

1. **Introduction:** Peter has earlier confidently asserted there is great value in imitating Christ's example of suffering, if necessary, to accomplish God's will. He now returns to that theme.
2. **1 Peter 4:1-6:** *Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ² so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. ³ For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. ⁴ With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; ⁵ but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶ For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.*
 - In 3:13-17 Peter encouraged having the Lord's view of suffering for doing good.
 - He did so to encourage believers to maintain a good Christian witness when times are tough. In verses 4:1-6 Peter emphasizes the related theme of willingness to suffer (if necessary to avoid sinning. Some amplification is needed to grasp the true meaning.
 - From verse 4:1 – Jesus willingly suffered painful death on the cross to do what was necessary to accomplish God's will. His was focused on pleasing God by completing His assigned task, the enormous task of making salvation for sinners possible.
 - As believers, we are to align our own thinking with that of Christ, suffering, if necessary, to maintain obedience to God and accomplish the tasks He sets before us.
 - Sins made Christ's sacrifice necessary. How can believers take pleasure in sin knowing what it cost Christ? Our past sins are more than sufficient. Sin no more.
 - Companions in sin will be surprised when we cease sinning. They may turn hostile when we don't join in their sins, thinking we are condemning them.
 - Each person is accountable to God for their own actions. Accusing others will not enable any sinner to escape responsibility for their actions.
 - Conclusion: No one can escape accountability to God.
 - Believers must experience mortal death, but they will escape condemnation at the final judgment. While in the flesh, we are subject to judgment by human standards, but the time will come when everyone will receive true and final judgment from the Lord.
 - Believers are to be clear-minded, self-controlled, maturely evaluate events, then pray.
 - Verse 4:6 is another somewhat confusing verse. Interpretations differ.
 - The best solution seems to be the one the NIV followed. "Now" is inserted in the "who are dead" phrase so that it becomes "who are now dead." That makes sense. People now dead heard the gospel preached during their life and believed.
 - This is consistent with Scripture which nowhere teaches salvation for sinners after death

3. **Something to Think About:** Paul is known as the apostle of faith, Peter as the apostle of hope, and John as the apostle of love. Each wrote extensively about all three things.
- In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul closed the chapter saying that when a Christian’s life is stripped down to its elemental core what remains is faith, hope, and love.
 - Believers have faith in the saving grace of our Lord. We have confident hope in the promises of God. Because of God’s love for us demonstrated in His grace to us, we confidently rest in God’s love, trusting that He will see us through to the end.
 - Notice that faith, hope, and love are each a form of a confident attitude.
 - James 1 deals with the importance of willfully choosing a proper attitude.
 - The human author of each of the letters in the NT were inspired by the Holy Spirit and enabled to write what God intended yet consistent with their own personality.
 - Each one wrote to meet the needs of particular people with specific needs at a particular time. Yet, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, each one wrote in such manner that their writings remain valuable to believers to this day.
 - Their writings remain both example and instruction for our benefit. Though written at different times and circumstances, all the letters show an amazing consistency.
4. **1 Peter 4:7-11:** *The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.* ⁸ *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.* ⁹ *Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.* ¹⁰ *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:* ¹¹ *whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*
- Verse 7 is a transition that closes the previous passage and opens the next. The literal translation of verse 7 begins, “The goal of all things has come near.”
 - It seems that God’s plan for the current era of this world is nearing completion. The implication is that the unfolding of Christ’s return and end-time judgment could happen at any moment. That is an attention-getting thought.
 - The “any moment” possibility of Christ’s return should be like a bright light shining to remind us that it is important that we make sure our behavior matches the seriousness of the times in which we live.
 - Peter says. *“Be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.”* He means use good judgment, stay calm. Maintain a spirit of prayer. Be disciplined and intentional in all that we do. Be calm. Don’t panic when things go wrong.
 - Be balanced in approaching life, working to the best of our abilities in all that we do.
 - Live as if Christ will return any moment, but we don’t and can’t know the actual time.
 - Peter’s second instruction is *“Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.”*

