

Roy's Sermon for November 28, 2021

1 Peter 4:4-8 'They Think It Strange; and Heavenly Preparations!'

Last week we looked at 1 Peter 3:22-4:3 'Being done with sin, we live for Christ'. In verse 21, having given us the assurance of our salvation, (saved through the resurrection of Jesus) Peter then gave us that exalted picture of Him reigning now! V22: "with powers and authorities in submission to him." Not at some future date, but as in Revelation chapter one, Jesus reigns now at the right hand of God! Then in verse 1 of chapter 4 (referring back to chapter 3:17-18) "therefore since Christ suffered in his body (v18 to bring you to God) arm yourselves with the same attitude (or mindset) because he who suffered in his body is done with sin." And the point is, not so much suffering for our faith, even though that is a given, but Living for God! And as we saw, that it is not that we "are done with sin" as if we are no longer sinners, but "done with sin" in that we in effect have turned our back on, and washed our hands of the old person with its ways! V2: "as a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God." John Calvin emphasises that it must be, "for the rest of our earthly life," because claiming to be Christian for a season will not find us in glory.

Jesus' Blood was not merely for a season, but "for the rest of our earthly life" unto eternity! Returning to that life and those ways from which we have been delivered, shows us as "dogs returning to our vomit" with contempt for Christ's Blood and also He who sent Him!

Finally, v3 "For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do." That picture of the church as being the same as the world, because the world is in the church. It is as in Malachi 3:17 indistinguishable from the Pagan world around it. Yes it is "Ichabod. Because the glory of the Lord has departed." The world is in the church and has been allowed to contaminate her with its ways. When this happens, it ceases to be God's church, but part of that debauched society from which she has been saved! Yes we are called to be "done with sin" and live for Christ!

We continue in 1 Peter 4:4-8: 'They Think It Strange; and Heavenly Preparations!' V4 "They think it's strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation and they heap abuse on you." Yes "they think it's strange."

Beloved, I know about the way that some of you have come to know the Lord Jesus, not all but some. Perhaps you too in different degrees have experienced some of what Peter speaks of here. Having just spoken of "debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry" v3, he then says that "pagans" nonbelievers, "think it strange that we don't plunge with them" into these same things!

Friends, as most of you know, my brother and I did not have any kind of a Christian upbringing. But please don't misunderstand me, we grew up in a loving family which still exists today. But Christian in any sense, no. We both grew up in the surfing culture through the 1970s and foolishly participated in everything that such a lifestyle had to offer. And when I was first born again, there was a real sense of separation, a breakdown that occurred. Now without wanting to be overly dramatic, when this happens to someone in a Pagan family, there is a real sense to which there were even a death in the family. Something has changed forever within the dynamic of that home. And for me, there was no turning back! Perhaps it was like this for you. O millions and millions of mistakes which continued today, but no turning back. As the disciples said to Jesus when everyone was deserting Him and He asked them; "Are you going to leave me too?" "We've got nowhere else to go, for you alone have words of eternal life" they answered. And similarly, with all of the people I used to hang out with.

Surfing, fishing etc. (or perhaps I should say, those I went surfing and fishing and having excesses with) “thought it strange” that I didn't want to do what I used to do! One friend, (who is now dead having put a shotgun to himself at 19), after having been in Sydney for some weeks on his return said to me, “Erch”, (that was my nickname it means little brother in Hungarian), “yes Erch, the word in Sydney is that you have become really religious”. Now I wasn't a Christian by any means, I had barely started reading the Bible. But the word had spread! And after some years, another guy that I knew came up to me at potholes and asked, “Hey Roy are you still a Christian? Have you given it up yet?” Yes “they think it strange.” What would cause a seemingly normal druggo from the bush to turn to Jesus? It makes no sense! Friends notice the words “they think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation.”

At Bible study in recent weeks we have been spending a bit of time looking at different translations of the Bible, in an effort to ascertain which one best suits the context in the original Greek. Well here are three keywords from verse 4. Firstly “plunge.” In Greek it is *suntrekontwn* meaning to run wild with. Next it is “flood” in Greek it is *anakusin* it means excess or overflow. And finally the word “dissipation,” which in Greek it is *sowntias* it means profligacy. But let me first define the word profligacy, because to be honest, I didn't know what it meant till just the other day. It is defined as ‘Abandoned to vice. Shamelessly immoral. A Depraved person. Even Shameless Depravity!’

