

1 PET. 3:8 – 4:6

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C. This includes living with one another in love and harmony and not repaying mistreatment by the world (3:8-12) – ⁸Finally, all [of you be] like-minded, sympathetic, loving as brothers, compassionate, and humble, ⁹not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but on the contrary blessing, for to this you were called in order that you may inherit a blessing. ¹⁰For, "Whoever wants to love life and to see good days let him stop the tongue from evil, and [his] lips are not to speak deceit. ¹¹And let him turn from evil and let him do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. ¹²For [the] eyes of [the] Lord [are] on [the] righteous, and his ears [are open] to their prayer, but [the] face of [the] Lord [is] against those who do evil."

1. Living differently from, yet attractively to, the hostile world (2:11-12) involves not only submitting to proper authorities (2:13-3:7) but also living with one another in love and harmony and not repaying mistreatment by the world.

2. In their relationships with one another, they are to be like-minded in that, as disciples, they all are to share the perspective of Christ. They also are to be sympathetic toward one another, to love one another, to be compassionate toward one another, and to be humble toward one another.

3. In their relationships with the world (and with one another if need be), they are not to respond to mistreatment in kind. Instead of returning evil for evil or insult for insult, they are to respond by blessing the perpetrators, by asking God to show his favor and grace upon them.

a. It seems the focus shifts here to unbelievers, as similar teaching elsewhere refers to the relations of Christians to those who attack them (Marshall, 108). Moreover, how Christians respond to unbelievers who mistreat them is an important theme of 1 Peter (Schreiner, 164). As Peter noted in 2:23, when the Lord was insulted by opponents he did not return insults.

b. Paul commands the same thing in Rom. 12:17 ("Do not repay anyone evil for evil"), 1 Thess. 5:15 ("Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong"), and 1 Cor. 4:12 ("When we are cursed, we bless"). This teaching is, of course, rooted in Jesus' teaching. For example, Jesus says in Lk. 6:27-28: "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you." Jobes says (p. 217-218) regarding this command of the Lord:

It is imperative here to understand what "loving" one's enemies means in contrast to modern ideas of "love." Such modern ideas led one

student to ask in exasperation, "How can Jesus expect me to love my enemies when I don't even like them?" "Loving" in modern culture refers primarily to an emotional attachment of a greater intensity than merely "liking." But Peter clearly interprets Jesus' command to love to refer not to emotions but to acting rightly toward one's adversaries, regardless of whatever emotions may or may not be involved (cf. Jesus' teaching on loving one's neighbor as presented in the parable of the good Samaritan in Lk. 10:25-37). Acting rightly toward one's adversaries is defined in 1 Pet. 3:9 as not responding in kind to their insults, slander, and evil intents. It means having the inner fortitude to break the cycle of evil that spirals ever downward.

4. Peter says, in essence, in v. 9b that they were called by God to a faith that is inextricably tied to a way of life, a way of life that includes loving their enemies and not retaliating against them, and they were called to that faith/life in order that they may inherit the blessing of eschatological salvation. The verb "inherit" recalls the eternal "inheritance" in 1:4, which is the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, meaning the time of final judgment at Christ's return. Michaels rightly states (p. 179):

The context of 1:4 reinterpreted the "inheritance," understood in the OT as the promised land, to refer to an eternal and heavenly salvation to be revealed at the coming of Christ. The same reinterpretation is assumed both here and in v. 7. The "grace of life" is an eternal future life, and εὐλογία, or "blessing," is God's final pronouncement (i.e., bestowal) of eternal well-being on his people at the last day . . .

