

14. “Show hospitality to one another”.

Particular instances I thought of were Zacchaeus (although Jesus did invite himself), the Jailer and Lydia in Philippi. In the latter case it wasn't just a meal but she put the disciples up in her house.

15. “serve one another”

The stress in these few verses is in doing good especially to the household of faith although our gifts should be used in order to do good to all.

16. “grace” makes the point that the gifts are from God, not our making. Verse 11 also makes this point when it talks about speaking the oracles of God and servicing by the strength God supplies - they are all grounded in God, not us.

“varied” makes the point that not everyone has the same gifts and indeed we know that in a church we need a rich variety of gifts.

Notice also that the gifts are to serve one another, they are not self-serving, nor are they to puff us up.

18. This is a bit of a weak question but it is the middle part of verse 11 that states this “in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ”. The following sentence seems to underline it.

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The First letter of Peter

LEADERS NOTES

Week 8 (1 Pt 4.1-11)

As pointed out in the notes there are a couple of difficult verses in this passage where there are a number of different views about what they might mean. In the first instance (second half of v1) I have mentioned a couple and then focussed on a third. In the second instance (v6) I have not included a question on the verse but in italics indicated one understanding and left the option of discussing it. In neither case the exact meaning seem to greatly affect the overall point of the passage as a whole.

1. The root word behind “arm yourselves” means armour and/or weapons and occurs several times in the NT including in Eph 6.13 “the whole armour of God” (where it includes armour and a weapon - the sword). The point here as in Philippians 2.5, and indeed Romans 12.1, is that it must begin with the mind, our way of thinking.

2. This question raises two possible meanings.

One is that verse 1b is a theological statement that if we suffer we cease from sin. Some indeed believe that we are without sin when we trust in Christ, but that seems to be contradicted by other verses in the Bible. However, this verse does not even say that - it simply says if we suffer in the flesh. Moreover, Jesus was without sin and that throughout his life not as a result of his suffering.

The second option is plausible and we can see it. When people are persecuted for Christ's sake, or even go through other suffering, worldly passions can recede into the background. But sometimes people find the opposite, that suffering seems to shake their faith and so on.

3 & 4. Chapter 2 verse 22-25 also deal with suffering and sin. This is a third, and in my view, a more satisfactory way of understanding chapter 4 verse 1. When we turn to Christ our sins are borne by Christ and although we do continue to stumble into sin, His death must be sufficient for all sin and therefore we are no longer slaves to sin, its power over us is broken. From our perspective we don't in fact cease to sin, but sin ceases to have power over us. We should therefore no longer live as slaves of sin but live by the will of God.

5. One of the tactics for resisting temptation is to reflect upon how much Christ gave; what our sin cost Him. That ought to help us to see the horror of sin, and want to turn from it and resist temptation.

8. The point made in 2.23 is that Jesus did not revile those who reviled Him but entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly.

In case it comes up - It might seem slightly confusing that Peter refers to the Father as "Him who judges justly" when it is the Son who will come again to judge the living and the dead. But remember that in John 5.27 Jesus says that the Father "has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man". Jesus will not usurp the role of the Father who is judge of all the earth (Gen 18.25) but is given authority to judge, a bit like delegated authority.

Note on verse 6:

As noted above and in the notes we have skipped over verse 6 unless your group particularly want to discuss it.

If this verse is covering the same matter as 1 Peter 3.19 then it could be argued that some who had already died when Christ came, had the gospel preached to them in order that by grace they might respond to it just as they have done since Christ's coming. The passages would say no more than that, certainly nothing about people dying now being given a second chance.

Another way of understanding it is see it as referring to people who are spiritually dead. We were in fact all spiritually dead before being

born again by the Spirit and in this case Peter is just talking about how people come to faith in general. However, it seems a peculiar way of putting it if that is the meaning.

Therefore in my opinion the suggestion that there was a common concern, clearly seen in 1 Thess 4.13-14, because Christ had not returned as soon as some expected. What did that mean for those who had died, including those who died under persecution as Stephen and James being examples in Acts. If this is the correct understanding it would be better if verse 6 read "those who are now dead", but that doesn't seem to be essential in Greek. The point is that those who died in faith, rather than being alive when Christ return, have been judged in the flesh, but have not lost out through this because to depart is to be with Christ as Paul said.

It may seem odd to us because there are so many Christians who have gone before us and have died before Christ's return. Those who first read this letter would not have known all that many people who had died in faith, an extraordinary thought. However, we should remember that when Christ returns there will be Christians, perhaps us, who will not have to endure death as the wages of sin - "Amen. Come. Lord Jesus!"

9. Self-control and sober-minded are both about the mind.

10. Sinful desires as much as sinful actions hinder our prayers. But those who are self-controlled and sober-minded are also going to be better able to converse freely with God in prayer. Otherwise we are going to be like a distracted or drunk person trying to pray.

12. "Keep loving one another".

The last part of the verse is not about a cover up in a negative sense. We could probably think of a building that is tatty and dirty (sin). Loving one another is like scraping off the dirt and covering it over with a bright coat of paint.