

### Faithfulness in Christian Conduct while Suffering

#### 1 Peter 4:7-19

1 Peter 4:7-11: *“But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.”<sup>8</sup> And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”<sup>9</sup> Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.<sup>10</sup> As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.<sup>11</sup> If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*

#### Background Notes

When Peter wrote that *“the end of all things is at hand”* (v7), he was thinking of the return of the Lord. He was saying that the Lord’s coming again for His Church is imminent – He could return at any time. In the sense that our Lord could return at any time, the end of all things is indeed at hand.

In view of this truth, we should be motivated to serve Him faithfully (v7-11), and to suffer faithfully for His sake (v12-19). Faithfully serving the Lord and suffering for His sake is beneficial for us – but most important of all, it brings glory to God!

#### Doctrinal Points

##### 1. The goal of Christian service is the glory of God.

Verse 11 follows the exhortation for faithful servants to serve one another as good stewards of God’s grace, *“that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”* The bottom line in all our Christian conduct and service is not our own well-being or our own personal success, but **the glory of God!** Let’s look at these exhortations.

##### **a. Have a serious prayer life.**

Verse 7: *“...be serious and watchful in your prayers.”*

Do you have a serious prayer life - or do you pray only when you are sick or scared? Have you matured in your prayer life beyond just praying before meals? Do you remember to pray for your fellow-believers, and for those who are yet unbelievers?

##### **b. Have fervent love for fellow believers.**

Verse 8: *“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”*

The word that was used for love here is the “*agape*” kind of love. When we love our fellow believers with “*agape* love,” we will be willing to deny ourselves in the interest of others. We’ll sacrifice our time and our own personal desires for the sake of others.

What is the meaning of the phrase “*love covers a multitude of sins*”? Does that mean that church leaders should cover up sin and ignore church discipline? Should we sweep sin under the rug and pretend it never happened? No! It means that if we really love one another, we will be able to overlook the *minor* faults and failures and shortcomings of other believers. Can you do that? Or do you magnify the faults and failures of others in order to minimize your own faults and failures? No one is perfect - including you! So - let love cover a multitude of “sins”.

### ***c. Be hospitable.***

Verse 9: “*Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.*”

This encouragement is especially important with certain “hard-to-love” believers, with whom we find it difficult to spend a lot of time. Peter reminds us that when we invite our best friends over for a summer BBQ, we should also include some of the people who may be hard to love, or those who may often be left out of social situations.

Listen to what our Lord said about hospitality in Luke 14: “*But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.*”

And notice that Peter said that we should be hospitable without grumbling or complaining! That’s tough at times, isn’t it? Don’t lose out on your “hospitality reward” in Heaven because you grumbled about inviting others into your home.

### ***d. Use your spiritual gift for service.***

Verse 10: “*As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*”

So don’t say that you don’t have a spiritual gift! This Scripture indicates that you **do** have a spiritual gift. You have at least one gift – in fact, you probably have more than one!

If you realize you have a spiritual gift but you don’t know what it is, how do you find out what it is? Get involved in serving the Lord wherever you can, and you will find out what your spiritual gift or gifts are. Other believers have a great way of telling what your gift is. (And they will gently tell you what your gift is *not*, as well!)

Notice that our spiritual gifts are given to us for serving one another (v10). The purpose of your spiritual gift is not for your own personal fame, or for making a name for yourself. The exercise of spiritual gifts is one way that God manifests His manifold grace in the church. Let’s be good stewards of that grace.

### ***e. Use your spiritual gifts for the glory of God.***

Verse 11: “*That in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever.*”

Whether we speak or whether we serve the Lord in other ways, let's not try to grab the glory! Let's serve for the glory of God.

The goal for Christian service is the glory of God!

## 2. The result of Christian suffering should be the glory of God.

Verses 12-19: "*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;*<sup>13</sup> *but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.*<sup>14</sup> *If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.*<sup>15</sup> *But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.*<sup>16</sup> *Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.*<sup>17</sup> *For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?*<sup>18</sup> *Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"*<sup>19</sup> *Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.*"

Why does God allow Christians to suffer persecution? A number of reasons are given here, as well as in the rest of the New Testament. But the bottom line, in every situation, should be **the glory of God**. Look again at verse 16: "*Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian... let him glorify God in this matter.*"

The Roman persecution of Christians was beginning when Peter wrote this letter. It would be a fiery ordeal: "*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you*" (v12). It was reported that Nero, the Roman emperor at that time, actually impaled Christians on poles and lit them on fire as human torches for his garden parties. But verse 13 says that believers can actually rejoice in suffering for the sake of Christ, because they will be rewarded when the Lord returns and reveals His glory. Christians around the world today are facing physical persecutions (even crucifixion) for their faith in Christ, but they will be rewarded.

Verse 14 says that suffering for the sake of Christ is an indication that you are **blessed!** "*If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.*" The Holy Spirit indwells every believer but He rests in a special way on the persecuted Christian. Christians facing persecution know the presence and power of Christ in their lives in a way that some Christians never experience.

And notice: if we are reviled or reproached for the sake of Christ, that is considered persecution just as much as being thrown to the lions. Have you ever been mocked or insulted for being a Christian? It's a sign that you are blessed!

Verse 15 is a very important command for every Christian: "*But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters.*" A Christian I know is in court right now - not because he's suffering as a

Christian, but because he broke the law. That is not “suffering for the sake of Christ.” In fact, it brings shame on the name of Christ. (And if you’re going to display a John 3:16 bumper sticker, then you’d better drive within the speed limit!)

Verse 17 says: *“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”* Here’s another reason why God allows Christians to suffer. God is using the persecution of this present time, before His return, to purify the Church. Persecution has a purifying effect on the Church. Unbelievers and heretics in the present-day Church tend to run when the going gets tough.

*“And if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?”(v17).* If God uses persecution and suffering to purify His Church, His beloved family, I would not want to be in the shoes of unbelievers who will face the judgment of God and His punishment for their sin. Hell awaits the unbeliever.

Notice also from verse 17 that the Bible does not teach a “prosperity gospel.” The present time is the time for the *purifying* of the Church. It is not the time for material prosperity of the Church, or for the perfect health and material prosperity of Christians who (supposedly) have “more faith.” The Bible does not teach a material prosperity gospel for this Church Age, this present dispensation of God’s grace.

The result of Christian suffering should be the glory of God.

## Practical Application

**Remember, suffering for the sake of Christ is a privilege, not a penalty.**

Verse 16: *“Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”*

The world says that Christians are the reason why there’s so much friction and hatred in this world. Christians are accused of being “scientifically ignorant” and they “hold up the education process.” Christians are accused of being “intolerant” for holding firmly to biblical standards and morality. The world will do everything it can to find fault with Christians to try to justify their criticism and persecution of Christians. Well, don’t let the world put you on a guilt trip. Remember, suffering for the sake of Christ is a **privilege**, not a **penalty** – and you have the opportunity to **glorify God** through it!

And remember - suffering for Christ’s sake is to be expected. Verse 12: *“Do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you.”* God uses the world’s persecution for our benefit. It’s a privilege to suffer! And the opportunity and privilege to suffer for the sake of Christ is *now*, because there will be no persecution or suffering in Heaven.

Suffering for the sake of Christ is a privilege, not a penalty.