

1 Peter

Chapter 4

XIV. Dealing With Sin - 1 Peter 4:1-6

In dealing with sin, we need to have both a forward and backward look. We need to look forward in the sense that we need to be on the watch for temptations that may be lurking just around the corner. We must be on the lookout for Satan and his demons lest we be taken unaware. We look backwards in the sense that we need to remember the heinousness of sin. A good memory is a strong deterrent to sin. In this section of 1 Peter, we find several things to remember about sin.

A. Sin Killed Christ - 1 Peter 4:1a

1 Peter 4:1a Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind...

The first thing we need to remember about sin is that the cost of its defeat was the death of the sinless Son of God. When Peter talks about Christ suffering in the flesh, he is referring to his death. If God could have redeemed humanity any other way, he would have. The only possible means of redemption was the sacrifice of Christ for our sins. We need to keep that in mind. When we come to fully realize the awful price paid by Christ to redeem us, we will want to live holy lives and stay as far away from sin as possible.

Additionally, we need to arm ourselves with the same mind. What does this mean? It means that we need to come to that point where we do not fear death, since our death only delivers us from the constant struggle with sin. When we do not let the fear of death control us, the enemy has lost a valuable stronghold in our lives. This is a great truth. Paul, at the end of 2 Timothy, almost breathes a sigh of relief since he knows that his death is imminent. He looks forward to his death as it serves as his entrance into eternal glory, and signals the end of his struggle with sin.

B. Sin Is a Constant Struggle For Christians - 1 Peter 4:1b

1 Peter 4:1b ...for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

Secondly, sin is a constant struggle in the life of the believer. From the moment of our salvation we have engaged our flesh in a never-ending struggle which stops only at our death. In Romans 7, Paul develops the concept of the principle of sin in our flesh (members). The believer is a new creation in Christ, however, that new creation is housed in a body of flesh. It is the flesh which causes the believer all kinds of problems. Only when we die, are we released from the bondage of the flesh.

This is what Peter is telling us here. Christ suffered, which is another way to say he died in this context, with the result that his death removed him from the struggle with sin. Christ did not sin, but as long as he was in the flesh he had that constant struggle with the lusts of the flesh. Once he died, however, he was freed from the flesh with the result that he had to struggle with sin no longer.

C. Realize That Sin Violates God's Will - 1 Peter 4:2

1 Peter 4:2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

How can we sin when we understand that it violates God's will for our lives? We must remember that any sin, no matter how small, is deserving of eternal death. A believer who takes the forgiveness of sin offered by God and then goes on living in sin with no thought of change is presuming on the nature and character of God, and has probable cause to doubt his salvation. Those that are truly redeemed desire to live holy lives so as to not presume on the grace and mercy of the God who saved them and forgave them all their sins.

D. Realize What Sin Has Done to Lost Humanity - 1 Peter 4:3-5

1. Men live for sin - 1 Peter 4:3

1 Peter 4:3 For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

Another thing to remember about our sin is what our past life was like when we indulged our flesh. Peter uses six terms to refer to this past life of sin, all of them highly descriptive.

Sensuality (*aselgeia*) refers to unchecked sensuality and vice which knows no restraints.

Lusts (*epithumeia*) refers to evil desires and animal passions.

Excess of wine (*oinophlugias*) refers to drunkenness and debauchery.

Revellings (*komios*) refers to wild partying or orgies. It was used to refer to a group of drunken men loudly making their way through the streets.

Banquetings (*potois*) refers to drinking parties, drinking for the sake of becoming drunk.

Abominable idolatries (*athemitois eidolalatriois*) refers to the worship of idols.

2. Men want others to sin with them - 1 Peter 4:4

1 Peter 4:4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:

The idea here is that men are shocked and even offended when we do not run with them in their sins. They are surprised that we do not share the same desires and appetite for sin as themselves.

The phrase "excess of dissipation" is very vivid. It is the idea of a mad rush of people running madly together in order to sin. Excess (*anachusin*) is used only here and refers to a confluence of water, much like water rushing into a cesspool or sewer. Dissipation (*asotias*) refers to sin without restraint. Because we do not run with them, they malign (*blasphemoi*) us since we serve as a mute rebuke to their lifestyle.

