

## **ARE YOU THROUGH WITH THE WORLD?**

(Have you had Enough of Running with the Crowd?)

I Peter 4: 3-5 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

We finished our Resurrection Day celebration last week, closing off the Day of Jesus rising again by singing our cantata, and then enjoying Tammy Wollman's delicious home-made caramel rolls. It was a grand day of celebration. Believers can have fun-lots of it. We can rejoice. We don't have to get buzzed to rejoice. Our joy doesn't have to be repented of. Paul said in Galatians 5: 23, as he concluded his listing of the nine fruit of the Holy Spirit, "Against such things there is no law." There are three huge gates that lead into the Cathedral of Milan, in the district of Lombardy, Italy. Over one side gate is an inscription in marble under a beautiful flower bouquet. It says, "The things that please are temporary." Over the second side gate is a cross with this inscription: "The things that disturb us are temporary." Over the central gate, is a huge inscription saying, "The things that are important are eternal." As we listen to this pointed exhortation of the apostle Peter, he might well ask us, "Are you seeking joy at local bars?" "Are you surfing the internet for lustful shows?" "At the fair this summer, will the world be surprised that you won't be running with the crowd this year?" Or, honestly, will you be running with the worldly crowd—forgetting whose you are and whom you serve?

Do we understand the sharp contrast between believers in the apostolic age, in the first century, and believers in Sweetwater County today? Does what they believed match with what we believe today? Truth never changes. The truth of the Gospel in Peter's day is the same truth we are reading about today in I Peter 4: 3-5. Praise God there are still many people today who have a deep devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ as Peter did. I was listening on the way back to the church on Monday to Pastor Alistair Begg. He spoke about the sharp contrast in the attitude we have toward conversion and devotion today. He said, "Let's have none of this silly teaching about the various stages involved in a progression of a walk with Christ, as if, "You can have the conversion package, which includes heaven and no hell but nothing beyond that; or, if you would like a little more, you can have the devotion package, which involves a little more commitment on your part, but it yields special benefits; or you can have..." and so on. Many people think of the Christian life just like that: "Oh no, I'm just converted; I'm not devoted." I want to say to you: if you're not devoted, it's questionable whether you're converted. "Well, I was converted and devoted a long time ago, but now I'm just demoted." Well, get back and get devoted—wholly devoted to one another and to Christ."

For the early Christians, eternity began the day they received Jesus into their hearts and lives. The fact that they had to live out their earthly days in the body didn't cramp their style or change their perception that their lives were united with Christ. They lived out the truth that their lives were hidden with Christ in God. They didn't see God as far off in heaven, but they saw that where He was, they were,

and where they were, He now was, by His Spirit. Those first century believers saw the grave of Jesus as the place where their pattern of sinning was buried with Him. They saw the grave as an impassable barrier to going back to their old way of life. If the world could refuse and reject and crucify their Lord, they wanted nothing to do with the world and being conformed to it. In Christ's resurrection and ascension, these apostolic believers felt they were participants in a strong spiritual way. Where their treasure was, there their heart was also. They saw themselves as citizens of the kingdom where Jesus was King, seated on the right hand of God the Father. They knew they still had to dwell down here just like we do, but it was only because here they had to do their business to make money so that they could live and do the will of God. They knew they had to learn lessons that could only be learned under the conditions our world subjects us to, with its passions and persecutions. They saw themselves as an antiseptic to the evil around them in their society. But all of this was as it should be because, with Peter, in I Peter 1:1, they saw themselves as aliens, pilgrims and strangers on the earth. They were breathing new air—Peter and the apostles and the early Christians were breathing celestial air here on earth. They were inhaling the breath of God's eternity.

Never shall I ever forget my first trip to India. When I got off the plane in Bombay, the stifling smell of human sweat and human refuse, mixed with the heat and humidity almost knocked me over. Many passengers who were frequent flyers to Bombay, now called Mumbai, gasped, and all they could say was "Ooooh, "India." Beloved, when the world gets around us, they should smell the breath of heaven, the aroma of life unto life. And when we are placed in the world in the thick of its folly, it ought to be as stench in our nostrils, of death unto death. In I Corinthians 2: 14-16, Paul said, "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing: to the one an aroma of death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?"

