

Lesson 20 – Arming Yourself Against Unjust Suffering

1 Peter 4:1-6, **“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, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. 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. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 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.”**

What comes to mind when you hear the expression, “Arm yourself?” It’s an urgent, focused emotion, isn’t it? The command to ‘arm yourselves’ is a call of preparation for imminent battle. We wouldn’t want to find our ourselves in battle completely unprepared and outgunned, or we will not fare well. Well Christian, you are in the midst of a spiritual war. There is a real spiritual opposition that is against you, both at the immaterial and material level of existence. In this battle, we are not called into hand-to-hand combat, but we are nevertheless called to arm ourselves with a way of thinking that comes only from the Lord. In this battle we will suffer injury, for some of us the wounds may be physical for our faith in Christ, for the rest of us they most certainly will be emotional wounds. Our Lord knew that we would suffer unjustly for His name, He promised that we would, but He has not left us alone. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit that lives within us, and we have the living and active Word of God in our possession. In our text today, we pray that the indwelling Holy Spirit would teach us four perspectives of thinking from the inspired Word of God that would arm ourselves for the surety of unjust suffering in Christ.

The first of the four perspectives that we’ll consider today is the attitude that Jesus had, 4:1, **“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.”** The theme of this epistle from Peter has been about suffering. We’ve spent quite some time thinking about suffering over the past three chapters of lessons. In our most recent lesson, Peter has been talking about the unjust suffering of Christ right up to the point of His unjust execution on the cross. The murder of Jesus Christ is the most unjust crime that mankind has ever committed! And yet look what good God has caused to come out of such a crime! Jesus knew what was about to happen to Him, He even told the disciples it was going to happen. He proclaimed aloud that He had the authority and ability to end His suffering at a moments notice. Yet Jesus chose to suffer to the point of death for the purpose of sacrificing Himself as the perfect sin offering for His sinful people. What a beautiful end to such an ugly and tragic event. Jesus, the perfect God-Man, enjoyed the perfect relationship with God the Father. Jesus spent the perfect amount of time in prayer with the Father. The sinless Christ was the man who depended upon God the Father more than any other man who has ever lived. How much does our sin keep us from Him! Even in perfection, our Lord realized His desire and need for perfect fellowship with the Father! God was gracious enough to record the prayer of Jesus in John 17 as He was preparing for the suffering of the cross. Jesus felt pain, He felt fear, but He did not let those fears overrule the purpose and plan for His suffering. The next time that you’re afraid, remember to pray to the God who knows perfectly well what your fear feels like, and then emulate the thinking He had when He was afraid.

The attitude of Christ that we’re to emulate is an attitude that is willing to suffer to the point of death. Notice how Peter ends verse 1 by saying that those who ‘suffered in the flesh’ have ceased from sin. We

only cease from sin when we're in glory, so then let us work for the Lord with the courage to face even our death, knowing that there is victory in Jesus. 1 Corinthians 15:54-58, **"When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."**

This following of Christ unto the point of suffering and even death is exactly the level of radical commitment that our Lord expects of us. Jesus said in Luke 9:23, **"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."** Jesus also said in Matthew 10:38-39, **"whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."** Perhaps it is a bit of a dying saying these days, as Christian influence seems to be less and less upon our culture, but there was a time not too long ago when people would use the expression of something being "a cross I bear." Typically what people would mean is by that is having to endure something difficult or awkward or boring. The range of definition varied greatly, *"My wife dragged me out to see that romantic movie at the theater, that's the cross I bear for being married!"* Let's be clear: When Jesus asks us to take up our cross and follow Him, He's not asking us to simply do stuff that we find tedious, or boring, or uncomfortable. Jesus means for us to be ready to follow Him at the cost of our very lives. The apostle Paul knew all too well how uncomfortable following Jesus is, 2 Corinthians 4:8-12, **"We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you."**

