



1 Peter Chapter Four

III. 1 Peter 2:13-4:11 - Living as Aliens to Bring Glory to God in a Hostile World (continues/concludes)

III.b 1 Peter 3:8-4:11 - Responding to suffering in a godly way (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Four

The work of a Christian is twofold:

1. Doing the will of God.
2. Suffering his good pleasure.

This chapter directs us in both. The duties we are here exhorted to engage ourselves in are the abstinence from sin, living fully to God, showing self-restraint, giving time to prayer, showing generosity and hospitality, and through the best application of our Spiritual gifts, which Peter presses upon believers from the consideration of the time they have lost in their sins, and the approaching end of all things (vv.1-11).

The second half of this chapter is given over to the idea of personal suffering as a believer in Christ. The directions for sufferings are that we should not be surprised by them, but rejoice in them, taking care not to suffer as wrongdoers. Peter intimates that their trials were near at hand, that their souls were in danger as well as their bodies, and that the best way to preserve their souls was to commit them to God, and thus live out a fulfilled life in God by doing so (vv.12-19).

III.b.ii 1 Peter 4:1-11 - Living for God

Peter now reasons that since Christ suffered in the body or flesh that those that have chosen to accept him as their Lord and Saviour should arm themselves with the same mindset as Jesus had; that is, a willingness to let God the Father be the ultimate judge of all matters and to submit in all humility to anything he allows to

come upon them, trusting in him completely. A person who truly accepts this and who willingly suffers without undue complaint will please God and bring honour to him. This is especially true when a person does not seek vengeance upon the perpetrator and has resisted the temptation to do so.

Peter also exhorts them to holy living, to resist the types of activities the pagans revel in, which may initially appear to be something that would be fun but is clearly contrary to the teachings of Jesus and the Gospel message. Such involvement nearly always brings problems upon those who fail to adhere to the teachings they have received. Believers are called to have a full life, but not at the expense of their witness: <<*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full*>> (John 10:10).

¹ Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. ² As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.

1 Peter 4:1-2

We are called to be imitators of God: <<*Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God*>> (Ephesians 5:1-2). Therefore, it follows that just as Christ suffered in his body, so too we are called to do likewise, i.e. arm yourselves also with the same attitude. Peter repeats this theme so as to remind the readers of his letter that their suffering was not in vain and served good purpose in their faith in Christ, providing they were prepared to hold on to what is good.

It is also reminding us that his suffering was to remove the burden of sin from us, in order to free us to imitate his life of good works and love of neighbour. Again, it alludes to the fact that we are called to do all we can to represent Christ and in doing so to bring glory to God.

Therefore since Christ suffered. The suffering of Christ again functions as a model and inspiration for the readers. Concerning the phrase he who has suffered in his body is done with sin, three different interpretations have been suggested:

1. Some suggest that this could refer to the suffering of Christ, i.e. the one who has suffered – who, although he was not himself a sinner, took sin upon himself and then triumphed over it forever through his suffering and death. This interpretation seems unlikely, however, because he who has suffered seems too broad and imprecise to be a clear reference to Christ.
2. Others have suggested that this is a reference to the believer being dead to the power of sin, as a result of having died with Christ, similar to Paul's concept (Romans 6:1-11).
3. More likely, Peter's point is that when believers are willing to suffer, the nerve centre of sin is severed in their lives. Although believers will never

be totally free from sin in this life: <<*We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check*>> (James 3:2), and: <<*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us*>> (1 John 1:8), 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.

Once again, since God gave up his only true Son, to suffer in the flesh then those who choose to follow him and accept the freedom this brings them, must be prepared to accept that suffering will also come upon them, not as a punishment but for their correction and the testing of their faith in Christ. We must always remember that he was and is innocent of any crime or sin, we are not! This was admitted by the criminal who died next to Christ: <<*But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong”*>> (Luke 23:40-41). Christ could submit to the worst of suffering but he could never submit to the least of sin.

Suffered in his body is often translated flesh to mean not just the physical body but the sinful nature imputed from Adam. It is this sinful nature that God finds so objectionable in the creature he made in his own image, for it is not part of that image, therefore: <<*Then the Lord said, “My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years”*>> (Genesis 6:3). But God has declared: <<*And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken”*>> (Isaiah 40:5).

