

I Peter 4:1-4a
June 18, 2017

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: For those who made a decision for Christ as an adult, were there any particular sinful habits that you dropped? [Let people engage]

Q: When your “before Christ” friends observed your changes, how did they react? [surprised? Upset? Ridiculed?]

Transition: Unsaved people do not understand the radical change that their friends or family members experience when they trust Christ and become children of God. They don't think it's strange when people wreck their bodies, destroy their homes, and ruin their lives by running from one sin to another! But let an alcoholic become sober, or an immoral person live life on the high road, and the family thinks he has lost his mind! Peter wants his readers to focus on having a Christ-like attitude. As we go through this chapter, consider that all of us CAN maintain a Christ-like attitude BY following the INSTRUCTIONS that he gives starting with v.7. Let's begin.

BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read I Peter 4:1-6]

V.1:

- Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.

V.2:

- As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.

V.3:

- For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.

V.4:

- They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.

V.5:

- But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

V.6:

- For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.1: What is “therefore” there for? [Peter referred back to Christ's suffering in 3:18 and applied the principles of patient endurance in unjust suffering to his readers' immediate situation.]

Q: How would you describe the “attitude” that we’re supposed to have when we unjustly suffer for Christ? What does it look like? [A resolve to be done with sin]

Q: Peter uses an interesting phrase “arm yourselves” with the same attitude that Christ had when He suffered. How do you “arm yourself” with an attitude?! [With the same determination and care with which a soldier puts on his armor. Think Eph 6:13]

Q V.2: Once we profess Christ as our Savior, how should we live our life? [By turning away from evil desires and living for the will of God]

Q: It really goes back to the Rom 6 picture of baptism. What does it represent? [Identification with Christ. We died to sins, a break from the sinful life. We are no longer slaves to sin.]

Observation: ***Think of what sin did to Jesus (v. 1).*** He had to *suffer* because of sin (see 1 Peter 2:21; 3:18). How can we enjoy that which made Jesus suffer and die on the cross? Jesus came to conquer sin forever. So when we are asked to live for the “will of God,” we need to remember that ***the will of God is not a burden that the Father places on us. We may not always understand what He is doing, but we know that He is doing what is best for us. We do not live on explanations, but rather on His promises.***

Q V.3-4: Has anyone ever “heaped abuse” on you because you made changes in your life? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Our goal in life is to “cease from sin.” We will not reach this goal until we die, or are called home when the Lord returns; but this should not keep us from striving (1 John 2:28–3:9). Peter did not say that suffering *of itself* would cause a person to stop sinning.

Suffering, *plus Christ in our lives*, can help us have victory over sin. But the central idea here seems to be the same truth taught in Romans 6: We are identified with Christ in His suffering and death, and therefore can have victory over sin. As we yield ourselves to God, and have the same attitude toward sin that Jesus had, we can overcome the old life and manifest the new life.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 419–420). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

1 Peter 4:1–11

A Militant Attitude toward Sin (1 Peter 4:1–3)

The picture is that of a soldier who puts on his equipment and arms himself for battle. Our attitudes are weapons, and weak or wrong attitudes will lead us to defeat. Outlook determines outcome, and a believer must have the right attitudes if he is to live a right life.

A friend and I met at a restaurant to have lunch. It was one of those places where the lights are low, and you need a miner's helmet to find your table. We had been seated several minutes before we started looking at the menu, and I remarked that I was amazed how easily I could read it. "Yes," said my friend, "it doesn't take us long to get accustomed to the darkness."

There is a sermon in that sentence: It is easy for Christians to get accustomed to sin. Instead of having a militant attitude that hates and opposes it, we gradually get used to sin, sometimes without even realizing it. The one thing that will destroy "the rest of our time" is sin. A believer living in sin is a terrible weapon in the hands of Satan. Peter presented several arguments to convince us to oppose sin in our lives.

Think of what sin did to Jesus (v. 1). He had to *suffer* because of sin (see 1 Peter 2:21; 3:18). How can we enjoy that which made Jesus suffer and die on the cross? If a vicious criminal stabbed your child to death, would you preserve that knife in a glass case on your mantle? I doubt it. You would never want to see that knife again.

Our Lord came to earth to deal with sin and to conquer it forever. He dealt with the ignorance of sin by teaching the truth and by living it before men's eyes. He dealt with the consequences of sin by healing and forgiving; and, on the cross, He dealt the final deathblow to sin itself. He was armed, as it were, with a militant attitude toward sin, even though He had great compassion for lost sinners.

Our goal in life is to "cease from sin." We will not reach this goal until we die, or are called home when the Lord returns; but this should not keep us from striving (1 John 2:28–3:9). Peter did not say that suffering *of itself* would cause a person to stop sinning. Pharaoh in Egypt went through great suffering in the plagues, and yet he sinned even more! I have visited suffering people who cursed God and grew more and more bitter because of their pain.

