

1 Peter 4:15-19
“The mindset and outcome of persecution”

- I. Intro
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I. Intro.

Peter’s words to persecuted Christians in chapter 4:12-19 was not focused upon the:

- “Occasional persecution” from those around them!

But rather upon the:

- “Official persecution” from those above them!

And in so doing he wrote to these suffering saints *five things that deal with persecution from those above them, three of which we examined two weeks ago:*

- A. Vs. 12 *The purpose of it: Refinement*
- B. Vs. 13 *The attitude though it: Rejoicing*
- C. Vs. 14 *The promise in it: Refreshment*

This morning we will conclude with:

- D. Vs. 15-18 *The mindset by it: Reviewing*
- E. Vs. 19 *The outcome because of it: Recommitment*

Peter mentions that his expectation for them in verses 13-14 was to “rejoice” to be “glad” with “exceeding joy” and to think of themselves as being “blessed” and I remind you that Peter’s words were to those who were facing sever persecution and even death. We take up the final two points of Peter this morning. Before we start let me remind you that Peter started this section with the word addressed to them in verse 12 “beloved” and in the Greek it is a word that means “divinely loved ones” this was far more than a descriptive title as it would serve to remind the readers that despite what they were going through they were loved by the heart of God. So often when we go through difficult seasons we can count the father of lies telling us that our present circumstances are an indication that God is either angry at us our doesn’t love us. He also wanted to let his readers know that by use of the phrase “do not think it strange” (which in the Greek is “STOP thinking it an alien thing to you”) that these Christians had a misconception that their faith in God had provided an immunity from suffering and that

their present circumstances were abnormal. Peter corrects their wrong thinking and tells them that what is strange is them misunderstand their present circumstances and not the persecution.

II. Vs. 15-18 The mindset by it: Reviewing

Vs. 15-18 The word “*suffer*” in verse 15 is linked with the words of verse 14 and “*reproach*” so Peter is writing about **suffering that comes with being hated for no reason.**

1. **Vs. 15 The first area we need to review or “examine” has to do with asking and answering the “WHY” question of, “Why I’m being hated”.** Some of the readers had apparently “*suffered*” in the past for being “*murderers, thieves, evildoers and busybodies*”, verse 15. Not all hatred is because of righteous living and can’t all be attributed to “refinement” but rather our own “disobedience”. The hatred they had received for such behaviors was to be in the “**PAST**” and **NOT** in the “**PRESENT**” they needed to be about the Lord’s business and not acting as if they were “*self-appointed over-seers in other people’s business*”. I’m afraid that this has become a global epidemic in our world today and even amongst God’s people. It has come about because of the advancement of global information where almost as soon as something happens we are given the information in real time and with that comes **talking heads** who want to tell you what you just witnessed means with their particular slant. Then we all gather around talking about it constantly offering our opinions. We are NOT “*self-appointed over-seers in other people’s business*” we are to be only about our “**Father’s business**” and we could avoid some of the hatred which has **at times** more to do with not minding our own business then it does be about our Father’s business! **The fact that we are Christian’s doesn’t mean that we should escape the normal consequences of sinful behavior.** Peter wants his readers to make sure that they are suffering hatred for being **Christians** and not

criminals!

2. **Vs. 16 The second area of examination has to do with asking ourselves the question:**

“Are we “ashamed” to be identified with Jesus when the world despises Him?” Peter

no doubt thought of himself as he wrote this with his own denial of Jesus no doubt on his mind. Jesus is not ashamed to be identified with us and even calls us His family! It is important to realize that at this time the state religion was the cult of Caesar where the emperor was worshipped as a god. Such worship of the emperor served two purposes:

A. *The subjects of the Roman empire gave allegiance and obedience to not only the laws of the land politically but religiously as they didn't question the laws as they came from the emperor who was god!*

B. *The worship of Caesar tended to unify and bond the entire empire into one making it easier to manage geographically.*

