

1 Peter 4

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Tape #8227
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn in our Bibles to First Peter chapter four as we continue our journey through the whole Bible closing down on the New Testament before too much longer.

In verse eighteen of chapter three, Peter tells us that "Christ has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18). And then he says, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but it is the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." So He had suffered once for sins, being put to death in the flesh but raised again, the resurrection of Jesus Christ "who is gone into heaven, is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers are made subject unto Him" (1 Peter 3:21,22).

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered (4:1)

That is, He suffered for our sins. He suffered death,

for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind (4:1):

That is, the mind of being dead to sin.

for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin (4:1);

The mind of Christ who suffered for sin, gave Himself for sin. "Let this mind be in you," Paul said, "which was also in Christ Jesus who humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name" (Philippians 2:5,8,9). "Arm yourself in your mind" to the idea or to the concept that I am dead to sin. God has ordained that sin should no longer rule in my body.

Let's turn back to Romans chapter six where Paul deals with this very same subject of being dead to sin. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin [that is, we who have been born again], that the grace of God may abound? God forbid! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man [the old nature, the life governed by sin] is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be ["katargéo," thrown down] destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he lives, he lives unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:1-11).

That's basically what Peter is giving to us in an abbreviated form. This whole idea and concept that my old nature, the life that I once lived after the flesh, a life that was ruled and governed by my flesh, is dead. Thus it no longer has power over me. I now have a new life. It is the life in Christ. This life in Christ has freed me from the power that the flesh once held over me. And thus the idea is I'm living in the risen Christ, and thus, no more. I have ceased from sin because I am dead unto that old life and old nature.

I don't think I need to tell you that that is the basic premise that is being worked out. I'm no fool. I'm not going to stand here before you tonight and say, I'm arrived at sinless perfection, folks, I don't sin anymore. But sin doesn't have power over me as it once did. And as the Spirit of God is dealing in my life with issues that are still there, that are displeasing to God. Those aspects of the flesh life where my old flesh, my old nature is prone to rise and to sort of rear its ugly head and I see it and I hate it. And I say, God, I don't want to be this way. I don't want to think like that. And then I reckon that to be dead. I said, Lord, that's a part of the old life that doesn't have power over me anymore. I don't have to be like that and I accept, Lord, that new life in Christ and His strength and His help and His victory. How glorious it is to experience that newness of life!

I don't know, it may be that tonight God has just done a new work in my life. Because He does work in my life daily and I expect that. But when I was on my way to church this evening, as I was coming down MacArthur Boulevard, there was a car that pulled out of Ralph's there near McDonald's right directly in my path. It was just there. I thought, This is it, and I swerved and there was a car waiting to make a left turn and it was a very close call. Now, the old Chuck would have wanted to whip around and teach that person a little bit about driving! The beautiful thing is that I didn't control that urge that generally rises. I didn't have the cap tight—But, I won't blow! The fascinating thing to me is that there wasn't the pressure within. I just said, Thank You, Lord, I missed them. And I'm sure they were more frightened than I was. But it could be that God is doing a new work in my life and I pray so. I've been praying on that one for a long time. And if that is the signal of a new work of God, I'm thrilled! The fact that I tell you about it, I might be tested again just so He can prove that He's done it.

But how wonderful it is to watch the Lord work in your life, to see Him do for you what you've been trying to do for yourself and not able to. The issues where you've been struggling so long, where you've practically given up. And then to see the Lord come in and do this special work. It was a real thrill for me tonight. I just came to church and sat here rejoicing and the fact that my response, it wasn't my response. I know that. I know how I responded to things like that up until this point in life. And so it could be that God is working in me and if so, praise the Lord. I rejoice in it. But God wants to work in all of our lives.

But He doesn't take away the old nature completely and fully and immediately. Death by crucifixion is a slow, painful death. You linger a long time. And yet "I am crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20). Death no longer has dominion over me. And having suffered then, we cease from sin. That is, suffering with Christ. Crucified with Christ. Suffering with Him. We have ceased from sin having its power and dominion over us.

That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God (4:2).

