

First Peter Chapter Four Supplemental Study Guide¹

I. Holy living and serving the body with a view to the Parousia (4:1-11)

Study Guide: Pages 5-32

- a. The purifying work of suffering (4:1-2)
- b. Surprise by holiness and the believer's gospel hope (4:3-6)
- c. Eschatological body life (4:7-11)

II. Joyful confidence in The Righteous Judge (4:12-19)

Study Guide: Pages 33-44

- a. Exalting Christ in the fiery trial (4:12-18)
 - i. The fiery trial for those in Christ is no surprise (4:12)
 - ii. Rejoice in sharing Christ's suffering (4:13)
 - iii. Insulted but blessed (4:14)
 - iv. Do not suffer for wickedness (4:15)
 - v. Shamelessly suffer for Christ (4:16)
 - vi. The judgment of God's Household (4:17)
 - vii. The outcome of the wicked (4:18)
- b. Suffering with a view to the Righteous Judge, the faithful Creator (4:19)

¹ Prepared by David Crowe for Pray's Mill Baptist Church Adult Sunday School
ALL Scripture Quotations are from the ESV Bible unless the Scripture reference is in a quote from another author – their original translation was kept.

I. Holy living and serving the body with a view to the Parousia (4:1-11)

“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....”

1 Peter 4:1 ^{ESV}

As one begins their examination of chapter four, they observe Peter’s use of “therefore” which ties the opening verse of the chapter back to the immediately preceding section in chapter three. There, Peter has just been speaking to Christ’s resurrection and esteemed positioning at the right hand of the Father. More precisely, it appears that Peter was drawing further back to at least 3:18 where it was Christ’s suffering that was being directly addressed.

This should bring to mind that it is a critical gospel matter that one affirms that Jesus came in the flesh and suffered in the flesh, just as Peter had expressed in the passage that he is plainly drawing from here. Support for the weight of this doctrine is also provided by the Apostle John.

“Jesus suffered...being put to death in the flesh....” 1 Peter 3:18 ^{ESV}

“...by this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God....” 1 John 4:2 ^{ESV}

“For many deceivers have gone out into the world those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh.” 2 John 7 ^{ESV}

With this in view, one observes that once again Peter is drawing on Christ’s suffering as an example and a charge to faithfulness in suffering. Though Jesus’ suffering in the flesh was a *propitiatory* atonement, it still serves as an *example* for his people who are naturally in the flesh and because of identification with him will suffer.

The most direct statement of Christ’s example in suffering in Peter’s letter came in chapter two, “...because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you follow in his steps.” 1 Peter 2:21 ^{ESV}

Having affirmed this foundational truth, Peter exhorts his readers to “arm themselves.” This was unique language for Peter’s letter with the closest statements coming in chapters one and two, “preparing your minds for action” 1:13 and “the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul” 2:11. So, in what way does the believer arm themselves or take on the thinking of Christ in his suffering?

It appears that this is an intentional putting on of the mindset of Christ in the context of righteous suffering. This arming of themselves with this proper perspective would be demonstrated, at the least, in the following three ways: 1) submission to the will of God, 2) humility, and 3) righteous confidence in the just Judge. Arming oneself in a context of suffering in these ways produces the expressed results of a disposition that is not naturally cultivating or embracing sin, or as Peter states, “ceasing from sin.”

John MacArthur includes with this a preparedness to obey to the point of death,² which would be very similar to what Paul expresses in Philippians 2, “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Philippians 2:5-8 ^{ESV}

But how has suffering in the flesh produced the cessation of sin? “...for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin....”³

Is the intent to parallel Christ’s suffering in the flesh (which is presumably a culminating suffering on the cross and not the cumulative suffering in his public ministry) with the believer’s suffering in the flesh unto death? Is that too strong of a conclusion? Because suffering unto death will certainly produce the ceasing of sin as the believer’s work and sanctification is at that time completed. Is Peter calling on them to be prepared to suffer to the point of death with “arm yourself with the same way of thinking”? It would appear that this is what Peter is communicating because such a mindset is a calibrating one... (not unlike 1 John 3:1-3), and he goes on to reference the rest of one’s limited time in the flesh.

Again, consider the realities of one’s struggle with sin while in this natural life.
Ceased from sin. Stopped sinning. This happens when we stop breathing.

John MacArthur agrees with this conclusion and argues that it is at death that the struggle with sin ceases and connects this to 4:2 by arguing that *in view of our final putting away of sin* we live now in pursuit of that final reality⁴ (this would not be unlike the forthcoming call to live in view of Christ’s return introduced in 4:7).

Regarding this way of thinking, consider the following observations:

The NET Bible argues that the nature of unjust suffering from pursuing righteous obedience is indicative that sin has lost its grip on the believer.⁵

The ESV Study Bible argues very similarly that one who has thus suffered has effectively demonstrated that sin no longer has its malignant grip on them...⁶ almost reflecting its own expression of the putting off and putting on as there was not just an affirmation of this choice, but a willfulness to own it with the loss that conviction may require.

² The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1Peter; John MacArthur Jr; Moody Publishers, 2004; (Hereafter: MacArthur Commentary), Pgs. 224-226

³ Selected portion of 1 Peter 4:1 ESV

⁴ The MacArthur Study Bible, ESV. Thomas Nelson, 1997. Digitally accessed through the Grace Study Bible, (Hereafter: MacArthur Study Bible), Notes for 1 Peter 4:1-2

⁵ NET Bible, 1 Peter 4:1, Note 2

⁶ English Standard Version Study Bible. Crossway, 2008; (Hereafter ESV Study Bible), Pg. 2411 (malignant grip was my word choice)

Edmund Clowney observes that the suffering is a once for all action and that the ceasing from sin is a present and ongoing reality – thereby communicating that something occurred in a past moment (suffering) and now there is the ongoing cessation of sin.⁷ With this being established, he looks back to 1 Peter 2, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.” 1 Peter 2:24 ^{ESV}

“In [1 Peter 2:24], too, Peter spoke of an event in the past that marks the end of sin and the beginning of a life of righteousness. When Christ died to sin in our place, we died to sin, just as when he rose, we were given new birth (1:3). Our decisive ‘suffering in the body’ is that death which we share with Christ who suffered in the body for us. Baptism marks our union with Christ in his death which we share with Christ who suffered in the body for us. Baptism marks our union with Christ in his death and resurrection (3:21). It is nothing less than death that separates us from a life of sin.”⁸ Following this he cites Romans 6:8-12.

“Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.” Romans 6:8-12 ^{ESV}

So, Clowney is seeing this as a *vicarious* death with *personal* results. That is certainly a true statement, but the question would be if that truth is the truth Peter is intending to express here. It appears that to heed the command to arm themselves with a proper view of suffering under the will of God is to plainly posture themselves in opposition to the enticement and perceived pleasures and benefits of sin. It is quite difficult to joyfully/willfully yield to that which you are actively choosing to oppose and mortify even at the expense of your own pleasures and comfort.

“The commitment to suffer reveals a passion for a new way of life, a life that is not yet perfect but remarkably different from the lives of unbelievers in the Greco-Roman world.”⁹

“...so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.” 1 Peter 4:2 ^{ESV}

It is important to note here, that in a context of the forsaking of human passions, that life in the flesh is not an expression of carnality, but the natural person (such as could be referred to Jesus in his incarnation).

⁷ The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of 1 Peter; Edmund Clowney; Inter Varsity Press, 1988; (Hereafter: Clowney), Pgs. 169-170

⁸ Clowney, Pg.170

⁹ The New American Commentary: 1,2 Peter, Jude; Thomas R. Schreiner; Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003; (Hereafter: Schreiner), Pg. 201

Understanding this contextual framing, one can now observe that ultimately the statement “for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin” appears to be an explanatory clause addressing the statement of how believers are to be thinking: centered on the will of God and not human passions. This can be seen more plainly by removing the clause to observed the direct flow of thought, “Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking so as to live the rest of the time in flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.”

1 Peter 4:1-2¹⁰ Now, in view of having a perspective of suffering unto death and the forsaking of this temporal life one will properly and more fully live for the will or good pleasure of God.

Further, Peter’s use of “no longer” also gives the sense of marking a definitive point in time, a “from this moment forward” kind of dynamic. There is a palpable exchange of dispositions: human passions yielding to the will of God. This could be viewed as a proper view of lordship or just the natural expression of sanctification that accompanies the normal and progressive behavior of a believer.

