

1 Peter 4:12-19 – Part E

1Pe 4:15 (NKJV) But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. ¹⁷ For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

As we begin this morning, our main focus is going to be on v17, and I am not sure that I can do justice to the content of that verse. It is and should be received as a very strong warning to any believer who does not take his Christian life seriously. In v15 Peter is telling us the obvious – do not be stupid with your life and do not do things that you innately know are wrong and unacceptable to God. If I murder someone, steal from someone, or just simply do evil things, then I deserve punishment. That is a statement that simply does not need a great deal of explanation. It is clear that there are things that are not just wrong, but grossly wrong. I think it is interesting that along beside words like “**murderer, thief**” and “**evildoer**”, he adds the phrase “**busybody in other people’s matters**” – which really seems somewhat out of place with the other three terms. That phrase is actually just one word in the Greek text and is translated as “**meddler**” in the Greek Interlinear and is the only place this word is used in the New Testament. It refers specifically to someone who gets their kicks off of agitating people. I have met people like that. No matter what you have to say, they are going to find something to disagree with you about. They seem to actually enjoy irritating people. The NASB uses the term “**troublesome meddler**”. The AMP and RSV say “**a mischief-maker**”, and the ISV says “**trouble-maker**”. No one likes meddlers and trouble makers, people who are always snooping around for some tidbit of gossip or some juicy news that they can use to spread around to everyone else. No one likes being around people who are just antagonistic and insensitive to what they are saying and how their words actually hurt people. Listen. If you cannot find something worthwhile to say about someone, it would be better to simply say nothing. [Ephesians 4:29](#) says it this way,

Eph 4:29 (NKJV) Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

The word “**corrupt**” (*sapros*, Gr.) comes from the Greek word “*sepo*” which simply means rotten, putrid, and therefore worthless.¹ Not one of us likes eaten rotten food or rotten fruit. So, every one of us would do well to make sure that what we say to people is designed to build them up, to edify them, and to impart God’s grace to their lives. I am always amazed at how much some people are hurting on the inside, but hiding it on the outside, and much too often our words, rather than ministering grace to them, actually tear them down – and often times we do not even care. Well, you can be assured that God cares and that God notices and that the Holy Spirit is deeply grieved. Whatever glory God may have wanted to receive from our life, at the moment of speaking rotten words it is completely lost and wasted.

Next in v16 Peter simply says that if you do have to suffer “**for the name of Christ**” that as far as God is concerned it is just another opportunity for you to use those events to glorify Jesus Christ in your life. Every single one of us should be thinking about and looking for opportunities to glorify Christ in our life

¹ Zodhiates, *sapros*, 1278.

– even if it involves things that may be quite uncomfortable. The greater our willingness to suffer through and endure some difficult moments, the greater our usefulness to God and the greater His glory. I am sure that most nominal Christians do not even want to think about these kinds of things and I can understand why. I mean, who really deep down wants to suffer – no one. However, if the glory of God means anything to us (and it should actually mean everything), then we have no choice but to understand this aspect of the Christian life. If you are someone who does not believe and accept the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, then difficult times that involve some level of suffering, whether it be emotional, mental, or physical, will always be a problem for you and an opportunity to complain and become frustrated and irritated with what God is allowing to happen in your life. The very moment that you begin to complain is the very moment that you have lost God’s perspective on your Christian life.

Okay. That brings us to the heart of these three verses – v17.

1Pe 4:17 (NKJV) For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

It is both important and critical to appreciate that God is very serious and very sober about our Christian lives – much more than we often times are. There is nothing about the Christian life in which we should become flippant or thoughtless with in how we are living. The older I become, the more I realize how important every day actually is. Every day matters, every season of our lives matters, every Sunday matters. This is not play Christianity, like we are playing Monopoly with play money – not at all. You may not be serious about your Christian life, but you can be quite assured that God is, and that is exactly to what this verse is referring. I think it has an even greater relevance based on some of the “end time” scenarios in which we are living.

