

First Peter - Contrasting Lifestyles

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[0 : 0 0] 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, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh, no longer for human passions, but for the will of God.

What is your own relation tonight to sin? What do you think of sin? I'm addressing that to myself, to all the Christians here, to any here who are not yet saved.

What is your relation to sin? When you sin and are conscious of sinning, that's doing something that you know is wrong, or leaving out something that you know you should have done that was right, what do you think?

What sort of thoughts do you have about that? How do you see yourself? How do you see yourself in relation to God as you think about yourself in relation to sin?

We can tell much about ourselves when we answer these questions. And tonight from this passage, these questions as they arise from the passage before us, are questions that each of us will actually seek to address to ourselves, I'm sure.

[1 : 2 8] Because what Peter is doing here is actually dealing with furthering the interest of those he's writing to, in moving steadily away from the life they've left behind as a sinful life, and progressing in a life of godliness or of holiness.

Those people who are saved, not only here, but in Peter's letter as well, those who know that they are saved, they know that their relationship with sin has changed, and indeed has changed radically.

I know that we still sin, I still sin. Every Christian in here knows that they still sin, and confess their sins, and confess their sins daily to God.

We know that we have not come to a point, or never will in this life, when we will be completely sinless. When we can say to God, Lord, I thank you that now from now on, I'm not going to sin anymore, in my thoughts, or in my actions, or in the words that I use.

Yet, those who are saved know, that while they still know of sin in their lives, they know that they no longer serve sin. Sin is no longer their master.

[2 : 5 0] Sin is no longer the controlling influence in their lives. Their relationship with sin has changed, because their relationship with Christ has changed.

And once your relationship to Christ changes, once Christ does come into your life, once you know that Jesus has changed you, and that you're not saved the same person you used to be, then your relation to sin also then changes.

You then hate sin. You want to be rid of sin. You would rather that sin no longer have any place in your life. And you hate yourself, in a sense, for the sin that you find yourself still doing, because you want to please God.

You want to please Christ. You want to be like God. You want to be like Christ. You want to live in this world as near to perfection as you can, though you know it's not possible to achieve that in this life.

And that's why, as we see in this passage, Peter is actually encouraging them to be godly, to continue to live a godly life, and in doing so, or he does so by linking them in the sufferings you remember we've been seeing, how they are suffering for what they believe, and how they have drawn attention to themselves, not deliberately, but just by virtue of the fact that they're living as faithful Christians, obedient to God.

[4 : 26] They have drawn the attention of those who care not for that, who want to do them harm, who want to malign them, who want to misrepresent them, who are treating them badly.

And Peter is saying, well, that's exactly how it was with Jesus. And what he's going to say here is, he's encouraging them to continue to live godly by drawing attention to the way Jesus suffered, and the attitude, or the mind, or the mindset that Jesus had in his sufferings, in viewing the sufferings in his own life.

And what he's saying is, let that be also your approach to sin. Let that be the mindset that you yourself continue to hold so that you no longer serve sin or go back to being what you once were, but actually that you now, for the rest of the time, no longer serve human passions, but the will of God.

So two things from that this evening. First of all, here is first of all an analogy, or a comparison if you want to use that word, an analogy with Christ.

And secondly, he speaks about an account to be settled. Verses 5 and 6 especially, speak about those who are maligning them for the life that they live, but he says, they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

[6 : 01] So here's the analogy first of all, because he's saying here, since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, over the same mindset, I think we can use that word, with the same mindset, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.

Now we need to go a little bit into that. What does he mean when he says, whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. Haven't we just said that we are not able to cease totally from sin in this life?

Yes. Well, why is he using this language and what is the analogy with Christ about? Well, for Jesus, when you go back to chapter 3 and verse 18, if you just cast your mind back there, Jesus also, 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.

That is, not just in his human nature, but in the life he lived in this world. That is the connection. Christ lived the life he lived in this world and we are connected to him as we live our lives in this world too.

