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## A BETTER RESISTANCE | IS IT WORTH IT? (12)

April 18, 2021

1 Peter 4:1-6

*<sup>1</sup> 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, <sup>2</sup> so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; <sup>5</sup> but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. <sup>6</sup> 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.*

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### BACKGROUND

“Like the Messiah, we must put on the mental armor that will make us strong to face the suffering which we may have to face. And here suffering is given yet another meaning. Suffering, it seems, brings about a particular transformation of character. It makes you re-evaluate your whole life. Sometimes it happens that someone who had a potentially fatal stroke or heart attack makes a remarkable recovery; in such cases people often say that they have rethought their whole lives, and now realize much more clearly what matters and what doesn't. In the same way, someone who has suffered for the gospel may attain a new kind of clarity. They see more sharply the kind of world that sin produces, and they know that they are done with it. And they see, far more gloriously, that God's will is the only thing worth following.” (N.T. Wright, *The Early Christian Letters*)”

### PURPOSE

To understand the transforming power that comes through Jesus Christ especially in the midst of suffering

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why are Christians to turn away from the behavior and attitudes of their former lives (vv.1-4)? What role does suffering play in changing our behavior and attitudes towards worldly living?
2. How has faith in Jesus rearranged the priorities and values of your life?
3. What pressures do you face in living out your Christian faith within the community around you? What has helped you to resist those pressures?

### LEADER'S NOTES

**Question 1:** “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

Those who place their faith in Jesus are made new through the Spirit of God, so that even the very desires of their hearts are reordered so that they live no longer for themselves but for the God who has loved them and redeemed them from their former life.

Here in this passage, the suffering of Christ for those whom he loves again functions as a model and inspiration for his readers. Peter's point is verses 1-2 is that when believers are willing to suffer, the source and power of sin over a person is diminished to the point of having no ultimate control over their lives. Although they will never be totally free from sin in this life, when believers endure suffering for the sake of Christ they show that their purpose in life is not to live for their own pleasures but according to the will of God and for his glory. The benefits and joys of Christ far outweigh the loss of worldly pleasures. This is especially true as all people are accountable to God for their lives for which they will have to give an account and face God's judgment (verse 5).

Verse 6 can be a difficult and confusing verse to understand. "Those who are dead" refers to Christians to whom "the gospel was preached" when they were alive but who have since died. Even though believers will experience physical death (i.e. they are "judged in the flesh the way people are"), believers who have died "live in the spirit the way God does" (i.e. they live in the presence of God now, and will experience bodily resurrection when Christ returns.)

**Question 2:** This question is an application of question 1, and people will have different responses based on their own experience of God's grace in their life. At the core, Christians have been given a "new heart" which increasingly seeks the will of God as they grow in faith. This is one of the fundamental promises of the Old Testament: "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules." (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Genuine faith in Jesus results in holiness—a life that is dedicated towards the purposes of God.

**Question 3:** The values of the Kingdom of God are completely "upside down" compared to the values of the world around us. You can think through these values through the lens of power, sex and money. For Christians, power (including job, status, influence, reputation) is something that is to be used for the purposes of God in the world. Sex is sacred gift to be highly regarded as a means for a husband and wife to love and serve one another—to strengthen their lifelong union, and even to create new life. To use sex for merely physical pleasure is to diminish the beauty and value of such an incredible gift from God. Finally, the way we use money reflects what we value most. Accordingly, Christians should use their money in such a way that reflects their hope in Christ and the work of God in their lives.

We can resist the pressures of conforming to the world around us by 1) regular prayer and study of God's Word, 2) keeping the Sabbath and prioritizing worship and Christian community, 3) tithing, living generously towards others, and especially those in need, 4) regularly reflecting on the hope of Christ and the benefits of salvation, and 5) service to others motivated by Christ's love for you.