

## Lesson 6

### 1 Peter 4

1) <sup>1</sup> Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

a) The phrase "arm yourselves" is a military term. Like soldiers preparing for battle, Peter says we should arm ourselves for suffering. And with what do we arm ourselves? As Paul told us in 2 Corinthians 10:4, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." We arm ourselves with the mind of Christ.

b) In verse 1 Peter says that those who have suffered in the flesh have ceased from sin. What does this mean? There are at least three possibilities.

i) Possibility #1 – Suffering purifies.

(1) There is a strong line in Jewish thought that suffering is in itself a great purifier. If this is the idea, then Peter is telling us that he who has been disciplined by suffering has been cured of sin because bodily suffering inhibits sin.

(2) Hebrews 12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

(3) But this almost certainly cannot be Peter's meaning here because Peter does not begin with suffering in general, but he begins with the suffering of Christ – and certainly Jesus did not embrace suffering to avoid sinning.

(4) The Greek words used here also tell us that this interpretation is likely not the correct one. The Greek verbs used here for "suffer" and "hath ceased from sin" describe a definite event rather than an ongoing process.

ii) Possibility #2 – Suffering strengthens.

(1) Another possibility is the idea that if a man has come through persecution and not denied the name of Christ, then he comes out on the other side of that experience with a character so tested and a faith so strengthened that temptation cannot touch him anymore. Every temptation resisted makes us better able to overcome the next attack.

- (2) Our commitment to suffer for Christ can be viewed as evidence that we have broken with our past life of sin. Those who willingly endure scorn and mockery for their faith show that they have left that old life of sin behind. This view is a possibility, but the next one fits better with the context.

iii) Possibility #3 – Suffering saves.

- (1) The third possibility is in my view the correct view. What had Peter just been discussing at the end of the Chapter 3? Baptism – and I think he is still writing about it at the beginning of Chapter 4.
- (2) Compare Romans 6:3-7 with 1 Peter 4:1. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.”
- (3) Our "suffering in the body" in verse 1 is the death we share with Christ at our baptism. That is the one-time event to which the Greek verb refers. The same verb form is used in 1 Peter 3:18 to describe the once-for-all suffering of Christ on the cross. There (as here) the verb is used as a synonym for death. Our baptism is a death that separates us from a life of sin, and it is also a resurrection to a new life in Christ. (Romans 6:8-12; especially note verse 10 – “For in that he died, he died unto sin once.”)

2) <sup>2</sup> That he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. <sup>3</sup> For the time past of *our* life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: <sup>4</sup> Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you*: <sup>5</sup> Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

- a) At our baptism we began a totally new type of life – we no longer live to the lusts of men, but rather to the will of God. We once obeyed the will of the Gentiles; we now obey the will of God. We once were swept along with the crowd; but not anymore. We now swim upstream.

- b)** In verse 3 Peter tells his readers that they had spent enough time doing what the pagans do. That life before their baptism was empty and wasteful. Our life in Christ is full and meaningful.
  - i)** The combination of sexual sin, drinking, and parties in verse 3 was common in the Roman world – as it is today. This lifestyle is called an "excess of riot" or a "flood of dissipation" in verse 4.
  - ii)** The Greek words used here for drunkenness and carousing occur only here in the New Testament. The reference to "abominable idolatries" is further evidence of what we have said before – Peter's readers were Gentile Christians.
  
- c)** Verse 4 tells us one outcome of our new life – those people we used to run with will now think us strange and will begin to heap abuse upon us.
  - i)** The Greek word for "heap abuse upon" is literally 'blaspheme.' The focus here is on reviling Christians rather than God, but Peter's use of the this word tells us that God himself is reviled when his people are reviled, and that has always been the case.
  - ii)** What, for example, did Jesus tell Saul on the road to Damascus? Did he say, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou my church?" No. He said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me." (Acts 9:4)
  
- d)** But verse 5 says that God is ready to judge the quick and the dead.
  - i)** The word "ready" points yet again to Christ. It is because of Christ's finished work that God is now ready to judge. The phrase "give account" is courtroom language and refers to the final judgment here.
  - ii)** The world may heap abuse upon us and be quick to judge our motives and our conversion, but God is also ready to judge. The reviling and abuse of unbelievers is not the last word. God will have the last word!
  
- e)** We should pause for a moment here and consider the type of persecution that these early Christians were facing.
  - i)** They would soon face state-sponsored persecution under which many would face death for their beliefs, but the persecution they were now facing does not seem to have yet been that severe.
  - ii)** Idolatry was woven into almost every dimension of their lives – including almost all public, social, and business activities. It was a mark of good citizenship, and those who failed to participate became social outcasts. They were ostracized and ridiculed for their beliefs.