This also serves to highlight that which is plainly true, that there is a palpable contrast between human passions and the will of God. This resolve to live for the will of God, which was previously addressed in chapter one where Peter calls his readers to holiness,¹¹ befuddles the unbelieving world as Peter goes on to address in 4:3-5. This will result in suffering... but it is suffering that is under submission of the righteous Judge, the faithful Creator (4:19).

Finally, a very common element that is addressed with this passage is expressed by J. Daryl Charles. He makes the case that this suffering in the flesh for believers is also an expression of righteous discipline to advance the sanctifying work of Christ in the believer’s life. To this end he demonstrates that this has been a common element of Peter’s letter to present, beginning in chapter one.¹²

“...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.” 1 Peter 1:2 ^{ESV}

“...so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 1:7 ^{ESV}

“Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart....” 1 Peter 1:22 ^{ESV}

“So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.” 1 Peter 2:1 ^{ESV}

“Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ....” 1 Peter 3:21 ^{ESV}

¹⁰ 1 Peter 4:1-2 ^{ESV} - With “for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin” removed to examine direct flow of thought.

¹¹ “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’” 1 Peter 1:14-16 ^{ESV}

¹² The Expositors’s Bible Commentary, Revised Edition; J. Daryl Charles & Tom Thatcher; 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude; Zondervan, 2006 - Kindle Edition; (Hereafter Charles & Thatcher), Kindle Edition, Kindle Location: 2974-2978

Personal Reflection and Application

How will truths from this section impact your thinking, praying, daily walk, and worship?

[illegible]

Further Reflection and Application

Peter gives the strong charge to arm oneself with the same way of thinking as the suffering Christ. In unpacking what this looks like, three areas were addressed – how might a right way of thinking in each of these areas help one to suffer in a way that exemplifies Christlikeness?

- 1) Submission to The Will of God.
- 2) Humility.
- 3) A Righteous Confidence in God.

Having so armed oneself with the mindset of Christ in the context of righteous suffering, it is stated that one “ceases from sin.” What do you think Peter meant by this and how is this reflected in your own life?

Some might see this reference to “ceasing from sin” as a support for sinless perfectionism or some other form of the “Victorious Christian Life” where there is no longer a draw or struggle with sin. How might you correct this conclusion from the Scriptures?

“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.” 1 Peter 4:3 ^{ESV}

What exactly does Peter mean that the time that has passed suffices for doing wicked things? To be clear it is not as though there was ever a time that God sanctioned wicked behavior, so why is it now the time to act right (particularly in contrast to before)?

Here also it appears that Peter was communicating that “enough is enough” – the time for such conduct is well within the past and is no longer befitting those in Christ. It appears that many of his readers had on some level likely engaged in these or like offenses themselves, but that time is now over, they are in Christ, and they are a transformed people. There has been a definitive break in *conduct* resulting from a definitive change of *heart*.

Note also, that while Peter wrote to churches with a mixture of Jews and Gentiles, here his emphasis appears to have been primarily on the Gentile believers,¹³ who are still ethnically Gentiles, but are spoken of as a separated people. This was because the Scriptures often use the term Gentiles synonymously with unbelievers in general. Regardless of the readers’ ethnic heritage, they are now, as articulated in chapter two the people of God, the New Testament Church.

Peter frames the pursuit of these former offenses in a way that should secure one’s attention. He states not that they were trapped or compelled, but that they wanted/desired to indulge in these vile behaviors that are in direct contrast to the will of God. In their lost condition they had no appetite for the call to holiness, only their human passions.

Peter does not provide a comprehensive list, but an informative articulation of the human passions desired by the unbelieving world and in opposition to a righteous appetite for the will of God.

Living in sensuality.

Unbridled and unrestrained vices.¹⁴

Living without any regard for moral restraint, especially in matters of sexual immorality or physical violence.¹⁵

Living in passions.

Sinful drive to commit offensive acts.

“...sinful human desires which can be allowed to exert strong influence on one’s behaviour.”¹⁶

Living in drunkenness.

A giving into the excesses of alcohol, or to include contemporary expressions other drugs that so obstruct and impact the mind.

¹³ This conclusion is made on account of the prescribed behavior, culminating with idolatry.

¹⁴ MacArthur Commentary, Pg. 228

¹⁵ Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 1 Peter; Wayne Grudem; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988; (Hereafter: Grudem), Pg. 168

¹⁶ Grudem, Pg.168

Living in orgies.

Raucous and uncontrolled gatherings of shameful conduct.

Live in drinking parties.

The NET Bible explains this term for “drinking parties” “...πρότος the term refers to a social gathering at which wine is served, hence ‘drinking parties’. However, the collocation with the other terms in v.4 suggests something less sophisticated and more along the lines of wild and frenzied drinking bouts.”¹⁷

Live in lawless idolatry.

Most precisely any conduct outside the prescribed Law of Moses and the dutiful worship of The LORD. Regarding this usage one can examine Peter’s other usage of the term “unlawful” in Act 10:28 where he was addressing the restrictions of the Mosaic Law on his engagement with Gentiles. More broadly, and befitting the context here, unlawful conduct was conduct contrary to God’s principles, precepts, and commands. It was disobedience manifesting itself in the worship of anyone or anything other than the one true God.

Paul plainly expresses the Christian’s call to disengage with idolatry in this manner:

1 Corinthians 10:14, flee from idolatry.

Galatians 5:20, deeds of the flesh include idolatry.

Colossians 3:5, putting to death the deeds of the flesh, including covetousness which is idolatry.

Many of these listed offenses have an overt sexual nature to them: sensuality, passions, and orgies (possibly the bridge to the other offenses).

Many of these have an abusive element associated with alcohol (or the corollary of that which is indulged in at the expense of the control of the mind and body such as illegal and recreational drugs): drunkenness, and drinking parties.

These are all elements commonly identified with the world (those outside of redemption in Christ). As D. Edmond Hiebert stated, “The six evils enumerated form a dark picture of life in the pagan world. The list is not intended to be complete; the sins mentioned are representative of the worst evils.... The use of plurals indicates the variety and frequency of these vices, while the absence of the definite article stresses their quality.”¹⁸

All but lawless idolatry, which may be a summarizing statement, reflect selfish and morbid indulgencies – taking things that have a proper context and time and stripping them of any value and making them wicked. Such is the nature of sin – a perversion of God’s good creation and order.

¹⁷ NET Bible, 1 Peter 4:3, Note 7

¹⁸ 1 Peter; D. Edmond Hiebert; Moody Press, 1992; (Hereafter: Hiebert), Pgs. 260-261

“With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you....” 1 Peter 4:4 ^{ESV}

It appears that these offenses were not secret or even occasional habits, but the very natural fabric of common experience to the unbelievers around them so that it was puzzling to these unbelievers that the Christians would not also participate.

With this is the reasonable presumption that there was, with these believers, prior participation (before salvation) and that further complicates this natural engagement with the unbelieving world. Such is the narrative of redeemed people. With this in view, it appears that the testimony of some of the readers would have included dramatic behavior changes with conversion, and such a transformation blew the minds of their former peers who then became their antagonist.

Now, while cultures and personal backgrounds will have significant degrees of variation, there is still the reality that the natural life of the believer walking in righteous obedience will be distinct enough that it will both actively and even passively prick and provoke unbelievers. There was, and continues to be, an expectation on the part of unbelievers that others, even believers, will participate in sin. It was reasonable that they were surprised. This would be true even if someone did not have a history of a debauched lifestyle before Christ, as this reflects the culture that is in active opposition to the will and good pleasure of God. Therefore, the offenders could not and cannot comprehend a refusal of participation.

Further, Peter does not appear to view these matters as incidental indiscretions, but profound offenses... “flood of debauchery” “excesses of dissipation.” The language of flood communicating excess... an unrestrained spilling over connected here to debauchery/dissipation.

Debauchery/Dissipation: indulgences in sensual pleasures (commonly associated with sex and alcohol – the very elements of the aforementioned list in 4:3). But make no mistake, this would not imply that Peter would be okay with “lesser offenses.”

This surprise for these unbelievers was of such a disappointing nature that they maligned the believer’s lack of participation! Assaulting them for not affirming and joining their vulgar conduct... leaving no room for a neutral party here. This is quite distressing – the alleged offense was not in overtly stopping the lawless idolaters’ conduct, but a lack of participation, and this offense escalated to assault! Such a wicked world.

