

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

www.unholycharade.com

www.lightdarktimes.com

Living as Exiles in a Hostile World – The Epistle of 1 Peter

Part 26 – If the World Hates You February 19, 2017

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 4

Scripture Reading: 2 Peter

I saw a photo of a hand written school report card from the old days on Facebook this week. I wonder just how much of our thinking about Christ, the gospel, our justification before God and so on is really pretty much like this “report card” thinking? Our justification is solely and only based upon Christ and HIS performance as our righteousness.

Well, on to our study of 1 Peter.

All of us at one time or another, if we are indeed Christians, have had to refuse to go along with the crowd –

Proverbs 1:10-18 My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. (11) If they say, "Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood; let us ambush the innocent without reason; (12) like Sheol let us swallow them alive, and whole, like those who go down to the pit; (13) we shall find all precious goods, we shall fill our houses with plunder; (14) throw in your lot among us; we will all have one purse"— (15) my son, do not walk in the way with them; hold back your foot from their paths, (16) for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood. (17) For in vain is a net spread in the sight of any bird, (18) but these men lie in wait for their own blood; they set an ambush for their own lives.

The Christian is an *elect exile* in this fallen world. That is what Peter is writing about and that is why this letter has so much to say about the *suffering* of the Christian in this present enemy territory. We are called by the Lord to be, as far as possible, at peace with the ungodly, but we are also called to refuse to walk in their ways and to be

separate from them in their ungodliness.

Psalms 1:1-2 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; (2) but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

And again –

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? (15) What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? (16) What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (17) Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, (18) and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

Listen now to Peter as we move into this fourth chapter of his first epistle –

1 Peter 4:1-7 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.

“for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin...”

As we mentioned last week, this is the kind of phrase that false teachers often rip out of its context in order to lay their ascetic legalism on us. We must not fall for it. Peter is not teaching that “severe treatment of the body” is the way we conquer sin. Paul’s words make that very plain –

Colossians 2:20-23 If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— (21) "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" (22) (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? (23) These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

So then, just what does Peter mean? Listen to him again –

1 Peter 4:1-4 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;

When we suffer the hatred and contempt and attacks of this present world because we are living for Christ

and refusing to walk in sin, the world is going to hate us for not joining in with them, we can be encouraged because this is evidence that we really do belong to Christ as we suffer just as He did. This kind of persecuting suffering in this world shows that we are not of the world. We have ceased from sin.

Have you seen this? The wicked being angry and shocked because you will not join in with them in their “debauchery”? The thing is really natural to them and it is very common.

Think about this. Why should anyone really care if one person chooses not to participate in a boozing party or in fornication for example? Why should they care? Because in fact they *know what they are doing is against God's law, they have a guilty conscience about it, and when we refuse to participate, that guilt they are suppressing springs up in them.*

Romans 1:32 Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

AND conversely they give *heartily DIS-approval to those who refuse to practice them.*

Any person who claims to be a Christian but who is popular with the world puts their claim of Christ in doubt.

This last week I saw in the news that a well known actor has a favorite Bible verse. If he is making a claim to be a Christian, then we have some valid questions for him about some of the roles he plays in movies. AND about just how it is he has been able to be so popular with Hollywood. *Because, as Peter says here, it is those who suffer who have ceased from sin.*

The Time Grows Short

Did you notice in these few verses how Peter emphasizes the fact that we are in the last days before Christ comes? –

- so as to live for the rest of the time
- For the time that is past
- but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead
- The end of all things is at hand

This fact, that the time remaining for this present world is short, encourages us to follow Christ and turn away from sin.

- We do not have to suffer forever

- We will be vindicated when Christ comes, and the wicked will be exposed and condemned

I listened this past week to President Trump's press conference. He told the reporters, many of whom have been doing their evil best to discredit him at every turn, that he "inherited a mess." He said this several times. He meant that the world is in a mess and that the previous administration created a lot of it and that these problems cannot be fixed quickly.

