

FIRST PETER 4:1-6 "No Longer Live For The Lusts Of Men, But For The Will Of God"

Our text this morning includes a recap of the previous thought which Peter has conveyed in chapter 3. This is why he introduces this next section with the word "Therefore". As we know, whenever we see the word therefore in Scripture it's a way of drawing attention to what has preceded so as to draw some conclusions based on that previous thought.

1PE 4:1-2 "Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude (purpose), because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. 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."

The connection here in our text is with Christ suffering in His body seen in 1PE 3:18 "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit," ..... 1PE 4:1 "Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude (purpose), because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.

And so we begin this morning to make a comparison between what Christ suffered and how that applies to you and me.

"Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude..." The suffering Christ endured resulted in His death for our penalty, but the attitude Peter speaks of, which Christ had, is what we should emulate.

What was Christ's attitude or purpose in regard to suffering unto death? Keep in mind that Jesus came into this world to die. He knew what was to befall Him before He came into this world. But there were two things which motivated Jesus to go through with His plan to redeem a people for Himself.

#1) He desired to please His Father. The Father convened with the Son in eternity past knowing that people, He would create, would rebel. In that rebellion someone had to pay the price. The Godhead; The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit chose to intervene on man's behalf and pay the price for God's elect through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Son, was to carry out this plan, abiding by the Father's will.

Joh.4:34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

JOH 6:38-40 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

#2) But, Jesus also did the Father's will because He loved those in the world. That was a great motivation.

We see this very clearly when the writer of Hebrews says in HEB 12:2 "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Peter has been talking to his readers about suffering. But he makes a distinction between suffering for doing God's will and suffering for doing things which are sinful. That's why Peter said in 1PE 3:17 "It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil."

It is true that Jesus Christ suffered, but it wasn't because He did something contrary to the Father's will, it was precisely because He was doing God's will. And for that He is commended by the Father. Even before Jesus went to the cross the Father was pleased with His obedience.

MAT 17:5 "While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

Everything that Jesus did was to love and please the Father, but His love for you and me cannot be ignored. We hear this verse all the time.

JOH 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Christ's death was personal for Him, because you and I were the ones He came to die for. And so what Peter wants us to see is that to do God's will may involve suffering even in our own lives. And we should have the same attitude, the same mind, the same purpose, as Jesus. Our attitude should be first and foremost to

want to love our God and Savior, and to please our Lord with our entire lives by doing His will according to His word.

As believers we have the Spirit who has put a new song in our hearts and has given us a new nature in Christ. David understood what it was to have a personal relationship with God and that his obedience was more than just going through the motions.

PSA 40:8 "I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

The prophet Ezekiel spoke of this relationship of the heart when God spoke these words through him in EZE 11:19 -20 "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. 20 Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God."

This is the attitude we need to have. It's an understanding that we belong to God, we don't belong to ourselves anymore. Jesus purchased us with His blood and we have been redeemed for a purpose and that purpose is to do God's will so as to glorify Him and bring others into the Kingdom.

And this is why, like Jesus, we must have a love for people. A love that looks beyond their sin, while not condoning it. It looks to people and sees them as ones who are without hope and life because they're without God. This is why Jesus has sent us into the world, to be His witnesses in both word and deed.

But then Peter continues in our text... "because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. 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."

Here Peter is not talking of Jesus. He's clearly speaking of you and me and what we should be doing with our lives.

Life is full of choices. We can either make them in our fleshly desires to please self and cater to the sinful nature, or we can live by faith in our Savior and make those choices that would be motivated and supported by the Spirit according to the Word of God.

The answer God clearly gives us is that we should be living the rest of this life with one purpose and one purpose only, and that is to love God with all our hearts, soul and mind, and show it by

doing the will of God in everything. And we need to trust His power will be there for the doing of it in faith.

Listen to what Jesus said of doing God's will and how that relates to our relationship with Him.

MAT 12:47-50 "Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." 48 He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" 49 Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

Jesus was simply saying that many will call themselves disciples, but only those who follow Christ can be called true disciples. Those who obey and do what God says are disciples.

Jesus put it another way when He said in LUK 14:26-27 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters -yes, even his own life - he cannot be my disciple. 27 And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

Some will take this out of context and distort it by saying that Jesus is teaching that we should literally hate our mother and father. In fact some cults will actually use this verse to keep young people from having any contact with their parents. This is absurd, especially in light of the 10 commandments, the 5th which says, "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you." (EXO 20:12 )

What Jesus is saying in Luke about hating father, mother, brother and sister is that if anyone would love the creature more than the creator they would be better off cutting off that temporal relationship so as to come into an eternal relationship with God through Christ.

It's the same kind of idea when Jesus said in MAT 5:29-30 "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."

Does this mean we go out and gouge our eyes out or cut off our arms or hate our mothers and fathers? No, Jesus is using the strongest possible means of teaching the importance of eternity and

the things of this world which would keep us from spending it with Him.

