

1 Peter 4 • Arm yourselves with the same attitude as Christ

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We are going through the New Testament here on Sunday morning. We're in 1 Peter, and in the fourth chapter. We're going to be reading through the whole chapter here this morning. Before we do, I just want to remind you that Peter is addressing this letter to believers who are going through some very, very difficult times.

They're dealing with severe persecution. They're suffering for their faith, the faith that they have in Jesus. And in this chapter, Peter is going to talk to us a lot about suffering. In fact, there's no place in the Bible that talks more about suffering than in 1 Peter. The word “suffering” appears more in 1 Peter than in any other book of the Bible.

And there's a lot of important understanding that we get from this book as it relates to our biblical worldview of suffering. So if I were to ask you, what is your biblical worldview of suffering as a believer, if you weren't really sure how to be able to answer that question, after studying through this book and particularly this chapter, you're going to have a whole lot more to say on the subject. So follow along as I read through the chapter here, and then we'll pray and then we'll get into unpacking these verses. Verse one:

“¹Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,²so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. ³For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. ⁴With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; ⁵but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

“⁷The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. ⁸Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹Show hospitality to one another without

grumbling. ¹⁰As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

“¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. ¹⁷For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

“¹⁸And ‘If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?’

“¹⁹Therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.”

Pray with me, please. Heavenly Father, as we take this chapter this morning and talk about what You moved upon the Apostle Peter to write about and what it means to us, we pray for Your Spirit to open our hearts to the ministry of Your grace that we might walk, Lord, today in a heart of understanding about these things. And even though suffering the way Peter is talking about it here isn't something that may be part of our daily experience here in the United States of America, we know, Lord, things could change quickly at any time, and we pray, Lord God, that You would help us to understand what You're saying to us and how You are preparing us for the days ahead.

We thank You, Father, for Your grace and power and wisdom and strength, and we know, Lord God, that You are here. And we ask You to touch every heart, and we ask it in the name of Jesus our Savior. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Peter obviously became aware of the fact that these believers were dealing with a great deal of suffering, and so he wrote to encourage them. A study through this letter is a very important reminder for us about what it means to belong to Jesus. Because, even as you heard me praying, suffering isn't something that we're dealing with here a whole lot, frankly, in our day-to-day life. There are

people around the world who are suffering for their faith, truly suffering. But we don't deal a whole lot with it. In fact, if you were to ask me, who are the people within the sphere of my own understanding who are maybe suffering the most, interestingly enough, I would have to say it is often in married couples, where one is married to an unbeliever who is hostile about the Gospel.

That can be a real and a very genuine form of suffering. And we've seen it happen. We've seen it happen to people in our own fellowship here. And perhaps it has even happened to you at some particular time in your life. I know that there are people who are married to unbelievers who can be pretty chill about the whole thing, about going to church, reading their Bible, praying and that sort of thing.

I get notes from people all the time that ask me, "How do I respond to my spouse who is constantly putting me down, constantly belittling me?" Or women who sometimes will write and say, "What do I do? My husband won't let me go to church." And that happens. That happens. They'll do everything in their power to stop her from going to church. And usually it's guys doing that to women. That's a genuine form of suffering. Let's make no mistake about it. I mean, those people are truly suffering.

So even though most of us have to confess that we're pretty comfortable, as I said, things could change very quickly. And that's why we're going through this letter and finding it important for us because we need a biblical worldview of suffering. So let's look again at the first five verses of this chapter, where Peter writes, *"¹Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, (he says) arm yourselves with the same way of thinking."*

Now, you'll remember in the previous chapter he had talked about how Christ suffered for us on the cross. He says, you are to arm yourself with the same way of thinking. And what he means by that, when he's talking about thinking, he's talking about how you consider the whole idea of suffering.

How do you think about suffering? What do you think about suffering? Well, again, this points back to Jesus. Let me show you on the screen in the previous verse. He wrote,(chapter 3):

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1 Peter 3:18 (ESV)

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous ..."

