

## 1 Peter

### Lesson #15, Chapter 4:1-6

It's important to remember that all of 1 Peter is connected. Each succeeding chapter in this book is tightly bound to what precedes it. Peter writes with purpose and a clear sense of what he wants to communicate to the poor persecuted and scattered believers. Thought builds upon thought so that each encouragement, example, and exhortation is funneled into the oft repeated theme: Salvation can and must make a difference in a person's life, consequently one lives for the glory of God no matter what the circumstances. So, in the case of 4:1-6, which contains some difficult statements to interpret, we must remember the theme of this book that Peter has woven throughout his letter so that we too can understand and apply 1 Peter 4:1-6 to our lives.

To gain a good sense of the context, please read 3:8-4:19 before beginning this lesson.

1. Peter begins 4:1 with *therefore* that refers back to his comments about Christ in 3:18. Read those 2 verses together (3:18 and 4:1) and explain Peter's train of thought.
2. In the preceding verses Peter encouraged the believers to follow Christ's example in the midst of unjust suffering, now he reveals a crucial attitude they must possess if they are to follow Christ's example. What is it according to verse 1?
3. What was Christ's purpose according to 3:17-18? See also 2:19-24.
4. From what you have learned, what are some specific ways you can arm yourself with the same purpose as Christ when you are enduring trials?

5. Peter provides a reason at the end of verse 1 for arming yourselves with the same purpose as Christ in your suffering. What reason does he give?
  
6. The first *hermeneutical* (a big word that means rules for studying the Bible) principle any student of the Bible learns is “context is king.” That rule means context is what determines the meaning of a passage and is to be considered foremost among the other Bible study principles when determining the meaning of a text. In this case, the meaning of the phrase at the end of 4:1 can and must be understood in light of Peter’s comments in 2:11-12 and the subsequent discussion on submission to trials to the end of Chapter 3. Keeping that in mind, what does Peter mean when he says *because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin*. Be sure to read 3:17-18; 2:24; and 2:11-12 as you develop your answer.
  
7. Peter is driving home the theme of the book in this section (that your salvation through Jesus Christ will make a difference in how you live no matter what circumstances you find yourself in). This is a familiar idea in Paul’s letters as well. Look up the following verses and record what you learn about salvation’s effect upon sin: Rom. 6:6-7; Gal. 5:24; Eph. 5:7-10; Phil. 3:9-11; Col. 3:3-5; and 2 Tim. 2:11.
  
8. Knowing that salvation produces a changed life, even during suffering, how are we to live our lives according to verse 2?
  
9. *To live for the will of God*. So often we think of *resigning* ourselves to God’s will. We might sigh, shake our heads and say, “Well, it was the Lord’s will for this to happen.” Yet verse 2 says we are to *live for* the will of God, not just resign ourselves to it. “To live” the will of God means to breathe the will of God, to grip it as life itself and to have it as the focus of your being. Assess how you are living for the will of God at this time in your life. What does verse 2 tell you about your purpose today?

10. What reason does Peter give for this purposeful living in verse 3?
  
11. Prior to becoming a Christian, you may not have lived to the excesses described here, but what is the main point Peter is making that we need to be sure to understand and apply from verse 2?
  
12. How do the following Scriptures echo what Peter is saying here in verse 3? See 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 2:1-3, 10; Col. 1:21-22; 3:7-8; and Titus 2:11-14.
  
13. What inevitably happens when someone turns away from sin to follow Christ (verse 4)?
  
14. What encouragement does Peter give for those who are maligned in verse 5? See also 2:12.
  
15. Why would Peter's encouragement be especially helpful to the scattered believers in their present circumstances? Read 2 Thess. 1:4-10 to see the similar circumstances the Thessalonian believers found themselves in. What similarities do you find between these two passages?
  
16. Look up the following verses and list what you learn about Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. See Jn. 5:22-29; Acts 10:42; 17:30-31; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; James 4:12.

17. What do the Scriptures teach about the judgment of believers and unbelievers? Base your answer from the following verses: Mt. 25:31-46; Jn. 3:16-18; 5:24; Rom. 5:18-21; 2 Thess. 1:6-10; 1 Pet. 2:6-8; 1 Jn. 4:17; Rev. 20:11-15.
  
18. All commentators agree that verse 6 poses some serious interpretative challenges to any Bible student. It's for that reason that we want to examine the context preceding verse 6 to make sure we are interpreting the verse in line with the flow of the passage, just as we did for verse 1. To begin with, note and write down the similar phrasing Peter uses in 3:18; 4:1 and 4:6.
  
19. With the words of verse 5 still echoing in his head, Peter continues his thoughts about those believers who have died. What does it mean to be *judged in the flesh* as used here? See Rom. 5:21; 6:23; I Cor. 15:16-18, 22, 54-57.
  
20. What word describes the state of the people Peter is writing about in verse 6 that tells you they have been judged in the flesh?
  
21. What does verse 6 tell us about the purpose of the gospel being preached?
  
22. The conclusion of verse 6 takes us back to where we started in this lesson: living for the will of God. Peter wanted to make sure that the scattered believers understood that circumstances do not and must not change their purpose. The same is true for us, no matter how difficult our situation, we are to live for the One who saved us and called us with a holy calling. Write out a prayer of commitment to live for the will of God each day, especially when you find yourself in difficult circumstances.

O Jesus, Thou hast promised to all who follow Thee,  
That where Thou art in glory, there shall Thy servant be;  
And, Jesus, I have promised to serve Thee to the end;  
O give me grace to follow, my Master and my Friend.  
John E. Bode