

Joshua & Peter: The Sufficiency of God

Lesson 11: The Sufficiency of Gospel-Centered Living

Key Verse: Therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. ~1 Peter 4.19

What is the difference between a good person, who is upright and moral, and a Christ-follower? The “Sunday School” answer is salvation/Jesus. However, that answer does not satisfy when the actions of Christians do not necessarily stand out from good, nice, moral, and ethical people among our society. As Peter completes his writing about the expected behavior of Christ-followers, he provides clues about what sets Christians apart even as we too may be perceived as good, nice, moral, and ethical people. Living in pursuit of **God's Will** as well as *resting* our confidence in our **Just Judge** and *His* judgments are hallmarks of Gospel-centered living. *High King of Heaven, Ruler over all from angels to armies, my Savior who sits now at the right hand of God, thank you that no matter my suffering I can entrust my soul to You, my faithful Creator. Thank you for calling me to “do good” as I suffer and experience trials. Continue to illuminate Your teaching, convicting me of attitudes and behaviors that do not reflect You. Keep me from being worthy of my suffering through my own sinful actions and attitude (V 15). Empower a Christ-like mind, attitude, and behaviors in me. Amen.*

1 Peter 4.1-19 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, **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.

3 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. **4** With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; **5** but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. **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.

7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded¹ for the sake of your prayers. **8** Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. **9** Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: **11** whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. **13** But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. **14** If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of God and of God rests upon you.

15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. **16** Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

17 For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? **18** And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”² **19** Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

¹More precisely “sober-minded” translates to “alert, sound-minded, and mentally disciplined” -Achtemeier, Paul J. 1 Peter

²Peter is referencing an apocryphal book, Wisdom of Solomon, written before Christ. An apocryphal book is one whose authenticity is doubted, but widely circulated as true.

Diamonds:

The first two verses of 1 Peter 4 are connected to Peter's thoughts beginning in 1 Peter 3.8. To better understand the concluding thoughts on the purpose of God-ordained, undeserved suffering, read 1 Peter 3.8-4.2 as one treatise or discourse. Freely do this in your favorite translation(s).

1. From 1 Peter 4.1-2, what does Peter teach are some of the positive purposes of God-ordained, undeserved suffering?
2. Which of these purposes is encouraging for you as you suffer today? Or, which of these purposes would you like to experience when suffering enters your life?
3. Using verses 3-19 complete the chart below, making two lists: one of the "past" behaviors/attitudes Peter identifies in this passage, and the other of current expected behaviors/attitudes of those who follow Christ and His example (freely read this passage in multiple translations to help you with these two lists).

"Past", or unChristlike behaviors/attitudes	Christlike behaviors/attitude

4. This holiday season it is likely you will spend time with those you love and those you have to love! As you review the two lists, write down at least two behaviors or attitudes that you want to display during this holiday season. Write a short prayer asking God to teach you, guide you and empower you to display these two behaviors or attitudes.
5. Be prepared to tell your group how God worked this holiday season by empowering you to Christlikeness through the two behaviors/attitudes you chose. It may be helpful to strategically place a sticky note, or card to remind you of this goal. Take notes about what happened here so you remember what you want to share!)

The historical context of verses 5-6 is important in understanding why Peter has again brought up "those who are dead" (V 6). Peter is explaining that those who have died while believing in Christ are still alive in Christ. It was assumed that anyone who died under human judgment was in jeopardy of God's wrath-filled judgment. Peter assures these new Christians that God vindicates His people who die under human judgment. Human judgment has no authority over God's judgment of His people, or any people for that matter!

Peter is not warning that "the end is near" like those that stand on street corners (V 7). Rather, he is continuing to teach about *everyone's* eventual accountability before God. In doing so, he commands four appropriate responses of Christ-followers to this truth.

6. In your own words, using your favorite translation(s), what are the four appropriate responses of Christ-followers to the reality of our accountability before God:
 - a. V 7
 - b. V 8
 - c. V 9
 - d. V 10
7. Recalling Jesus's actions in John 13, how does Jesus provide us an example to follow in each of these four responses? (See also Lesson 10.)
8. Everyone has a gift by which they demonstrate God's grace in service to the Church (V 10). According to verse 11, what makes a "gift of service" more than a personality trait or natural aptitude with a corresponding skill set? What transforms it into something Divinely given?

Our key verse, verse 19, grounds Peter's final statements about suffering and trials (V 12-16). This verse is also powerful in distinguishing Christ-followers from those who live good, moral, and ethical lives. Chapters 2-4 of Peter's first letter contain behaviors that reflect the pagan idolatry and lifestyle at the time of his writing. While much of what he identifies is also present today, American social norms do not require such practices or normalize them as the pagan *religious* culture did at Peter's time of writing. Additionally, while Americans today may assert their "right" to behave as Peter describes, the truth remains that they too know their actions are wrong and are aware of the futility of their pursuit (Romans 2.14).