5. Peter supports his linking of their way of life to their salvation (note "For") by reference to Ps. 34:12-16 (LXX 33:13-17).

a. Schreiner remarks (p. 166):

In the historical context of the psalm, "life" (ζωή) and "good days" (ἡμέρας ἀγαθὰς) refer to life and blessing in this world. But for Peter this language almost certainly referred to the *eschaton*, to end-time salvation. We have already seen in 1:4 that the "inheritance" refers to eschatological salvation. The language of the psalm, therefore, is understood typologically in that the promise of life and good days in the land points toward and anticipates life in the world to come. Similarly, the language in 3:7 also demonstrates that Peter thought of the coming reward since "joint heirs of the grace of life" (RSV) signifies life in the future age.

b. The psalm indicates that the blessings of God are for those who live godly lives, the unstated reason being that genuine faith in God necessarily and inevitably expresses itself in godly living. As I have said *ad nauseam*, biblical faith is not mere intellectual assent to certain truths; it is the "yes" of the entire person. As Schreiner notes (p. 168), "Peter was hardly suggesting that believers will live perfectly and that

such perfection is necessary to obtain an inheritance. But he was insisting that a transformed life is necessary to obtain the inheritance."

D. Encouragement to righteous living in the face of opposition (3:13 – 4:6) –
¹³Now who [is] the one that will harm you if you are zealots of the good? ¹⁴Indeed, even if you should suffer because of righteousness, [you are] blessed. So do not fear the fear of them nor be troubled ¹⁵but in your hearts sanctify the Christ [as] Lord, [being] always ready to [give] a defense to anyone who demands an accounting for the hope in you, ¹⁶but [do so] with gentleness and fear, having a clear conscience, in order that when you are spoken against those reviling your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷For [it is] better to suffer [for] doing good, if the will of God wills, than [for] doing evil, ¹⁸because Christ also suffered once for sins, [the] righteous for [the] unrighteous, that he might bring you to God, having been put to death in [the] flesh but made alive by [the] Spirit, ¹⁹by whom also he went [and] preached to the spirits in prison, ²⁰when they formerly disobeyed, when the patience of God waited in [the] days of Noah while [the] ark was being built, in which a few (that is, eight souls) were saved through water. ²¹This [water] also, [as] an antitype, [that is] baptism, now saves you – not a removal of dirt from [the] flesh but a pledge of a good conscience toward God – through [the] resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who, having gone into heaven, is at [the] right [hand] of God, with angels and authorities and powers being subject to him.

4 Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, you also must arm yourselves with the same resolve – for he who suffered in the flesh has finished with sin – ²so as to live the remaining time in [the] flesh no longer for [the] lusts of men but for the will of God. ³For enough time has passed to have participated [in] the desire of the Gentiles, having traveled in licentiousness, lusts, instances of drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and detestable acts of idolatry, ⁴regarding which they are surprised by your not running with them into the same flood of debauchery, vilifying [you]. ⁵They will give an account to him who is ready to judge [the] living and [the] dead. ⁶For to this [end] the gospel also was preached to [the] dead, that they may be judged in [the] flesh according to men but live by [the] Spirit according to God.

1. Given the blessing in store for those who live faithfully, the blessing Peter spoke of in 3:8-12 (*kai* at the beginning of v. 13 translated "Now," being almost equivalent to "Therefore"), he asks rhetorically who will harm one who is devoted to God's will, devoted to doing what is good in God's eyes. The assumed answer is "No one."

a. By that Peter does not mean that faithful Christians will not suffer harm in persecution or that they will do so only rarely. He means that the eternal blessing in store for them from God makes any harm they suffer in persecution in this life so relatively insignificant as to not count as harm in any meaningful sense. In Schreiner's words (p. 170), "Peter assured believers that nothing can ultimately harm them if they continue to walk in God's paths, that the pain inflicted on them now is only temporary, and that they will be vindicated by God on the last day."

b. His thought is similar to that in Rom. 8:31, where Paul asks rhetorically (ESV), "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" The understood answer to that question is "No one," but it is "no one" in a qualified rather than an absolute sense. It means that, given God's determination that the faithful will be with him forever in glory, no one can be opposed to the faithful in any way that *ultimately* matters.

c. Achtemeier comments (p. 230), "The thrust of the verse is therefore not to deny the presence of social persecution in the lives of Christians, something the author knows as both possibility (e.g., 1:6; 3:14) and reality (4:12-19), but rather to point out that such persecution is not capable of removing them from the divine favor shown to them in Jesus Christ."