The opposition was mainly verbal at this stage. Later in verse 14 we will see that were being insulted because of their devotion to Christ.

- iii) The Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians were very different in this regard. The Jewish Christians had never been a part of the local culture. They had always followed their own customs and laws. The Gentile Christians by contrast had been part of the culture, and so their non-participation was a change in behavior that was quite noticeable to non-believers. The Gentile Christians had no experience being a cultural minority, but they were quickly learning how.
- iv) The persecution that we face today as Christians is much more similar to that described in 1 Peter than that described, for example, in Revelation, by which time believers were losing their lives for their devotion to Christ. But we, like them, are living in a time of increasing hostility against Christians.
- f) Notice that verse 2 presents a contrast between the lusts of men and the will of God. We each make that choice every day. Every person must make a choice between truth and desire. Either one conforms desire to the truth or one conforms truth to desire. There is no other path.

<sup>3)</sup> <sup>6</sup> For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

- a) Before we consider what this verse says, we can say for sure what it does not say. There is absolutely no possibility of repentance and salvation after death. Those who delay until death have delayed too long.
  - i) Luke 16:26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.
  - ii) Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.
  - iii) 2 Corinthians 6:2 Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.
- b) What then does Peter mean in verse 6 when he says the gospel was preached to the dead?
  - i) Possibility #1 – The "dead" are those who are dead spiritually.

(1) This view is likely not correct. First, the "dead" in verse 5 seem to be physically dead, which would suggest Peter has the same meaning in mind here in verse 6. Further, the Greek verb "preached" in verse 6 is passive, which supports our next view.

ii) Possibility #2 –The "dead" are those who are dead physically.

(1) This view is the most natural meaning. In verse 5, Peter tells us that God is ready to judge the quick and the dead, and in verse 6 Peter says that this is why the gospel was preached to those who are (now) dead (but who had obeyed the gospel while living).

(a) The NIV actually adds the word "now" in this verse. ("For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead.") I believe that reading accurately captures the meaning, but the word "now" is not in the text and it should not be in a translation of the text. We have determined the meaning here from the context. Rather than serving as a translation, the NIV is serving here as a commentary. The original Greek text is ambiguous, and a proper translation should retain that ambiguity so that the reader can determine the proper meaning from the surrounding text.

(2) The context in verses 5-6 is the vindication of God's people who are being abused by pagans. Those Christians who had heard the gospel and had since died physically had not believed in vain. They might have died according to a temporal judgment of man, but they would live eternally according to the will of God. Physical death is not the last word for Christians.

c) We need to remember that the death of Christians created a problem for the early church – had such people forfeited their reward by dying before Christ returned?

i) Paul reassured the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 that those who had died in Christ had not missed out on the promises.

ii) Perhaps the opponents of Christ used the death of Christians to mock the Christian hope. These may be the scoffers in 2 Peter 3:3-4.

<sup>4)</sup> <sup>7</sup> But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. <sup>8</sup> And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

- a) What does Peter mean in verse 7 when he says the end of all things is at hand? There are at least three possibilities.
- i) But let's begin first with a theory that is not a possibility – that Peter was simply mistaken; that he thought Christ was about to return.
- (1) Peter was not mistaken. Peter knew very well not to predict the day of the Lord's return.
  - (2) He had heard Jesus say in Mark 13:32 that "of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."
  - (3) The very last thing that Jesus had said to Peter before ascending was: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." (Acts 1:7) This statement was made with regard to the establishment of the kingdom, but it certainly has a broader application than just that.
  - (4) Also, although today it is true that Christ could return at any moment, that was not true in the first century. Indeed, Paul makes that very point in 2 Thessalonians. There were certain Old Testament prophecies regarding the "son of perdition" that had not yet been fulfilled – and Jesus could not return until after they were fulfilled. (They have now been fulfilled. See my notes on Daniel and Revelation available at [www.thywordistruth.com](http://www.thywordistruth.com).)
- ii) Possibility #1 – "Near" is a relative term.
- (1) The answer may lie in how we interpret the word "near." Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8 tell us that one day with us is like a 1000 years with God, and vice versa.
  - (2) Also, we are now living in the final phase of human history, however long that final phase may last. God now speaks through his Son, and the world will remain only until his Son returns. In that sense the end has been "near" since the first century.
  - (3) But note that in Mark 14:42 ("Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.") the same word is used for an event that took place within minutes or hours.
- iii) Possibility #2 – The end of what is near?
- (1) Perhaps the end was literally near when Peter wrote these words.

