

- I. I. Be Holy In All Your Behavior With A Holiness Like God's Holiness
 - A. I Peter 4:1-6 . . . Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, [2] so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. [3] For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. [4] In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you; [5] but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. [6] For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.
 - B. Pray
- II. Suffering in the flesh – Ceasing from sin (I Peter 4:1)
 - A. I Peter 4:1 . . . Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin . . .
 1. Last week we talked about suffering in the flesh, that is, suffering the pangs of putting to death self, our flesh, and our sinful habits in order to cease from sin so that we can live a new life of holiness unto God.
 - a. In talking about suffering in the flesh, I tried to make it clear that killing off our self-life, our ungodly fleshly desires, our unholy fears, and our sinful habits requires doing the kind of violence to our flesh, our thought life, and to our sinful habits that is similar in nature to the violence done to Jesus on His way to the cross, and in His dying to sin.
 - b. In fact, suffering in the flesh in order to die to sin and live for God is so hard and demanding that persevering in dying to sin and self takes the same kind of strong commitment Jesus had in submitting to God's will (*Not my will, but Yours be done*). It takes the same kind of noble motivation Jesus had for enduring the painful suffering of obeying God. And it takes the same strength

of motivation Jesus had for wanting to please God so much that He willingly died to sin in order to rise and live unto God.

- c. Therefore, knowing the suffering required of our flesh in order to cease from sin, Peter asks us to make the purpose and the same strength of commitment Christ had, our purpose and strength of commitment.
2. Moving on from the reminder of what we talked about last week, I want to spend some time talking about the sequence of events in relation to suffering death and rising to newness of life. My purpose for doing this is twofold.
 - a. First, because doing things in God's ordained order is important for arriving at God's ordained end.
 - b. Second, because God's order for growing in godliness is clearly presented in the scriptures.
 3. According to God's word, when it comes to growing in godliness we are to follow the path shown to us in baptism. And baptism shows us that we must die first, then rise to newness of life. Or in other words, we must put off the old nature, or the specific sin that we know needs to be put out of our life, and then put on the new man or the specific qualities of righteousness that go in sins place.
 - a. Now I understand that at times this appears to be a single act. And I am well aware that there are occasional exceptions to the rule – the kind of exceptions where God miraculously changes someone in regard to a specific sin in a moment of time – such as freeing them from alcoholism or drug addiction or some other major sinful habit that normally requires a much longer time, a lot of hard work, and perseverance to kill off and replace with godliness.
 - b. Yet apart from this unique kind of exception and those times when growing in godliness seems to be a single act of putting on Christ-likeness, God says the normal path to godliness requires us to do our part – which means doing the hard, painful work of dying first and then rising to newness of life second.
 4. And to reinforce this truth, I am going to present five portions of scripture that show Christian growth as putting off before putting on, or dying before coming to newness of life. And because we recently looked carefully at Romans 6, I will exclude that chapter.
 - a. Ephesians 4:22-24 . . . that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, [23] and that you be renewed

in the spirit of your mind, [24] and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

- b. Colossians 3:5, 8-10, 12-14 . . . Therefore put to death the members of your earthly body that are on the earth, immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. . . [8] But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. [9] Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, [10] and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him . . . [12] And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; [13] bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. [14] Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.
- c. Hebrews 12:1-2 . . . Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, [2] fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
- d. James 1:21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.
- e. 1 Peter 2:1-2 . . . Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, [2] like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.
- f. The point here is that God, in His word, tells us clearly that the sequence for spiritual growth is, first of all, to die to sin, deny self, put off the old nature, and kill off the evil desires of your flesh, AND THEN put on the new nature and grow in godliness in order to become holy in all your behavior, just as God is holy.

