

Exegetical Paper on 1 Peter 4:14-16

NT6102 – Studying the Greek NT

Dr. Ed Neufeld

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Rick Wadholm

Box 1182

¹⁴ εἰ ὀνειδίζεσθε ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ, μακάριοι, ὅτι τὸ τῆς δόξης καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς ἀναπαύεται. ¹⁵ μὴ γάρ τις ὑμῶν πασχέτω ὡς φονεὺς ἢ κλέπτῃς ἢ κακοποιὸς ἢ ὡς ἀλλοτρίεπίσκοπος· ¹⁶ εἰ δὲ ὡς Χριστιανός, μὴ αἰσχυνέσθω, δοξαζέτω δὲ τὸν θεὸν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τούτῳ. (1 Pet.4:14-16 – NA²⁷)

“If you are insulted in the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory (and of power)¹ and of God rests on you. None of you should suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evildoer, or (even) as a meddler; but if (anyone of you should suffer) as a Christian, he should not be ashamed, but he should glorify God in that name.” (Personal Translation)

Main Exegetical Idea

The primary exegetical idea in this particular passage seems to be that suffering, when it comes for unjust purposes, must not be simply endured nor must the suffering believers recapitulate their confession of Christ. The believers who suffer must do so to the glory of God recognizing that the glory of the Spirit of Christ is even now upon them as they suffer in the bearing of his name. Peter wishes to once again identify the suffering of these saints with the suffering of their Lord, and thereby to affirm them in the glory that is theirs, because their Lord Jesus Christ is Himself already glorified, being glorified and will be glorified. Peter is not therefore giving them some form of moral principles to live by, but a personal encounter with God, whereby they recognize their chief aim is not to simply “be good,” but to glorify God and this through suffering in righteousness for His Name’s sake.

Grammatical and Syntactical Development of the Main Exegetical Idea

If you are insulted in the name of Christ, you are blessed. The verb (ὀνειδίζεσθε “you are insulted”) referring to “verbal abuse and public shaming”² in this clause is a present passive indicative that, when combined with the conditional particle (εἰ) suggests a “condition

¹ See Appendix for this variant reading.

² John H. Elliott, *1 Peter*. Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 778.

presuming reality rather than a remote contingency.”³ This construction is repeated in verse 16 as well. What might Peter mean by this construction? Peter is saying that it is assumed as a normal anticipated reality that anyone bearing the name of Christ will be suffering insults and ridicule because of Christ. Elliot believes this functionally makes “clear at this point the actuality of suffering and reproach is foremost in view.”⁴ Whether Peter is referring to formal legal accusations as Beare thinks, or is only referring to “name-calling” and “verbal abuse” as both Elliot and Michaels suggest, cannot be definitively determined apart from the specific date of authorship which one holds.⁵

Further this whole passage directly echoes the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 5:11 where he tells his disciples that they are blessed for being ridiculed and insulted for his. This is a blessed state of affairs because the reward that is theirs still awaits them and also because they suffer alongside all who have suffered for the Lord’s sake. Being the suffering “blessed ones” is something that Peter has already written earlier in this letter. The nominative adjective μακάριοι (1 Pet.4:14) also occurs in 1 Peter 3:14 where it is the anticipated response to suffering for righteousness; whereas here it refers specifically to suffering “in the name of Christ”.

The phrase ἐν ὀνόματι (1 Pet. 4:14) is unique in that it occurs only twelve times in the NT. Nine times with the object κυρίου with or without the article. This form occurs only once with the object Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Acts 16:18) and once with ὅτι Χριστοῦ ἐστε (Mark 9:41) as explanatory. The phrase ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι in 4:16 is similar to this phrase but is articulate

³ J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*. Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX Word Books, 1988), 263; also see F. W. Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958; 3rd ed.: 1970), 191.

⁴ Elliot 782.

⁵ Beare 191; Elliot 795; Michaels 264.

there and includes simply the demonstrative pronoun **τούτῳ** (1 Pet.4:16) as the object instead of the specific appellative of either “Christ” or “Christian”. The terminology used here has been suggested to be “an idiom” with the idea “because of” association with Christ.⁶ Also, the use of **ἐν** with Christ is anomalous here because it is the only occasion in the NT where it refers to a name-calling by those who are not disciples of Christ but persecutors.⁷

Because the Spirit of glory (and power) and of God rests on you. The subject (“the Spirit”) is identified with “glory” (and “power”) and “God” by the repeated use of the article **τὸ** and thus *the* Spirit of glory (and power) and God is “determinate and familiar” in Peter’s mind as he speaks of the Spirit resting on them.⁸ Also, *the* glory (and *the* power) and *the* God adds extra particularization to glory (and power) and God in order to emphasize the specific characteristics of the Spirit that is resting on them.⁹

“Glory” (**δόξης**) seems never in Peter’s mind to stray far from suffering. Here it is in connection with the insults one suffers in the name of Christ. In 4:13, the “glory” is specifically stated as the future correlative to be received at Christ’s appearing by presently sharing in Christ’s sufferings. Here the explanation is that the **δόξης** refers in some way to the Spirit of God as belonging particularly to the Spirit. The expansion “of power” suggests that the Spirit in His glorifying nature will provide whatever strength is necessary to bear the suffering being imposed.

