

1 Peter 4:1-11

This passage splits up simply into three sections:

vv. 1-4 What it costs to be a Christian.

vv. 5-6 That there's going to be a judgment.

vv.7-11 The all important question which we should always ask ourselves every time we come to Scripture: How then shall we live?

First of all, we find out what it really costs to become a Christian. If you stood up at work one day and suddenly announced to everybody that you've become a Christian, how do you think they'd react? Would it make any difference?

It'll make a difference all right. We will get opposition from our old friends and maybe even our family. Anything from light teasing, to ridiculing, to being killed for our faith. We'll soon find out that the world doesn't like us any more. Mainly because it doesn't understand us. But that's exactly what happened to Christ, and what He said would happen to us:

John 15:18,19

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”

世人若恨你们，你们知道（或作该知道）恨你们以先，已经恨我了。你们若属世界，世界必爱属自己的。只因你们不属世界。乃是我从世界中拣选了你们，所以世界就恨你们。

So, why do people bother becoming Christians at all? Let's look at the passage.

4:1 “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.”

基督既在肉身受苦，你们也当将这样的心志作为兵器。因为在肉身受过苦的，就已经与罪断绝了。

In this verse Peter's comparing the suffering Christ had in His body with the suffering the Christian has in his body. We're told that in our sufferings, we should have the same attitude that He had in His sufferings.

But there are some of Christ's sufferings that we can't possibly enter into, and conversely there are some aspects of our sufferings that Christ can't enter into.

So, first of all, the sufferings of Christ that we can't enter into:

Christ was God, perfectly blessed from all eternity, yet He was born into a human body, limited by time and space. He grew up as a sinless child. He must have had a very lonely childhood. As a perfectly sinless person, He had

to endure living every day constantly surrounded by naughty children, by sin.

And when He was on the cross, the agony of soul He went through as He took on His shoulders the sins of all His people, so that they wouldn't have to take them on themselves. We can't even begin to share His sufferings in any of this.

But there's something we have, that Christ can't enter into. We're sinners. We're born slaves to a sinful nature. Christ was sinless.

To understand this a bit better, we need to know exactly what becoming a Christian involves.

Becoming a Christian is not merely an outward decision. That's very important to understand. A Christian is not just someone who "decides" one day to follow Jesus Christ and His teachings, just as other people may "decide" to follow another great teacher like Mohammed, or Buddha, or Confucius.

Becoming a Christian is far more than a mere decision. The reason it isn't is simple. We can't follow any of Christ's teachings by ourselves. It's impossible. Our sinful natures prevent this. Try loving your enemies continually. Try doing good to those who persecute you. Try keeping any of the Ten Commandments, not only in actions but in your thoughts as well. None of us can do it. We're simply incapable of following Christ's teachings by ourselves.

We need far more than just a moral teacher. We need a Saviour. Someone who can not only teach us how we should live, but also someone who can actually save us from our sinful nature. Christ compared our sinful nature to an illness:

Mark 2:17

"They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

健康的人用不着医生，有病的人才用得着。我来本不是召义人，乃是召罪人。

Only when we see our need of a Saviour and cry to God for mercy, can God begin working in us to change us on a permanent basis.

The Bible describes this change in several ways: as being "born-again," as having a new heart put within us, as our being made a new creature. Once we have been given this new life from the Lord, we're freed from slavery to our sinful natures, and now have the ability to begin to follow Christ's teachings. That's what it is to be a true Christian.

Has this life-changing experience happened to you? Have you been brought from darkness to light? From the power of sin to salvation in Christ? If not, or if you are not sure, pray to God. Communicate with Him.

Matthew 7:7

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be

opened unto you.”

你们祈求，就给你们。寻找，就寻见。叩门，就给你们开门。

But, even after we've become a Christian, we don't become perfect. For the rest of our lives, there's a battle going on inside us. Our old sinful nature is still there, and will try to drag us back into sin all the time. Only when we die will we be freed from it altogether. Christ never had this problem. Christ never had an old life, or an old nature, dragging Him back all the time, like we have. He was altogether sinless.

He was fully human, and so suffered human frailties such as tiredness and hunger, so He really:

Hebrews 4:15

“was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

他也曾凡事受过试探，与我们一样。只是他没有犯罪。

But He could never have experienced, like we do, an old heart battling within Him, constantly dragging Him back to sin.

Now that's what we don't have in common with Christ's sufferings. But what Christians do have in common with Christ, is suffering unjustly in this world for doing good. That's what this verse is talking about. In this respect we should have the same attitude as Him. To the extent that we follow the leading of our new hearts, we will suffer the same kind of persecutions He suffered.