3. Men will give an account to God for their sin - 1 Peter 4:5

1 Peter 4:5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

The word for account (*logon*) refers to the idea of paying back. Men amass a debt of sin against God which will take them forever to pay back. This judgment is inclusive since God will call both the dead (*nekroi*) and the living (*zontas*) into his court.

Romans 2:4-5 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

E. Remember What God Promised Us - 1 Peter 4:6

1 Peter 4:6 For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

“Them that are dead” refers to believers that have died for their faith. The thought here is that those who have died have ultimately overcome sin. All death can do is to bring us into God’s presence. Men may kill the body, but the spirit will live in the presence of God.

XV. The Believer’s Responsibility in a Hostile World - 1 Peter 4:7- 19

A. The Believer’s Motivation - 1 Peter 4:7a

1 Peter 4:7 But the end of all things is at hand...

“End” (*telos*) does not necessarily mean cessation, but culmination or consummation. “At hand” refers to the immanency of the end. We are never told when Christ would return, only that it would be unexpected. What Peter apparently has in view here is the idea that since the second coming of Christ is near, and could be at any time, we should be motivated to holy living and endurance through suffering.

Throughout the NT we find that the expectancy of Christ’s return is a great motivation to holy living and patience. If we really believe Christ could come at any time, we will strive to be ready so that we will not be caught off guard.

1 John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

1 John 3:2-3 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

James 5:7-8 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

B. The Believer's Duties - 1 Peter 4:7b-11a

1. Personal Holiness - 1 Peter 4:7b

1 Peter 4:7b ...be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

In this short phrase we are given a gold mine of information about holy living. Holiness is one of those things that is out of vogue in the church today. We talk a lot about our problems, run from one new pop-psychology session to another, and look for answers to all of our woes, yet we go right by the concept of holiness as though it is totally irrelevant for life.

However, holiness is not irrelevant. Holiness is the foundation of the Christian life. It is a road all believers are to take. The call to the believer in the NT is to holiness, a purity of life by which we exalt and glorify the God we serve. We find three aspects to holiness in this verse, proper thinking, alertness, and prayer.

a. Proper thinking

Sober (*sophronismos*) is a word rich in meaning. It comes from two words which mean "to keep safe the mind." Only believers have this ability. Our minds have been affected by the fall to such an extent that it is not possible for us to think rightly apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. We need to guard our minds so that the right input comes into them. What we feed our minds will come out in our conduct.

Joshua 1:8 (This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

b. Alertness

A second component to holiness is alertness (*naphate*). It means to "not be intoxicated with wine." Wine has a tendency to dull the senses, one who is sober has not had his senses dulled with wine.

Peter uses this word again in 1 Peter 5:8 where he tells us to be "sober" (*naphate*). One who is sober is alert and watchful so as to not be taken by temptation or by the schemes of Satan.

c. Prayer

A final component of holiness is that of prayer. Without prayer, a person cannot be holy. Many would like to live holy lives, but many do not spend the necessary time in God's presence required for such a calling.

Another note is to realize that before one can pray powerfully, one must have right thinking and be alert. Many prayers go unanswered because many prayers are based on cluttered and errant thinking. Believers claim promises which are not given to them, or ask things of God that they already possess. Powerful praying is based on right thinking and an alert mind.

2. Mutual Love - 1 Peter 4:8-9

1 Peter 4:8-9 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

A second duty of the believer in this hostile world is that of mutual love one to another. The new commandment that Christ gave his disciples was that they "love one another." Love is not an emotional feeling, but an act of self-sacrifice for others. We love one another when we sacrifice our time, energy, or talents in behalf of one another.

Some commentators say that the phrase "for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" refers to God's love for us. Others say it is our love for one another. Probably the best way to see this is as an axiomatic truth. It is true in all cases, whether talking about God's love for us or our love for one another.

