

XXXV. Peter in Biblical Perspective

The Elect in the Exile

“Arm Yourself – Part 2”

I Peter 4:1–6

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Our text is in I Peter 4. This is our 35th study in I Peter. May God speak to your heart for this is His Word. I Peter 4:1–7 says *[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, [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.*

[7] The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.

May God bless the reading of His Word for the grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

When you see the word ‘therefore’ in the Bible you need to ask yourself, what is it there for? The ‘therefore’ means you can’t understand what this text is saying without understanding what went before it. The context is not only the content of what went before it but it’s the one who is writing this. When you study an epistle you look at who the Spirit of God is using. Peter doesn’t come to this task in neutrality. Peter was developed in the providence of God for the writing of this epistle. Here Peter is writing a pastoral letter about the Christian life to Christians in the area known today as Turkey.

This is the same Peter who walked with Jesus when He was here on earth and one of the last things Jesus said to Peter, by a charcoal fire at the Sea of Galilee was ‘Peter do you love Me more than these?’ Peter said ‘Lord, You know.’ Three times Jesus asked him this as God gave Peter a chance for an opportunity for his repentance to match his sin and earlier beside a charcoal fire Peter had denied Jesus three times. Now he gets to confess Him three times. After all three times Jesus said ‘Feed My sheep. Tend My flock. Nurture My lambs.’ That is what Peter is doing in this epistle for it’s a pastoral letter about the Christian life.

Peter calls believers elect exiles in this letter as he uses Old Testament imagery of our salvation. God’s covenant people were in slavery in Egypt. God by His grace remembers and honors His promises, as He not only brings judgment against the Egyptians but delivers His people from slavery. Now we have someone greater than Moses, we have Jesus. Now it’s not just a Pharaoh that gets defeated but Satan will be defeated. Now it’s not just Egypt but the power of the world in its rebellion against God and all the enemies of God. Peter says that in light of what Christ has done know that you’re elect exiles. Elect is who you are by the grace of God. Exiles are what you do for you’re not to root yourselves in this world but you’re rooted in the Kingdom of God as you are on mission and on message. Peter builds on this imagery has we

are delivered out of slavery and now we're going through a wilderness, a broken world headed to the Promised Land of the new heavens and the new earth.

Then Peter begins to equip us for this life as elect exiles. He does this by first telling us who we are in Christ by giving us 13 Gospel blessings we have in Christ because of what Christ did for us on the cross. We have a tendency to think we're Christians because of what we do instead of because of what Jesus did. What we do is because He has saved us not to help Him save us. Then Peter starts giving us gospel commands, what we do for Christ because of our love for Him. So far we have covered five of them. Again, Peter takes us back to the Old Testament here for God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and before He gives us those commandments He tells us 'I am the Lord your God who delivers you.' He doesn't tell you what to do for Him until He tells you what He did for you. Now this is what you have been saved to do for Him.

In a brief summary here are the five Gospel commands for the Gospel blessed. The elect exiles on their sojourners journey for Christ one, have personal pursuit of a pervasive holiness in life. Be ye holy as I am holy (I Peter 1:16). Two, have a sincere and heart-felt love for one another. I am so grateful how I continually hear about how the congregational communities in this church minister to those who are going through difficulties in their life. I hear people say 'Pastor I'm just overwhelmed by the love from my congregational communities' but of course you have to be a part of one before you can get overwhelmed by it. We're not in this life alone. We're in it together. This is not a perfect love because we're not perfect but it's an intentional love.

Thirdly, there is a cultivation of an appetite for God's Word preached. Faith comes by hearing and God's Word was designed to be preached. It was given also to be read and studied. Fourthly, there is a lifestyle of obedience that stimulates praise to God. The fifth one was being in subjection to every human institution silencing the ignorance of the foolishness. Any time an institution would tell us to disobey God we must obey God rather than man but in obeying of God we are called to submit ourselves in marriage, family, church, business etc. which shows how we treat each other and that will silence the prideful arrogance of those who stand in rebellion against God by rebelling against every human institution. So these Gospel commands are how we live for Christ on our way to Christ which is called a Gospel life.

