

PETER'S EPISTLES

1 Peter: Living In Conflict With The Culture

XV. Wise Living In View Of Christ's Perfect Example, 1 Peter 3:18-4:6

D. Christ's Example In His Accountability To God

(1 Peter 3:18, 21b-4:6)

I. Introduction

- A. Several believers in different states have reported on the increasing difficulty they face in living in accord with Bible truth since doing so conflicts with the godless world's deteriorating culture around them.
- B. "First Peter was written to Christians . . . whose stand for Jesus Christ made them aliens and strangers in the midst of a pagan society" (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 837), so we study 1 Peter for insight and edification.
- C. 1 Peter 3:18, 21b-4:6 presents Christ's example in suffering persecution due to His accountability to God the Father, and we view it for our insight and edification (as follows):

II. Christ's Example In His Accountability To God, 1 Peter 3:18, 21b-4:6.

- A. Before Peter's digression in 1 Peter 3:19-21a, in 1 Peter 3:17-18, Peter had taught that Christ exemplified suffering by evil foes in going to the cross for our redemption where 1 Peter 3:21b-22 reveals God the Father's reward for Christ's fulfilling the Father's will in raising Him from the dead (1 Peter 3:21b), in causing Him to ascend to heaven in glory (1 Peter 3:22a; Daniel 7:13), in seating Him at the Father's right hand (1 Peter 3:22b with Psalm 110:1) and in giving Him authority over all angels, authorities and powers (1 Peter 3:22c).
- B. Christ's example of accountability to the Father was greatly rewarded, so Peter called his readers to "arm yourselves" (*hoplisasthe*) like soldiers "putting on armor" with the mind Christ had in facing godless persecutors that they might similarly receive God's great eternal reward, 1 Peter 4:1a-6; *Ibid.*, p. 852.
- C. Thus, Peter's believing readers were to consider themselves as suffering and dying to sin, that they like Christ might obey God's will, 1 Peter 4:2. Typical sins of the world in that era that Peter's readers were to avoid were "debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and . . . idolatry," 1 Peter 4:3 NIV; *Ibid.*, p. 852-853.
- D. However, avoiding these sins appeared strange to ungodly onlookers, what elicited verbal abuse from them because the holy lives of Peter's readers acted to critique the sinfulness of their persecutors, 1 Peter 4:4.
- E. Still, believers were to recall that the whole world was going to give an accounting to God, 1 Peter 4:5-6:
 1. Even the unsaved world that verbally abused righteous believers in Christ will eventually give an account to God for their actions, and God is ready to pass judgment on **all** of the living and the dead, 1 Peter 4:5.
 2. Peter then made the allegedly obscure claim that for this reason, the gospel was preached to them that are dead that they might be judged by men in the body, but live to God in the spirit, 1 Peter 4:6. We explain:
 - a. The inferential conjunction *gar* ("For") that introduces 1 Peter 4:6 grammatically ties the identity of the "dead" in verse 6 to the *physically* "dead" in verse 5 so that the "dead" in verse 6 **cannot** be *spiritually* "dead" people, but *physically* "dead" people! (Henry Alford, The Greek Testament, 1861, vol. IV, p. 372)
 - b. In addition, the gospel would **not** be preached to the *physically* dead to give them a second chance to be saved, for Hebrews 9:27 claims that after physical death is the judgment, not a second chance to be saved.
 - c. Thus, Peter in 1 Peter 4:6 described those who are **now physically** dead, likely due to martyrdom for the faith (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to 1 Peter 4:6), but who were saved by faith in the Gospel when it was preached to them **when** they were *still physically alive!* Regardless of having physically died, due to their obedience to God, they were still spiritually very much alive and honored by the Lord.
 - d. Also, viewing the *context* of the *whole epistle* in a *consistently literal* way supports this interpretation and explains the epistle's alleged obscure verses: (i) In 1 Peter 1:10-12a, the Spirit of Christ *literally* ministered to us who are physically alive by the Old Testament prophets, and in 1 Peter 1:12b, the readers *literally* had the Gospel preached to them in the Spirit's power when they were physically alive. So, (ii) in the epistle's alleged obscure verses, in 1 Peter 3:19-20, Christ by the Spirit *literally* preached through Noah to his generation when they were physically alive, and in 1 Peter 4:6, believers who are now physically dead were saved by believing the Gospel that was *literally* preached to them when they were physically alive.]
 3. Thus, Peter showed the value of facing persecution for righteousness in view of our accountability to God.

Lesson: *Christ obeyed the Father in facing unjust suffering, accordingly receiving great honor and glory. We believers must also obey the Father in facing unjust suffering righteously due to our similar accountability to God.*

Application: *We like Christ will give an account to God, so we should live righteously even if facing persecution.*