We don't look for persecution, but the Christian would rather love God and be persecuted to death if necessary, than give up the Christian life and go back into the world and let the persecution be lifted.

All we have to do to escape persecution, is to renounce our faith and go back to our old ways, our old life, our old friends, who I'm sure would accept us back. But we can't. We don't want to. We've got no taste for the old life any more. In fact we're totally ashamed of the life we lived in the past. The new heart has given us a desire for new things, and the taste for old things has become unpleasant. The passage describes this as having *“ceased from sin.”*

2 “That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.”

你们存这样的心，从今以后，就可以不从人的情欲，只从神的旨意，在世度余下的光阴。

Our desire now, and our duty, as Christians, is to follow the leading of the new heart and put to death the old:

Romans 8:13

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do

mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

你们若顺从肉体活着必要死。若靠着圣灵治死身体的恶行必要活着。

But our old friends just won't understand any of this at all, because they've never experienced this new birth. And that's when the persecution will begin:

3,4 “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.”

因为往日随从外邦人的心意，行邪淫，恶欲，醉酒，荒宴，群饮，并可恶拜偶像的事，时候已经够了。他们在这些事上，见你们不与他们同奔那放荡无度的路，就以为怪毁谤你们。

Upon becoming a Christian, we now have an extra problem to contend with which we didn't have before. We're now persecuted by the world, our old friends. They think it strange we don't follow them any more like we used to. But we'd rather seek a new life, a life that pleases God.

Our attitude ought to be altogether different from the world from now on. We now have Christ as our example, and the new heart within us gives us the ability and desire to begin to follow Him. How did He live His life?

1 Peter 2:21-23

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”

你们蒙召原是为。因基督也为你们受过苦，给你们留下榜样，叫你们跟随他的脚踪行。他并没有犯罪，口里也没有诡诈。他被骂不还口。受害不说威吓的话。只将自己交托那按公义审判人的主。

Whatever our situation, we should never retaliate. That's the Christian way. We're called to love our enemies and do good to those who persecute us. Our new heart gives us the ability to do this, we can't do it naturally:

Matthew 5:44

“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

只是我告诉你们，要爱你们的仇敌。为那逼迫你们的祷告。

Romans 12:19-21

“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

亲爱的弟兄，不要自己伸冤，宁可让步，听凭主怒。（或作让人发怒）因为经上记着，主说，伸冤在我。我必报应。所以，你的仇敌若饿了，就给他吃。若渴了，就给他喝。因为你这样行，就是把炭火堆在他的头上。你不可为恶所胜，反要以善胜恶。

But surely, the Christian should care about justice being done. Yes, of course. God isn't going to let sinners get away with their sin. But the point is we should leave any kind of vengeance or retribution to God. He's the only one who can see the hearts of men. He alone knows how to judge justly. We don't. We should leave judgment to the just Judge to sort everything out.

And this leads us onto our second point in verses 5 and 6. There's going to be a judgment. Men think they can get away with their sins. But God sees the heart, and will one day judge all men for the deeds done in the body.

5 “Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.”

他们必在那将要审判活人死人的主面前交账。

Most people don't think there's a judgment coming, or rather, they don't want to think about it. But if there wasn't going to be a judgment to come in the next life, then God would be totally unjust, because it's obvious that justice is not done in this world. If this world is all there is, God would be unjust.

Everyone naturally lives for themselves, and their own pleasure. A judgment at the end of their lives, is going to be awkward for them, so most people choose not to believe in it. They'd rather believe death is the end and there's no judgment, so they can freely enjoy living for their lusts here and now:

1 Corinthians 15:32 – *“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”*

若死人不复活，我们就吃吃喝喝吧。因为明天要死了。

But the Bible's clear:

Hebrews 9:27:

“it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”

按着定命，人人都有一死，死后且有审判。

So, if there's going to be a judgment, what should we all do? REPENT!

Acts 17:30,31

God *“now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”*

如今却吩咐各处的人都要悔改。因为他已经定了日子，要借着他所设立的人，按公义审判天下。并且叫他从死里复活，给万人作可信的凭据。

We're born living a self-centred and sinful life. We all need to repent and turn to the one Saviour that God has appointed to save people from their sins. That's why it's vital for us to receive the new heart and the new nature that only God can give. It's the only way possible to escape the judgment to come.

6 “For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.”

为此，就是死人也曾有福音传给他们，要叫他们的肉体按着人受审判，他们的灵性却靠神活着。

The gospel is, the good news that there is a Saviour for sinners. This verse is teaching us that this good news has been preached throughout history. It has been preached *“to them that are dead.”* That is, all those throughout history who have since died, who are *“now dead,”* as I think the NIV says, in order that they too may be able to escape the judgment to come.