What can you expect as elect exiles on your way in this Gospel life? What happened to Israel when they walked out of Egypt? Pharaoh came after them. When God starts delivering you from your sins and you start serving Jesus, Satan, the world and the flesh comes after you. So the life in Christ is a life of suffering for Christ. I'm not talking about Christians suffering because we're in a broken world. We all will experience death, sickness, loss of jobs, separation, etc. This suffering for Christ is a specific suffering. Paul said in II Timothy 3:12, *[12] Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* Philippians 1:29 says *[29] For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.* Many of the Apostles talk about this kind of suffering in their writings in the Bible.

Peter takes one half of this epistle to talk about suffering for Christ – how to do it, why you do it, what God does with it. The reason for this is because you can't expect a parade or applause. Don't get angry when you don't get applause, just turn it over to the Lord. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. The Gospel life is willing to suffer for Christ's sake. Every true Christian, who by God's grace intentionally living for God's glory, will at some time, to some degree suffer for Christ's sake. Don't be surprised at suffering. Peter, as a pastor, is equipping the sheep, to

know how to live for Christ. Suffering is a gift from God as God will use this in your life, for your life as you serve Him. How are we supposed to do this? Peter is going to give us another command as we look at I Peter 4. So now we have covered the ‘therefore.’

In I Peter 4:1 we see Peter’s call to suffering. Christ suffering instructs me in my suffering and inspires me in my suffering. Here’s how it instructs me. The sufferings of Christ are the foundation (reason I am suffering), the formation (how to suffer) and the motivation (why I’m willing) for Christian suffering. So the sixth Gospel command is arm yourself with the mind of Christ to endure the spiritual warfare of suffering for Christ as you live for Christ in this world. This is unmistakable military, warfare vocabulary.

Peter is no different than Paul. In Ephesians Paul tells us who we are in Christ in Ephesians 1–3, how to live for Christ in Ephesians 4–6 and then in Ephesians 6 Paul takes 12 verses to tell us about spiritual warfare. Put on the whole armor of Christ – belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, shoes of peace. Paul arms you up. Now Peter is not quite as verbose as Paul. Peter just takes one verse and says to arm yourself. When you are in warfare you arm yourself with a Christian mind – the mind of Christ. If I want to live a life for Christ even in the midst of suffering I need to have a heart for Christ and that heart has to be instructed and inspired with the mind of Christ.

Jesus didn’t just run into suffering. When He was praying in the garden He said ‘Father if there be any way let this cup of suffering pass from Me, yet not My will...’ See how He is thinking, with an unfettered heart ready to suffer. You can’t live for Christ in the midst of suffering without having an unfettered heart for Christ. You can’t have an unfettered heart for Christ without it being instructed with the mind of Christ. You can know the mind of Christ which you find in the Bible, but people can know the Bible backward and forward and not have a heart for Christ and therefore not have a life for Christ. You can know the facts but to think Christianly you have to have a heart for Christ.

How do you think about the issues of life when Satan comes to deal with you in suffering as he inevitably will? So let’s finish walking through this I Peter 4 text. I Peter 4:1b says [1b] *for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin...* The power of sin has been broken so you can live the rest of life, no longer for human passions but for the will of God. Then Peter gives this list of a life of self-indulgence and rebellion against God, but he says that time has passed for the rest of my time will be given to the Lord. Then he says that those who do the will of the flesh will be surprised when you do not join them, not if you do not join them. The expectation is that you are done with that. Now I do have an old man that keeps wanting to drag me back into it so every day I need to kill the old man, flee temptation and get the mind of Christ. I acknowledge that I struggle with the old man that wants to get back in there but let me kill him daily, not manage him and start walking toward Christ.

He goes onto say in I Peter 4:6, [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.* What is he saying here? I only know of two exceptions but everybody is going to hit the judgment of sin in the flesh and that’s called death. Enoch and Elijah are the only two I know that didn’t die but went on to be with the Lord. Jesus died and rose again and took our penalty. Part of the judgment of sin is the way of the flesh which means everybody dies but when you are in Jesus, though you go the way of the flesh in death, you are walking in the way of the Spirit where God is working in your life. That’s the Good News, the Gospel – Jesus has won the victory. Death is the place where the flag flies the highest every single time.

I am going to give my takeaways in the form of questions and there are three questions that are going to be answered here. The sixth Gospel command is for us to arm ourselves with thinking so that we can think the way Christ thinks as the inevitable suffering from the world and Satan will come against you. The Bible tells us not to be ignorant of Satan's strategies and he has three of them. He has the strategy of imitation. He confuses with imitation. He loves to put out tares and say they are wheat. That is man-made religion and even false religion in professing Christianity.

