

**Women's Bible Study – Fall 2017**  
**1 Peter and Job: #whenlifestinks**  
**Angie Pankratz ~ 1 Peter 3**  
**November 29, 2017**



If you ever meet Wilhem Belocian please offer him a hug. What happened to him 15 months ago certainly makes the category of #whenlifestinks. His name may not sound familiar to you but it wasn't that long ago when his name was all over national news. He was born June 25, 1995 and is known for being a French hurdler and sprinter from Guadeloupe.

Belocian trained exclusively for the 2016 Olympic 110 meter hurdles. He had already won medals at the World Youth and Junior Championships. Unfortunately his dream came to a crashing end when he mistakenly had a false start coming out of his block a millisecond too soon. Because of a new rule made in 2010 there's no second chances. He was eliminated from the race. In just a fleeting moment his life changed. Belocian's name was all over the news and unfortunately it was not for winning a medal or breaking a record. He was devastated because he was not able to even participate in the race he spent years training for. His grief on the track would make you want to cry out in extreme sympathy that this could ever happen.

You probably have not ever missed out on an Olympic Gold medal but I'm guessing that you too have had some loss of dreams. But here we are in chapter 4 of 1 Peter talking about suffering again. Today I broke up my lecture into four basic points that we can learn from this chapter. Some of these may seem redundant but I am confident there will be new applications we can draw from here. So...

**1. #whenlifestinks We are to exemplify Christ.**

Chapter 4 begins with the word therefore and as I learned long ago we must consider what the "therefore" is there for... This therefore refers back to 1 Peter 3:18 - what Svea highlighted two weeks ago. So since this verse is "there for" 4:1 let's read them right after each other

**"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 by the Spirit..."**

**Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin."**

So since Christ suffered by dying for our sins when we suffer we are told that we are to arm ourselves with his same attitude. But in order to exemplify Christ we must know what his attitude was like when he suffered.

Philippians 2:6-7 says,

**Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!**

So Christ's attitude was humble and obedient. He didn't grumble or complain. He didn't get mad at God for calling him to do this act to save his enemies. He trusted His Heavenly Father. He also didn't broadcast his suffering in order to elevate himself.

Christ came to this earth to be our example. We are told to be imitators of Him and to arm ourselves with his same attitude of obedience and humility. **But** let us not forget that Christ did not stuff his emotions either. He did not deny his feelings of grief or betrayal but instead addressed them directly to his Heavenly Father and to those around him.

When Lazarus died we are told that Jesus wept. When John the Baptist, his cousin, was beheaded Jesus withdrew by boat to a solitary place to spend time with his Father. At the last supper - the night before he was crucified - a argument broke out among the disciples about who would be the greatest and Jesus didn't ignore them - He directly addressed their (self-centered) thoughts on superiority telling them it is not about being served but to serve in order to be great. So although Jesus attitude was one of humble obedience without grumbling or complaining, it does not mean that he was a door mat so therefore, neither should we be.

Looking at the second part of this verse, we are told that when we have this attitude during suffering that we are done with sin. So let me first ask you to raise your hand if God has used a difficult circumstance in your life to draw you closer to Him? Raise your hand if you can say, "Yes, God has used a trial in my life to get me to where I am today..."

Now for those of you raising your hand - Who has never sinned since that trial in your life? Raise your hand if you are currently sinless?

Well, that doesn't really work then does it. IF we interrupt that verse to read that we are completely done with sin - never sinning again - then that would contradict Scriptures that show Abraham, Noah, Peter and many others who still sinned after a dramatic encounter with God. So this verse must not mean that....

I've read many commentaries and not one of them think that this verse is telling us that when we suffer we never ever sin again. But rather what it's saying is that when we suffer and take on Christ's attitude we separate ourselves from our sinful nature... When we have a godly attitude we separate ourselves from a worldly perspective and even from Satan whose motive (as we saw in Job) is that we will turn our back on God.

Unfortunately most faith stories are full of valleys rather than mountain tops. I think this is why many of us pray that God would "gently" take our unbelieving family and friends through a trial that might help them realize their need for a Savior. If you're like me, there are some unsaved people on your prayer list that you know need that. Because it seems that as long as life is good, they will never change course. Suffering creates a refining

process when we have the attitude of Christ.... That as Peter says in verse **three results in us leaving our evil human desires and choosing to live for the will of God.**

**2. #whenlifestinks We are to extend God's grace.** 1 Peter 4:7-11a says,

**"The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.**

**Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ."**

I find those words - the end is near- peculiar in the Bible. Because if the end was near 2000 years ago then how much nearer are we now!? So often times when this is said in the Bible it's not that they're saying it's going to happen in the next month but rather that all the major acts in the redemption history have occurred - creation, fall, the calling of Abraham, the exodus from Egypt, the kingdom of Israel, the exile in Babylon and the return, the birth of Christ, his life, death, resurrection, his ascension into heaven, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. (Grudem, 173)

Now you don't have to look hard and long to find an abundant number of well-known voices who declare today that the end is near - Many consider themselves Biblical numerologists and take into account all the details listed in prophetic passages in the Bible. Many of them occupy (what I think is) way too much of their time trying to predict the exact date when Jesus will return. I think this is so silly because we are told that even Jesus, who is seated on the right hand of the Father does not know the date so then how do these mere men or women think they might know? But just in case you are curious to know, these individuals are also willing to sell you survival kits for when that day occurs.

