

04-12-2015

Message: Armed with the Attitude of Christ

Text: 1 Peter 3:17 - 4:6

Introduction

- A. If you go on a backpacking trip in the mountains, you prepare yourself for several things you expect to experience - thirst, rain showers, hunger, cold, wild animals, etc.
- B. The time that we Christians spend walking in our mortal bodies on earth also requires that we prepare ourselves for things we should expect to experience, one being suffering for Christ's sake.

1. Ten years ago I was thinking it might (wrongly) appear less practical to American congregations to hear preaching on Christian suffering, since we have been greatly sheltered from such suffering compared to Christians in other countries in various time periods throughout history. I do recall thinking that our sent ones need to be equipped with a handle on such portions of Scripture as Daniel, Mark, Revelation, 1 Peter, as many of the churches they plant will experience suffering for their faith almost immediately.

2. But I think we can all see the culture changing and becoming increasingly hostile to Biblical Christianity, that beyond the threat of malignment, there might be economic, career, and even physical consequences for faithfully following and bearing witness to Jesus Christ as Lord. E.g., ...

Kevin O'Conner's dream was to own and operate his own business, a dream that came true when he opened his pizzeria in 2006, when he started the business from scratch, and which he now operates with his 21 year old daughter Crystal near South Bend, Indiana. Mr. O'Connor and his family have been forced into hiding and had to temporarily shut down their store after they told a local television reporter that they would not cater a gay wedding because it violated their Christian faith to condone such an event by their participation. Their family business came under fierce attack by LGBT activists and sympathizers, calling them anti-gay bigots. Their Facebook pages were smeared with gay pornography. Their phones were overwhelmed by vulgar and profane threats. A high school softball coach in Concord, Ind., was suspended after posting an arson threat on Twitter. "Who's going to Walkerton, IN to burn down #memoriespizza w me?" Coach Jess Dooley tweeted. "It's been pretty tough, yeah," Kevin said. "It's been hard." Kevin said he hopes to reopen the pizzeria sooner rather than later – but an exact date is unclear. Right now, he's trying to console his 21-year-old daughter – who has shouldered a mountain of hateful threats. "Crystal needs some time," Kevin said. "This scared her pretty good."

- C. When Christ was on earth He prepared His disciples for this.

John 15:18 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you.¹⁹ "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but **because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.**²⁰ "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you

Matthew 24:9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and **you will be hated by all nations because of My name.**

- D. They would find themselves in situations where they had to choose between suffering and sin, between serving their Savior and serving themselves. Sadly, as Jesus taught, many who profess faith in Christ will choose to sin against Christ in order to spare themselves suffering for Christ.

Mark 4:16 "In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky *places*,

who, **when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy;**¹⁷ and they have no *firm* root in themselves, but are *only* temporary; then, **when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away.**

- E. Now risen from the dead and reigning at His Father's right hand, Christ, continues to prepare each generation of believers to suffer in this life according to the will of God.

1 Peter 3:17 For it is better, **if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right** rather than for doing what is wrong.¹⁸ For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; 4:1 **Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose**

F. Through His apostle Peter, in 4:1-6 He gives six reasons why we, His people, are to prepare ourselves, when faced with the choice of, "do I sin or do I suffer," to choose to suffer according to the will of God.

I. Because Christ suffered in the His mortal body as an example to us.

1 Peter 4:1 **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,

A. "Therefore" points back to Christ's sufferings in 3:18-22.

B. Suffering with Christ after the example of Christ is part of our calling as Christians.

1 Peter 2:21 For **you have been called for this purpose,** since Christ also suffered for you, **leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,**

Luke 14:27 **"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."**²⁸ "For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and **calculate the cost** to see if he has enough to complete it?"

II. Because those who choose to suffer righteously have truly ceased from sin.

1 Peter 4:1 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,**

A. This is not speaking of perfection in this life, but a characteristic way of life, free from sin's enslavement.

B. Choosing sin is self-indulgent, choosing suffering for Christ's sake is not, and thus indicates the relinquishing of self-will in order to do the will of God. If we are suffering for righteousness, we have not only resolved to cease from sinning, but have acted on that resolve. Sin has no hook in our hearts.

III. Because we are to spend the rest of our lives living for the will of God

1 Peter 4:1 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,² **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.**

A. Living by that faith in Christ by which God's justifies us, results in doing the will of God from the heart. Therefore, ...

1. ... Christ can say ...

