

Sunday Morning Message

November 15, 2020

**SM 111520 1 Peter 4:1 - 6 - *Having the Mind of Christ Regarding Suffering*
Series - *Experiencing God's Grace in the Midst of Suffering***

Text - 1 Peter 4:1 - 6

Congregational Reading - 1 Peter 4:1 - 6

"1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; 2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. 3 For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: 4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: 5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. 6 For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (1 Peter 4:1-6)

We are going to deal with only six verses this morning, and will cover the rest of the chapter over the course of the next two weeks.

Introduction

We have been taking our time examining this first epistle of Peter, which was originally written to “strangers” in what was known in Bible days as “Asia,” but is today the area within the borders of Turkey. These Christians were called strangers because they were believers who knew that their home was in Heaven, and that they were only sojourning here on the earth for a short time. They were suffering intense persecution, and often were living “on the run” trying to escape from their civil and religious tormenters. This was the time of Emperor Nero, and under his reign Christians were being slaughtered by the thousands.

Peter’s letter was intended to comfort these afflicted saints of the Lord and encourage them to remain faithful, even while they were going through extraordinary trials and great affliction.

We, too, are going through some difficult times. People are suffering; though our trials seem to pale in comparison to what we know happened to these Christians in the first century. However, the times that we are living in are becoming increasingly difficult for believers in an increasingly godless culture; and, unless a national revival is sent from heaven, things will likely only get worse.

Though this epistle specifically addresses the unique difficulties of these persecuted Christians within the Roman Empire in the first century, the Holy Spirit of God intended that the timeless principles contained within this portion of Scripture be applicable to believers today as we Experience God's Grace in the Midst of Our Own Suffering.

So far in these series of messages from 1 Peter, we have learned:

- We can trust in God's grace in the midst of our suffering (1 Peter 1:1 – 5).
- Our faith can be strengthened through seasons of suffering (1 Peter 1:6 – 12).
- What we can do when we are going through periods of suffering (1 Peter 1:13 – 25).
- We are a purchased possession by the grace of God (1 Peter 2:1 – 12).
- We can follow in Christ's steps by the grace of God (1 Peter 2:11 – 25).
- Maintaining Good Relationships by the Grace of God (1 Peter 3:1 – 12).
- Having a Proper Perspective on Suffering by the Grace of God (1 Peter 3:13 – 22).

Transition

As we transition into chapter four we are continuing with the overall theme of suffering. After Peter's parenthetical discussion at the very end of chapter three, he now refocuses, and reminds us of Jesus, who is our example of suffering. We need to see our suffering the same way that Jesus saw his.

We need to have ... *The Mind of Christ Regarding Suffering*

Paul's Letter to the Philippians speaks about having the mind of Christ:

*"1 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, 2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. 5 **Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:** 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of*

Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:1-11)

Paul also told the Church at Corinth:

"16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:16)

Here in vs. 1 - 2, Peter tells us to arm ourselves with the mind of Christ: to arm ourselves in preparation for a battle.

I. Arm Yourself for the Battle (vs. 1 - 2)

1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; 2 That he no longer should live the rest of [his] time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. (1 Peter 4:1 - 2)

Christ is our example. The conjunction, “forasmuch,” connects us to that idea from chapter three:

"18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:" (1 Peter 3:18)

This was the verse that immediately preceded that difficult, parenthetical passage in vs. 19 - 22. We concluded that that passage is teaching that after Jesus died for our sins, and before he was quickened by the Spirit, He went and declared his victory over sin to the “spirits in prison.” Jesus’ suffering preceded and brought about His victory. Peter is teaching us here that any suffering that we may have to endure while on this earth will be followed by great victory as well.