2. Peter in v. 14 reinforces his assurance that the faithful cannot be harmed by men in a truly meaningful sense by stating that even if they should suffer in persecution, suffer because of righteousness, what really matters is that they are blessed by God for the faithfulness that generates the persecution!¹ As Jesus said in Mat. 5:10 (ESV): "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

3. Given that men cannot really harm faithful Christians and given that suffering because of righteousness, being persecuted for their faith, is a sign of God's blessing, Peter commands them in v. 14b not to fear the fear their opponents bring, meaning not to fear their threats or intimidating behavior, and not to be troubled by them. This understanding of "do not fear their fear" is reflected in RSV ("Have no fear of them"), NAU ("Do not fear their intimidation"), NKJV ("Do not be afraid of their threats"), TNIV ("Do not fear their threats"), ESV ("Have no fear of them"), and NET ("do not be terrified of them").

4. Christians are not to be bullied from faithfulness to God. Rather, as he commands in v. 15, they are in their hearts to sanctify the Christ as Lord, meaning they are to reaffirm in their hearts their commitment to Jesus as Lord.

5. Related to that, he tells them they are always to be ready to [give] a defense to anyone who demands an accounting for the hope in (or among) them. We are to be ready to explain why we live as we do, explain what is motivating our conduct, when the larger society is getting "worked up" because we are out of step with the culture.

a. Note that this presumes we have solid intellectual grounds for believing the gospel is true, rational grounds that can be shared with others in the public arena (Schreiner, 174-175). We are not left saying simply that we know it is true because of some private, subjective experience in our hearts.

¹ Schreiner states (p. 170), "The conjunction 'but' (*alla*) introducing v. 14 does not provide a contrast but a clarification of v. 13. Hence, it could be translated as 'indeed.'" See also, Michaels (p. 185).

b. As Schreiner cautions (p. 175), "That does not mean, of course, that every Christian is to be a highly skilled apologist for the faith. It does mean that every believer should grasp the essentials of the faith and should have the ability to explain to others why they think the Christian faith is true."

6. Peter says in v. 16 that in making our defense of the faith we are to do so with gentleness and fear, having a clear conscience. We are to exercise gentleness toward our challengers and respond with fear of the God who commands that gentleness, keeping our consciences clear through our faithfulness to him in this and in all aspects of our lives. Hillyer remarks (p. 109), "Christian lips must be corroborated by Christian lives."

7. One purpose for our being ready to give a godly defense of why we live as we do is so that those who demand that defense through their attacking us for living as Christians may be put to shame by having their hostility exposed for the ignorance it is, perhaps turning others and maybe even them to the faith as a result.

8. In v. 17 Peter reinforces the call to keep their conduct good, to live with a clear conscience before God. They are to do so because ("For") it is better to suffer for doing good, to suffer persecution for behavior in accord with the Christian faith, which suffering God sometimes permits, than to suffer as punishment for wrongdoing. By living right they ensure that whatever suffering they receive from opponents is persecution, suffering for Christ, rather than justified punishment.

Note on difficulty of vv. 18-22 – Paul Achtemeier says (p. 240) of vv. 18-22, "There is little question that these verses constitute the most difficult passage in the entire letter." John Elliot says (p. 648) the passage "poses a staggering number of difficult questions." Karen Jobes states (p. 236), "This passage in 1 Peter is the one most debated and written about; from the earliest days of the church it has been understood in different ways." Indeed, Martin Luther wrote (quoted in Jobes, 236), "This is a strange text and certainly a more obscure passage than any other passage in the New Testament. I still do not know for sure what the apostle meant." The literature on the text is enormous, all of which is a clue that one must tread here with an extra dose of humility and circumspection.

9. As I understand v. 18a, Peter is saying that it is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil because in the former case one is following the path of Christ. Though being absolutely righteous, he also suffered, once for all time, in accordance with God's purpose that he atone for sins so as to bring the unrighteous (including them) to God. Davids remarks (p. 136), "Jesus died in order that, so to speak, he might reach across the gulf between God and humanity and, taking our hand, lead us across the territory of the enemy into the presence of the Father who called us."

