

Sermon by Bob Brown on Sunday AM 11/16/08
Hope In Abuse - 1 Peter 4: 1-11

The core of this passage is also the heart of the matter for each believer. Look at verse 4 again *"They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you."* This is speaking of those outside a personal relationship with our Savior, pagans who still live the way we used to before we were changed by the Spirit of God.

The Message Bible puts it this way: *"Of course, your old friends don't understand why you don't join in with the old gang anymore, but you don't have to give an account to them."*

The abuse that a believer comes under can be severe, soft or silly, but it will all center around our personal choices, and we are affected in different ways. Each time Jesus suffered abuse, whether it was spiritual, emotional or physical, he responded with the right attitude, knowing that they could cause him to suffer temporarily, but when the earthly life was over, the sufferings/abuses would be over, completely.

Think of it this way, we all endure a degree of pain so that we can ultimately feel better. We even allow others to do the unthinkable—we allow doctors and nurses to stick needles in us and crazier yet, we stick needles in our helpless children, hoping for a healthier life when it is over.

Now, on a larger, much more grand scale, Peter talks about our present suffering in this body that we are to endure with a Christ-like attitude, for the rest of our earthly lives. The hope that we have in suffering for Jesus is this: while our bodies are subject to this earth, our spirits are set free in the spiritual realm. Our greatest hope is that He is our life. We read in **Acts 17: 28**: *"For in him we live and move and have our being..."* This all sets up our heritage in Christ, in whom we put our faith.

The *"Therefore"* of verse 1 refers back to 3:18, look at it again with me *"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the spirit."*

When we think that the suffering Jesus went through in his body not only brought about his death, but also his resurrection, the logical thought

then is we should take on the same attitude that Jesus had on this earth. You may think that this is impossible but it isn't, the Bible says in **Philippians 2:5** *"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."*

You see, it is possible to be like Jesus, but Peter also has in mind here an earthly sanctification thought process for each one of us. Instead of thinking that I have to endure and suffer for Jesus all my life, then I will get my heavenly reward, think of it as the other disciples and the apostle Paul did.

In Romans 6 there is a thought that Peter probably has in mind here, alluding to what Paul said in **Romans 6:17-18**: *"But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness."* (MSG)

Each one of us, as followers of Jesus, by his absolute amazing grace, have been set free from the agonizing life of:

- Debauchery - outrages against all that is moral & decent
- lust - having to do with our human desires
- drunkenness - abuse of alcohol
- orgies - wild promiscuity- associated with paganism
- carousing - acting on lustful desires
- detestable idolatry - worshiping idols in place of God

All of these acts or ways of life are illegitimate substitutions, trying to fulfill the real life that God has intended that each one of us is to have—a life lived for our Creator, in Him and for Him.

You want to die early then live the pagan life. But if you want to live forever in the presence of God, live according to His laws, standards and life—in the Holy Spirit.

After telling us what to avoid, Peter now tells us why we need to avoid certain actions that used to be a part of our lives, before we met Jesus. Because The end is near. Believers know and believe that Jesus came to suffer and to save us, but we also know that He is returning soon. That in itself should make us want to give up the old life that was only concerned

with pleasing ourselves, so that we can be self-disciplined, pray and serve others.

How do we do that? How can we be clear minded and self controlled? When these two things are in place in our lives, then we can pray. When we are under the influence of this world, by lust, alcohol, drugs, or idolatry, we cannot put God first in our lives. If you are controlled by drugs or lust, you cannot think clearly and you certainly cannot pray for someone that you want to take advantage of.

Above anything else, *"love each other deeply"*. This is a love that is chosen to be lived and it is deeper than anything we used to live in the world. The reason that we as believers are to show this kind of love is really two-fold: it covers a multitude of sins, it doesn't ignore them but rather it forgives them. Secondly, it shows the world the grace of God in our lives to forgive those, including our old friends, the grace of God now living in us, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Hospitality is a tangible expression of love for one another, and this was very important in a culture where there were no motels in which your guests could stay. Imagine being hospitable, in a small house when your relatives or friends show up, sometimes unannounced, and being hospitable, without grumbling!

The way we have been created to serve others should also be our testimony of God's amazing grace in our lives. Don't hoard the gifts God has given you, use them to serve others, with all the strength God has given you. You and I have each been saved for a purpose—to become as Christ-like as possible and to take as many people to heaven with us in as Christ-like condition as possible.