

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.

I hope that you have been wrestling with what it means to “arm” oneself with the weapon of suffering in the flesh. Sometimes when we learn these concepts but do not take the time to figure out how to practically apply them. But this is not one of those concepts we can skip over. In every relationship, we must be prepared to suffer. There is no guarantee that others will do us right—none. But that is between them and God (keeping in mind that if they don’t do us right it is really an issue between us and God and what He wants to accomplish in us or through us). So stop living in fear trying to control the outcomes in your life, stop trying to manipulate circumstances, and stop trying to self-protect from everyone. Rather, let it be; God will deal with their treatment of you—you are too precious to Him for Him to just let it be. Your job however is to understand and accept the reasons why God allows these things to happen in the first place. It is all about His glory in you and your glory in Him. So rest. It will be ok.

1 Peter 4:3-6

For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness,

carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you; but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.

For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. The point is that we should now be beyond this type of behavior; and, if you are not, it is time to let it go. The time is sufficient or literally has come along side of you and is confirming that you must let it go. You don't need that form of indulgence anymore. In reading this, you get the feeling that the Spirit is saying that children of this world indulge in these types of behaviors and it is for really sick reasons. But you are no longer children of this world, you are children of God; and you have the real reasons why this course of action is not necessary for you.

I want you to note that the Spirit addresses the desire, the will, or the determination of the Gentiles, not just the behavior (with "Gentiles" just being a euphemism for those who have made their abode in this world). Their "behavior" is merely an indication that they have a deeper issue, which explains why they *resolve* to give themselves to these things. It is their means of coping with all that they can't control and don't understand.

Furthermore, they don't stumble into this type of behavior nor are they just

falling into temptation; they literally have dug in deep into their souls and set their minds and emotions toward this type of lasciviousness (“having pursued” is in the *middle* voice). And I think this happens because they realize they have an empty soul; they literally have nothing with which to fill themselves. They have either not discovered that contentment is actually available in Jesus or they have refused to access the only pathway of contentment. To cope with their decision (whether conscience or not), they set their minds and emotions on indulging in this type of excess living. This is the pathway they choose, the course they set for themselves. They can’t bear the emptiness and so they try and fill it with all sorts of indulgences that are not even to be named among the saints.

The Spirit is saying that we must not be like them. We are not empty inside; we have the Spirit of the living God dwelling in our being. We have learned that unlike those who make their abode in this world clinging to anything they can: we have a living hope; we have belonging; we have a new identity; we are holy; we have a future; we have been redeemed from the futile way of life inherited from our forefathers; we have been born-again of imperishable seed; we have tasted of the kindness of the Lord; we have drank the milk of the Word; we have fallen on the rock and been broken; we are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a people of God’s own possession; we have purpose: to proclaim the excellences of the one who has called us out of the darkness into His marvelous light; we have been equipped and enabled to live as a child of God; we get to choose to be submitted to authorities; we get to serve; we get to suffer; we have a war to fight; we have a phenomenal reason to choose to live differently: our agape or divine love for one another; we were called to inherit a blessing; and only we have the ability to turn

from evil and do good.

We have so much and they have so little. We are not soulless people and we must not emulate their lives. Rather, we have been called to sanctify Christ as Lord of our hearts knowing that our flesh is not worth holding onto and must be killed under the waters of judgment. Thus, we are to let this way of living go and never return to it. We have moved on. We are the few, the chosen, the elect lady that gets to know and experience Jesus' life in ours; and this is how we are to live all the time.

And by the way, I don't think we need to nitpick these words (sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries), we all have a pretty good grasp of what they mean. A list of examples is not needed and I am sure I could not capture the entirety of creative ways we have found to carry out these things in our lives. Suffice it to say that these things are evil and not of the Spirit. Thus, this evil can and will manifest itself in so many different behaviors that are dishonoring to the Lord and it will always produce rotten fruit.

With that said, I do want to drill in on one of these items: abominable idolatries. In those days they had to deal with a lot of actual idolatry; it permeated every aspect of their culture. Temples of worship were set up everywhere. But keep in mind, the statutes and figurines they worshiped had no life or real power. The issue with idolatry is about what these idols represent and the demonic spirits which inspire the worship. In fact, **1 Corinthians 10:20** makes it clear that all such sacrifices they made to their "gods" were not offerings to any "gods" (there is only one God) but offerings to demons who like to pretend they are "gods" and convince people to come to them for answers and to satisfy needs in

this life.

