

BEING SERIOUS AND WATCHFUL

According to Bible Gateway.com, where I copied the text for our passage of Scripture in 1 Peter 4, they separated this chapter into three sections...**1. Christ's Example to be Followed**, **2. Serving for God's Glory**, and **3. Suffering for God's Glory**. In My Scofield Study Bible it has our passage of Scripture separated into only two sections, 1. Since Christ has suffered, why should we not suffer?, and 2. Christian conduct in the light of the times in which we live. Both of those breakdowns of the Scripture are good but the one on Bible Gateway breaks it down a little nicer for this message, since it points out that all things are ultimately for God's glory. Isaiah 43:7 says, "Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created **for My glory**; I have formed him, yes, I have made him." Romans 11:36 says, "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom **be glory forever**. Amen."

This letter was written to the Jewish Christians who had been persecuted in their Jewish homelands like in Jerusalem and had settled in Gentile areas of which was Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. We find that to be the case as was also recorded in Acts 8:1 where it says, "Now Saul was consenting to his death [Stephen's]. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." Peter was writing to those who had dispersed to different territories of what is now the country of Turkey. Sadly, while the gospel of Jesus Christ was being spread like wildfire throughout the region of Turkey, they are presently almost completely Muslim. A whole country, a whole nation has basically rejected the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sound familiar? It is most certainly where this nation, the United States of America is headed. Just as the gospel began to spread, the works of the enemy were also very much at work. In Jeremiah 16:16, God spoke through Jeremiah, "Behold, I will send for many fishermen," says the Lord, "and they shall fish them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks." God IS sending forth His fishermen but the enemy WILL send forth his hunters. Later in 1 Peter 5:8 Peter says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Those people who Peter addressed in his letter had to leave behind their homeland in order to survive. Just as Jesus had told the disciples to go into a city and if they won't receive you and your message, shake the dust off their sandals and move on. Jesus said about that city, "But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city." Jesus Himself had to many times escape from towns from where He was not welcome.

1 Peter 4:1-6

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

Christ's Example to Be Followed

This is first caption of the passage of Scripture in 1 Peter chapter 4. Following Christ's example. Peter says, "since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, **arm yourselves also with the same mind**, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." We have to get it in our minds that we are in a spiritual battle and that it is real and that it is serious and that there are eternal consequences that are involved, not only for us but for all of those around us. This is real brothers and sisters and the first step we must take when we accept Jesus as our Savior, when we believe on Him to have died on the cross for our sins and then He rose from the grave on the third day, conquering death so that we may have life eternal in Him, we must continue to follow Christ to wherever He leads us. This isn't to heap guilt on you all, my brothers and sisters. This is to hopefully encourage ALL of us to keep pressing on in the faith. The struggle we face is as real as the spiritual warfare that we face and the struggles we face in the battle of the will of the flesh. The calling of the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus is just as real as the desire to sin in the flesh. Praise God that He led us here today to talk to him in prayer, to pray for His hand to be on us, to pray for His help in our time of need, to guide us into all of His truth, to show us His ways and to know Him better, and to sing songs of praise and worship to Him, and to read and hear His Word so that He can renew our minds and change our hearts, so that we can be sanctified in Him, set apart for His holiness, that we can be healed by Him, be healed emotionally, spiritually, and physically to the glory of God and that He will then work in us to continue to bring forth a harvest, that we can bear much fruit for the glory of God. As Jesus said in John 14:21, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest

Myself to him." And in verse 13 Jesus said, "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Following Jesus! As we follow Jesus we will encounter suffering, we will encounter persecution, we will suffer grief, we will occasionally have to shake the dust off of our sandals and move on. But oh what an incredible blessing it is to follow Jesus! We can be set free from the bondage of sin, we can walk in that newness of life that Paul mentioned in Romans 6:4, we can be born again as Jesus said in John 3:3 and Peter mentioned in 1 Peter 1:23, and to where we can say as the Apostle Paul said in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Glory to God! The struggle is real, the spiritual battle that we are in is real, but so is salvation through Jesus Christ, so is deliverance from the chains of sin where Jesus sets us free to walk in the glorious liberty of the children of God, and the healing hand of God is real through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. God can and will change our hearts and renew our minds as we follow Jesus to His healing waters and restful pastures. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want...That is what He wants for us all, as His sheep, His children, His beloved. He wants to lead us into His goodness that leads us into eternal life in Jesus.