One real way in which we exhibit love to one another is in the area of hospitality (*philoxenoi*). One who is hospitable "loves strangers" and is willing to open their lives and their homes for others. In Peter's time it was crucial that believers showed hospitality, especially under the persecutions of Nero when many would have been forced out of their homes. Furthermore, this hospitality is to be without grudging (*goggnusmon*). In other words, it is to be a free sharing without griping about the imposition of others into our lives.

3. Spiritual Service - 1 Peter 4:10-11a

1 Peter 4:10-11 As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

In these two verses we find the fourth and final reference to the existence and use of spiritual gifts in the NT (the others being Romans 12:8ff., 1 Corinthians 12-14, and Ephesians 4:11-13). Although this passage is the shortest, it is full of truth regarding spiritual gifts.

Some basic points about spiritual gifts

1. All Christians have them.

This first point we need to make regarding spiritual gifts is that every Christian has at least one. It is not possible to be a Christian, and not have a spiritual gift. 1 Peter 4:10 says “*As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold [multicolored] grace of God.*”

2. They are given and energized by the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, spiritual gifts are given to us by the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:11 says “*But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*” Not only are they given by the Spirit, but they are energized by the Spirit as well. 1 Corinthians 12:6 says “*there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh in all.*”

3. They are given to minister to others, not ourselves.

Thirdly, spiritual gifts are given to edify the body of Christ as a whole, not for the edification of the holder of the gift. This is why Paul comes down so heavily on the Corinthian believers because of their misuse of the gift of tongues. They had made the gift into a self-glorifying and self-edifying manifestation of the Spirit not realizing that all spiritual gifts are for the benefit of the entire body. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says “*But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*” The Greek construct literally means “for the good of those gathered together.”

4. They are essential to the health of the Body of Christ.

Fourthly, spiritual gifts are essential for the health and well-being of the church. A careful study of each of the spiritual gifts, which is beyond the scope of our current discussion, will reveal the necessary character of each gift. The church could not function as God intended, if it were not for spiritual gifts.

5. They are to unite the Body of Christ, not divide it.

Spiritual gifts are given to unite the Body of Christ. A reading of 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 will clearly show the uniting power of the gifts. Conversely, whenever we see a Christian ministering their gifts and causing division and harm, we can rest assured that they are not empowered by the Spirit.

6. They are not a measurement of spirituality.

Perhaps no single point regarding spiritual gifts is more misunderstood than this one. Spiritual gifts do not give a measure of spirituality. If we look at the Corinthian Church as presented in 1 Corinthians, we find that they had every conceivable sin and problem, yet Paul states in 1 Corinthians 1:7 that “ye come behind in no gift.” The Corinthian believers had manifestations of all of the spiritual gifts even though they were characterized by carnality and division.

7. They fall into various categories.

Seventh, spiritual gifts fall into several distinct categories. Every believer has a unique gift made up of a combination of these distinct categories. Peter calls our gift “the manifold gift of God” in 1 Peter 4:10. The word “manifold” means “multicolored.” Just as the light falls on a gem and is broken out into various colors and hues, so God's spirit has given us a gift that is manifest in many different ways. For example, the gift of teaching can be given to a seminary professor as well as a first-grade Sunday School teacher. Both have the teaching gift, but it is ministered in different ways to different audiences.

Words Translated “Spiritual Gift” in the New Testament

A. *Charisma*

This word means “grace gift” or “favor.” The root word, *charis*, is the common word for “grace” in the New Testament. This is the word used in Romans 6:23, 12:6, 1 Corinthians 7:1, 7:7, 12:6, 12:9, 12:28, 12:30, 12:31, 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6, and 1 Peter 4:10.

This word is used to refer to the source of the spiritual gift, namely something that has been given by grace to those who do not deserve it.

B. *Pneumatikos*

This word literally means “characterized by the spiritual.” It is used to refer to spiritual people in Galatians 6:1, and 1 Corinthians 2:15 and 3:1. In 1 Corinthians 15:44 and 46 it is used to refer to the spiritual body as opposed to the carnal body. And lastly, in 1 Corinthians 12:1 it is used in the plural to refer to spiritual gifts.