Now, by “assault” here, it should be qualified that the attacks and repulsion were at this time and in this context primarily verbal as Peter expresses their assault here as maligning (which is severe in its own right and is the common precursor to physical engagements).

With these incendiary responses expressed... one could reasonably ask just how openly or overtly depraved must a culture be to reach such a status that its primary population is so consumed with sex and drugs so as to violently protect their flood of debauchery? Yet here is where much of the Western World has found itself now. Such lawless idolatry is celebrated in entertainment and then protected by law. Holiness in such a context will always come as an unwelcomed surprise guest, a stranger who needs to be put away.

“...but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.” 1 Peter 4:5 ^{ESV}

As distressing as this context of living and engaging the world was and continues to be, Peter does not leave the matter to just stand at the tragedy of the immediate context – an unregenerate world that actively opposes the righteous. Rather, it proactively addresses that all will give an account before God.

In stating this here Peter was not only speaking with a view to future reward for those in Christ (as if it were a consolation for their suffering), but future justice too – both demonstrations of God’s glory.

So, for what will these persons give an account? Their flood of debauchery? Their maligning the righteous? Both their debauchery and their maligning? Other like offenses?

Everything. They will give an account for every offense not covered by the atoning blood of Christ.

What is included or meant by this giving of an account?

Answering for one’s actions and receiving either punishment or reward.

This is plainly a severe matter, and Peter states that the Lord is actively ready for judgment. This state of readiness communicates that while there is, in many ways, a *present* condemnation and accounting for unbelief and unrighteous conduct, there is a *complete* and *perfect* judgment to come. Peter’s statement “They will” (future active) frames this as a sure future event, an accounting to the righteous Judge of both the living and the dead. Further, this “readiness” that Peter expresses is plain company to the immanency of other future events too – there is no restriction on when the Righteous Judge will set these events into motion as he will determine the day of his judgment and it could very well be soon.

Regarding this immanency, Peter frames this forthcoming judgment as one of the living and the dead, expressing a clear pause in history at which time both those presently living and those presently dead will be judged. The living will be called to an account, and the dead will be resurrected and called to an account too.

This judgement should terrify those outside of Christ, but by striking contrast, it works a continued sanctifying work of those in Christ.

God's forthcoming judgment governs Christians' present conduct with a proper fear of God – directing them to faithfulness and obedience: “And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile....”
1 Peter 1:17 ^{ESV}

God's forthcoming judgment even informed how Jesus Christ himself carried out his public incarnate ministry: not responding with retaliation, but entrusting himself to him who judges justly. “When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.” 1 Peter 2:23 ^{ESV}

Ultimately, whether one is fearful or confident of God's judgment depends on what they are submitting for evaluation before him, as his judgment is a righteous evaluation of the facts. If what is being submitted before God is a life of lawless idolatry, then there should be a deathly fear. If, however, what is being submitted before God is the righteousness of Christ put on display through a life that pursued the faithful execution of the will of God, then there should be exuberant longing for the forthcoming reward.

“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.” 1 Peter 4:6 ^{ESV}

In view of the fact that the Lord is prepared to judge the living and the dead, the gospel has been preached to the dead so that though dead (in the flesh) they may live (in the spirit).

Regarding this truth, the “why” connection that Peter made needs to receive proper attention. He was communicating that it was for a reason that the gospel was preached in this context. It does not by any necessity communicate a *unique* practice, but presumably the *common* practice, and the common practice is indisputably preaching the gospel to those who are alive, present, and without hope until they submit to Christ in faith.

Peter was stating that in view of a forthcoming righteous/perfect judgment the gospel was preached to persons (while living) so that they might submit in faith and repentance (while living), and thereby live (though naturally dead).

An examination of how the term εὐαγγελίζω or “preaching the gospel” was used throughout the Scriptures helps further sharpen this argument as it can make plain:

- 1) When the gospel was preached (before or after natural death).
- 2) To whom the gospel was preached.
- 3) The results of the gospel being preached.

“...but he said to them, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.” Luke 4:43 ^{ESV}

Jesus addressed the matter of preaching the good news of the kingdom of God, strongly stating that he must do this, and it was for this purpose that he was sent. Peter would have been keenly familiar with a matter that was that high of a priority for Jesus and his public ministry.

“And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.” Luke 9:6 ^{ESV}

The disciples were sent out by Jesus on a short-term ministry opportunity to preach the gospel and heal. Peter would have been one of the members of this work of declaring the gospel to unbelievers.

“One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel....” Luke 20:1 ^{ESV}

Jesus was teaching and preaching the gospel in the Temple toward the conclusion of his public ministry. By all accounts, Peter would have been present in some capacity, and at the least, witnessing Jesus’ activity.

These examples from the Gospel of Luke all involved declaring the gospel to those presently living and making the truths of God’s good news known to them with the implicit aim that they would hear and believe. Peter was either present or participated in these various opportunities. This is the pattern that will continue to be seen through the book of Acts and beyond (the exception being that Peter was not as directly involved with all of the remaining examples).

“And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.” Acts 5:42 ^{ESV}

Peter was one of those who physically suffered for preaching the gospel, and even after being rebuked and threatened, he continued teaching and preaching that Jesus is the Christ. Just as it had been for Jesus, this was clearly a high priority for Peter.

Immediately after this, the text speaks of the disciples growing in number (Acts 6:1), which brings one to the intended and implicit effect of preaching the gospel: salvation.

“But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” Acts 8:12 ^{ESV}

Philip was preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. Note that the response of those hearing Philip was baptism – a public affirmation of personal faith in Christ. This again affirms the pattern that has been observed throughout these examples:

- 1) The gospel/good news was preached to the living.
- 2) The gospel/good news was preached to those who were in need of salvific faith.
- 3) The gospel/good news was preached, and the living who had been without faith and without Christ came to saving faith.

“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.” Acts 8:35 ^{ESV}

Philip preached the good news of Jesus from the Scriptures to the Ethiopian eunuch, and the response was salvific belief and baptism.

“Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.” Acts 14:15 ^{ESV}

Barnabas and Paul were greatly distressed that the local idolaters failed to realize that they were preaching the gospel to them – calling them to turn away from the foolishness of idols and to the Creator God. Preaching the gospel was God’s means of delivering these people from their hopeless idolatry.

“I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Romans 1:14-16 ^{ESV}

Paul was under obligation and eager to preach the gospel to everyone, as it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. The Gospel of Christ is the only means for one’s eternal salvation.

This brings one to the proper conclusion that Peter implicitly states in this text. There is a forthcoming judgment of God (as addressed in 4:5). Therefore, there is a need for redemption in Christ, and this is secured through the preaching, hearing, and believing of the gospel.

“For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?’ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” Romans 10:13-17 ^{ESV}

The gospel was preached to those who were outside of Christ, and while they were alive in their natural persons (the flesh), they came to salvific faith in Christ. Their natural person subsequently died, but as they were in Christ, their spirit continued in life.

The Lord is prepared to judge the dead, and for this reason the gospel *was previously preached*, even to those *who are now dead*. Dead was speaking to their present condition – they were presently dead and it was in this capacity that these will be judged by God.

The dead will be judged, not for their post-mortem conduct, but their conduct while alive. It was when they were alive that the gospel was preached to them – the time that they were to exercise the work of repentance, birthed from sincere faith. This is clearly communicated with the connection to the previous verse... those with vile behavior who were provoking and insulting the faithful... they will give an account to the one who judges the living and the dead, and this is why the gospel was proclaimed – that there might be reconciliation or further condemnation.

What does it mean to be judged in the flesh the way people are? There are a variety of conclusions on this matter ranging from persecution unto death to death being a natural judgment experienced by all persons (as even the Christian's natural/physical person in its fallen condition is unfit for the eternal state). These are both possibilities, but not as likely as a third option that was consistently addressed by various commentators – that some of Peter's readers were troubled by the death, perhaps even martyrdom, of fellow believers as it could appear that there was a condemnation on them or no clear advantage of victory in Christ.

This third conclusion appears to be the best. If it is accurate, then it would be reasonable to conclude that Peter was unpacking that there was an explicit/clear advantage for these believers who while alive heard and believed the gospel and are now alive in the spirit. This fits both the preceding context and that which follows, namely an eschatological charge in verse seven.