Thank God, the rest of my life I don't have to live in the flesh. Living as a slave to the desires of my flesh. My body appetites and body drives no longer rule over me. They're still there but they no longer rule over me. But governed now by the Spirit of God. Paul writing to the Ephesians said, "And you has He made alive, who were dead in your trespasses and sins. Who in times past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, that even now works in the children of disobedience. Among whom you all one time had your manner of living, as you were controlled by the desires of the flesh and the desires of your mind; and you were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in His mercy and His grace wherewith He loved us, hath brought us this new life in Jesus" (Ephesians 2:1-5). So reckoning myself to be dead with Christ, crucified with Him, I've ceased from sin and no longer need I live, governed by my flesh and my desires. But I live by the will of God. "Crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life that I now live [Paul said] I live by the faith of the Son of God.

For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles (4:3),

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We once lived that way. We lived like the heathen.

when we walked (4:3).

Peter just tells us where the flesh led us. Governed by our flesh and the fleshly desires, we walked,

in lasciviousness [or sexual impurity], after our lusts, in the excesses of wine, in partying, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein those that you once partied with think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, and they start speaking evil of you (4:3,4):

You're no fun anymore. You don't get drunk and act like a fool. You're not carousing around. You're not interested in partying and they speak evil of you because you no longer run to the same excesses with them that you once did. You're no longer a party animal. And they can't understand why the change in you. They can't understand the joy that you now have. Being freed from the bondage of the flesh.

The flesh is one of the worst tyrants in the world. When you give in to the flesh and you start living after the lust of the flesh, it is never satisfied. It wants to draw you deeper and deeper into its control over you. But thank God, we have been freed from the power of the life of the flesh having been crucified dead unto the flesh. Paul said, "The mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace and joy" (Romans 8:6).

Who shall give an account to him that is ready to judge the alive and the dead (4:5).

Jesus spoke of the day of judgment that is coming. Coming to judge those that are alive and those who have died. Death and hell will give up the dead which are in them. And Christians will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The sinners will stand before the judgment seat of God. The judgment seat of Christ is as the judges in the Olympics. The purpose is to receive the rewards according to how we have run the race. Whereas the judgment seat of God is just that, a judgment of condemnation to receive the sentencing for the life of sin.

And for this cause was the gospel preached to them also that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit (4:6).

That's why we preach the Gospel to those who are dead in their trespasses and sins. The purpose is to bring them new life, life in Jesus Christ. A life of freedom from the power that sin has exercised in his control over them. And so the glorious gospel of Jesus preached to those who are dead in trespasses and sins that they might know the wonders and the glory of being alive unto God in the Spirit. Peter goes on to say,

But the end of all things is at hand: be therefore sober, and watch unto prayer (4:7).

The early church believed that the Lord was coming back very soon. They were anticipating His return at any time. And thus, there was always the call to soberness, living a sober life because the Lord's return is so close. It can happen at any time. Paul writing to the Romans said, "Knowing the time, it is now high time to awake out of our sleep. For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. Let us therefore put off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light" (Romans 13:11,12).

Throughout the New Testament there were the warnings of the return of the Lord and living a life that is in expectancy of the return of the Master at any time. Jesus taught them to live with that kind of expectancy. This morning we made reference to that one parable that Jesus gave concerning the servants and the steward, who the Lord had gone away and left him in charge of his things. The Lord returned and He said, Blessed is that servant who when the Lord does return finds him so doing the work of God. It is important for us to live

as though the Lord may come tomorrow because He is going to come at any moment and there will not be a forewarning and we don't want to have a lot of things left undone. And so it is important for us to live each day as though this were the last day that we might be here for we have no assurance that it won't be. "Blessed is that servant, who when the Lord comes shall find him so doing" (Matthew 24:46).

When the Lord returns, I don't really want a lot of unfinished business. I want the accounts all cleared up. I want to be ready to meet Him at any time. They had this kind of expectancy and the early church had this expectancy of the Lord's return. I do believe that it was by deliberate design that God wanted the church always to live in the expectancy of His, any moment, coming. Because it does give a certain urgency to the task before us. It helps us from procrastination, putting things off. Let's get to it, let's get things done. If we have a major project, let's go for it because we don't know when the Lord is going to return, how much time we've got. There's an urgency to getting the Gospel out into all the world! And thus it gives us that sense of urgency in our work for Him!

The second effect of believing that the Lord is going to come at any time is a purifying effect within our lives. John said in speaking of the Lord's return, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, it doesn't yet appear what we're going to be: but we know when He appears, we're going to be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. He that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2,3). This hope of the Lord's return is a purifying hope because we want to be walking in holiness and purity when our Master comes for us. So "the end of all things is at hand. Be ye therefore sober, watch unto prayer." Be alert, be ready, be watching.

