A Study of 1 Peter

Living for God (1 Peter 4:1-11)

Peter encourages his readers to face persecution like Christ. Just as Christ suffered in the flesh so his followers are to imitate the attitude of Christ. In desire, thought, attitude, and principles think like Christ. One who thinks like Christ thinks and who suffers like Christ suffered will put away sinful lifestyles. The entire remaining years of his life will be spent not on human passions, but on doing the will of God.

Part of the rationale for following Christ comes from the brevity of life. Verse 7 teaches that the end of all things is at hand.

1. **How could Peter say in the first century that the "the end of all things is at hand?" (After all, over twenty centuries have passed and life in this world continues.)**

Part of the way people make decisions is by considering the length of life and what comes after this life. If this world is all there is, then perhaps we should eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die. The Christian believes that Christ suffered for our sins, died, and rose again. Christians also believe that all ***"will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead." (1 Peter 4:5)***

2. **Peter describes some of the ways in which these people used to live in verse 3. Write below those sins he lists along with their meaning.**

   A.

   B.

   C.

   D.

   E.

   F.

These Christians had changed (vs 3), but the world around them did not understand (vs.4). Non-Christians could not understand this change and ridiculed the Christians for not joining them in their debauchery.

3. **Do Christians in Australia today experience the types of persecution that Peter addresses in verse 4? If so, describe how this happens. If not, then why not?**

4. **Do non-Christians frequently want Christians to engage in sinful behaviour? Why would it matter to them how a Christian lived?**

5. **How does verse 4 describe the non-Christian lifestyle of those in Peter's day?**

Justice always ultimately prevails because all will give account of their lives. This includes those who are now living as well as those who have already died. As Christians we need to consider the brevity of this life compared to the vastness of eternity.

Verse six refers to those who have died and face judgment. While on this earth, (in the flesh) they had opportunity to obey or disobey God. They will be judged on their response to the gospel. Those who obey the gospel will live in the spirit (will be resurrected to live with God for eternity).

Some understand verse 6 to refer to those Christians who faced persecution in this life. They were judged in the flesh by non-Christians who persecuted and abused them, but they will be judged by God in the spirit and will have eternal life with him.

To the persecuted, verse 7 stands as a sobering conclusion: ***"The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers."*** Coupled with this exhortation is the beautiful thoughts of verse 8, ***"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins."***

When the world turns against Christians, it is helpful to know that our brothers and sisters will not. We are God's home, his family, and we must treat one another as a family would. Our love for one another in the church ought to be strong enough and deep enough to always forgive each other.

6. **Why must one be self-controlled and sober-minded to be effective in prayer?**

7. **How does love "cover a multitude of sins? (Compare Proverbs 10:12)**

The word that is translated as "earnestly" in the ESV or "deeply" in the NIV in 1 Peter 4:8 literally means "stretched out" or "strained." Love isn't always easy or comfortable. It isn't the natural thing to do. It often requires a strenuous effort. Love stretches us. It means stepping out in faith and not being afraid of risk. This kind of love is far more than an emotional feeling. It's a decision to act in the best interest of each other no matter what the cost. This kind of bold, fearless love "covers a multitude of sins." This does not mean that we ignore or condone sin. But love seeks to "cover" and forgive sin, not merely to expose and condemn it.

Peter moves from love to hospitality which is a natural expression of love. In the world of the New Testament, travelers did not have the abundance of motels, hotels, and caravan parks that are available to us. Instead, they would depend upon the generosity and hospitality of other Christians who would open their homes to provide for their needs. This was especially important for traveling preachers who were limited in funds. Not only could they not afford to pay for lodging; many of the places that took in guests were places of a poor reputation. It might harm the work of Christ if people saw Christian teachers coming in and out of those kinds of places. The gospel was able to spread as people opened up their homes to those who were passing through. These acts of hospitality were costly. Few people had a lot of money, so housing and feeding visitors was a costly proposition that stretched their resources.

8. **What is Peter's instruction about hospitality in verse 9 and why is it an important consideration? (See also Romans 12:13 and Hebrews 13:2)**

9. **What are some ways in which we can show hospitality today?**

Peter says that Christians have ***"received a gift"*** that they are to use ***"to serve one another."*** Apparently every Christian has been gifted in a way that enables them to serve others. These gifts are a manifestation of the grace of God, are varied so that every person does not have the same gift, and to neglect using the gift indicates poor stewardship of what God has given.

10. **What specific gifts does Peter mention and describe how they are to be utilised.**

11. **What is the goal in using the gifts given to us by God? (vs. 11).**

Verse 11 closes this section of the letter with what is known as a doxology which is a verse of praise. The verse closes with a statement; not a question: ***"To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."***