

We are in the midst of a very intense study on what it means to live as an alien and stranger in this world. God has made it clear what He desires and what He wants us to desire. He desires us to let Him completely annihilate our flesh under the waters of judgment in order that we might live according to the new life given to us by the Spirit of God. As such, He wants us to appeal to Him, as it says in **3:21**, for a good conscience, or a transformed mind, that is obsessed with doing only that which comes from God—that which is inherently “good.”

### **1 Peter 4:1-2**

Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

This passage starts with therefore, therefore we need to look backwards to make sure we are following the correct train of thought from **3:18-22**. Jesus set an example for us where He willingly allowed His flesh to be destroyed confident that He would be quickened or made alive in the Spirit and in so doing triumph over all His enemies putting them to shame. The Spirit therefore wants us to set our minds toward the same *purpose*: the complete annihilation of our flesh under the waters of judgment so we might likewise be quickened or made alive in the Spirit.

As He did in **1:13** when we were commanded to prepare, or gird up the loins of

our mind, for action, the Spirit once again uses the language of war. In **4:1** we are commanded to dig deep down into our souls and equip ourselves, as if for war, with this same purpose which Christ armed Himself. This is speaking of putting on a weapon. To “arm” is in the *aorist middle imperative*. It is to be our way of life (*aorist*), it is something we have to dig deep into our soul and choose (*middle*), and yes, it is a command (*imperative*) we are to obey. We are at war against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places and this is one of our most powerful weapons and we are command to strap on this particular piece of equipment because with it we are indomitable. Yes, we must be prepared to suffer in the flesh.

It is amazing, and for me this has always been a bit disturbing, but if you read through the Bible you will find that the Lord has a totally different perspective on our lives than we do. He sees us first and foremost as spiritual beings and not physical beings (since, from His perspective, our spiritual reality is both our now and eternal reality). Thus, He does not seem to place a big premium on the physical. And our gross over obsession with the psychical is way out of balance. Therefore, the Spirit wants us to start aligning our perspective of our lives in these bodies with that of God. Accordingly, Jesus suffered in the flesh and so we must like Him be ready to suffer in the flesh; it is how we wage war against the enemy. And if you think about it, this is actually a brilliant battle strategy.

Most of us naturally have a lot of fear when it comes to our physical body: we are terrified of pain, discomfort, and suffering. We hate it, we hate the idea of it, we will do anything to avoid it, and we have found many creative ways to circumvent it—including running away. The enemy has used this fear of pain and

suffering to control us. He has preyed on the self-protective mechanism in our being to tempt us to seek comfort and relief from our appointed suffering when in reality we need to go through it. This fear of suffering has been a very effective weapon of the enemy used against the **beloved** and a weapon that has been wielded in stealth with few knowing its true source. And once the enemy gets our attention with fear, he adds to it all sorts of lies like: "If God really loved you, He would not make you go through this;" "This is just like God, isn't it; He just wants you to suffer;" "You must have done something wrong for God to punish you like this;" "If you were obedient or had enough faith then you would not have to hurt like this;" "You get what you deserve;" "This must be from the devil and not God, for God's children are supposed to live in blessing and not suffering;" and so on. The enemy lies and lies about God, about our circumstances, and about us; and, because we loath pain and suffering, we tend to believe his lies and get all confused and out of sorts. But no more. We now know the schemes and tricks of the enemy and therefore we must be prepared to suffer in the flesh. It is to be our way of life.

When you refuse to be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance (**1:14**); when you toss aside the futile way of life inherited from your forefathers (**1:18**); when you put aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander (**2:1**); when you abstain from fleshly lusts (of self-pity and self-love) which wage war against the soul (**2:11**); when you turn away from evil and do good (**3:11**); and when you allow your flesh to be buried under the flood of judgment (**3:20-21**); then all that is left to control you is your physical body.

Another way to say it is, all that is in the way of total freedom from the

enemy's control over your life is your physical body. The enemy knows this to be true and will fight hard to keep you from gaining your freedom. When you wield your ultimate weapon, when you are prepared to suffer in the flesh, you will disarm the enemy of their secret weapon of fear in terms of your physical body. Your ultimate weapon immobilizes their secret weapon and they are practically unable to control you any longer. With the fate of your physical body already decided (if you dig down deep in your soul and choose to be ok with suffering trusting that everything is an appointment from God and it is always good, pleasing, and perfect), then they are in effect powerless and you are free. Yes, you are free from the ability for the enemy to mess with you, torment you, and bind you in fear.

