

Lesson 7
1 Peter 4 : 1 – 19
Right Attitudes for A Right Life

Memory verse: “They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.” (John 17:16 NIV)

A pastor and his wife were in Nairobi where he would be ministering to several hundred national pastors at an Africa Inland Mission conference. He was very excited about the conference even though they were a bit weary from the long air journey. He could hardly wait to get started, and the leader of the conference detected his impatience. “You are in Africa now,” he said to the pastor in a fatherly fashion, “and the first thing you want to do is to put away your watch.”

In the days that followed, as he ministered in Kenya and Zaire, he learned the wisdom of his words. Unfortunately, when they returned to the States, they found themselves caught up again in the clockwork prison of deadlines and schedules.

Peter had a great deal to say about *time* (1 Peter 1:5, 11, 17, 20; 4:2–3, 17; 5:6). Certainly the awareness of his own impending martyrdom had something to do with this emphasis (John 21:15–19; 2 Peter 1:12ff.). If a person really believes in eternity, then he will make the best use of time. If we are convinced that Jesus is coming, then we will want to live prepared lives. Whether Jesus comes first or death comes first, we want to make “the rest of the time” count for eternity.

Further in this passage, Peter explained about a special kind of persecution—a “fiery ordeal”—that was about to overtake the entire church. It would not be occasional personal persecution from those around them, but official persecution from those above them. Thus far, Christianity had been tolerated by Rome because it was considered a “sect” of Judaism, and the Jews were permitted to worship freely. That attitude would change and the fires of persecution would be ignited, first by Nero, and then by the emperors that followed.

The commitment to God calls us to have is nothing greater than the commitment Jesus had in enduring suffering for our salvation. In the last days we need to have a commitment to God that will endure through great struggles. Jesus communicated the same idea when He told us that anyone who would come after Him must take up his cross and follow (Matthew 16:24). For Christians, taking up the cross meant that we are to be absolutely committed to Jesus and not be looking back.

Peter realized we have all spent enough time living like the world. Now we are called to live like Christians. It is a profound and foolish waste of time for Christians to live like the world, and we must simply stop being double-minded and start living as Christians. Sadly, many Christians (in their heart of hearts) think that they have not spent enough time doing the will of the ungodly. They want to experience more of the world before they make a full commitment to godliness.

Every Christian who lives a godly life experiences a certain amount of persecution. On the job, in school, in the neighbourhood, perhaps even in the family, there are people who resist the truth and oppose the gospel of Christ. No matter what a believer says or does, these people find fault and criticize. Peter dealt with this kind of “normal persecution” in the previous part of his letter. Peter in this passage deals with the attitudes that a Christian can cultivate in his lifetime (“the rest of his time”) if he desires to make his life all that God wants it to be.

Are we running out of time and can we still serve Him? Yes, we can for the rest of our time on this earth!

To learn in this lesson: 1) Assault On Sin. 2) God’s Expectation of Believers. 3) Handling Tough Situations.

Discussion Questions:

1) It is true that Christians can get accustomed to sin. What key elements did Peter present to oppose sin in a believer’s life in verse 1 to 3? (Discussion time: 10 mins)

2). Discuss the expectations from God as a believer serves Him for the remaining life on earth as described by Peter in verses 4 to 11. (Discussion time: 20 mins)

3). How are we to respond to challenges in “a fiery ordeal”? Here in verses 12 to 19, Peter gives instructions for believers to handle them. Discuss this in the light of those verses. (Discussion Time: 20 mins.)