And above all things [everything else, top of the list] have fervent love among yourselves (4:8):

This word love is the word agape, our New Testament word, which speaks of divine, spiritual love. It isn't the word eros. Don't misinterpret this word. "Have fervent love," that is, godly love, divine love which goes much further than any other kind of love, "among yourselves."

for love shall cover the multitude of sins (4:8).

It's interesting when you really love someone how little you see of their faults or maybe that should be rephrased. How little their faults bother you. You probably see more but your willingness to overlook the flaws, the faults, because of your love. "Love bears all things, it believes all things, it hopes all things" (1 Corinthians 13:7). When you're lacking in love for someone, it's amazing how much their faults irritate you. And that's why we're to have this fervent love for each other because this kind of love overlooks, it covers a multitude of sins.

Use hospitality one toward another without grudging (4:9).

Several years ago in our second pastorate, which was in Tucson, Arizona, we had many men who were attending our church who were in the service. They were stationed there at Davis Motham Air Base. We had one fellow, a sergeant, who was an interesting person. He and his wife were very faithful in attendance. I really don't know how to describe them but maybe just by an incident, you can sort of catch the picture. They were constantly fighting and one night, she tried to lock him out of the house. And so he came through the window, broke the window, the screen came on through and gave her a shiner like you can't believe. And she came and this huge shiner, eye just all puffed closed, huge, swelling; and started telling me of all of the abuse that she had received from him, verbal and physical. And I being just a young pastor said, Maybe you should consider leaving him. And she said, But I love the guy. Well, go ahead, live with him. But they invited us over for Sunday dinner after church. And so they had a very delicious pot roast and they asked if we would like seconds. So I thought I was being polite and I said, Oh yes, that's great. So they gave seconds. And as I was eating the seconds, he said, Used to be that a roast like this would last us all week but I see this

one's not going to. So he was showing hospitality but he was grudging. Peter said, Be hospitable but don't be grudging about it.

As every man has received the gift (4:10),

Interestingly enough, hospitality is one of the gifts. There are people who just have the gift of hospitality. My dad and mom were that way. They had the gift of hospitality. Whenever we had an evangelist in town, they always had him over for dinner. They had the gift of hospitality. And there are many people that just have this gift of hospitality. And it is a gift of God. So "as every man has received the gift."

even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God (4:10).

God has made us the stewards of His manifold grace. God has been very gracious to us, very forgiving, very kind. And I am to be a steward. God has entrusted me with this wonderful grace. I'm a steward and a steward is one who is in charge and oversees the resources of another. So I am to oversee the resources of God's grace and to show God's grace to others in the gifts that God gives to me. Using them to minister unto others. And so whatever gift that God has given unto us, and He's given to all of us certain gifts, every one in the body of Christ is a minister of Jesus Christ. The word minister means servant. We've all been called to serve our Lord Jesus Christ. We say, Lord, and that's exactly what it means. He is the Lord or the Master over our lives. We've been called to serve Him.

We are not all called to serve Him in the same capacity. There are many areas of service and many different gifts that God gives to us to enable us to fulfill our service unto Him. And so with some, there is that gift of hospitality. There is the gift of showing mercy. There is the gift of giving. And people are blessed with different kinds of gifts but they are all to be used for the benefit of the whole body of Christ as we serve one another through the gifts that God has given to us. So one of the gifts, of course, is that of speaking the word of God.

So he that speaketh, let him speak as the oracles of God (4:11);

The oraclochia in the Greek was an oracle, actually one who the Greeks thought was the voice of God speaking through humans. They had these people who are like the New Age channelers. They would go into sort of a trance and this strange voice would come out of them that the Greeks interpreted as the voice of God. And whenever they were going to purchase a house or sell something or make important decisions, they would go to the oracles and they would pay huge sums for the oracle to speak to them to give them the words of the gods for the guidance and the direction for their lives.

When we were in Greece we visited the site of the oracle of Delphi and we saw the place where the oracle sat and we saw the ruins of the temple and the amphitheater there at Delphi where hundreds of people would come to receive guidance and direction from the gods through this supposed oracle that was there. This voice would speak to them and it's sort of shielded; they would come and they would ask their question and this voice would come out supposedly directing them. Much like I think the TV psychics today where you call in and the psychic is supposed to guide you in your love life or whatever and I saw where they hire people off the streets to be psychics to answer the phones. They give you training, how to answer people and how to lead them on and make them think that you have insight for them. But such was the oracle in those days.