As Christians, we are connected to him. And then go up to verse 17 in chapter 3, for it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil, for Christ also suffered.

[7 : 30] Now what he is saying is, here is really what we are called to be as Christians. That often we are called to suffer for doing good. And that is what is commendable as God looks upon us.

And that is what he is saying in that verse 17. It is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. And what he is saying is, that is how it was with Jesus.

He suffered for doing good. He suffered for resisting evil. He suffered in such a way that as he resisted evil and as he went on doing good and suffered for that, it culminated in his death.

But that was his mindset. That is what he set his mind to do. That was his determined resolve. And now he is saying, that is the mindset in comparison, in analogy with him, that you as Christians need to cultivate as well.

You know yourselves that Jesus was tempted at various times. Tempted, we believe, actually all along the way of his life in this world.

[8 : 38] But the Bible tells us of specific occasions when he was tempted to leave that life of obedience and actually depart from that mindset that he had of pleasing God.

The devil, early on in the Gospels, in Matthew and Luke especially, you find details of him being tempted in the wilderness by the devil. Forty days, forty nights there, he was hungry.

And then after that, the devil came to tempt him. And three times, he tempted him. And each of these temptations, as you can see from the way Jesus replied to the devil, that's where you get an insight into what the devil was about, into what his intention was, into his aim.

His aim, his intention was to not just deflect the attention of Christ, but to divert the direction of his life, if it were at all possible, from obedience, from serving God, from being God's person in this world as our Savior.

And Jesus overcame that. Jesus rebutted that. Jesus conquered that temptation without ever sinning himself, not even in the least way in his thoughts.

[10 : 00] And as we heard last night and was referred to this morning by Mr. McLeod, we heard about Jesus in Gethsemane.

We read about the way that he suffered so deeply in Gethsemane just shortly before the cross to the point that he shed great drops of blood, as Luke puts it.

What was it about? It was, in fact, this cup that the Father had given him to drink, this cup of suffering, this taking of these sufferings that were to do with providing an atonement for sin, answering the demands of God and of God's law for the sin of his people, suffering the sufferings of the death that they deserved, the death of hell, the death of damnation.

And as Jesus resisted this, as Jesus actually prayed in relation to this, as he sought help from the Father, well, we're told that that itself was something he overcame because in John's Gospel, when an attempt was made to protect him, actually, from those who were coming, to take him into custody.

And Jesus said, put your sword away, the cup which my Father gave me to drink, shall I not drink it? See, not only did he come back from Gethsemane and the experience of Gethsemane, having overcome the temptation there, that the cup be set aside, even to the point of praying to the Father that it would be possible that this might be done.

[11 : 34] not only did he come having conquered that, but he came out all the stronger in his resolve to drink it, to finish it. A mindset that Jesus himself had with regard to the sufferings.

And now, Peter is saying, arm yourselves with that same mindset. You see, because it's interesting he's using these words, arm yourselves, by which he means, not necessarily, in this context, dealing with warfare or with being in a battle, though that comes into the picture, I'm sure, very soon.

But what it means is, essentially, fortify yourselves, strengthen yourselves for a life of godliness. Strengthen yourselves against sin, against the temptations you face in your life to go backwards, to give in to temptation.

Strengthen yourselves, fortify yourselves, how? With the same mindset that you saw and see in Christ, who suffered in the flesh in the way he did with the approach he had, with the mindset that he had.

And it means that as you take up that mindset, what he's really doing here is saying, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. Of course, not every aspect of a comparison is exact.

[13 : 04] And you can't push things too far. But what he's saying here is if you think of Jesus and the way that he resisted the temptations to sin or to disobedience culminating in his death, his death marked the end of his relationship with sin.

That's what we read in Romans chapter 6. He died to sin once and he's now alive forevermore after his resurrection.

The fact of his death, the matter of his death, and beginning with his resurrection, that was an end for Jesus of any connection with sin. Before that, he was connected with sin, necessarily bearing the sin of his people, paying the price of sin, paying their debt.

