

Personal Sin and Success in Suffering

1 Peter 4:1-6

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. 3 For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. 4 With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; 5 but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

Intro:

- Written prior to Nero's accusations that the Christians started the fire that burned a large portion of Rome
- Peter wrote it to encourage Believers as persecution was on the horizon
- Christians of every age have been adequately warned and prepared for persecution from the Scriptures.
 - *Mt 10:24-25* "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.
 - *Jn 15:18-19* "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

- *Jn 17:14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.*

Even before Jesus was born in human flesh it was prophesied by Isaiah that he would be “despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces...(Is. 53:3)

In summary : the world hates Jesus and therefore will hate those who belong to him whether they are even aware of it or not.

Keep this in mind- the world does not hate people simply because they are Christians or “ascribe” to Christian beliefs. The world hates Christians who take Christianity serious and obey their Head, Jesus. Who, commanded all of his followers to know Him, know his truth, obey his truth and propagate his truth. If you avoid all of that you will be safe. But, if you love him and follow him as he commanded us to do, YOU WILL SUFFER!

I’m going to share some biblical examples of this truth and as I do I want you to pay close attention to what the believers were doing that got them into trouble, who the persecutors are, and the outcomes of their obedience.

- *Acts 4:1-3 And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.*
- *Acts 5:16-20 The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed. 17 But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy 18 they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. 19 But during the night an angel of*

the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20 “Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.”

- In the rest of that chapter they were brought before the High Priest and Sanhedrine and questioned again. They beat them and let them go. Then Luke records *“Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. 42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.”*
- Acts 7, Stephen preached and then was stoned to death upon the approval of an up and coming young pharisee named Saul. This event brought persecution upon the whole church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1)
- Saul later became Paul. He went from the church’s greatest persecutor to the church’s greatest missionary. Surely persecution from the Judaic church stopped then, since Paul was an old friend of the Pharisees, right? NO! Jesus made it clear that the reason for his conversion was to suffer for his name sake (Acts 9:16)

That’s just a few examples from the Scriptures to demonstrate to us that we should not be suprised when persecution comes. It is not a matter of “if” it is a matter of “when”.

A Quick Glimpse from History:

Just in case you may be thinking that persecution ended with bible times and we are not susceptible to this type of persecution, let me give you a brief glimpse into church history.

- After the Scriptures were finished being written persecution against the church evolved into official policies of the Roman government. The Roman government saw the church’s refusal to participate in their ungodly state’s religion as rebellion, punishable by torture and death. This continued for nearly three centuries under Diocletian’s rule.

- During the Middle Ages it was the Roman Catholic Church that rekindled persecution. We had the Inquisition, the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, and the martyrdom of men like Jan Has, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, Thomas Cranmer, and William Tyndale.
- We have seen and are still seeing Communism and Islamic extremist persecute the church in other parts of the country.

We may not have an excuse to be surprised by it but that does not mean we do not still need warnings and great words of encouragement when it comes. That is the purpose of Peter's epistle to the Believers dispersed throughout the Roman Empire, or Babylon as he likes to refer to it.

Peter sees persecution on the horizon and he knows its going to be bad. They need his encouraging words inspired by the Holy Spirit and so do we.

Before we get into the text I want to draw your attention to the specific focus of this particular passage. It is about the relationship between our personal sin and enduring persecution. We will see how obedience affects our response to persecution and suffering. Peter is going to give us 5 crucial principles for overcoming sin and successfully enduring persecution.

1. Look to Jesus (1)

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

The ***Since therefore*** here is there to point us back to the previous chapter in verse 18 where Peter says, "*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.*"

Christ suffered in the flesh - Let's look at all that implies as it relates to our victory over sin and death.

- He suffered to defeat all the sins of all the believers for all time
- He suffered in the flesh that we may have his righteousness imputed to us and our unrighteousness credited to him.
- He suffered to bring us to God
- He suffered to fulfill the will of his Father
- He suffered to secure for all believers eternal life
- He suffered to break the power of sin over those who are born again
- He suffered in the flesh because he loved us

Because he suffered in his flesh to accomplish those purposes believers should also ***arm yourselves with the same way of thinking.*** What thinking?

