

## STUDY ON THE BOOK OF FIRST PETER

### SERVING GOD IN EVERYTHING!

Read 1 Peter 4:1-8

#### **Introduction.**

Christians are sinners, but this is nothing to brag about. I've heard people recite as their spiritual mantra, "I'm just a sinner, saved by grace." True. But if you haven't turned away from sin with hearty repentance, then you are rebellious.

Shame on us if we sin knowingly and shamelessly. Peter tells us in this passage that there's no excuse for Christians to live like pagans. Rather we Christians have come from a place of sin (past tense) and should be grateful to God for deliverance. We may struggle as God purifies our thoughts, hearts, and motives. But we must abstain fully from acts of sin that characterized our life before Christ.

#### **Done with Sinning**

*“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin” (v1)*

The commitment God calls us to have been nothing greater than the commitment Jesus had in enduring suffering for our salvation. In the last days we need to have a commitment to God that will endure through great struggles. Jesus communicated the same idea when He told us that anyone who would come after Him must take up his cross and follow (Matthew 16:24). Taking up the cross meant that you were absolutely committed and not looking back.

Many of us are defeated in our battle against sin because we refuse to sacrifice anything in the battle. We only want victory if it comes easily to us. Jesus called us to have the kind of attitude (“same mind”) that would sacrifice in the battle against sin (Matthew 5:29-30).

But this passage raises an interesting question. What was Jesus' attitude as he suffered on the cross? "Attitude" (NIV), "mind" (KJV), or "intention" (NRSV) is the Greek noun “*ennoia*”, "the content of mental processing, thought, knowledge, insight." Specifically, what was Jesus' thought about sin – since sin is the focus of this passage – as he bore the scourging he received? What was his attitude about sin as they drove the nails into his hands? As he hung on the cross for six hours, finally succumbing to his wounds? What was his insight toward sin? What was his understanding of God's desire for you and me to be free from sin's pollution and degradation in our lives?

Peter says to "arm yourselves" with this attitude. The Greek verb is *hoplizō*, means "equip, arm," The insight that Jesus died a horrible death because of our sin ought to be a sword in our hand to defend us from sin returning to harass and defeat us. Just as Jesus died for sins "once for all," so we are to be "done" with sin ourselves. "Done" (NIV), "ceased" (KJV), or "finished" (NRSV) is the Greek verb *pauō*, "to cease doing something, stop (oneself), cease."

Are you done sinning?

## Living for the Will of God

*“... that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.”*  
(v2)

When a person suffers physical persecution for the sake of Jesus, it almost always profoundly changes their outlook regarding sin and the pursuit of the lusts of the flesh. That one is more likely to live the rest of his time in the flesh not for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. The phrase “has ceased from sin” depicts the spiritual state of the victorious sufferer. It carries a note of triumph; he has effectively broken with a life dominated by sin. It need not mean that he no longer commits any act of sin, but that his old life, dominated by the power of sin, has been terminated.

Peter finally gave us two-time references that are helpful in having the right attitude in our following of Jesus Christ.

- First, **no longer** should we live in sin, and we should answer every temptation and sinful impulse with the reply, “**no longer.**”
- Second, we should carefully consider how to **live the rest of our time**. God has appointed us some further days on this earth; when each of us must answer to Him how we **live this time**.

Instead of living in order to fulfil our petty desires and lusts, we live with a higher purpose -- to live the rest of our earthly lives ... for the will of God." That is God's desire for us, his plan for us, to learn to pattern our lives and our lifestyles after his will. It is not boring and old fashioned, but a challenge, an adventure, and the only way our lives can really be fulfilled.

### A Catalogue of Vices

*“For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.”* (v3)

Peter realized we have all spent enough time living like the world. Now we are called to live like Christians. It is a profound and foolish waste of time for Christians to live like the world, and we must simply stop being double-minded and start living as Christians. Sadly, many Christians (in their heart of hearts) think that they have **not spent enough** time doing the will of the ungodly. They want to experience more of the world before they make a full commitment to godliness. This is a tragic mistake and takes a path that leads away from eternal life.

**Lewdness:** This word begins a list of sins that Peter understood should only mark the *past* life of Christians and not the present. This word means to live without any sense of moral restraint, especially in regard to sexual immorality and violence. Lewdness also denotes excesses of all kinds of evil. Involving a lack of personal self-restraint, the term pictures sin as an inordinate indulgence of appetites to the extent of violating a sense of public decency.

**"Lust"** is the Greek noun *epithymia* meaning "desire for something forbidden." God has built sexual desire into humans. But we are to restrict that desire to the one we marry. In that context it is a legitimate and godly desire and joy. But we are not to live in unrestrained lust for any member of the opposite sex (or same sex) that strikes our fancy. We can't do that and fulfill the will of God.

**"Drunkenness"**. When we seek to intoxicate or drug ourselves in order to escape our lives or so we don't have to face our problems, we sin and fail to let the will of God be worked out in our lives.

