

1 Peter 4:1-6 Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, **arm yourselves also with the same understanding**—because the one who suffers in the flesh is finished with sin—² in order to live the remaining time in the flesh no longer for human desires, but for God’s will. ³ For there has already been enough time spent in doing what the Gentiles choose to do: carrying on in unrestrained behavior, evil desires, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and lawless idolatry. ⁴ They are surprised that you don’t join them in the same flood of wild living—and they slander you. ⁵ They will give an account to the one who stands ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶ For this reason the gospel was also preached to those who are now dead, so that, although they might be judged in the flesh according to human standards, they might live in the spirit according to God’s standards.

Introduction: We live in a fallen world that is only a shadow of what it will become in the New Creation.

Let’s summarize his first paragraph right there.

Summary:

- So Christ has suffered once the in body for sins
- We are baptized by the Spirit into Christ’s death and raised by the Spirit for the forgiveness of sins
- And now we arm ourselves with this understanding in order to keep from being pulled back into the orbit of the world’s system. Their system of thinking, their way of living.

This results in their shock—they are utterly flummoxed that we are not joining in on the trendy and fashionable cliché’s of pop-philosophy that permeate our culture.

This also results in them slandering our character and motives. He picks this themes up again in vv. 13-16

¹³ Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

¹⁵ Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or a meddler. ¹⁶ But if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in having that name.

Transition: How do we arm ourselves with this understanding?

God's End-Times Program

1. Understand that we live in the end-times. Famine, plague, locust swarms, crashed economies, a world on fire, and rumors of impending war; asteroids passing by earth too close for comfort. About six months ago I could have easily pulled these words out of the **Mount Olivet (Mt. 24; Lk 21) or Revelation (Rev. 6–18).**

But I pulled those terms or phrases out of modern headlines. I certainly don't need to tell you that the world feels like it's about to come apart at the seams—like it just can't take much more of this.

Are we in the End Times?

Yes. And we have been for a long time. Let's look at one of the earliest statements made about it by Peter and one of the latest first century statements, also by Peter. Answering the charge of morning drunkenness, Peter responds to the crowd that the Holy Spirit has been poured out on all people...

“On the contrary, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ‘And it will be *in the last days*, says God, that I will pour out my Spirit on all people’” (Acts 2:17ff.).

Toward the end of his life during Nero's reign Peter taught the exiled Christians scattered across Rome, **“*The end of all things is near*; (1 Pet 4:7).**

Peter thought that the last days had started when God poured out his Spirit on all people as a sign of his in-breaking Kingdom. He thought that the end of all things was “near” or at the door. This means that we have been living in the end-times for two-thousand years.

There is good indication that the Apostles thought that Jesus would bodily, visibly return in their lifetime. He didn't. And every generation has believed this, and every generation has been wrong.

But though every generation has been wrong in the past, *some generation* in the future is going to be right.

And in the meantime what kind of behavior ought to characterize the faithful?

2. What should characterize the faithful until Christ returns?

- **Be Alert:** The word for “alertness” is *sophroneo* meaning “the quality of being prudent, reasonable, sensible; the ability to keep one’s head under pressure.” **The opposite of this character trait is hysteria.** You and I know something the world doesn’t know. We know that we are already living on borrowed time, the world is winding down as we know it, and new creation is coming. We have an advantage over the masses who are prone to hysteria and fear. So this calls for alertness; vigilance and watchfulness;
- **Be sober-minded in prayer:** The word for sober-minded means “free of mental drunkenness, the result of which is rashness and confusion.” The analogy here is that we need to be vigilant and alert in prayer—resulting in a mind that is free of hazy, uncontrolled, thinking—leading to rash action and confusion.
Alertness in prayer inoculates us from the worry, the fear, the hysteria that is in our culture right now.
- **Be relentless in your love for each other:** “Maintain constant love of each other”: as love covers over a multitude of sins. **As the world is tearing itself apart—the church needs to strengthen the bonds of our unity—in love. Why?** Because love redeems. Love covers. Love suffocates the embers of disagreement before they turn into a blazing fire of animosity. Love is our highest law. Love is our central ethic. Love has that power.
- **Be hospitable:** “practice hospitality” He uses this interesting word *philoxenos* which is a combination of two words in Greek: *phile* meaning “brother.” The word *xenos* means “stranger” and is where we get the family of terms like “xenophobia” meaning—“fear of a stranger” or the fear of someone who is “other” than you. Hospitality means to treat strangers and outsiders with brotherly love. Yet, he uses this term of the brotherhood. **If we are to be welcoming to those outside the community of faith, then how much more so should we be welcoming to our brothers and sisters in Christ?**
- **Be agreeable:** “without complaining.” This word literally means to refrain from “speaking in a low tone”—that is, under one’s breath. It is used in contexts describing the murmuring, whispering or secret discussions about someone else’s character.
Phil. 2:14, Paul said “do everything without complaining.” My prayer is that God would deliver me from being a peevish, cantankerous soul. A person who is just always uptight and irritable about every issue.
- **Be of service:** “just as each one has a gift (charisma), use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God.” The word he uses here for service is *diakoneo* the same word he used in **1 Pet. 1:12** when he stated that the prophets who looked intently into the times and circumstances of their own prophecies—**they thought they were serving you.** They believed they were serving a future generation with their gifts. Let me ask, how often do we think of the gifts, the talent, the treasure our service—**how often do we think about serving a future generation?** I have been obsessed with the question,