However, it was not the suffering of the body that was so punishing, for he suffered in his soul too: <<*After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities*>> (Isaiah 53:11), and above all the separation of his Spirit from the Father: <<*At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” – which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”*>> (Mark 15:33-34).

Evil human desires. Mankind has consistently shown a greater willingness to succumb to their sinful nature than to have a desire to let Christ rule in their life: <<*When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed*>> (James 1:13-14).

To cast off the desires of the sinful nature requires a change of mindset in order to do God’s will: <<*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will*>> (Romans 12:1-2), and: <<*Then I said, ‘Here I am – it is written*

about me in the scroll – I have come to do your will, O God>> (Hebrews 10:7).

Those who finally submit to the will of God will come to know true inner peace in their lives and will find they are much better able to deal with the trials and tribulations that will inevitably come upon them. They will also receive an eternal reward for their suffering: <<*You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised*>> (Hebrews 10:36), and: <<*The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever*>> (1 John 2:17).

³ For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do – living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. ⁴ They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.

1 Peter 4:3-4

Living in debauchery, drunkenness, and detestable idolatry. The lives of unbelievers have not fundamentally changed from the 1st Century to the 21st; believers should have nothing to do with such behaviour, even when their nonparticipation means that others will heap abuse on them. Solomon also spoke out on this issue: <<*Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat*>> (Proverbs 23:20), and Paul teaches against associating with other church members who choose to live this way: <<*But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat*>> (1 Corinthians 5:11)

As an aside, it is interesting to note that those who planted the churches in the regions Peter is writing to would have attended Pentecost in Jerusalem when the apostles first received an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which prompted a variety of responses, including: <<*Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine”*>> (Acts 2:13). In response, Peter then quoted the Prophet Joel: <<*And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the survivors whom the Lord calls*>> (Joel 2:28-32). He then gave other convincing proofs about Jesus that brought 3,000 people into the Kingdom of God. This was an event that led to this letter being written some 30 years later.

Many of us may identify directly with either the actions of the described lifestyle or perhaps the thoughts at least of participating in such. Others may claim never to have done such things, but this does not make them righteous

for God does not grade sin and since all are sinners then we are all in the same boat; we should not be tempted to justify ourselves by pointing at the deeds of others: <<*How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye*>> (Luke 6:42).

Peter names six general categories of lifestyle that are dishonouring to God. It is unlikely that the list was intended to be exhaustive. Often the church likes to pick on one or two categories as being contrary to living a Christian life and then tend to ignore others. Some focus on gay issues as being sexually immoral but do not discuss heterosexual couples living or sleeping together outside of wedlock. People with addictions to alcohol, tobacco or drugs are often criticised, and yet the church often has many obese members who are given to gluttony and are clearly not good stewards of their bodies that are designated as a temple, holy to God. We all need to be reminded of our own shortcomings before we start looking at others: <<*Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?*>> (Luke 6:41).

⁵ But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

1 Peter 4:5

Unbelievers do not have the last word; for they will have to give account and face God’s judgment on the Last Day.

Christians are called to set themselves apart from any aspect of worldly living that dishonours God. This often makes them the targets of abusive comments and even ridicule, but this should be of no concern for all will be called to account.

Judge the living and the dead. Peter spoke similarly on this topic in his discourse to the members of Cornelius’ household: <<*You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout Judæa, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached – how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. “We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen – by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead*>> (Acts 10:36-42). Paul agrees in a powerful exhortation to Timothy to warn others of their desires to hear false teachers who were already in the church and exist still today: <<*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with*

great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry>> (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

⁶ For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

1 Peter 4:6

Again, this is a passage that causes disputes in its interpretation. There are those who believe that the Holy Spirit can communicate with the souls of those who have long since perished; this does not sit well with mainstream Christian theology and teaching.

Others think it refers to those who are dead in their sinful nature but come to life in the spirit when they hear and accept the Gospel. This could even be said to be the state of the unbelieving Gentile in comparison to the believing Jew. Jesus had spoken of a similar situation that interpreters also disagree over: *<<I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live>> (John 5:24-25).*

The second viewpoint that Jesus is speaking of those dead in the flesh, to be brought alive in their spirit, seems to fit better here too.