"Orgies" (NIV), "revels" (NRSV, KJV) is the Greek noun *kōmos*, means "excessive feasting, carousing, revelry." "Party hearty" is the watchword of an entire generation. Jesus enjoyed parties and dinners. He was not an ascetic like John the Baptist. But partying for the excesses keeps the will of God from being fulfilled in us.

"Idolatry" is the Greek noun *eidōlatría*, which is a derogatory term, "image worship, idolatry". In Peter's Day, every Greek and Roman city had its own patron gods. Sacrifices were made to these gods and much of the city life was bound up in this idol worship. Many Christians, too, were entangled in it. They had been raised in idolatry, but even after becoming Christians there was the temptation to just "go with the flow," and not make others angry by refusing to take part in idol worship.

Today we understand idolatry in a figurative sense -- anything that takes the place of God in our lives. Money, power, the weekend get-a-way, a fast car. Whatever it is, it must take second place to God.

When we look at this list again, (**lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries**), we see just how little fallen man has progressed in the last 2,000 years. These problems have not been solved in the time since Peter wrote this letter.

### Going Along with the Crowd

*In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. (vv4-5)*

When the world looks at our godly living, they think it strange that we do not follow them in their flood of dissipation (wastefulness). If life lived after the flesh is anything, it is a waste. When we don't participate in the sin around us, we convict those who practice their sin, and they don't like that — so they speak evil of us.

When this account is required, all who live in the sins Peter described will clearly see how foolish they have been. Even if one seems to live the "good life" living by the world's rules, his life will be a waste in the measure of eternity. The awesome truth is that those who live in sin will meet terrible judgment unless they repent and turn to Christ. That's why your lifestyle around them is so important. Someone said well: "The only Bible they'll read is you."

### Preaching to the Dead

*"For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (v6)*

Peter has already told us that Jesus preached to the spirits in prison, preaching a message of judgment (1 Peter 3:19). The school of thought is that apparently, during this same time Jesus also preached a message of salvation to the faithful dead in Abraham's Bosom (Luke 16:22) who anticipated the work of the Messiah for them. This preaching to those who are dead was not the offer of a second chance, but the completion of the salvation of those who had been faithful to God under their first chance.

In doing this, Jesus fulfilled the promised that He would lead captivity captive (Psalm 68:18 and Ephesians 4:8). It may also be that Peter here had in mind those in the Christian community who had already died, perhaps even dying as martyrs. If this is the case, then Peter used their heroic example as a way to encourage his suffering readers to also be faithful.

## Self-Control in Preparation for Christ's Coming

*“But the end of all things is at hand; therefore, be serious and watchful in your prayers.” (v7)*

If we really believe that we live in the last days, it is all the more appropriate that we give ourselves to prayer (therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers). Many Christians who believe that Jesus is coming soon based on prophecy charts and political events fail to apply that belief in the proper way. They fail to apply themselves to more diligent prayer.

**Therefore, be serious... in your prayers:** We must give ourselves to serious prayer. As we see the weight of eternity rushing towards us, we dare not take the need for prayer lightly. **Therefore be... watchful in your prayers:** We must give ourselves to watchful prayer, primarily having our hearts and minds watching and ready for the return of Jesus Christ. But this also means watching ourselves and watching this world, measuring our readiness for Jesus' coming.

## Love and Hospitality

*“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.” Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 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.” (vv8-11)*

If these are the last days, then it is important for us to love those we are going to spend eternity with. In light of eternity, we must have fervent love for one another. For “love will cover a multitude of sins” which is true. Love does cover a multitude of sins, both the sins of the one loving and the sins of the one who is being loved.

**Be hospitable to one another without grumbling:** Love will show itself in hospitality. Christians should often open their homes to others and doing it all **without grumbling**.

**As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another:** Love will show itself as we give to the church family what God has given us as gifts. As we do so, we are good stewards of the many-faceted (manifold) grace of God given to us.

In 1 Corinthians 15:10, Paul makes it clear that he was what he was only by God's grace. But at the same time, “His grace toward me was not in vain” because Paul put his own God-inspired efforts to work with God's grace. The idea is that if we are **bad stewards of the manifold grace of God**, it is as if that grace was given to us in vain. That grace is wasted because it only comes to us and doesn't move through us.

**If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies:** Every part is important; each has its job to do. Even the smallest, seemingly least important part of the body of Christ is important. A man was rebuilding the engine to his lawn mower, and when he finished, he had one small part left over, and he couldn't remember where it went. He started the engine, and it ran great, so he figured that the part was useless — until he tried to stop the lawn mower, and it wouldn't stop! Even the smallest, seemingly least important part of the body of Christ is important.

As we serve **one another**, we do it with the strength God provides, **the ability which God supplies** — so that to Him **belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever**.