This word is used to refer to the quality of spiritual gifts as well as their source of empowerment and character.

- a. Every believer has a spiritual gift

When a person comes to Christ they are given a gift by the Holy Spirit. It is not possible to be a Christian and lack a spiritual gift (see above).

- b. The source of all spiritual gifts is the Spirit

The source and empowerment for all spiritual gifts is the Holy Spirit.

- c. The purpose of spiritual gifts is to serve one another

The single purpose of spiritual gifts is the edification of one another. A spiritual gift is never given for the benefit of the holder, but the benefit of the body of Christ.

- d. The variety of spiritual gifts is manifold

There are many categorizations of spiritual gifts. We find a list of several kinds in the NT, but it is possible that this list is not exhaustive. What the Holy Spirit does is to take these many different gifts and mixes them together in a unique combination for each believer. Several believers may have the gift of teaching, but that gift is manifested in many different ways.

- e. The categories of spiritual gifts are basically threefold

- 1). Speaking gifts

- a). Prophecy (associated with the office of the prophet as well as a continuing gift)
- b). Evangelism (associated with the office of an evangelist)
- c). Pastor-Teachers (associated with a gifted office)
- d). Teaching
- e). Exhortation
- f). Wisdom
- g). Knowledge
- h). Faith

- 2). Serving gifts
 - a). Apostleship (associated with the office of the apostle)
 - b). Ministry or Serving
 - c). Helps
 - e). Discernment of spirits
 - e). Giving
 - f). Ruling or Administration
 - g). Mercy
- 3). Sign gifts
 - a). Healing
 - b). Miracles
 - c). Tongues
 - d). Interpretation of tongues

- f. The goal of spiritual gifts is that God be glorified

The whole reason that we have been given spiritual gifts is so that we can minister to one another with the result that God is glorified. Whenever a spiritual gift is exercised for the benefit of the holder, the purpose for that gift is prostituted.

XVI. The Fiery Trial - 1 Peter 4:12-17

A. We Should Expect Suffering - 1 Peter 4:12

1 Peter 4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

Whenever fiery trials hit, the average believer seems to be the first to question God. It is as though trials are something that is to be unheard of in the Christian life. Yet we are told time and time again in the NT that trials are to be considered part of the Christian life. Not only are they a part of that life, but they are a normal part of that life.

In this next section, Peter takes a look at suffering. This is most appropriate since it is highly likely that Peter wrote this book at the start of the great Neronian persecution of A.D. 64-65. Nero, who had a penchant for building, torched the city of Rome and then blamed the results on the Christians. Throughout the empire the Christians became the brunt of hatred. Hundreds of thousands were eventually hunted down and killed for their faith. In light of this, Peter's words are most appropriate.

Why Do Christians Suffer?

1. **Because of the fall - Romans 8:19-23, Genesis 3:17-19**

- 2. Because of the flesh - Romans 7:18-21, 13:14**
- 3. Because of Satan - Job 1-2, Revelation 2:9-10**
- 4. Because of demonic attacks - 1 Samuel 16:14-16**
- 5. Because of the world's persecution - John 15:18-25**
- 6. Because of other men - Psalm 13**
- 7. Because of our own sin - 1 Peter 2:20-21**
- 8. Because of God's perfecting work - Genesis 22**

B. We Should Rejoice in Suffering - 1 Peter 4:13-14

1 Peter 4:13-14 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

1. The attitude in suffering

The proper attitude in the midst of trials is that of joy. Joy is not the bubbling good feeling that occurs when everything is going our way, rather it is the inner working of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. It is one of the nine fruits of the Spirit. Joy is enduring in spite of the conflict we face. It does not depend on external conditions, but the inner work of the Holy Spirit.