Beloved, what Peter wants to tell us today is that there is to be a sharp contrast between us and the world, between what the world's values are, and what our values are, and between the way the world pulls others and the way it no longer lures or pulls us. In this contrast, Peter makes three daring statements that ought to be our daring experience of life. **What are these three daring statements that we ought to have made real in our own experience?**

**YOUR TIME OUGHT TO BE UP—ENOUGH, SUFFICIENT FOR LIVING LIKE THE WORLD!**

(I.) Look at verse 3 closely. "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. What an enumeration of awful dark and wicked things that we ought to put on our "never again" list—our list of "The time is past, for doing that ever again." What a remarkable statement this is that each of us as Christians needs to make to Jesus and to testify to each other, and then to mean it. What is this statement? It is in reality, "I have

had it with the world's sin patterns. The time already past is more than sufficient for me to have lived in sin. I have had my fill of it. I don't want a drop more." What a glorious place to come to—whatever amount of past sinning we have done is enough. If you were saved like me, at an early age, the sinning I did up til' then, Peter says, was enough. If you were saved from sin, after many years of living in sin, that was enough sinning; don't want any more time in sin. God save us all from saying, "I was saved early, and I need a little more time to sin." Or, "I was deprived." God forbid. And if you have had a life of sin, how tragic to say, "Yes, I know I need a clean break with sin, but honestly, I just want a little more of sin first." God forbid. Beloved, whether you've sinned a little or a lot, God had to pull us all out of the same awful sinful pit. Our time in sin was sufficient. Make the break. Let go of sin like a hot potato. Choose to follow and to do the will of God.

Now Peter writes down what we ought to be done with. This isn't an exhaustive list, but it gives us a taste of what ought to nauseate us just to think about. What is this dark enumeration or numbering of dark sins? (1) **Living in sensuality or pursuing a course of sensuality** – (1) the Greek translation of this phrase might well be, "running to stagnant pools of havoc-making sin." The KJV calls it "walking in lasciviousness." The Greek word is **aselgeia** and it means incontinent, (medically, we know what that means, and we want no part of it. It means without control, filthy, wanton undisciplined, lawless, insolent, dirty-mouthed, filthy conversations, no restraints, and the idea is that there is no struggle against sin—no repentance. You just choose to live there. Fifteen years ago, when Andrew was a lot younger, on a Saturday morning, I took my grandson, with me to the dump. It was one of those damp, gooey days. We backed up to dump trash in what appeared to be a stagnant pool of filthy refuse. I remember, there was a bit of a small pond of water with a little boat floating on one end. Andrew got out to help me unload our red pick-up, but the smell, oh the smell, was horrendous. The next thing I knew, he was back inside the truck with the windows up. Just a whiff of the stench for him was sufficient. Beloved, do some of us live with a foul mouth and never say, "Enough anyway!" Do some of us watch pornography and never say, "Enough!" Do some of us try to live and dress and look just like the world and never say, "The time is sufficient. Enough!" Do some of us keep going back to drugs and alcohol and we never look that habit straight in the eye and say, with God's help, "The time is sufficient for this. I'm done." "Enough!"

**Passions or lusts** (2) Peter's word is **epithumia**. This is a compulsion, a longing for what is forbidden. It is an obsession, a craving, a desire that cannot be satisfied, it is concupiscence which is an irrational longing for pleasure that is unbridled. God give us the courage in Christ with His indwelling Holy Spirit to say, "Enough! The time is sufficient. **Drunkeness**, (3) Peter's word is excess of wine, the Greek word being **anachusis**. **Anachusis** means to pour wine in excess. And millions go to the Pour House and end up in the Poor House. Beloved, by God's grace and His leading by His Spirit, say "Enough of pouring wine and craving more and more. Enough! **Orgies**, (4) The Greek word is **komos**. It means "letting loose," reveling,

rioting, and the picture is riot and revelry mixed with alcohol and half drunken frolickers lustfully lighting up the town at night, carousing, and being immoral. Oh, haven't you had enough of playing the fool in carousing? I heard a spouse openly confessing, at a public restaurant, saying, "I was so drunk I was naked in the street." Haven't you done that long enough? Isn't the time sufficient?