- Suffering destroys sin (***for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin***)
- Suffering for Christ's sake is a holy honor
- Suffering fulfills the will of the Father
- Suffering brings us nearer to God (Physically and spiritually)
- Suffering is an expression of love for a God who first loved us
- Suffering often spreads the gospel

We also must understand that the military expression of arming ourselves is intentional. We are preparing ourselves for war. We do not know when that war will happen but we must always be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is in us. We must always be on guard. We are training like an athlete except we are not training for a sporting event, we are training for war. What determines a victory or a defeat in Christian suffering is remaining faithful.

Keeping our focus on Jesus and having his mind about the purpose of suffering is the first step. The second is the surrendering of our will.

2. Surrender Your Will (2)

so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.

One of the greatest examples Jesus set for us was when he prayed in the garden as a full human being, “Not my will but yours be done.” There is no greater joy or peace found in life than when your will is in complete submission to that of the Father. That is exactly why it is one of the most difficult things to do. Every fallen thing on this earth and everything inside of your fallen heart compiles you to seek your own pleasure and will. It is only the Holy Spirit that is at work in you that can silence the wicked pleas and convince you to submit to the will of the Father.

Think about exactly what Peter is telling his hearers. He is telling them to choose now ***to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.*** When you are waiting on the gate in the Colosseum to open knowing there are ravenous hungry lions waiting to devour your flesh, pray “Not my will but yours be done Father”. When the Roman soldiers dip you in wax and hang you to be burned so that your burning body will light the streets at night, pray “Not my will but yours be done Father”. When everything you own is confiscated, pray “Not my will but yours be done Father”. When you're sitting in a cold prison cell knowing you're innocent and not knowing if you'll ever get out, pray “Not my will but yours be done Father”.

You must look to Jesus, the author and finisher of this faith. Though in the form of God and equal to him he did not consider it a thing to be grasped, so that he may die on the cross for sinners. He did not quit. He finished it so you could also.

3. Embrace the New You (3)

For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.

We all know well the doctrine of the new man/creature.

2 Cor. 5:17 if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Rom. 6:4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

We have been born again, the old is gone. We are new people when we are saved. It is not because of some choice we make, it is because our old self dies when we are regenerated. However, we do still struggle to return to that old self. We are drawn to the old ways of thinking and living because we still live in a fallen world.

Peter tells us that time is over. We lived in that way long enough. Just like the rest of mankind and the children of wrath we too loved ***living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry***, but no more. Our times of ignorance and rebellion is over. We must live prepared for war and that means all the opposites of this list.

living in sensuality - Living for what pleases Christ (which ultimately we will find the greatest measure of pleasure)

Passions- We no longer live by feelings and whims, being tossed to fro by every wind of doctrine, but instead we live soberly and grounded by God's revealed truth.

Drunkenness- We live in reality not constantly seeking stimulants to help us escape our reality.

Orgies (love feasts) , ***drinking parties, and lawless idolatry-***
You get the point

Embrace who you are in Christ. You were redeemed not to go back and live like you used too. God chose you for a great purpose. It may be great to the ungodly world but you will find it to be great in God's kingdom. Live in the present for the future glory, not for who you used to be.

4. Welcome Separation (4-5)

With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; 5 but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

Inherent with the new person there comes an inevitable separation. You no longer participate in the things you used too and now you have been separated from the rest of the world.

You've heard it a million times but you need to hear it a million more. *Ephesians 2:1-10 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

We have never seen in our lifetimes a divide this deep between who and what we are as flowers of Jesus and the world in which we live in. I wish I could tell you it's going to get better, but one thing I know is that the fallen world never gravitates toward God, unless he sends revival. We have made revivals commonplace in our culture but the one our world needs right now is a supernatural revival only God can send. Brothers and sisters we do not belong here. This world is not our home and we have been too comfortable here. We have forgotten that. Because we do not fit in and refuse to, this world will malign us.

Malign (blasphemeo) *slander, defame, speak evil of someone, run a smear campaign.*

Christian remember this, no matter what happens there is no such thing as a social injustice for us. There are only temporal victories for the enemy. ***they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.***

5. Cling to the Gospel (6)

For this is why the gospel (good news of salvation in Jesus) ***was preached*** (announced) ***even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.***

The reason the gospel was preached to the saints that have passed was that though they were judged in the flesh (physically killed, most likely martyred) they are now in spirit with God (2 for 5:8 *Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord*).

Do not forget in the midst of suffering and persecution the gospel. It is the hope of glory for each of us. We can accept whatever evils this world forces upon us because we know it is not our home. It is only temporary. Cling to the gospel.