The kind of disciples He wants are the kind which look at everything else in this world through Godly eyes which put Christ first and desire to please and follow Him no matter what. No matter how hard life may get, no matter how difficult people are to deal with, no matter the persecution which may ensue for serving the Lord.

God knows where we are, but He still wants us to follow Him. But He promises us that He will be with us in every circumstance of life. This is why David could write in PSA 23:4 "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

But you know this same David was just like you and me. There were times when life got confusing for him and there were times when he didn't know what God wanted for him or how to accomplish His will in certain circumstances. But instead of throwing in the towel and checking out, he prayed in PSA 143:10 "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground."

David may not have always had the strength to go on, but he knew who he could go to find the strength and the direction he needed, and so can we if we're willing to do His will and follow Christ even through the valley of the shadow of death, knowing He will be there with us to lead us out.

David had made a choice to follow God and so he essentially chose to turn away from his former life. Just as Peter is teaching in our text, David was "done with sin" as it reads in the NIV of verse one. The NAS puts it, "he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." This doesn't mean we never sin, it simply means that we cease from being a slave to sin and running after its ways.

Dr. Wayne Grudem in his commentary on 1Peter translates this verse: "For a Christian who has suffered for doing right has made a clear break with sin."

Many Christians can't say that because they choose not to make the break. They want the best of both worlds. But we can't have it both ways. Again, this doesn't mean we don't mess up, but our walk with Christ is not to be some schizophrenic experience where we spend this month with God and next month pleasing the flesh.

Once again, Dr. Grudem: "Peter now explains 'ceasing from sin' in more detail. It is for the purpose of living a life governed not by human feelings but by God's will: one breaks clearly with sin so as to live for the rest of time in the flesh (the rest of one's life on earth) no longer by human passions but by the will of God."  
(Verse 2)

Peter wasn't being insensitive to his readers whom he knew were undergoing some tough times, precisely because of their faith in Christ, but he didn't want them to think that God gave them the option not to follow or obey or love Him anymore.

In fact he reminds these Christians of their past in a way that shows them how God is working in their lives.

1PE 4:3-4 "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. 4 They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you."

Peter recognizes that their faith is costing them something. It's costing them friends, and it's costing them family in some cases. But the price is so small in comparison to the reward of walking with Christ and being with Him for eternity.

Peter reminds these Christians of how they used to walk. For some of them it wasn't a very pretty picture. Paul makes mention of a similar list.

1CO 6:9-11 "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were (Past Tense). But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

I get so tired of the world's view on sin. There is very little they would view as sin because they often times define it in a way so as to excuse it. Enter the word, disease. Everything these days that relates to behavior can, in some way, be shown to be a disease. And if it's a disease how can it be your fault? And it's usually a disease in which they're always recovering.

What I find interesting about these diseases is that they are always self-inflicted. If you get the flu it's not cured by living a more moral life. You certainly need to get your rest and eventually it will run its course. But with self-inflicted diseases if the person stops the immoral behavior the disease itself stops.

Peter mentions a few things in our text including lust and sensuality, drunkenness and abominable idolatries. I did an interview with a "Christian" author a number of years back and he had written a book on being addicted to sex and how people shouldn't always be seen as lustful but rather sick with this particular disease.

Both the world and Christians will often view drunkenness as an alcoholic disease. Now don't get me wrong I believe sin to be the kind of disease of the soul which kills spiritually. But to call sin disease, when God calls it sin, is to call God a liar.

I do believe people can be diseased to sex as they can be diseased to alcohol and drugs, but not diseased in a medical sense; rather diseased in a spiritual sense. What the world calls diseased to alcohol and drugs is nothing more than a lust for alcohol which pleases the flesh. That's why the Creator of man always calls it drunkenness and never a disease.

I get so disheartened with people who go to embrace the world's solutions. It's not as though these solutions don't have some short term results, but simply getting results doesn't make them God's solutions, which have eternal remedies. For example, many 12 step programs, be they secular or Christian, invariably teach that you are forever recovering. You're never truly healed.

Now, if you've got a disease that's incurable it can be very disheartening to get news that you'll have to live with it for the rest of your life with no hope of overcoming it. But if you've got a sin problem with alcohol, or lust or anything else there's hope because Jesus came to forgive sinners. He came to make us new creatures in Christ, not just to try and fix up the old man. He makes us brand new.

I know there are those who would argue with me on this point. I've seen the articles written to try and prove the chemical imbalances which might predispose someone to alcoholism. I've also read the other articles that show this research to be unfounded. But you know it doesn't make any difference. Even if it could be

proved that such an imbalance exists a choice has to be made to drink.

A man, for example, has certain chemical hormones which God created that He didn't give to women. Does that give a man an excuse to rape a woman because he's predisposed to want to engage in sex at the drop of a hat? No, choices come into play. And if you play with fire, no matter how attractive or addictive it may be, it will burn you. God says stay away from it.