For instance, Jim and Lori Bakker would like you to prepare for end times by purchasing some products listed on their website...

- Fuel less generator for a \$4100 donation to their ministry
- Pizza bucket that's sealed for a long term shelf life and stores 96 servings of pizza for a \$250 donation
- 50 filtered water bottles for a \$1000 donation
- (1) 5 gal Bucket and Toilet Seat, six (6) bucket liners, six (6) rolls of toilet paper and one (1) Tri-Fold Shovel along with a BONUS Solar Flashlight for a \$100 donation.
- 7700 servings of lasagna with up to a 20+ year shelf life for a \$9700 donation to their ministry

I wish I was making this stuff up but you can check it out on the Jim Bakker show website to verify my information. It's clear that many dooms day preachers feel like you need to buy items to prepare for the end. But here God is calling us to not stockpile because the end is near but rather have an outward focus - We are called to extend God's grace.

Specifically God calls us to -

1. **Be clear-minded** - Christians are called to be characterized by reason - making wise and mature decisions.
2. **Be self-controlled** - This is a fruit of the Spirit. The more we abide in the vine of Christ the more we should be able to exhibit this fruit. There's one thing Paul tells Timothy to teach young men and it's self-control. I suspect it is something we are to teach all young people. I can assure you as a mom that babies are not naturally born with the trait of self-control.
3. **Pray** - God's Word tells us that as we commune with our Heavenly Father we know more of His leading in our lives, we become like him and we are less anxious.
4. **Love** - God is love. He died for us while we were his enemies. We are to show this selfless love to others as an example of Christ and what He has done for us. Love does cover a multitude of sins. Love spurs us on to tell others about the eternal hope of Jesus Christ.
5. **Offer hospitality** - (without grumbling) what a great reminder before the holidays. There is something powerful that happens when you invite others into your home (or should I say the mess of your lives). If you have an imperfect home, invite others into it. If you have a perfect home, please don't - It just makes others feel bad ;-)
6. **Use our spiritual gifts to serve others** - If you have never done a spiritual gift assessment then please do that. There are several online. When we become Christians we are given at least one spiritual gift - This is given to us not to hoard but rather to use for the benefit of others. Some examples of spiritual gifts are teaching, mercy, encouragement, healing, administration, helps, discernment, missions, hospitality, evangelism, etc.
7. **Be wise with our words** - Verse 11 says we should consider our words as one speaking the very words of God. One of my favorite Proverbs is 17:28 - *Even fools are considered wise when they keep their mouths shut.*
8. **If you serve, give God the glory.** Don't post it on Facebook or twitter when you serve. God's given you the strength to serve be sure you give him the credit and don't serve to make yourself look good. The end is near and we need to make it our mission to point others to God not to ourselves!

3. **#whenlifestinks We are to expect suffering.** In verse 12 Peter says,

**“Dear friends, don’t be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you.”**

In my Bible commentary it had this note on this verse -

"Apparently Peter's readers were astonished that they had to suffer as Christians, especially to the extent that they were suffering...." (Radmacher, 1687)

Now back to Wilhem Belocian, the 110 hurdler. Though it was always a possibility that he may get disqualified from his race, he had to be devastated by it. That shows in the agonizing seconds following the race when he was in such a state of despair and understandingly so - He prepared for years for this one chance in time and in a matter of milliseconds it was gone!

How strange it would have seemed for his coach to say to him that morning, "Wilhem, today you should expect to get DQ'd. I know you were hoping to succeed and maybe earn an Olympic medal but instead, you will endure great tragedy. Don't be surprised by it. It's all part of my plan. In fact you should rejoice when it happens. There's something greater in store for you."

So that would be completely absurd but that is how absurd it felt for these first century Christians to hear that they should expect suffering. They were still hoping for victory, stress-free living. These Christians were dealing with Nero and they were hoping still that their Savior might have a dramatic rescue plan for them - They were not wanting to expect suffering!

Unlike Job this suffering Peter's referring to was not based on infirmity and physical devastation but rather it seems that Peter is talking about suffering that comes from persecution. And so I can't help but think - If Peter told the first century church that they should expect suffering shouldn't we!?

You know I'll be honest, I understand suffering brought on by ill health. When my daughter, Lydia, was diagnosed with Leukemia in 2012, it devastated our family. She endured 2 1/2 years of treatment one of which was full of scary fevers, long hospitalizations, multiple kidney stones, and a severe case of pancreatitis. This eventually led to our doctor's taking Tom and I into a separate room telling us to gather our family and prepare for the worst. It seemed like this trial was just plopped in our laps hand-picked from God....Praise God Lydia eventually made a full physical recovery but that season of our lives was incredibly difficult.

