

EPISTLE: 1 PETER

4



MP3

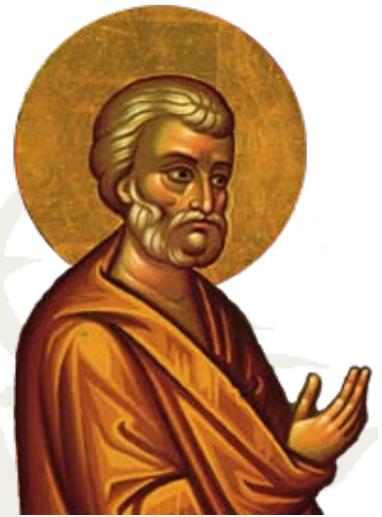
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PRACTICE QUIZ

Take a quiz to test your knowledge of 1 Peter chapter 4.

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The Holy Apostle Peter ended 1 Peter 3 by telling his readers that, when suffering, we should remember that Christ too suffered, but is now at the right hand of God; he begins chapter four saying that, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, we should likewise serve God through our suffering by ceasing to sin (4:1-2). We've spent enough time being controlled by our passions and engaging in "lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries" (4:3) – in fact, non-Christians will think us strange and talk against us because we no longer live in the same way as them (4:4) – but we must nonetheless remember that these people will give an account to Christ for how they've lived (as we will also do) (4:5). This is the message preached by Christ to those who died before His Crucifixion and Resurrection: those who lived righteously would rise to immortal life (4:6).

You might wonder: how does Christ's death and Resurrection relate to our overcoming such passions as lust and idolatry? Venerable Abba Isaiah answers in this way, "Christ's Resurrection became life and healing from passions

for those who believe on Him, that they might live in God and bring forth the fruits of truth." The key to this, St. Maximos the Confessor tells us, is love. The remedy against the passions, St. Maximos says, is the commandment of love, and he continues, "Through genuine love for God we can drive out the passions. Love for God is this: to choose Him rather than the world."

All of this is something that must be faced with serious thought and attentive prayer because, St. Peter says, "the end of all things is at hand" (4:7). You might be put off by this statement, because nearly 2,000 years has passed since it was written, but Venerable Bede warns us not to be flippant about it, "Peter says this so that you will not be fooled into thinking that judgment is a long way off or even that it will never come. Its timing may be uncertain, as far as we are concerned, but it is sure to come sooner or later."

Part of this serious, attentive, prayerful life involves lovingly serving each other (4:8-9). This service involves using the spiritual gift(s) given to the Christian by God (you can find more about the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12-14, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4). Serving in this way is dependent upon two things: relying upon the power of God, and giving the glory to God. Therefore, a person who preaches or teaches presents the words of God for God's glory, and likewise a person who serves others does so through the empowerment of God for God's glory (4:11).

Finally, St. Peter returns to the theme with which he began the chapter: partaking in Christ's sufferings. It is not strange or unexpected that Christians suffer – we should instead rejoice that our suffering purifies us and glorifies God (4:12-16). St. Tikhon of Zadonsk tells us that this is the true Christian life, but unfortunately only a few Christians truly stick with it,

We Christians are disciples as were the apostles. We must be followers of both of the teachings and of the example set by the life of the Master - And what is it then, to follow Christ? To do good and to suffer for the sake of the will of God who desires our forbearance; to endure all, looking upon Christ who suffered; for many wish to be glorified with Christ, yet few seek to remain with the suffering Christ.

In the end, then, persecution comes to the Church to purify it – God's judgment then moves on to those who do not obey the gospel of God (4:17-18). True Christians will therefore commit their lives in loving service to their Creator (4:19).

LIFE TIP

Abbot Nazarius of Valaam tells us how we should see our suffering: "If you love Christ God, then endure as He endured, and do all that is pleasing to Him. He taught and did. Unfailingly your love also should be such as does good, endures, is disturbed by nothing present, and in everything ever thanks Him not with words and tongue, but with very deeds. You must love Him with heart, with mind, with your whole soul, strength, and mind."

