

February 7

1 Peter 4:15-17 (NIV) ¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

One of the advantages of growing up when I did rests with the understanding that there are no official records, pictures, or social media accounts to document my upbringing. Thus, one must trust my recollections. Living in Germany was one of my favorite times. We lived in apartment buildings containing 18 apartments with 6 apartments per stairwell. The door for the stairwells were kept locked for security; therefore, if you wanted to enter, you rang a doorbell, the person asked for your name, and they would buzz you in. Well, my friends and I would arrange to "camp out" at night. Late at night, with one person at each stairwell, three of us could ring all 18 doorbells at the same time. The longer we rang them, the more lights would come on. We would run and hide until we felt it safe to hit the next building. All went well one night until we noticed the MPs had been called and were patrolling the streets. Knowing it was not safe to stay outside, we all ran home even though it was late. When I got home, my parents were up and knew I had been up to something when I came in the door.

When my father began to question me, he did not care about my friends who were with me. All he focused on were my actions. I had no idea if he was going to call the other fathers, but I knew that I was going to be punished. After all, it was our house. Peter tells us that we will either suffer for doing evil or suffer for doing good. If we suffer for engaging in sin, we will pay the price. If we suffer for being a follower of Jesus Christ, we will receive praise, not from the world but from our Father. However, in our world, we see much debate about what is good and what is evil. God's judgement, which is fair and unavoidable, will begin with His household just as my father's judgement began with ours. We will be held to a different standard, a standard established by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If we will be judged, what will happen to those who have ignored the gospel and rejected Jesus? We are witnessing the line between the darkness and the light become more and more apparent. Those in the light understand the judgement that awaits those in the darkness. Therefore, we are to proclaim the truth of the gospel to everyone because no one will escape that judgement, including us.