- (2) "The consummation of history was the coming of Jesus Christ. In him time was invaded by eternity. In him God entered into the human situation. In him the prophecies were all fulfilled. In him the end has come."
- (3) 1 Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

**iv) Possibility #3 – Our end is always near.**

- (1) The third possibility is most likely the correct view – for each of us the end of all things is very much at hand, and that was particularly true for those in the first century facing persecution.
- (2) James 4:14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.
- (3) James 5:8-9 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. 9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.
- (4) Judgments in the Bible are often described as a coming of God or coming of the Lord. Our judgment comes after our death. (Hebrews 9:27)

**b)** When we realize the nearness of the end, we are then bound to commit ourselves to a certain kind of life. We must live each day knowing that it may be our last. We are strangers and pilgrims, and our time here is short. In view of this nearness, Peter gives four commands in verses 7-8.

**i) Command #1 – We must preserve our sanity.**

- (1) The Greek word "sophroneo" is translated "sober" in verse 7. It means to be of sound mind or to be in one's right mind. This same word is used in Mark 5:15 to describe the demoniac after he was healed by Christ.
- (2) The great characteristic of sanity is that it sees things in their proper proportions; it knows what is important and what is not important. This word is particularly important in this context. An obsession with end time events has caused and continues to cause many to become mentally unbalanced.

**ii) Command #2 – We must preserve our sobriety.**

- (1)** The KJV says that we must be sober and watch unto prayer. The RSV translation is better – "therefore keep sane and sober for your prayers." Sobriety is the second command rather the first.
- (2)** The Greek word "nepho" is translated "watch" in verse 7. It means to be sober, to be calm, and collected in spirit. These two Greek words for sane and sober are virtually synonymous and should be understood together. Sobriety is a theme in 1 Peter.

**iii) Command #3 – We must preserve our prayer life.**

- (1)** If we are not of sound mind or if we are not sober, then we cannot pray as we should. We are to be of sound mind and sober. Peter says, so that we can pray properly. Prayer demands alertness. It is not an opiate or an escape, but it requires a sound and sober mind.
- (2)** Peter we recall failed in this regard at Gethsemane. He slept after Jesus had charged him to watch and pray.
  - (a)** Mark 14:37-38 And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? 38 Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.
  - (b)** Peter no doubt wrote verse 7 with great regret, and if anyone had reason to become paralyzed by regret it was Peter. But Peter did not wallow in regret. He knew regret, but he also knew forgiveness.

**iv) Command #4 – We must preserve our love.**

- (1)** The word that Peter uses to describe this love is "ektenes," which is translated "fervent" in the KJV. The Greek word means outstretched as a runner stretches out or as a horse at full gallop.
- (2)** "Our love must be energetic. Here is a fundamental truth. Christian love is not an easy, sentimental reaction. It demands everything a man has of mental and spiritual energy. It means loving the unlovely and the unlovable; it means loving in spite of insult and injury; it means loving when love is not returned."
- (3)** It is the reach of God that stretches our love. (1 John 4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.) Our love is stretched by exercise; it grows as it is tested.

- c) Finally, in verse 8, Peter says that love will cover a multitude of sins. What does this mean? There are at least three possibilities.
- i) Possibility #1 – Our love overlooks the sins in others.
- (1) If we love a person, it is easy to forgive that person. We do not love others if we take delight in finding and exposing their faults. (Proverbs 10:12; 1 Corinthians 13:4)
- ii) Possibility #2 – Our loves causes God to overlook our sins.
- (1) It may mean that if we love others then God will overlook a multitude of sins in us. (Luke 7:47 – “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much.)
- (2) But it is not our love of others that brings forgiveness, it is our love of God and our obedience to the gospel, which is the only way that we can demonstrate our love of God.
- iii) Possibility #3 – God's love covers our sins.
- (1) This view is most likely the correct view.
- (2) Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
- (3) James 5:20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.
- (4) John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

<sup>5)</sup> <sup>9</sup> Use hospitality one to another without grudging. <sup>10</sup> As every man hath received the gift, *even* so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. <sup>11</sup> If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

- a) Our love must lead to service. In verse 9, Peter commands us to be hospitable.