Now he says, you're to have the same attitude about suffering. And so he says, “*Arm yourselves.*” Now that's a very interesting statement because that's a military term actually. To arm yourself means to literally put on some kind of protection. Why would they put on armor back in those days? Why do they put on armor today? It's to bring protection, to literally protect yourself.

And so the whole idea here is, he wants you to put on an attitude that is meant to be a safeguard for you as it relates to suffering, so that when it happens, not if it happens, but when it happens, you're not going to be shaken or shocked or dismayed or saying, “What in the world is this? This came out of left field.”

He says, arm yourselves with an attitude that understands that this is really just part of what it means to be identified with Jesus Christ. We know that we're going to suffer. We know that some kind of suffering is going to happen in our lives. It might be minor. It might be major. And by the way, that isn't some paranoid personality disorder, believing that we're going to suffer.

There are people who have this idea, this complex, “everybody hates me.” That's not what we're dealing with. We're dealing with a biblical understanding that accepts the fact of the spiritual realities that when I'm united with Jesus Christ, that's going to create problems, as it were, because Paul told us elsewhere, that we are the aroma of Christ, both to people who are being saved and to people who are perishing.(2 Cor. 2:16) And by the way, you stink to people who are perishing.

Let me show you what Jesus said about suffering:

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John 15:18-21 (ESV)

If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: “A servant is not greater than his master.” If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, (he says, and here's the reason why) because they do not know him who sent me.

They don't know God. They don't. They might claim to know God, but they don't know God, and that's why they're going to do what they're going to do.

But Jesus made it very clear in that passage. If the world hates you, know that it hated me first. It hated me before it hated you.

Kind of funny, I actually got an email from a guy just this morning. Opened up my email and there, got a note from a guy who quoted this. He didn't know what I was going to teach on and didn't know that I was going to reference this passage. But he quoted John 15. He said, "How does this really apply to me?" He's coming from a standpoint like a lot of people are, that are living in relative ease and comfort as it relates to this issue of persecution and suffering, because we aren't really seeing it. But I actually already wrote him back, and I said, "Well, hey, praise God that you're not dealing with persecution. But it could change. It could change quick, and Jesus wants you to be prepared."

The other thing that you have to remember when you're reading the Bible, and this is something that sometimes folks don't factor into it, we tend to read the Bible and think that it's a message for me. Only. I reminded him, you're one person living in one area of the world. Jesus wrote that message for all believers living in all areas of the world. And we have to remember that all of the original apostles died a martyr's death, except perhaps, we think John actually died of natural causes, but that's not because they didn't try to kill him. They tried on several occasions to kill him, but it just didn't take. But the point is, many of the people whom Jesus has spoken those words to over the years, have suffered greatly for their faith.

Now, in the middle of verse one, you'll notice that, again, Peter says, "*1...whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.*" We read that, and we wonder, "Well, yeah, that's interesting. What's that all about?" Listen, Peter is not promising sinless perfection for those who go through some kind of suffering. He's simply observing the fact that suffering has a way of straightening out our priorities.

I don't know if you've experienced that in your own life. It's really interesting how what seemed to be hugely important in a person's life can suddenly become very insignificant once they go through a period of suffering. When they suddenly realize that, maybe, their days are numbered. All the goals and the things that they were trying to strive for and so forth suddenly just don't seem important anymore.

And that's what Peter is saying, and he goes on to describe this change of priorities in verse 2, when he says, no longer are they living for the rest of their lives "*2for human passions but (rather) for the will of God.*" Suffering has a

way of taking those everyday human passions that we seem to want to live for, and the world is encouraging us to live for, and putting them into perspective.

And what I once put so much energy toward, is now considered almost petty. “Why was I doing that? Why was I running after that? That doesn't seem important at all anymore.” And that's what Peter is saying. And the Apostle Paul also wrote about getting a different perspective on life as well when he wrote to the Philippians. (Let me put this on the screen.) This is a really great passage. He talks about the things that he used to either brag about or consider to his profit, and he says:

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Philippians 3:7-8 (NIV84)

...Whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. (In fact, he says) What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to (this one goal) the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. (In fact, he says, now I've gotten to the point where) I consider them rubbish (alongside this whole idea of gaining Christ and knowing him and loving and serving and walking with him).