Suffering, *plus Christ in our lives*, can help us have victory over sin. But the central idea here seems to be the same truth taught in Romans 6: We are identified with Christ in His suffering and death, and therefore can have victory over sin. As we yield ourselves to God, and have the same attitude toward sin that Jesus had, we can overcome the old life and manifest the new life.

Enjoy the will of God (v. 2). The contrast is between the desires of men and the will of God. Our longtime friends cannot understand the change in our lives, and they want us to return to the same "excess of riot" that we used to enjoy. But the will of God is so much better! If we do the will of God, then we will *invest* "the rest of our time" in that which is lasting and satisfying; but if we give in to the world around us, we will *waste* "the rest of our time" and regret it when we stand before Jesus.

The will of God is not a burden that the Father places on us. Rather it is the divine enjoyment and enablement that makes all burdens light. The will of God comes from the heart of God (Ps. 33:11) and therefore is an expression of the love of God. We may not always understand what

He is doing, but we know that He is doing what is best for us. We do not live on explanations; we live on promises.

Remember what you were before you met Christ (v. 3). There are times when looking back at your past life would be wrong, because Satan could use those memories to discourage you. But God urged Israel to remember that they had once been slaves in Egypt (Deut. 5:15). Paul remembered that he had been a persecutor of believers (1 Tim. 1:12ff), and this encouraged him to do even more for Christ. We sometimes forget the bondage of sin and remember only the passing pleasures of sin.

“The will of the Gentiles” means “the will of the unsaved world” (see 1 Peter 2:12). Lost sinners imitate each other as they conform to the fashions of this world (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 3:1–3). “Lasciviousness” and “lusts” describe all kinds of evil appetites and not just sexual sins. “Revelings and banquetings” refer to pagan orgies where the wine flowed freely. Of course, all of this could be a part of pagan worship, since “religious prostitution” was an accepted thing. Even though these practices were forbidden by law (“abominable” = illegal), they were often practiced in secret.

We may not have been guilty of such gross sins in our preconversion days, but we were still sinners—and our sins helped to crucify Christ. How foolish to go back to that kind of life!

A Patient Attitude toward the Lost (1 Peter 4:4)

Unsaved people do not understand the radical change that their friends experience when they trust Christ and become children of God. They do not think it strange when people wreck their bodies, destroy their homes, and ruin their lives by running from one sin to another! But let a drunkard become sober, or an immoral person pure, and the family thinks he has lost his mind! Festus told Paul, “You are out of your mind!” (Acts 26:24) and people even thought the same thing of our Lord (Mark 3:21).

Raymer, R. M. (1985). 1 Peter. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 852-853). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

B. Enduring suffering (chap. 4)

This chapter is the heart of Peter’s encouragement for endurance. Here is practical instruction based on Christ’s example in undergoing suffering. In order to endure suffering, Christians are to arm themselves with Christlike courage, minister to one another with Christlike service, and commit themselves to God with Christlike faith.

1. CHRISTLIKE ATTITUDE (4:1–4)

Maintaining proper conduct in suffering requires that Christians maintain a Christlike attitude, living for the present in God’s will, knowing that they will live for eternity in His presence.

4:1. **Therefore** (*oun*, an inferential conjunction) Peter referred back to Christ’s suffering in 3:18 and applied the principles of patient endurance in unjust suffering to his readers’ immediate situation. He exhorted believers to **arm** themselves with **the same** courageous **attitude** or mind-set Christ had regarding suffering. The word translated “arm yourselves” (*hoplisasthe*, used only

here in the NT) referred to a soldier putting on armor (cf. Eph. 6:13). With the same determination and care with which a soldier puts on his armor, Christians are to adopt Christ's "attitude" (*ennoian*, lit., "thought"; Heb. 4:12 has the only other biblical usage of this word) toward persecution, an unswerving resolve to do God's will.

Identification with Christ, arming oneself with His attitude, also means sharing in His suffering and death. Christ **suffered in His body**, and a believer suffers **in his body** also. One who has suffered in this way **is done with sin**, that is, his being identified with Christ demonstrates (as does baptism) his break with a sinful life. Because of Christ's death, "we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been freed from sin" (Rom. 6:6–7).

4:2. **As a result** Christians who have adopted Christ's mind-set have counted themselves dead to sin. They **live the rest** of their lives not **for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God** (cf. 2:15; 3:17; 4:19).

4:3. Christians were exhorted to live for the present in God's will because old habits were a thing of **the past**. In blunt language Peter stressed that there must be a definite break from **what pagans choose to do** (*boulēma tōn ethnōn*, lit., "desire of the Gentiles"), the wasted years of **debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and ... idolatry** (cf. Gal. 5:19–21). This exhortation probably had a strong impact on Gentile Christians who used to live in gross sin.

4:4. Christians are to live in the present for the will of God because old acquaintances are now persecutors. Godless men are genuinely surprised by the changed lives of those who once were like they are. **They think it strange** (*xenizontai*, from *xenos*, "stranger"; cf. v. 12). A changed life provokes hostility from those who reject the gospel. Consequently **they heap abuse on** (*blasphēmountes*, lit., "blaspheme") believers.