Once he had done that, that was it. He's done with it. No longer features and never will again in the life of Jesus. Now he's saying, whoever has this mindset that is determined to overcome sin and not to give in to sin, even though at times we know we do so, but having that mindset that is really patterned on Jesus' own mindset, well, that person has ceased from sin, by which he means that person has made a clean break with sin, is no longer under the government of sin the way they once were.

Let me take you back to Romans chapter 6. We read the passage because there is a connection with what we're seeing in Peter here, in 1 Peter. Romans 6, and especially verses 10 to 11.

[14 : 52] It's a long argument and it's an important one all the way from the beginning of the chapter, but when you come to the climax of the argument there in verses 10 and 11, he talks about Jesus, the death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God, so you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ.

Now that's the principle where Jesus has come to shatter the bond that you had with sin. Now as a Christian, you know that it's not sin that rules your life, but it's Jesus.

And where Jesus has broken the dominance of sin, where he has actually come to break you free from the hold that sin had upon you in your own heart.

Now he's saying, therefore let not sin reign in your mortal bodies to make you obey their passions. On the basis that a clean break has already been made by the power of Christ, by the grace of God, by the spirit of God, by the application of Christ's redemption to us.

What happens when he comes to bring us to life, when he comes to make us a new creation? He breaks us free from the old Adam. He places us in the last Adam, in Christ.

[16 : 19] The root of our life is transplanted from the old Adam, the initial Adam, to which we are related as we come into this world. And by which relation we are subject to death.

But now we are planted in, rooted in, the last Adam who is Christ. And the dominance of sin, the government of sin, has been broken.

And on the basis of that, we seek to live a pleasing, holy life before God. Remember, the Shorter Catechism puts it in this way in regard to repentance.

What is repentance in the definition of the Shorter Catechism, number 87? Well, it says that repentance unto life is a saving grace by which a sinner out of a true sense of his sin and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ turns from it unto God.

And then it says this, with full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience. You see how wise and how knowledgeable those who crafted the confession and the catechisms that we still need to refer to so much.

[17 : 46] You see how well they knew their theology. You see how well they knew God and themselves because they didn't say repentance unto life means we no longer sin. But repentance unto life as it is a saving grace by which we turn from sin to God, we do so with full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience.

we live a different life. We seek to reach a greater measure of godliness and of holiness and of leaving sin behind and build upon the fact that as Christians the root of sin has been destroyed in our lives and we can build for heaven on the basis of that.

And so that's why Peter says he has ceased from sin. Sin has been a clean break with sin with the dominance of sin so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh in this world.

No longer for human passions but for the will of God. Let me come back to the question I began with. what is your own view of sin?

What do you think of sin when you find yourself sinning? What are your thoughts about yourself? Is it the case that you say Lord I know that I still sin and I regret that and I want to repent of that and I want to be rid of it more and more or is it something else?

[19 : 30] Does sin not really bother you? Are you used to it so that it doesn't really register to the same extent in your life as it ought to?

Have you really turned from it to God with full purpose and endeavor after new obedience? Have you repented from sin unto God?

There's no more crucial question that I could ask myself or you could ask yourself tonight because our eternity hangs upon that. Our relationship with God hangs upon that.

And so Peter is saying here's an analogy towards a different way of living which is why he goes on to say the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do.

Now by Gentiles obviously he's writing to some people who are Gentiles as well as Jew but to the converted wherever they are in these regions that he mentions but he's talking about the Gentiles in the sense he means that they are still not saved.

[20 : 39] They are around you as the people of God and this is what they're still doing. Living in sensuality and passions and drunkenness and orgies in drinking parties and lawless idolatry.

