

1 Kefa 4:1-11

Being Stewards of God's Grace

In my last post, we concluded the topic of **Undeserved Suffering ~ Part 2** in **1 Kefa 3:17-22**. In this post, we explore **Being Stewards of God's Grace** in **1 Kefa 4:1-11**.

¹ Therefore, since the Messiah suffered physically, you too are to arm yourselves with the same attitude. For whoever has suffered physically is finished with sin, ² with the result that he lives the rest of his earthly life no longer controlled by human desires, but by God's will.

Arm yourselves borrows soldiers' imagery arming, training, or otherwise preparing themselves for battle and possible death. Those who died with **Yeshua** through faith (cf. 2:24) are genuinely prepared to suffer with Him in any other way, including martyrdom.

³ For you have spent enough time already living the way the pagans want you to live - in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, wild parties, and forbidden idol-worship. ⁴ They think it strange that you don't plunge with them into the same flood of dissoluteness, and so they heap insults on you.

Recall that the letter as a whole is meant for **Messianic Jews** and **Messianic Gentiles** who identify with them. But just as earlier, **Kefa** addresses the **Jewish Believers** specifically (1:18), so here he speaks to the **Gentile Believers**. Today's world is not so different from **Kefa's**. Many **Believers** face the same kinds of temptation, ridicule, and rejection by their friends and family, who **think it strange that you** try to follow **God's** priorities instead of theirs.

⁵ But they will have to give an account to Him who stands ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶ This is why He was proclaimed to those who have died; it was so that, although physically they would receive the judgment common to all humanity, they might live by the Spirit in the way that God has provided.

According to **John 5:21** and **Romans 2:16**, **Yeshua HaMashiach** is the one **who stands ready to judge the living and the dead**. As a result of trusting in **Yeshua**, we might, by the **Ruach HaKodesh's** power, live holy lives of joy before death, and, after death, we have the joy of eternal life with **God**. This passage, like **1 Thess. 4:13-18** provides **Believers** with comfort over friends who have died, as well as an answer to pagans mocking them for exchanging worldly enjoyment merely for the grave (vv. 3-4).

Some have interpreted v. 6 to mean that **Yeshua** proclaimed the **Gospel** to persons who had already died (or to their spirits, 3:19) so that they had an opportunity to be saved. To those who prefer to lead selfish and sinful lives, ignoring **God**, this "second chance theory" appeals. However, the only support in the **Brit Hadashah** for such an understanding comes from verses at least equally problematic. On the contrary, **Hebrews 9:27**, agreeing with v. 5, says that **human beings have to die once, but after this comes judgment**, not another opportunity to accept the **Gospel**. Persons who believed as much of **God's** truth as had been revealed and then died before **Yeshua** came joined those who would be saved through **Yeshua's** atoning death later on; this is clear from **Hebrews 11**, especially **Hebrews 11:39-40**.

There is a marked contrast between suffering in the flesh and indulging in the flesh. **Yeshua's** example should lead to the former's ready acceptance when **God** wills it and the latter's firm rejection. Those who indulge in human passions must be prepared to render an account to the divine **Judge**.

Believers are to have the same attitude toward suffering that **Yeshua** had. We are to live our remaining days for **God's** will and no longer for human desires (4:1-2). **Kefa** lists the kinds of ungodly behavior that unrestrained humanity desires (4:3). Not only do **non-Believers** do these things, but they also slander **Believers** because they don't engage in such wild living with them (4:4). But they don't realize they will give an account one day to the one who will judge the living and the dead (4:5). Which is worse, being slandered by the ungodly or by being judged by God?

Between **Yeshua's** crucifixion and resurrection, He preached to people who had died, proclaiming His salvation to **Tanakh Believers** in preparation for His leading them to paradise (see Eph 4:8-10). It was also the victorious proclamation of the victory of the cross over sin and **HaSatan's** authority (see Col 2:14-15). ¹

⁷ The accomplishing of the goal of all things is close at hand. Therefore, keep alert and self-controlled so that you can pray. ⁸ More than anything, keep loving each other actively; because love covers many sins.

Time is short; the end of all things is near. You and I are on death row; our fuses are burning out. So, how should we live? From **God's** viewpoint, time is the boundary of opportunity. **Kefa** explains how to make the most of the opportunity you've been given. At the top of the list is prayer. It replaces self-focus with a **God-focus**. It reminds us who we are and - more importantly - who we are not.

Love covers many sins. There are two alternative interpretations: (1) Love makes you willing to forgive others' sins and overlook their faults. (2) At the final judgment, God will forgive many of your sins if you keep loving (compare **Luke 7:47, Matt. 25:31-46**).

⁹ Welcome one another into your homes without grumbling.

Hospitality was receiving others, especially taking in travelers of the same faith who needed a place to stay. As generally in antiquity's ethical ideals, lodging and provisions were to be provided generously, not grudgingly.

¹⁰ As each one has received some spiritual gift, he should use it to serve others, like good managers of God's many-sided grace - ¹¹ if someone speaks, let him speak God's words; if someone serves, let him do so out of strength that God supplies; so that in everything God may be glorified through Yeshua the Messiah—to him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen. ~ 1 Kefa 4:1-11 (CJB)

We are to serve others based on the spiritual gift(s) we have received. Full-service gas stations are hard to find today. Most are self-service. Unfortunately, many attend a church like a self-service station. They fill up on preaching and go home until they need more fuel. But **God** intends His church to be full service with each member providing for the well-being of others. We are stewards of **God's grace**. We manage something precious that we received but do not own. And since you are a receptor of grace, you ought to be a conduit for grace. So whatever your spiritual gift, it's all about **God** - not you. Whether you speak or serve, it should be done with **God's Words** and the strength **God** provides so that **God** may be glorified through **Yeshua** in everything. Do you serve your boss with more excellence than you serve **God**? Eternal glory and power belong to just one of them (4:11). ²

In my next post, we will learn about **Suffering As a Believer** in **1 Kefa 4:12-19**.

¹ The Tony Evans Bible Commentary.

² Ibid.