The Gospel was preached even to those who are now dead. Although some maintain that Peter offers a second chance after death for those who rejected Christ, this view is untenable since it contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture throughout the rest of the Bible: *<<And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us>> (Luke 16:26), and: <<Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment>> (Hebrews 9:27).* See comments made on 1 Peter 3:19, the immediate context concerning the importance of perseverance of believers (vv.1-6), and the coming judgment of: *<<the living and the dead>> (v.5).* Given the immediate context, those who are now dead refers to Christians to whom the Gospel was preached when they were alive, but who have since died. This fits with the meaning of dead in v.5. Even though believers will experience physical death, i.e. they are judged in regard to the body the way all people are, the spirit of believers who have died live, in regard to the spirit, in the way God does, that is, they live in heaven now, and they will live as well at the resurrection when Christ returns.

⁷ The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.

1 Peter 4:7

The end of all things is near does not mean Peter was expecting Christ to return in a few weeks or months. It means, rather, that all the major events in God's great salvation plan, culminating in the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, had already occurred. Therefore Christ's return could happen at any time: it was near in Peter's day, and it is nearer still today. But the imminent arrival of the end is not a call simply to look into heaven and wait for Jesus' return. Instead, believers are to be self-controlled and clear minded, so that they may be devoted to prayer and maximise their usefulness in God's Kingdom here on earth.

The end of all things is near was a common understanding in the 1st Century church and beyond as believers expected Christ to return almost immediately, but Jesus' own teaching seemed to indicate there would be a period of time between his ascension and his Parousia, or Second Coming, in order to allow the Holy Spirit to build the church and the Word of God to be preached to the entire world. Refer to The Parable of the Ten Minas in Luke 19:11-27 as an example of this. However, the delay in Christ's return should not worry believers and we are still called to live our lives as though Christ will return at any moment but plan our lives as though it will not occur during our own lifetime - part of the tension of living in the 'now but not yet of the Kingdom of God'.

There are some commentators who believe that the Gospel is weakened by the delay in the Second Coming. This attitude seems to be a direct challenge to God that he has got his plan wrong. This could take some explaining by those who hold this view on the day of judgement!

The apostle John also wrote of the approaching time: <<*Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour*>> (1 John 2:18). The antichrists are all those who either speak directly against Christ or teach incorrect doctrine about him. They have existed throughout this 'last hour', which some also designate as the church age.

But God is not bound by time as we also read in Scripture: <<*For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night*>> (Psalm 90:4), and Peter himself states a similar viewpoint: <<*But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day*>> (2 Peter 3:8).

⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹ Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

1 Peter 4:8-9

Love each other deeply. Christian love is not supposed to be something superficial and can often creep in to our way of speaking without giving much thought to what is said, if we are not careful. We can only truly love each other if we take the time to get to know each other and also if we are able to drop the judgemental attitude

that Jesus has warned us of: <<*Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven*>> (Luke 6:37). The deep love that Peter calls for requires us to look past the outer person and try to discern the spirit of the person that is in Christ. That is the level of true love.

Enduring love for others testifies that a person is living in the light of the future. True love covers over a multitude of other people's sins, i.e. <<*love covers over all wrongs*>> (Proverbs 10:12b). Where love abounds, offenses are frequently overlooked and quickly forgotten, and should certainly be forgiven. This passage gives the reason why we need to remain watchful and prayerful as we eagerly await the coming of our Lord. To do so is good for us and also for our neighbour, if we remember him too in our prayers.

Love covers sin is used by some to say there is a contradiction here between faith alone leading to salvation, and here both Solomon and Peter indicate it is given according to our good works and deeds. Such good works and deeds are simply an outward manifestation of the faith that a believer has and there is no contradiction, just as we see elsewhere: <<*What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone"*>> (Romans 9:30-32), which shows how Israel had failed to understand that it was faith that would bring them into the presence of God, and: <<*As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead*>> (James 2:26), shows that once we have that faith it must manifest itself through good works if it is true faith.