Throughout history, believers of all walks of life have come to Christ willing to follow Him even when it meant loss of employment, bankruptcy, torture, having their families ripped apart, watching their loved ones die, imprisonment, and even death. These people had the gospel brought to them in dangerous and extremely difficult circumstances. They weren't promised health, wealth, and prosperity. On the contrary, they knew that the person sharing the good news was putting themselves in grave danger by sharing it. The Church of Jesus Christ has grown so much through adverse times such as that. I have heard of Christians praying for a level of persecution to come upon Western Christianity in order to purify it's people and cause them to grow as they ought to. The people we're considering who have by the thousands throughout history given their lives as martyrs for Christ have done so because they armed themselves with the same thinking that Christ had, as we read from verse 1. In Hebrews 11, the writer of Hebrews recounts the lives of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, how they lived their lives by faith in God. He writes in verses 13-16, **"These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city."** Later in the same chapter, he wrote in verses 35-40 concerning the physical suffering of God's people throughout history, **"Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so**

that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.” The greatest triumph of all for those who paid the ultimate price of suffering with their very life is the overcoming of sin through Christ at their death. Verse 1 ends, **“for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.”** This overcoming of sin is of course accomplished through the propitiatory one-time sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Hebrews 7:27, **“He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.”** Hebrews 9:11-14, **“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”** Hebrews 10:10-14, **“And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”**

Christ loved those who were unlovable (His enemies called elsewhere). He loved His own to the point of giving up His life. This is the “same way of thinking” that we’re to share with Him. Following our Saviour, when we die enter into an eternal, sinless, holy perfection. After Christ died, He had a glorified body. Hebrews 12:2, **“Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”** There was a joy that motivated Christ’s heart that far outweighed all of the pain attached with what He knew was ahead of Himself. Like Christ, we can have that courage to love our enemies up to the point of our death. Matthew 10:28, **“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot.”** What’s the worst that man can do to us? They can kill us. What’s the best thing that will ever eternally happen to us? We die. Paul said in Philippians 1:21, **“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”** If we arm ourselves with the same thinking as Christ had in our suffering, we disarm the very one who can hurt us.

Verse 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.”** Aligning our thinking with Jesus Christ covers not just our suffering to death, but also our daily living up until the day we’re called home. We are called to obedience all over scripture. Jesus warned about the danger of a disobedient heart in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:24-27, **“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the**

floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

Those who live according to their human passions and not according to the will of God will be those who receive eternal condemnation at their judgment. Jesus said in Matthew 25:41-46, **"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'** Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, **'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'** And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." Jude 14-16, **"Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him."** These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage."

We read plainly in scripture that judgment awaits those who choose a life of disobedience over a life of obedience. As believers in Christ, we recognize that obedience runs deeper than even an adherence to God's will, but a complete washing (or renewal) of our minds in order that we would desire and be able to do that which pleases Him. Romans 12:2, **"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."** To help define 'sin', think of it like missing the Bullseye on a dart board. Our hearts are so prone to wander off into sin that we lack the ability to see the Bullseye, and lack the skill to throw the dart at it. With the indwelling Holy Spirit, God's Word is revealed to us, showing us where the target is, and giving us the ability and the desire to hit it. Disobedience therefore is purposefully not hitting the Bullseye. This is the exact nature of holy living. To be perfect is to throw that Bullseye every single time. The longer that I am a Christian, the more aware I become of my sin. You would think that the longer someone is a believer in Christ, the less they would sin, and in one sense that is true, we do grow in grace and obedience as we progress. But we also have the blinders removed by the Holy Spirit the longer we walk with Christ, revealing to us more aspects of our sinful heart that we still need to address.

Any Christian (but especially an old Christian) knows all too well about their hearts propensity to follow after its wicked desires. That is why we pray for Christ to return. We want Him to return and usher in His eternal Kingdom and rid the world of sin, both around us and in us. Until that day, Peter says in verse 2 that we are, **"to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God."** Such a strong word that Peter uses, "passions". Paul uses the same term in his second epistle to Timothy. He links the passions of the heart to youthful foolishness, and commands us to run from it in 2 Timothy 2:22, **"So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."** This following of passion is how the unregenerate world around lives, in the deadness of their spiritual condition, which is the life we were all saved out of, Ephesians 2:1-3, **"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our**

flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”

As believers in Christ, we need the scripture to reveal to us the truth about our flesh, and to reveal to us the truths found in the Word. When we come to the Word of God as truth, wisdom and strength, things that we desperately need, understanding that they come only from the Word of God, then we're ready to arm ourselves. The very thing that we put on (that which we could have never desired, nor carried out on our own strength) is the desire to do the revealed will of God and abandon our old sinful ways. Paul commands this response of believers in Romans 6:8-12, **“Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.”**