- i) Without hospitality the early church could not have existed. Traveling missionaries stayed in the home of Christians because inns at that time were notoriously expensive, filthy, and immoral. Peter stayed with Simon the tanner in Acts 10:6, and Paul stayed with Mnason of Cyprus in Acts 21:16.
    - (1) But even the early church was aware that this hospitality could be abused. The *Didache* (A.D. 100) says that a visiting preacher can stay up to two days, but if he stays three days he is a false prophet!
  - ii) The local churches also needed hospitality. At this time there was no such thing as a church building. The church met in homes. They met in the home of Aquila and Priscilla in Romans 16:5 and 1 Corinthians 16:19, and they met in the home of Philemon in Philemon 2.
- b) Verse 10 mentions the "manifold grace of God."
- i) We saw this word "manifold" in our lesson on Chapter 1. In verse 6 of that chapter the same Greek word meaning "multi-colored" was used to describe the varied trials that a Christian must face. This verse tells us that although our trials may be multi-colored, so is the grace of God.
  - ii) And Peter tells us that we are to be "good stewards" of this grace. We hold these gifts in trust from God, and they are to be used for God's purposes. We will be held accountable for how we use those gifts. Gifts from God are much more a responsibility than a privilege.
- c) In verse 11, Peter mentions two broad categories of ministry – speaking and serving. We must speak as the oracles of God, and we must serve as God has given us the ability.
- i) Peter tells us that we must speak the oracles of God. What does that mean?
    - (1) The phrase "oracles of God" (used often in the Old Testament) refers to the very words that God has given his people. We must never supplant the wisdom of God with the wisdom of man.
    - (2) Isaiah 55:11 tells us that once God's word goes out, it will not return to him void. But it will not go out unless we proclaim it.
    - (3) In 2 Timothy 4:1-4, Paul told Timothy to preach the word because the time would soon come when "they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

- (4) But Jeremiah 5:31 points to the root problem. “The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so.”
- ii) Peter also tells us that we must serve as God has given us the ability.
- (1) We must all serve, but we all can't do everything, and one key to church growth is to understand that simple truth. We each have gifts, and those gifts are different. We must serve God as he has given us the ability.
- (2) This was Paul's point in Romans 12:4-8 where he said that we are all members of the one body, but we do not all have the same gifts.
- d) And what is the purpose of our speaking and our serving? Verse 11 tells us. "That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ."
- i) Anyone who begins a ministry for Christ soon finds that it is very easy to shift the ownership of the project. Even the apostles were soon arguing about who would be the greatest. (Mark 9:33-34)
- ii) But Paul tells us in Galatians 6:14 that we have but one thing in which to glory – the cross of Christ. “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

<sup>6)</sup> <sup>12</sup> Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: <sup>13</sup> But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

- a) The more firmly Peter grounds their hope and the more eloquently he states their privilege, the more strange it must have seemed that they would have to suffer. But Peter tells them not to think it strange.
- b) Peter tells us four truths here about persecution.
- i) Truth #1: Persecution is inevitable.
- (1) The more we live like Christ, the more we will face persecution. The world hates those who are different – particularly those who are different because they are holy. A Christian is necessarily different from the world, and thus we should not think it strange when we experience persecution.

ii) Truth #2: Persecution is a test. In fact, it is a test in two senses.

(1) First, a man's devotion to a principle can be measured by his willingness to suffer for it. Persecution is a test of our faithfulness.

(2) Second, those who compromise with the world will escape persecution. If we are not facing any persecution it may be because we are not standing up against the world. Persecution is a test of our genuineness.

iii) Truth #3: Persecution is a sharing in the sufferings of Christ.

(1) When we are persecuted, we are walking as Jesus walked and we are taking up his cross. Suffering for the sake of Christ is a privilege rather than a penalty. We did not see Jesus on the cross as Peter did, but we like Peter can understand the meaning of his atoning death.

iv) Truth #4: Persecution is the way to glory.

(1) The cross is the way to the crown. Suffering is not a threat, but a promise. Paul said that if we suffer with Christ, then we will be glorified with him (Romans 8:17) and we will reign with him (2 Timothy 2:12).

<sup>7)</sup> <sup>14</sup> If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. <sup>15</sup> But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. <sup>16</sup> Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

a) Peter tells us something remarkable in verse 14 – he says that if we suffer for Christ's sake, then the spirit or presence of glory rests upon us. What does this mean?

i) The Jews used the word Shekinah to refer to the luminous glory of God. This idea is referenced repeatedly in the Old Testament. (See for example Exodus 24:16 and 1 Kings 8:10-11.)

ii) Peter is telling us that something of that glow of glory rests on those who suffer for Christ. When Stephen was on trial for his life and it was certain he would be condemned to death, his face looked to those around him like the face of an angel. (Acts 6:15)

- iii) Peter also says that we should be happy if we are reproached for the name of Christ. Recall Acts 5:41. ("And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.")
  