The Results of Suffering

- 1. Trials test the strength of our faith.**
- 2. Trials humble us.**
- 3. Trials wean us from worldly things.**
- 4. Trials call us to an eternal hope.**
- 5. Trials reveal what we really love.**
- 6. Trials teach us to value God's blessings.**
- 7. Trials enable us to help others.**
- 8. Trials produce endurance and strength.**
- 9. Trials produce future glory.**

2. The reason our attitude

a. We are partakers of Christ's sufferings

Whenever we suffer as believers we are, in a small way, a partaker of Christ's suffering. Christ suffered unjustly at the hands of sinners.

Because of that suffering, he was exalted to the highest position of honor by God. If Christ suffered, should we as his followers do less? When we do suffer as a believer, there is a certain joy in that is unexplainable.

b. We are reminded of Christ's return

A second reason we can rejoice in our suffering is the soon return of Christ. When he appears, we will appear with him in glory. The path to glory is through the valley of suffering. Those that have suffered with Christ will also reign with him.

c. We are honored to suffer for Christ's name

Finally, we can rejoice in suffering because we are identified with Christ. When we suffer on behalf of Christ, we are given a special joy by the Holy Spirit, and a special power by the Holy Spirit to endure. God's presence is never more keenly felt than in the middle of a great trial.

C. We Should Evaluate Our Suffering - 1 Peter 4:15-18

Whenever we suffer, we need to be careful to evaluate that suffering. It is possible to suffer as a Christian for the wrong reasons. When we do that, we are not glorifying God and we do not experience the joy of suffering mentioned in vv. 13-14.

1. The Wrong Reasons for Suffering - 1 Peter 4:15

1 Peter 4:15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

a. Breaking the law

One of the ways we can suffer wrongly is when we suffer because we broke the law. If we commit a murder, or steal, and are caught, we cannot glorify God in that situation. Put more broadly, we as believers should never find ourselves suffering because we broke the law (unless of course we break that law because it commands us to act contrary to God's law). When we do so, we cannot claim the presence of Christ in that trial.

b. Bothering others

This word (*alotrioeπισκοπος*) refers to the conduct of a person in society. A person who is a busybody is someone who is an irritant in society, someone who is always stirring up trouble and making problems for the authorities. As believers, we are forbidden to be troublemakers.

1 Thessalonians 4:11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

2 Thessalonians 3:11-12 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

2. The Right Reasons for Suffering - 1 Peter 4:16-18

1 Peter 4:16-18 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

Out of the many reasons for suffering Peter lists two here. The first is suffering as the result of godly living, the second is suffering as a result of spiritual cleansing.

a. Godly living

Note that Peter says, “if any man suffer as a Christian.” This is in reference to someone who is suffering because of their faith in God and because of their holy, righteous lifestyle. When we are suffering for that reason, we are to glorify God, which is to exhibit his character.

b. Spiritual cleansing

Another reason for suffering is spiritual cleansing. The word for “time” (*chairos*) is epochal time. It is now the right time for judgment to being at the household of God. What is the purpose of this judgment? It is the separation of the godly from the ungodly. Whenever the Church is popular, a lot of tares enter which the winds of persecution drive away. A persecuted church is a pure church because no one will want to become part of a church under fire.

When God’s judgment comes, it is an inclusive judgment. We as believers are barely saved from this judgment by our faith in Christ. Those that are outside of Christ find themselves the victim of God’s wrath. Peter asks the rhetorical question, “if the righteous are barely delivered, what will happen to the ungodly?” A good example of this is the deliverance of Lot from Sodom.

D. We Should Trust God in Our Suffering - 1 Peter 4:19

1 Peter 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Peter’s final injunction regarding suffering is that we need to have a firm belief in the plan and purposes of God. God allows suffering into our lives in order to purify and mature us. When we have that perspective, we can rejoice in our trials knowing that we have a faithful creator who will keep our souls.

An alternate outline of this section (1 Peter 4:12-19) is as follows:

A. The Promise of Suffering - 4:12a

B. The Purpose of Suffering - 4:12b

C. The Participation of Suffering - 4:13

D. The Power of Suffering - 4:14

E. The Peril of Suffering - 4:15-16

- 1. All suffering is not because of Christ.**
- 2. We may become ashamed of suffering.**

F. The Purging of Suffering - 4:17-19