There is a clear line of demarcation in the life of every believer: Before Christ, and After Christ. There are only people who live with 0% of the Holy Spirit within them, and people who live with 100%, there are no in-betweens. There saved and unsaved. Safe in the Father's hands, and not in the Father's hands. Those that call Him Father, and those who aren't family. Those who are alive (spiritually), and those who are dead. Therefore every believer in Christ must come forth from the grave spiritually, as Lazarus did physically, leaving the stench of the lifestyle of death in their rear-view mirror and pursuing a new life of holiness. A person who claims to have walked with Christ for years and yet lives in lockstep with the world is not a person who needs a boost of the Holy Spirit, they're a person who needs the Holy Spirit to enter in.

Peter talks about the former life that all believer's have been transformed out of in verses 3-5, **“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. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”** One of the most colourful pictures of the unregenerate world around us is depicted in Paul's writing of [Romans 1:18-32](#). What an accurate description of the world as we see it! The unregenerate will not see the Kingdom of God, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, **“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”** Paul says again in Galatians 5:19-21, **“Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”** Ephesians 5:3-12, **“But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no**

part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.” Light has nothing to do with darkness, it’s either one or it’s the other. And so Peter tells us in verse 3 that our days of living in the dark are over. Our ESV translates the word “doing”, **“For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do.”** The ESV translators chose a word that gets the right message across but misses the impact of the word in my opinion. The word has passion behind it. We all do things that we’re not crazy about, but here Peter is saying that our days of passionately pursuing the things that the unregenerate want are behind us.

Peter goes on to describe six elements of the passionate living of the Gentiles in verse 3, **“Living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.”** The top of Peter’s list is ‘sensuality’, describing those who live with unrestrained living. This is the lifestyle that says, “If it feels good, and it’s not hurting anyone, do it!” With that philosophy of living, many have wandered off into a lifestyle of having multiple sexual partners before marriage (if marriage ever comes), men who are addicted to pornography for life (even those who profess Christ), many have wandered off into lifestyles of homosexuality, some have pursued the mutilating end of attempting to transform into the opposite gender, some have defiled their marriage bed by sharing their spouse with another, and all other sorts of rank sin. I think we have all seen (some first-hand) the massive amount of damage that this lifestyle has caused, when they thought they weren’t hurting anyone. Paul tells us in Romans 13:13-14, **“Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”** Second on Peter’s list is ‘passions’. This word is related to the first, more so as the fuel behind it. Passion is the burning desire that leads to the carrying out of the unrestrained sensual appetite. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, **“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.”** Third on Peter’s list is ‘drunkenness’. The scripture has much to say about the dangers of the excess of alcohol in a person’s life. I think we would be negligent at this point not to lump in the various options of narcotics that are readily available to people to consume these days that likewise inhibit the senses and lead to all sorts of damage, even death. The main thrust of Paul’s point in Ephesians is that we would be careful what we put into our bodies, because what we put in has a controlling influence. If you put something into your body that inhibits you from thinking and speaking and moving clearly, bad things can happen. As good Baptists we don’t like to talk about it, but the same is true for the one who overeats, or has a diet high in salt and sugar. Ask a doctor if those things hinder your body from performing at its intended level, they’ll agree. It matter what goes in to the body, and so what is the best thing for us to feed our bodies? Paul says it’s the Word of God, so does Jesus. Paul said in Ephesians 5:15-18, **“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.”** Be wise Christian, fill your mind with the wisdom of God so much so that it controls your thinking and changes the way you operate. That is how we move from foolishness of old, to the wisdom that is from above. And all of this is because of the Holy Spirit that now lives within us. Jesus also spoke about the necessity of what we put in our mouth, but our greater necessity of the Word of God. John 6:26-35,

“Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?”³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” Fourth on Peter’s list is “orgies”, which is nothing more than a wild party composed of a large number of people who are out of control, displaying the first three words on Peter’s list. Fifth and lastly sixth on Peter’s list he mentions “drinking parties and lawless idolatry”. Peter is not forgetting that he’s already brought up drunkenness, he brings these two up together because of the idolatrous nature behind the inebriation. Idolatry and false religion were plentiful in that time and region, and part of the worship of the gods was to enter into the realm of the supernatural, done by reaching the point of inebriation. A time of worship to an idol such as this would look like nothing more than a drunken party filled with all sorts of unspeakable acts.

