

If the righteous one is scarcely saved...

1 Peter 4

Introduction

1. **1 Peter 4:18** – does this mean if we're saved in the end, it will be by the skin of our teeth?
 - a. Bad translation – **"If the righteous are barely saved, what will happen to godless sinners?" (NLT)**
 - b. Contradictions – **1 Peter 1:5, 8-9, 13; 5:4, 10** – especially contradicts the whole context of **chapter 4**.
2. Quoting or adapting **Proverbs 11:31** (LXX) – Hebrew text gives us a better idea – negative, **"recompensed" (NKJV)** or **"rewarded" (NASB)** for their good with evil.
 - a. **"scarcely" (NKJV, KJV, ASV, ESV)** – *molis* – with difficulty (STRONG)
 - b. **"AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?" (NASB)**
3. The thrust of the verse, and its entire context is that those who commit their lives to Christ and are faithful will be saved, but through difficulty – **1 Peter 1:6-9** – this is the entire context of 1 Peter.
 - I. Provocation **(vv. 1-6)**
 - A. The Mind of Christ **(vv. 1-2) ("purpose," NASB)**
 - a. **3:17-18** – Christ suffered as a just man, but was made alive in spiritual form upon death.
 - i. **Luke 23:43, 46** – paradise, spirit committed to God's hands.
 - ii. **(v. 6)** – revisited here.
 - b. **(v. 2)** – the cause of this suffering is our decision to stop sinning, and live for God.
 - i. **2 Timothy 3:12** – it will lead to suffering.
 - ii. **Acts 14:22** – Paul, after being stoned and left for dead.
 - c. **Armed with the mind that is willing to suffer for doing good because of confidence in the reward.**
 - B. The Provocation of Righteous Living **(vv. 3-4)**
 - a. **(v. 3)** – once with them, but enough is enough.
 - i. **Lewdness** (greater) – licentiousness, unbridled lusts.
 1. **Lusts** (lesser) – longing for the forbidden.
 - ii. **Drunkenness** (greatest) – an overflow of wine.
 1. **Revelries** (lesser) – "half-drunken," concomitant and consequence of drunkenness.
 2. **Drinking parties** (least) – a drinking.
 - iii. **Abominable idolatries** – the umbrella under which all this falls – the idol of "self" today.
 - b. **(v. 4)** – when we break free from this life, it implicitly judges their deeds as wrong, and implies the danger of their own soul.
 - i. They then lash out – **2:12; 3:16** – THIS IS ABUNDANT IN OUR SOCIETY TODAY.

1. **They aren't content to just leave us alone because their conscience demands something be done to make it feel better.**
 2. It says something about them!
 - ii. **Dissipation** – literally, unsavedness.
- C. The Retribution God **(vv. 5-6)**
- a. **(v. 5)** – they will answer to God for this.
 - b. **(v. 6)** – **“those who are dead”** = those Christians who have died (context: for their faith)
 - i. **Revelation 6:9-11** – how long until you avenge or blood?
 - ii. God allowed them to be judged by men in the flesh – they judged them unworthy of life, so they took it!
 - iii. Gospel preached to them (while alive) so they could have hope and security – like Jesus **(cf. Hebrews 12:2)**.
 - c. **Cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8** – righteous for God to repay them, and reward you.
- II. Perseverance **(vv. 7-11)**
- A. The Wrong Response to Persecution – **Hebrews 10:35-39**
 - B. The Anticipation of Judgment Produces Perseverance in Good **(vv. 7-11)**
 - a. **(v. 7)** – looking back to **verse 5** – judgement of the living and the dead.
 - i. **At hand** – this is the only thing left to come eschatologically.
 - ii. It could be here at any moment, so don't draw back, don't let the persecution affect you negatively, but shore things up – **SERIOUS AND WATCHFUL PRAYER.**
 - b. **(v. 8)** – Love for each other – accountability, burden bearing, protection from sin **(cf. James 5:19-20)**.
 - c. **(v. 9)** – shown affection and servitude – provided comfort and strength in hard times. (Even of strangers) (requires sacrifice, but don't complain – **cf. James 5:9** – judge is at the door!)
 - d. **(vv. 10-11)** – use what God has given you for the sake of the body **(cf. Romans 12:3-8)**.
 - i. **Speak** – only speak what God supplies **(Cf. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4)**. (Not false comfort.)
 - ii. **Minster** (serve) – to the best of your ability, and in all ways God has supplied you with.
 - iii. **To His glory!** – **cf. Colossians 3:23-24**
- III. Positivity **(vv. 12-16)**
- A. The Positive Response **(vv. 12-13)**
 - a. **(v. 12)** – ill treatment by others as a direct response to our righteous living may be unjust, but it should not surprise us.
 - i. **Matthew 5:10-12** – the OT is filled with examples of this – so they treated the prophets before!
 - ii. **1:6-9** – the apostles and prophets have made sure to prepare Christians for this with knowledge of its inevitability.

- iii. **Romans 8:20** – God subjected us to this, and told us!
- b. **(v. 13)** – rejoice...that when – the response of joy is not only proper, but ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAINING AND STRENGTHENING HOPE!
 - i. **Opposite** – **Hebrews 12:15-17** – bitterness leading to forfeited birthright.
 - ii. Partake of Christ sufferings to partake in His glory – **Philippians 3:10-11** – Paul’s desire.
 - 1. **Partake** – i.e. fellowship – this not only includes the sufferings, but the QUALITY OF OUR CHARACTER DURING IT.
 - 2. **2:21-23** – Christ our example.
- B. The Positive Reason **(vv. 14-16)**
 - a. **Blessed (v. 14)** – if you are treated poorly because of your life lived in service of Christ.
 - i. **“the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you”**
 - ii. **The fact that the suffering is occurring because of our obedience to God’s will revealed by the Spirit is evidence of God’s approval of us, and brings glory through the evident fellowship we have with Him.**
 - iii. **Cf. Romans 8:16-17** – approval, assurance, anticipated glory.
 - b. **Unblessed (v. 15)** – this comes with no honor! – **2:20**
 - c. **Reciprocate (v. 16)** – God deserves praise that He has granted us with the privilege to suffer for His sake. (**cf. Acts 5:41-42**)
- IV. Perspective **(vv. 17-19)**
 - A. The Proper Perspective **(vv. 17-18)**
 - a. **(v. 17)** – what judgment?
 - i. **3:18 – Acts 13:27-28** – condemned Him to death – they judged Him.
 - ii. **(v. 6)** – we are judged by men in the flesh.
 - iii. DO WE JUDGE THEM? – in the sense of being the judge, jury, and executioner – NO – **cf. James 4:12**
 - 1. We do let the word judge them though.
 - iv. **(v. 17b)** – if we have it so bad right now, how bad will it be for them?
 - b. **(v. 18)** – **WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?” (NASB)**
 - i. **“How much more the ungodly and the sinner.” (Proverbs 11:31)**
 - ii. Parallel – **Luke 23:27-31** – contrast of Jesus’ suffering as a righteous man and the judgment on Jerusalem (AD 70).
 - B. The Proper Resolve **(v. 19)**
 - a. Commit to God! He is faithful, and will deliver us – **1:5 (cf. Gal. 6:7-9)**

Conclusion – We are to expect ill-treatment and persecution from the world when we live faithfully before God. We also are to expect a great reward in the end and realize what terrible things await those who refuse to commit to God.