That's a change of priorities, isn't it? Because the world tells us there are all these things that are so important for us. So important to run after, grab hold of, take hold of, grab all the gusto, whatever the commercial says. You need these things. You deserve a break, all the things you deserve. McDonald's has their jingle. Everybody's got their jingle about everything you deserve, and suddenly we find out this isn't really important. And we come to that place of saying, you know what's really important? Knowing Jesus. That's what's really important. That's a change of priorities.

Verse 3, Peter says, “*For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do,*” and he uses the word “Gentiles” there to refer to ungodly people, because, for the most part, in the first century, Gentiles were very ungodly people. We're Gentiles, so that would be a little self-deprecating, I suppose, to use that in relation to ourselves.

We just say, “the world.” We talk about the world or “the ungodly,” and what Peter is saying here is that, whatever we've lived in the past in an ungodly way, that's enough. That's enough. It'll suffice for doing what the world does. And he talks about some of the ways the world lives. Notice he says, “*living in sensuality,*” and that's essentially the pursuit of physical pleasure. Running after physical pleasure. Don't ever let anybody tell you that physical pleasure isn't

pleasurable. It's very pleasurable, but when you run after it, it becomes your god (small g), and it will rule you. He talks about "*passions*." Your Bible may say "lusts" because that's actually what the Greek word speaks of. It speaks of lustfully desiring to fulfill belongings of the flesh. "*Drunkenness*," (I don't think that really needs any explanation), *orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry*," which is running after and making gods of our pleasures and desires and so forth.

Peter says, we've wasted enough time living like that. We've done that plenty. Let's not waste any more time. We're only given so much time on this earth. And when I was young, I would hear people say that, and I would kind of go, "Eh, but..." But when you're young, you're bulletproof, and you feel like life is just going to go on endlessly. But we only get so much time, and we've wasted enough of it, and that's what he's saying here.

He goes on in verse 4 to say, "*With respect to this*, (and he's talking about the way the world lives) *they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you*." And debauchery is the word (I don't use the word debauchery daily), but it just means living for sensual pleasure. But he says, they're surprised. The world is surprised that you don't want to go do that anymore. They're kind of talking about you, your old buds, maybe some of your old friends you used to kind of hang with before you came to Jesus and before He really got hold of your life.

And you used to hang out with them, and do the things that they did, and talk the way they talk, and run after the things they run after. And all the things that were important to them were important to you, but now they're not important to you anymore, and you don't really want to go and do those things anymore. And they're like, "What is up with you?" And it says that they're surprised that you don't want to do this anymore, and they malign you. And that's persecution. They malign you.

But there's one thing we can be sure of, and that's expressed in verse 5. Peter says, but they're going to have to "*give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead*." And that's one of those statements that reminds us there's a judgment coming. There's always some Christians in the room that are going, "Yeah, bring it on!" They're anxious for God to judge. "God just needs to come and judge." But you have to remember something about judgment.

He says it in verse 17. (I want you to skip down to verse 17.) "*For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God*." Oh, oops! Here I was, going, "Yeah, God, bring on the judgment!" and then I read here, it begins with us. It

begins here. It begins at the household of God. ^{“17...And what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (if that's the fact). And if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become the ungodly and the sinner?”} So, what is he talking about exactly when he says, *“It is time for judgment to begin at the household of God?”*

We have to be careful when we use the word judgment as it relates to believers. We have to be careful. Not that it's inappropriate, but we have to be careful. Here's why. Because Jesus took our judgment, okay? We have to understand that. Jesus was judged for us, for you. On the cross. And you accepted that judgment, the judgment that God brought against Him in your place, right?

And Jesus was rejected and forsaken on the cross. And that happened for you. So when we talk about judgment related to the church, we're talking about that process of pruning and disciplinary work that God accomplishes in our lives. That difficult, sometimes even painful, pruning process where He deals with us related to the kind of lives that we're living, not in the sense of a condemning judgment. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Amen? Right. So what we understand is that the judgment that comes to the body of Christ is a purifying work of God. And the church is always in need of being purified. Right?