Although it should not be overlooked that it is love that is covering the sins, for an outpouring of genuine love that comes from Christ should produce a forgiving heart in a believer, who then willingly forgives the perpetrator for any harm or will have no ill feeling towards them. This should be done more readily and more completely than by those who do not have the heart of Christ within them.

Another way of looking at it is that faith in God will produce his loving response of forgiveness through his grace and mercy to the believing sinner. The believer is then in a position to forgive his neighbour's sin against him in love, even a multitude of sins, although that does not mean the neighbour's sins are forgiven in God's eyes for: <<*Who can forgive sins but God alone?*>> (Mark 2:7b). Love is clearly a gift of God and part of his nature: <<*Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love*>> (1 John 4:8), and of it Paul writes: <<*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails*>> (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a).

We should also note that to truly forgive someone we need to actually wish them well in their life and not hold any grudges against them, or raise the issue with them over and over again.

Hospitality was much admired in both Greco-Roman and Jewish sources. Unknown to Lot, two angels who were strangers to him arrived but he showed both respect and hospitality toward them: <<*The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. “My lords,” he said, “please turn aside to your servant’s house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning”*>> (Genesis 19:1-2a), Isaac’s Chief Servant received hospitality when he arrived at Laban’s house: <<*“Come, you who are blessed by the Lord,” he said. “Why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels”*>> (Genesis 24:31). We see hospitality offered again in Gibeah, in the sad story of the Jebusite and his concubine: <<*“You are welcome at my house,” the old man said. “Let me supply whatever you need. Only don’t spend the night in the square.” So he took him into his house and fed his donkeys. After they had washed their feet, they had something to eat and drink*>> (Judges 19:20-21). Church leaders are called to show hospitality: <<*Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach*>> (1 Timothy 3:2), and: <<*Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined*>> (Titus 1:8).

It was much needed in an era when inns could be expensive, dangerous and unpleasant. It remains just as important today, not just for economic reasons but as an act of love towards a fellow believer and as a service to Christ. Christ has also taught this principle: <<*Freely you have received, freely give*>> (Matthew 10:8b), and confirmed by Paul: <<*In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’*>> (Acts 20:35).

From the time that Jesus first sent out his disciples, and then his apostles, it became the normal accepted procedure that Christians should welcome fellow believers into their home: <<*When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house*>> (Luke 10:5-7).

Hospitality, as already stated, was very important for early Christians, for most of them could not afford lodging houses when travelling, but depended on the provision of fellow believers. Further examples of this are: <<*Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon*>> (Acts 9:43), <<*When she and the members of her household were baptised, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us*>> (Acts 16:15), she being Lydia in Philippi. <<*Leaving the next day, we reached Cæsarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven*>> (Acts 21:8), and: <<*Some of the disciples from Cæsarea accompanied us and brought us to the home of Mnason, where we were to stay. He was a man from Cyprus and one of the early disciples*>> (Acts 21:16).

Without grumbling. Serving others should always been seen as a privilege and we should never spoil hospitality with inappropriate remarks about either the financial cost involved, the inconvenience, the time or the effort, all of which are part of our worship and service to God. God was always displeased when the Israelites grumbled against him after he had brought them up out of Egypt and sustained them in the wilderness: <<*Moses also said, “You will know that it was the LORD when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD”>>* (Exodus 16:8). It is perhaps worse when disciples grumble that Jesus’ free gift of salvation is too hard for them to attain: <<*On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?” Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.” From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him>>* (John 6:60-66).

¹⁰ Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.

1 Peter 4:10

Peter shows that whatever gifts the Spirit has given to each disciple they are to use them actively in ministering to others as stewards of God’s undeserved grace and mercy, expressed in so many different ways toward many different people, but all through the Holy Spirit.

All believers have received at least one spiritual gift from God, and they are not to hoard these gifts but use them faithfully as stewards of God’s grace (see 1 Corinthians Chapters 12-14).

Those given the gift of music are called to the important task of leading us in worship: <<*These are the men David put in charge of the music in the house of the Lord after the ark came to rest there. They ministered with music before the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, until Solomon built the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. They performed their duties according to the regulations laid down for them>>* (1 Chronicles 6:31-32), while others need to perform lesser tasks during the meetings, such as cleaning, welcoming, serving refreshments, etc: <<*Their fellow Levites were assigned to all the other duties of the tabernacle, the house of God>>* (1 Chronicles 6:48), all of which are blessed by God and are good in his eyes.

