

THEY THINK IT STRANGE

1 Peter 4:3-6

INTRODUCTION

- As our godless society celebrates “Pride Month”, we are again reminded that “whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19), and it is this wickedness that God gave his Son to deliver us from
- We saw previously in the opening verses of chapter 4, that Christ suffered and died for us, to both pardon and purify us from sin
- As Christ died *for* sin, we must die *unto* sin – this is sanctification
- The believer now lives not for his lusts, but for the will of God
- Peter emphasises the great change that takes place in the sinner who comes to faith in Christ
- More than merely a new “way of life”, he has an entirely *new life* (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- The Christian is different, not merely because they have chosen to live in a different way, but because his very nature has been changed
- When God saves a person, he regenerates him, creating new life within him
- That new life in the heart becomes manifest by a new walk
- Those companions in sin will wonder what has happened to their friend – why doesn't he join us in our sinful activities anymore?
- They will become hostile, but the Christian doesn't care what men think or say or do – he is only concerned with pleasing his Lord
- And on the day of judgment, God will reward the believer, but punish his persecutors

I. WALK FROM YOUR FORMER TRANSGRESSIONS (3)

- A. The Christian's view of his former life
 1. “Time past” in v.3 is contrasted with “the rest of his time” in v.2
 2. Just as all of human history is divided into BC (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini), so too the Christian's life is divided into two parts – “before Christ”, and “the years with his Lord”
 3. Peter is saying, “You have spent enough time living for sin in your unconverted state”
 4. Those years spent without Christ were wasted years, in the light of eternity

5. "Gentiles" (*ethnon*) can also be rendered "nations" or "heathen", and here refers to the general sinful course of the people of the world
 6. Unbelievers "work the will of the Gentiles", slavishly carrying out the desires of the flesh, while believers live to the will of God (v.2)
- B. How should the Christian look back at his former sins?
1. On the one hand, we are told to "forget" our past sins (Philippians 3:13)
 2. Yet there are places like this where the past sins of believers are brought to remembrance (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 2:2-3; Titus 3:3)
 3. There is a wrong type of remembering and a right type of remembering
 4. Do not remember past sins with fondness
 5. Do not remember them with guilt
 - a. If Christ has forgiven my past sins, it is a slight against him to wallow in the guilt of them
 - b. Satan is the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10) and will use such guilty remembrance to bring discouragement and defeat
 6. Do remember them with disgust, fearing ever being polluted by them again
 7. Do remember them with humility, realising the depraved, abominable, state you were once lost in (Deuteronomy 15:15)
 8. Do remember them with thanksgiving, that God graciously delivered such a hell-deserving sinner from the eternal destruction you deserve, and brought you into a state of grace, faith, regeneration, justification, adoption, peace and joy (1 Timothy 1:12-15)
- C. Six sins of the Gentiles
1. These are sins that we "walked" in, following, pursuing them as travellers going from one sin to another
 2. There are other lists of various "former lusts" in several New Testament passages (Mark 7:21-23; Romans 1:29-31; Galatians 5:19-21)
 3. These particular sins were pagan excesses often associated with the idolatrous worship of heathen gods
 4. Lasciviousness (*aselgeia*) – wantonness, without moral restraint, shamelessness, uninhibited immoral behaviour
 5. Lusts (*epithumia*) – the indulgence of unlawful desires
 6. Excess of wine (*oinophlugia*) – drunkenness
 7. Revellings (*komois*) – rioting, carousing, wild parties, group debauchery
 8. Banquetings (*potois*) – assembling for the purpose of drinking

9. Abominable idolatries (*athemitois eidololatriais*) – all idolatry, and particularly the immorality associated with the idol worship

II. WATCH YOUR FRIENDS TURNING (4)

- A. The world thinks the Christian strange”
 1. “Strange” (*xenizo*) is derived from the term for a foreigner
 2. Though formerly a native citizen of this evil world, the Christian has changed his nationality, becoming a citizen of Zion, and consequently a stranger and pilgrim in this world (1:1; 2:11)
 3. The change in the believer becomes evident to the lost
 4. The new believer’s refusal to run with them in their sin is a reproof to them, and they become hostile
 5. The world is not content to “tolerate” Christians, it must destroy them, and where they cannot legally end our lives, they will use other means such as slander to achieve their purposes
 6. It goes as far back as Genesis 4, when wicked Cain was unable to tolerate his righteous brother
- B. We do not run with them to the same excess of riot
 1. “Run with” describes a crowd or mob that seemingly moves and acts with one mind
 2. “Riot” (*asotia*) is profligacy, reckless abandon, wild, extravagance, dissoluteness, wastefulness, and describes the masses of this world, recklessly running after sin

III. WAIT FOR THE FUTURE TRIAL (5-6)

- A. The judgment of God (5)
 1. Those who speak evil of the saints, and thereby blaspheme Christ, must one day give account to him before his judgment seat
 2. The Father has committed all judgment to the Son (John 5:22; Acts 17:31)
 3. He is “ready” to judge
 - a. He has authority to judge
 - b. He has ability to judge
 - c. His judgment is imminent – “behold, the judge standeth before the door” (James 5:9)
 4. While he delights in mercy (Micah 7:18), takes no pleasure at the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11), and as such, judgment is “his strange work” (Isaiah 28:21), yet his justice demands unrepentant sinners be judged

5. He will judge the quick (living) and the dead at his coming
 6. “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” (Ecclesiastes 12:14)
 7. The unbelievers will be judged at the great white throne, found guilty and cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15)
- B. Encouragement to the saints (6)
1. “For this cause”, that is, because judgment is coming, we preach the gospel to the lost
 2. The knowledge of the final end of those who die without Christ is a strong motivator to evangelism – “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Corinthians 5:11)
 3. Peter here is speaking of the gospel that had been preached to sinners who believed, and had since died
 4. “Judged according to men in the flesh” refers to their physical death – they die, apparently no different to unbelievers
 5. Yet they “live according to God in the spirit” – for the Christian, to die is not death, it is life, eternal life with God (John 11:26)
 6. This is the encouragement to reviled, slandered, persecuted believers – the ungodly will soon be judged, their cruel deeds ended, and the Christian will dwell in eternal bliss with Christ
 - a. This encouragement helps us to endure the trials of this life with confident hope
 - b. This encouragement helps us to refrain from rendering evil to our persecutors, but rather to show them compassion by preaching the gospel to them (Romans 12:20-21)

CONCLUSION

1. Can you mark the “before Christ” and “after Christ” divisions of your life?
2. Has there been a day when you repented and trusted in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour?
3. The Christian who yet plays with those sins he has been delivered from is double-minded, unfaithful, worldly, and wasteful of the life that God has given him
4. What sins are besetting you that you must forsake?
5. Every person is running one direction or another
6. Are you running with the crowd on the broad way to destruction?
7. Are you running with saints on the narrow way to life?