Now I want to make a point of the fact that this issue of suffering has moved away from unjust suffering at the hands of someone who thinks they can take advantage of you to just any kind of suffering in our flesh. The suffering mentioned here is not fixated on the source, whether human or spiritual, just the event. Thus, suffering could be from the hands of others, the hand of the enemy, God's direct intervention, and so on; but that is not the point. The point here is suffering in our physical bodies. Therefore, it could be with sickness, it could be with injury, with despair, with depression, with pangs for another, it could be with abandonment or rejection by those whom you have loved, it could be with emotional and psychological terror and stress, one could malign you, lie about you, disparage you, mock you, deceive you, pick on you, single you out for difficult treatment, cheat on you, take advantage of you, use you, play games with you, manipulate you, or anything else that can cause some type of pain and affliction

in our bodies. We must be ready for this. It does not mean we will have to endure it, but we might. But, either way, this is a discussion regarding our readiness for war—being armed with the same mindset that Jesus had.

All of these awful things I just read actually happened to Jesus. His friends rejected Him. His friends abandoned Him. His friends betrayed Him. His friends denied Him. His own people wanted nothing to do with Him. They doubted Him, they used Him for His gifts but they did not care about Him as a person. They followed Him in order to take from Him. They lied about Him, they conspired against Him, and they used power and influence to turn others against Him. They hated Him, they berated Him, and they despised Him. They could not appreciate the good He did because they wanted to see Him hurt. This is why the Bible says that Jesus was a man of sorrows.

***Isaiah 53:3***

He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

They eventually did hurt Him. They took Him, they beat Him, they ripped the meat off His body, they nailed Him to a tree and they killed Him. He suffered in the flesh in every way imaginable and in ways we do not even think about. Consider how much pain He endured not just in His soul but in His body when He bore the sins of every man, woman, and child that has ever lived or will ever live.

And we must not forget that He was judged by the Father for this sin.

***Isaiah 53:4-8***

Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away.

This is some serious suffering in the flesh. Jesus emotionally and psychologically suffered, and His body was literally destroyed. And He did it all willingly. He walked into His suffering knowing the example He would set for us to follow.

***John 10:16***

No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded.

***Isaiah 50:6-7***

I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting. For the Lord God helps Me, therefore, I am not disgraced; therefore, I have set My face like flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed.

Jesus was determined to go all the way with it. He was not going to bend or back off. He was going to take the full assault of whatever was thrown at Him. He had set His face like flint which is a picturesque way of saying that nothing was going to change His mind. He had dug down deep into His soul and decided that His flesh was not worth preserving. And He could do this because He was more than confident that He would not be ashamed. He knew the Father's plan was good, pleasing, and perfect (even though it did not feel that way). He knew the glory that awaited Him and He knew that He would take His life back up again, by the power of the Spirit of God. He knew He would have complete victory over His enemies and would triumph. This is our example. He prepared Himself. He said for this purpose He came. He knew what He was walking into and still He did it.

***John 12:27-28***

Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. "Father, glorify Your name."

He was prepared to suffer in the flesh. Yet, when the physical suffering was

crouched before Him like a lion ready to pounce on its prey, He struggled; although, He did not back down from the course which the Father set before Him. It is not an easy decision to choose to suffer in the flesh. Look at His discourse with His Father.

***Matthew 26:38-43 (excerpts)***

My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death. My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet, not as I will, but as You will. My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.

Likewise, it will not be easy for us to walk through this final stage of maturity and spiritual release; but we need to prepare ourselves for this suffering. Like Jesus before us, we can trust in our Father's will for our lives knowing that His pathways are always good, pleasing, and perfect (there can be no other way than the way He chooses for us). With that said, I want to get back to the fact that "arm" is in the *arist* tense and *middle* voice. This way of living needs to be your life, from beginning to end, and it is something you have to choose. You have to, like Jesus, set your face like flint to endure whatever form or manner of suffering the Father appoints for you, understanding that it is all from His hands. Remember, nothing that happens to you is random or comes at the hand of someone whom the Father has not authorized. That was the same with Jesus. All the horrors that happened to Jesus were prescribed by His Father.



***Isaiah 53:10-12***

But it was the Lord's good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the Lord's good plan will prosper in his hands. When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins. I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier, because he exposed himself to death. He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.

Jesus trusted Himself so completely to His Father that He was willing to go through and endure whatever the Father had prescribed for Him. He knew it was for good. He knew it was for us; and He knew it would result in our being with Him for all eternity. He knew the Father had a purpose and He trusted that purpose. He knew the Father's plan was good, pleasing, and perfect. And what does it say. Jesus was satisfied knowing what His anguish would accomplish.