- Mutual love and care for one another is a powerful encouragement to strengthen believers so that they persevere even during unjust treatment, persecution, and confusion.
 - Christian does not and must not condone sin. However, it is true that fervent, forgiving love “covers a multitude of sins” in the sense that Christian love does not spread the news of sin through gossip and slander, but rather supports our brothers and sisters in Christ as they strive to eliminate sin from their life.
 - Peter is quoting Proverbs 10:12, **“Hatred stirs up strife but love covers all offenses.”**
 - Peter’s third instruction is **“Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.”**
 - He is urging mutual hospitality among believers, hospitality that flows from earnest love for one another. True hospitality encourages our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - Peter’s fourth instruction is **“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies.”**
 - This command reminds us that every believer has received at least one spiritual gift.
 - Spiritual gifts are not given for our personal amusement or benefit. God intends we use our spiritual gifts in such a way that God receives a spiritual return on His investment.
 - Believers are expected and encouraged to obey Peter’s four instructions to the best of their ability in order that in everything God may be glorified through Christ, our Savior.
 - To God belong all glory and dominion.
 - In the next passage (4:12-19) Peter returns to the concept that willingly suffering, when necessary to achieve God’s will, is of great value. The context of his comments is that in this way we share in Christ’s suffering.
 - The “fiery trial” Peter mentions does not appear to be individual “normal” persecution such as all Christians experience because of living in a world hostile to Christ. This “fiery trial” was persecution of all believers that would overtake the whole church.
 - Indeed, such a fiery trial did soon come to pass.
 - Christianity had been considered a part of Judaism, but that was about to change.
 - Rome allowed Jews freedom of worship. They were not required to engage in Emperor worship. When Christians were considered a sect of Judaism, that rule applied to them.
 - Nero and later emperors changed that picture. The Jews forbade Christians to worship in synagogues. Rome then considered Christianity to be a separate religion and by law they were required to participate in emperor worship. That was forbidden for Christians.
 - Most Christians refused to participate in such worship which led to severe persecution.
 - Peter sees signs of a wave of persecution coming and writes a warning to his flock.
5. **1 Peter 4:12-19: Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an**

evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶ *Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.* ¹⁷ *For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?* ¹⁸ *And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”* ¹⁹ *Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*

- Peter gave four instructions aimed at maintaining proper behavior during a “fiery” trial.
- First, ***Beloved, do not be surprised.*** Persecution of godly people is not something new. People of God have always suffered to some degree in the hands of an unbelieving world.
- A dedicated believer lives their life based on God’s truth, obedience, humility, holiness, and a desire to glorify God. Much of life in the unbelieving world thrives on lies, disobedience, pride, pleasure, and a desire to gain more prestige, power, and/or wealth.
- The sharp contrasts between the two life orientations leads to conflict. Many stories in Scripture illustrate this truth beginning with Cain and Abel. Jesus explained to His disciples that they should expect opposition and persecution from the world as they followed His way of life (Jn 15:17-16:4).
- Jesus also gave them an uplifting promise (Jn 16:33), ***“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”***
- Persecutions and trials are not random but a part of God’s plan. He is in control.
- God promises to work even bad events to our good as we follow him even in adversity.
- Peter’s second instruction is ***“rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings.”*** Suffering because we stand with Christ is valuable and worthy of joy.
- Because the world has not experienced the saving grace of God, the unbelieving world is bewildered when we show an attitude of joy in the face of persecution.
- Suffering for standing firm for Christ means fellowship with Christ now and glory in the future. Suffering for the cause of Christ intensifies the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- Peter’s third instruction is ***“If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed.”***
- Why am I sometimes insulted and suffer? Some suffering and insults are deserved. Always be on guard against allowing our sinful actions to be the cause of insults or suffering. Peter mentions 4 offenses that can lead to suffering and which no Christian should ever be guilty.
- Murder and thievery are legal infractions that will bring civil government punishment.
- The second two, committing evil and meddling, don’t appear to be secular lawbreaking offenses, but seem to be moral and social offenses. At times, to our shame believers behave as though they have forgotten who they are in Christ. Rather than conduits of righteousness, such people become instruments of wickedness.
- As he dictated these comments to Silas, Peter undoubtedly recalled his shameful denials of Jesus. We should never be ashamed of Christ or His gospel.

- Peter's fourth instruction is, *"Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good."* The word translated "entrust" is a banking term that means "to deposit for safekeeping."
 - Commitment to our Creator is not a single action but a continuous entrusting. While we entrust our soul to God, we are to continue doing good. Judgment begins in the family of God, but the brunt of judgement will fall on unbelievers.
 - What believers suffer now does not compare with the enormity of what the unrighteous will suffer in judgment.
 - As we make the spiritual journey during our mortal life, believers will at times suffer "according to the will of God." God will use good times and bad to grow our godliness.
 - We are to have total confidence in both the goodness and the power of God. His ultimate purpose will be accomplished!
6. **Next:** Begin with 1 Peter 5:1.