It's interesting to me, I talk to believers sometimes who just seem to get happy when you start talking about judgment related to the body of Christ. They think that the body of Christ really needs to be judged, and I think that's frankly one of the reasons why some people, not everybody, but some people believe in a Post-Tribulation rapture. It's like, “We need to go through the tribulation. Yeah, we're nasty. We need to get cleaned up, and the tribulation is going to clean us up.”

And it seems like people are kind of angry. They take that attitude. You have to remember that there's this interesting sort of a parallel thing going on with the body of Christ. Yes, God sees the needs that we have to be purified, but you also have to understand something. He also sees us through the blood of Jesus Christ.

And through the blood of Jesus, it's done. You're perfect. Do you understand? There's the temporal way that God views you and the body of Christ as a group, but then there's the eternal way that God views the body of Christ. And you're the bride. We are the bride of Christ. He doesn't look at his bride and go, “You need to clean up.” He looks at His bride and says, “You are gorgeous. You are

the apple of My eye.” So that's an interesting thing. You have to hold that in balance; you have to hold that in tension.

So verse 6, let's deal with this: *“For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.”* We actually talked about this in our last study of 1 Peter, and we discussed the fact that there is a story that Jesus told in Luke 16, (we won't take time to turn there today because we did it last time in our study).

And Jesus told in this story about the death of these two men. Remember there was this rich man who remains nameless in the story, but there was this diseased beggar named Lazarus, and they both died, and they both went to essentially the same place, although one side of this place was a place of comfort and the other side was a place of torment.

And we learned that that is essentially this holding place because people didn't go to heaven before Christ died on the cross. A lot of Christians don't understand that. People didn't go to heaven before Jesus opened the way for heaven. He had to cleanse the sin of mankind once and for all before people entered heaven.

Now people go to heaven when they die, but they didn't then. The people who died in faith were comforted, and the people who died rejecting God were being tormented as they awaited judgment. And we talked about the fact that, in the last chapter (3:19), he mentioned that Jesus went and declared himself to those who were disobedient, and that would be the people who were there in torment.

But we also find out now here in verse 6, that he went and preached, and this is a different word than the one that is used in the previous chapter. It says he went and preached the gospel, right? This is, this word preached is where we get our word evangelize. So He declared himself as the fulfillment of the Messianic promises, and then took those individuals who were in paradise, into heaven with Him.

And so that side of that holding area that we would call paradise was emptied. And those people were taken to heaven because now the way to heaven was open, since Jesus had opened the way. So he goes on now in verse 7 to say,

“The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded (and this is an interesting reason) for the sake of your prayers.” It's kind of interesting, isn't it? In other words, he's saying, keep your wits about you so that

you can pray. That's an interesting thing to say. Why would he say keep your wits about, (I mean, that's my words, that's my paraphrase) keep your wits about you so you can pray.

Why would Peter say something like that to people who are going through suffering? Well, it's an appropriate word for anybody. The enemy loves to get believers stirred up and distracted by all of the craziness and all of the drama and all the junk going on in life. Because he knows that if he can do that, he can get him to a place where they can't even utter a prayer. They're just so consumed with the craziness of life.

He urges two things you'll notice here. He urges, first of all, self-control, and we forget sometimes that self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. It's like we don't really want to admit it, but it's there. It's the last one mentioned, but it's a very important one. And when we say something is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, that means that fruit is living in you by virtue of the Holy Spirit living in you. And even though you may not show a lot of fruit in your life as it relates to self-control, it doesn't mean that the capability isn't there. It means that perhaps you're just resisting that particular fruit of the Holy Spirit.

The fruit is there, right? So, notice that he also goes on to encourage sober-mindedness, we're to also be sober-minded, which is the ability to think clearly. The Greek word that is translated sober-mindedness actually literally means to abstain from wine. But, I think Peter is using it (certainly that applies), but he's using it in a more general sense because, there's a whole lot more that can cause you to stop thinking clearly than just drinking wine.

