

4:6 Why the Gospel Was Preached Even to the Dead

That They Might Live in the Spirit.

Clement of Alexandria: Those who abandon their faith in this life are judged according to the above judgments, so that they might repent. This is why Peter adds “so that in the spirit they might live as God lives.” Adumbrations.²⁰

Even to the Dead.

Hilary of Arles: The gospel is preached to the Gentiles who are dead in sin, but this may also refer to the fact that when the Lord was buried in the tomb he went to preach to those who live in hell. Introductory Commentary on 1 Peter.²¹

The Gentiles.

Andreas: Here Peter uses “dead” to refer to the Gentiles, who are dead because of their insurmountable sins and whom he wants to see turn to Christ. Such sinners, after they accept his commandments, judge themselves in the flesh according to their human understanding, by mortifying it in fasting, prostrations, tears and other forms of suffering. They do this in order that they may live in the spirit as God wants them to, being inspired by the word of the apostle Paul, who said: “If our outer man is being destroyed, our inner man is being renewed day by day.”²² Catena.²³

Preaching in Hell.

Oecumenius: This means that those who are now attacking believers will have to give account of themselves to him who judges everyone, both living and dead, for the dead are also judged, as is clear from Christ’s descent into hell. For when he went there after his death on the cross he preached in the same way as he had preached to those who were alive on earth. Moreover, he did this not in word but in deed. And just as when he came into the world in order to justify those who were ready to acknowledge him and to condemn those who refused to do so, so he did exactly the same in hell. For he went to judge those who had lived according to the flesh, but those who had lived according to the Spirit, that is, who had lived an honest and spiritual life, he raised to glory and salvation. Commentary on 1 Peter.²⁵

Christ Preached After His Death.

Theophylact: It was the habit of the Fathers to take this verse completely out of context. They therefore said that the word dead has two different meanings in Scripture, referring either to those who are dead

in their sins and who never lived at all or to those who have been made conformable to the death of Christ, as Paul said: "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God." ²⁶ But if they had paid the slightest attention to the context, they would have seen that here the "dead" are those who have been shut up in hell, to whom Christ went to preach after his death on the cross. Commentary on 1 Peter.²⁷

4:7 The End of All Things Is at Hand

After the Gospel Preached to the Gentiles.

Hilary of Arles: Peter is saying that once the gospel has been preached to the Gentiles the end will have come. Introductory Commentary on 1 Peter.¹

The End of All Prophecies Is Near.

Oecumenius: The end of all things means their completion and consummation. Perhaps this means that the end of all the prophecies is near, for that refers to Christ who is in himself the consummation of all things. This is very different from Epicurus, who said that pleasure is the end of all things, or other Greeks, who said that the end is wisdom or contemplation or virtue. Commentary on 1 Peter.³

4:8 Love Covers a Multitude of Sins

Love Unites Us to God.

Clement of Rome: Love unites us to God. Love hides a multitude of sins. Love puts up with everything and is always patient. There is nothing vulgar about love, nothing arrogant.... Without love, nothing can please God. Letter to the Corinthians 49.⁴

Love Casts Out Fear.

Ambrose of Milan: The one who sins does not love, for love covers a multitude of sins. Love cuts out the desire to sin, and since it also casts out fear, it is obviously full of perfect faith. Letters to Priests 48.⁵

4:9 Practice Hospitality Ungrudgingly

Receive Your Neighbor as If Christ.

Chrysostom: If you receive your neighbor as though he were Christ, you will not complain or feel embarrassed but rather rejoice in your service. But if you do not receive him as if he were Christ, you will not receive Christ either, because he said: "Whoever receives you, receives me." ⁸ If you do not show hospitality in this way, you will have no reward. Abraham received passers-by and travelers just as they were. He did not leave them to his servants. On the contrary, he ordered his wife to bring flour, even though he had domestic help. But he and his wife wanted to earn the blessing, not only of hospitality but of service also. This is how we ought to show hospitality, by doing all the work ourselves, so that we may be sanctified. Catena.⁹

Without Grumbling.

Theophylact: Note that when Peter mentions love he immediately goes on to talk about offering hospitality without grumbling. That is a sure sign of what love is. Commentary on 1 Peter.¹⁰

4:10 Employ Gifts for Another

As Each Has Received a Gift.

Augustine: God has granted to each of us the special graces needed for the upbuilding of his church, so that we will do what he has indicated should be done, not only without complaint but with joy. On Christian Doctrine 1.15.¹¹

As Good Stewards of God's Varied Grace.

Andreas: It is not merely that the rich man is obliged to meet the needs of those who are less well off than he is but also that each one of us must use the gifts which we have received either by nature or by the Holy Spirit, so that no one may say that we are keeping these things to ourselves and refusing to share them with our neighbors. Catena.¹³

4:11 *Whoever Renders Service*

By the Strength That God Supplies.

Cyril of Alexandria: Those who offer hospitality to others make themselves happy and content, not so much because they are giving of their own as because they are being helped by others. And this in two ways; first, because they enjoy the company of their guests, and second, because they earn a reward for their hospitality. But if you receive a brother, do not be distracted by too much serving, and do not attempt what is beyond your strength. Unnecessary effort is always tedious, and such exertions will only embarrass your guests. Do not let your guest become a cause for impoverishing yourself, but even in hard times be as generous as you can. *Catena*.¹⁴

4:12 *Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal*

Trials Nothing New.

Hilary of Arles: The trials and temptations which come to Christians are nothing new. The prophets of the Old Testament suffered exactly the same things. All such trials find their meaning and culmination in the cross of Christ. The servant is not greater than his master. If Christ suffered, how can we expect to get off any more lightly? *Introductory Commentary on 1 Peter*.¹⁶

Do Not Be Surprised.

Theophylact: Many Christians found afflictions hard to bear because they had read in the law that a prosperous and secure life was promised to those who serve God. Peter therefore approaches the subject by telling them that they are greatly beloved. He then goes on to warn them not to be surprised at their sufferings, which come to them as tests from God. *Commentary on 1 Peter*.¹⁸

4:13 *Be Glad When His Glory Is Revealed*

Sharing in Christ's Suffering.

Clement of Alexandria: This means that if you are righteous you are suffering for righteousness's sake, just as Christ did. *Adumbrations*.¹⁹

4:14 *Reproach for the Name of Christ*

The Spirit of God Rests upon You.

Oecumenius: How can it be that when the Spirit of God appears to be blasphemed among the ungodly he is glorified in you? This happens because when people accuse you falsely the shame of it rests on them, but you receive glory thereby. Commentary on 1 Peter.²⁰