This kind of rebuttal would be of a like nature to what Paul addressed in 1 Thessalonians 4.

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.” 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 ^{ESV}

Finally, the language of “preaching to those who are dead” may well bring to mind the disputed passage at the conclusion of chapter three where Jesus was stated to have “proclaimed to the spirits in prison.” These two passages are wholly different in their context and content. However, their like language provides some helpful insight into both passages as their *apparent* similarities serve to highlight their *actual* differences.

A helpful contrast in understanding the context of the declared messages, audiences, and outcomes in 3:18-19 versus that of 4:6 is to examine the use of εὐαγγελίζω (the preached gospel) in 4:6 and κηρύσσω (the proclaimed message) in 3:18-19. To that end, here are some observations and conclusions secured through overlapping and similar terms found in both passages – particularly with a view to their relationship between εὐαγγελίζω (the preached gospel) and κηρύσσω (the proclaimed message).

3:18-19 “put to death” 4:6 “those who are dead” (different terms)

3:18, Christ is the one referenced as having been put to death – no such context is provided of “the spirits” outside of the fact that they are presently in prison.

4:6, Those who have put their faith in Christ because of their submission in faith from hearing the εὐαγγελίζω (preached gospel) are the one referenced here.

Conclusion 1: There is no immediate/overt reference to the “spirits” in chapter three as having been those who died without salvific faith. Christ’s death is the only plainly expressed death in that context. However, in chapter four it is the dead in Christ who are referenced, those who have believed the declared gospel (εὐαγγελίζω). A fair argument could be introduced that in 3:20 it is stated that “they formerly did not obey” and that disobedience is a consistent way that Peter references unbelief/unbelievers. However, that is not a required correlation and fallen angels would plainly fall into that larger category of disobeying God.

3:18-19 “flesh” 4:6, “flesh” (same term)

3:18, As already established, this is a reference to Christ’s physical death and he alone is identified in this section as the one who has died “in the flesh” but made alive by The Spirit. It is my conclusion that this is an overt reference to Christ’s bodily resurrection by the Holy Spirit and that, just as his spirit was never dead, so was it never made alive again – it is Christ’s bodily resurrection by The Spirit. The second reference to spirit is in the plural and plainly referencing a company engaged by Christ. A group that he preached/declared (κηρύσσω) something to in that time. What was preached/declared was not made explicitly clear, but there is an implicit clarity: Christ preached his victory over sin, death, and Satan. This is deducted from their context as vile/fallen angels under a unique bondage/imprisonment from prior disobedience and the triumphant tone established through the conclusion of the section (3:22).

4:6, Here there is a plain contrast to the dead in Christ having experienced death in their flesh who have also experienced life in their spirit. Their “judgment” needs to be wrestled through and various conclusion are explored in this study guide, but whatever the nature of it, there was a death of the natural person and continued life of the immaterial spirit (with a view to the restoration of body and spirit in the resurrection).

Conclusion 2: Spirit is used to communicate various immaterial persons and/or conditions of existence. In 3:19 the spirits are not a way to express the present condition of someone’s personhood, but to reference angels (specifically fallen angels). These spirits (fallen/imprisoned angels) received a messaged declared to them by the resurrected and triumphant Christ. In 4:6 the present condition of persons who are no longer physically alive are plainly referred to as “those who are dead.” But to express the fuller or more complete present condition of these persons, it is explained that though physically dead at this time, they are spiritually alive.

3:18-19 “made alive” 4:6 “live” (different terms)

3:18, As established in this context, the only one “made alive” here is Christ and this is a reference to his resurrection when Christ was, “made alive by The Spirit.” There is no such reference to the imprisoned spirits being made alive or that the preaching of Christ would have potentially led to this either.

4:6, The very reason that the gospel was proclaimed (εὐαγγελίζω) was in view of the imminent and righteous judgment of God (4:5) that there might be redemption for those who submit to Christ in faith with the result that, though dead in the flesh, they live in the spirit.

Conclusion 3: It is because Christ’s resurrection (his being made alive by The Spirit) that there was/is the good news of the gospel, which upon believing, produces eternal life that supersedes even the reach and impact of physical death. Imprisoned spirits/fallen angels have no such prospect of life, but only a finality to their present partial experience of a righteous judgment.

3:18-19 “spirits” 4:6 “spirit” (same term)

See section on flesh and its conclusion.

Sidebar: No Place To Entertain The Error of Post-Mortem Evangelism

I am not persuaded that every aberrant position needs to be addressed in this format (a study guide and not a commentary). However, it grieves me that some otherwise good expositors have apparently flirted with the idea of a post-mortem proclamation of the gospel here, though it plainly runs contrary to the consistent testimony of the Scriptures and the immediate development and context of the passage. Nevertheless, it is something that will be observed from time to time. So, with this in view I found that Thomas Schreiner provided a concise rebuttal to this fallacy and it comes directly from the verse in question: “...if v.6 refers to all the dead, then it follows from the rest of the verse that all of the dead will be saved, for Peter said the gospel was preached to the dead so that they should ‘live according to God in regard to the spirit.’”¹⁹ For context, Schreiner had already demonstrated that the post-mortem gospel preaching does not have a means of restricting its audience. Then here he argues for the effectiveness of the preaching (these persons are living in the spirit now) and therefore the position’s conclusion of universal salvation (whether intended or not). So, it can be plainly seen that flirting with the idea of post-mortem gospel proclamation is a terrible abuse of the text and it leads to untenable outcomes that its conservative supporters never intended but cannot restrict.

“And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment....” Hebrews 9:27 ^{ESV}

¹⁹ Schreiner, Pg.207

Personal Reflection and Application

How will truths from this section impact your thinking, praying, daily walk, and worship?

[illegible]

Further Reflection and Application

Read the following selection from The Expositor's Bible Commentary and honestly reflect on where your life and conduct fit into this range of expressed conduct addressed here. The presumption is that those in Christ who are walking in righteous obedience will plainly be on the receiving side of the world viewing them as strange and even vilifying them. Think on these things and evaluate how your life reflects these truths and areas that might need more attention and/or change.

"This catalog of vices has the rhetorical effect of producing shame and highlighting the contrast between Christian and pagan conduct. To the same end, Peter's choice of words heightens this contrast: he speaks of 'what pagans choose to do' on the one hand (v. 3) and the 'will of God' on the other (v. 2). The ethical standards could not be more opposite. What is conspicuous is this: the pagan lifestyle revolves around indulging one's appetites, 'a flood of dissipation', so that pagans 'think it strange that you do not plunge with them ...' The Christian ethic, in notable contrast, is characterized by bridled passions (1:14; 2:11), purity (1:22), and a good conscience (3:21). That the surrounding pagans are said to 'think it strange' ('to astonish') conveys more than mere amazement or wonder. As evidenced by their response, 'they heap abuse', which is to say, they are expressing outrage and resentment (cf. 2:12, 'they accuse you of doing wrong'; also 3:16, 'they speak maliciously'). Part of the experience of normative Christian suffering is to be vilified for not participating in the hedonistic lifestyle of pagan culture; not to participate is to provoke resentment."²⁰

How strange are you to this unbelieving world?

How might you make yourself more properly distinct from this world (not with sensational actions, words, or attire – with righteousness and holiness)?

How do you respond when treated poorly as a stranger in this unbelieving world?

Peter speaks directly of the Righteous Judge ready to act. How does this inform your view of God from the perspective of present or potential suffering and your own call to be faithful?

What is the relationship between the righteous judgment of God and the preaching of the gospel?

How would you defend the fact that Peter is not stating that the gospel is actively preached to those who are presently dead (a second chance hearing of the gospel after dying in unbelief)?

²⁰ Charles & Thatcher), Kindle Edition, Kindle Location: 2987-2997

“The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.” 1 Peter 4:7 ^{ESV}

D. Edmond Hiebert highlighted a necessary connection that is not always overtly expressed in various English translations, but demonstrates the connection of 4:7 back to 4:6.²¹

“Πάντων **δὲ** τὸ τέλος ἤγγικεν.” ^{GNT}

“The end of all things is at hand....” 1 Peter 4:7 ^{ESV}

“The end of all things is near....” 1 Peter 4:7 ^{NASB}

“For the culmination of all things is near.” 1 Peter 4:7 ^{NET}

“But the end of all things is at hand....” 1 Peter 4:7 ^{KJV}

The NET Bible and the KJV both translate the conjunction “δὲ” that has been boldened in the above copy of the Greek text. However, the KJV translates the conjunction as an adversative conjunction, which is the common use, but it does not appear to be necessary or best here. The NET Bible therefore appears to have captured the intended usage with “for”, bridging 4:6 (righteous judgment and the declaration of the good news of the gospel) and 4:7 (the end of all things).

