1 Peter 4:1-11

Key Verse 4:1

*“Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.”*

Introduction: The believers should have the same attitude in sufferings as Christ did. Jesus suffered for sins, so that those that suffer in the body would be done with sins. He willingly suffered because of God’s love for sinners; in order to forgive sinners and save them from eternal judgment. Instead of living the rest of their lives for pleasures and suffering for their sins, they were called to suffer for the sake of Christ. Those that die in Christ will live, but those that die apart from Christ will be judged and suffer eternally. Based on the love of God displayed in Jesus Christ, believers ought to love each other. They ought to welcome others without grumbling and serve them with the gifts provided by God--giving thanks to God.

1. Read verses 1-3. What attitude should the believers arm themselves with? (1) What purpose does suffering in the body have in the life of a believer? What changes in the life of a believer after suffering in the body? (2-3)

*Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.* ***2*** *As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.* ***3*** *For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.*

1. Believers should arm themselves with the same attitude as Christ had in sufferings. Jesus willingly submitted to God will for him to suffer in the body for the sins of the world. Believers are also called to participate in the sufferings of Christ (4:13). They ought to recognize this will of God and willingly suffer for the sake of Christ. Peter’s charge for believers to arm themselves with the same attitude is like preparing soldiers for battle. Believers are not to fear sufferings; so that they avoid, shy away from or enter into sufferings hesitantly. They are called to boldly arm themselves with the attitude of Christ in sufferings. They should have the attitude that they will surely suffer for Christ and that this is God’s will which pleases God. No one wants to or likes to suffer. Not even Christ wanted to or liked to suffer. But his suffering fulfilled God’s will and pleased God. God was glorified through Christ’s suffering on the cross.
2. Suffering in the body helps believers to be done with sin. Here, Peter uses very strong language, saying, “... whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.” He means that whoever suffers in the body for the sake of Christ--for the glory of God is through with sin. Here, whoever means that there are no exceptions. If any believer legitimately suffers for the sake of Christ--for God’s glory that believer is through with sin. Here also, through with sin is also an absolute statement. They are, at long last, through with sin. Many believers struggle with the same sins again and again. How can they be through with sin. It is only through suffering in the body for the sake of Christ and for the glory of God. When they willingly suffer in this way, God disciplines and humbles them to deeply recognize the price of sin and to hate sins, so that they would make a decision before God to be done with sin. It is not that this believer will never sin again, but that God sets them free from their chronic sin problem once and for all. In other words, when they are through with sin, then sin no longer has a hold on them. They receive deep healing from the wounds of Jesus Christ and can claim the victory, “by his wounds you have been healed” (1 Pet 2:24, Isa 53:4-6).
3. After suffering in the body believers can live the rest of their earthly lives for the will of God. They already spent enough time living a life of sin like pagans--living for evil human desires. Now they had the opportunity to live a new life. To live for the will of God could mean to live for God’s salvation purpose. God’s will is to save sinners, and God doesn’t want anyone to perish. When the believers were saved from their sins, they also receive a new life of mission. Instead of living like the pagans, they could live a new life being used to save souls among the pagans. The believers used to live a wild, pleasure-seeking lifestyle; following the desires of their flesh and committing all kinds of lascivious sins.
4. Read verses 4-6. How did the pagans respond to the lifestyle of the believers? (4) What consequence would the pagans face for their lifestyle choices? (5) What was the result of the gospel being preached to those that had since died? (6)

***4*** *They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you.* ***5*** *But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.* ***6*** *For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.*

1. The pagans were surprised that the believers didn’t join with them in their reckless, wild living and heaped abuse on them. When the believers were changed, the pagans recognized it. They insulted and persecuted them. The fact that the pagans were surprised shows that the lives of the believers were really different from that of the pagans. The lives of believers should not be indistinguishable from that of an unbeliever. They must be radically different, otherwise their faith has little influence and could even become an excuse for the pagans not to believe. When the believers were radically changed, the pagans were surprised and heaped insults on them, but this represented the very opportunity to save some of them. When the believers were insulted, they must repay insult with blessing, and evil with good.
2. The pagans would face judgment for their sinful lifestyles if they did not repent. When the unbelievers saw the changed lifestyles of the believers, and persecuted them, they had the opportunity to repent their sins and turn to God. But, if they did not repent and turn to God, they would be judged by God. They would have to give and account for all of their sins after they died or Jesus came again, whichever came first.
3. The result of the gospel being preached to those that had since died was so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit. When the Scripture says that the gospel was preached to those who are dead, it means to those who had died after trusting in Christ. Their choice to live for God, to suffer in their bodies for the save of Christ while alive, lead to their opportunity to live in the spirit in the next life. Their suffering was not in vain. Pagans try to excuse their pleasure-seeking lifestyles by saying “Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die!” or “You only live once!” They try to get as much pleasure out of life as posible. But, there is another life coming and there will be a judgment. When believers die believing in Christ, their body dies and is buried the same as unbelievers, however, their spirit continues to live. They go directly from death to eternal life, and will receive a resurrection body when Jesus returns.
4. Read verses 7-9. How should the believers prepare for God’s coming judgement? (7) What ought to be the priority for their lifestyle? (8) Why? How could they love each other deeply in a practical sense? (9)