The Father wants us to likewise trust Him so completely that like Jesus we set our face like flint to endure whatever He prescribes. He is telling us this upfront so we can take to Him our fear of suffering, take to Him our anxiety, and our worry. He wants us to willingly deal with it all in light of what Jesus did, and in light of what Jesus won through it all. He wants us to truly trust that all He has planned for us is good, pleasing and perfect—even if that means great suffering in the flesh. He wants us to be convinced that like Jesus we will be satisfied knowing what our anguish will accomplish. So He commands us to arm ourselves with this

mindset. It is a powerful weapon; one that cannot be defeated.

The person who has armed themselves with this purpose has made the choice to let go of the attachments to this world. They are willing; they are ready; and they are the ultimate alien and stranger. They know they do not belong to this world so they have willingly removed all that causes an unnatural spiritual attachment to what is dead and dying. Again, I have to mention that this is a choice; this will not happen to you. Rather, the Lord has done everything possible to prove to you that you can trust Him in this regard; and now He wants you to stop all the fussing and arguing and choose to agree with Him. He is good and all His ways are pleasing and perfect. No, suffering does not feel good, pleasing, or perfect, but Jesus was able to see through His pain and overcome His fears and attach to the fact that His Father's purposes were for His glory and for our glory. He wants you to make the exact same decision.

Now we know this type of decision can be made by a mere man (someone other than Jesus) because Paul made it. We read of His example in the book of **Acts**. Paul was on His way to Jerusalem and here is what He said.

***Acts 20:18-27***

You know that from the day I set foot in the province of Asia until now I have done the Lord's work humbly and with many tears. I have endured the trials that came to me from the plots of the Jews. I never shrank back from telling you what you needed to hear, either publicly or in your homes. I have had one message for Jews and Greeks alike—the necessity of repenting from sin and

turning to God, and of having faith in our Lord Jesus. And now I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don't know what awaits me, except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.

And now I know that none of you to whom I have preached the Kingdom will ever see me again. I declare today that I have been faithful. If anyone suffers eternal death, it's not my fault, for I didn't shrink from declaring all that God wants you to know.

***Acts 21:13***

I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but even to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus.

The question now lies, are we willing to be obedient and obey this command to arm ourselves with this purpose as Jesus was obedient and as Paul was obedient? This is a big one to swallow for sure, it makes you kind of shutter. But the Spirit was serious when He used the picture of the complete destruction of the world under the floods of judgment as His example of what He wants to accomplish with us: the complete destruction from our flesh regardless of what it takes to accomplish that glorious purpose. Are you ready to let the Lord bring your flesh under the waters of judgment, even if it means suffering? Have you truly made

the appeal for a “good” conscience? You need to decide because He is a jealous God and He wants all of you, not just part of you. He wants every little bit of you and He wants you to want all of Him so that the design point (His life in yours) can be completed.

Now as to the design point, the person who suffers in the flesh has ceased from sin. Now, I said suffers and not suffered because “suffers” is in the *aorist active participle*. This is addressing something that is ongoing in our lives (hence, the *participle*). Which makes sense; just being alive in this fallen world produces a daily dose of unpleasant suffering. Now, the qualification for this cessation of sin is that a person has armed themselves with the mindset which Christ armed Himself. There are a lot of people who suffer in this world, as have many of us, but that does not mean they or we have ceased from sin. Ceasing from sin is a consequence of arming ourselves with the same purpose as Christ. You see if you have not adopted the mindset of Christ toward your suffering, if you don’t understand the purposes of your suffering, then most likely your suffering will just make you angry, bitter, and resentful instead of satisfied. But Jesus wants you to be fully satisfied and content in Him; and that comes when you are willing to suffer—willing to let God do whatever is necessary to put down your *flesh*.

I want you to grasp the direct correlation between physical suffering with the right mindset and the design point. You see, the only way we will cease from sinning is when Jesus is practically living His life in and through our physical bodies (since obviously, Jesus does not sin). That is the design point we have been speaking of (I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me). So this is speaking of a total exchange of your life for His.

It is speaking of an existence in this world that is infinitely powerful. There is so much freedom when you are not dominated by sin and your life is ruled by the power of the Holy Spirit. This can be your reality which is why the Spirit is emphasizing this so emphatically. Has “ceased” from sin is in the *perfect middle indicative*. Thus, it means that you dug down deep into your soul and definitively decided to arm yourself with the mindset of Christ in terms of suffering and this decision is now giving room in your body for Christ to live through you. How cool is that? And what is the evidence that you have made this decision? You live the rest of the time in the flesh (in your physical body) no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. Now we finally get to the third part of the design point or should I say the trifacta (or perfection) of spiritual living. Let’s review.