10. The passive participles in v. 18b "having been put to death" and "made alive" seem clearly to refer to Jesus' death and resurrection, but that raises the question of how to understand (and thus how to translate) the dative nouns σαρκὶ (flesh) and πνεύματι (S/spirit) that modify those verbs.

a. Rather than discuss the various options, let me just say that I agree with Achtemeier (p. 250) that the most natural way to understand the dative noun "Spirit" following the participle "made alive" is in an instrumental sense, which yields "made alive *by* the Spirit." It is so translated in KJV, NKJV, and NIV. As Achtemeier notes, it is "a central affirmation of the NT" that Christ was raised by God (citing Acts 3:15, 4:10; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; Gal. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:10), and there are clues that the Holy Spirit is the means or agent by which God accomplished that great work. That is implied in Rom. 8:11, 1 Cor. 6:14, and 1 Tim. 3:16.²

b. The resistance to this understanding is "because the parallelism of the two phrases implies that both datives are to be construed in the same way" (Achtemeier, 250), and most find it unsatisfying to construe the first as "having been put to death *by* flesh" or "*by* [the] flesh."

(1) Though it would be unusual not to do so, the parallelism of the phrases does not absolutely require that they be construed in the same way (see KJV, NKJV, NIV, and Schreiner, 184). The parallel prepositional phrases in 1 Cor. 6:11 and 1 Tim. 3:16 commonly are translated differently. So Peter could be saying that Jesus was killed *in* the flesh, meaning either in his body (as NIV) or in his state of mortality and raised from the dead *by* the Spirit. This is even more likely if this section was part of a preexisting Christian hymn (see NET note), as poetry is replete with examples of grammatical and lexical license.

(2) The result can be similar if both datives are construed as datives of sphere. In that case, Peter would be saying that Jesus was killed *in* the realm of the flesh, in his state of mortality, and raised from the dead in the realm of Spirit-mediated blessings, referring to his being raised by the Spirit to resurrection life. Grudem states (p. 156), "But made alive in the spirit . . . must mean 'made alive in the spiritual realm, in the realm of the Spirit's activity'. Here it refers specifically to Christ's resurrection, because 'made alive' must be the opposite of 'put to death' in the previous phrase. 'In the spiritual realm, the realm of the Holy Spirit's activity, Christ was raised from the dead.'"

(3) It is also just possible that both datives could be construed as instrumentals, as Achtemeier argues. In that case, Peter says Jesus had been put to death "*by* flesh," meaning he was killed by unbelieving humanity but was raised to life by the Spirit of God. In 1:24 "flesh" refers to physical creatures in their mortality.

² See the discussion in Gerald F. Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1991), 184-198.

11. The Spirit by whom Jesus was raised Jesus to life is the same Spirit by whom Christ went and preached (or the realm of the Holy Spirit's activity is the same realm in which Christ went and preached) in the person of Noah (that being understood, see below) to the people who were disobedient in the days when Noah was building the ark, people who thereafter died in the flood and whose spirits have since been confined to the terrible portion of Hades, the realm of the dead, awaiting the final judgment.³

a. This understanding is at least as old as Augustine and was the dominant understanding for over a thousand years, but today it is held, with some variation, by only a minority of scholars (including Gordon Clark, Paige Patterson, John Feinberg, Wayne Grudem, Edmund Clowney, Millard Erickson, and John Skilton [see Jobes, 239; Schreiner, 184, n. 280; and Grudem, 204, n.1]; see also NET notes).

b. The notion of Christ preaching through Noah by means of the Spirit is not as strange as it may sound given Peter's statement in 1:10-11 that the Spirit of Christ spoke through the O.T. prophets and his statement in 2 Pet. 2:5 that Noah was a preacher of righteousness.