Peter is reminding these first-century believers that they had come out of a culture such as this, and their participation in these acts had reached an abrupt end. From the vantage point of being in Christ and knowing the revealed will of God, they now saw their sin and felt the pain and misery of its effects both on their lives and the lives they injured in the process. While believers will never be sinless this side of glory, the habitual pattern of a believer is to recognize sin when the Spirit reveals it, and to repent of it. The momentum of the pendulum swing should be pointed in the direction of holiness, the ultimate end of every believer.

Verse 4, **“With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you.”** To one degree or another, every single believer in this room can relate to this verse. We may not have all come out of lives of extreme vice, some of us here today may have come to Christ after a childhood of falling asleep in the church we were dragged out too. We may have sought to live a good and moral life while rejecting the need for Christ. Some of us may have been called by Christ at 8 years old, and so it seems to people that we’ve always been a believer. It’s important that we remember everyone needs to reach a point in their life where they repent of their sin and follow Christ. If our theology reasons that an 8 year old’s sin does not warrant eternal punishment, and so we question the validity of their salvation, we have gravely misunderstood what sin is. So I say again, at whatever point (or whatever age) Christ called you, we can all relate to verse 4. There was a time in our lives when we were going east, and starkly our lives were going west, and it shocked people. Peter says that they’re surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery. Is this still not true of the young boy who suffers ridicule at the hands of the neighbourhood children or siblings because his speech and actions now desire to make much of Christ. Peter’s description of the unregenerate world is quite heavy and violent. He uses the word ‘flood’ to describe the wickedness that believers are called out of. We can picture the damage waves levelling a town after a terrible storm. And then he uses the word ‘debauchery’, which is a state of mind in which the only thing that a person

thinks about is evil continually. Is this not an accurate definition of a sin-cursed soul? The scriptures say that we were unable to come to God (Rom. 8:7) because we were dead in our sin (Eph. 2:1). The world of the unregenerate is one that is constant in sin. David said in Psalm 51:5, **“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”** David understood that sin’s curse is upon all people from conception. Isaiah understood the sinful depth of our actions, Isaiah 64:6, **“We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.”** Even our best deeds are so tainted with sin that they are polluted deeds and are therefore rejectable as deeds of righteousness before God. This is why mankind cannot ever stand in their own righteousness, we need the righteousness of Christ. From this perspective of sin, we can better understand Peter’s terminology of “flood of debauchery”.

So Peter says in verse 4 that those people who you once lived near are now surprised that you’re no longer willing to join them in the ways you once subscribed too because you want to obey and follow Jesus Christ, and because of that “they malign you”. As you may have guessed, Peter is once again choosing a heavy word. To malign someone is going further than calling them a fool for believing in a fairy tale. Here we are thinking about words that an enemy would speak against you, whose end is to tear down and destroy verbally. If Christianity were a quiet religion where we worshipped our Lord in the quiet hours of our bedroom and kept our theology tucked away snugly in our brain, the world would have no issue. If Christianity were an open-book religion that lived in perfect harmony with the clashing philosophies of all the unregenerate, they would take no issue. Where the world gets angry is when they are confronted with their sin and are told that they need to repent of that sin and trust Jesus Christ. I know what it’s like to be fast asleep and all of a sudden Erin has flipped the light on in the room because we need to wake up, I’m not happy because I was comfortable in the dark! Now my eyes hurt, now I have to leave my slumber and being tackling the responsibilities of my day. For the first minutes of that day, I’m a bit grumbly at the one who turned the light on! Humorous analogy I hope, but I’m attempting to paint the picture of the new believer in Christ who turns the light on in the room for the first time. Everyone was having a good time doing their thing, and all of a sudden the light came on! Outside of the Holy Spirit’s work in the heart of someone else in that room, the reaction to that light will most certainly be, “Turn that light off! Break the bulb if you have too! I hate that light!”