Mark 3:35 "For **whoever does the will of God**, he is My brother and sister and mother."

2. ... the writer of Hebrews can say ...

Hebrews 10:36 For you have need of endurance, **so that when you have done the will of God**, you may receive what was promised.³⁷ FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.³⁸ BUT **MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH**; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.

3. ... Christ's apostle John can say ...

1 John 2:17 The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but **the one who does the will of God lives forever**.

B. Sometimes it is the will of God that we suffer for doing what is right in His sight. In those times we are to continue to live by faith, entrusting our lives to God by continuing to do His will regardless of the cost.

1 Peter 4:19 Therefore, those also who **suffer according to the will of God** shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

IV. Because we already wasted too much of our brief life in the flesh pursuing sinful passions

1 Peter 4:3 **For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles**, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.

A. Even though the majority of Peter's readers are likely Gentiles, the "desire of the Gentiles" refers to sinful yet acceptable practices typical among the Gentiles vs the Jews whose law condemned such practices.

B. The problem of withdrawing from affirming and participating in some of the behaviors and lifestyles popular in society continues to be an issue today. New converts must often decide which relationships they can keep and which ones they must discontinue for the sake of loving and following Christ.

V. Because those who malign and persecute us for following Christ will be held accountable by Christ at His return.

1 Peter 4:4 In *all* this, they are surprised that you do not run with *them* into the same excesses of dissipation, and **they malign you**;⁵ **but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead**.

A. Idolatries were not called "abominable" by non-Christian Gentiles. Even if they did not like a particular religion, the worship of idols in itself was not condemned. The Greeks and Romans were polytheists.

What they condemned the Jews and Christians for was their claim that there was only one true God, and all others were false.

B. Interestingly, as our culture now celebrates religious pluralism, Christians are once again coming under

increasing criticism and attack for insisting there is only one God and one way of salvation, through

faith in God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way to the Father but by Christ (John

14:6).

C. Even though Christians may be criticized for abandoning their past lifestyle and cultural values, we can take heart in knowing that human judgments are not the last word - Christ's judgment on behalf of God at His return is the final word. "Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead" is none other than He whom God raised from the dead as Lord!

Acts 10:42 "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that **this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.**

Acts 17:30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent,³¹ because He has fixed a day in which **He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.**"

2 Timothy 4:1 I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of **Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead,**

John 5:22 "For not even the Father judges anyone, but **He has given all judgment to the Son,**²³ so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father.

VI. Because we who have received the gospel of Christ, even though we die, will live again at Christ's return.

1 Peter 4:6 For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, **that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in spirit according to the will of God.**

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been **put to death in the flesh, but made alive in spirit;**

A. The contrast between flesh and spirit is a contrast between our present mortal and future glorified existence. Flesh refers to our mortal body and existence, spirit refers to our spiritual, immortal body and existence.

1 Corinthians 15:44 it is sown a natural body, **it is raised a spiritual body.** If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual *body*.

1 Timothy 3:16 By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: **He who was revealed in the flesh, was justified in spirit, ...**

B. The fact that some who have received Christ at the preaching of the gospel have nonetheless died under the curse God put on humanity due to Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden is no basis to devalue the gospel and its promise of future grace in God's eternal glory.

C. Even though God's judgment on mortal human flesh results in the death of believers as well as unbelievers, those who received the gospel of Christ preached to them while they were alive, were enabled to do so by God's sovereign grace, so that when Christ returns to judge the world in righteousness, they will be made alive in the glorious resurrection bodies Christ will give to them by His power according to His promise.

1 Peter 4:6 For the gospel has for this purpose 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.**

John 6:39 "**This is the will of Him who sent Me**, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but **raise it up** on the last day.⁴⁰ "For **this is the will of My Father**, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will **raise him up** on the last day."

Conclusion

- A. Suffering according to the will of God did not result in defeat for Christ but in victory! He died in His mortal, fleshy body, but He was raised with an immortal, glorious spiritual body.
- B. Therefore, do not fear any degree of suffering for Christ, even unto death, for as it was for Christ, so will it be for those who lose their lives for Christ's sake. They will gain their lives at Christ's return.
Jesus said ...

Luke 21:16 "But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put *some* of you to death,¹⁷ and you will be hated by all because of My name.¹⁸ "**Yet not a hair of your head will perish.**¹⁹ "**By your endurance you will gain your lives.**

1 Peter 4:1 **Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose,**