Secondly, Satan loves to do infiltration. He loves to infiltrate the leadership of the church with false teaching and false leadership. The Bible calls this wolves in sheep's clothing. Paul warns the church in Ephesus of this in Acts 20:29–30 which says [29] *I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; [30] and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.* He also infiltrates the membership of the church through grumbling and complaining. These are people who sow discord. The ninth commandment says not to bear false witness, yet that seems to run rampant in our society through social media as people repeat through copy and paste or retweets. The ninth commandment also tells us to honor and protect one another's reputation which is the positive side to that command.

The third thing Satan loves to do is intimidate and he does this in various ways. He marginalizes. He intimidates you culturally. He wants you to think you're not going to be on the right side of history if you hold to biblical truth. I may not be on the right side of the history of this nation but I'm going to be on the right side of God and that's my biggest concern. How am I supposed to live with truth and love? How are you to respond to that suffering? So let's get to the three questions.

Question one is who will be willing to suffer for Christ? Those who will suffer for Christ in this life are the people who know that Christ suffered for them. We see this in the Apostles' Creed which says;

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in *Jesus Christ*, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the *Holy Spirit*,
born of the *Virgin Mary*,

suffered under *Pontius Pilate*...(then suffered under His Father)
was crucified, died, and was buried...

Editorial summation – Then He descended into hell for on that cross Jesus had all of the hell for all of the sins (in thought, word and deed) of all of His people for all of eternity came upon Him. It wasn't a paper shuffle where over here is their sins and over here is My life and I'll shuffle the papers. No, the Bible says that He became all of that sin. We hear His suffering in Mark 15:34 when Jesus says from the cross, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken **me**?" Why would the Father forsake the Son whom He had declared on numerous occasions 'this is My Son in whom I am well pleased'? It was because on the cross Jesus was you and me. All of our sins of omission and commission – He became all of it for us. Why would I not suffer for Him now?

I am not suffering for my atonement. I am suffering for the One who suffered for my atonement. If I know who I am in Christ then I will be ready to suffer for Him. That is my foundation – Christ and Him crucified. This hell deserving sinner has been saved by Jesus who took my hell and it descended upon Him on the cross.

The second question is how are we to suffer for Christ? We are to suffer for Christ by our hearts being informed with the mind of Christ. Arm yourselves with the same way of thinking. Peter is doing like Paul. Paul says in Philippians 1:29 says [29] *For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.* The Apostles all know what Jesus said. He said in John 16:33, [33] *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*” He also said in Matthew 5:11–12, [11] *“Blessed are you **when** others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

So when this suffering comes, because I am in Christ and Christ is mine, we are to arm ourselves with the mind of Christ, with His way of thinking. Again Paul said the same thing Peter is saying here in Philippians 2:5–8 which says [5] *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* Jesus humbled Himself in the suffering to save us and glorify the Father. ‘Help me think the same way, Lord’, not that my suffering saves anybody, but that Jesus will use my suffering to glorify the Savior. I want to learn to think that way.

Paul does it again in the book of Romans. In Romans chapters 1 through 11 he tells us who were are in Christ and then enters into a doxology at the end of Romans. But in Romans 12:1–2 he says [1] *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. [2] Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* You are going to suffer so present your bodies but you stay ready by being transformed in the renewing of your mind. Think differently about who God is, about what sin is and what life is. So the unfettered heart is inspired and instructed by the mind of Christ.

When I first came to Briarwood about 20 years ago there was something that was popular then. It was a bracelet that had four letters on it – WWJD (What Would Jesus Do). I think this is great but maybe it should read WDJJ – What Did Jesus Do. Where do you find that out? You find that out in the Bible. Actually maybe I need a bigger bracelet because I can think of more letters to put on it – WDJSTD (What Did Jesus Say To Do). What does Jesus tell me to do? That is what I want to know. I not only need the foundation that Christ suffered for me but I need the formation of Christ’s mind as to how to suffer for Him.

The third question is why are we willing to suffer for Christ? Peter gives three motivations. The first one is that you have a Christ-delivered life. I Peter 4:1b says [1b] *for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin...* He is not saying that if you have suffered you’re going to have a sinless life. He is talking Romans 6. In suffering, I am making a proclamation for I am willing to suffer rather than to sin against the Lord. What is that telling the world? I am dead to sin and alive to Christ. Now sin is not dead to you for it’s still living in you because you have an old man, a body of death and the principle of sin that’s working against you, but you are identified with Christ. I am in Christ and Christ is in me. Christ is my life.