### ***Galatians 2:20-21***

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

“I have been crucified with Christ.” That is step one of the design point; allowing your flesh to be killed under the waters of judgment. This is something you have to be active in doing and it goes to the heart of our passage. This is the ultimate weapon. “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” This is the second step of the design point. Jesus will live His life in and through your life when you let Him kill and murder your flesh and completely separate you from its

control over your life. This is done by trusting that Jesus is your Lord and as your God Almighty all that He prescribes for your life is good, pleasing, and perfect. “And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” This is the third step in this spiritual trifecta. *We live by faith.* We are not yet separated from these bodies of flesh, but we can choose to live by faith in the Son of God who loves us and is obsessed with us and has proven it by giving up His physical body for us. He chose to suffer in the flesh in ways unimaginable because He loves us and always wants to be with us; therefore, we can now trust in His love. We can trust that all He allows and prescribes for our lives, even great suffering, is nothing less than an expression of His great, immense, and incomprehensible love for us.

By faith in the Son of God; that is the way an alien and stranger lives. That is the way of the **beloved**. By faith means that you can make the choice to pursue with a whole heart the Father’s will for your life and discard your own will which is driven by your fleshly lusts. Those fleshly lusts of self-love and self-pity can be destroyed and demolished and obliterated and they no longer have to control you. Rather, the rest of your time on this earth can be lived for the will of God.

I am going to say something that many would consider to be quite harsh and judgmental; but, in reality, I am just going to be quoting Jesus. These are not my words; these are His words and we MUST give HEED to His WARNING. We have been warned in **2 Thessalonians 2:3** that in the last days there will be a great falling away from the faith; many so called believers will become apostates. But take note, one cannot fall from something if they do not belong to it in some way, shape, or form. Thus, the sign of the true **beloved** is not that they call themselves

Christians, it is not that they go to church and Bible studies, it is not that they read their Bible, and it is not so many things. The sign of the true **beloved** is clear: those who live to do the will of the Father.

***Matthew 7:21-23***

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, ***but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.*** Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

***Matthew 12:46-50***

While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. Someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You." But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! ***For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.***"

And this is the example which Jesus set for us to follow. He lived by faith seeking, desiring, and doing the will of His Father in heaven—and only His will. He

never took matters into His own hands. In fact, His very sustenance in this world was doing the will of His Father. That is a very bizarre concept but it goes to what Jesus said to Lucifer: man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. His will should be our very food for life.

***John 4:34***

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.

***John 5:30***

I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

***John 6:38***

For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

I hope you understand that this path He has you and I on is the right and the only pathway. *It is the pathway of faith*—the spiritual trifacta. It is how we are to live on this earth. We are to let the Lord kill our flesh, we are to let Him be Lord of our lives (sanctify Him as Lord in our hearts); and we are to seek to do the will of the Father throughout our time on this earth. For His will is all that really matters.



Your will for your life doesn't really matter. Sorry, your will for your life became a non-issue the moment you chose to ask Jesus to come into your life and be your Lord and Savior. At that moment, you were redeemed with the precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ, and you forfeited to your God the right to your life (**1:19**). He now gets to determine the best pathways for your life (even if that includes suffering and death); and you get to live this life in the flesh *by faith* in the Son of God who loves you and gave Himself for you. You get to seek His will, no matter what it is, trusting that His ways are always good, pleasing, and perfect.

The way of faith, the way of the Father's will, is the right road. If you are still stuck seeking your own will in this world, you are on the wrong road. I don't care how long you have been a Christian, I don't care how much you profess your love for Jesus, and I don't care how much money you give or how much you know about the Bible, you are on the wrong road.

***Matthew 7:13-14***

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

The pathway of faith is a very narrow pathway and the reality is that few find it. But you have been taught the truth; nothing has been withheld from you. The Lord loves you so much that He has seen to it that the whole truth, and nothing

but the truth, has been taught to you. And this has been done because He wants you to join Him on this very narrow road. He wants you. He wants all of you. And He wants you to want all of Him. So arm yourself with the same purpose with which Christ armed Himself. Be prepared to suffer for the goal of your suffering is the eradication of your flesh so you can live the rest of your life for the will of God and not for your lusts of self-love and self-pity. Those lusts cause us to be so pathetic especially when we consider the fact that we have the opportunity for Jesus' life to be lived in ours.

What Jesus has done with this body is a beautiful thing—glorious even—and I know He wants to complete this good work. Let Him have His way. Choose, be prepared, let go of your flesh, let it be buried under the waters of judgment, and let the Spirit of God bring you through the flood so you can live in freedom doing only what your Father tells you to do, saying only what He tells you to say, and going only where He sends you. Triumph over the enemy; strip him of his weapon of fear. Arm yourself accordingly and live in the ultimate spiritual trifacta. You will be satisfied!

Let's pray.