- b) In verse 15, Peter reminds us that it is as a Christian that we must suffer and not as an evil-doer.
  - i) The examples that Peter gives (murderer, thief, evildoer) are clear except for the last one – busybody.
    - (1) This one word has been described as "one of the most difficult interpretive problems in the New Testament."
    - (2) The Greek word is allotriepiskopos, which literally means "looking upon that which belongs to another." This is the only example of this word in Greek, and one commentator suggests that Peter may well have invented it. This word is found nowhere else in the New Testament, nowhere in the Septuagint, and nowhere in any Greek literature written before 1 Peter.
    - (3) There are at least three possible meanings.
      - (a) Possible Meaning #1
        - (i) It might mean simply that we should not look with longing at the things that belong to another – that we should not suffer as a covetous person. Others have suggested it means an embezzler or a revolutionary.
      - (b) Possible Meaning #2
        - (i) A second possibility is that the Greek word meaning "that which belongs to another" could also mean "that which is foreign to oneself." Thus, we should not suffer as one who looks into things that are alien to the Christian life.
      - (c) Possible Meaning #3
        - (i) It might mean that we should not look into the affairs of others – that we should not suffer as a busybody. If this is the proper meaning (and this is how later writers used the word), then Peter may have been concerned that Christians in their rejection of idolatry and pagan immorality might put their noses into situations where they don't belong. If we suffer from such activities, then that suffering does not bring glory to Jesus Christ.

- ii) Peter's message is that our sufferings must be the kind that bring glory to God, and not all suffering falls into that category.
- iii) The use of the word "Christian" in verse 16 is interesting. It was first used in Acts 11:26, and then possibly as a term of abuse or derision. The term appears only two more times – once here and once in Acts 26:28, where it was spoken by Agrippa. Verse 16 here could be translated as "but if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name." Peter tells his readers to glorify God by that name even though it may have been intended as an insult.

**8)** <sup>17</sup> For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God? <sup>18</sup> And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? <sup>19</sup> Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

- a) In verse 17, Peter says that judgment must begin at the house of God. What does this mean?
  - i) The point may be simply that where the privilege has been the greatest, the judgment will be the most stern.
    - (1) Luke 12:48 For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.
    - (2) It also reminds us of the judgment in Ezekiel 9:6, where God told Ezekiel to begin first at His sanctuary.
  - ii) Judgment in the Old Testament often carries a double purpose – to purify the righteous and consume the wicked. Malachi 3:1-3 (to which Peter seems to be alluding here) shows the messenger of the Lord coming with a refiner's fire to sit as a refiner and purifier of his people.
    - (1) Peter has already spoken of the refining of our faith through fiery trial, and he has told us that we are God's house, his spiritual temple. Now from Malachi we have the image of purifying the house of God through fire. And if the very house of God is purged by fire, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel?
      - (a) In Hebrews 10:31, we see that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." In 2 Thessalonians 1:8 we see that

God will in flaming fire take vengeance on those that do not know him and on those who obey not his gospel.

**(2)** Both pictures involve fire, but how different is the purpose of the fire in God's house from the fire of the last judgment! This purging of the house of God is the discipline of suffering and trials by which the faith of his people is purified as gold in a furnace.

**(a)** When the early church was persecuted by Rome, the early church remained pure. There were no half-hearted Christians when being a Christian meant persecution and death. But Rome, as great and mighty as it was, was not able to defeat the church through persecution. Yet Rome did eventually do great harm to the church – not by its persecution, but by its embrace. When Constantine made it fashionable to be a Christian, the great apostasy started.

**b)** What does it mean in verse 18 that we are "scarcely" saved?

**i)** The word means "with difficulty." It does not imply the uncertainty of the outcome, but rather the difficulty of the road that leads to it. The Christian life is not always an easy life.

**c)** Finally in verse 19 Peter tells those who suffer to commit the keeping of their souls to God. Only here in the New Testament is God called the Creator. Peter tells us that God is a faithful creator, and we can confidently place our trust in him.

**i)** The word that Peter uses for commit or entrust is "paratithesthai," which is a technical word for "depositing money with a trusted friend." At this time there were no banks and very few safe places to deposit money. Before people left on a journey they would often leave their money in the safe-keeping of a friend, and this trust was regarded as sacred. The friend was absolutely bound by all honor and all religion to return the money intact.

**ii)** If a man entrusts himself to God, God will not fail him. This same word was used by Jesus Luke 23:46, when he said "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Paul used the word in Acts 14:23 when he entrusted his converts to God, and he used it in 2 Timothy 2:2 when he entrusted God's truth to faithful men.

**iii)** Paul said in 2 Timothy 1:12, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."