It was thought to be the word of God coming through an individual. So "if you speak, speak as an oracle of God." That is, speak the word of God to people. What I have to say is of little merit or value. The best way I can help you is to tell you what God's word has to say and an answer. It's interesting to me that in our program, "To Every Man an Answer", so often the questions are questions for which there is not a Biblical

answer and people are wanting your opinion on a subject. But my opinion is no better than anybody else's opinion. It's only that, just an opinion of man. My opinion is worthless. What we need is God's word to guide us. That's why we seek to give to you the word of God and stick to the word of God as close as possible. Where God speaks, I want to speak. Where God is silent, I am wise if I keep silent and just share. And so "if you speak, speak as an oracle of God."

If you minister (4:11),

And that is using the word in the sense of serve, as all of us are ministers. All of us are servants,

let him do it as of the ability that God gives to you (4:11):

which, of course, means that in whatever area that God has given me talent, I serve Him with that area of my giftedness. According as God has gifted us, so we serve. With the ability that God gives.

that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ (4:11),

It is fascinating to me how that God has gifted different people with different types of gifts. I can appreciate the gift that God has bestowed upon different people. I love to watch people who are gifted. I love to listen to gifted musicians. I love to watch a gifted artist as they paint. I love to see people who are gifted and skilled in the various crafts and all. And I watch with amazement what they're able to do.

On New Year's Eve I was fascinated with this potter and the shaping of that vessel and all and to see the gift that this man had and watch him as he exercised that gift. Not everyone has the same gift. Some people can draw a dog that looks like a dog. And some people when they draw a dog, you wonder, What is that? And people are just gifted in these various things. And so I am to use the gifts of God recognizing that this isn't me, this isn't something that I have because I studied. But this is just something that God has given me a natural aptitude toward this. And if I am especially gifted, it's because God has given me that ability and that gifting. And thus I do it for the glory of God. I seek to bring glory to God through the exercise of my gift.

As Paul said, "What do you have but what you have received? And if you have received it, then why do you boast, as though you didn't receive it" (1 Corinthians 4:7)? There are many people who do not acknowledge God. They have tremendous gifts and they use these gifts for their own enrichment. That is a prostituting of the gifts of God. The highest capacity of man is that of being an instrument through which God works His divine work in the lives of people. God wants to use your life as an instrument. He has given you certain abilities and certain capacities to be used for Him.

Now there is always a danger in the exercise of the gifts that God gives to you that men get their eyes upon the instrument rather than upon God who is using the instrument. And men so often want to lay upon you the accolades. Tell you how marvellous you are and how wonderful you are and how you did so much for them. In reality, you know that it wasn't you, it was God working through you. And the danger is taking glory that belongs to God unto yourself.

You remember when Paul and Barnabas were in Lystra and there was a lame man about forty years old. As Paul was preaching, Paul saw and discerned by the Spirit that this lame man lying there was receiving the word and had faith to be healed. And Paul turned to him and said, Brother, Jesus Christ makes you whole. Stand up, walk. And the man stood up and walked for the first time in his life about forty years old. And the response of the people was, The gods have come down. These men are gods. That taller one, Barnabas, that must be Jupiter. And that shorter little runt, that must be Mercury. And they ran down to the temple of Jupiter and they got the priest and they said, Hey man, your god is here. He's in the street. He's coming to

Lystra. And the priest came down the street dragging an ox. He was going to offer a sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas. And they stopped him and they said, No, no, we are men just like you. God has called us to tell men to turn away from these vain things and to serve the true and the living God (Acts 14:8-15). But the response of the people was to put the glory and the accolades upon Paul because they saw the work of God and the gift of God through Paul's life.

And so when God has gifted you and you begin to use that gift, there will always be those who will want to exalt you rather than to exalt God. You must not allow that to happen. You must not take bows for God. But you must always immediately point people away from yourself and unto the Lord.

So we "minister with the ability that God gives, that God in all things may be glorified through the work of Jesus Christ in our life." To God be the glory, great things He has done.

to whom [that is, Jesus Christ] be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (4:11).

Now he changes gears and he goes to another subject. The subject that isn't always very popular.