c. The word πνεῦμα ("spirit") can refer to an angel or demon, but it also is used in a number of places in reference to the human spirit (e.g., Num. 16:22; Eccles. 12:7; Mat. 27:50; Acts 7:59; 1 Cor. 5:5; Heb. 12:23).

d. When Peter says that Christ "preached to the spirits in prison," he need not mean that they were spirits in prison *when* Christ preached to them. He could mean that they *now* are spirits in prison, at the time of his letter, but that when Christ preached to them they were human beings, beings of both body and spirit, living on the earth. The NAU inserts "now" in its translation to reflect that understanding. This is similar to how most commentators understand 1 Pet. 4:6: the gospel was preached to those who are *now* dead, at the time of the letter, though they were alive on earth when the gospel was preached to them. NIV, TNIV, and NET insert "now" in 4:6 to reflect that understanding.

e. That the spirits in prison are the spirits of humans who were living on the earth in the days of Noah is indicated by the specification that the preaching took place at an earlier time, when they formerly disobeyed, that is, when the patience of God waited in [the] days of Noah while [the] ark was being built.

(1) Though most translations understand the aorist participle ἀπειθήσασίν as an adjectival participle modifying "spirits," yielding the translation "*who* formerly disobeyed," it is better to understand it adverbially, which when taken in a temporal sense yields "*when* they formerly disobeyed." See Grudem, 233-236 and ESV footnote; NET note states, "the grammatical construction strongly favors an adverbial interpretation describing the time of the preaching."

³ In the following comments I am heavily indebted to Grudem, 203-239.

(2) There were many texts in extra-biblical Jewish literature that interpreted "sons of God" in Gen. 6:2, 4 as referring to sinful angels who married human women, but there were only a few extra-biblical Jewish texts that put this assumed angelic sin at the time of the flood or described it as a cause of the flood. More often this angelic sin is placed two to four generations *before* the flood. And none of the texts that make a connection between angelic sin and the flood mention what Peter mentions: God patiently waiting and disobedience occurring during the building of the ark.

(3) On the other hand, the biblical evidence is clear that there were human beings who disobeyed God, when he waited patiently in the days of Noah during the building of the ark. Genesis 6:5-13 is all about human sin as the reason for the flood. 2 Peter 2:5 identifies Noah as a preacher of righteousness and then describes the world of his day as "a world of the ungodly." In 2 Pet. 3:6-7 the flood is analogized to the coming judgment of the ungodly, referring to humans (see 2 Pet. 3:11).

(4) Outside of Scripture, the *Sibylline Oracles*, dated to the late 1st century B.C. or early 1st century A.D., describes Noah as exhorting the people to repentance and their mocking of him. Some later rabbinic teaching, which may go back to the first century, describes Noah as warning the people while building the ark and being mocked and despised. Clement of Rome, a first-century Christian, wrote that Noah preached repentance. In addition, Jewish literature frequently mentions human sin as the reason for God bringing the flood.

(5) So even if Peter's readers believed Gen. 6:2, 4 referred to fallen angels who took human wives, which was a popular but not uniform understanding of that text in first-century Judaism, it still seems likely that Peter is here speaking of human beings who disobeyed during the building of the ark.

(6) This conclusion is further supported by the fact these spirits are said to have disobeyed "when the patience of God waited," which almost certainly refers to his waiting for their repentance, a possibility never mentioned with regard to fallen angels. Indeed, a number of extra-biblical Jewish writings, including Philo, specifically connect God's patience in the years leading up to the flood with his waiting for sinful humans to repent.

f. As for why Peter did not simply say that Christ "preached *through Noah* to the spirits in prison when they disobeyed," Grudem states (p. 238-239):

[T]he abundance of extra-biblical testimony to Noah's preaching to rebellious unbelievers during the building of the ark would have made the sense proposed here much more readily understood. In fact, if we could have asked any first-century Jew or Christian the question, 'Who preached to those who disobeyed in the days of Noah, while the patience of God was waiting during the building of the ark?', there would certainly be only one answer: it was Noah who did this preaching.