The end of all things. In view of the sweep of Redemptive History there is nothing left but for Christ to return and initiate the conclusion of this present world (though this in itself will include the years of tribulation and Christ’s millennial reign). Christ’s return is more imminent today than it was in Peter’s day and more imminent today than it was yesterday. Therefore, just as Peter exhorted his original readers so now all believers are to live in view of Christ’s imminent return: sober, ready, faithful....

Such a view to Christ’s imminent return was a consistent theme of the New Testament Scriptures:

“Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.” Romans 13:11 ^{ESV}

“For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 ^{ESV}

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” Hebrews 10:24-25 ^{ESV}

“Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” James 5:7-8 ^{ESV}

“Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.” 1 John 2:18 ^{ESV}

²¹ Hiebert, Pg.268

This mindset expressed here by Peter appears to be very similar to how he also concludes his second letter, 2 Peter 3 – referencing the vile nature of this unbelieving world and its response to the Lord who will *soon* come in complete, decisive, and righteous judgment. This in turn impacts the conduct of the believer.

“Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!” 2 Peter 3:11-12 ^{ESV}

In view of the end of all things being at hand... being near... there is a clear way in which one should conduct himself: self-controlled and sober-minded.

Regarding these two verbs, self-controlled and sober-minded, there is no plain conclusion if they were intended to be communicate one command or two.²² The reading of the ESV, NASB, and NET Bible see the two verbs as speaking to one primary charge – the life disposition for prayer (being both self-controlled and sober minded). The other equally viable option from the grammar would be to see these as two commands: to be self-controlled in all expressions of life and to sober-minded for the discipline of prayer.

Mindful of the grammatical range here, for the purposes of this guide, the operating conclusion will be to regard them as one command, thereby communicating that for one to have a proper prayer life it is expected that they be both self-controlled and sober-minded/clear thinking.

These two disciplines, being self-controlled and sober-minded, are tightly knit together and are the antithesis to the conduct of the unbelieving world referenced earlier: living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry (4:3). Therefore, it is plain that Peter saw that a view to the end of all things was a truth that should govern one’s priorities and actions. Whereas the world would view the end as a reason to throw all cares to the wind and indulge themselves until everything was “over”, those in Christ were to be all the more disciplined and focused.

Self-Controlled: of a clear, reasonable, disciplined mind.

Sober-Minded: unobstructed thinking, having a prepared mind.

In a similar context Peter used the same term for “sober-minded” in relation to Christ’s return in chapter one, “Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being *sober-minded*, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 1:13 ^{ESV}
Immediately following this he speaks of righteous obedience in contrast to the wickedness of their prior disposition of unbelief and the impartial Judge who judges according to each one’s deeds.

²² Hiebert, Pg.270

This right mindset/thinking was directly tied to the believer's prayers. This proper disposition of one's person and mind were so that they could be free to pray effectively/properly – having clear, disciplined, focused, unobstructed minds. Peter clearly highly valued the discipline and expectation of prayer... there is an expressed need to pray with a clear mind and this in view of the Lord's imminent return.

“Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.” 1 Peter 4:8 ^{ESV}

There was an extremely high value placed on the mutual love and care of the body here, and it continues through verse eleven.

4:8, love one another.

4:9, show hospitality to one another.

4:10-11, serve one another.

“Above all” appears to be a substantial elevation, but loving believers has been an elevated theme in the book:

1:22, the call to love one another earnestly from a pure heart.

2:17, the very short, but direct command: “love the brotherhood”

4:8, above all... keep fervent in love for one another

Further, loving believers is an elevated theme throughout the Scriptures:

John 13:35, the universal expression of discipleship – loving one another.

Galatians 5:13, through love the church is to serve one another.

Colossians 1:4, the testimony of the church was of loving one another.

Colossians 2:2, there was a profound advantage in the believer's hearts being knit together in love.

Colossians 3:14, love has a unique binding dynamic (this in the immediate context of: compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bearing with one another, and forgiving each other).

1 Thessalonians 3:12, Paul prays that the church would abound in love for one another.

2 Thessalonians 1:3, the testimony of the church was an increasing love for one another.

Philemon 1:5, Philemon's reputation was of loving believers.

Note the qualitative nature of this love for one another... it is to be executed earnestly or with vigorous effort. The picture frequently referenced was stretched, strained, or taut muscles in their full exertion of action. Further, it appears that it is given high value because of its high impact – continue to love earnestly because it covers a multitude of sins.

What does Peter mean here by, “love covers a multitude of sins”? One cannot atone for themselves much less someone else, but such an atonement would not be necessary as it had already been completed in Christ. What Peter was communicating here was not unlike what Paul expressed in Colossians 3, “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” Colossians 3:12-14 ^{ESV}

Edmund Clowney made a very practical statement regarding this elevated priority and its impact: “We do not love others if we take delight in finding and exposing their faults and sins.”²³ This is an overlooking that the primary offended party, The Lord, has provided for his children – he has forgiven and they can now overlook (not everything, but mundane daily missteps).

Interestingly James uses the exact same Greek/English wording in chapter five of his letter, “...will cover a multitude of sins.” James 5:20 ^{ESV} In his context, it was restoration from a wandering sinner – possibly the restoration of a believer (given the prior context of confessing one’s sin and being restored and the inclusion of “anyone among you”) that was being addressed.

The NET Bible argues that it is a proverbial statement (even referencing Proverbs 10:12, “Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.”) expressing the forbearance of Christian love. So, again, it appears to be a righteous overlooking of offenses... it is not that the believer has the capacity to redemptively overlook them, but if one is in Christ, then ultimately those offenses are covered and believers can charitably see offenses in a like manner amongst themselves... it is not a cavalier dismissing of sins, but a willingness to not assault every perceived and actual offense – being generous with forgiveness and overlooking that which can be overlooked, especially offenses against one another knowing that one’s love is demonstrating a more effectual love that has *truly* covered these offenses.

This choice of the covering of sins proves to be the most *immediate* and *common* expression of love in daily life. When one walks closely with another believer who is genuinely pursuing holiness, but will inevitably say or act with varying degrees of failure (primarily unintended and of little to no immediate consequence in its actual offense to another person), there is abundant opportunity to express this covering love.

²³ Clowney, Pg.179

“Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.” 1 Peter 4:9 ^{ESV}

The second of the one-another elements here is the showing of hospitality, the generous opening of one's home and/or sharing of one's resources with others.

This was, and continues to be, an expression of loving one another – generously caring for one another as one would themselves or their family, but not out of a dutiful obligation but a joyful heart (hence without grumbling/complaining). Speaking of this qualification, Wayne Grudem connects the not grumbling here with not resenting the time and expense of this act of service.²⁴ Hospitality will, by its very nature, cost something (time, resource, etc.), but such is the self-giving nature of love. It would be a tragedy to spoil something beautiful with something so ugly as grumbling and complaining. Further drilling down on this, Grudem also goes on to state, “...grumbling is ultimately a complaint against God and his ordering of our circumstances, and its result is to drive out faith, thanksgiving, and joy.”²⁵

Hospitality was also a demonstration of the mature believer as it is an element of the qualifications for the Pastor/Elder. Patterns of faithfulness in showing hospitality are expected of Elders who are to exemplify mature obedience to and within the body, demonstrated by the term's use in only two other references (both in the Elder qualifications).

“Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach....” 1 Timothy 3:2 ^{ESV}

“...but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.” Titus 1:8 ^{ESV}

“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—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” 1 Peter 4:10-11 ^{ESV}

The third one another in this larger passage was the application of what God has uniquely provided an individual in service to the church body. So, in view of what Peter stated here, in verse ten, one can conclude that there are varied expression of service and ability provided to individuals within the church and these are to be yielded in mutual concert of service with others in their gifting – a reflection of loving and serving the church.

