

Everyone goes through suffering; no one is exempt. As Christians, we can be assured that God uses every moment of our suffering for a greater purpose.

In Chapter 4, Peter encourages the believers to endure suffering because there is a purpose in it. He reminds them and us that while Jesus lived on the earth, he was a man of sorrows (see Isaiah 53:3-5). There was a purpose to Jesus's suffering—our salvation—and there is a purpose to our suffering—our sanctification.

Armoring Up

Peter writes in verse 1, *"...arm yourselves with the same way of thinking,"*

To arm oneself is to prepare for battle. Arming ourselves with the knowledge of the Bible—the Sword of the Spirit—is the greatest way we can prepare for life's battles. Peter wants us to arm ourselves with the same attitude Jesus had toward the world, sin, and suffering.

If we face suffering without a biblical worldview, suffering will embitter rather than purify us. The Bible clearly says we will endure hardship in this world (John 16:33); we cannot dodge that bullet. If we want to live victoriously in the face of suffering, we must embrace a biblical worldview of the challenges we face. Restraining Sin Verse 1 ends with a somewhat confusing statement, *"...for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin."*

This doesn't mean that the person who has suffered is no longer capable of sinning. Rather, it means that they are no longer enticed by temptations the way or to the degree that they once were.

In Luke 15, the prodigal son came to his senses while in the literal pigpen of his sin. He realized that he was made for more; the slops and corn husks were not desirable to him. He left the pigpen and returned home to his father.

If you are a child of God, you will no longer enjoy living in the pigpen of your sin. Your tastes will have changed; sin will no longer hold the appeal it once did (see 1 Peter 4:2 & 1 Corinthians 5:17). When you find yourself tempted toward or back in the pigpen of your life before Christ, you will quickly run from it and return to the Father.

If, however, you live in willful sin without conviction, you are most likely not saved. You cannot be a child of God and enjoy living in the pigpen.

Coming Judgment

Peter looks to the future: our lives are short, and we must not waste time going back to play in the pigpen of sin and brokenness.

He writes in verse 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."*

Peter lists the specific sins that his audience saw all around them, the sins that enticed them. We can add to his list the sins we see all around us, the sins that entice us—gossip, lying on our tax returns, pornography, etc.

The time is past for living in that pigpen. Walk in purity because life is short. The world is rapidly moving towards the judgment of God.

Suffering Witness

As you walk in purity, you will be countercultural, and that may attract attention, good or bad. *“With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you,”* 1 Peter 4:4 says.

When you live for Jesus, walking out the new life he has given you, your life will raise questions. Some people will be drawn to the peace of God in you by the power of the Holy Spirit. Never underestimate the example of your lifestyle.

Other people will be offended by you. They will be convicted of their own sin, made aware of their own pigpen. As a result, they will try to pull you back. They will mock and scorn you.

If you are a true follower of Jesus, you have a new nature—the nature of Christ, you have a higher calling to glorify the name of Jesus with your life. You have the Holy Spirit, who gives you the strength to live out that new nature regardless of what circumstances and opposition you face.

Living for Eternity

Peter looks ahead with an eternal perspective, writing, *“but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead”* (1 Peter 4:5).

Every person must give an account before Jesus one day—even those who are in Christ for believers, this judgment will not determine salvation—that took place on the Cross—but it will determine our eternal rewards. In light of eternity and the day of judgment, what does it matter what someone thinks of you? They won’t stand next to you when you stand before Jesus.

Live for a higher purpose and r calling.

Refining Purpose

“For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does” (1 Peter 4:6).

Peter was referring to the fact that the Gospel was preached to people while they were physically alive yet spiritually dead. Some responded and were saved. Others rejected Christ and are eternally separated from God, facing eternal suffering in hell—this is the second death that Revelation 20 speaks of.

These are the stakes. This is why we need an eternal perspective on every moment and the life that we are called to live. Often, that calling includes suffering by the grace and purposes of God. Many reading this are very much aware of this; you can see in your own life how God has used your suffering for His purposes and your good.

Sometimes God uses suffering to discipline His children. Sometimes we suffer because of our own poor choices. But Peter is writing about the suffering God intentionally allows for the purpose of refining us and realigning our lives with Him.

If that is you today, I encourage you to embrace the purposes of God for your life. Turn towards God in your suffering, and don’t give into the temptation to become bitter. God loves you and will not abandon the good work He is doing in you.