Peter goes on to say in verse 5 that those who reject and slander us for our alignment with Christ will answer to God, **“But they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”** I know a thing or two about accounting. I speak with business owners all of the time, and I have to ask them what they purchased this or that for, and they have to give me an account so that I can properly prepare their reports. I’ll resist the urge to attempt to create an elaborate accounting analogy here, and be content to leave it where I did! All people will one day stand before our Lord and will give an account for everything that we have ever done here on Earth. Understanding that reality ought to motivate the way you decide your day today. If you knew that your day was being recorded today (even your thought life), and at the end of the day you would stand before a judge and give an account for your entire day, I promise you that you would attempt to live the best day you’ve ever lived today. And yet your entire life is being recorded, and is being recorded by the One who never forgets, and knows your hearts intentions better than you do. Does that motivate you towards holiness?

Those who malign us will obviously give an account to the Lord for all of their deeds, including this maligning against us. Every sin is done first and foremost against the Lord. When they injured us, they injured Him first, and they will be required to answer for that sin. I am reminded of Matthew 25:31-46

where Jesus links disobedience to God with injuring first and foremost God. Paul described the severity of the judgment that would come upon those who persecute the God's children in 2 Thessalonians 1:5-9, **"This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering— since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might."**

Jesus Christ is the One who died to save His people from their sin, and He is also the One who will judge the living and the dead. John 5:19-27, **"So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. 'Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.'"**

A certain and eternal judgment is coming upon those who reject the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us pray for those that persecute us, not wishing that any should perish, as our Lord taught us to do. We read of the certain coming judgment in Revelation 20:11-15, **"Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."**

Peter will close our lesson in verse 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."** The gospel is broadcast freely so that all ears can hear, yet only those whose hearts have been made flesh by God will respond positively and affectionately. It is through the gospel, the greatest good news message in human history, that we know that we will be victorious over sin and death ultimately because of Jesus Christ. We can know with certainty where we sit (or I stand) that we will be in glory 10,000 years from now because Jesus has paid it all! Peter in verse 6, comforts the readers who likely knew many who had come to Christ and been martyred in the faith before they read this epistle from Peter. He encouraged them to remember that although they were gone from us, they were alive in the spirit. This is the hope of eternal life that believers are to arm ourselves with as we suffer unjustly. With

courage that comes only from God, this is why believers should live their lives unafraid of the brief moments of physical violence and death, because all that death can do is expedite the glorification process! There was a point of theological confusion amongst first-century Christians concerning physical death and altogether missing glorification, because of their imminent anticipation of the second coming of Christ to usher in His eternal Kingdom. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 to encourage them that those who had died beforehand in Christ were safe in the arms of God, **“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”**

Do you remember how happiness is an emotion? If my wife ever lets me buy the barbeque of my dreams I'll be happy, if I break my ankle later today my emotion will immediately not be happy. Happiness is a pendulum swing, there are those who think that Christians need to learn to smile all the time. If you smile when you're supposed to cry, something is wrong. The word we're looking for is 'joy'. Joy is constant in the life of the Christian because it's secured in Christ. People love security, wise people invest their lives financially (in other aspects of their life emotionally) into things that they deem are secure and will last for their lifetime. Fortunately for our hearts, there is only one thing this side of Heaven that has eternal security, and that is Jesus Christ. In Christ, no one can shake us, no one can condemn us, no one can remove us. We possess Christ (well, He possesses us) and that is invaluable. If we meditate on that truth, than we can think differently in the moment remembering that nothing can come into our life that change that, and that is Christian joy! That is why a Christian is supposed to 'smile' during life-ending martyrdom.

When we meditate on our victory in Jesus, our Saviour forever who sought us and bought us with His redeeming blood, joy will be before us. Joy is something like the Ferrari that we have in our garage. The car always looks good, and it always goes fast. Our problem is that we tend to forget that we own the Ferrari most times, and because we forget, we don't drive the car very well, so it's potential is never reached. Believer, you have the Holy Spirit resident within you, so tune yourself into the Word of God so that you enjoy God and not live your life forgetting He's in the garage! Knowledge of your certain victory will maximize your spiritual strength, it will humble you, it will drive you to pray, it will enrich your reward in heaven, and it will give you the confidence to endure unjust persecution just like our Lord did.

No more fitting words were ever written to close this lesson. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, **“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”**