

PETER'S EPISTLES

1 Peter: Living In Conflict With The Culture

XVII. Suffering Persecution For The Faith

(1 Peter 4:12-19)

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 4:12-19 teaches about suffering persecution for the faith, and we view it for our insight and edification:

II. Suffering Persecution For The Faith, 1 Peter 4:12-19.

- A. Peter gave directions on **how** to suffer for the Christian faith in 1 Peter 4:12-14, 16 and 19 (as follows):
 1. We believers who are beloved of the Lord need to **stop** being **surprised** (*xenizesthe*, present pass. impv. with the *me* negative adverb; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 800; The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 280) at the fiery trial that comes upon us as though some strange thing was happening to us, 1 Peter 4:12.
 2. Rather, we must rejoice in realizing that since we share in Christ's sufferings, we will also greatly rejoice (*agalliomenoï*, from *agalliao*, "shout for joy," Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 3-4) when His glory is revealed [at His coming], 1 Peter 4:13.
 3. Thus, for example, if we are "reviled, insulted" (*oneidizo*, Ibid., p. 573) for the name of Christ, we are blessed in God's view, for the spirit of the glory and of God rests upon us, 1 Peter 4:14.
 4. If a man suffers as a Christian, he should **stop** being ashamed (*aischunestho*, present imperative of *aischunomai*, "be ashamed" with the *me* negative adverb; Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T., p. 801; Ibid., The Analyt. Grk. Lex., p. 10), but glorify God in that name of "Christian" for which he suffers. (1 Peter 4:16)
 5. Accordingly, those believers who suffer for the faith according to God's sovereign will for their lives should entrust their *pseuche*, their "earthly lives" composed of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual [as a believer] components (Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 901-902) unto God as unto a Faithful Creator of that life while doing good, 1 Peter 4:19. God knows what each component of the earthly life He as created in each believer can withstand under the persecution he faces, so God must be trusted sovereignly to oversee the persecution faced that the believer by faith might be able to suffer persecution without sinning!
- B. However, Peter also directed that we believers must not suffer trouble from the world because of our own sinful deeds, 1 Peter 4:15: Since the command not to suffer involves the present imperative (*pascheto*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., The Analyt. Grk. Lex., p. 312) with the *me* negative adverb, Peter commanded that every believer should **stop** suffering retaliating trouble from the unsaved world for committing sins like murder, stealing, committing other sins or even meddling in other men's matters, 1 Peter 4:15 ESV.
- C. Peter then noted that we must face persecution for the faith due to our accountability to God, 1 Peter 4:17-18:
 1. When God administers judgment, He always begins it with the house of God, with His own people, v. 17a.
 2. If that judgment begins with us believers, we can only surmise how great will be His punishment of those who do not obey the Gospel of Christ, 1 Peter 4:17b.
 3. Indeed, if the righteous are scarcely saved, one can only imagine the degree of divine punishment that will be administered on the ungodly and sinners who enter eternity without salvation, 1 Peter 4:18.
- D. Peter's teaching on suffering persecution for Christ takes on added power when we recall that Peter knew from Christ's prediction that he would be crucified for his faith, John 21:17-19. May we then heed Peter's teaching!

Lesson: *We believers in Christ must expect to be persecuted for our faith as a "normal" part of our Christian life, and respond to such persecution with great joy because we suffer for Christ. We should not be ashamed of the mistreatment we face, but entrust ourselves to God as a Faithful Creator to provide what we need to handle the persecution without sinning. We must not suffer for committing acts of sin, but realize that our accountability to God requires that we live righteously even amid persecution, for in eternity, God will hold all men, believers and unbelievers alike, accountable to Himself for their actions.*

Application: *(1) May we realize that persecution is not the exception, but the norm for a godly life (cf. John 15:18-16:4), and that (2) it is a great privilege to suffer for Christ in view of our eternal reward and our duty to live righteously in accountability to the Lord. (3) May we then trust and obey God as we face persecution for our faith.*