When you are a Christian your identity is not what you do after you became a Christian or before you were a Christian. Your identity is what Christ did for you to make you a Christian.

He is your identity. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21). Christ is my life. That is what you identify with. So when Satan comes knocking at the door to lead you off into sin or try to intimidate you go to the door and answer it. Derek Thomas discovered this from Martin Luther's comment on sin's dominion. He said 'I have ceased from sin.' When you were saved you were delivered from the penalty of sin. Shame and guilt don't disappear, they have to be eradicated and when you come to Jesus He takes it all. It doesn't matter what happened in your past for if you confess it, turn from it, and put your trust in Jesus then all is forgiven. Shame comes from guilt. He removes the guilt and by Him doing that He removes the shame. *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus* (Romans 8:1). Don't try to manage it. Don't try to therapize it, just go to Jesus and He eradicates it. He pays for it. He also make you innocent because He gives you His righteousness.

He also delivers you from the power of sin. The principle of sin is still living in you but you are delivered from the power of it and you are being delivered from the practice of sin. And you will be delivered from the presence of sin. That is what He is doing in you, therefore Christ is in your life so when Satan knocks at the door here is what Martin Luther said to do; As he goes to the door and opens it, Satan says with a fiendish smile 'Is Martin Luther here?' Luther says 'No, he died. You're talking to Jesus.' Jesus is answering the door. I'm in Christ and Christ is in me. Galatians 2:20 says *[20] I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* That's where we identify in and for Christ.

It's not Harry Reeder the preacher or Harry Reeder the self-centered sinner. It's not me anymore and I'm not that anymore. I'm not living my life to be somebody for I already am somebody – I'm a child of the King, clothed in the righteousness of Christ and washed in the blood of Jesus. Jesus' blood and righteousness are my only dress. So we suffer for Christ by the motivation of who we are in Christ and what He has done in us (Galatians 2:20).

The second motivation Peter gives to why we are willing to suffer for Christ is that we have a Christ-directed life. It is now the will of God that directs you and not the will of the flesh. Let's go back to look at I Peter 4:2–4 which says *[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.*

You tell the world 'Sorry I don't do that anymore for I'm through with that but can I sit and talk with you about Who has changed my life?' Realize the world is not interested in coming to talk to us if we live like them and go to church on Sunday. They want to know if something has changed you but don't expect them to offer a parade when you don't join them. They will mock, malign and then possibly martyr and you'll have to die. But you are willing, why? Think of it this way. Over here the time has passed for the way you used to live for you gave enough time to the wasteland of sin. I know I still have to deal with it for it's still calling me and tries to entrap me. I have to flee temptation and kill the old man everyday but the one thing I know is that I've given enough of my life to that.

I like what D. James Kennedy said about hearing people's testimonies. He said 'I hear people's testimonies and by the time they're through Jesus doesn't seem to mean much to them but their sin did because they spent all their time talking about their sin. Then they end by saying 'then I met Jesus and I'm saved' and then they're done. How about one third about your sin, one

third about your conversion and one third about your new life?’ That has so impressed me that I have just dropped the third down. Here is what I would say about my testimony. Before Jesus I was an immoral, profane, self-absorbed, violent person. God saved me. I gave enough time to the drinking parties, the immoral life style, etc. and now the rest of my time I want to do the will of God. Nobody knows it more than me that I will have to struggle with my old man but the point is that Jesus saved me from that and I’ve given enough time to it so I don’t want to give any more time to it. The rest of my time I want to spend with going with the Lord and being with the Lord.

I want to come back to identity. I’m certainly not going to let what dominated my life before Christ be my identity in Christ. I was asked the other day to talk about what it means to be a gay Christian. I said ‘There is no such thing. Are there Christians who are saved out of homosexuality? Yes and do they battle a principle of sin within them? Yes but we’re never identified with our sins. I’m not a fornicating Christian or a pornography Christian or a stealing Christian or a gambling Christian.’ I don’t take those things that time has passed and identify with them. I know I have the struggle within me, the old man but I know I don’t manage that struggle or normalize it by identifying with it. I say ‘God, give me the grace to kill it every day and to flee temptation.’ One of the best ways to kill it is to quit identifying yourself with it and identify with Jesus.