God is the one who enables us through Christ to turn away from sin and He heals us of the death sentence sin had over us. This doesn't mean that someone who enjoys getting drunk, but then after coming to Christ, can once again tempt himself with alcohol. If you're weak in an area you stay away from it. But to suggest you're forever recovering is to deny the sufficiency of Christ's death for your sin, both its penalty and power over your life.

Again, we must let God's word be the final authority. If He says such things are sin then who are we to redefine it as something more palatable, giving people an excuse for their sin and no hope in turning from it.

Again, keep in mind what Paul told the Corinthians in 1Cor.6:11 "And that is what some of you were (Past Tense). But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

That's real hope and it's not only the penalty of sin we're delivered from it's also the power of sin. This is what Paul is recognizing in 1Corinthians. It's a choice to trust God and rely on His power as we submit to Him.

This doesn't mean we're insensitive to the sinful choices people have made that have kept them in bondage, rather it's an opportunity to come along side and help in these areas that produce physical as well as spiritual bondage. We need to meet the needs of the whole man. And sometimes that involves dealing with the physical first, but never at the expense of the spiritual, which is their real need found only in Christ.

But the reason Peter makes mention of these areas of sinful behavior is because this is what they used to participate in and now they've chosen to leave behind the old as they embrace Christ who has made them new. And what this has done is create an environment for their friends and family to malign them.



**1 Peter 4:4** <sup>4</sup> In *all* this, they are surprised that you do not run with *them* into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign *you*.

Misery loves company and when you choose not to follow after their sin, what happens? Well, first of all they're amazed that you no longer look to that fellowship you once enjoyed with them. But second, there's an indignant attitude, because in you choosing God's way you in essence condemn them with your godly behavior.

Now that's the way they perceive it. It's not as though we spend all of our waking moments condemning people. That's not our job, but living in the light will in itself expose the darkness and the darkness doesn't like that.

And so they malign and they heap abuse on you. Why? Because that fellowship with the world has been broken and their lives are seen for what they are; empty and hopeless. And so they react.

But Peter reminds them that even though their friends or family malign them and continue to revel in their sin, God will ultimately have the last word.

1PE 4:5 "But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead."

No one escapes their accountability to God. Dr. Kistemaker comments on this phrase "the living and the dead." He says, "the reference is to the judgment day when all people (those who are physically alive and those who have died) will be judged. Therefore, the phrase the living and the dead has a literal meaning -- that is, it refers specifically to a person's physical state."

And so the next verse also continues with the same literal meaning concerning the dead and the living.

1PE 4:6 "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."

The NAS has a more literal translation. "The gospel has been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God."

With this translation the English could give the impression that the gospel could be preached to those who have died. We saw a couple of weeks ago that scripture does not teach this. The Greek construction gives the idea that those who are now dead had the gospel preached to them as the Scriptures announced the coming Messiah in whom people must put their faith.

In this way, as they embraced the promises of the Messiah it was reckoned to them as righteousness even as it was with Abraham.

**Galatians 3:6-7** <sup>6</sup> Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. <sup>7</sup>

Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

In fact, Moses is said to have looked forward to the coming Christ and as a result of placing his faith in Christ longed for the promises to come. That's the gospel.

**Hebrews 11:24-26** <sup>24</sup> By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, <sup>25</sup> choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, <sup>26</sup> considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.

Moses was obviously alive when he heard and then responded to the gospel, but at the writing of Peter he is absent from the body, but present with the Lord.

And so Peter is referring to those who died in the faith. But this idea of being judged in the flesh as men is in direct contrast to living in the spirit according to the will of God. Those unbelievers who persecuted the Christians, even to the point of death, made a judgment and their judgment concluded that the flesh is the end of all things.

In contrast God comforts the believers that though we may die, whether at the hands of unbelievers or through natural causes, we live in Christ. This was meant to be an encouragement to these believers who may have felt defeated by the attitudes of those they used to run with and are trying to seduce them back to their life of death.

You and I live in a world which is always trying to influence us to their way of thinking and acting. The world would try and steal our joy in Christ by pointing to some of the struggles we face as

believers. They say it's not worth it, come back into fellowship with us.

Sometimes we listen and we find ourselves doing things which dishonor God. Our Lord has called us to represent Him by faith. That means trusting He is the loving God He is. Living according to His will, not ours, as we rely on His power and strength, is what it means to walk with Christ with the hope that we will live with Him forever more.

Remember what Peter has already said at the beginning of this section regarding sin being dealt with by Christ once and for all and how we too are to be done with it.

**1 Peter 4:1-2** <sup>NAU</sup> Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, <sup>2</sup> so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

And of course, Paul would concur.

ROM 13:13-14 "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. <sup>14</sup> Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."

If we're busy drawing close to Christ we will grow in a way where we will be useful to our God and accomplish what He wants to do with our life.

PHI 4:8-9 "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things. <sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

Paul speaks of those things which are from above, those things which are of God. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Let His life shine through you and praise Him for the eternal life you've got in Christ, and let His love overflow from you to a dying world that needs the hope found only in Christ.