

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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The Armor of Jesus' Mind

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. (1 Peter 4:1-5 KJVP)

The topical theme that closes the third chapter continues in this chapter. "Forasmuch then..." links Peter's present teaching to the prior chapter. At Calvary, Jesus was "...put to death in the flesh." He submitted to incredible suffering during the scourging of the night before and throughout the day of His crucifixion. Despite all this suffering in the flesh, in the end, Jesus conquered and defeated His—and our—adversary. Our baptism in water depicts our belief in Jesus' life, death, sufferings, and resurrection. We thereby pledge ourselves to a lifestyle that honors His example in our thoughts and actions. However, we often face the enticing song of sin that appeals directly to one or more of our physical or bodily appetites.

How do we resist these enticements? How do we say no to them and stand fast in our pledge of service and honor to our Lord? That goal is Peter's point in our present study. "...he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin..." I doubt that Peter intended sufferings as in disease or illness as much as suffering for the godliness of following Jesus' example in our own lives. You can indulge your physical appetites and become quite popular with the friends of this world. However, if your life consistently mirrors your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as when you were baptized, this world will make sure that you suffer. You only face that kind of suffering when you cease from sin. Perhaps Peter may have also intended our discipline on our own physical appetites and desires that become a righteous, self-inflicted suffering that follows in direct proportion to our actual ceasing to allow sin in our lives.

"...arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." Dealing with our physical inclinations toward sins of any stripe and bringing our sinful inclinations under control is not as simple as a polite, "Oh, no. You shouldn't do that. Naughty, naughty." If we control our own sinful inclinations, we will find ourselves in all out warfare. Paul's "...think on these things" (Philippians 4:8) makes the same point, but Peter takes us a giant step further into the character of godly living. "...arm yourselves" leaves no doubt that we are engaged in spiritual warfare. The

Christian life is not simply one of many philosophical ideas that encourage interesting thinking and conversation. It is a way of life that demands a military-like quality of training and self-discipline, as well as involving an adversary whose primary aim is our destruction. Our one defense must begin in our own mind, the primary battlefield for this war.

That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. Sin of any kind has a distinctly addictive quality about it. Give any one of your sinful appetites an ounce of satisfaction through indulging that sin. What will it do? It will react by demanding that you give it more and more. If you follow it, you will spend the consummate whole of your life feeding it. Be painfully honest and focus on your personal "...besetting sin." (Hebrews 12:1) Imagine living the remaining days of your life feeding that one sin. What happens to your faith in God? How does your spiritual health fare in such a lifestyle? With each decision we make, each action we choose to take, we make moral choices that impact the remainder of our lives. Our modern minds love to think that everything in life, even many of its moral options, is some shade of gray, never black and white, right or wrong. Peter contradicts our modernity in this passage. He marks our conduct with two identifying characteristics, 1) living the rest of our life in the flesh to the lust of ourselves and other sinners, or 2) living the rest of our life in submission, behavioral submission, not mere lip service, to the will of God.

In terms of God's eternal purpose and covenant for His beloved and chosen people, all of God's will was vested in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no doubt about the outcome of His work or His will. (John 6:38-39; Hebrews 10:5-10) Scripture always describes the outcome of God's will in this area as dependent on the Lord Jesus Christ, and as wholly and unquestionably accomplished.

Scripture also addresses God's moral will for His children, and Scripture puts the responsibility for compliance with that will on each believer.

Sometimes we listen to the law of God written in our heart and mind, and we obey. We live life during that season "...to the will of God." At other times, we compromise and listen to the appetites of our sinful flesh, and we do not then live our life according to "...the will of God." Paul specifically describes God's will in this area of our personal conduct.

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7, KJV 1900)

God's will for our eternal security is described in Scripture by "Shall." Scripture describes His will for our personal conduct by "Should." One is certain; the other is not. One shall occur by God's merciful grace and power through the Lord Jesus Christ. The other does not always occur because of our personal weakness and sinful choices. And forget about thinking that, in this life, you shall ever rise above this dilemma to sinless perfection. First John 1:8-10 leaves no doubt about our flawed conduct, but First John 2:1-2 lifts us to see the solution to our sin problem, **not in more will power or determination in ourselves**, but in the Lord Jesus Christ. First John 2:1 also emphasizes God's commandment to us that we "...sin not." God doesn't give us a sliding scale of acceptable sin. No matter how well we do today, His commandment to us first thing tomorrow morning will be exactly the same, "Sin not." "...that ye sin not" bears undeniable witness to the fact that we do not always do God's will in our personal choices and conduct. Notice Paul's use of "...that every one of you **should**..."