Well, the world certainly is a big mess. A mess of wickedness. Lines are being drawn more clearly between good and evil, just as Peter says. If you live for righteousness, if you live for Christ and refuse to participate in evil, if you –

- Refuse to kill babies
- Refuse to acknowledge sexual perversions as valid lifestyles
- Refuse to embrace ungodly philosophies that the masses push on us

...then you will be hated and maligned. Simply because, like Abel, your deeds are righteous and Cain's are evil.

But this is not forever. The time is short. A day of full and complete accounting is coming. Christ is

coming. He comes to judge the earth. So don't trade your soul for a bowl of mush like Esau did.

The Gospel is Preached to All

(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.

There are some strange sounding phrases here that can be difficult to understand.

- The gospel was preached even to those who are dead
- They might live in the spirit the way God does
- For the sake of your prayers

I say again – I find Peter more difficult to understand at many points than Paul!

You may recall a few weeks ago when we considered these verses in chapter 3 –

1 Peter 3:18-20 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, (19) in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, (20) because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

And we concluded this –

After Christ died on the cross, and before His bodily resurrection, He in spirit went to the place (prison) where the wicked and ungodly await their final resurrection and judgment. He “proclaimed” to them.

Who are these spirits? Peter tells us. They are the people who, in their time in this world, rejected God's command to repent and to turn to Christ.

Peter uses the group who mocked prior to the flood while Noah was building the ark, which is a type and picture of Christ. They had the gospel proclaimed to them by Noah and by the ark itself, but they would not repent. I suspect that this group is not the only one that Christ preached to but is representative of all the wicked who died prior to the cross.

So Christ went to them in their prison (Hades?) and preached again to them,

showing them that HE is what the ark was pointing to all along, but they would not have Him.

Christ proclaims His gospel then to the wicked, for His glory, showing them that He is indeed Lord, that He did warn them and call them to be saved, but they would not and therefore He is perfectly righteous and just in sending them to hell.

Could it be then that this group of “dead” Peter speaks of in 4:6 is hearkening us back to that same group of “dead” he was talking about in chapter 3?

(4:6) 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.

But that does not make sense, does it? Those disobedient spirits “in prison” are not redeemable. They do not hear the gospel and “live in the spirit the way God does.” I conclude this cannot be the group Peter is talking about here in 4:6.

So who are these ones of whom he says “...the gospel was preached even to those who are dead...”?

I would suggest that Peter is not speaking of people who are literally,

physically, dead, not of that same group of disobedient spirits in prison from the days of the flood, but rather of people who are spiritually dead in their sin. Just as Paul called them –

Ephesians 2:1-6 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,

Peter is reminding us that *the very reason the gospel is preached to anyone is so that they might hear and believe and repent and be made into new creatures who, like true Christians, will be judged in the flesh by the wicked, but will live for Christ in the spirit consistent with the nature of God.*

The good news of the gospel is that sinners can be changed, saved, born

again, and brought out of the slavery to darkness they are in, free from slavery to evil, and set free to live in the spirit (I wonder if this should not be “Spirit”?).

Therefore, anyone who professes to be a Christian but who chooses to continue to live as they used to –

1 Peter 4:3 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.

...has missed the entire purpose of the gospel.

God’s purpose in Christ, for His glory, is to make us a new humanity, to make us His holy ones, to deliver us from Satan’s realm. But that time is past for us. We are dead to that old life. So put it all behind, refuse to participate in those who are living in it, and realize that they are going to malign you for your refusal. You will be, as Peter puts it here in verse 6, “judged in the flesh the way people are,” but pay no mind to it. In fact, recognize that such maligning by the wicked is evidence that you really belong to Christ.

We close then with Peter’s opening words in this chapter –

1 Peter 4:1-2 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.

Arm yourselves. See it? This is a chief weapon in spiritual warfare. Let your mind be renewed in Christ’s truth. Whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. Mark it down. When the enemy and his agents come at you, mocking, maligning, and accusing, realize that their attacks are evidence that you have ceased from sin. That you really belong to Christ. This is the source of our assurance. ARM yourself with this truth! Because you are in a battle and if you are going to withstand the opposition of those who (as G.K. Beale puts it) “heap abuse on you,” then you must be armed and prepared when the attack comes. This is a vital key for elect exiles living in a hostile land.