

Class 4 - Introduction & Comments

Armed with the Spirit

Paul wrote about “*the whole armor of God*” (Eph 6:19-17) and a believer’s “*weapons of warfare*” (2Cor 10:6-5, 6:6-7). He also describes the ongoing conflict of the **flesh vs. spirit** in Rom 8:1-17, Gal 5:16-25 and Eph 2:1-9. Jesus declared the *heart of man* to be the source of a long list of evil thoughts and wicked practices (Mk 7:20-23). James pinpointed the root cause of the conflict: “*your passions that are at war*” within yourself (Jas 4:1-3).

Therefore, Peter was right on target when he urged the brethren “*to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul*” (2:11), never to return to past Gentile behavior that was defined by “*living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry*” (4:3) or to be living for the rest of the time “*in the flesh*”, driven by “*human passions*” (4:1).

Motivated by the example set by Jesus when he “*suffered in the flesh*” (4:1, 2:21), the brethren could “*arm themselves with the same thought of Jesus*” (4:1) who resisted and overcame the flesh by the spirit (Mk 14:34-42). Having been baptized by the Spirit of God and being led by that Spirit as directed (Mt 3:16-4:1), Jesus destroyed the flesh (Heb 2:14, 1Jn 3:8) and would “*cease from sin*” (4:1, 1Jn 3:9).

To be armed with the Spirit of God is to think and do like Jesus. As for implementation, Peter discusses urgency, the coverage of love and using God-given gifts for the benefit of the brethren (4:7-11 cf. Rom 12:3-13, Jas 5:19-20).

Partnership with Jesus

Since 4:11 ends with a closing blessing and “*Amen*” [cf. 5:11 ending], Peter may have intended to end his letter here. In any case, 4:12-19 is a powerful addition to address “*the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you*” (v.12).

Proving out the strength of disciple’s faith was mentioned in 1:7, will be mentioned in 5:9 and is an important subject discussed in Jas 1:2-3. Unwavering faith is essential to withstand fiery attack and trial (e.g., Eph 6:16, Heb 11:34, Acts 4:19-20, 5:29, Dan 3:13-18).

Sharing in Christ’s suffering should not be a surprise (4:12). If Jesus the master was persecuted, so will his servants. Peter and the other apostles rejoiced in being “*beaten and suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus*” (Acts 5:40-41). Paul responded the same way (Acts 16:22-25, Phil 3:7-11). To suffer for the sake of Christ is indication of special status with Jesus (4:16), for such servants know that like the Lord, they have “*entrusted their souls to a faithful Creator*” (4:19, 2:25).

Bible Text - Chapter 4

1 Since therefore Christ suffered 3:18, 5:10, v.1 in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered v.1 in the flesh has ceased from sin 2:22, **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.

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.

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

6 For this is why the gospel v.17 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.

7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded 1:13, 5:8 for the sake of your prayers.

8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins 3:18.

9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good 3:21, v.19 stewards of God's varied grace:

- **11** whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God;
- whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies
- --in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory 1:24, v.13 and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

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.

13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings 1:11, 5:1, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory v.11,v.14 is revealed.

14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory v.13, 5:1 and of God rests upon you.

15 But let none of you suffer 3:17, v.16 as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.

16 Yet if anyone suffers v.15, v.19 as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

17 For 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 v.6 of God?

18 And "*If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?*" (Prov 11:31 cf. Lk 23:31)

19 Therefore let those who suffer v.16 according to God's will entrust their souls 2:25 to a faithful Creator while doing good v.10.

Your Study and Action Notes

1. What do the following words, terms or phrases mean? Write in your answers:

- Christ suffered in the flesh (v. 1, 13) —
- debauchery (v. 4) —
- malign (v. 4) —
- sober-minded (v. 7) —
- oracles of God (v. 11) —
- if anyone suffers ... let those who suffer (v.16, 19) —
- entrust their souls (v. 19) —

2. What *encouraging* verse or passage would you like to discuss? _____
Points you would like to make:

-
-

3. What *confusing* verse or passage would you like to discuss? _____
Questions you would like to ask:

-
-

4. What *new information* did you encounter and *what might you do* about its teaching?