We are all given different spiritual gifts, which we are called to discern and then use to good effect in our Kingdom work. Hospitality, as recently discussed, is one such gift, although it can be offered by anyone to anyone else in need.

¹¹ If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:11

With regard to: If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God then one who is given the gift to preach or teach should do so with all the authority given to him. He must also make sure that what he is teaching is the Word of God and not some fabrication of man. However, this equally applies to every believer in their daily conversations.

If anyone speaks, if anyone serves. Peter divides spiritual gifts generally into speaking and serving gifts: <<*We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully*>> (Romans 12:6-8), <<*To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues*>> (1 Corinthians 12:8-10), <<*And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?*>> (1 Corinthians 12:28-30), and: <<*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers*>> (Ephesians 4:11).

If Paul's list of gifts is ordered according to their importance then there are some who would be displeased to see the gift of tongues so far down and after administration!

The strength God provides. Others too have relied on God to give them strength: <<*David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the LORD his God*>> (1 Samuel 30:6), and David again: <<*It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect*>> (Psalm 18:32), the prophets acknowledge it: <<*Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation*>> (Isaiah 12:2), and: <<*O LORD, my strength and my fortress, my refuge in time of distress, to you the nations will come from the ends of the earth and say, "Our fathers possessed nothing but false gods, worthless idols that did them no good*>> (Jeremiah 16:9). This is something we should all look to

God to do in our own lives!

Those who speak must not propound their own ideas but faithfully declare God's words. As previously noted, this is not just an instruction to those who are called to speak the word publically, but to all believers in their private conversations about God or anything else as well: <<*Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honoured his name*>> (Malachi 3:16), <<*All you have made will praise you, O Lord; your saints will extol you. They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, so that all men may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendour of your kingdom*>> (Psalm 145:10-12), and: <<*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen*>> (Ephesians 4:29). Similarly, those who serve must not depend on their own strength but draw their strength from God, so that God alone may be praised through Jesus Christ: <<*Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name*>> (Hebrews 13:15).

Power and glory forever. John will later on provide a similar doxology: <<*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen*>> (Revelation 1:5b-6).

In general, the passage teaches us to use whatever gifts we have been given profitably and faithfully in accordance with the measure of the gift given. Paul's teaching on this is worth repeating: <<*For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully*>> (Romans 12:3-8).

If a work is of God then he should receive all the praise and glory for equipping us to do it. If it is not of God then we need to look closely at the reason why the work was done, and not offer any praise to God if it were by our own volition.

IV 1 Peter 4:12-5:11 - Persevering in Suffering

As the letter draws to a close, Peter reminds his readers that they should not be astonished when they suffer. God is using the suffering to purify the church; therefore they should unreservedly give themselves to God in their sufferings (vv.12-19). Peter concludes his letter with exhortations for the leaders and the congregation as a whole to continue in the faith, knowing that their final reward is certain (1 Peter 5:1-11).

IV.a 1 Peter 4:12-19 - Suffering for Being a Christian

The frequent repetition of counsel and comfort to Christians, considered as sufferers, in every chapter of this epistle, shows that the greatest danger these believers, and especially the new converts were in, came from the persecutions to which their embracing of Christianity exposed them. The good behaviour of Christians under sufferings is the most difficult part of their duty, but yet necessary both for the honour of Christ and their own sense of wellbeing; and therefore Peter, having exhorted them in the former part of this chapter to the great duty of self-discipline, now directs them in the necessary duty of patience under sufferings. An un-disciplined spirit is not fit to endure the types of testing that will inevitably come upon all believers.

¹² Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

1 Peter 4:12-13

Dear friends marks the beginning of a new section of the letter as it did at 1 Peter 2:11. This form of address, often translated beloved, shows Peter's genuine concern for them, both as a shepherd of their souls by his position as an apostle of Christ (1 Peter 1:1), and also as a fellow believer in the Lord who is called to love his brother. The apostle John similarly writes to his beloved friend Gaius: *<<Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you>>* (3 John 2-5).