Idolatry therefore is a substitute for Jesus where one looks to demons to obtain something that Jesus is intended to satisfy and fulfill. Jesus is our "I Am;" He is our entire source of every provision and He wants you to look only to Him to be your source for all things. But when you look to something else to be your provision you have succumbed to abominable idolatries; and it does not matter if that "something else" is a woman, a man, a child, money, religion, a job, a position, politics, or anything else we tend to look to for some level of personal provision. For instance, some of us look to our identity in this world and seek fulfillment in that identity (as a wife, a mother, a boss, a teacher, a good and faithful friend, and so on) and that can also be idolatrous as it attempts to fill something which Jesus is to fill and satisfy. So don't be fooled into thinking that just because you don't have little statues sitting around or just because you are not necessarily running into some temple and offering up sacrifices that you do not have a life full of idols. The demons behind our obsessions don't care what image they hide behind. The reality is that if you are not living the design point, you are busy sacrificing to many, many idols. And always keep in mind that behind each source of provision you seek is a demon who is lying to you and convincing you to seek its approval and its blessing instead of that of God.

In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation (or wasteful debaucheries), and they malign or speak blasphemous evil about you. This is reality. The world is a very intolerant place. If you do not conform to its image, it will attack you. That is why the **beloved** have always had to live under some form of suffering. In *John 15:18-20*, Jesus said: "If

the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you.” In fact, if the world speaks well of you that is a problem and something you should be concerned with, for that is how they used to treat the false prophets of old (**Luke 6:26**). Rather, “Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets” (**Luke 6:22-23**).

Therefore, being maligned for not participating in their excessive dissipation is an honor; embrace it and arm yourself for this type of suffering and be prepared for it. Big deal if they come after you and mock you, dis you, separate from you, ridicule you, and so on. You can deal with it. If you “arm” yourself with the weapon of suffering, they will have no ability to impact you whatsoever. They will just be annoying, but they will not be able to impact you or control you by their attack. It really will not matter. In these instances, you can worship Jesus that you get to suffer for Him knowing that each “attack” it is another opportunity for you to let your flesh be killed and bury it under the waters of judgment.

And please always remember, if anyone is giving you grief and maligning you, it comes at the hand of God. Therefore, it has a purpose and that purpose is to give you the opportunity to practice and to own your true identity and purpose in this life. It is giving you the privilege of choosing to live like an alien and stranger in this world. Besides, as it says in **James 4:4-5**, friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself

an enemy of God. And that is not what you want to be; hopefully you have learned that lesson.

But they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. There is no doubt about it; the Lord has made it clear that He is an avenger and according to **3:16**, they will be put them to shame for wrongfully treating you. He has told us this while at the same time guaranteeing that we will not be put to shame. The chilling reality is that Jesus is now ready and continually ready to judge (“who is ready” is in the *present active participle*). He knows all, He sees all, and He is ready to now judge all in truth. So this is not just talking about the final judgment at the end of days; rather, this is talking about judgment in our day-to-day lives. Rest assured, Jesus is even now bringing judgment into the lives of people who malign and speak blasphemous evil about you. Besides, “judge” is in the *aorist active*: it is what He does and what He is about.

The point is that even though it often seems that people get away with mistreating us, they don’t. Jesus is on the job and He always has our back. So you can relax and arm yourself with this type of suffering. Expect it, don’t react to it, don’t freak out, but be prepared like a warrior. When it comes, just pull out this piece of armor and endure the suffering knowing that they will get their comeuppance and it will occur in their lifetime. But also note, that if you are an instrument of maligning others, you also will be judged. If you make your abode in this world and live like a Gentile, then you will also be judged like a Gentile. This sort of judgment is not just reserved for unbelievers, but it is reserved for those who live like their home is in this world like the soulless unbelievers.

Now it is kind of weird that it says He is ready to judge the living and the dead. I

will explain this comment about the “dead.” However, first I want to make note of the fact that the Spirit is painting a picture for us that has everything to do with arming ourselves with the purpose of suffering because He is about the total annihilation of the flesh in order that we might live in the Spirit according to the design point: His life in ours. He is therefore communicating that He is dead set on doing this work and He will be faithful to lead you to freedom from yourself.

The Spirit says, “For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.” It is a statement of fact that the gospel has been preached to the dead (it is in the *indicative* mood). But which dead? Well, it is qualified by the fact that the result of their being judged in the flesh is that they live in the Spirit according to the will of God. So to whom could this possibly refer?