Notice the phrase, “arm yourselves” (ὀπλιζῶ - *hoplizō*), which is a command. According to Phillips:

It was used of a Greek soldier preparing himself for the coming battle by putting on his armor. And Peter does not use the Greek word for light armor here but the word for heavy armor. We need all of the protection we can get to prepare ourselves for the battles ahead. God does not promise to carry us to the skies on flowery beds of ease. God does not hand out colorful brochures offering good health, prosperity, wide popularity, and a long life

to those who accept Christ. Those who array themselves in such flimsy robes are in for a shock.¹

Swindoll said it like this:

Peter's point is clear. Christ has not sent us into the world as vacationers on a self-guided tour of a playground, but as soldiers on a tour of duty in a battlefield. We are not called to kick back, relax, take in the scenery, and wait for our Guide to take us home. Rather, we are engaged in a fierce conflict on foreign soil. We need to arm ourselves with spiritual armor to withstand the temptations of this world (cf. Eph. 6:10–18). Peter says if you have been conformed to Christ's death and resurrection, then the power of sin has been broken (1 Peter 4:1). Because the old person you used to be has died, as it were, with Christ, you are now free to live with Christ.²

We need to prepare ourselves mentally, spiritually, and maybe even physically for the individual battles that may be ahead in our future. Peter certainly exemplified this in his own life. He served the Lord sacrificially for many years, enduring many trials of affliction, and then he was crucified upside down. Paul also went through countless trials: beatings, hunger, shipwrecks, imprisonments, etc.; and, eventually he also was martyred for the Lord. Both of these men endured severe trials on earth, but in Heaven, they are greatly rewarded.

Notice the last phrase in verse one: *“for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;”* This is a difficult phrase to interpret. What I believe Peter is saying here, is that a person who grows to the point where he can remain faithful to the Lord through suffering, is mature enough also to resist the temptations of sin. The word, “ceased,” indicates a completed action with ongoing results. This does is not teaching a “sinless perfection,” but rather a Christian maturity. It has the idea of being released from the power of sin. Sin no longer dominates us.

Verse two clarifies this idea:

2 That he no longer should live the rest of [his] time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. (1 Peter 4:2)

Notice the word, “should.” Christian maturity, or growth, should cause a person to desire the things of God, rather than what the flesh desires. The ability to resist the fleshly desires increases as we are yielded to, or filled with, the Spirit. The complete fulfillment of this principle comes when the Christian makes the ultimate

¹ John Phillips, *Exploring the Epistles of Peter: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), 1 Peter 4:1a–b.

² Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on James and 1 & 2 Peter*, Swindoll's New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 212.

sacrifice by being martyred for the Lord. Martyrdom was a regular occurrence in Peter's day.

Paul taught this same principle in Romans 6:

"1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7 For he that is dead is freed from sin. 8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. 11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

(Romans 6:1-11)

II. Separate Yourself from the Bad (vs. 3 - 5)

A. From the Bad Actions in Your Past (v. 3)

"3 For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:" (1 Peter 4:3)

The word, "suffice," has the idea of "having enough." What God is saying here is that we should have had enough – had our fill – of the old life before we were saved. We should now be ready to "just say no" to those fleshly desires, and say yes to the will of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Before we were saved, we "wrought" (κατεργάσασθαι), meaning we worked or participated in the "will of the Gentiles;" meaning, we acted like lost people.

1. Lasciviousness – unbridled lust; excess; outrageousness
2. Lusts – illicit desires; forbidden lust
3. Excess of wine – drunkenness

"18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;"
(Ephesians 5:18)

4. Revellings – "clubbing;" a late-night drunken party; often involving sexual immorality.

5. Banquetings – carousing, drinking
6. Abominable Idolatries – illicit worship of idols; not a problem for the Jews, but the Gentiles who were saved often were guilty of idolatry before Christ.

Romans 1 talks about how bad mankind can get without God in them:

"24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; 29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." (Romans 1:24-32)

"19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:19-21)

"9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

All of these evil characteristics are what we were capable of being or doing before Christ, but no more. We are now new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), and by the grace of God, we can behave like Christ wants us to.

B. From the Bad Actors in Your Present (vs. 4 - 5)

"4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: 5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead." (1 Peter 4:4-5)

The world is shocked (think it strange) when we don't want to participate in the wicked things that they do. And, when they can't get us to join in with them, they rail against us; they revile us; they mock us.