The popularity of that “*state religion*” known as “*Kaisarianos*” (*Kaisar being the Greek form of Caesar*). Christianity came onto the public with a “*rival claim to world worship and dominion!*” The LORD Jesus is the messiah who according to the Church would one day soon come back and lay claim rulership and take the government upon His shoulders. Those who worshipped Jesus were known as “*Christianos*” worshippers of a Christ and as such against the worship of the emperor and his worshippers the “*Kaisarianos*”! The Roman empire saw that the “*imperialism*” of Christianity was challenging the imperialism of the Caesar’s with its spread evangelically. The Roman’s answered this challenge by 10 bloody persecutions! The point is that in those days it “**COST SOMETHING**” to be a Christian. Society not only hated you for being a Christian they would persecute and even take your life. That is what Peter means when he writes, “*Yet if*

anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed'. The negative is not being "ashamed", but Peter wasn't just asking not to be ashamed he asks them to be positively "*glorify God*" when the Roman's hated them for identifying with Jesus and going against the society's worship of the emperor. Saint's it's easy to be a follower of Jesus when it doesn't cost you anything, when it is popular to be one but how many Christians would stand up to worship Jesus openly and publicly when society it wants to kill you for doing so? Most churches in America are reporting that their congregations have seen a 50% decline in attendance during Covid-19 and the state saying that we can't publicly gather together for worship what would it be like if the state said that we couldn't publicly worship not due to the possibility of spreading a virus but because they saw us as atheists and subverting the government?

3. **Vs. 17-18 The third question we need to ask ourselves when we are being hated is: "Are we seeking to love and save those who hate us?"** Peter wanted these severely persecuted Christians to realize that such persecution was to purify them in their witness to the lost world that was persecuting them. They were undergoing a discipline by the hand of God designed to cause them to be a purer witness not to go into hiding in an attempt to avoid persecution! The starting place of judgment was the church NOT to judge the church alone but to provide a clearer witness of the unbelievers of their need for Jesus when they were hating and killing those who in spite of their efforts were lovingly reaching out to them! When the believer in Christ suffers for their loving witness the judgment upon those who continue to reject Jesus is greater and we assure our glory in the presence of Jesus for all eternity! When God sends a refining fire upon the church it is for our discipline and the world's judgment, Peter says. The church will be saved through

it with difficulty in the sense that it was necessary for God to purify His dearly loved ones by drastic means of persecution and suffering. If God's people need disciplinary judgment, how much more will the unsaved merit the wrath of God when they reject the righteousness of God? The reference is to Gen 19:15-26 when God sought to rescue Lot from Sodom before the city was destroyed. God was willing and able to do so but found Lot was unwilling as he lingered and argued with angels and finally had to be taken by the hand and drag out of the city. Lot was "saved by fire" as everything he lived for went up in smoke. We can compare that with Paul in Acts 16:15-34 who when imprisoned for his witness; he and Silas chained in the darkest dungeon, after the earthquake by God freed them stayed to witness to the jailer who had beaten them and had heard them praising God. That is what Peter is talking about as a witness as had Paul and Silas not received the discipline of God to purify them the Philippian jailer would have killed himself and never received Jesus! Paul had a greater love for his persecutor than he did for vengeance and because of this they received their freedom and the joy of seeing another soul added to the kingdom of God.

III. *Vs. 19 The outcome because of it: Recommitment*

Vs. 19 The Greek word for "commit" is a financial term that means "*to give in charge of a deposit*". Peter is exhorting the persecuted believers to make a further "deposit" in their spiritual lives and grow deeper. While Donna was undergoing her stem cell transplant at UW medical center I was forced to live at the cancer apartment 4 miles away and found that I could go to the hospital everyday by walking faster than taking the free shuttle. While I didn't mind the walk, I found the mental onslaught unbearable after a few days as I didn't know if during my over an hour walk if she would be alive when I arrived, and I became mentally tortured by the prospects

of that. There was a stretch of that walk where I would come upon a concrete staircase that seemed to go on forever and every day when I reached it I felt as though I was stuck on it even though I didn't have to climb it. One day as I passed by it and tears running down my face in fear of what might be God spoke to me that He wanted me to "*Press into Him to press on with Him!*" Those words set me free from the fear and the doubt as I "*recommitted*" my heart to Jesus every day on that journey to the hospital at that very spot! Saint's we are "*extremely loved and valuable to God!*" He made us sent His only Son to redeem us, He lives in us and promises to never leave us or forsake us. So, when you deposit more of your life with God's "savings and loan trust" you have nothing to fear and a guarantee of a greater reward then what you originally deposited! Such commitment I found was not a single action but one I needed to take each and every day on my four-mile walk to the hospital so it's a "*constant and continual recommitment!*" We do this by trusting God in spite of the circumstance or consequences and this is best revealed to our own hearts by "doing good" even to those who hate us as if they are our "*Faithful Creator!*" The unsaved persecutors are controlled in the present because they are controlled by their past but we Christians have a glorious present and future because it's controlled by our loving Father. Our God will NOT fail us so we can not only allow the refinement we can rejoice in it and make a further recommitment through it to Him!