I believe it refers to the saints of old who placed their faith in God. I believe their faith preserved them until the time of the cross when their faith could be completed in Jesus Christ. You see, prior to the cross, when people died they went to Sheol or to hell. However, unbeknownst to many, hell had two parts and this is described for us in the story of Lazarus in **Luke 16**. One part of Sheol was a place of fire and great suffering and was called Hades and Abaddon, or destruction. The other was a place of great comfort and it was called “Abraham’s bosom.” But the point is that before the cross there was no way for the faithful dead to enter into the presence of the Lord. The precious blood of Christ had not yet been spilt and their sins had not yet been covered by the blood of the lamb. Furthermore, **John 3:5-8** makes it clear that no one can enter the kingdom unless

they are born again of the Spirit of God. So the faith of the Old Testament believers preserved them in Abraham's bosom and they were comforted until the day that the gospel could be preached and they could choose to place their faith in Jesus Christ and be born again of the Spirit of God. I believe this happened during the 3-days and 3-nights when Jesus was dead in the flesh and in the heart of the earth (**Matthew 12:40**).

We already know that during this time He went and shamed the demons who did something very awful during the time of Noah (**3:19**). In **3:19**, we are told He went and preached or proclaimed something to the spirits now in prison. I want to note however that the Greek word translated "preach" is different than the one translated "preach" in **4:6**. In **3:19**, it literally means to herald or to announce (presumably His great victory over the demon's insidious plan); however, in **4:6** it means to announce good news and comes from the root word for blessing "*eulogia*."

Jesus went and announced the good news, the blessing, to those faithful saints who were dead. He let them know that He was their provision, He was the object of their faith, and He provided atonement for their sins. And when He ascended to the Father He led the spirits of those who now believed in Him, as a result of the preaching, into the presence of God. He led those who were captives in Sheol captive to the living God; and one day they will join us at the marriage supper of the Lamb (**Revelation 19:9**). Yes, we will get to meet all our heroes of faith. **Matthew 8:11** says: "I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" How cool is that. The scriptural references to this concept are found in **Ephesians 4**

which itself pulls from ***Psalm 68***.

Ephesians 4:8-10

Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

Psalm 68:18

You have ascended on high, You have led captive Your captives; You have received gifts among men.

The picture we are given is of great triumph. Jesus busted the captives out of their prison of Sheol and led them as His captives into the presence of God. And they are now alive in the Spirit according to the will of God. The Spirit wants us to understand this in light of our own baptism. This passage is a proclamation of God's faithfulness and is intended to help us walk in a manner worthy of the calling in which we have been called. If God did not lose a single person who had ever placed their faith in Him, then our "living hope" through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is guaranteed. Thus, we can stop worrying about what's to come our way and the suffering that must take place in this earth; we can leave it all behind. We can choose to live in the now fully committed to being

judged in the flesh so we might live in the Spirit according to the will of God. If He ensured the faithful dead were judged in the flesh, we can be assured that we will be judged in the flesh with the same aim of new life in the Spirit. With this truth we can arm ourselves for battle.

Next the Spirit sets our perspective as to why.

1 Peter 4:7

The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.

Everything is passing away and the end is near; and believe me, it is a lot more near than when this was written 2,000 years ago. As we studied in the books of **Jude** and **Revelation**, everything on and in this earth will be soon be judged and destroyed. Thus, holding on to anything this world has to offer is simply ludicrous. It is dumb. It is a waste of time and energy. Rather, we are commanded (it is an *imperative*) to be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. And since this is in the *aorist* tense it is to be our way of life; it is to define us. We are to be, always, of sound judgment and sober spirit.

Now given that it has been 2,000 years and nothing seems to have really changed, a lot of people—especially so called believers—do not take this serious and they just continue to act like this world is the end all be all. But Jesus has warned us sternly about this attitude. He gave us the parable of the ten virgins where it is clear that if you do not have the oil of the Spirit of God burning bright,

you may be left behind. That parable ended with the phrase: “Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour” (**Matthew 25:13**).

In **Matthew 24:42-44**, Jesus said: “Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think.” And this comes right before another parable about a slave who did not expect His master to return and gave himself to lascivious living, just as described in our text. The end of the parable says: “the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (**Matthew 24:50-51**). That is bone chilling. Remember, it does not matter if one calls Jesus “Lord,” what matters is if one does the will of the Father in heaven (**Matthew 7:21-23**).

We must not be so arrogant to not take Jesus at His word. The end of all things is near; therefore, you must be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. When I think of sound judgment I think of wisdom and mental acuity. And we know, according to **Proverbs 2:1-4**, that wisdom comes from God and is a result of fearing the Lord, seeking Him, receiving His Word, treasuring His commandments, crying out for insight, asking for understanding, and searching for them as you would for lost treasure.

Proverbs 2:5-7

Then you will understand what it means to fear the Lord, and you will gain knowledge of God. For the Lord grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He grants a treasure of common sense to the honest.