You see what he's saying to the Christians the time that is past is sufficient for us to have engaged in the likes of these things. We have had our bondage to sin dealt with we have had our relationship to sin broken we have had the dominance of sin broken so we say about our own lives now as we look upon ourselves as Christians as those who know the Lord we're saying about ourselves the time that we did that is absolutely sufficient for us it's enough I'm done with it I don't want any more of it it's enough for me that I had so much of it as I did have in my life before Christ redeemed me from it and broke the dominance and the power of sin the time that has passed suffices us and the world around you and around me is very much engaged in these very things today sensuality passions sinful passions drunkenness orgies drinking parties lawless idolatry an excess of what is physical an excess of what is sexual an excess of what is immoral and what is idolatrous we don't need to have gatherings together in order to engage in that in our day and age people do it in their own homes people do it just by looking at their phones or their tablets or their televisions you can engage in all of these things and the lifestyle and the mindset that is associated with these things without leaving your home without even your room and that's added another layer and another dimension in a sense to the way

Peter is here speaking to these Christians that he is encouraging to resist these things and of which he is saying it's enough for us that we once lived that way but we don't want that anymore and that's why we know the dangers of the internet and of certain means of communication because the devil has access to them all and our sinful appetite unless we watch it and overcome it and so easily be led by these means themselves to more sin to the very things that characterize the world and its worldliness the sensuality and the passions and the excesses that you see around us and what he is saying is we have had enough of that

I am done with that I know that I still sin but I have had enough of actually being dominated by these things by living for these things by not really caring too much that I am doing these things by not being concerned that these things feature in my life I am concerned he is saying we are concerned we don't want any more of them what is sin to you what is sin to you when you see it before your eyes when you see it portrayed whether it is in the interest of arts or music or whatever what do you think then of yourself and of your mindset and of your relationship to God and of eternity and of what God is really looking for in your life is this you is this you with the mindset that Jesus had towards sin and towards temptation and towards pleasing

God is this you with the mindset that is still not ready to turn to God or doesn't want to turn to God and really give your life to him completely with every aspect of your being your thoughts and your actions and what you do when you're by yourself or with others the company you keep the priorities in your life Peter is saying things have changed with us surely that's the case with you and with me too that we have a contrasting lifestyle compared to what once was the case that doesn't mean that you or I would necessarily have gone to extremes and following these sinful appetites such as he's saying here but what you and I need to know of and to have is a change in lifestyle a change in approach a change in attitude a change to our thoughts about sin about its impact upon ourselves and upon how God sees it and instead that we follow what is according to his will and let's be also very vigilant for our children for our young people for our grandchildren who have access these days to all kinds of things and can download lots of stuff that is harmful to them let's be very watchful against that let's teach them what it means to have access to things which could indeed harm them and harm them for life and lead them into ways that would really bring them an addiction to pornography or to all of these other horrible things that you find offered so readily through such means today please pray for them be an example to them counsel them encourage them show them the alternative lifestyle to what you find in this world show them that alternative mindset to the mindset of ungodliness to the mindset that casts God aside and casts the law of God aside and wants just to follow human inclination and human appetite show them what it means to be a

[27 : 30] Christian to be set on pleasing God and he says they malign you they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery and they malign you but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead he's been speaking all along of suffering for what they believe and what they live in their lives and it's understandable and many of you yourselves will follow this perhaps all of us indeed will know something of what it means to attract the attention of those who would malign the Christian walk and a Christian confession and a Christian way of life and a God pleasing way of life and the mindset that is patterned on that of Jesus himself well that's what was happening to these Christians because he says two things about them there they are surprised when you don't join them in the same flood of debauchery you see how strongly

Peter puts this and how appropriate that is to really describe the things you find in this world and in our society it's not a little trickle of ungodliness it's a flood of debauchery and when you turn from that lifestyle people will notice and you will attract their attention and what Peter is concerned for is that you don't turn from that new way of life that you don't let those who malign you influence you so as you go backwards but rather that you maintain the mindset that Jesus himself had don't be deflected however difficult the way might become from living in a way that pleases God indeed the more of the bite of the world the more malign descriptions and actions against you are experienced for what you live as a

