

PETER'S EPISTLES: PREPARING FOR ETERNITY
XVI. Applying Christ's Example Of Responding To Persecution
(1 Peter 4:1-6)

I. Introduction

- A. Before the Apostle Peter began to minister for the Lord in the Church, his outlook was impacted by Christ's prophecy in John 21:18-19 that he would be crucified for Christ. Eternity was thus often on Peter's mind.
- B. Peter's epistles highlight preparing for eternity, and in 1 Peter 4:1-6, Peter applied Christ's example of responding to religious persecution to us. We view the passage for our insight, application and edification:

II. Applying Christ's Example Of Responding To Persecution, 1 Peter 4:1-6.

- A. Our identification with Christ in His death and resurrection requires that we have a new viewpoint, v. 1-2:
 - 1. Paul wrote that when Christ suffered and died, He died unto sin "once for all" (*ephapax*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 543; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 330), but in that He now lives, He lives unto God, Romans 6:10. Paul then added that we should likewise consider ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, Romans 6:11.
 - 2. Peter taught the same truth: in 1 Peter 4:1a, he stated that since Christ suffered for us in the body as He died on the cross, so we believers similarly are to "put on the armor" (*hoplisasthe*, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 852) of spiritual protection against sinning by adopting Christ's "attitude, thought" (*ennoian*, Ibid.) in willingly sharing in His suffering and death to this world.
 - 3. If we identify with Christ in His suffering and death, just as Christ died to sin, so we are to cease from a life of sin because of our spiritual position in Christ, 1 Peter 4:1b.
 - 4. Consequently, we Christians should live the rest of our lives not to fulfill our human desires, but rather to live to fulfill the will of God for us, 1 Peter 4:2.
- B. Such a change in our view leads to a change in our relationship with the world, 1 Peter 4:3. A break with one's past life also produces a break with the unsaved world that functions in the sins of our past, 1 Peter 4:3. "Peter stressed that there must be a definite break from what pagans choose to do . . . the wasted years of debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and . . . idolatry . . . This exhortation probably had a strong impact on Gentile Christians who used to live in gross sin." (Ibid., p. 852-853)
- C. In addition, a break with our past life in the world also involves a break with past "acquaintances" who often become "persecutors. Godless men are genuinely surprised by the changed lives of those who once were like they are." (Ibid., 1 Peter 4:4a) This requires a relational adjustment to both God and the world, 1 Peter 4:4b-6:
 - 1. Jesus taught His disciples that because they were not of the world since He had chosen them out of the world, that strangeness convicted the world of sin, so the world reacted by hating His disciples, John 15:19, 22. Thus, Peter noted that since the world thought it strange that his readers did not join them in their "same flood of debauchery" (1 Peter 4:4b ESV), they therefore "malign you," 1 Peter 4:4c ESV.
 - 2. The unsaved world will eventually give account to God for their hatred and mistreatment of believers, for He is ready to judge it when He judges the living and the dead in the end time, 1 Peter 4:5; Acts 10:42; Romans 14:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; 2 Timothy 4:1; Ibid., p. 853.
 - 3. Peter added that for this reason the gospel of Christ was preached to those believers who are now dead due to martyrdom by the unsaved world, that though they might be judged according to unsaved men in the flesh as being bad, they might rather live in righteousness according to God in the spirit, 1 Peter 4:6. (Ibid.; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to 1 Peter 4:6)
 - 4. Since the world and God are at enmity with each other, we believers need to choose to fellowship with God over fellowshiping with the world, thus, no longer to live in sin, but to live in righteousness.

Lesson: *Our spiritual position in Christ who died to sin and rose to newness of life in God's righteousness demands that we no longer commit the sins of our past but live righteously before God. Such a life also requires that our fellowship be with God, not with the world, what results in our break in fellowship with the world that leads to our being persecuted by it.*

Application: *(1) May we live righteous lives in fellowship with God in accord with our position in Christ before a persecuting world. (2) To a degree, even fellow professing Christians who adopt errant beliefs promoted in or affected by errant worldly ideologies will persecute godly, Biblically correct believers! In such a case, we need to opt to hold to the truth over error in fellowship with God even if we face persecution from fellow believers!*