B. 1 Peter 4:2 . . . so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

1. Imagine repenting and coming to faith in Christ for salvation, and than being told by one of Jesus' disciples that the normal Christian life means living the rest of your life doing the will of God rather than continuing to give in to the sinful and foolish desires of your flesh, the world, and the devil. Yet this is what Peter has just done.
 - a. Imagine being in the presence of Jesus and hearing Him say that you are to be perfect in your love for others just like God is perfect in His love for us (Matthew 5:48).
 - b. Imagine receiving a letter from one of Christ's disciples that exhorts you to read and apply what is written in the letter so that you will sin no more (I John 2:1). And then imagine reading further and finding a warning that no one born of God practices sin (I John 3:9).
 - c. Imagine hearing that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control – followed immediately by the reminder that those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:24).
 - d. Imagine listening to a sermon by the apostle Paul and hearing him say that we are to cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God (II Corinthians 7:1).
 - e. And in the midst of all those exhortations and warnings, imagine being told that you have died to sin and therefore you are no longer to live as a sinner (Romans 6:1-7).
2. Does this imagining seem a bit extreme? Well, it isn't.
 - a. Remember that Peter began this epistle with an exhortation for his readers to be holy in all their behavior just as God is holy (I Peter 1:15-16).
 - b. And Peter begins chapter 4 with an exhortation to arm ourselves with the same purpose Christ had in suffering in His flesh. Why? Because those who have suffered in the flesh have ceased from sin.
 - c. My point here is that this is not extreme Christianity. From the words of Jesus to Peter to James to John to Paul, we see that this is normal Christianity.
3. It seems to me that one of the weaknesses of our current church culture is an exaggerated emphasis on God's love, His grace, and His readiness to forgive. I call it an exaggerated emphasis because it not only teaches us to feel safe in committing unintentional and careless

sins, it implies we are just as safe even though we are knowingly continuing on in the practice of one or more particular sins – be they thoughts, attitudes, fears, words, or deeds.

- a. Now we know that the scripture clearly teaches that God loves all humanity, and that He has a special love for all His children. And the scripture instructs us to find comfort in God's grace and forgiveness of sins committed. We also know that God's grace and forgiveness are the result of Christ becoming our sacrificial Lamb in paying sin's debt. And we know that we receive daily grace for any sins committed because Christ is our Advocate when Satan accuses us before God as having sinned.
 - b. However, this exaggerated emphasis on God's love, grace, and forgiveness has led many to believe there is a new "normal" regarding God's standard of holiness among His children.
4. But is this new normal the true normal? No, not according to God's Word! So let's return to Peter's words, for these are the words of God, and they declare the original and still normal standard for Christian living.
- a. I Peter 1:14-16 . . . As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, [15] but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; [16] because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."
 - b. I Peter 4:1-2 . . . Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, [2] so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.
5. But Peter does not stop with these words, he continues on . . .
- C. I Peter 4:3 . . . For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.
1. This statement contains a truth that to me is very interesting, and what makes it interesting is the way it is said and its use of the word "sufficient."
 - a. Sufficient implies a period of time or a quantity that is enough or adequate to fulfill a need or requirement, or in this case, to fulfill our sinful desires.

- b. Putting that definition with the way Peter says this truth tells us that the years spent as a willful, deliberate sinner are sufficient or adequate enough to no longer need to return to that way of life in order to find out what sin is like or to take pleasure from certain sins. In other words, we don't need any more time or opportunities to sin. We have had enough.
 - c. Now you may say, "So what!" But I say that this statement gives us another strong argument to use on ourselves when resisting and turning away from and bringing an end to the devil's temptations, our unholy thinking, and the sinful desires of our flesh.
2. It is my intention to talk about the rest of verse 3 next Sunday, but for now I want to conclude by drawing your attention to one of the important reasons why we are to begin with putting sin to death and than moving on to put godliness in its place.

III. Conclusion

- A. Jesus made it very clear that the evils of our flesh, mouth, mind, and behavior come first from our heart. For example:
 1. Matthew 15:18-20a . . . "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. [19] For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. [20a] These are the things which defile the man"
 2. Mark 7:20-23 And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. [21] For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, [22] deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. [23] All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."
 3. Psalm 24:3-4 . . . Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? [4] He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully.
- B. This is why any serious effort on our part to die to sin and live a holy life unto God must include purifying our heart.
 1. In other words, putting sin to death and putting on Christ-likeness requires more than dressing up the outer coating of our lives. It requires more than learning better communication techniques, or

- honing conflict resolution skills, or listening longer and arguing less, or learning to control our anger, or refusing to worry or be anxious.
2. Without question, these are all good things to learn and do, but they are the surface representations of the real problem – and the real problem must be addressed by cleaning up what is deep within our heart.
 3. Therefore, even though it is absolutely true that we need to change our outer man in regard to dying to sin and putting on godliness, it is also absolutely true that we must change what is in our heart if we are going to remain dead to sin and alive to living unto God to the end of our days.
- C. And what is a purified heart? It is a single-minded heart, focused on one goal, headed in one direction, clinging to one supreme treasure, and given to one supreme love that is superior to all other loves – and that supreme treasure and love is God. He loves us this way, and surely we need no further reason than that to love Him this way.