



1 Peter 4:1-6

“Real Christians are Strange People”

NKJ 1 Peter 4:1 Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

2 that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

3 For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles -- when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.

4 In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.

5 They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

6 For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

Almost every believing soldier that I have spoken to in my time here in Fayetteville has commented on how difficult it is to be an Evangelical Christian in the modern army. Not only because various kinds of sinful behavior are commonplace, whether it be the way men speak, or what they read and watch, or what they do with their time off. But because it is expected that everyone will also do those things in order to fit in, and if someone doesn't do those things, he is considered to be strange. Often just by the fact that he doesn't do those things, he is thought to be judging those that do.

One soldier told me how after he got into the 82nd he had initially tried very hard to live as a Christian in the barracks. But one day his sergeant came by and sat him down and told him, “Look you just aren't fitting in here, the only thing we know about you is that you go to church and you read your bible. If you don't start making an effort to bond with the guys, I'm going to have to make you a driver.” He said he'd been there long enough to know what drivers did and to know that he didn't join the 82nd to be one, so he started hanging out with the guys going out with them on the weekends, and soon he found that Christian walk was disappearing to be replaced by what the Apostle calls in these verses “*the lusts of men.*”

Brothers and Sisters, that soldier learned the hard way that no servant can serve two masters, and that there are only two ways to go in life:

1) the way of the world – or what Jesus called the Broad way that leads to destruction

Or

2) the way of Christ, the narrow and difficult way that leads to life

There is no course between those two paths.

But oftentimes, Christians who are enduring suffering and being counted as strange for not following the way of the world, will be tempted to walk in the less difficult path, and like that soldier may leave the King's Highway, Peter is writing in these verses to encourage you not to do that but to continue living for Christ come what may.

In doing that Peter tells Christians in verses 1 and 2 that there are two ways in which the suffering and death of Christ is vital to your walk.

The first is as an example to us. As Christ took up his cross and walked the narrow road that ended at Calvary, so we should take up our Crosses and walk after Him. Our master was hated and scorned by the men of the world, from the moment He took on our flesh he suffered difficulty, humiliation, and reproach. But he was willing to do that because he knew that at the end of that suffering he would be crowned with glory and honor. In the same way you need to arm yourself with the same mind. And the idea here is the same as putting on the spiritual armor in Eph. 6. Put on that same mindset, arm yourself against sin and temptation with the certain knowledge that the end of your suffering is glory and that while you are in the way of suffering and difficulty, **you** are on the right path.

The second is in our Union with Him: Those who are united to Christ by the indwelling presence of His spirit have died with Him and been buried with him, and have risen to newness of life in Him. Your Baptism in part marks the death of the Old Man, and the birth of the New. Believers are Born again in Him. Jesus' suffered in the flesh as our sin bearer, he paid for those sins and their curse is gone forever. How therefore who in Christ are dead to Sin return to them again? Romans 6 makes this point in detail and I would strongly urge you to read the entire chapter sometime today, but let me just quote the first six verses

NKJ Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

Therefore just as Christ the Son lived to do the will of the Father while He was here on earth, so should you. And remember that the time we have in the flesh to do His will is short and as Peter reminds us, we have already wasted enough of it living the wrong way, following the way of this world, the way of slavery and bondage. When you become a Christian that is the first time you become truly free.

Now if you were to put it that way to an unbeliever, contrast to the two different lives as slavery or freedom they'd laugh and say what you do you mean slavery? I'm free to do whatever I want, you on the other hand have all these rules you have to live by. I'm the one who has liberty to do what I please.

But friends, true liberty is not the freedom to do **whatever you want**, it is the freedom to do what is right. Tyrants take away that freedom from their subjects, we see that in the way, for instance that Christians are forbidden to worship the true God in many lands. The Devil takes away the freedom to do what is right from His subjects, in reality while they say "**I'm free to do what I want**" they show by their actions that they are slaves to sin. Because of the fall that is the sad condition of all men, they are born slaves to sin. Every Christian was once in that condition prior to being saved –

NKJ Ephesians 2:1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,

3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

We said we were free, but what we were slaves, walking inexorably according to the course of this world, that is according to the will of the Prince of the Power of the Air, that is the Devil. Free? Far from it! We were slaves to sin and the Devil. We simply could not turn from that way until Christ brought us to new life, and made us Free indeed, by giving us that true liberty to do what is right for the first time in our lives?