There's a whole lot more, and obviously putting any kind of a substance in your body can be a problem to cloud your mind, but you can abstain from all those things and eat a very pure diet and still have a very clouded thinking. There's a lot of other things that can come into our hearts and minds that cloud our thinking, and sometimes we forget about this, guys. I get convicted pretty regularly on movies. Movies can cloud my mind. Secular music can cloud my mind if I'm not careful. Books. If I'm not reading the right books, they can cloud your mind.

Pornography will cloud a person's mind, as much as being drunk, and keep them from being able to pray. The Bible tells us to think on things that are good and pure and right and true. And so many times we fill our hearts and our minds with things that are the exact opposite, and we wonder why we're having a hard time praying.

And that's what Peter says here: keep your heart clear from these things so you can pray, because prayer is the most underappreciated tool that we have been given. If only we understood, oh, if only we could see what's going on in the spirit realm when we pray. Oh, wouldn't that be cool? "Well, why doesn't God show me what's happening when I pray?" "I prayed, nothing happened." People say that all the time: "I prayed. Nothing happened." How do you know? How do you know nothing happened? Why are you saying that? "Well, nothing happened that I can see." Exactly. "So, why is it God won't show us? "I wish He'd just show me what's happening when I pray."

Maybe He wants you to have faith. Maybe He wants you to believe what the Word says about prayer. Even if you can't see it with your eyes, maybe He wants you to believe that you're making a difference, because prayer makes a difference. A huge difference. So we need to be careful to heed the things that the Word is saying here related to being able to have an effective prayer life.

Now, the rest of the chapter, verses 8 down through the end, Peter's giving some practical ways to live in a hostile world, living for Jesus, that doesn't want you to live for Jesus, he says in verse 8, "*above all, keep loving (the word *agape* is used there, the highest form of love) keep loving one another earnestly (Your Bible may say "fervently," and then he says this) since love covers a multitude of sins.*" What exactly does that mean? Well, it's kind of interesting whenever you use the word love and sin in the same sentence, Christians have a tendency to get confused because sometimes we think that to call out sin, we have to be really angry.

And it's the opposite of loving somebody. And the reason we think that is because the world has done a very effective job at communicating to us and convincing us, frankly, that love and affirmation are the same thing when you're dealing with someone's behavior. You know what I mean?

To love somebody and to affirm that person—those are synonymous. That's what the world tells you. And so, we're drinking the Kool-Aid, so to speak, as it relates to our understanding of that sort of thing. And so the converse also becomes true. Refusing to affirm someone's behavior or their lifestyle is an act of hatred.

Have you ever gotten that from anybody? That's getting to be one of the more popular questions that I get, I've got a nephew, I've got a niece, I've got a this, I've got a that, I've got this guy I work with, or da, da, da, who..., and then they start to say something about how this person has made decisions about their lifestyle, about how they're going to live, which are unbiblical.

And they say, “How do I respond to this person?” What do you do? Have you ever, I'm not asking for a response here among you, what do you do? What do you do when you know that something is wrong, and you've got a family member or a distant relative or something like that, and there's a couple of guys getting married or something like that (I mean, to each other)? Do you go? Do you stay home? Do you write him a note explaining why you're going to stay home? How do you handle that sort of a situation?

The reason we struggle so much is because we have gotten bullied into being afraid that if we show any lack of affirmation related to someone's own biblical lifestyle, that we will be considered a hater. “You're a hater. Haters hate. It's all they do, man.” The Bible talks about, and this is what we ought to believe, the Bible talks about speaking the truth in love. We need to learn how to do that. We need to learn how to speak the truth in love. And I know it's hard. It's hard. It's hard when people are convinced within themselves that any lack of affirmation is hatred. If they've convinced themselves of that, it's going to be a tough thing to do. You guys know how childish that is.

How incredibly childish it is to say. “If you don't agree with me, or if you don't affirm my choices in life, you hate me.” That's what children say to their parents when they're being emotionally manipulative, and it's what some adults say when they're being emotionally manipulative and haven't learned to grow up, but we still need to learn how to speak the truth in love. We still need to learn how to communicate a heart of love to people, even those with whom we disagree.