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing has happened unto you (4:12):

It's interesting but our first reaction and response to a real heavy trial is that, Man, of all the people in the world, I don't think anybody's ever had anything like this. Some strange thing is happening to me. We just don't understand why God's people have to suffer. That's a real enigma unto us because we believe that God is love. We believe that God loves us supremely. If God loves me so much, why would He allow me to suffer? That doesn't seem consistent with love. If I love someone, I want to save them from suffering. I want to keep them from suffering. And that is how we so often spoil our kids rotten is that we want to protect them from the consequences of wrong actions. And in our protection, not letting them experience and know that certain things bring certain consequences, they only go further and deeper into their state of rebellion.

When I was pastoring in Tucson many years ago, received a call one night from one of the young men in the church. Pastor Chuck, I need your help. What is it? He said, I'm down here in jail and I need fifty dollars to bail me out. What are you in jail for? There was a pie truck and the door was not locked and so we got in and started eating some of the pies and the police came. I need fifty dollars bail. So Kay said, What are you going to do, Chuck? Well, we can't let him spend the night in jail. That's a horrible place. We'll scrape up the money and somehow we'll go down and get him out. And so we went down and we bailed him out and of course, he was tearful and, Thank you, I'll never do that again and so forth. We bailed him out. He didn't experience the real consequences of his activity.

So not much after that, I got this call again. Voice with tears, Pastor Chuck, I need your help. A hundred dollars bail this time. And this went on as the family and those continued to bail him out, the offenses became more serious until, and he got into the thing of stealing cars. But it was joy riding, oh well, after all, a kid. Joy riding. So he was sentenced. Actually we moved from Tucson over to California and he moved over, too. And so he was living in Riverside, we were in Corona. And he was stealing cars and he got caught in one of these traps where he tried to turn around and the police pulled him over and he had several stolen jackets that he had taken out of the cars that he had stolen. He'd take them for joy rides but then he'd take stuff. So he was sent to Blythe for six months. And there he learned his mistakes. They told him the other prisoners, Hey man, you're crazy for stealing sixteen different cars that he got caught for. He said, All you need to do is just steal one car and steal the license plates off of another car and put the license plates on it and they don't trace it. That's before the computers.

So I get this call: Pastor Chuck, help me. Actually when he got out of Blythe, he came over to our house in a stolen car to visit us. And Kay said, Where did you get that car? Oh, Sister Smith, you don't think I, how could you think that of me? And within a week or so, he was caught in this car but he had driven it to Tucson to bring his sister over so now it was a federal offense and he was sent to a federal penitentiary in Oklahoma because it was taking stolen property across the state lines. Hopefully he learned his lesson. I didn't receive any more calls anyhow, I don't know where he is now.

But by coddling, by keeping them from experiencing the consequences, by keeping them from suffering, we think that we are helping but oftentimes we are hurting them and harming them because they are not learning the consequences of wrong actions. God loves us and whom the Lord loves, He chastens. And where others might be able to get by with things, God won't let you get by with it because you're His child. That is not to say and certainly I don't want to infer and I definitely do not believe it, that suffering is the consequence of some sin in our lives. That was the mistake that Job's friends made when they saw the suffering of Job.

The Bible just tells us concerning suffering that it is God's way of purifying our lives. "Consider it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing has happened to you."

But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy (4:13).

So when we suffer and it is possible that we will suffer for righteousness' sake, the world hates the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is a condemning thing to them. And there are many believers today who are suffering tremendously for their faith in Jesus Christ and for their commitment to Jesus Christ. And Peter is writing just as the great persecution under Nero has begun in Rome and it will spread throughout the Roman empire. And so they are sort of almost words prophetic of the suffering that the church was going to experience under imperial Rome, under this mad man known as Nero. So "don't consider it strange concerning the fiery trials which are to try you, but rejoice, you're partakers of Christ's suffering; and when His glory shall be revealed, you will be glad also with exceeding joy."

Paul said, "We know that the present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed" (Romans 8:18). "For the light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh an exceeding eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). So we look at suffering as part of the refining process of God in our lives.

*Out from the mine and the darkness, out of the damp and the mold
Out from the fiery furnace cometh each grain of gold
Crushed into atoms and leveled down to the humblest dust
With never a heart to pity, with never a hand to trust
Molten and hammered and beaten, seemeth it near to be done
Oh for such fiery trial, what hath the poor gold done?
Oh for mercy to leave it down in the damp and the mold
If this is the glory of living, than better to be dross than gold
Unto the press and the roller, into the jaws of the mill
Stamped with an emblem of freedom with never a flaw or a dent
Oh what joy the refining out of the damp and the mold
And stamped with the glorious image, oh the beautiful coin of gold*

God puts us through the refining process and sometimes we feel like we've been hammered on and beaten down and all. But God is going to imprint on us His image. That image and that likeness. That's part of the process of bringing me into the image of Jesus Christ.