To a group of Christians who had such an understanding of the biblical narrative, Peter then wrote that Christ preached to the disobedient people in Noah's time. It might not have been asking too much of his readers to expect them to realize that he meant that it was through Noah that Christ did this preaching. In short, the sentence may not have been as obscure to the original readers as it has long seemed to subsequent interpreters.

12. I think these remarks serve to remind Peter's readers that Christ is through the Spirit (or in the realm of the Spirit's activity) working in them and with them toward the goal of appealing as a small minority to an ungodly and hostile world, the very thing he has been urging them to do. God is waiting patiently for repentance of the ungodly in their day, as he is in ours, but whenever he chooses to bring the flood of judgment, the faithful will pass safely through that frightening event.

13. In Noah's day, the eight faithful souls were saved from judgment "through water" in the sense that water, which served as the means of the world's judgment, also served as the means of their deliverance. It was water that lifted the ark and thus protected its occupants from the water's deadly effect. Michaels states (p. 213):

The likely meaning is that Noah and his family were brought safely through the flood by means of the flood waters themselves (cf. *διὰ πυρός*, "by fire," in 1:7). If it is objected that they escaped only because Noah built an ark that would float, the appropriate (and only possible) answer is that Peter is interested in "water" in the story, not "wood" (as in *Wisd Sol* 14:6, and Justin, *Dial.* 138.2), because there is something he wants to say about Christian baptism.

14. Peter says the saving water of the flood is a type, the antitype of which (the thing it symbolizes), Christian baptism, now saves them.

a. He adds that the saving effect of baptism is related not to some physical effect of the water, a removal of dirt from the flesh, but to the fact baptism, being immersed in penitent faith in Jesus' name, is either an *appeal* (RSV, NAU, NRSV, ESV) to God *for* a good conscience or a *pledge* (NIV, NJB, TNIV, NET) to God *to maintain* a good conscience.⁴ It is an expression of the human heart directed to God.

b. He then declares the objective basis on which Christian baptism saves – the resurrection of Jesus Christ! In other words, the expression of faith in baptism is related to salvation only because Christ's atoning work, represented by his resurrection (as in 1:3), has made salvation possible. Baptism merely is the God-ordained way in which faith is to express itself for one to appropriate personally Christ's saving work. It is the culminating expression of saving faith. Thus Paul speaks of it as baptism into Christ's death (Rom. 6:3).

⁴ Deciding between these two possible meanings of *ἐπερώτημα* is very difficult.

15. He reminds them in v. 22 of the supreme position and authority of the one to whom they are loyal, the one for whom they are suffering. Jesus Christ is in heaven at the right hand of God the Father, and all hostile spiritual powers are subject to him. The implication is that there is nothing ultimately to fear from the attacks of those powers, expressed through human persecutors, because these spiritual beings can do only what the Lord allows them to do. They are not comparable, rival powers; they are subjects.

16. Since Christ, their master, suffered for faithfulness to God they must arm themselves with the same resolve to suffer for faithfulness. That it requires resolve to endure such suffering is evident from the declaration that one who suffered [for faithfulness] has broken with sin. In other words, no one suffers for faithfulness who has not broken with sin, who has not *resolved* to endure suffering rather than disobey God to be free of it. The nature or consequence of this resolve (v. 2) is that one who has it lives one's remaining life no longer for the lusts of men but for the will of God.

17. They should arm themselves with this commitment to the will of God for the additional reason that before their conversion they had already spent enough time in the Gentile (unbelieving) wasteland of sinful living, which was replete with rampant sexual sin, intoxication, and detestable idolatry (to which some of the sexual sin and intoxication was no doubt related).

18. Regarding their repentance from this sinful lifestyle, their acquaintances are surprised that they no longer join them in their sinning and heap scorn on them as a result. But Peter reminds them that those heaping the scorn will face divine judgment, will account for their rebellion to the one who is ready to "judge the living and the dead," a "phrase that normally refers to Christ's judgment (Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1; cf. Acts 17:31; Rom. 14:9; and later references in 2 Clem. 1:1; Barn. 7:2; Polycarp, *Phil.* 2:1)" (Davids, 153). "[E]ven the dead cannot escape the final judgment (as also in 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Rev. 20:11-15)" (Davids, 153).

