

Series: **Living Under Pressure** – week 14

CDOBC – beginning on 2/7/16

Today's Title: **"The Best Defense Against Suffering"** Part 2

May 22, 2016 ~ 1 Peter 4:1-6

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**OBJECTIVE:** To encourage believers to remain faithful and confident in suffering, knowing what God has promised to those who believe.

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My wife received some bad news this week from the doctor. When you receive this kind of news which requires changes to be made, it can be very difficult!

**Turn to 1 Peter 4**

*Illus.* - Kim found out she has some food allergies - and one of the foods she needs to avoid as much as possible is sugar. Sugar is in everything...and sugar is delicious!

As a follower of Christ, we are called to change - to leave our sin and pursue holiness.

Even though sin may be sweet - it will cause damage and pain. Pursuing holiness may lead to ridicule and suffering - but we're told to:

**Think about suffering as Christ thought about suffering.** vs. 1-2

Why are wedding rings important?

Because they make a statement to the world you are married - you are taken - you are not *'in the market'* anymore.

It's also a reminder to the person wearing it - a reminder that you have committed yourself to another person for life - "till death do us part".

The married man or woman doesn't live their life the same way as they did when they were single.

Marriage brings joy and pleasure into life, along with various commitments and restrictions.

A husband or wife doesn't say: "*My spouse committed their life to me, so I can do whatever I want without regard to them or our marriage vows.*"

In similar fashion, the Christian has many joys and pleasures in Christ - along with various commitments and restrictions.

"Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God."

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, your faith not only speaks to the forgiveness of your sins and your eternal destiny in heaven, but God intends your faith in Christ to make a difference in your life now!

The command here is to "arm yourself".

If you want to "arm yourself" with a firearm, you need a Conceal Carry Permit. Many people do this as a safeguard - as an extra measure of protection from those who wish to do harm to others.

Consider this verse the Christian's Conceal Carry Permit - "arm yourself" not with a physical weapon, but with the mind and attitude of Christ.

Why?

Because suffering will most likely be in your future – and you need to prepare for this. You need to strengthen your faith so you can endure and remain faithful if/when persecution comes your way.

Peter says the place to start is with thinking the same way about life as Jesus thought about life.

Jesus knew His life was not for Himself - but for others.

Jesus knew His life was directed by the Father's will.

Jesus knew His life was a mission - a mission to defeat sin and death - to make a way for humanity to be redeemed from their sin.

Jesus knew His life was not to be wasted on His own desires - His own interests - but His life had a purpose.

Is this how you think about your life?

Do you know your life is for others?

Do you know the Father's will for your life?

Do you know the divine mission / the divine purpose of your life?

Paul told the church in Corinth:

"...we have the mind of Christ. But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh...I fed you with

milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh.”

**1 Corinthians 2:16-3:3**

Notice they were Christians (“brothers”), but they were not developing or growing in their faith. They were still drinking from the bottle as an infant...they didn’t move from milk to solid food - they still had the mind of “flesh”.

Now they had “the mind of Christ” - but they failed to set aside their mind and habits of the flesh.

Peter is telling us - in order to remain faithful during difficult times - during times of persecution and suffering, you must have the same mind - the same attitude as Jesus had toward His suffering.

What was His attitude toward suffering?

He submitted to suffering throughout His life because of the larger mission of His life.

What is the mission of your life?

Peter goes on to say if you suffer in the flesh (the idea is your suffering is due to your faith in Christ), then you are done with sin.

This doesn’t mean you are without sin - it means you have determined to leave sin behind and pursue holiness (1:13-16).

It’s what Paul wrote about in **Romans 6** and how the Christian is to walk in “newness of life” because we are

now united with Christ. When you put your faith in Christ, you died to sin along with Christ - and you now live in the new life of His resurrection.

In other words - you're not perfect - as a follower of Christ you're not sinless - but your mind - your thoughts no longer dwell on sin, but your mind...your thinking dwells on righteousness and how you can live as Christ lived.

**Leave your past sins in the past vs. 3**

Regret is a powerful emotion.

Looking at your past with regret steals away the joy of the present and often, your hope for the future.

Some Christians come to faith in Christ, but they don't want to let go of the world and the pleasures of sin.

“For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.”

Peter says, *‘Enough’!* *‘Enough of the old life – leave it behind!’*

In the account of Lot and his wife in **Genesis 19**, she had a hard time letting go of the life they had in Sodom and Gomorrah.

You see...when you become a Christian, we need to make a break with our old way of living. You are a new creation in Christ, so live like a new creation in Christ!

“what the Gentiles want to do” simply refers to those who live according to the flesh - according to the way of the world. The list Peter gives were common things done in the Greco-Roman 1<sup>st</sup> century culture.

Our culture is not so different. Modern American culture is obsessed with sensuality and passion, getting drunk and sex without any limits is the common course for any weekend.

We don't think we struggle in terms of “idolatry”, but we would be wrong.

Our culture has replaced God with all sorts of idols.

The idol of work...

The idol of academics...

Family...

Recreation...

Health & Fitness...

Religion...

All of these - and many others - are idols because they have captured our devotion and emotion and we have pushed God to the side...or put Him into a box we seldom open.

Whatever you have done in your past...whatever sins litter your past - leave them.

Leave them in your past - enough is enough - and move on to your new life in Christ!

**Unbelievers will be confused and critical of your new life vs. 4**

When you make the break with your past, it will be noticed.

