

“The Trying Times: As Tools of God’s Grace”
(1 Peter 4:1-11)

Intro. Whenever you give someone a task to do, you should always prepare them for that task. If you want your child to mow the lawn, you will make sure the lawnmower is working properly with gasoline on hand. If you want to show someone how to replace a roof, you will explain to them the tools they need. As we make our way through 1 Peter & “The Trying Times,” today we look at chapter 4 how God has equipped us “As Tools of God’s Grace.”

Theme: Stewardship

Background: Peter encourages believers that suffer for their faith to consider Jesus as the great example of One who suffered before entering His glory as the model for their own lives.

➤ Whenever you as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ experience “The Trying Times,” live your life in such a way that you are a “Tool of God’s Grace.”

I. Be Ready to Suffer (4:1-6)—3 reasons

A. For God is your Master, not sin (4:1-2)

- The imperative is grounded in Christ’s suffering
- “arm yourselves”—military connotations

Illus: If you knew someone was coming to fight against you, wouldn’t you prepare yourself? You may take up firearms or in ancient times a sword or bow & arrow. As a believer, you are to take up spiritual weaponry in preparing for the battle (prayer & the Word as your sword)

- Have the attitude that is ready to suffer—discipline & grit are needed in the Christian life
- The idea of suffering in the flesh indicates that believers have ceased from sin in the sense that not that they no longer sin but that they no longer let sin have dominion over them—supported by v. 2 & living for the will of God

B. For unbelievers will be judged (4:3-5)

- Peter uses “Gentiles” for unbelievers & understands Christians as part of Israel, members of the new people of God (cf. 2:9-10)
- The sins listed are not comprehensive but indicates the partying, drunkenness & sexual sins characteristic of the Greco-Roman world

Illus: Many state colleges are known for these very sins at Frat parties & such—be careful about the places you encourage your children to attend. If the most important mind-advancement years are college years, you should help your child make a wise choice for college as a place that won’t push them from the faith but promote them in the faith

- Pagans are surprised when believers don’t join them in their practices & malign believers for their faith & way of life
- Believers should take courage, however, because Christ will judge them & the tables will be turned

C. For death is not the end for believers (4:6)

- Pagans probably dismissed the Christian faith by pointing out that believers died in the same way as unbelievers
- Physical death, however, is not the last word for believers, for the gospel promises that they will ultimately be raised from the dead

II. Be Ready to Serve (4:7-11)

A. Because the end is near (4:7a)

- Nowhere does the NT encourage the setting of dates or of any other kinds of charts
- Eschatology is used to encourage believers to live in a godly way

B. So think clearly before acting (4:7b)

- “Self-controlled” & “sober-minded” are synonymous & call for right thinking in light of trying times where believers are tempted to live like the world

Illus: Martin Luther was asked what he would do if the end were to come today. He replied that he would plant a tree & pay his taxes. He lived every day in light of the end & therefore, he would do the appointed task for that day (see Schreiner, 211)

C. And act consistently with your calling (4:8-11)

- By loving each other, for it covers a multitude of sins—when believers lavish love on others, the sins & offenses of others are overlooked (not that they are dealt with, for habitual, unrepentant sin must be confronted, but the shortcomings & sins of individuals aren't the focus of believers relating to each other)
- By showing hospitality to each other—especially important in a society where many believers could not afford lodging—to be done without grumbling so that believers don't grow tired of serving others
- By using God's gifts—as managers or stewards of God's manifold grace
- Each believer has a gift from God, whether teaching, administration, prayer, evangelism, singing, service, leadership, giving, or whatever—the lists in Scripture provide about 20, but it is doubtful that they are comprehensive (1 Cor 12; Rom 12; 1 Pet 4; Eph 4)—isn't singing a gift & could craftsmanship be a spiritual gift, as implied in Exodus 31?
- Use whatever God has supplied you to the glory of God through Christ who reigns forever!

Conc. You may be given a set of tools for your birthday or Christmas, but they don't do you any good unless you use them. You may have a firearm for protection, but if your house is broken into & you don't use it, it doesn't do you any good. God has prepared you for “The Trying Times” with tools so that you can be ready to suffer & be ready to serve, but you have to use them. You don't have the tools as gifts of God's grace until you've received God's greatest gift of grace in Christ Jesus. Trust Him & then use what He gives you in serving Him & others.

Dear Friend of Sweetwater,

In conversation with someone after the morning worship service this past Sunday, it occurred to me that I never said anything about the help you (your students) can get at colleges and universities through BCM (Baptist Campus Ministries). I'm sorry for not thinking about it, because you need to know about it.

Many of our schools have BCM Directors (usually funded by the North American Mission Board—your Annie Armstrong dollars at work). Since some of you have children or grandchildren at UCF, you should check out the website for the school's BCM: <http://ucfbcm.com/>. Brad Crawford is the Director of BCM and does quality work for them. Contact him and provide some contact information on your family member so he/his team can reach out to them.

If you have a child or grandchild or friend at a different school, you can "Google" "BCM" and the name of the school. Then you can contact the Director and give him/her the name of your family member, so BCM can reach out to them. That way, your family member can find some Christian support in the midst of everything else they face at school.

I apologize for not mentioning this very important information in my sermon. Hopefully, you will find it useful in connecting our students with Christian leaders on their campuses.

May the Lord bless you as you continue to "Love Jesus. Love Others. Lead Others to Love Jesus,"

Joel R. Breidenbaugh, PhD

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