**Drinking parties** – (5) The Greek word is **potos**. It means a drinking bout or bash, a "kegger." The literal meaning is a party or banquet or occasion to go out for beer, to get high. Peter is saying, "That was then, this is now! No more, I've had one too many of those drinking parties. Don't ever believe the lie that when we get to heaven, it will be one big drinking party. There won't be drinking parties in heaven, and there won't be any drinking parties in hell. The rich man wanted even a drop of water to cool his burning tongue. **Lawless idolatry** – (6) The Greek word for **abominable or lawless** is **athemitos**. It means that which is illegal, unlawful, shameful, that which is urged hotly and demanded violently, that which is vicious and infamous, of evil and ill repute, scandalous, vile, that which has a bad reputation and can land you in prison—haven't you had enough of this?

The Greek word for **idolatry** is **eidoloatreia**. This is a strange word—image worship—literally, a slave of the mind against God. The image can be figurative or literal, Strong's concordance says. "It is a depraved idea that captures our mind and its image rules us rather than God." Our world is filled with a desire to conform to the image of the world, in thinking, in our pleasures, in our bodily image, in our music, in our desire to look like the world—be it one little thing, a whole lifestyle, or an area of stubborn desire to be and look like the world. Peter says, "Hasn't the time been sufficient for you in this? Do you and I still have a thought in our mind, "Lord, let me be like, look like, and act like, or sing like, or speak like, or think like, or feel like the world, like the Gentiles? Thunder can be loud in Rock Springs, but let the Word of God thunder in your heart today. Enough! Be like Me, Jesus says, not the world. Peter makes a second inspired, but daring statement:

**YOUR ACTIONS OUGHT TO LEAVE THE WORLD SURPRISED THAT YOU WON'T RUN WITH THEM.** (II.) Turn to verse 4 – "With respect to this, they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you." What is this surprise stuff Peter mentions? The Greek word for surprise or think strange is **xenizo**. It means to treat as a guest. You aren't from around here, are you? It also means to be astonished at the strangeness of a thing. The world you once ran with knows which ones of you are the life of the party, which ones of you, when you loosen up with wine, compromise or lose your morals. They know and they know what to expect. All of a sudden it's like—who's the house guest? They surely aren't from around here. And the fool-proof meaning of this verse about them maligning you is literally, "The world will try to make you look like a perfect fool in as many ways as they can. Beloved, it is better to look like a fool than to die like a fool. Paul says, "We are fools for Christ's sake." (I Corinthians 4:10)

What is this joining with them Peter is speaking of? The strange Greek word for **join or run with** is **sunithemai**. It means to have a covenant that places you jointly in a consensual relationship. It means to make a bargain or an agreement of assent to do the same things together. When we enter God's new covenant with Jesus, the old covenants of running with the crowd and joining in on their debauchery ought to be forever gone. We don't run together anymore. And Peter adds, "to the same flood of debauchery. The Greek word for debauchery is **asotia**. It means literally to be as a prodigal, with loss of morals, loss of virtue, loss of decency, loss of principles, spending it all as a prodigal, routed, ruined in values. Beloved, isn't it past time that we astound and astonish the world and take the guff of being made a fool. Our actions ought to surprise the world that we don't run with them. Our time ought to be up, sufficient, enough for living like the world. Peter makes a third and last daring statement.

### **YOUR MIND OUGHT NEVER TO FORGET THE JUDGMENT COMING.**

Peter's words in verse 5 make it clear that when you want to punch the ones who make fun of you, don't resort to such sinful vengeance. Let God have the last word. Notice what Peter says, "But they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead." God will settle the score. Peter is saying, "Hand over your case to God. They will give an account—the living and the dead. No generation will get away with living for the flesh. The evil deeds may be forgotten by man, but not by God, unless they are repented for and under the blood. So beloved, suffer for doing what is right. Leave all judgment to God. W. L. Thompson wrote, "There's a great day coming, a great day coming, there's a great day coming by and by, when the saints and the sinners will be parted right and left. Are you ready for that day to come? Are you ready, are you ready, are you ready for the Judgment Day? (Repeat.) "There's a sad day coming, a sad day coming, There's a sad day coming by and by, When the sinner shall hear His doom, Depart, I know you not, Are you ready for that day to come? Are you ready, are you ready, for the Judgment Day, (2x)