

Gospel Suffering (2)

Introduction

In this study we turn our attention to 1 Peter 4vs1-7, a passage which, at first reading, is quite difficult to understand. In what way can it be said that those who have suffered have “done with sin” (4vs1)? What does it mean to say that the gospel has been “preached to those who are dead” (4vs6)? On closer examination however we find that Peter is making a very simple and important point. As Christians we will face pressure to conform to the culture around us – a culture which used to shape our thinking and behaviour. Such compromise may even prevent persecution – if we simply fit in we can’t be persecuted for standing out!

Such an attitude of compromise is however not appropriate for believers. Christ died for our sins (4vs1) and we should follow His example. Saying no to sin may well lead to suffering – but in the end it is the only pathway to life. For some believers the struggle is now over (4vs6) but though the battle against sin was tough and lasted right until the point of their death, their belief in Jesus and commitment to follow Him, means that though dead from this world’s perspective – they are very much alive with God! Both they and the Lord whom they followed should therefore be an encouragement to us to say ‘No’ to sin and ‘Yes’ to what God wants for us, all the more as we remember the approaching Day of judgement.

At the end of this study you should be able to answer the following key questions from the text.

- What attitude should we have toward sin?
- Why is it worthwhile to say no to sin and yes to God?

Read 1Peter 4s1-7



Observe:

1. The reference to Christ’s earthly suffering in 4vs1 (compare 2vs21& 3vs18)
2. The call to Christians to arm themselves (a warfare image – compare 2vs11) with the same attitude as Christ
3. The reference in 4vs2-3 to *past life* and *the rest of life*
4. The two-fold effect that a changed life has on those who are still pagans (4vs4)

5. The reality and nearness of the approaching judgement (4vs5&7)
6. The fact that those who believed the gospel (while alive) now live in the spirit with God even though they have died in this world (4vs6)
7. The importance of prayer in our fight to live for God in a pagan and hostile world (4vs7)

?Think:

1. In what way should Jesus' death influence our thinking as Christians with regard to our daily fight against sin?
2. What attitude should we have toward our former way of life?
3. What should we dedicate the rest of our lives to?
4. What should we remember in the daily battle against sin?
5. What should we remember when we are misunderstood or ostracised by those who do not know God?
6. What should we do when we feel under pressure from the world?

! Understand / Apply

1. What answer can you give to our key questions?