I was talking with a man the other day who told me he had been talking with another man who has a ministry called ‘drink and think.’ I told him he would have to explain that to me. He said ‘They rent out a pub, buy the adult beverages (as if there is ever a misnomer) and then we talk theology. What do you think of that?’ I said ‘You may not want to hear what I think. If someone asks me to go to a pub and share with someone about Jesus I will show up tomorrow for I would be glad to do it. But I am not going to create drinking parties or orgies or anything else like that as a venue to share the Gospel. Time has passed for that for me. It is not because I’m self-righteous, it’s because I’m saved. I don’t want anything to do with it. I am only saved by the grace of God to the glory of God and the same God who saved me from my sins has at least given me some sort of hatred for those sins. I don’t want to make peace treaties with sin. I want to kill it. This is what He is calling us to do – to have a Christ-directed life to the glory of God.

The third motivation Peter gives to why we are willing to suffer for Christ is we have a Christ delivered-life. We have a Christ-determined life for it is Jesus who delivers us and everyone you know that died in Jesus is that they lived by the Spirit before they died and they are alive in the presence of the Lord right now because of the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He has given them life and life evermore. I Peter 4:1–6 is such a rich text.

I want to close with this thought. You have a foundation, a formation from the mind of Christ and your motivations that instruct and inspire us. I am who I am because Jesus made me who I am – I’m delivered. I am who I am because Jesus now directs my life. Is it imperfect and uneven? Absolutely, but praise God He is persistent by His grace in my life. You don’t have to keep going back to those old cisterns to drink, don’t identify with them or give them room for them. I don’t need to walk through the wasteland of sin anymore. I want to walk through Immanuel’s ground to glory in life and by the grace of God you can walk in the Spirit, guided by the Word with your eyes fixed on Jesus. He loves you and will be with you. The sin hates you and will kill you. He loves you and if you haven’t come to Him, come today. He is inviting you, not me for I’m just reporting it.

Nobody knew this more than Peter. Nobody knew a willing heart has to have the mind of Christ more than Peter. We see this in Matthew 26:31–35a which says [31] *Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ [32] But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” [33] Peter answered him, “Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.” [34] Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” [35a] Peter said to him, “Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!”* Not long after Peter is by a charcoal fire when a little girl says ‘are you one of them’ and Peter says ‘no, not me.’

Peter had a heart to suffer for Christ but he needed the mind of Christ for the heart to be unfettered. That is what he got because this Jesus who told him that he would deny Him, when He rose said ‘tell Peter’ and then He tells Peter ‘now you can feed My sheep.’ It’s Jesus, it’s not us. It’s not the resolve of our heart. It’s the unfettered heart that is instructed and inspired by the mind of Christ that gives us a life that is willing to suffer for Christ. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Take a few moments in silent prayer. Jesus says ‘My sheep know My voice’ and if Jesus has spoken to your heart through all the inadequacies of this preacher today He has spoken to you so that you might follow and come to Him. Cast all your cares upon Him because He loves you. He cares for you. He died for sinners like me and you. Today can be the definitive day that you say ‘I’ve given enough time to walking through the wasteland of sin, Jesus the time has come for me to come to You so that the rest of my time can be given to You who gave Yourself for me. Jesus, no matter what it costs me, I know You will be with me. Give me a life for You propelled by a heart for You, instructed by a mind from You.’ Jesus I lift these prayers up with Your people today in Your glorious Name, Amen.

Power Point

ELECT EXILES – THE SOJOURNERS JOURNEY – THE DIVINE SUMMONS

1. Personal pursuit of a pervasive holiness in life
2. Sincere and heart-felt love for one another
3. Cultivation of an appetite for God’s Word
4. A lifestyle of obedience stimulating praise to God
5. Subjection to every human institution silencing the ignorance of foolishness

CHRISTIAN SUFFERING

Every true Christian, who by God’s grace is intentionally living for God’s glory, will at some time, to some degree suffer for Christ’s sake.

CHRISTIAN SUFFERING AND THE SUFFERING OF CHRIST

The sufferings of Christ are the Foundation, the Formation, and the Motivation for Christian suffering.

Gospel Command #6

Arm yourself with the mind of Christ to endure the spiritual warfare of suffering for Christ as you live for Christ in this world.

LIFE TAKEAWAYS

I. Who will be willing to suffer for Christ?

II. How are we to suffer for Christ?

III. Why are we willing to suffer for Christ?

- Because we have Christ-delivered life
- Because we have a Christ-directed life
- Because we have a Christ-determined life