Sound judgment is therefore a result of pursuing God with all your heart, mind, and soul. If you do, God will grant you His wisdom and your ability to reason and mentally work through conflicts and the affairs of this life will be sure and steady. This will be such a blessing to others who need you to be sure and steady for them during trying times. In addition, this is a command and it can be obeyed; you just need to now decide that it matters. And in light of the fact that the end of all things is at hand, it matters.

Next it says you must be of sober spirit. You must be steady, not drunk, and your spirit must not be out of control. If “sound judgment” addresses the acuity of our minds, I think “sober spirit” addresses our emotions. Too many of us still imbibe in our emotions to such an extent that we are not sober, we are unstable, and we are like a drunk person who cannot be depended upon, especially when some crisis (like the end of all things) is at hand. This must not be the way of the **beloved**. We have every reason to be emotionally stable, in control, and emotionally balanced. We have a God who loves us and is obsessed with us. We have a God who is inherently good; in fact, only He is truly good. We have a God who oversees every single detail of our lives—He is truly the Lord—and all His paths are just and true. Therefore, we can and should be more emotionally steady and stable than anyone (believer or unbeliever) who has chosen to make their

abode in this world. We can be at rest trusting God to navigate the pathways of our life. We don't even have to fear the enemy as the enemy is terrified of our God in us. If we give Jesus the room in our soul and stand firm in our faith, the enemy will simply flee. Again, we have every reason to be emotionally sober and balanced. We *never* have to be out of control or drunk with emotion.

And there is a purpose for this command. We are to be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. If our mind is confused and if our emotions are all out of whack, we will be unable to effectively fulfill this purpose. After all, we are commanded in **1 Thessalonians 5:17** to pray without ceasing and that is in the *present middle imperative*. We are commanded to pray every moment of our now; and this is a decision that we have to dig down deep into our soul and make. Honestly, I am not so sure that we have given this command to pray much space in our lives. Perhaps the “without ceasing” part makes it seem impossible so we kind of just ignore it. But clearly the Spirit is telling us this is critical and important for the end of all things is at hand (which also explains why the enemy attacks us in this area of our lives since he does not want us praying). Clearly prayer is powerful and is a huge threat to the enemy; so we need to take this seriously. Prayer changes things quite dramatically; we have experienced it firsthand. Therefore, we must be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. Prayer is a powerful weapon.

I want you to understand however that this is another cry by the Spirit for us to live the design point. You see, in **Ephesians 6:18** we are commanded to pray in the Spirit at all times—in the Spirit. Therefore, to pray without ceasing does not mean to constantly be babbling to God; rather, it is to continually connect to His

purposes through the Spirit. To obey this command, we must allow the Spirit to judge our flesh and put it down under the waters of judgment so we can be alive or quickened in the Spirit. Then and only then will we be able to pray in the Spirit. And as for the “without ceasing” part which seems so impossible, the Spirit tells us that when we do not know how to pray, He prays for us and intervenes for us according to the will of God.

Romans 8:26-27

In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

When it comes to the “pray without ceasing” part, the Spirit has our backs. And since the Spirit prays according to the will of God, we can be confident that not only are our prayers heard but that they will in fact be answered (***1 John 5:14-15***). Isn't this amazing. If we arm ourselves with the purpose of suffering, if we let the Spirit kill our flesh, if we seek the Lord and seek His wisdom, not only will we know how to pray but even in those moments when we are stuck and unsure, the Spirit will step in and pray for us as He lives in and through our lives. But for our part, we need to keep our minds sound and our spirits sober and we do that by clinging to Jesus for our very lives. We do that by choosing to let Him crucify us in the flesh so He can live in and through us. And then this life we live in the flesh,

we choose to live *by faith* in the Son of God who loves us and gave Himself for us. It is an incredible closed loop system in which we can fulfill the purposes for which Christ has called us.

Think about prayer. This is one of the main jobs of the priests. Only the priests could come before the altar of incense in the Temple and inquire of the Lord and seek His help on behalf of the people of God. According to **2:9**, we are those priests and that is our job; that is our purpose. We are to come before the Lord and inquire of Him, seek His will, and offer up petitions on behalf of others as the Spirit leads because the end of all things is at hand. But if we are given over to licentiousness and lasciviousness (I love those words), then we will not be living the design point and will not fulfill this purpose of prayer. Further, if our minds and our emotions have not been transformed and stabilized with the truth, we will also not fulfill this purpose of prayer. Instead, we will be like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. We will be unreliable and those who should look to us to be steady and stable will find nothing but inconsistency. That is not the way of the **beloved**.

The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. This is something we can do; this is something you can do. God has called us to this life as priests, as aliens and strangers in this earth. Let's fulfill this purpose.

Let's pray