

Sin Free? – I Peter 4:1-5

I. Introduction:

- A. Before the 19th century, there were only two ways to travel from New York to Sydney, Australia.
 - 1. Usually those old sailing vessels went under the Cape of Good Hope at the southern end of Africa.
 - 2. But there was another route: sailing by way of the Drake Passage or through the Strait of Magellan at the southern tip of South America.
 - 3. For a couple of reasons, the South American course was far more dangerous than the Good Hope route.
 - a. One was that it was 1,500 miles further south and only a few hundred miles from Antarctica.
 - b. The other danger included the extremely perilous currents, narrow passages and terrible storms which faced those old wooden ships heading west into the Pacific.
 - c. Even today, the Strait of Magellan is so difficult that the Chilean government requires ships to use their government pilots who are familiar with the narrows and the problems.

- B. In our current study, I feel like we have entered the Strait of Saint Peter, with doctrinal narrows, contrary winds and possible disastrous heresies.
 - 1. For example, Christ preached to the unbelievers just prior to the flood – but it was through Noah.
 - 2. Some people say Christ preached to those who were dead, offering them a second chance for salvation.
 - 3. And then there is the statement *“baptism doth also now save us”* – but only by way of illustration & example
 - 4. And in the verses we have just read we have the potential heresy of personal sinlessness.

- C. Admittedly, these verses sound complicated and confusing.
 - 1. As someone who stands before others with a message to share two, three, four times a week, I know how easy it is to make simple things sound complicated.
 - 2. It a common paradigm among politicians and heretics to obfuscate their proclivities, rationale and biases.
 - 3. But for the rest of us, sometimes it just happens.
 - 4. For example, I may use words for which I have definitions in my head, but which are new to you.
 - 5. And sometimes I use words for which my definitions are wrong – forcing you into confusion.
 - 6. And there are occasions when the words just aren’t put together in an easily understood pattern.
 - 7. That may be the case in the two sentences before us tonight.

II. Simply put and generally speaking, what is it that Peter is saying?

- A. **Verse 3** declares the obvious: we were once reckless, thoughtless, hopeless sinners.
 - 1. There were days and years in our past, as unsaved Gentiles, that we lived in...
 - a. *“Lasciviousness”* and *“lusts”* – loose, open, ungoverned and uncontrolled greed and immorality.
 - b. And there were days of *“wine,” “revellings”* and *“banquetings”* – parties, sometimes full of drunkenness and drugs.
 - c. And we were filled with *“abominable idolatries”* – a love for things which rivaled God Himself.
 - 2. Now, our old cohorts and accomplices in sin *“think it strange”* that we no longer join them in the same riotous living we shared with them before our conversion.
 - 3. They not only think it strange, but now they may have gone to the other extreme, speaking evil of us for our morality and godly living.
 - a. Sometimes they accuse us of living with the attitude of being *“holier than thou.”*
 - b. They accuse us of hypocrisy and belittlement by simply telling them we won’t join them in their sin.
 - c. But of course these accusation are not true.
 - d. We are only trying to live the new life which we have in Christ.
 - 4. We are living the life to which we testified when we were baptized.

- B. With that as the back ground, **verse 1** says to us: *“You should strive to live above your old sins.”*
 - 1. It not saying that Christians are sinless. It is not saying that if you sin you are not a Christian.
 - 2. Peter is laying out before us the Christian ideal.
 - 3. And while he does, he gives us a weapon to use in the pursuit of that plan.

4. He says, when people die, they are no longer able to do those things they use to do while in the flesh.
 5. And specifically: dead people can no longer sin.
- C. Peter is saying essentially what Paul tells us in **Romans 6**, but his language isn't quite as crisp as his brother's
1. Please turn to **Romans 6** – *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”*
 2. *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*
 - a. *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.*
 - b. *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:*
 3. *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. For he that is dead is freed from sin.*
 - a. *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:*
 - b. *Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.*
 - c. *For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*
 4. *Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*
 - a. *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*
 - b. *Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*
 - c. *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*
 5. *What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.*
 - a. *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*
 - b. *But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*
 - c. *Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*
 6. *I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.*
 - a. *For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.*
 - b. *But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*
 7. *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

III. In the light of Romans 6, let's consider a little more deeply what Peter tells us.

- A. *“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh...”*
1. Peter referred to Christ's sufferings in the last chapter, and in **verse 18** he clarifies that he is not pointing to the pain which Jesus suffered, but more specifically to His death.
 2. We were not redeemed by Jesus' pain, but by the blood which He shed on Calvary as He died.
 3. He could have said, *“Forasmuch then as Christ **DIED** for us in the flesh...”*
 4. Peter didn't use that word, but, clearly, that is what he meant, because the last clause of the verse says, *“for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.”*
 5. The suffering to which he referred stopped sin forever.
 6. But the only thing which can really stop sin in the flesh is the death of that flesh.
 7. I was once run over by a car, which caused me a great deal of suffering, and yet I have continued to sin.
 8. The only suffering in the flesh which completely ends sin is the suffering which we call *“death.”*

- B. By the way, as far as I know, only the King James Bible says in this verse that Christ suffered *“for us.”*
1. I don't have all the modern versions, and I didn't consult everyone that I do have, but the most popular most and common modern translations omit the words *“for us.”*
 2. That may not be the end of the world, or the end of Christianity, but to my feeble brain it's a huge omission.
 3. **Verse 1** might make sense without *“for us,”* but it means so much more with it.
 4. The ESV, ASV, NIV and RSV are not improvements over the KJV with those two words removed.
- C. Christ died for us in His flesh to deliver us from the **penalty** of our sins and also from the **enslavement** of sin.
1. Peter then tells us, *“arm yourselves likewise with the same mind”* as Christ.
 2. Some people say that the exhortation is to **think** about **suffering** as Jesus' did.
 - a. *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”*
 - b. They suggest that if we apply Jesus' approach to suffering, we should be able to live in this sinful world without sin.
 - c. That is **not** Bible doctrine.
 3. Again, I point out that Peter was not talking about suffering persecution & pain; he was talking about death.
 4. And as far as I know, physical death is not something any living Christian has yet experienced.
- D. What Peter is saying is also what Paul told us in **Romans 6**.
1. **Arm yourselves**; pick up as a weapon against sin and temptation, the fact that Christ died in your place.
 2. Through His substitution, when Christ suffered and died, so did you who trust in Him.
 3. The word *“arm”* means *“equip yourself with this as your weapon – make it your sword.”*
 4. When the temptation to sin rears up and begins to attacks, let this mind be in you: *“you are dead to sin”* though Jesus Christ your Saviour.
 5. This suffering and this death were not felt in your flesh, but rather they were felt by your Saviour on your behalf. You died in Christ by faith.
 6. **Romans 6:6** – *“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with (Christ), that (our) body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.*
 - a. *Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him...*
 - b. *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”*
- E. **Verse 2:** As a dead person, sin has no more power over your flesh to fulfill its lusts in you.
1. If you choose to sin, it is because you haven't put on the whole armor of God, and you haven't drawn the sword which the Lord has given you to fight against this enemy.
 2. Christian, as dead to sin but alive unto God, you have a new life to spend in carrying out the will of God.
 3. **Romans 6:11** – *“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*
 - a. *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*
 - b. *Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God... Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”*
 4. Peter says, *“You now have a new life in Christ.*
 - a. *Don't waste the rest of this time you have in the flesh fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of sinful men.*
 - b. *Spend your few remaining days fulfilling the will of God.”*
 5. This is not just the ideal Christian life; this is the way our Saviour expects us to live.