Living a godly Christian life is one of the fiercest wars ever imagined or fought in this world, and it never ends till we leave this world and realize His victory for us in glory. However, God's charge to us while we live is clear; *"That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."*

For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles. The believer who immerses his/her mind in Scripture, similar to his/her body being immersed in the water of baptism, understands Peter's point. How often in talking with people who believe, quite sincerely, that they in some way contribute to their new birth and their eternal life, have we heard this response to our insistence that eternal salvation is all of God and all of His grace, "Oh, if I believed like that, I'd go out

and have my fill of sin." No, you wouldn't. If you understand this truth, you are sick to your soul of sin, and you long to live as far from it as possible. You live with the realization of your own past sins, and you pray that all of those past sins stay in your past, not in your present conduct. They are more than sufficient. We live with the abiding conviction that our present charge from the Lord is to live according to the will of God, not the will of the Gentiles.

Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you. Most sins occur in connection with other people, so when we cease those sins, the people who may have joined with us in them are puzzled by our refusal to continue with them in the sin. Not only do they not understand our new way, but they also gladly criticize us for our refusal to walk that dark path with them.

Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. By speaking evil of you for your refusal to continue with them in the path of sin, these people judge you. They defy God and His judgment, but they quite readily take the judgment seat and pass their judgment against you. Peter's mention of God's judgment serves to encourage those who know and love Him. No sin was ever committed that shall not face God in righteous judgment on the Last Day. Those critical sinners shall face Him, but they shall hear the sentence then, not pronounce it, as they now pronounce their judgment against you for your refusal to walk with them in the path of former sins.

...ready to judge the quick and the dead. Nothing outside God Himself stands in the way of that final Day of Judgment. No Biblical prophecy remains unfulfilled. No event must yet unfold. He is ready—right now—to judge the living (or "quick") and the dead, those who live at that day, and those who died prior to that day. Living or dead at the Second Coming will make no difference in judgment. All shall be raised, and all shall be judged. Why doesn't He come right now and end it all? The timing is His choice, not ours. When the martyrs asked why He didn't avenge their murder (Revelation 6:10), the Lord reminded them that more time must lapse, and more martyrs must die, but that they were to rest, for the Day was certain and would come.

In Hebrews 12:1-4. Paul (I believe the inspired author of Hebrews) argues similarly in his encouragement of the discouraged Hebrews to stay their course in godliness. There Paul uses the analogy of a race, as in the ancient Olympic races, not a casual afternoon neighborhood race for entertainment. The rigors of training for the Olympics were similar to the rigors of preparing for war. Both demanded all. Here Peter commands us to arm ourselves, as with military armor or equipment. There Paul commands us to lay aside sinful hindrances and to look steadfastly to Jesus as we run the race.

Our study takes us into the trenches of the Christian life where we live every moment of every day. Thank the Lord, it also equips us with the information that will enable us to face the task of living to the glory and honor of the “Captain of our salvation.”

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:4 KJVP)

Notice the locus of this warfare that Paul describes, “Casting down imaginations...” Where do your imaginations originate and grow? Your mind, and your mind is where you must engage your—and God’s—enemy in this warfare. Your personal imaginations are your worst enemy, not your best friend. The Lord calls on each of His believing children to face their vain imaginations—to face them down, to defeat them, not feed them. We imagine our importance, we imagine the vastness of what we know, often in contrast to our imagination of ignorance in others, we imagine that God has something in mind for us that will magnify our pride in our own abilities; there is no end to our imagination’s ramblings, and they all work as our spiritual adversary, not “...a friend to grace.” Are you ready to seriously engage this enemy and submit it to the will of God? Are you ready to “...arm yourself...” with the mind of Christ, the mind of suffering in the flesh? Only by this bold step of faith shall you ever “...cease from sin.”

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Worship service each Sunday 10:30 A. M.
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