

Small Group Outline for week of February 21, 2021 1 Peter 4:1-6 – Endurance in Persecution

Read 1 Peter 4:1-6

Peter is coming to his first ending of his letter and he trying to give a final encouragement. Living the Christian life is difficult, and there are choices to be made every day for Him. Some choices happen in our hearts, some are choices of what to do with our present and future lives; what to and what not to get involved with

A very clear theme in this letter, is the cost of being a Christian. I have not talked about this much over this series, but this passage we will explore really highlights what it means to live as a Christian when you are being picked on and bullied and persecuted for nothing else than being a Christian.

No doubt there will be some of us who have been very quiet about our faith, even so that no one would know that we go to Church or that we are a Christian. We are afraid of persecution.

It is encouraging to note that Peter knows persecution first hand, having been afraid and denying Christ, then turning around and preaching about Jesus in Acts 2; then placed in jail, and other confrontations with people because of his outspoken faith.

How do we live as a Christian while being marginalized, ignored, picked on, even severely persecuted? The Apostle Peter gives some real encouragement and perspective here in Chapter 4:1-6. Each verse gives a good directive as to how to live Christianly.

Main Text: 1 Peter 4:1-6

Verse 1 *So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you have suffered physically for Christ, you have finished with sin.*

- There will be times when living for Jesus will be exceptionally tough, even physically demanding, like what Jesus went through. How did He do it? The attitude and perspective...
- Arm yourself (*TPT notes: The Greek word “Hoplisasthe” means “to arm yourself” (like a foot soldier). It is used metaphorically to describe the battle we experience for moral purity in a decadent world.*)
- We are in a battle - not against flesh & blood, but against principalities and powers.
- Ephesians 6:11-13. A picture of carefully putting on the armour – here is why
 - 1 Peter 5:9
 - 2 Corinthians 2:11
 - 2 Thessalonians 3:3
- Have you experienced spiritual battles in your desire to follow Jesus? Share this.
- Talk about your priorities and your resolve to not sin. It will not be that you never struggle with sin, or never sin again, but there is a new resolve to be done with sin. How is your battle with sin

Verse 2 *You won't spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God.*

- Anxious means to be excited, to be eager - looking ahead to the prize
- This is about focus and priority. A soldier is focused in a battle, watching, listening, being on guard
- Consider an Olympic athlete and the intense discipline...
 - 1 Corinthians 9:24-27
- Application: are there some habits and activities that you know or you should cut out of your lives that are distracting you in your walk with Jesus?
- Is there a sin to forsake that is stealing your resolve?
- Talk about your priorities and your resolve to not sin. It will not be that you never struggle with sin, or never sin again, but there is a new resolve to be done with sin. How is your battle against sin going?

Verse 3 *You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy—their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols.*

- Enough, you realize how useless evil things are. We have to sit up and think, “what am I doing?!”
- To put it all down and walk away from your sinful habits and lifestyle.
- Other versions use the following words to describe what unbelievers do:
 - NIV: living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.

- CSB: carrying on in unrestrained behavior, evil desires, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and lawless idolatry.
- NASB: having pursued a course of indecent behavior, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties, and wanton idolatries.
- Note that Peter is reminding them of what they used to do, and they realize the uselessness of it all
- Can we see the same thing? There is often the temptation to go back to familiarity for comfort.
- Have you been tempted to go back to your former way of life and sin?

- Psalm 1:1 “Blessed is the one who does not **walk** in step with the wicked or **stand** in the way that sinners take or **sit** in the company of mockers...” NIV
 - Discuss the progression of falling into sin

Next week we will look into verses 4-6.

Weekly Reflection:

1. Read 1 Peter 1:1-6 each day.
 - Where is it difficult to live the Christian life?
 - Are there some ways that I need to more bold about my faith?
 - Is there a specific sin I need to confess and forsake?
2. Pray for one former friend whom you may need to sit and humbly share your faith with? Pray about an opening to have that conversation.
3. Learn more about The Persecuted Church - “The Voice of the Martyrs” event online March 5

Conclusion

The challenge and difficulties of living a life that honors Jesus Christ is worth it all. And Peter, having been through so many incredible difficulties, more than most of us, encourages us very strongly to not give up on our faith and to trust Jesus. He is worthy of our trust.

Then we are to ever thankful for all that Jesus has done for us; He has rescued us from sin’s penalty and from the grave. Then we live for him, to be ever faithful, even until death; which puts us face to face with Him.

Pray for each other in the difficulties of living the Christian life in the midst of persecution or difficulties.