I keep remembering the example of Jesus. I love that story of the woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8:3-11). And they throw her at Jesus' feet. Demand that He agree with the law as it relates to an individual so caught. “The Law of Moses says we should stone this person. What do you say?”

And you guys know this story. Jesus says, “Fine, go ahead, stone her. Just whoever is without sin, you pick up the first stone and throw it,” and they start walking away one by one. That's love, isn't it? That's mercy and love. But did you notice, Jesus didn't stop there? He knelt down, and He said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Is there anyone here?” “No, nobody.” He said, “Okay, then neither do I accuse you. Go and sin no more.” That's truth. So we have this perfect balance of love and truth. Jesus, no surprise to anybody, is the example of how to speak that word, speak the truth in love.

It's interesting, that Peter goes on to actually talk about the fact that “*love covers a multitude of sins,*” and then he's saying really the same thing that Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 13. You guys know that chapter, the Love Chapter.

It is an interesting chapter in the Bible, but he describes what real love is, genuine love, and one of the things that he describes when he talks about real love is, this: love “*keeps no record of wrongs.*” (NIV) Remember that? That's love. It keeps no record of wrongs. That's what Peter is saying when he says, love covers over a multitude of sins.

That's what he's saying. He's not saying love ignores sin or love covers up sin. You're not being loving to somebody by ignoring their sin. They will die in their sin. You're not being loving by just ignoring it. That's not what he means when he says, love covers a multitude of sins. It's not a cover-up.

This verse is specifically talking about keeping no record of wrongs. That's what he means when he says love covers over a multitude of sins. Let me show you an interesting proverb that kind of goes along with this.

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Proverbs 19:11 (ESV)

Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

Isn't that a great verse? You want to hear the 2022 paraphrase of that? Let it go. Let it go. There's some people who struggle letting it go, and they think they have to have an intervention for every offense that has ever happened to them. But the proverb says it is to a person's glory to overlook an offense. Why? Because of love. When somebody offends you, you don't have to confront everybody who has ever offended you. You just don't have to do that. It's not necessary. Just forget it, forgive them, and move on. Love covers over a multitude.

Next, Peter says in verse 9, “*Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.*” And by the way, hospitality in the first century didn't mean having a dinner party. It literally meant having somebody in your home. There weren't very many inns back in those days, and the ones that existed were raunchy places. I mean, dangerous places to stay.

And so, the Christians were encouraged in the first century to open up their homes to people traveling through. Some people were refugees. They were literally fleeing from other persecution. And so Peter is saying, be willing to

show hospitality, and do it without grumbling. And frankly, I can understand where the grumbling part comes from, because I value my privacy.

I love entertaining people. I like having people in my home. When they come to stay, that's a different situation, isn't it? When they're messing up the bathroom...(and every introvert in the room knows exactly what I'm talking about. Don't pretend like you don't, but anyway). Some people have the gift of hospitality. And that's why Peter goes on to say in verse 10, *“as each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.”*

And then he mentions some of the areas where God has given grace to people. In speaking, in verse 11, he says, if you're speaking, if you have that gift to speak, then do it as if you're speaking for God. If you have the gift of serving, (and that's a wonderful gift. We need servants, people who help and do) and he says, do it with the strength that God supplies and make sure that God is the one who's glorified and so forth.

So there are all kinds of gifts that are given, and the assumption here is that everybody has a gift. You may not know what your gift is, but you're expected to serve anyway. How do I find out my gift? Just get started. You'll figure it out as you go along. You'll also find out what's not your gift, but that's okay. It's okay to go through a process of elimination. You do a little service over in this area. You go, "Well, that's not my gift. Can't do that." Don't think that just because you may not want to do something, that's necessarily not your gift.

I dug my heels in the very first time that the opportunity came my way to teach the Bible. I didn't want to do it because the church we were attending at the time had a youth ministry. “Teen” was like junior and senior high together, and they needed somebody to teach in there and to lead and to help, and the pastor came to us and said (we had just started walking with the Lord), “Why don't you guys get involved in the youth group?”