⁶ Elliot 779-81.

⁷ Beare 191.

⁸ Maximillian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek: Illustrated by Examples*. Trans. Joseph Smith (Rome: Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963), 53.

⁹ J. H. Moulton and N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek: Vols. I-IV* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906 – 1976), 82; Zerwick 59.

This “glory” of the Spirit (or with Elliot – “the divine Spirit of glory”)¹⁰ rests (ἀναπαύεται only occurs as a present middle indicative in this passage) on the persons and community that suffer revilement for Christ’s name. This language is borrowed from the LXX of Isaiah 11:2, but in contrast to the Isaiah passage the Spirit does not rest only on the Christ, but on all who are called by His Name. The Spirit of glory (and power) that rests on them is identified therefore as Christ’s Spirit of glory (4:13). Also, this is not a future possibility (as in the Isaiah passage), but a present reality for the suffering Church. Thus, Peter is saying that the glory which is eschatological is also already present and is not simply glory as an abstraction, but glory as the personal presence of God Himself.

None of you should suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evildoer, or (even) as a meddler. The γάρ may function as a “connective” meaning “to be sure,”¹¹ but may also have little translational value in this immediate context. The negating particle μὴ is in the emphatic position to definitively announce that not one single individual among the churches should suffer (πασχέτω – present active imperative) for doing what is wrong.

ὥς (1 Pet.4:15, 16) is repeated in this verse and the next to give emphasis but also to correlate the two other names under which they might suffer. It both “links” and “distinguishes” the two terms from the other three.¹² The first “as meddlers” they should not be, but the second “as Christians” they should “not be ashamed” to be. The three anarthrous ignominious appellatives are straightforward enough. They must not suffer as a “murder,” “thief,” or “evildoer.”¹³

¹⁰ Elliot 782.

¹¹ Ibid., 783.

¹² Ibid., 785.

¹³ Ibid., (784) proposes the term “thug” or “rogue” following the suggestion of several others.

The term ἄλλοτριεπίσκοπος is less clear and has had several textual variants as attempts to clarify what Peter was trying to say. This term seems to refer to some function of meddling in affairs that do not rightfully fall within the domain of responsibility of the one “meddling,” which is preferable to Beare’s suggestion that it refers to some form of revolutionary activity.¹⁴ Bigg’s suggestion may be a stretch, but may not be far from the mark.

Peter is not adding another offence, but summing up all possible offences in a comprehensive *et cetera*. ‘Neither as murderer, nor thief, nor evildoer generally, nor, in a word, as a bad Christian.’ The movement of thought is from particular to general, from special crimes to all lawlessness and immorality, and from this again to all actions forbidden by the still wider rule of the faith.¹⁵

They are therefore to live in such a manner that there will be no justifiable accusations.

But if (anyone of you should suffer) as a Christian, he should not be ashamed, but he should glorify God in that name. ὡς Χριστιανός (the adjective functioning substantively) occurs only here and twice in Acts (11:26; 26:28). Both of the occurrences in Acts appear to be used in a slanderous manner by those outside the Church. The first occurrence is by the residents of Antioch, the second is by Agrippa. Thus it seems that here as well, Peter is referring to the naming of one as a “Christian” to be a bad thing, but to be embraced because it means that they are at least suffering under the name of Christ.

It is suggested (and even included in as such in the original hand of *Codex Sinaiticus*) that this should read Χρηστιανος instead. The former term better explains the fact that they are suffering “in the name of Christ” as “partisans of Christ” rather than that they might be suffering in being called “partisans of Chrestus” (though having the support of several Roman historians as referring to the followers of “Chrestus”) which seems far less likely. Since there is no “Christos”

¹⁴ Beare 193; Elliot 786; Michaels 267, 268.

¹⁵ Charles Bigg, *The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*. The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 179.

in Latin, the similar sounding name in Latin (“Chrestus”) was wrongfully thought to be the name by which the early church called themselves as followers.

