

THE LIVING CHRIST

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Lutheran Church of the Cross

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Our text is from 1st Peter, chapter 4, verse 19: “Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.”

Today, we will finish our look at the book of 1st Peter. It is a message of hope in the midst of suffering. Two weeks ago, we looked at the first section, which was about how we are connected to Jesus the Living Stone—rejected by men but chosen and precious to God. Last week, we looked at the second section beginning in chapter 2 all the way until chapter 3:17. That section was about how we are to connect with other people. It was marked by three words—honor, submission, and love. Today we look at the third section, The Living Christ, which covers the last 2½ chapters of the book of Peter (3:18-5:11). It consists of the three parts listed below; however, we only have time to cover the first two parts (3:18-4:19):

1. Christ triumphant and resurrected (3:18-22)
2. Encouragement for individuals (4:1-19)—living as Christians and suffering as Christians
3. Advice for congregations (5:1-11)

1. Christ Triumphant and Resurrected:

Peter 3:18 “For **Christ** also **suffered once for sins**, the **righteous for the unrighteous**, that he might **bring us to God**, being **put to death** in the flesh but **made alive** in the spirit.”

This is a great verse to memorize. It is similar to John 3:16. Christ suffered for our sins. God does not ignore sin or excuse sin. God does not compare you to other “worse” sinners and criminals. But He suffered for all of your sin. He suffered once. In the Old Testament, Jews had to bring a perfect sacrifice for atonement regularly for each new sin committed. But Jesus declared, “It is finished” for all your sins for all time. In the great and wonderful exchange, the righteous one gave us his righteousness, even though we by nature are unrighteous.

The rest of chapter 3 reads like the second section of the Apostles’ Creed. Jesus, suffered, died, was buried, descended into hell, rose, and ascended.

2. Encouragement to Live and Suffer as Christians:

Peter 4:1 “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.”

This verse is talking about a different kind of suffering. It is not persecution, but rather resisting temptation. Consider two people who are tempted by their favorite dessert. If one gives in to the temptation and the other one resists, who suffers more? The person who resists. That is what Jesus did on this earth. Every day, Jesus resisted temptation and therefore suffered more than anyone. We, too, should adopt the same attitude of self-control.

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

This is what they are to resist. Unfortunately, this list of sins from the first century is still taking place in 2017. But ultimately, Jesus will come back to judge all people.

Peter 4:7 “The end of all things is at hand; therefore be **self-controlled** and **sober-minded** for the sake of your prayers. ⁸Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since **love** covers a multitude of sins. ⁹Show **hospitality** to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰As each has received a gift, use it to **serve** one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.”

Notice the list of responses from Christians. These are action words. To love someone means we actually have to get to know them and care for them in tangible ways. To serve people means actually putting others first. To be hospitable means to actually welcome a stranger into your midst.

Peter 4:12 “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. ¹³But rejoice insofar **as you share Christ's sufferings**, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶Yet if anyone **suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.** ¹⁷For 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? ¹⁸And if the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” ¹⁹Therefore **let those who suffer** according to God's will **entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.**”

Peter then talks about suffering in terms of being persecuted for the sake of your Christian faith. Persecution will come and should not be a surprise. It is not a mark of failure, but rather of faithfulness.

There is also a stark warning about suffering. If Christians, who are God's chosen people, are suffering now, then imagine what will happen to those who reject God their whole lives. The final verse 4:19 is an important reminder for people who are suffering. Entrust your soul to a faithful Creator. It reminds us of Psalm 23, “Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

All the while we trust God, we are called to do good. What an excellent summary of the entire book.