As we were driving home talking about it, Sue was like, “Let's do this.” I was like, “Ah, I don't know. Teenagers?” And we weren't that far from teenagers ourselves. I mean, how old were you at the time? 20. 21? Yeah. And I was 14. No, I'm just kidding. Kidding. But I didn't want to do it, but then once I got in and started teaching the Word, I was like, "This is fun!"

If you're thinking, “Oh, I don't know,” give it a shot. See what happens. And so, just serve. And if you need a good reason to serve, by the way, just start serving. I'll give you one. Jesus is coming back, and you don't want Him to find you

sitting on your hands. That's not the way you want to be found. Just kind of going, "Well, I was just waiting for a phone call."

Peter concludes this chapter, returning again to the subject of suffering:

"¹²Beloved," he says, *"do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you."* Don't consider it a weird thing, because we've already been given a biblical worldview as it relates to suffering, and we know that it is expected, but he tells us here to rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings. But then he talks about what it means to be suffering for the name of Christ, being insulted, and so forth and so on.

But he also talks about other kinds of suffering. Did you notice in those verses, he talks about the kind of suffering that you don't want to endure, and that's suffering for your own poor choices. And he makes reference in verse 15 to some things that you don't want to suffer because of, right?

Unfortunately, we often do, but there's this other kind of suffering that he really doesn't make reference to here, but it's a suffering, nonetheless. And it's suffering from living in a fallen world. You guys do know we live in a fallen world, right? And we live in a fallen world that is dark and dangerous and things happen, and sometimes it's weather-related. Sometimes it's, you have an accident, things happen, and you suffer because of it. But that's really not the thing that he's referring to. He's talking about this third kind of suffering, which is suffering because we are sharing in Christ's sufferings, and that means suffering as a believer.

Doesn't really matter though what area you're suffering. And even if you're suffering for your own poor choices, which we do, or you're suffering because you live in a fallen world and people get sick and accidents happen. Or you're suffering perhaps because you're a believer. God will help you either way, in either one of those.

Can I just tell you something? Even if you're suffering because of your poor choices, bring it to Him. I find Christians don't want to do that. I find Christians don't want to pray about the suffering that they've brought upon themselves, because they think they don't deserve God's help. Listen, let me say something. You never deserve God's help, and you never will, so don't let that stop you.

He loves you anyway. Not because you're deserving, but because He's loving and merciful, and that's why we go to Him. We don't go to Him because we think we deserve help. Right? You don't deserve help. "I just don't feel like I

deserve God's help.” You don't! That's what I tell people. You don't deserve His help. But don't let that stop you. He loves you. “Even when I made the mistake?” Even then.

We looked at verses 17 and 18. Peter ends the chapter in verse 19 saying, *“¹⁹Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.”* And that means continuing to walk with the Lord, continuing to serve God, continuing to do what He's called you to do on a day-to-day basis. Even if you're struggling, even if you're suffering, whatever you're suffering for. Continue to walk with God, continue to love Him. Continue to do good. Amen?

Let's stand together. If you need prayer this morning, we would be more than happy to pray with you. Just come on up front as everybody is leaving, and we'll spend some time praying with you. We'll have some folks up here to pray with you. And so oh, and Happy Memorial Day. We're observing Memorial Day and remembering those who have served with their lives.

Father, we thank You so much for the incredible love that You have for us, and whether we are suffering because of our own poor choices or suffering because we have just run into the fallenness of this world, or whether we're suffering because we belong to You.

We just want to tell You, Lord, we trust You to see us through, to walk us through, to enable us, Lord, to hold our heads up. Keep praying, keep serving, keep loving, and arming ourselves with an understanding that suffering is part of what it means to belong to Jesus. Thank You, Father, for the reminders of this small letter, and we pray that You'd continue to fill us with grace and insight as we go from this place this week. We ask in the name of Jesus who is the Savior and King of all. And all God's people said together, Amen. God bless you. Have a good rest of your Sunday.