What Peter says is that “**the time has come**”. What “**time**”? To what specific time or kind of time is Peter actually referring. The word “**time**” is “*kairos*” and refers to a very decisive and crucial moment in time.² Obviously in his mind, it is not a time that these believers should ignore, simply because it is a time that is related to judgment beginning with the church. So, this is not a small and inconsequential matter. To the contrary, it is a very serious moment. Now, I know that we are nearly 2000 years removed from the historical setting in which this was written, but that does not negate the reality of how God consistently deals with His people. There are multiple words for “**judgment**” in the New Testament, but this is the Greek word “*krima*” which specifically addresses God rendering a decision regarding sin in the life of His people, in the life of the church, and eventually on the lost. So, what this verse indicates is that if judgment begins with God’s people, it will then proceed to the unsaved who have no intention of ever obeying the Word of God. We might call it a kind of domino effect. So, it would be utterly foolish on our part for us to somehow casually ignore the ramifications of this verse.

It seems somewhat strange to me personally how easy it is for Christians to just simply dismiss and ignore sin in their life, and never seem compelled to even deal with it. We cannot lose sight in studying this verse that it is specifically addressing sin in the life of the church and God’s people – which is us, right? To just be somewhat indifferent to sin in our lives is very revealing. We all struggle with sin in our life. No one is exempt from the world, the flesh, and the devil attacking their life. However, to not take a timeout to make sure that we are not allowing some sin to actually become a stronghold in our life

² MacArthur, 256.

is spiritually criminal. Even a sin like spiritual indifference can wreak spiritual havoc and chaos in a person's life and in their family. We never sin in a vacuum. Just as an example, if you as a husband do not love your wife like Christ loved the church, the impact of that on both your marriage and your children will eventually catch up with you and you may lose everything that you should hold dear to your life. No husband is given an exemption from this – not one single Christian husband. There is no spiritual waver that God grants to you or me as husbands. There is no get out of marriage free card here.

Think of it this way. If a husband (or a wife) ignores the most basic of all spiritual virtues, it will be virtually impossible for them to ever make an impact on others. I personally have never met one single husband or wife who mistreated and neglected their spouse that God has chosen to use – not one single person. The problem, however, is that this is very much a spiritual reality within many churches, and in my understanding of Scripture, God will hold the negligent party responsible and accountable. Why would God choose **not** to judge His church if it is failing at one of the most basic levels of Christianity? Well, He will judge His church, and I believe that some of that is already in progress. Today, the research that has been done indicates that nearly half of the people who were faithfully attending church before the Coronavirus have gone spiritually AWOL and are not even interested in finding an alternative. In reality, it is possible that many will never return. It is the idea of “out of sight, out of mind”.

Listen carefully. This is not me just preaching and giving a rebuke to this church. That is not what I am doing. If there is sin and neglect in your life regarding those elements that God considers utterly essential and crucial for the Christian life, then you need to do what you need to do to make things right. That applies to my life and it applies to your life. The reason for addressing this is because God's judgment, His chastening, and His cleansing are coming, and if we are not prepared for suffering, I can assure you that we will not be prepared for God's chastening – which by the way is never enjoyable.

Now, what we know is that because of the work of Christ in securing our salvation, that for our life there is “**no condemnation**”. [Romans 8:1](#) says,

Ro 8:1 (NKJV) *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*

This is really good news for every single one of us, but that single statement does **not** negate the reality of God's judgment and chastening of His church. So, whatever this divine judgment of God actually entails for the church, it is not a condemning judgment. To the contrary, it is a divine corrective judgment that God renders on our sins and it involves two distinct elements – **His chastening and His cleansing**.³ [1 Corinthians 11:32](#) says it this way,

1Co 11:32 (NKJV) *But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.*

This verse is clear. When God does judge and chasten His people, it is for the distinct purpose of them not being condemned with the world. I legitimately cannot even call myself a Christian if my life is no different than that of lost people who have no desire for godliness. We may live in the world, but we are

³ MacArthur, 256.

not of this world, and this is not our home. When I travel internationally, I can hardly wait to get back home, and that is exactly how we should feel about this world and our real home with Christ.

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