But, many people mistakenly understand this phrase about the gospel being preached to *“them that are dead,”* as meaning that people are given a second “chance” to hear the gospel and respond to it after death. They also use 3:19,20, in the previous chapter, which contains a similar phrase, talking about Christ preaching to the *“spirits in prison”* in Noah's day.

Those who believe this are mainly those who have a problem with the fact that many people on the earth live their whole lives without ever “getting a chance” to hear the gospel before they die. They would say that it's “unfair” of God not to give everyone at least a “chance” of salvation. But this verse can't mean that there's a “second chance,” because we're clearly told elsewhere that:

Hebrews 9:27

“it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”

按着定命，人人都有一死，死后且有审判。

In Luke 16, Christ tells a parable of the rich man and Lazarus, which also clearly shows that after death there's a great gulf fixed between heaven and hell that no-one can ever cross.

There are two main problems with the idea that people get a second “chance” to hear the gospel after death. Firstly, it takes away the urgency of missionary work. Why bother spreading the gospel at great hardship to ourselves when everyone’s going to get a second chance to hear it anyway? Especially as after death it’s Christ who’s supposedly going to preach to them. He’s a far better preacher than any of us are. So let’s just leave it to Him.

Secondly, there’s a big problem with the word “chance.” Nothing happens in this world by “chance.” Everything’s under God’s control:

Matthew 10:29,30

“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”

两个麻雀，不是卖一分银子吗？若是你们的父不许，一个也不能掉在地上。就是你们的头发，也都被数过了。

So is it unfair of God to allow so many people in this life to never hear the gospel, and go to hell without hearing the gospel?

God knows who’d respond and who wouldn’t. God knows that even if these people had heard the gospel, they would’ve rejected it. God isn’t going to waste His resources by sending a missionary somewhere where there’ll never be anybody converted. God guides each individual believer to be where He wants them to be, in order that all His elect will be gathered in:

Acts 16:6-8

“Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.”

圣灵既然禁止他们在亚西亚讲道，他们就经过弗吕家，加拉太一带地方。到了每西亚的边界，他们想要往庇推尼去，耶稣的灵却不许。他们就越过每西亚，下到特罗亚去。

God didn’t want Paul, at that particular time, to go to Asia or Bithynia, but to go to Troas, because God wanted Paul to go to Europe. The responsibility of God’s people is that we should make sure we’re in God’s will, and not worry about the gospel not going to some places. Where the gospel goes is in God’s hands alone. He knows what He’s doing. We shouldn’t be unduly concerned or worried about these things. We should just be obedient.

Now the third and final section, in verses 7-11: In the light of the fact that there’s soon going to be a judgment, How then shall we live? It’s pointless reading the Bible, or listening to sermons, unless it changes our lives.

7 “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober...”

万物的结局近了。所以你们要谨慎自守，儆醒祷告。

We certainly should no longer live our lives to please ourselves. We should rather live our lives to the glory of God. We should be sober. Not only will this please God, but it'll also be the best witness possible to those around us.

“...and watch unto prayer.” ... 儆醒祷告。

We should be a PRAYING people. We should be constantly in communion with our heavenly Father. Having a relationship with Him. Telling Him all our needs. Wanting to discern His will for us in the smallest circumstance.

If we're not alert or sober, but instead slothful, lazy, and tired all the time, we aren't going to have a very good prayer life. We need to get our priorities right.

8 “And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves,”

最要紧的是彼此切实相爱。

We should LOVE one another. Do you know what that involves? It involves time and effort, because by nature we're all the most unloving of creatures.

John 13:35

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

你们若有彼此相爱的心，众人因此就认出你们是我的门徒了。

In Matthew 24, where Christ tells us about what's going to happen in the last days, one of the things is:

Matthew 24:12

“The love of many shall wax cold.” 许多人的爱心，才渐渐冷淡了。

We should particularly make an effort to love those around us who are unlovely. It's all too easy to love someone who we think has something lovely about them. But in reality, none of us has anything lovely about us at all. Why should God bother with any of us? The wonder is that He does bother with us:

Romans 5:8

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

惟有基督在我们还作罪人的时候为我们死，神的爱就在此向我们显明了。

“...for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.”

因为爱能遮掩许多的罪。

This doesn't mean that if we love someone we should turn a blind eye to their sin. God doesn't turn a blind eye to sin. God loves His people, and to deal with their sin was a very costly business for Him.