1 Peter 4:7-11

But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. 10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Serving for God's Glory

Jesus manifests Himself to us as we follow His commandments and follow Him. All to the glory of God. And listen to this: Jesus said in John 12:26, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father **will honor**." Jesus will manifest Himself to us and God will honor us as we follow Jesus and follow His commandments. Do we not want more of Jesus in our lives and in our community? As WE follow Jesus we begin to see for ourselves a transformation. First within ourselves and then to those around us and then to our community. It only takes a spark to get a fire going. Did not the gospel of Jesus Christ start with one man, the Son of God, to die on a cross for our sins to bring forth a message that has changed the world? Yet John 1:10 says, "He

was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him." The world that has changed from the time of Jesus is twofold. Some people receive the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ with gladness, believing on Him unto eternal life. Yet others who are of the world, reject Him and sink further into their sin. As the Apostle John wrote in 1 John 2:16, "For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world." There are some who would rather go after the things of the world, that are but temporary and will pass away. In verse 17 he says, "And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." But to God be the glory! He lifts us up out of the ash heap, out of the pile of dung that we were living in—for this world can most definitely be compared to a pile of dung as it has been horribly corrupted and it is full of the sins and ways of sinful mankind. But to God be the glory He is bringing forth a new heaven and a new earth and our sins will be remembered no more. But glory to God, He does not have us accept Jesus as our Savior and then have us to just wait around to suffer until we die. In John 15:8 Jesus says, "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." We, as Christians, followers of Christ, are His disciples, and it is the desire of our Heavenly Father that we bear much fruit for His glory. He works His Spirit in us to rely upon, to live and operate in the fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and self-control. When we bear fruit, it is never just for ourselves, it is to bless other brothers and sisters in Christ, and it is all to the glory of God!

1 Peter 4:12-19

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. 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? Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

Suffering for God's Glory

When we suffer for Jesus' sake, God gets the glory! That might be a tough one to wrap one's head around at times, especially when we are presently suffering. But if we are truly believing that it is Him working in us to will and to do according to His purpose, if we truly are trusting God in whatever situation we are in whether well fed or hungry, living in plenty or in want, whether we're on the mountain or the valley, whether we're sitting at the king's table or sitting in the dirt, that He has the perfect plan, that He will never leave us or forsake us, that He will carry out to completion the work that He began in us, that He will set us apart in His holiness, that He will bring us to being a tree planted by the waters that spreads forth its roots and brings forth much fruit, and that He has a future for us that lasts into eternity, if we are believing in His promises, if we are keeping our focus on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, if we are delighting in knowing Him and learning of His ways, then those circumstances will become clearer and clearer to us that our suffering and the things of this world are all but a vanishing wisp of smoke and that the eternity of being in God's glory and of the glory that shall be revealed in us is not even close to comparison to our present sufferings. As Peter pointed out though, let God be glorified in our lives through the work that He is doing in us through His mercies, goodness, and grace, and not just for the glory He gets by enacting His judgment on us through sin. Realize this too, Jesus' sufferings began in the gospels by fasting for 40 days and then overcoming temptation by the devil himself. I'm not suggesting we all fast for 40 days and then head to the wilderness, but by following Jesus we are going to have to suffer in overcoming the temptations of this world (just as John pointed out in 1 John 2:15-16, the lusts of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life-wanting to build our own kingdom, be our own gods). Another thing then to mention is that all of our suffering isn't just in the physical realm. As the Apostle said, "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." The spiritual battle is real and the consequences and rewards are real.

Be not discouraged beloved of God, for God spoke and still speaks to His people through the prophet Isaiah, saying "You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest regions, and said to you, 'You are My servant, I have chosen you and have not cast you away: Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

God will one day judge us all for what we let Him do through us in our lifetime on earth, and all the bad stuff will burn off and all

the good stuff will remain as our reward and for God's glory, so let us continue to follow Christ to wherever He leads us, serve Christ, and when necessary, to suffer for Christ and hold onto the promise of hope that, "when His glory is revealed, you will be glad with exceeding joy."