²⁴ Grudem, pg.174

²⁵ Grudem, pg.174

Therefore, it plainly appears that there is the expectation that all members on some level have been supernaturally gifted in some area by God. When and how is not wholly clear, and it could be that there is an overlapping of natural gifting/inclination/skill that is brought to submission and use by the Spirit of God when one becomes a believer. This itself testifies to how God providentially prepares one's life, providing and cultivating a range of a person's skills and natural abilities both before and after conversion.

To help understand that spiritual gifting does not need to have a mystic origin, Grudem addresses the plain nature of what they actually are, spiritual gifts would be, "...any talent or ability which is empowered by the Holy Spirit and able to be used in the ministry of the church."²⁶

While not an exhaustive subject there are four chapters in the New Testament that give varying degrees of treatment on spiritual gifts: Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4. None of these lists are the same or intended to be exhaustive. They appear to help communicate some firm expressions of varied gifting and demonstrate that there is a likely inexhaustible nature to the rich diversity in the matter of gifting within the church body. Therefore, it would be wise to not be too consumed with "discerning" one's gifting through nuanced evaluations, but rather to remain focused on being faithful and seeing how the Lord most consistently and fruitfully uses someone. This process of defined gifting and its refinement will likely continue to take shape throughout one's life of service too – some areas being more defined than others in various seasons and with various needs of the body.

While the gifting may be varied, there are two elements that are common to them all observed in the statement: "...use [one's spiritual gifting] to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace...."

- 1) Spiritual gifts are to be stewarded/managed properly – used in service to the church body/one-another.
- 2) Spiritual gifts are a reflection or fruit of God's grace, which expresses itself in various ways within the body.

Paul addresses the nature of the member's gifting within the church both to the Romans and the Corinthians.

"For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness." Romans 12:4-8 ^{ESV}

²⁶ Grudem, pg.175

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.” 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 ^{ESV}

Both of these passages have a rich context to them that include similarities and differences to Peter’s immediate and larger context, but for the purposes of focusing on Peter specifically and the more direct matter of gifting, the following general observations can be made from these two passages:

The subject of gifting is consistently framed in the diversified unity of the body in mutual service to itself.

Every member’s gifting is an expression of the grace of God in their lives and, by extension of service, the life of the body too.

The gifting of individuals is plain enough that they are expected to be properly cultivated and exercised in service within the life of the body.

Continuing with verse eleven, one can observe that Peter addresses two large categories for the gifting of members within the body: speech and service. These appear to communicate two sweeping categories under which effectively all the varied expressions of the gifts can be categorized. Further, these two categories are treated in a parallel fashion to one another: both with a view to representing their source, God. *Speaking* as though speaking God’s words/truth. *Serving* as though strengthened by God for the work.

This would be consistent with the culminating treatment of the gifts: The glory of God through Christ. Christ, who is not necessarily the direct actor, but one is speaking and serving in such a way that it overtly reflects Christ: his words and his strength.

So where are these gifts being exercised? It would appear to be primarily within the church or at least the fellowship of believers on some level as they are used in service to one another (4:10), then by extension in the expansion of the testimony of Christ to the unbelieving world.

Speaking and Serving

The term used here for “speech” is used for effectively any common speech. What distinguishes it here is that it is a grace gift used in service for the body and wholly informed by God’s own provided/revealed word (the oracles or utterances/words of God).

The term for “serving” is also a plainly used word to express tangible actions for the benefit and/or care of another.

Peter was not addressing categories of superpowers endowed on Christians to accomplish sensational acts for God. These spiritual gifts are the Lord taking the common gifting and skills of man and uniquely empowering them by the Spirit of God to accomplish the daily work of the Kingdom of God: declaring the gospel and making disciples who will be dutifully loving one another while also being obedient worshippers actively posturing themselves for their Lord's imminent return.

This drives one once more to the end of this passage and its purpose clause: that the Father would be glorified through the Son. That is exactly how Jesus conducted himself during his public incarnate ministry, and it is no less our charge too.

It is also worthwhile to note that Peter did not just give a purpose clause, but he erupted into a brief doxology as his thoughts spilled over with worshipful gratitude and worship to God. Such a response was not uncommon in the Scriptures and it should compel all believers to be so enraptured by the majesty and glory of God as he generously reveals himself in the Scriptures.

"To him be honor and eternal dominion/strength/power. Amen." 1 Timothy 6:16 ^{ESV}

"To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." 1 Peter 4:11 ^{ESV}

"To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen." 1 Peter 5:11 ^{ESV}

"Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." Jude 25 ^{ESV}

"...to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." Revelation 1:6 ^{ESV}

Peter's purpose clause and doxology came at the conclusion of a section unpacking the life that believers have been called to live in view of Christ's imminent return, "The end of all things is at hand...." Now he turns his attention to the role of suffering in this time of sojourning too.

Personal Reflection and Application

How will truths from this section impact your thinking, praying, daily walk, and worship?

[illegible]

Further Reflection and Application

Eschatological living. How eschatology impacts present Christian living is magnificently put on display in 4:7-11. How does this look in your life, or how should it impact you moving forward?

Peter provides a clear requirement for a proper prayer life: sober-minded/clear thinking. How should that be applied in your life, and how might you improve these disciplines?

What does Peter mean by “love covering a multitude of sins,” and what does that look like in the life of your family and the church?

How is showing hospitality a reflection of loving one another, and is this a bygone cultural phenomenon that does not carry the same weight of consequence today? If it is still applicable today (and it is), then how might you put this discipline to practice?

In view of the fact that spiritual gifts can be so extraordinarily varied and that they are more concerned with serving the body than being precisely defined and refined, how are you putting the ways that God has gifted you into action within the local body?

Further, how does your respective gifting (be it under the larger category of speech or service) demonstrate a centrality in God and his strength? Are you more self-confident or God-confident? How might you mature your gifting in these areas?

II. Joyful confidence in The Righteous Judge (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. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.” 1 Peter 4:12-13 ^{ESV}

Before going into the details of this section, just reading it provokes some questions in view of earlier statements made in the letter. Earlier in the letter it sounded as if Peter spoke more to the *possibility* than to the *inevitability* of suffering, especially in chapter 3, “But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake...” 1 Peter 3:14 ^{ESV} However, here in chapter four Peter seems to be emphatic about the reality of escalated suffering.

In addressing this apparent tension within the letter, Grudem made two very helpful observations:²⁷

- 1) Suffering has accompanied various parts of the church to different degrees since its inception.
- 2) Peter is writing to several churches in a large geographic area and it is wholly reasonable that their circumstances and experiences have a substantial range, particularly in the area of suffering.

With this being established, one immediately observes that at this point in transition Peter engages his readers with a term of endearment, referencing them as “beloved.” This is only the second time that he uses this term in the letter, 2:11 being the first and only other occurrence where Peter was urging for the welfare of his readers’ souls, “Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.” 1 Peter 2:11 ^{ESV} This engagement of his readers, here in 4:12, appears to set a lovingly gentle tone while addressing a hard subject that Peter wants them to bear up under/handle well. However, while being gentle, he also calls his readers to recognize that even a “fiery trial” is not something that should surprise them.

Earlier in the chapter it was drawn out that the world is “surprised” when the believers do not participate in their vulgar indulgences... but by contrast the believer has to be aware that they are *not* to be surprised by their robust or fiery trial.

Now it is important to not only recognize that fiery trials are viable possibilities for the believer’s experience, but also that these “fiery trials” have an expressed purpose/function: to test the believer. This testing ultimately serves the purpose of proving the sufficiency of Christ within them.²⁸

²⁷ Grudem, Pgs.177-178

²⁸ A consistent treatment of this verse included the idea of a refining fire for the believer – a sanctifying purging.

Trials/Testing

Jesus' own public ministry was one accompanied by trials/testing. Speaking to the disciples Jesus stated, "You are those who have stayed with me in my trials...." Luke 22:28 ^{ESV} It would be a terrible misreading to see this statement that preceded Jesus' cross-work and assume that such matters of struggle are now in the past. Presuming that the Christian life is going to be a trial-free victorious life for those who are in Christ because trials had certainly come but victory has now been secured. Victory has been secured and there is an immediate expression of that experienced through one's reconciliation with God, but the full and complete expression of that victory awaits Christ's return and future glory.