1 Peter 3:18

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”

因基督也曾一次为罪受苦（受苦有古卷作受死），就是义的代替不义的，为要引我们到神面前。按着肉体说他被治死。按着灵性说他复活了。

So, love isn't turning a blind eye to sin, but exactly the opposite. If we love someone and they're sinning, love for them should motivate us to at some point tell them about their sin. Not only because of the judgment to come, but also because sin ruins lives. We should want the best for everyone around us.

John 14:15

Christ said: *“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”*

你们若爱我，就必遵守我的命令。

To walk around and continually see people sinning ought to motivate us to tell them about the love of God in Jesus Christ. They need to know how they can be saved from the inevitable consequences that their sins will lead them into. That's real love. Covering over sin, pretending it doesn't exist, isn't love at all.

Romans 13:10

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

爱是不加害与人的，所以爱就完全了律法。

9 “Use hospitality one to another without grudging.”

你们要互相款待，不发怨言。

We should offer HOSPITALITY towards each other without grumbling. In 1 Timothy and Titus we see a list of requirements necessary for becoming an elder, one of which is being *“given to hospitality,”* or *“a lover of hospitality.”* This is a continual attitude of heart.

Hebrews 13:2

“Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

不可忘记用爱心接待客旅。因为曾有接待客旅的，不知不觉就接待了天使。

10 *“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”*

各人要照所得的恩赐彼此服事，作神百般恩赐的好管家。

This is all about spiritual gifts. The Lord gives to every Christian spiritual gifts, in order to serve Him. Every Christian is different, and will receive different gifts. Spiritual gifts are mentioned elsewhere in Scripture. Rather than going through a list of them all, Peter quite cleverly boils them down to two elements. All spiritual gifts are made up of a combination of these two elements in varying proportions: speaking and serving:

11 *“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.”*

若有讲道的，要按着神的圣言讲。

SPEAKING – not our own words, but as one who speaks the very words of God. That should shut our mouths.

Speaking about the things of God is a very serious subject. We’re talking about heaven and hell. Sin and repentance. God and eternal judgment. How can anybody be light-hearted or humorous in any way when speaking on these things? Too many preachers today just want to tell funny stories to endear themselves to the audience. But the subject we have is far more serious.

But, also, even in our everyday conversation, we’re told that flippancy, light-heartedness and joking, shouldn’t be named amongst us:

Ephesians 5:3,4

“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.”

至于淫乱，并一切污秽，或是贪婪，在你们中间连提都不可，方合圣徒的体统。淫词，妄语，和戏笑的话，都不相宜，总要说感谢的话。

Matthew 12:36

“But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”

我又告诉你们，凡人所说的闲话，当审判的日子，必要句句供出来。

That doesn’t mean we can’t have a sense of humour. But generally speaking, we ought to be serious-minded people.

“if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth”

若有服事人的，要按着神所赐的力量服事。

SERVING – We should never try to do anything in our own strength, but only with the strength that God provides. We're such proud people. We want to do things in our own strength all the time. Then we wonder why things go all wrong. We need the Lord:

Philippians 4:13

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

我靠着那加给我力量的，凡事都能作。

And it's not just a question of simply *saying* it's the Lord giving me the strength. We should mean it. How many of us, for example, glory in our infirmities, like Paul did?

2 Corinthians 12:9,10

"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

他对我说，我的恩典够你用的。因为我的能力，是在人的软弱上显得完全。所以我更喜欢夸自己的软弱，好叫基督的能力覆庇我。我为基督的缘故，就以软弱，凌辱，急难，逼迫，困苦，为可喜乐的。因我什么时候软弱，什么时候就刚强了。

And also, of Christ it's said that He:

Philippians 2:7,8

"made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.."

反倒虚己，取了奴仆的形像，成为人的样式。既有人的样子，就自己卑微，存心顺服，以至于死，且死在十字架上。

Do we really live like this? Servant lives with servant hearts. Do we really make ourselves nothing? Do we really humble ourselves, and would we be obedient even unto death, if necessary? This is a challenge to all of us.

And the ultimate aim of all our actions should be:

"... that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

叫神在凡事上因耶稣基督得荣耀。原来荣耀权能都是他的，直

到永永远远。阿们。

God is working everything out to His greatest glory in the end. All the glory in everything we do, should therefore go to Him and never to ourselves.

Matthew 20:26-28 – *“But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”*

你们中间谁愿为大，就必作你们的用人。谁愿为首，就必作你们的仆人。正如人子来，不是要受人的服事，乃是要服事人。并且要舍命，作多人的赎价。

This is the Christian's calling.