μὴ αἰσχυνέσθω seems to pick up the thought which Peter has written about in this letter where he references what Isaiah wrote. “For it stands in Scripture: ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame’” (1 Pet.2:6 ESV). The stone, which the builders rejected, is Christ whom those who are suffering in the name of should expect to suffer as well, but know that they will never be put to shame; therefore, they should not be ashamed to bear His name even if it is being applied to them in a derisive and slanderous manner. This verb is a present middle imperative and thus calls for not being ashamed, since they should give no reason to be ashamed and the bearing of Christ’s name offers no reason to be ashamed. Also, the contrast which Peter describes elsewhere is once again discussed here. He juxtaposes the only two possible final states before the judging of God – either shame or glorifying God (2:12; 3:16).

The verb δοξαζέτω (“he should glorify” – present active imperative) is a call from Peter to the Church to glorify God in having been cursed for Christ’s sake. It is a call to glorify God even as they are being cursed. Peter is describing the goal of those who are suffering for Christ rather than “what will objectively be the case,” which is why he uses the imperative instead of the indicative mood.¹⁶ In this way they will turn the curse of their accusers into blessing for themselves and glory for God. A similar statement about suffering and giving glory to God is found in 2:12 where Peter says, “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”

¹⁶ Michaels 269.

Diagram of Passage

¹⁴ εἰ ὀνειδίζεσθε ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ,
μακάριοι,
ὅτι τὸ τῆς δόξης
καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα...ἀναπαύεται
...ἐφ' ὑμᾶς....

¹⁵ μὴ γὰρ τις...πασχέτω
...ὑμῶν...
ὡς φονεὺς
ἢ κλέπτης
ἢ κακοποιὸς
ἢ ὡς ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος·
¹⁶ εἰ δὲ ὡς Χριστιανός,
μὴ αἰσχυνέσθω,
δοξαζέτω δὲ τὸν θεὸν
ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι
τούτῳ.

Appendix

NA²⁷ lists three cases of textual variation in 1 Peter 4:14 and this appendix addresses the first one. The clause ὅτι τὸ τῆς δόξης καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα translated literally reads “because the Spirit of the glory and the (Spirit) of the God”. There are three readings as follows: 1: “and the (Spirit) of the God”; 2: “and of [the] power and the (Spirit) of the God”; 3: “and of power of the God’s name and”. The NA²⁷ editors have chosen the first option. Manuscript evidence can be seen below. The number in square brackets after each manuscript comes from the rating of Aland and Aland.¹⁷

- 1 κ α ι τ ο υ θ ε ο υ – P⁷² [I] B [I] K [V] L [V] Ψ [I I] 049 [V] *pm* [= a large number of MSS] (syriac^{peshitta}); Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria
- 2 κ α ι (τ η ς - α ρ ϸ) δ υ ν α μ ε ω ς κ α ι τ ο τ ο υ θ ε ο υ – α (*)
[I] A [I] P [III] 33 [II]. 81 [II]. 323
[II]. 945 [II]. 1241 [I]. 1739 [I] *pm* [= a large number of MSS] (r z vulgate^{clementina})
bohairic; Athanasius of Alexandria
- 3 κ α ι δ υ ν α μ ε ω ς τ ο υ θ ε ο υ ο ν ο μ α κ α ι – 614 [III].
630 [III]. 1505 [III]. ρ ϸ [= a few MSS]
syriac^{harklensis}

Reading 1 has strong attestation from several early manuscripts and from a wide variety of witnesses. Michaels is emphatic that the textual evidence in favor of this reading is “conclusive” and best explains the other two readings.¹⁸

Reading 2 also has strong attestation in several early manuscripts and from a wide variety of witnesses. Beare finds the textual evidence in favor of this reading to be the most persuasive and the simplest for explaining the others.¹⁹ While Michaels believes this reading simply makes “use of the familiar association of ‘glory’ and ‘power’” as found in Rev.15:8 and the doxology of the Lord’s Prayer and therefore seems to be no more than a smoothing of the text.²⁰

¹⁷ Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, Revised and Enlarged (Eerdmans, 1989), 159-162.

¹⁸ Michaels 256.

¹⁹ Beare 189, 192.

²⁰ Michaels 256.

Reading 3 has the least favorable manuscript support and seems the most likely gloss and is therefore rejected as the original. It does however lend some further support to Reading 2.

While both Readings 1 and 2 have strong support it is notable that the stronger external support leans towards Reading 2 as the most likely original. However, if preference is given to P⁷² and B then perhaps the first Reading is stronger. The internal support seems divided as well depending upon whether one thinks it more likely to have the shorter reading or longer. Metzger's proposal is that the longer reading of 2 should be rejected because of its "absence" in several diverse and early witnesses, because the longer reading also has several variants itself, and because it gives the appearance to him of being "homiletic supplements to the original text."²¹ However, this may suggest that the longer reading was the more difficult and therefore required smoothing. For the sake of this paper, the second reading is preferable, but contained within parenthesis to denote the strong possibility of it not being original.

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²¹ Bruce M Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. 2nd ed (United Bible Societies, 1994), 624, 625.