James, also speaking to suffering, went on to state that there is not only the absence of surprise in trial, but there is joy and reward in their greater outcome:

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness." James 1:2-3 ^{ESV}

"Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him." James 1:12 ^{ESV}

Fiercely trials are not strange... they are not beyond what should be reasonably expected, but they are also not the end of the story there is also joy in the anticipation of future glory.

But rejoice... "Rejoicing and shock stand at opposite ends, and a deep awareness of our union with Christ—and all that it entails—preserves the Christian from surprise that metastasizes into disenchantment and disillusionment. To expect suffering, it should be emphasized, is not to welcome it in some blindly fatalistic way; it is, however, to be realistic about our union with Christ."²⁹

By direct contrast to testing not being something foreign, or strange, or unexpected, one must be intentional to recognize its preeminent value when it is identified with Christ's sufferings as in this there is a sure reward. As it is not only that one's identification in Christ will bring trials/testing – it is that one's identification in Christ will bring trials/testing and this will culminate in great reward! Joining Christ in his sufferings is also to join in his exultation. Therefore, the call is to rejoice now in suffering with a view to rejoicing later in glory.

Peter also appears to be communicating that there are varying degrees of suffering for Christ – some will suffer more than others and others may suffer less – whatever one's call, the responsibility is to persevere and rejoice.

²⁹ Charles & Thatcher, Kindle Location: 3158-3161

Further, regarding this matter of fiery trials and Christ's suffering, two things must be plainly understood: this is Christ's sufferings that one is joined into and not their own (there is plenty of natural suffering from being in a fallen world), and therefore it is also his glory that is being centered upon and enjoyed later. It is not that you have labored and toiled so very hard only to suffer for yourself and then to later enjoy your reward (that is what athletes do and they rightfully receive their temporal acknowledgements). To apply that mentality to eternal matters is a works based approach and the reward will be utterly lacking, even damning. Therefore, it is not that believers are rejoicing in their suffering, but in the Lord. In God's good providence, suffering would be the catalyst to promote their continued joy, confidence, and satisfaction in him.

Jesus laid the clear foundation for this in Matthew 5 – the blessed condition when one suffers on account of their identification and submission to him and the means that this provides for rejoicing: great reward in heaven. "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Matthew 5:11-12 ^{ESV}

Peter himself had already put these very words into action too, having served as the spokesman of those who were first to suffer for the resurrected Jesus (he understood association with Christ in suffering and implicitly the accompanying reward), "Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name." Acts 5:41 ^{ESV}

Eschatological Hope

"Whenever that eschatological hope is a living reality in the life of the believer, it inspires unswerving loyalty to the Lord and promotes a readiness to suffer for Him now."³⁰

"Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure' — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' And he said to me, 'These are the true words of God.'" Revelation 19:6-9 ^{ESV}

Finally, with a view to 4:14, it is important to understand that sharing Christ's sufferings, particularly in the contemporary context of today, will often not be due to the overt identification with the name of Christ. Rather, in our context, suffering in light of identifying with Christ will likely come due to the carnal world's surprise of someone not joining them (as stated in 4:4). Suffering will come from holding fast to the exclusivity/integrity of the gospel and its outworking principles and precepts.

³⁰ Hiebert, Pg.286

“If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” 1 Peter 4:14 ^{ESV}

Following the encouragement that directs one to a view to future reward (4:12-13) also comes the encouragement of present blessing. This is framed with: If – Then – Because

IF: You are insulted for the name of Christ.

THEN: You are blessed.

BECAUSE: The Spirit of glory and God rests on you.

Note that one's name is a way of expressing an intimate identification with who and what they are – an immediate expression of the whole person. Therefore, the slander/insulting is on account of one's identification with Christ. But again, there is blessing in this, a disposition of joyful satisfaction and delight – if one is insulted for the name of Christ.

An expression of this blessing is that the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon the suffering believer. Peter is not parsing the Spirit of God into different manifestations or elements, but appears to be making a comprehensive emphasis as the Spirit of glory is the Spirit of God. The reference to glory highlights his incomparable excellencies that in prior times of Redemptive History were put more overtly on physical display, such as the glory cloud's presence with Israel in the wilderness and its associated imagery in Ezekiel where it represented the special presence of God dwelling with Israel and the Temple. It is this Spirit that comfortingly accompanies the faithful and suffering believer. Just as one would expect from Jesus' upper room discourse where he speaks of his departing and the sending of the Comforter.

“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” John 16:7-11 ^{ESV}

It appears those who are faithfully suffering on account of their identification with Christ enjoy the Spirit of God in a way that bears them up for this trial through suffering so as to guarantee both their successful endurance and their present joy. So, it is interesting that often *in sensational ways* many have desired to express that they are enjoying the special expression of the Spirit of God. There is *no* support for such things, and while they are usually expressed in a context of worship and/or gifting, such applications usually run afoul, as worship is to be wholly directed to God and gifts are for the benefit of the body and for the glory of God, not oneself. However, by contrast, if there *is* a special expression of experiencing the Spirit of God, it is more likely to be what Peter is expressing here – a special/supernatural empowerment to bear up under suffering well, beyond one's natural capacities even as a more mature believer. Effectively, this would be a means by which one could bear up under the impossible in a way that magnifies the Lord. Such has been the testimony of the suffering Church from the time of Stephen and thousands of times over in the last two thousand years. It is a context of suffering that is accompanied by blessing and the resting of God's Spirit upon his child.

“But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.” 1 Peter 4:15-16 ^{ESV}

Suffering for Christ’s sake is a blessed condition with guarantee of future reward for those who faithfully persevere. By contrast, suffering for sin produces no blessing from God or future reward – rather, judgment should anticipated.

The contrast here, identifying things for which the natural/carnal world suffers is quite severe: murderer, thief, evildoer, and meddler. Persons falling into these categories are finding their association more with Satan who kills, steals, and destroys than with the Righteous Redeemer. This is especially true as many of these and associated offenses describe persons who are excluded from the Kingdom of God. Any suffering such persons experience in this temporal life is likely natural and/or just. Further, it must be understood that this is true with the full spectrum that Peter has provided for here, demonstrating a range from murder to meddling. Perhaps for many, their attention should be on the seemingly peculiar inclusion of meddler. It may be that one is not an enemy of the state, but a nuisance to their neighbor – putting their nose where it does not belong and for no redemptive value. In such a case, they are not suffering for Christ when their “misplaced nose” gets bloodied.

There is *inherit* and *proper shame* for suffering for the consequences of one’s sins, particularly the more overtly rebellious they are, such as murdering, stealing, wicked conduct, or meddling. However, there is *no shame* in suffering for one’s faithful identity and obedience to Christ. In contrast to shame, (focused on one’s personal fears, failures, and conduct), there is to be glorifying of God (focused on exalting God for his person, works, and gracious allowance to so be identified with the Son). Suffering as a Christian is to suffer for one’s identity in/with Christ, and for this there is no room for shame.

Peter intimately knew this truth and bore the scars of his failures as a younger man when fear provoked dissociation with Jesus in the hours of his culminating suffering before men. But on account of the transformative work of God and his personal restoration by Jesus himself, Peter went on to embrace his mistreatment on account of Christ, and with joy he glorified God.

“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? And ‘If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?’ Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.” 1 Peter 4:17-19 ^{ESV}

“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?” 1 Peter 4:17 ^{ESV}

It would almost appear that Peter inadvertently put the wrong people in the place of the recipient of God’s judgment here, and that would most certainly be true if this were a condemnation. However, the context of the passage informs his readers of the following:

1) While the term for judgment is most consistently used to express condemnation or the act of judging one guilty on some level, that is not its only use. Judgment can also be used in the broader expression of judging, which would be the evaluation of facts. James’ use of the term in chapter three of his book³¹ appears to be expressing that there is a closer and more consequential scrutiny for those who would teach. Those who speak God’s truth on his behalf will be evaluated more closely before the Lord, but not with the outcome of their soul in the balance. There is the potential of gain or loss of reward for the teacher, and their stewardship is evaluated more stringently.

2) Another expression of judgment is an evaluating judgment of believers that can lead to their discipline and/or refinement during their natural lives. Depending on the circumstances, this can be a more intense or painful process, but it is for their restoration and refinement.

3) Finally, judgment can be, and most consistently is, used to express an evaluation leading to condemnation – an identification of and punishment of guilt. When God stands as judge in this capacity there is only refuge in the Son. Outside of Christ, this judgment is unparalleled doom.