Likewise, American Christians lives are not threatened for following Christ, attending church, or declaring oneself a Christian. We may be isolated from invitations, sardonically accused of having a "moral high ground", be cast aside in favor of those whose self-promotion invites popularity, and experience many circumstances that hurt our feelings and/or make us feel misunderstood. But as of this time in American history, following Christ is not a guarantee of being thrown before a hostile court of law nor a death-sentence. This is unlike the time period in which Peter is presciently warning his readers.

So how do you, a Christ-follower, stand out from the moral and ethical unbeliever living next to you? What makes a Christ-follower different from all the "good, nice, people" who sit next to you at work, volunteer alongside you, stand next to you in the grocery store line, or sit in the cars near you in rush-hour traffic? One answer is found in 1 Peter 4.19: "Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good."

9. How does a Christ-follower view suffering (V 19a)? Do you consider "suffer[ing] according to God's will" fatalistic, a perfect 'pat answer', dismissive of pain, the long-view, sufficient, hope or something else?
10. What are those who suffer called to do while "entrust[ing] their souls to [our] faithful Creator"? How does this distinguish a Christ-follower from a good, moral, and ethical person? Consider your response in light of all the good a Christ-follower is called to do in 1 Peter 2-4.

Deity: Just Judge~ “Just” means legally correct: faithful to an original: conforming to a standard of correctness; “Judge” means to make an official decision about: to act with authority to reach a decision.

God is our Just Judge (Deuteronomy 32.4; 2 Corinthians 5.10). He can be trusted to do what is exactly right and legally correct (according to God’s holy standard) with every human being (Genesis 18.25; Romans 2.1-16; Revelation 20.12-13).

As Just Judge, God alone is the final authority in knowing whose heart has been circumcised, changed by the Holy Spirit to seek His praise alone (Matthew 13.24-30; Romans 2.17-29).

We are cautioned not to usurp His authority by judging others using standards that we too transgress, thus inviting condemnation (Romans 2.1-3).

11. “It is finished.” (John 19.30) These words, spoken by Jesus at His crucifixion, confirm that the cost of sin had been paid (John 3.16-18; Colossians 2.13-14; 1 Peter 2.18-19). Having Justly Judged all of sin through Jesus’ death, how does God as your Just Judge (V 5) motivate you to live in line with Peter’s commands throughout chapter 4?

Doctrine: The Will of God~ God’s plan and purpose for His creation and for each individual. God does whatever He pleases (Psalm 135.6) and desires that all people do His will. Only people fully mature in Christ are able to do God’s will consistently (Colossians 4.12). God’s will is always good, acceptable, and perfect (Romans 12.2).

Doing God’s will sustained Jesus for life (John 4.34). Sometimes, however, the will of God leads to suffering (Romans 8.28; James 1.2-4; 1 Peter 3.17), as it did for Jesus (Isaiah 53.10; Matthew 26.39, 42).

Christians are to strive to know the will of God for their lives (Psalm 143.10; Ephesians 5.17; Colossians 1.9). Christians discern God’s will through prayer (Colossians 1.9) and also pray for God’s will for the world to be done (Matthew 6.10).

Jesus counted those who did God’s will as His own family members (Matthew 12.50). They, like Jesus, will live forever (1 John 2.17).

12. What verse(s) in 1 Peter 4 and in this definition help you entrust your soul to our faithful Creator as you do good, even in suffering and trials (V 19)?

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer: If we are honest with ourselves, there are times when we don’t look any different than those “good” people around us. We too fear, pity, experience flash-bang anger, cry, feel orphaned, receive and give partial treatment, yell at the terrible driver in front of us, scorn injustice, grieve, get sick, lose our homes in “acts of God”, and on and on. Following Christ does not provide immunity from the reality and consequences of this sin-filled world and creation. However, we are set free -NOW- from the total destruction of sin’s inevitability.

To help you see the game-changing sufficiency of Gospel-centered living in your own life, read all the Scripture-Soaked Prayers you have written in our study thus far. (If you missed writing any of them, take some time to write them during the break.) Having read all of them, what difference in your behaviors/attitudes do you notice, or how do you see the sufficiency of Gospel-centered living revealed?

Now write a Scripture-Soaked Prayer as the Holy Spirit leads you:

Lecture Outline:

Aim: Embracing God's will is a believer's privilege.

- I. Embrace Your Calling (1 Peter 4.1-11) **T1:** God's will is embraced by obeying His call for gospel-centered living.
 - a. How could Jesus' example encourage and instruct you as you seek to obey God's call to live a gospel-centered life?
 - b. In what ways are you living according to God's will, even as you endure a season of suffering?
 - c. What type of suffering **are** you enduring? Suffering caused by THE Fall, YOUR fall, or suffering allowed by God the Father?
- II. Embrace Your Commitment (1 Peter 4.12-19) **T2:** God's will is embraced by a steadfast commitment to glorify Him, even in suffering.
 - a. How steadfast is your commitment to glorify God?
 - b. How might your suffering be turning your attention away from God's glory and toward yourself?
 - c. In what ways could you keep your commitment to glorify God steadfast as you suffer?