WE HAVE EVERYTHING WE NEED

2 Peter 1:1-11

“The end of all things is at hand.” (4:7) This morning we’ll look at Chapters 4 and 5 – not in depth, but we will hit the main points. With all the persecution and suffering the exiled saints Peter is writing to were going thru, these were wonderful words. Peter is telling them, “It’s not going to last forever. Jesus is coming back!” What hope this gave them.

Suffering, being maligned, being mistreated for being a Christian has been a recurring theme in First Peter. Suffering for doing what is right, for doing God’s will is a given in this ungodly world. Peter says, “even if you suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed.” God will bless you for it. In other words, being “blessed” means that we experience all of the fullness of the indwelling Spirit of God in our life. And our model for living the Christian life (which Peter’s been describing) is Jesus. Jesus Himself suffered even though He lived a perfect, sinless life and was completely operating within His Father’s will. Jesus’ suffering, His death on the cross made a way for our salvation – “Jesus Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God…” (3:18) Yes, Jesus suffered, but He triumphed over death, hell and the grave and in the end was exalted by the Father; which leads us into Chapter 4…

Is it possible for me as Christians to live out the remaining days of my life on earth pursuing God’s holy will rather than the lusts of my flesh?

READ 1 Peter 4:1-2

V 1a Since Christ suffered in the flesh (Ch 3), we Christians can expect to suffer as well, possibly even die for our faith. While enduring it, we need to arm ourselves (realize we are fighting a spiritual battle) with the same way of thinking that Jesus had. What attitude did Jesus have when He went to the cross? He wasn’t focused on the pain He was suffering, but rather on the end result, the salvation of mankind. The writer of Hebrews says, “Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb 12:2). Jesus was completely submissive to His Father’s will. “He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:8).

V 1b-2 The worst that could happen to us is that we should die for our faith. And if that happens it means the end of all sins. So certainly there is the aspect that when we die we will cease from sin. But the million dollar question is, what about while we’re still alive? Is it possible to cease from sin in this flesh on a daily basis?

Who here battles on a regular basis with any sort of sin in your life? To help define sin, 1 Jn 2:16 places all sins generally in one of 3 categories: the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and pride of life. If we are honest we will have to admit that these are areas we all battle with in one form or another. Our fleshly nature, our physical desires, our bent toward sin is strong, even as believers. When we die we WILL cease from sin, but what about the rest of the time we are still alive and living in this flesh? Back to the original question. Look at V 2 Peter’s admonition is to live the remaining days of our life on earth pursuing the holy will of God rather than the ungodly lusts of the flesh (“human passions”). Is that even possible? Peter seems to think so. The overriding desire of our heart should be, even above our own desires, to do God’s will – no matter what.

Why don’t I as a Christian act like my unbelieving friends?

READ 1 Peter 4:3-6

V 3 Unbelievers, those who are outside of Christ, the majority of the people in the world, live to fulfill their own passions and desires. V 3 describes what this kind of lifestyle looks like. And as believers, that is what we used to do, but no longer (hopefully). For unbelievers, having a good time, being happy, feeling good is what motivates them. V 4 says they don’t understand why we Christians won’t join in with them. As a result they malign us, they criticize us, they make fun of us. And why is it that we don’t in with them doing these sorts of things? We used to, before we were saved. But why not now? Because we know that what they are doing is sin and we understand what the Bible says about sin. Sin is rebellion, hostility toward God. So we want no part of that. V 5 reminds us that there will be a judgment someday, a day of reckoning. Here Peter is speaking of the Great White Throne judgment of Rev 20, the judgment reserved for unbelievers. The “Him” in verse 5 is Jesus. “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son (John 5:22). The final judgment of God is a scary thing. Have you ever read that famous sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” by Jonathan Edwards? It’s frightening to think about. But that’s why, Peter says, “the gospel message was preached” V 6 so that they, just like we did at one time, may hear the good news, believe it by faith and be saved. Those who believe will be able to live in the spirit the way God does. Despite being dirty rotten sinners, they, like us, can escape God’s wrath and receive eternal life instead.

When will Jesus return to the earth again?

READ 1 Peter 4:7a

“The end of all things is at hand.” This is a reference to the second coming of Christ. Peter and all Christians thru the centuries of church history have believed that Jesus is coming back to earth soon. That’s the way we need to live our lives. With hopeful and eager anticipation.

Practically speaking what can I do to help maintain my focus on pursuing God’s will rather than my own desires?

READ 1 Peter 4:7b-11 “Therefore…”

Remember back in V 2 Peter admonished us to no longer live for human passions but for the will of God. In these verses he gives us some practical ways that we can do that. So what’s the secret? Well he mentions several what I call “Basic Christian disciplines” in these verses, things that we do: V 7b Prayer, communication with God; V 8-9 Love which forgives and shows hospitality to others, putting others before ourselves. “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35); V 10-11 Serving through the exercise of our spiritual gifts. The best way to be “good stewards of God’s varied grace” is to use the gifts and talents God has given us. So, Peter’s emphasis is to have, first, a right relationship with God, then, second, a right relationship with others. Love is the glue that bonds Christians together. Finally, a life characterized by service, putting your feet and hands to your faith.