“What am I doing for Christ/how am I serving, so that what I’m doing will outlive me?”

In our world we have become so accustomed to good medicine, vaccines, technology—all of that has made it possible for us to experience the promise of *lasting life*. A novel situation in the history of humanity. Previous generations took comfort in the promise of *everlasting life*.

Again, you and I live in such strange times. Centenarians (those who live to age 100 or more) are expected to rise to half a million. That number is expected to increase sharply, perhaps even double, by 2050.

We have become so accustomed to promise of lasting life that we don’t think much about everlasting life.

3. Expect Judgment. 4:16^b “let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in having that name. ¹⁷ For the time has come for judgment to begin with God’s household, and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who disobey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And **if a righteous person is saved with difficulty, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?** ¹⁹ So then, let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator while doing what is good.”

So, let me end with this thought: God’s judgment on those who reject the Gospel of God is going to be different than his judgment on us. But make no mistake about—*we do experience judgment*. Let me give you several ways judgment occurs in the Christian life:

Caveat: The Second Coming of Christ is our Hope and there is no expectation of Condemnation associated with it. The second coming of Christ is described as our blessed hope, a cause for rejoicing, and great expectation that Christ will bring the salvation from the presence of sin and its corruption.

Jesus said, “Truly I tell you. He that hears my Word and believes on Him who sent me has everlasting life and shall not come under condemnation—that one has passed from death to life.”

Paul stated, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1-2). God’s judgment on the believer and the church is not to condemn us but to refine us, to purify us, to prepare us for service, and to assess our works in this life.

Temporal Judgments

- **For Refinement:** 1 Cor. 11:31 “If we were properly judging ourselves, we would not be judged, ³² but when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined, so that we may not be condemned with the world.” God’s judgment for us has the effect of bringing well-needed discipline into our lives so that we might not fall under the same judgment as the world.
- **For Purification:** 2 Cor. 11:2-4 “For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy, because I have promised you in marriage to one husband—to present a **pure bride to Christ.** ³ **But I fear that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your minds may be seduced from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.** ⁴ **For if a person comes and preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you had not received, or a different gospel, which you had not accepted, you put up with it splendidly!”**

What is at stake in the life of the Christian is whether or not our lives will, in the end, bring glory and honor when Christ is revealed. 1 Pet. 1:7 “so that the proven character of your faith—more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is **refined** by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Summary: Temporal judgments refine the church and purify it from false teaching which deviates from the gospel and the value system of grace. Judgment begins in the house of God.

Eschatological Judgment for Reward: Rom. 14:10, speaking to Christians Paul says, “For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.”

- **For Reward and Loss:** 2 Cor. 5:19 tells us “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”

1 Cor 3:11-15 “For no one can lay any foundation other than what has been laid down. That foundation is Jesus Christ. ¹² If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, ¹³ each one’s work will become obvious. For the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire; the fire will test the quality of each one’s work. ¹⁴ If anyone’s work that he has built survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone’s work is burned up, he will experience loss, but he himself will be saved—but only as through fire.”

Series: God of All Grace / Message: The End is Near / Jeff Kennedy 8/13/2020

The message? God's judgment and wrath is coming upon the earth. But God's judgment begins in his own house. To refine and purify his bride—to reveal by trial and fire who are really believers and who are false believers. To ultimately give us the free grace of salvation by faith—and to reward us for a life of good works.