*The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray.* ***8*** *Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.* ***9*** *Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.*

1. Believers should prepare for God’s coming judgment by being alert and of sober mind so that they can pray. They need to pray because the end is near. Judgment is coming for all people. The believers should not just go through the motions of life. They should use their life on earth to prepare for the next life--the life to come. They should keep Jesus at the center of their heart and life and live as those that are waiting for the coming kingdom of God as Jesus’ return. They should not just get saved that go on with their life as it was before, but they should pray and rely on God. When Jesus comes again there will be judgment. Even believers will face judgment for what they have done, good or bad.
2. The priority for their lifestyle should be centered on loving each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins. Instead of living for their own pleasures, they are called to live for others by loving each other. Previously, Peter said, *“Love one another deeply from the heart”* (1:22). The message of love is central to God’s commands and to the gospel message. The believers were called to love one another through their actions; giving and sacrificing on behalf of others. This was the way for them to express their love toward God and to reveal God’s love to the world. The apostle Paul spoke about love in 1 Corinthians 13, beginning with the words, “Love is patient, love is kind …” and finishes with, “Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. **7** It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.**8** Love never fails” (1 Cor 13:4a, 6-8a). However, love is also defined by what it is not, “... it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered it keeps no record of wrongs” (1 Cor 13:4b-5). Love requires that one repent and purify themselves through obeying the truth--the word of God or gospel message (1 Pet 1:22). Especially, in the context of today’s passage, a pleasures-seeking lifestyle is in direct conflict with loving each other. If believers live like pagans or unbelievers; living a pleasure-seeking lifestyle, there is no room left for them to love each other.
3. The believers should love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins. The love of believers is more than loving on a human level, but has to do with loving with the love of God--or in and through the love of God. God’s love is best displayed through Jesus' death on the cross for sinners. In this way, sacrificial or self-sacrificing love in Jesus’ Christ covers a multitude of sins. Forgiving others through Christ’s love is what covers a multitude of sins. Here, “each other” is also important. If someone forgives our sins, then we should also be ready to forgive them their sins. We should be strict on ourselves, but generous toward others. We should be ready to forgive easily, so that God’s people would experience the sin-forging love and grace of God. Also, covering sins could be related to bearing sins. When believers take the pain of each other's sins without retaliating, they bear each other’s sins and cover each other’s sins.
4. The practical way of loving each other deeply expressed by Peter was to offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.” To be hospitable means to generously welcome others. It not only means to open our homes to others, but also to open our hearts. It means to stop what we’re doing and take time to listen to others--to put aside our own concerns in order to take on the concerns of others. We easily grumble against others because of our own self-centeredness. We feel that others’ concerns keep us from getting done what we need to get done. We often feel burdened or spread too thin because of the concerns or even demands of others. However, showing hospitality without grumbling is a practical way for us to die to ourselves in order to love others.
5. Read verses 10-11. What purpose did gifts have in the lives of the believers? (10, 8) What gifts did Peter specify? (11) What instructions did he give regarding these gifts? What was the purpose of these instructions?

*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.* ***11*** *If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

1. God’s gifts given to the believers were for the purpose of serving others and loving others. The gifts they had received were not their own, but came from God through the grace of God. They were not to be used for their own benefit, but for the benefit of others. In this way, they should be good stewards of the gifts they received from God. They should use them for the purpose of serving and loving clothes--to be a source of God’s blessing to others.
2. Peter specified the gift of speaking and gift of serving.
3. Peter’s instructions regarding these specific gifts were as follows: “If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides” Speaking the words of God is more important than speaking some other things; such as small talk or just speaking about common interests. This doesn’t mean that the believers could not talk about other things, but it means that even in speaking about other things, they should have in mind speaking the very words of God. For this to happen, their minds should be fully immersed in the words of God, so that they could make use of whatever teaching moments might naturally arise. For those that serve, they should do so with the strength God provides. They should not rely on their own strength to serve others, only to become burned out and end up grumbling. In order to serve with the strength God provides, they should pray and be filled with the Holy Spirit.
4. The purpose of Peter’s instructions regarding gifts and the ultimate purpose of the gifts themselves were so that in all things God might be praised through Jesus Christ. Peter followed this statement by praising God himself, saying, “To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.” God’s gifts are not for our own purpose or glory, but to glorify God that God might be praised. They are from God and for God. When we use God’s gift to serve the needs of others--for God’s purpose of saving and uplifting others before God, and then give thanks praise to God, God is glorified.

**One word: Arm yourselves with the same attitude of Jesus to love others!**