Do not be surprised. The expectation of suffering and mistreatment in the world go back to its origins. Warnings of this come from Solomon: *<<If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still>>* (Ecclesiastes 5:8), and John: *<<Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death>>* (1 John 3:13-14).

The painful trial you are suffering is often translated as a fiery trial to indicate the type of intense suffering a believer may have to endure in this life. Peter has already used this analogy for testing: <<*These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed*>> (1 Peter 1:7), as do the prophets: <<*See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction*>> (Isaiah 48:10), and: <<*But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap*>> (Malachi 3:2).

Peter is saying that we should not suffer ourselves to be surprised or to think it strange and wonderful that the heat or fire should meet us, whereby we are tried and tested as gold is, when it is melted in the fire.

When faith enters it must be tested and strengthened. The Gospel is a powerful thing but it cannot do its work unless it meets opposition, and no one can be sure that it possesses such power, but he who has experienced it. Where there is suffering and the Cross, there its power may be shown and exercised. It is a living word, and therefore must exercise all its energy upon the dead. But if there is no such thing as death and corruption there is nothing for it to do and none can be certain that it possesses such virtue and is stronger than sin or death. Therefore, Peter says, 'Are you tested?' That is, God appoints for you no heat or flame, i.e. cross or suffering, except to test you and strengthen your faith in his word and promises.

Suffering is the norm for Christians, not a surprising exception. To suffer as a Christian is a call to rejoice as a disciple of Christ, and such joy is the prelude to the joy that is to come at the return of Christ, i.e. when his glory is revealed. Matthew Henry writes that it is not the suffering but the cause that makes the martyr.

Revealed is the Greek word apokalypsei, which means literally uncovering or disclosure.

If we wish to share in Christ's glory, we must be prepared to suffer with him too: <<*Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory*>> (Romans 8:17).

In our suffering there may be pain in our bodies and minds, but there shall also be a sense of spiritual joy. For this joy springs from suffering and is everlasting. Yet whoever cannot bear his sufferings cheerfully and is dissatisfied, and chooses to contend with God shall endure suffering both here and throughout eternity.

Paul confirms the joy of suffering for Christ: <<*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does*>>

not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us>> (Romans 5:1-5).

¹⁴ If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

1 Peter 4:14

We are called to persevere and overcome such trials in life, which the Ephesian church did and were commended by Christ for doing so: *<<You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary>> (Revelation 2:3).*

To be insulted because one belongs to Christ is to be blessed by God, because in such times the Spirit of glory, the Holy Spirit, rests on or dwells within believers in an especially powerful way. Further, it is the same Spirit that rested on Jesus: *<<The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord>> (Isaiah 11:2), <<And when Jesus was baptised, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him>> (Matthew 3:16 ESV), who now rests on the believer.*

Although David did face personal abuse for all sorts of things, it is not known if he was ever personally the subject of abuse for his devotion to God and his willingness to proclaim his love for him, but he cries out just the same: *<<Because of all my enemies, I am the utter contempt of my neighbours; I am a dread to my friends – those who see me on the street flee from me>> (Psalm 31:11).* His neighbours here being the surrounding countries, many of whom were frequently at war with Israel.

There have always been many who oppose Christ and this will always be the case. Therefore, anyone who chooses to proclaim Jesus as the Christ will come into conflict with such people and will be reviled by them. Jesus had said: *<<If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first>> (John 15:18).* He also stated: *<<“He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me”>> (Luke 10:16).* It is not the believer that is being reviled or rejected but God and his Holy Spirit that rests within the believer. God had pointed this out to Samuel, when he thought Israel was rejecting him as their judge in order to have a human king: *<<And the LORD told him: “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king”>> (1 Samuel 8:7).*

¹⁵ If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶ However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

1 Peter 4:15-16

On the other two occurrences of it in the NT the term Christian is used by non-believers. The term was coined in Antioch: <<*and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch*>> (Acts 11:26), and King Herod Agrippa II used it in his conversation at Paul's trial in Cæsarea: <<*Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"*>> (Acts 26:28). The term means 'little christs', and was intended as an insult initially by pagans living in Syria. However, believers accepted this allusion to their Lord with honour and humility, and it is now accepted generally as a term 'follower of Christ'.