The group with whom judgment begins is “the household of God” or, as more commonly known, the Church. This identification is plainly affirmed in the immediate context where Peter interchanges the two identifications, “...time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us....” Further, “us” is contrasted with the unbelieving world who are known to be those “...who do not obey the gospel of God.” Textual support for both of these conclusions is further affirmed through 1 Timothy and other references in 1 Peter.

“...the household of God, *which is the church of the living God*, a pillar and buttress of the truth.”
1 Timothy 3:15 ^{ESV}

“...and ‘A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.’ They stumble because *they disobey the word*, as they were destined to do.” 1 Peter 2:8 ^{ESV}

“Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some *do not obey the word*, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives....” 1 Peter 3:1 ^{ESV}

“...because they formerly *did not obey*, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.” 1 Peter 3:20 ^{ESV}

³¹ “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.” James 3:1 ^{ESV}

So, while it can be a bit disconcerting at first to see Peter speaking about judgment with the church in an almost parallel fashion to the unbelieving disobedient, the tension is quickly resolved with an understanding of the range of the word and its application in context. In regard to the church, the language of judgment is still very sobering, but it is speaking to the purifying work the Lord accomplishes through the sanctifying and disciplining of his church which he loves. So, with this weighty matter in view, Peter's attention turns to the unbelieving world who have no means or mercy under the weight of the perfect and righteous judgment of God. This makes the contrast for his engagement of the wicked so much more terrible. For the wicked there is also an examination. It will result in a terrible day of reckoning under which not one of them can stand. MacArthur draws on this strong parallel stating, "...if God so strongly and painfully judges his church, which he loves, what will be his fury on the ungodly?"³²

Paul appears to be making a like point in his second letter to the Thessalonians: "Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring. This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed." 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10 ^{ESV}

"And 'If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?'"
1 Peter 4:18 ^{ESV}

Peter appears to be emphatically pressing what he has just established, drawing support from his quoting of Proverbs 11:31 "If the righteous is repaid on earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!" or as worded in chapter four, "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" Peter is turning the statement into a rhetorical question, again, to drive home his emphasis of compared severity for the unrighteous.

J. Daryl Charles affirms that the quotation here was a rhetorical question and emphasizes that Peter was not intending to communicate that the righteous will limp across their finish line so much as to draw out just how severe the unbeliever's context will prove to be in their lack of prospect of hope.³³

³² MacArthur Study Bible), Notes for 1 Peter 4:17

³³ Charles & Thatcher, Kindle Location: 3189-3192

Peter appears to go on to unambiguously address just what will come of the ungodly in his second letter:

“...if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, *making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly....*” 2 Peter 2:5-6 ^{ESV}

“But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and *destruction of the ungodly.*” 2 Peter 3:7 ^{ESV}

“Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.” 1 Peter 4:19 ^{ESV}

4:19 appears to be the final piece of a running argument that Peter has been developing from 4:12-19. He provides an initial proposition, and then draws out a conclusion.

4:12, Proposition (Righteous Suffering is to be Expected)

The fiery trial for those in Christ is no surprise.

4:13, But, So That

But rejoice in sharing Christ’s suffering.

So that you may rejoice in Christ’s revealed glory.

4:14, If, Then, Because

If you are insulted for the name of Christ.

Then you are blessed.

Because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

4:15, But

But do not suffer as a wicked person.

4:16, Yet If, Then, But

Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian.

Then do not be ashamed.

But glorify God in Christ.

4:17, For, If, Then

For it is time for judgment to begin in God’s household.

If it begins with Christians.

Then what will come of the unbelieving/disobedient?

4:18, If, Then

If the righteous is barely saved.

Then what will become of the unrighteous?

4:19, Conclusion (How the Righteous are to Suffer)

Those in Christ suffer with a view to the righteous Judge, the faithful Creator.

Closing the final section of chapter four, Peter began with, “therefore.” In view of the *expected* nature of the suffering of the believer for Christ, and the *distinguished* nature of this suffering from the natural suffering that is imposed as a consequence of unrighteous deeds... those in Christ are to be like Christ in entrusting themselves and their suffering to a faithful Creator while doing good.

Peter’s audience are those who are suffering according to God’s will. Those whose righteous obedience and submission to God has produced a context of rejection and malicious treatment by the unbelieving world in which they are immersed. Those who have labored to discern the good pleasure of God and then pursued it at the expense of their comfort and proper treatment. Those who have loved their Lord and in turn loved his people, but have experienced the antithesis of love by those who would sooner curse God than yield to him. Those who know that, “Behind the vicious activities of their enemies stood the wise will of God.”³⁴

Peter’s call to those who are suffering according to God’s will is to entrust their souls to the Lord – not in a salvific manner, that has already been completed, but in fully giving themselves to him with an active confidence of his safekeeping in this time of suffering. Further, it appears that the call to entrust their souls to the Lord is with a view that the body may well suffer and even perish, but the immaterial man is safe in his keeping.

“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” Matthew 10:28 ^{ESV}

“...obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” 1 Peter 1:9 ^{ESV}

In stating this, Peter is not dismissing the flesh or the value of the natural life, but prioritizing it in view of *future* glory and reward – which will include a resurrection body. There are two explicit examples of this provided for us in Luke 23 and Acts 76.

Jesus on the cross: “Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!’ And having said this he breathed his last.” Luke 23:46 ^{ESV}

Stephen being stoned: “And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” Acts 7:59-60 ^{ESV}

What was Peter communicating by “Faithful Creator”?

Creator communicates God’s universal and absolute sovereignty.

Faithful communicates that which is just/righteous.

So, the faithful Creator is he who has universal and absolute sovereignty over all creation (everything outside of himself who was alone not created) and he exercises this perfect authority with uncompromised justice and absolute righteousness. There is no one else to whom one should ever entrust themselves, especially when suffering in submission to his good pleasure.

³⁴ Hiebert, Pg.294

Finally, there is still the expectation to proactively do, specifically to be doing good. Peter established a context by which all believers plainly understand that suffering on some level is to be the anticipated experience of those identified with Christ. So, with this in view, it is not simply a matter of hunker down and trust God, but trust God and get about the work. Peter has plainly charged the church to a life of doing good, doing the works of God, and suffering in no way diminishes this call.

In a context of suffering, it is fully expected that good deeds and a view of Christ's future glory remain staple elements. "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see *your good deeds* and glorify God on the day of visitation." 1 Peter 2:12 ^{ESV}

A plain element of the expressed will of God: do good, and do good even within the context of opposition.

"For this is the will of God, that *by doing good* you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people." 1 Peter 2:15 ^{ESV}

Doing good in the context of suffering is pleasing to God. "For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when *you do good* and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God." 1 Peter 2:19-20 ^{ESV}

It is expected that the believer will be one who is consistently doing good and that this too may provoke disdain from a fallen and disobedient world, but it is always better to suffer for doing good. "...having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile *your good behavior* in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for *doing good*, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil." 1 Peter 3:16-17 ^{ESV}

Do not be surprised by your suffering for righteousness' sake – there is present blessing and future reward from the perfect and just judge. Now, with full confidence in the Lord all believers are called to joyful obedience – be it through suffering well or a disposition ready to suffer well.

Personal Reflection and Application

How will truths from this section impact your thinking, praying, daily walk, and worship?

[illegible]

Further Reflection and Application

If someone was working at the botanical gardens and heard an eruption of gun fire, explosions, and tanks rolling through the immediate area, there would be reason for immediate surprise. However, if one were in the middle of a war zone it would be nothing of surprise at all – it might provoke a greater alertness or the need to take immediate action, but it would not be surprising. Such is the believer's existence in a world that is not their home, in which they are strangers and aliens. What a striking contrast to those who have matters that are just difficult or inconvenient and they are rattled... and when trials do come, their world crumbles.... Take some time to think about these matters and evaluate if you are, or would be, surprised by suffering. How might you righteous recalibrate your mind?

When tested by trial, how have you demonstrated the sufficiency of Christ, and how might you do this more fully in the future?

Why might one struggle with being ashamed for their suffering, and what would be your counsel to such a person?

How does one understand the judgment of the "house of God," and what implications does this have for the unbeliever?

What does it mean to entrust one's soul to a faithful Creator, and how might that look in various expressions of suffering?