19. Verse 6 is another notoriously difficult verse. Given that the final judgment encompasses the dead (v. 5), I think Peter reminds them of why the gospel had been preached to those of their number who were *now* dead, those who had believed in Christ and already passed on. It had *also* been preached to them, preached to them as well as to those still living, because it protects against God's judgment even beyond the grave, his judgment of the dead. It was preached to these now deceased saints so that, though they were judged negatively, persecuted for the faith, during their earthly lives (in the flesh) in accordance with the will or standards of men, death did not mean they were fools for having endured that suffering. It was not the final word. The gospel was preached to them so that however they suffered at the hands of men they will, despite having died, be given life by the Spirit according to the will or standards of God.

a. Achtemeier summarizes the meaning of the verse this way (p. 291):

The point of v. 6 is thus not to provide justification for God's right to judge both living and dead, nor is it to give further light on the obscure event described in 3:19. The point rather is the encouragement of embattled Christians, to assure them that their faith, despite their rejection by human beings and the death that has overtaken some of their fellow believers, has not been in vain. Rather, the same judgment that will require an account from those who have blasphemously opposed the Christians (v. 5a) will also see the vindication of those Christians who had undergone what appeared to their nonbelieving contemporaries to be the judgment of death, and hence the demise of all their hopes.

b. Schreiner comments on the verse (p. 208-209):

Peter considered the case of believers who had died physically. These people heard and believed the gospel when they were alive but had subsequently died. Unbelievers viewed the death of believers as proof that there is no advantage in becoming a believer, for all without exception die. Peter indicated, however, the unbelievers do not understand the whole picture. Even though from a human perspective believers seem to gain no benefit from their faith since they die, from God's perspective (which is normative), they live according to the Spirit. . . . [D]eath is not the last word for believers. They will be raised from the dead. The contrast between "flesh" and "spirit" here is parallel to 1 Pet. 3:18, for Christ died in terms of his flesh, but he was raised to life by the Holy Spirit. A similar destiny awaits believers. They die physically but will be raised to life by the Holy Spirit. I am suggesting, therefore, that Peter did not consider the intermediate state here but the resurrection of the dead. He used the present tense because the future will certainly come to pass. This interpretation makes the best sense contextually, for it gives the readers encouragement to continue to endure the social ostracism they are facing from their contemporaries. Peter reminded his readers that even if they die physically, death is not the last word. The resurrection awaits them.

c. Most modern commentators understand 4:6 to mean the gospel was preached to those who are *now* dead, dead at the time of the letter, though they were alive on earth when the gospel was preached to them. This includes Kelly, Davids, Grudem, Michaels (with a twist), Marshall, Hillyer, Achtemeier, Elliott, Schreiner, and Jobes. The NIV, TNIV, and NET go so far as to insert "now" in the translation to reflect that understanding.

d. Regarding the dative nouns *σαρκὶ* (flesh) and *πνεύματι* (S/spirit) that modify the verbs "may be judged" and "live," I again, as in 3:18, follow Schreiner in construing the datives differently despite the parallelism of the two phrases. As I said there, the parallelism of the phrases does not absolutely require that they be construed in the same way, and they are not so construed in 3:18 in the KJV, NKJV, and NIV. The

parallel prepositional phrases in 1 Cor. 6:11 and 1 Tim. 3:16 commonly are translated differently, and in 3:18 the possibility one is dealing with a fragment of a preexisting Christian hymn (see NET note) increases the plausibility of doing so. If that is the correct way to construe the datives in 3:18, then that verse supports construing them similarly here.

e. The result can be similar if both datives are construed as datives of sphere. In that case, they would be judged in the realm of the flesh, meaning in their earthly lives, and would live in the realm of the Spirit, meaning in the realm of Spirit-mediated blessings, the focus being on the blessing of eternal resurrection life at the final judgment.