Christians are called to suffer in such a way that will bring honour to God and not disrepute: <<*I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes*>> (Ezekiel 36:23).

We must not confuse our Christian suffering with that which comes upon us as a result of any evil or unlawful deeds that would deserve it, for anyone who commits a civil offence must face the due process of law and indeed has also sinned against God most grievously, unless that offence was civil disobedience in protection of God's work. However, we do not have to be a murderer, a thief or other kind of criminal to qualify in this category, for Peter also includes meddler here, i.e. someone who sticks their nose in where it is not wanted or required!

However, if we truly suffer just for being a Christian then we should accept it gladly and offer up praise to God that he has accepted us into his family. Jesus confirms such rejoicing: <<*However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven*>> (Luke 10:20), as does the writer to the Hebrews: <<*But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel*>> (Hebrews 12:22-24).

Although many were martyred for Christ, a practice that continues today in some parts of the world, no one can die spiritually for being a Christian. That is something reserved for unbelievers: <<*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell*>> (Matthew 10:28), and: <<*If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire*>> (Revelation 20:15). Paul is one who did not fear death, something he faced on a daily basis following his encounter with the Risen Lord on the Damascus Road, and could state without boasting or fear of contradiction: <<*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain*>> (Philippians 1:21), that is, he lived his life purely to serve Christ but knew that his death would take him into the very presence of his Lord for all eternity.

Do not be ashamed. Those who faithfully follow the Gospel and proclaim the Word of God should never feel ashamed, even of themselves when they get it wrong in life as we all do at times, unless it is a deliberate choice to sin and then we should be ashamed. We should certainly never be ashamed for being a believer in Christ, for Jesus had said: *<<If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels>>* (Mark 8:38), and Paul never was, even when it cost him his freedom and eventually his life: *<<I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile>>* (Romans 1:16).

As just noted, there are times when we should feel ashamed. God was angry with the Assyrians and was intent on destroying their capital city Nineveh, which he had proclaimed he would do through the prophet: *<<The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. The Lord takes vengeance on his foes and maintains his wrath against his enemies>>* (Nahum 1:2). God sent the prophet Jonah to them, although Jonah at first tried to run away before finally going to Nineveh to proclaim God's warning to them, something he should have been ashamed of but apparently was not. When the Ninevites repented of their sin, God was gracious and loving, forgiving them and turning away his anger from their wickedness. Instead of joyfully praising God for this, Jonah became angry and probably should again have felt ashamed for doing so, but clearly again did not: *<<But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to the Lord, "O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." But the Lord replied, "Have you any right to be angry?">>* (Jonah 4:1-4). And speaking of judgement:

¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And,

“If it is hard for the righteous to be saved,
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”

1 Peter 4:17-18

Peter crafts together ideas from the prophets in this passage: *<<See, I am beginning to bring disaster on the city that bears my Name, and will you indeed go unpunished? You will not go unpunished, for I am calling down a sword upon all who live on the earth, declares the Lord Almighty>>* (Jeremiah 25:29), *<<“You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins”>>* (Amos 3:2), and: *<<When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judæa flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfilment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be*

in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled>> (Luke 21:20-24).

It is time. Peter alludes to the final day of judgement that looms ever nearer as each generation passes. It is not a long time for we only endure the sufferings during our life on earth, but perhaps we will still have some sense of time beyond death to wait for the glorious coming of our Lord: <<*When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?”>> (Revelation 6:9-10).*

In the OT, family of God, which is literally house of God referred to the temple, but now it is God’s people who are his temple, see 1 Peter 2:4-10. Those who are the family of God have their worst times during this life and most have shown that they can endure it.