If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye (4:14);

Jesus said, “Oh how happy is the man who is persecuted for righteousness’ sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.” Peter is picking up on the words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount.

for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of (4:14),

Those that are persecuting or bringing persecution upon you.

but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief (4:14,15),

There’s no blessing or joy in that.

or as an evildoer, or as a gossip (4:15).

and it’s interesting, look what he puts gossip in the list with—murders, thief, evildoers, and gossipers. It’s not a list that you want your name associated with.

Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come when the judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it begins at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God (4:16,17)?

The purifying processes. Judgment begins at the house of God. God wants to purify His church. And thus He begins His work here. But if the judgment begins here, where do you suppose will be the end of the ungodly? Here we are seeking to live a good life, a righteous life, do the right thing. God begins that work of refining right here. What will be the end of the ungodly, those that obey not the Gospel?

And if the righteous scarcely be saved (4:18),

One day a rich young ruler came running up to Jesus, fell on his knees and he said, Good Master, what good thing must I do to be saved? Jesus said, Keep the law. He said, Which one? And Jesus quoted to him from the second table of the law, the duties that God requires of us toward each other. Thou shalt not steal, commit adultery, lie and things of this nature. He said, Lord, I’ve done all of these from my youth up. What lack I yet? Jesus said, If you would be perfect, go and sell everything you have and give the money to the poor and come and follow Me and you’ll have great treasure in heaven. We read that he went away sad because he had great riches. And Jesus turning to His disciples said, How difficult it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

And then He sort of modified it, He said, How difficult it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of heaven. It is easier for a camel to go through an eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. The disciples were amazed and Peter expressed their dismay when he asked, Lord, who then can be saved? You’re talking about something impossible. A camel going through, who can be saved? And Jesus said, With men it’s impossible. Man cannot save himself. This guy was looking for some good work. Man cannot save himself. All of the good works in the world won’t save you. But Jesus said, With man it is impossible but with God all things are possible. The possibility of your being saved takes a miracle of God. You can’t do it yourself. With man it’s impossible. But with God all things are possible.

“If the righteous scarcely be saved,” it’s only through Jesus Christ that any of us can hope for salvation.

Then where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear (4:18)?

We barely make it in. Where are they going to appear?

Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator (4:19).

If I am suffering according to the will of God, my attitude is to commit myself unto God. He's faithful. He is a faithful Creator. He has allowed this to come into my life for a divine purpose that I may not understand. It is not necessary that I do understand but it is necessary that I just say, Lord, if this is what You have for me, if this is part of Your plan for my life, here I am. Work out Your plan in me. And I commit the situation, I commit the issues unto the Lord. He is a faithful Creator. He is watching over me, nothing happens but what He allows it to happen. And if He is allowing it to happen, He has a good reason to allow it to happen. And so I commit myself unto Him as a faithful Creator.

God has not promised skies always blue. Flowers strewn pathways all our lives through. God has not promised sun without rain. Joy without sorrow, peace without pain. God has not promised we shall not know toil and temptation, trouble and woe. He has not told us that we shall not bear many a burden and many a care. God hath not promised smooth roads and wide. Swift, easy travel needing no guide. Never a mountain, rocky and steep. Never a river turbid and deep. But God has promised strength for the day. Rest for the laborer, light for the way. Grace for the trials, help from above. Unfailing sympathy, undying love.

He'll be with us. No matter what we go through, He is there. I just commit myself unto Him, Lord, my life is in Your hands. You take care of it.

Father, we thank You for the fact that we can serve You and know that You are watching over us and know that You love us supremely. And therefore, nothing happens in our lives outside of Your will because You are watching over. We don't understand and we don't know, Father, why this particular trial, why this problem, why the agony and suffering that we feel within, the pain. But Lord we know that we are Yours and we know that You're a faithful Creator, a loving God. And we commit our lives and these issues unto You and we look to You, Lord, to be with us and to work through these things Your perfect work in our lives, bringing us into conformity to the image of Jesus. And as You stamp His image upon us, thank You, Lord, for the processes by which You conform us into Your will. Have Thine own way, Lord, have Thine own way. You're the Potter, we're the clay. Mold us, shape us, Lord, after Your will. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.