But I don't feel like the suffering Peter is talking about here is related to one brought on by an illness... Sure suffering is suffering but suffering for your faith is so different than suffering for an illness! I tend to wrestle with the fact that yes, I have experienced suffering in this world but I can't deny that I rarely suffer for being a Christian which is what Peter is talking about in this passage. He says in verse 14, "If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you...."

Since we are told to not be surprised at the painful trial we are suffering for Christ's sake, I can't help but wonder should I be surprised if I'm not suffering for Christ's sake? If I am to expect suffering for my Christian witness and then if I am not suffering for it, does that mean I am not a good witness?

Let's first remember that Peter's setting was different than ours. As Jann mentioned Nero was emperor at the time and had great fury against Christians. He would wrap them up in the fur of wild beasts and allow his wild dogs to hunt them down and eat them alive. He burned their bodies on high stakes for all to see in order to light his gardens.

Also remember that Jesus often pulled Peter aside with two other disciples- James and John, the sons of Thunder - Those three witnessed amazing miracles, the transfiguration and were there when Jesus pleaded with his father at Garden of Gethsemane. We know from Acts 12:1-2 that King Herod Agrippa beheaded James - He must have been one Peter's dearest friends. So clearly the persecution that Peter already witnessed was beyond what any of us experience in modern day America.

So how should we respond to this dichotomy of emotion - agreeing that we should as Christians expect suffering but realizing our world here is very different than those of first century Christians?

1. Witness. Use our freedoms to proclaim truth. We don't need to be obnoxious or weird because that is not helpful and just gives Christians a bad name which I don't consider persecution. But we should realize we are blessed to be able to meet publicly in our houses of faith, to speak truth openly and honestly with the freedom of speech we've been given during this window of time. We must make the most of every opportunity to as Svea talked about last week in chapter 3 give an account for the hope that lies within us. Does your neighbor know that you are a Christ follower - If the answer is no then we should feel convicted that we are not using our freedoms in a way that pleases God. To whom much has been given, much is required. Here in America at this time we have so many resources at our finger tips.
2. Educate. Be aware that there are more persecuted Christians today than any other time in history. According to the Christian advocacy group, one in 12 Christians today experiences high, very high or extreme persecution for their faith. Ironically in many of the most persecuted areas of the world the Christian church is thriving. If you haven't yet please read or watch the *Insanity of God* and check out [persecution.com](http://persecution.com) to become more informed on our persecuted brothers and sisters. It will encourage you with the state of the world wide Church.
3. Act. How do we act - We must give, encourage and pray. 20 of ARC missionaries serve in "high security contexts." This means they could be kicked out of their homes and deported (losing all possessions) if their work becomes too well known. Six of our missionaries work in countries where they could be killed if they and we are not careful about the information we share. These missionaries could use our encouragement. There are these "On Mission" booklets on the tables in the foyer. In that booklet you will find the contact information for our missionaries. Please write them a word of encouragement but also be mindful it's important to be wise with your words to them. I've attached a list of directions from Woody on how to connect with these missionaries so that you do not endanger their lives any further.
4. Remember that suffering for the Lord will always be better than suffering without the Lord. Even though Peter experienced great suffering and would continue to suffer

greatly, he knew that it paled in comparison to that sinking feeling he had when he took his eyes off Jesus while walking on the water. The pain of persecution is nothing to that piercing conviction he felt when he rebuked, denied or abandoned Jesus. God set eternity in all of our hearts and we will not rest until we surrender to him. So one way or another humanity will suffer - it's just a matter if we want to suffer temporarily (on earth) or eternally (in the absence of God in Hell!

#### **4. #whenlifestinks We are to exalt the Lord.**

In verse 13 it says that we are to rejoice when we participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that we may be overjoyed when his glory is finally revealed. It goes on to say that if we are insulted because of Christ we are blessed. In verse 16 we are told that if we suffer as a Christian we are not to be ashamed but praise God that we bear his name.

If you feel like an outcast in your family because the rest of your family does not get it, praise God. You know you are experiencing exactly what we are told we would experience in this world. If you make certain decisions in your life because of your convictions, you may sense division or isolation- Exalt the Lord because he is giving you wisdom and strength to be his witness. We should feel like aliens here. We should so desire coming together because we build each other up after being in the harshness of the world. Do continue in love, hospitality and service - It is hard to argue with those virtues but do those things exalting the Lord. Our focus is not on the brevity but on eternity. **Psalm 34:3 says, Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt His name together.** I'd like to close with a song in which we can do that. Jamie will lead us and once he is done you will all be dismissed to your small groups.

Grudem, Wayne. *1 Peter*. William B Eerdmans, 1988. Print.

Radmacher, Earl D. *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*, T. Nelson Publishers, 1999.

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/history/foxs-book-of-martyrs/the-first-persecution-under-nero-a-d-67.html>

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