And so if we have been set free from that bondage, that way of life why would we return to it? Many young people raised in the church will feel that have to spend some time experiencing that bondage by following the course of the world for a time. We have euphemisms for it, "Sowing your wild oats" "living a little" or "seeing life" but Spurgeon nailed it when he said: **"Some young people foolishly say that they must have a little space in which they can "see life." Ah, those of you who have been converted in after years regret that ever you saw what men call "life", which is but the alias for corruption and death!"**

The younger kids won't understand this, but those of you hitting your teens might. Believe me, It's not seeing life, it's seeing death. Because I was converted in later years I have a host of embarrassing or painful memories up here, I don't want. Experiences I desired, I now wish I never had. Drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties. I know exactly what he means when he means we have spent enough. Young kids, want to do yourselves a favor that will last for the rest of your lives, *don't spend any of your time doing the will of the Devil.*

Now of course those of you who have turned from doing His will, will be accounted as strange by the world. But if you haven't already guessed this, Christians are supposed to be strange people in the eyes of the world. If you are really trying to live a holy life, worldlings will not be able to figure out why you don't want to spend your time running with them in the same flood of dissipation they do, and explaining true freedom to someone who is in bondage to sin, and whose understanding is darkened is almost impossible. Unless their darkened minds are illuminated by the Spirit of God they'll never get it. So be willing to be weird! Don't be ashamed of the gospel or cover-up your Christianity. Make up your mind to live consistently as a Christian from the being, and often you will find that even the people who don't understand you can't help but respect you. And if you are following the command to give a reason for the hope that you have, it just might be that you are the instrument God uses to bring them to faith.

Peter acknowledges though that if you live for Christ, they are going to speak evil of you, and surely we see that don't we? In Peter's time Christians were the subjects of all kinds of horrible rumors, and in ours evangelicals are the new Nazis. We are the only religion its fashionable to despise and make fun of. Witches are treated more favorably than we are. Worse many Christians aren't just going to be spoken evil of, they will be made to suffer:

**"He professes to have knowledge of God,
and calls himself a child of the Lord.
He became to us a reproof of our thoughts;
the very sight of him is a burden to us,
because his manner of life is unlike that of others,
and his ways are strange.
We are considered by him as something base,
and he avoids our ways as unclean;
he calls the last end of the righteous happy,
and boasts that God is his father.
Let us see if his words are true,
and let us test what will happen at the end of his life;**

**for if the righteous man is God's child, he will help him,
and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries.**

**Let us test him with insult and torture,
so that we may find out how gentle he is,
and make trial of his forbearance.”** (Wisdom of Solomon 2:13ff)

Some will be judged by men, and those men will cry out "*Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!*" and they will put them to death as those missionaries were put to death in Egypt. But Peter points out that those who are judging you today will give an account of their actions before God tomorrow, and believe me, you don't want to stand amongst the persecutors of God's people on judgment day.

And as for those who have died in Christ, in verse 6, Peter says that this is the reason that the gospel was preached to them, that while they may be judged by men according to the sinful standards of the world, and suffer and die because they seem strange, yet they have inherited eternal life, and they will enter into the glory that God has reserved for them in heaven. Men may kill the body, but they can never kill the spirit that cleaves to Christ.

Two final applications: an unbeliever hearing this might say as they've said to me when I've been witnessing. Look you paint too grim a picture, sure there are people in the world whose lives are a flood of dissipation, but there are moral men and women who aren't Christians and who teach good morals – there are moralists amongst the pagans aren't there? The Bill O'Reilly's of the world?

Paul points out in Romans 2 that in their own ways, these hypocrites do exactly what they condemn or get up to worse things. For instance we hear much about the debauchery of the infidels from the moralist Mullahs Muslim world. They rightly point to our rampant public immorality, our drug abuse, our war on the family and they condemn it. But those of you who have spent much time in the Muslim world will have seen much darker evils, repression, cruelty, slavery, murder, and often the same very same things they condemn us for. They rightly diagnose our sicknesses, but the remedy they are peddling is worse than the disease.

No matter how you try to avoid there are really only two paths. The way of Christ, and the way of the World. You may try to clean-up the worldly, minimize the dissipation, walk it with a more sober gate, but ultimately it still leads to destruction to damnation. There is no forgiveness for sin there, only the denial that it exists until it is too late. You have already spent long enough doing the will of the World, the Flesh and the Devil, it is time to make an end of it and follow Christ.

To those of you who are, and who are struggling with those temptations. Brothers, Sisters, I know how you feel, and I sympathize. Some of you may even be saying to yourself, well I know I can't lose my salvation, so why not compromise a little? Let me show you something that may help:

Look at these hands of mine, Flesh, sinew, and bone, matter, and yet although I don't know how, something immaterial my soul can move them, make them do things and thus I can use them for evil or for good. I can use them to build up or to tear down. For a while, only for a while. Some day soon, I will not be able to move them any more. My days of working will be over. The flesh and sinew will disappear and there will only be left dry bones. How should I use them in this all brief time? For more idle dissipation that will grieve my soul and the Savior who paid for my sins on the cross? If I remember that, I will remember that I should "no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God."