Illustrate – Justice Alito recently gave a speech and stated:

“For many today, religious liberty is not a cherished freedom. It’s often just an excuse for bigotry and can’t be tolerated, even when there is no evidence that anybody has been harmed,” Alito said during a virtual event with the Federalist Society’s National Lawyers Convention, a conservative legal network. “The question we face is whether our society will be inclusive enough to tolerate people with unpopular religious beliefs.”

The atheist politicians went absolutely crazy in response. “Homophobic rhetoric isn’t a matter of free speech. It’s a matter of hate speech,” Rep. Jimmy Gomez, D-Calif., said on Twitter Friday. “These are stunning, harmful words from Justice Alito.”

So, if you believe and practice what the Bible teaches, you are labeled as a right-wing fanatical bigot.

Right now it’s just rhetoric, but the time will come very soon when Christians will be arrested (or worse) for speaking the truth of the Bible, even when they do it “in love.”

What these Christian bashers don’t realize is that someday they will have to give an account to the Lord. He is the judge of the living and the dead. The lost will eventually have face God at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11).

Jesus Christ and His followers are the focus of their hatred, but someday He will be their judge:

"1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;" (2 Timothy 4:1)

Believers also will be judged for their faithfulness to Christ at the Bema Seat, which is not a judgement for sin, but to determine rewards, or loss of rewards.

Our sin was judged at Calvary. Christ paid the price for our sins on the Cross. (see 1 Corinthians 3:9 – 15; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10).

III. Secure Yourself in Belief (v. 6)

"6 For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (1 Peter 4:6)

This verse is also often misunderstood. It is sometimes connected with the other difficult passage at the end of chapter three. Here the word “preached” is different. Christ preached (ἐκήρυξεν), or proclaimed victory to the fallen angels, or “spirits in prison” (3:19). Here, however, it is the good news of the gospel that is preached (εὐηγγελίσθη).

The question is: who were the “dead” that the gospel was preached to.

- It could be a reference to all believers who were once spiritually dead in their sin, but now are made alive in Christ.

"1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)" (Ephesians 2:1-5)

"13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;" (Colossians 2:13 KJV)

"10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." (Romans 8:10)

- It also could be a reference to believers who died, and may have even were martyred for their faith. They were judged by men in their bodies, but are now alive and thriving in Heaven.

Illustrate John Phillips:

The people to whom Peter refers here were dead. But when they were still alive, they had heard the joyful news of the gospel and had believed. Their lives had been changed. Their transformed lives had activated the malicious dislike of “men in the flesh.” The “judging” referred to here seems to have

been done by wicked people who had persecuted and even martyred the Christians. As a result, these people were now dead. But that was by no means the end of it. On the contrary, they now “live according to God in the spirit.” Men in the flesh had done their worst. All they had succeeded in doing, however, was to “promote them to glory”! The people they had hated and hounded to death were, in fact, very much alive in heaven itself! D. L. Moody, the great evangelist, used to say, “One of these days you will read in the newspaper that D. L. Moody of Northfield is dead. Don’t believe a word of it! I shall be more alive then than I am now.”³

Conclusion

- As Christ suffered, we, too, may be called upon to suffer.
- As Christ achieved victory through His suffering, so too, will we.
- The world did not understand Christ, and neither will they understand us. People will sometimes look at us like we have two heads.
- The world will also attack us both verbally and sometimes physically for the Biblical principles that we stand for.
- Don’t be shocked when the people out there don’t like what you stand for.
- We must remain faithful. Prepare for the battle and strengthen your faith through the Word of God; strengthen your faith through prayer; strengthen your faith by serving Him; strengthen your faith by getting around people who whose strength will strengthen you.

Illustrate – Stephen

"54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. 55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, 56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. 57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, 58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. 59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." (Acts 7:54-60)

³ John Phillips, *Exploring the Epistles of Peter: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), 1 Pe 4:6.