For judgment to begin with the family of God alludes to Ezekiel 9:1-6 <<*Then I heard him call out in a loud voice, “Bring the guards of the city here, each with a weapon in his hand.” And I saw six men coming from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with a deadly weapon in his hand. With them was a man clothed in linen who had a writing kit at his side. They came in and stood beside the bronze altar. Now the glory of the God of Israel went up from above the cherubim, where it had been, and moved to the threshold of the temple. Then the Lord called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing kit at his side and said to him, “Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it.” As I listened, he said to the others, “Follow him through the city and kill, without showing pity or compassion. Slaughter old men, young men and maidens, women and children, but do not touch anyone who has the mark. Begin at my sanctuary.” So they began with the elders who were in front of the temple>>, and Malachi 3:1-4 <<*“See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the Lord, as in days gone by, as in former years>>, where the Lord purifies his people. Judgement here is not punitive, however, but purifying and cleansing. The suffering of God’s people refines them: <<*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed>> (1 Peter 1:6-7).***

What will the outcome be? If the people of God need purifying, then surely the judgment of those who do not obey the Gospel will be much more severe (vv.3-5). Peter reinforces this point by quoting Proverbs 11:31 directly from the Septuagint, i.e. the LXX or Greek OT. Peter was a native Aramaic speaker and would have either studied an Aramaic or Hebrew version of Scripture for much of his life, but his recipients would mostly speak Greek, at least as a second language, which was the norm in the Roman Empire. Also, Peter may have had the help of Silas in writing this letter, although we will discuss in 1 Peter 5:12 that he was most probably the person who delivered the letter. If Silas did indeed write the letter, it may indicate that, although Greek was quite common in Galilee at the time, Peter may never truly have mastered the Greek language. However, the use of someone else to write letters from the speaker's dictation was common, as we see from Paul's letter to the Romans: <<*I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord*>> (Romans 16:22). Having said this, we must remember that Peter was a business man, owning his own boat, and was clearly intelligent, so it is likely that he could at least speak Greek quite fluently, if perhaps with an accent: <<*After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away"*>> (Matthew 26:73).

Peter asks that, if this is the way God will judge his elect, how bad is it going to be for those who oppose him? He is reiterating something that the prophets had written of so long ago, in that a time is coming when all mankind must stand before the judgement seat of Christ to give an account for what they have done whilst in the body. True believers must give an account even though they have already been deemed to be not guilty due to the saving grace of Jesus on the Cross and their acceptance of him as Lord. Those who have not believed will have to give an account even though they are already judged to be guilty and their fate is determined also, irrespective of any reason they may offer in their defence.

Hard to be saved does not mean that the righteous just barely receive salvation. It is hard, Greek molis, which translates as with difficulty or scarcely, means that the righteous to be saved in the midst of suffering; their salvation is not easy and simple.

Jesus too had shown how hard it is for some to be saved: <<*It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God*>> (Mark 10:25), and: <<*Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it*>> (Matthew 7:13-14). However, God will reward those who persevere, not that the reward should be the purpose of our endurance: <<*To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life*>> (Romans 2:7), and: <<*Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life*>> (Revelation 2:10).

This uses the words of King Solomon: <<*If the righteous receive their due on earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner!*>> (Proverbs 11:31). If those

deemed righteous because they have chosen to accept the free gift of grace barely escape judgement - there is not a chance for those that have rejected it! The testing will rock the faith of those that have it when it is tested by fire but it will endure if it is genuine. Those without faith cannot endure it.

The Lord's brother also speaks of the ungodly sinners: <<Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him">> (Jude 14-15).

¹⁹ So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

1 Peter 4:19

Paul is perhaps the greatest testimony to this verse: <<Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me>> (2 Timothy 1:8-12 ESV).

This verse encapsulates the message of the whole epistle. Believers suffer in accord with God's will, for he rules over everything that happens to them. As the sovereign Creator, God is also loving and faithful, therefore they should commit their lives entirely to him, just as Jesus did when he suffered: <<When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly>> (1 Peter 2:23). Such trust manifests itself in doing what is good.

It may seem reassuring to believers that their eternal soul is assured of eternal salvation, something we should be forever thankful to God for. However, it is in the nature of the believer to feel sorrow and grief for those who are lost, who do not call on the name of the Lord Jesus for their salvation, and the penalty for their apostasy seems harsh to us. If we think it is difficult to accept, then just how hard is it for their faithful Creator, who is their heavenly Father too, when he sees so many of his children perishing for all eternity?

God is the creator of every human soul and he has the right to deal with them however he chooses, which will be done according to true justice in accord with his perfect being. Those that have proved their true faith through their good works will pass through the testing of judgement. Those that have no faith will pass on into eternal separation from their creator: <<where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth>> (Matthew 24:51b).