Christian the more assurance it gives you that you are on the right path that you're serving the Lord that you're indeed becoming more like himself but he says they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead that's the same people as in verse 4 those who are maligning them those who are mistreating them those who are calling them all sorts of things because they live as Christians well he says they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead he's throwing their minds to the fact that even if they have died and were persecutors of the church they haven't got off with it they're going to have to face God there's a judgment coming for every single person including those who persecuted God's people and maligned them and mistreated them and who have now passed on into eternity and are no longer in this world they haven't got off scot-free they're not in a position where they will never have to face a judgment or an appraisal of what they have done

God is going to do that as he's going to do it for you and for me as well and he goes through to say this is why the gospel is preached even to those who are dead and I think he means by that those Christians who have died that though judged in the flesh the way people are by which I think he means these words are rather difficult to interpret that they in fact have also died judged in the flesh if you like as experiencing or have gone to the point where they have died they've left this world but he says though that is the case yet so that they might live in the spirit the way God does or really literally it says like God in other words the persecutor who has died has not escaped judgment because that's facing them when God brings the judgment and sets it up they will appear before him they will receive what is proper and just from the judge but those

Christians who have also died the gospel was preached to them so that they now are actually saved and as they are now saved they in fact live though they have died they live in the spirit like God and that's a point which is worthy of more than just ending a sermon or even one sermon it's worthy of a series of sermons it's a staggering thought and in fact it relates I should have said to what you find in 2nd Peter where he begins the second letter and where he says particularly there in verse 4 in verse 3 he's saying his divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire you see how like that is to what we've seen tonight in 1st

[33 : 35] Peter 4 you have escaped by God's salvation the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire you've been taken away from that and you have been given the things that pertain to life and godliness so that through these promises of God you may become partakers of the divine nature the saved people of God are being made godlike they are being brought more and more into the image of Christ until they finally are what Romans 8 describes as the image of his own son they are godlike you remember when we were created by God in the beginning he created human beings in his own image and the sin that has marred that image when it is taken away we become once again godlike not divine not to the extent of becoming gods as Mormonism teaches but godlike in being in the image of

Christ like unto himself and he has given us right now in the gospel the means towards that great climax of being godlike so there's the logic of Peter's argument what he has done for you and to you is towards this end of making you like himself let me end with the question we began with what do you think of sin what is sin to yourself what are your thoughts about yourself has your root in sin been broken and are you rooted tonight in Jesus Christ let's pray gracious god we give thanks for your grace for it is by your grace and the power of your spirit that we are saved and we thank you for that salvation that is provided for us that you have purchased for us as we heard this morning and as we remembered this morning by your death the death which you died that we might be saved lord we thank you for the gospel that comes to promote that life eternal to us and that brings us that message that you have come into the life of your people so as to make them like yourself lord we pray that each of us here tonight will have our hearts set upon it for Jesus sake amen let's now conclude our service with psalm 84 psalm number 84 that's in the Scottish

Psalter page 339 singing from verse 8 to verse 12 lord god of hosts my prayer here oh jacob's god give ear see god our shield look on the face of thine anointed dear and this is to junkil marnock verses 8 to 12 lord god of hosts my prayer here lord god of hosts my prayer here oh jacob's god give ear say god our shield look on the face of thine anointed here for in thy course one day excels a thousand a thousand reverend by god's house will like he adore and well in hands of sin for god the lord the sun and shield hill grace and glory give and well with all no good from them and uprightly to learn oh thou that art the lord of hosts that man is truly blessed who by assured confidence on thee alone

God rest I'll go to the main door after the benediction Lord we give thanks now for the provision made for us for our bodily needs as we anticipate shortly receiving food we give thanks for it and for those who have provided it for us and we pray again for your blessing on the fellowship as we meet together and now we ask that your grace and your mercy and your peace from God the father the son and the holy spirit will be our portion now and evermore amen thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you