

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes: Book of 1 Peter

7/5/17

Chapter 4

Living for God - Verses 1-11

¹Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. ²As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. ³For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. ⁴They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you. ⁵But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit. ⁷The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. ⁸Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. ¹¹If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

4:1-2 Suffering helps us be like Christ, yet people will do anything to avoid pain. Followers of Christ, however, should be willing and prepared to do God's will and to suffer for it if necessary. We can overcome sin when we focus on Christ and what he wants us to do. Pain and danger reveal our true values. Anyone who suffers for doing good and still faithfully obeys in spite of suffering has made a clean break with sin.

4:3-4 People whose lives change radically at conversion may experience contempt from old friends. They may be scorned not only because they refuse to participate in certain activities but also because their priorities have changed and they are now heading in the opposite direction. Their lives incriminate their friends' sinful activities. Mature Christians should help new believers resist such pressures of opposition by helping them to be faithful to Christ, surrounding them as new friends, and encouraging them to develop new habits and activities that are not only enjoyable but positive for their spiritual growth.

4:5 The basis of salvation is our belief in Jesus (Acts 16:31), but the basis for judgment is how we have lived. All people will be judged: believers for the rewards they will receive; unbelievers for punishment. Those who inflict persecution are marked for punishment when they stand before God. All will give an account to God, so we must be ready. This may give you a new perspective on your activities and actions today. Are you prepared to explain them to God?

4:5-6 Many people in the early church had concerns about life after death. In Thessalonica, Christians worried that loved ones who died before Christ's return might never see Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Peter's readers needed to be reminded that the dead (both the faithful and their oppressors) would be judged. The judgment will be perfectly fair, he pointed out, because even the dead have heard the gospel (see also 3:18-19). The gospel was first announced when Jesus Christ preached on the earth, but it has been operating since before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4), and it affects all people, the dead as well as the living.

4:7-9 We should live expectantly because Christ is coming soon. Getting ready to meet Christ involves continually growing in love for God and for others (see Jesus' summary of the law in Matthew 22:37-40). It is important to pray regularly and to reach out to needy people. Your possessions, status, and power will mean nothing in God's kingdom, but you will spend eternity with other people. Invest your time and talents where they will make an eternal difference.

4:10-11 Our abilities should be faithfully used in serving others; none are for our own exclusive enjoyment. Some people, well aware of their abilities, believe that they have the right to use their abilities as they please. Others feel that they have no special talents at all. Peter addresses both groups in these verses. Everyone has some gifts; find yours and use them. Peter mentions speaking and serving. Paul lists these and other abilities in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-11, and Ephesians

4:11 Even as you seek to discover your gifts, if you see a need in the church, seek to meet it. You may find gifts in areas you might not have guessed! How is God praised when we use our abilities? When we use them as he directs, to help others, they will see Jesus in us and praise him for the help they have received. Peter may have been thinking of Jesus' words, "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Suffering for Being a Christian - Verses 12-19

¹² Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. ¹⁷ For it is

time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" ¹⁹ So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

4:14-16 Again Peter brings to mind Jesus' words: "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me" (Matthew 5:11). Christ will send his Spirit to strengthen those who are persecuted for their faith. Peter creates no illusions; God's plan for your life may include pain and hardship. When trouble comes, don't be surprised. This does not mean that all suffering is the result of good Christian conduct. Peter says to distinguish between suffering for being a believer and suffering for doing wrong things. For example, a Christian may think he is being picked on for his faith when it is obvious to everyone else that his own unpleasant behavior is the cause of his problems. It may take careful thought or wise counsel to determine the real cause of our suffering. We can be assured, however, that whenever we suffer because of our loyalty to Christ, he will be with us all the way.

4:16 It is not shameful to suffer for being a Christian. When Peter and John were persecuted for preaching the gospel, they rejoiced because such persecution was a mark of God's approval of their work (Acts 5:41). Don't seek out suffering, and don't try to avoid it. Instead, keep on doing what is right whether or not it brings suffering.

4:17-18 This refers not to final judgment but to God's refining discipline (Hebrews 12:7). God often allows believers to sin and then experience the consequences. He does this for several reasons: (1) to show us our potential for sinning, (2) to encourage us to turn from sin and more constantly depend on him, (3) to prepare us to face other, even stronger temptations in the future, and (4) to help us stay faithful and keep on trusting him. If believers need earthly discipline (judgment) from God, how much more will unbelievers receive it? If the righteous are barely saved (only because of God's mercy), what chance have those who reject Christ?

4:19 Everywhere the Bible counsels that we trust God—in good times and bad, during sunny skies and thunderclouds, when we have a pocket full of change and a pocket full of sawdust. How does trust work? (1) Trust overcomes fear. Genuine trust in God says, "Whatever mess I'm in, my heavenly Father will lead me." (2) Trust overcomes depression. No matter how overwhelming the situation or how low it makes you feel, God can draw you back to the light. (3) Trust overcomes hate. When careless or cruel people hurt you, sometimes irreparably, you can hate forever or you can trust God, but you can't do both. God is there to steady even the worst situation—always with a promise, always with hope. Commit your life to him for safekeeping. Rely on him when you face your worst circumstances.