

1 Peter 4:12-19 – Part F

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?

What point do I want to make today? What kind of message do I want you to leave with from this meeting today? It is a very simple message. You better take sin in your life seriously! You can remember that – right? You better take sin in your life seriously. If you are serious, and somber, and sober about your Christian life, which you should be, then it would be very difficult to read v17 and not take it seriously. This is no small statement, no minor point that Peter is making to his readers. Peter is not just making some kind of casual statement and then moving on to the next point. If you think that, then you simply have not been paying attention. Without any question and beyond any doubt Peter is making sure that both his readers **and us as well** fully understand that God does not take sin in the life of His people lightly.

This passage is talking about suffering BECAUSE we are Christians. Listen to [Mark 4:17](#) which says,

Mk 4:17 (NKJV) and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble.

Please notice that the then persecution arose specifically because of the “**word’s sake**”, or in other words, because they are faithful followers of Christ. Please fully appreciate and understand right here at the beginning of this teaching that the Bible never teaches that the love of Christ will keep someone from persecution – never, not one time does it say that. Rather, it teaches that persecution cannot separate me from the love of Christ. [Romans 8:35](#) says,

Ro 8:35 (NKJV) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

That is a rhetorical question with the answer being a resounding – no one or anything. In fact, it is actually your love for Christ that brings on the persecution. In the New Testament, persecution is most always directly linked to your personal relationship with Christ. Stated another way, we should not be surprised with this kind of suffering or hostility comes, but should actually expect it.¹

There are two realities that as a believer we fully understand. First, we understand that lost people sin, that those who have never been saved are going to live in sin as a way of life. They are actually what Scripture refers to as “**slaves of sin**”. [Romans 6:17 and 20](#) state it this way,

Ro 6:17 (NKJV) But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

Ro 6:20 (NKJV) For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

¹ Hensley, 85.

For the lost person, their entire life is dominated and controlled by sin, by sinful practices, by sinful ideologies, and by sinful desires and lusts. Whether they realize it or appreciate it, their entire life is governed by the domain of sin in the world. They think that they are nice people, good people, and that in the end that everything is going to work out for them. Well, nothing could be any further from the truth than that kind of thinking. All of this is normal and natural for the lost person. Sin in their life is the standard by which they live.

However, for the saved person this is exactly what they were saved from when they came to Christ. I am never surprised when sinners sin, but I am stupefied with believers who claim the name of Christ and continue to live in sin and indifference to the things of God and to His Word, who are unfaithful in their Christian life, and who never even think about sin in their life. Listen. If your life never changed when you say that you were saved, if nothing happened to you, if nothing spiritually meaningful took place in your life when you made some “decision”, then in reality you were never saved. I have clearly taught you for years that a decision is not a conversion, yet many believe that it is. [2 Corinthians 5:17](#) clearly states the following,

2Co 5:17 (NKJV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

That verse is what salvation is and how it should be defined. I absolutely love the way the last phrase of that verse is given in the Greek Interlinear. It simply says “**behold, he has become new**”. That is it, that is right, that is the Christian life – a completely new life that is so foreign to the way that we used to live that it is undeniable. There is no mistaking what this verse is saying, yet there are so many professing Christians who actually have no visible evidence that anything took place in their life. In fact, for many of them you cannot tell the difference between them and lost people. There is no difference. They love what lost people love and actually have little to no love for God or the things of God. Yet they made some kind of “decision” at some point in their life, and they are going to die on that hill no matter what – no matter what their life is revealing. So, what is the point? You better take sin in your life seriously.

The problem is so simple, yet so difficult to accept for many believers. Too often we as Christians take sin much too lightly, way too casually. As a pastor, one of the problems that I have to wrestle with on almost a weekly basis is people coming to church, hearing a message, but it making absolutely no difference in their life whatsoever. We have visitors that come to church here and if I go over 30 minutes in a message, they are constantly looking at their watch as if “what is wrong with this guy”. I can preach and teach on something for weeks, and in reality some of the people listening are sleeping in the service, they have no Bible with them and do not follow along, they are reading something on their cell phone or texting someone, or just not engaged in God’s Word and their mind is miles away from what is being said. If you do not think that is a problem, then I doubt seriously that Peter would ever have had to even write such a statement that “**the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God**”. Why is judgment going to happen for the church? The answer is simple – the individuals in the church are not taking sin in their life seriously. This judgment of God which is going to come upon the New Testament church is going to happen to test and refine the faith of those who claim Jesus as their Lord, but who do not live as if He actually is. It is not a judgment to condemn, but a judgment to test and refine – and it will do exactly that.

Listen very carefully. You should be coming to church so that you can both hear and better understand the Word of God. That is a primary function of a New Testament church. When I teach and preach behind this pulpit, it is always to do several things based on [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#) which says,

2Ti 3:16 (NKJV) All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

My God-given role is to teach you doctrine (which I have done and will continue to do). It is to provide reproof when things in your life are out of God's order. It is provide correction of misunderstanding of Scripture and of God's truth. It is to instruct you in what is right. I must do all of the above, and it must challenge you at the very core of your being. If you are never challenged to live out the Christian life in a way that honors Christ, then either I am not doing my job as your pastor or you are not doing your job as a believer. It may be a combination of the two, but we best figure it out. Listen. I can preach my heart out, study all week to bring you a sound exegetical message, but if it makes no difference in your life, then there is nothing else I can do as your pastor - nothing. When I preached for 11 weeks on husbands loving your wives, if that bored you as a husband and made absolutely no difference in your life, then you need to re-examine your so-called Christian life. You may not actually have one if it made no difference to you. That teaching was as clear and as provoking and as timely of a series of messages as I could have given. There is nothing minor or insignificant about marriage, and if you get tired of me mentioning it, then in all likelihood your problem is much bigger than you realize. Just ask your wife, and she will let you know where you are in all of this. Most husbands are afraid to ask their wives how they are doing in their marriage, and for many of them, they simply do not want to hear what she has to say because they know it is probably true and means they will have to humble themselves and change. I read something recently that the average couple spends about 4 minutes per day in face to face conversation with each other. I am surprised that it may be that long. The way you as a husband treat your wife is just a reflection of the depth of your love or lack of love for God – and you husbands better get that right. If God is going to hold you responsible for anything in your life, it is how you treat your wife.

What Peter is saying here in this passage is that God is going to chasten His church, discipline His church, and probably allow those in His church to go through some suffering and really difficult times. Let me say that a different way just to make the point. God is going to chasten THIS church, discipline THIS church, and probably allow us in THIS church to go through some suffering and really difficult times. If you are not prepared for that, chances are you may be a part of the great apostasy that is to follow. So, this is what Peter is addressing. When God chastens us, when God interrupts our life with His divine chastening which we cannot avoid, casually dismiss, or circumvent in any way, when He does that it is specifically for the purpose of purifying and cleansing our life of everything that is displeasing to Him. I am grateful that God is more than patient and longsuffering with every single one of our lives, but that does not mean that He will wait forever to deal with the sin in our lives. [Hebrews 12:11](#) says,

Heb 12:11 (NKJV) Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Please appreciate that God does not chasten lost people, but He judicially judges them. On the other side of that coin, God does not judge His people, but He does chasten them. It is a spiritually inevitable reality – the discipline and chastening of God on sin in our lives. Every one of us will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and give an account of everything in our life – the good, the bad, the ugly. At that judgment, what we have done for Christ will last, and where we have sinned against God it will be burned up completely with no reward.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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