When you stop hanging out on the weekend at the bar / club.

When you stop drinking 5-6 drinks when you're at dinner with your friends.

When you refuse to sleep around, watch porn, don't go to the strip club or decide not to go to certain movies, stop using certain language - your friends will notice!

At first they might be confused...surprised at this sudden change - and if you stay faithful in these choices, their confusion or surprise will turn ugly and mean - and they will malign you.

4 With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you..."

"With respect to this" - (see vs. 3) meaning, when you leave your sinful ways in the past. When you do this, it will change your relationships.

"they are surprised when you do not join them"

At first this may not happen in your presence. They will talk about you amongst themselves and simply give you time to work through this new 'fad' you're going through.

But when your new life proves not be a 'fad' - but a new, transformed life - some discussions may take

place. For the new believer - or the believer who has rededicated their life to Christ - this is often a great chance to share your testimony - to share the Gospel - to share the “...reason for the hope that is in you...”.

Our prayer is they will listen and like you, find their hope in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for their sins. However, most will turn their questions into accusations and slander - “they malign you”.

This always hurts. There’s no way around it - and no way to soften it.

When you take a stand for Christ with humility and grace...and your friends attack you and malign you - it hurts.

This is part of the suffering you endure as a follower of Christ.

In vs. 1 Peter said, “for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin...” I gave a brief explanation - but I want to look at this from another angle. In the scenario Peter has described for us, when you make a break from your sinful past (vs. 3), you will suffer as former friends malign you.

In part, I think this is what Peter was getting at in vs. 1. When you embrace suffering in the name of Jesus, it’s often because you have made a decisive break from sin.



So...Peter says “for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin...”

Like I said earlier, he’s not talking about sinless perfection - but rather, when you understand the newness of life you have in Christ - and you leave your sinful ways in the past - you will often be treated harshly from those you used to hang out with - and this is a form of suffering when they malign you and treat you in rude and cruel ways.

Let me share another confusion and surprise your unbelieving friends may experience.

When they know you are a Christian...and they know you go to church...yet you live the same way as they do. This is confusing to the unbeliever.

They may malign you for this...but often they simply accept you - even though your behavior is confusing for them - and your behavior prevents them from considering the Gospel because from their vantage point, the Gospel doesn’t really do anything or transform anyone except for a few hours on a Sunday morning!

**God will judge all unbelievers vs. 5**

5 but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

This is a reminder to us Christians to keep in mind what happens in this life is not all that happens in life.

Often, the wicked do not face justice in this life. They enjoy the wealth and pleasures of this world - even the adoration of many other people - while we may never enjoy the physical pleasures of this world - and we are maligned / slandered because of our break with sin.

This is a reminder to us.

**First** - everyone will give account (“they will give account”)

Nothing done in this life will escape ultimate and eternal justice.

**Second** - Jesus is their judge (“to Him who is ready to judge”)

**John 5:22**

“The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son...”

You are not their judge...Jesus is.

So love them...model the gospel for them by doing good (3:8-13)

**Third** - the living and the dead all face the justice of God (“the living and the dead”)

Some may cheat justice in this life...but nobody will escape the justice of God.

Jesus is “ready to judge” - He is fully prepared - He will miss nothing - His judgement will be complete and thorough, judging every thought and deed.

So Christian...take heart and live with this hope - the unjust suffering you endure in this life will be judged by

Christ in totality - and your blessing in Christ can never be taken away (3:14-15).

**Christian, your hope is in Christ!** vs. 6

In the first decades of the church's existence, one of the questions and fears many had was for fellow believers who died prior to the return of Christ. They were concerned and worried their deceased fellow believers would miss out in the blessings of Christ's return. Paul addressed these fears in his first letter to Thessalonians (4:13-18), and here Peter is addressing similar fears. Peter's point in vs. 6 is: *"The purpose of the gospel is that although man is marked for death, by responding to the gospel he may live unto God."*

(A Living Hope, A Commentary on 1 & 2 Peter, by Robert H. Mounce, p. 67)

**6 For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does."**

Peter reminds his readers "this is why the Gospel was preached" because (vs. 5) "the living and the dead" will face judgment. It's important for all of us to remember what is at stake here! If you're not living within the mission of the church - the mission for which God has saved you - then you're missing the point!

Eternity is in the balance - judgment is coming to all - and the gospel of Christ is the only way to satisfy the justice of God! “This is why the gospel was preached”!

Peter continues - “even to those who are dead” – meaning, the gospel was preached to your friends and family who are now dead. They believed, but physical death is a result of sin and they died. But Peter reminds them of their hope in Christ - even though they died, they “live in the spirit the way God does.”

Their spirit is alive - they were saved when they heard the Gospel and believed - they are now in heaven!

What great hope! What a wonderful promise!

Have the same attitude about life and suffering that Jesus had.

Leave your sinful past in the past - and for the rest of your life - pursue the will of God - pursue holiness!

When you break away from sin, you may suffer.

If/when you suffer, remember - everyone will be judged by Christ.

For those who believed in Gospel of Christ - your sin has already been judged in the person of Christ - and you will “live in the spirit the way God does.”

### **Apply it...**

Put your faith in Jesus - become a Christian (warning in vs. 5)

**A**dmit your sins

**B**elieve in Jesus as your Savior

**C**ommit each day to Christ

Arm yourself with the mind of Christ

Live on mission!!

Make a break from your past sin

Leave your life of sin and embrace your new life in  
Christ.

Close in prayer