

“PRIORITIZING THE JUDGMENT OF GOD”

1 Peter 4:1-6



Theme: The only way you can avoid condemnation is to be made like Christ – regardless of the cost.

I. The Purpose of the Godly – 4:1-2

A. Defense through Christlikeness – v. 1a

1. Peter now begins to expand on the thought of the security of our deliverance – because of Christ.
2. He exhorts us – not to imitate Christ’s suffering – but to make the purpose for His suffering a piece of armor – *“Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose ...”*
3. He picks up the emphasis that he made in 3:18 – that Jesus was *“put to death in the flesh ...”*
4. He calls on us to *“arm yourselves also with the same purpose ...”*
5. What was the purpose for His suffering? ... to glorify God through obedience to His will.
6. To *“arm yourselves”* [ὀπλίζω] – is an aorist middle imperative – meaning that is a resolute decision that only you as an individual can make – in light of the “truceless war” that we are in with sin, this is a decision make ready and then fight to the last.
7. There is *no hope for victory* if one is vacillating between a resolve to abhor sin and adore Christ and adoring sin thus abhorring Christ.
8. The greatest defense against the attempts of the world to intimidate believers and silence the testimony of the glory of Christ is a commitment to the will of God for our lives regardless of what it takes.

B. Defiance of the Flesh – vv. 1b-2

1. This interesting expression has caused confusion in the minds of some – thinking that sinlessness is in view.
2. What Peter is explaining is that the face of their persecution indicates that a choice has been made by the believer – to choose obedience to the will of God – *“... because he was suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.”*
3. The believer is one who knows a loyalty to Christ, and in the power of

Christ, steadfastly chooses to endure persecution rather than join in the wicked practices from which he has been saved.

4. This does not mean that the Christian cannot sin, or even that he does not sin, but that the domination that sin once exerted over him has been broken and he now has a new heart with a new pursuit.
5. Remember that the world seeks to use persecution to intimidate obedient believers to conform to them – thus, in order to be receiving their persecutions, there must be a distinction in the life – defiance of the flesh – cp. **2 Timothy 3:12**.

II. The Price of Godliness – 4:3-4

A. The Denial of the Flesh – v. 3

1. Peter now declares that there was sufficient time prior to faith to pursue the flesh – now it is like a book that has been already written – no more to be added.
2. Peter declares: *“For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.”*
3. The sinful past is seen with a shameful view, able to reflect with insight to the debaucheries, indignities, defilements, and treacheries that their past indulgences perpetrated against the holiness of God.
 - a) *“Sensuality”* [ἀσέλγεια] – a lack of self-constraint so that one violates all boundaries of what is socially acceptable; self-abandonment.
 - b) *“Lusts”* [ἐπιθυμία] – cravings, longings, inordinate desires for what is forbidden
 - c) *“Drunkenness”* [οἰνοφλυγία] – lit. – “bubble up” – drinking to the point where behavior becomes fermented (only used here in NT) & may also refer to narcotics (drugs).
 - d) *“Carousing”* [κῶμος] – festive gatherings where behavior becomes emboldened to outdo previous exhibitions of indulgence; pressuring one another to “go further” – often associated with orgies.
 - e) *“Drinking parties”* [πότος] – social gathering for the purpose of drinking wine – intentionally getting drunk
 - f) *“Abominable idolatries”* [εἰδωλολατρία] – image worship – the “taproot” of the previous evils, suggesting the Satanic or demonic connections to their indulgences.
4. “The memory of the pain and misery those deeds caused them was to motivate his readers to diligently avoid such behavior, especially since their new life goal was to enter the holy place where sin would forever

cease.”¹

5. We are on a completely different road .

B. The Disapproval by the Fleshly – v. 4

1. Not only do we loose our love for the involvement in sin, but we also loose the love from our former friends – *“In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you.”*
2. They become *“surprised”* [ξενίζω] – lit. “resentful astonishment” that not only are you no longer eager to indulge in the indignities of such activity, but you refuse to indulge in them at all.
3. Our new viewpoint of these practices is that they are *“excesses of dissipation”*
 - a) *“excess”* [ἀνάχυσις] – refers to water that overflows boundaries and thus pouring out like a wide stream
 - b) *“dissipation”* [ἀσωτία] – profligacy or the state of corruption that so consumes one’s mind that all one can think of is how one can indulge in satisfying sinful passions.
4. Since you are no longer committed to the “high tide” of sinful practices, they seek to intimidate you through persecution to conform to them – they’ll malign you, literally blaspheme you, into conformity.

III. The Promise of God – 4:5-6

A. The Doom of the Godless – v. 5

1. Here we are told that they will not be getting away with their mistreatment of the saints – they will “answer” for what they’ve done – *“... but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”*
2. The One “who is ready to judge” is a reference to Jesus – cp. **3:22; John 5:22, 27; Acts 17:31**
3. He is here said to be *“ready”* [ἐτοίμως] or “poised” to judge all men – both those who are alive and who have already died; death does not end one’s accountability but rather brings it up front.
4. This is a reference to those who are disobedient to the Word – cp. **2:8; 3:20.**

B. The Deliverance of the Godly – v. 6

1. However, the Gospel makes a difference in the destiny of those who receive it – *“for the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.”*

¹ MacArthur, p. 229

2. He is saying here that the natural result of accepting the Gospel is living obediently to Christ – which will inevitably bring persecution while in the flesh, but the deliverance of eternal life spiritually.
3. “Peter’s point is that believers, even under unjust treatment – including death – should be willing and unafraid to suffer, knowing that all death can do is triumphantly bring their eternal spirits into everlasting life in heaven.”²

² MacArthur, p. 231