4 – we groan in “this tent” desiring to be further clothed...

And thus we find Peter’s encouragement to remain faithful, even as we face sufferings. Should persecutions come our way, let us never forget that God is greater and will reward accordingly. As Jesus Himself taught, *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* (Matthew 10:28). Let us learn from this letter where citizenship is and faithfully serve our king. Think about it!