

THE GODLY SUFFERING OF THE BELIEVER

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have prayed and read the Bible for this lesson to learn what the Holy Spirit wants you to teach your students. Then let Him guide you in using these notes. When you follow this procedure you will be a better teacher of your students.

Lesson Aim: Think of Christ's suffering and obey Peter's exhortations to be prepared for any trial.

Suggestion: This lesson will call attention to important truths in this week's Lesson. After teaching it, give it to your class for review and next week's Student Lesson for answering the questions.

Introduction: Peter reminds the believers to be ready to suffer for Christ as He suffered for them. He gave ten exhortations to prepare them for the fiery trial that the Roman government is about to bring upon them. "As Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind" (1 Pet 4:1).

How do we arm ourselves with the same mind as Christ? 4:1

To answer this question, we must know what was in the mind of Christ. He knew that His Father had chosen Him to suffer for the sins of all people and die to pay the penalty for their sins. Since He was the Son of God, a Person in the Godhead, He could not suffer and die. That meant He would have to leave His glorious position in Heaven, become a man, take the position of a slave among men and be treated as such by sinners, yet He had to keep Himself pure from their sins. It also meant He would bear their sins, suffer for their sins and die to pay the penalty for their sins. It took humility to do this. Humility was in the mind of Christ when He submitted to the will of His Father in order to complete the plan of His Father (Phil 2:5-8). Now we are to arm ourselves with the humility that was in the mind of Christ and obey the will of God in order to complete the plan that He has for us.

How does suffering in the flesh cause us to cease from sin? 4:1

The context of this verse is instructing believers how to have victory over the sins of the flesh. It does not mean that they will completely cease from all sin. That is not possible until they see Christ in Heaven (1 Jn 3:1-3). So believers are faced with two choices: they can continue in their sins that satisfy their flesh, or they can suffer from sinners that hate them for not continuing in the sins of their flesh. Jesus suffered in His human body for living a righteous life and not sinning with the unrighteous. When we choose to suffer in the flesh with Christ, we will cease from sin in the flesh against Christ. This is the way we have victory in Christ.

How should believers live so that they please God? 4:2-6

Believers no longer are to live by the will of unbelievers, satisfying the lusts of the flesh, but they are to live by the will of God, satisfying the desires of the spirit. Unbelievers will judge them and hate them for not living as they do, but the Judge of the living and the dead will make the final judgment when believers will be blessed by God and unbelievers will suffer His wrath.

How should believers prepare themselves for times of persecution? 4:7-19

Peter gave ten exhortations in this chapter. Peter told them to arm themselves with the humble mind of Christ (4:1). Nine more exhortations are given in 4:7-19. One, he told them to be sober (clear-minded) and alert in prayer (4:7). He had failed to do this and as a result he denied the Lord three times. Two, they needed to love all believers fervently so they would help and encourage those under attack (4:8). Three, they needed to be hospitable and give to those who lost their goods and homes (4:9). Four, they were to minister their spiritual gifts to one another as they would to God (4:10-11). Five, they should expect fiery trials without surprise (4:12). Six, they should rejoice in sharing the sufferings of Christ, knowing that they also would share in the glory of Christ in Heaven (4:13-14). Seven, they must not be ashamed to suffer as a godly Christian (4:15-16). They would glorify God by suffering for Christ (4:16). Nine, when fiercely persecuted, they were to commit the keeping of their souls to a faithful Creator (4:19). They may lose their lives, but not their souls.