What are possible reasons for suffering, persecution in my life?

READ 1 Peter 4:12-15

Suffering is inevitable, so how do we deal with it? V 12 Don’t be surprised but it. He mentions several possible causes of our suffering. V 12 It could be God’s way of testing and purging us (1:7). V 13-14 It could be the negative reaction, hostility of the world against Christianity. They hated Jesus, so they’re going to hate us. Peter says, “Rejoice in it.” Evaluate it, take a look to see why you are suffering. V 15 Peter throws out the possibility that suffering could be a result of wrong attitudes or actions, sin, evil in our life. “Or as a meddler.” The Greek word translated “meddler” is only found in this one verse in the Bible. It basically means to mind your own business. Paul addressed this problem among some Christians in 1 Thess 4:11 “live quietly and mind your own affairs.” And again in 2 Thess 3:11 “we hear that some among you are busybodies.” So you need to take a good look at yourself and see why you may be suffering.

We know that God judges unbelievers, but what about believers?

READ 1 Peter 4:16-19

If you are indeed suffering for doing what is right, for being a Christian, V 14 you will be blessed by God for it, V 16 accept it, don’t be ashamed, but glorify God. It’s all part of God’s plan. But V 17 if you are suffering because of some wrongdoing in your life then you can expect God’s judgment on you. “For judgment…begins with us. Those unbelievers will get punished for their sin of unbelief at some point, but unfaithful believers will receive God’s discipline now. V 18 Peter quotes from Prov 11:31. Here’s the idea: Our salvation brings suffering, hardship, judgment, discipline, testing, all part of God’s plan. This will continue in the church until the Rapture, and even after that. Read Revelation. The redeemed there also suffer. And if it’s so difficult, and there’s so much suffering as a Christian, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? What kind of suffering will they endure if we have to endure all this? Peter implies that theirs will be a far greater suffering. V 19, so faithful Christian, “Therefore…” if you suffer for doing what is right, for doing God’s will, then trust God. He knows what is best for you. Examples of Job and Joseph.

Who are the elders that Peter addresses here?

READ 1 Peter 5:1-4

Times of persecution, difficulty in the church require good leadership. V 1 Peter exhorts, appeals to the elders (spiritual leaders – also called pastors, overseers, or bishops) to make sure they fulfill their responsibility to God’s people. Peter identifies himself “as a fellow elder” and as one with apostolic authority. “Elders” is always plural which implies that church leadership is to involve not one leader over the church but a plurality of leaders (more than one). They need to be faithful shepherds. V 2 To “shepherd the flock of God” means to feed, to teach. Yes, there is the aspect of protecting, guiding and oversight, but teaching is their primary duty. Shepherds are to bring their flock to the place where they receive divine truth. They are to protect them from invading danger, false doctrines, to warn them about the dangers. Notice that they are identified as “the flock of God” not the flock of a particular pastor. Each shepherd has a portion of God’s flock allotted to their charge. Theirs is not merely leadership by oversight, but it is a leadership by personal example. Anyone who has been around sheep knows that you lead them from the front and not from behind. Shepherds shepherd the flock, v 2, willingly, because you care, not for personal gain, money; v 3 not being oppressive, controlling, wanting power. Why? V 4 Because one day we will give an account of ourselves to Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, “The Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (2:25). Faithful service will result in an eternal reward, “the unfading crown of glory.”

What attitudes are required for me to grow spiritually?

READ 1 Peter 5:5-8

V 5 Peter turns from addressing the shepherds to addressing the sheep, the people in the church. Peter gets back to the basics. He lays out fundamentals of spiritual maturity for the sheep. When adversity comes our way (such as persecution), we better be good at the fundamentals. These are not so much actions as they are attitudes. These are the attitudes we must have to grow to maturity in Christ. Here they are: V 5 “Be subject to the elders,” submission to those leaders that God has placed over us – honor and respect them; V 5 “Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another,” be humble, put on the garment of a slave, to serve one another. “But in humility count others more significant than yourselves (Phil 2:3). Peter quotes Proverbs 3:34. In the KJV: “Surely He (the Lord) scorneth the scorners, but He giveth grace unto the lowly”; V 6 “Humble yourselves… under the mighty hand of God.” Humble yourself to God, under His power, deliverance, protection, testing, chastening, calling and perfect will for your life. Don't question God. Don't argue with God. Don’t debate with God. Humble yourself under His will, under His Word, under His power." The phrase, “at the proper time” means “in God’s perfect time;” V 7 “Casting all your anxieties [KJV care] on Him, because He cares for you.” Trust God who loves you. Whatever you are burdened with, give it to the Lord. Phil 4:19 says, “And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus;” V 8 “Be sober-minded.” Have self-control. (1:13 and 4:7). We need a well-disciplined thought life. Romans 12:2 “Be transformed by the renewal of your mind…” Adopt a divine perspective on your life; V 8 “Be watchful.” Why do we need to be watchful, alert? Because… “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.” We have an enemy and we need to watch out for. Satan and his demons are active and always looking for an opportunity to destroy us and defeat us. He is evil and malicious! He cannot take away our salvation but he can try to destroy our lives, our witness. So, Christian, be alert! We are in a spiritual battle.

Close by reading 1 Peter 5:9-11.