So our family or former friends, (or indeed the wider world) “think it strange” that we no longer dive with them into the flood of shameless depravity and abandoned immoral behaviour that exists today. That we don't accept homosexuality or homosexual marriage as normal behaviour. They “think it strange” when we take offence at their vulgar language and worse still, of the blaspheming of the Name of our Saviour. “They think it strange” when we hold a traditional view of marriage and family. And “they think it strange” that as those who hold to the teaching of the Bible, we hold that people should be accountable to God for their actions. That we hold to a Biblical account of Creation. That Jesus is the Son of God and the Creator of the universe, and that He holds it in the palm of His Hand! Yes, “they think it strange” Beloved, when we claim to be different because Christ has brought us from death to life. But further still, “they think it strange” when we actively seek to Live for Him by being “in the world but not of the world.” For example, we as Christians don't mind a glass of wine or a beer and are happy to have one with you. But excess, or a “flood” of anything, leads to a loss of control of one's self, and a betraying of our Saviour and our faith in Him, which is actually “detestable idolatry”!

So brothers and sisters, may it always be said of each one of us by the world, of our behaviour and our life in it, as we seek to live for and reflect our Saviour; We think they are strange. But not only do they passively think we are strange; they will also actively “heap abuse on us.” Literally meaning, that they blaspheme us. Even as the Pagan idolatrous world does of Jesus, they speak against our life and our ways. They hold us up as fools. While their inmost desire, is to catch us out when we fail our Lord. Because when we do so, that justifies their own lost debauched souls! They think to themselves, ‘Well if there truly is a God, and that person is a Christian who is going to heaven, then I'll be alright Jack!’

“But” Peter says. Here is the reality check for all who would do such things to the Lord's anointed children: V5 “But they will have to give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.” Dear friends, notice that Jesus is “ready to judge the living and the dead.” His final judgement and return is imminent. John saw it in his Revelation of the risen exalted ascended king. Revelation 1:7: “Look he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all the peoples on earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be Amen.” Revelation 22:7: “Behold I'm coming soon.” Revelation 22:20: “He who testifies to these things says yes, I am coming

soon. Amen. Come Lord Jesus." Dear friends, there is an urgency in Peter's words here because the Judge of all life has sat down upon His throne. All that remains now is for Him to return. John in his revealing of Jesus saw Him coming. So we are simply now awaiting for His arrival! Having spoken in chapter 3:22 that "all authorities and powers are in submission" to Jesus, Peter reinforces that picture of authority. Showing us that He is not only Lord, but the Judge even of "the living and the dead."

So whether we are alive in the body when the King returns, or have died in Him in are kept by Him for the resurrection of our eternal bodies it matters not. Because He is the Judge of both "the living and the dead." Friends, Satan would have the world believe that there is peace the other side of death for all people. So kill yourself. Yes murder your own life and you will have peace from all of your troubles and trials of this world. But he lies.

Hebrews 9:27 "just as man is destined to die once and after that to face judgement." No friends, death holds no peace for the unbeliever. Because Jesus is "the judge of the living and the dead." Friends, whether Peter speaks of those who are literally alive or dead, or be it that they are spiritually alive or dead, Jesus is the Judge of all of humanity. Indeed the judge of the whole universe!

V6 "For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged (condemned) according to men in regard to the body (the flesh) but live according to God in regard to the spirit." John Calvin sheds light on this confusing verse. Calvin explains, that Peter is simply emphasising the fact, that those who have died in Christ, having heard the gospel preached, and it being efficacious for their salvation, are not lost. Because though difficulties, trials and sufferings accompanied them in this life, yes though they were judged, (condemned) by men in this body (this flesh) in this life, they will yet "live in regard to the spirit" and "according to God." You see, they are not those who went chasing after "what pagans choose to do" v3, but sought to "live their lives for the will of God", v2 Yes, that world would have "thought them strange."

Why die for this cult called Christianity? You can have your beliefs. Only bow down to Caesar, recognising him also as god and live. Yes you can have your religion that's fine. Only worship the emperor and live!

Brothers and sisters, it is very clear that half-heartedness, and the compromise of what we hold to and believe in, in accordance with the scriptures, has no place in the Christian faith. That's why the reformers and those of the Reformation were put to death. It must be Christ alone! No, seeking to play both sides of the fence will avail us not. "You are either for me or against me" Jesus said. As His cross loomed ever near, and Him finally speaking in words that the disciples could clearly understand, Jesus spoke these words to them. John 16:31-33 "You believe at last," Jesus answered. "But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Though I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart. For I have overcome the world." Yes in this world you will have trouble. But take heart, I have overcome the world."

Dear friends, I want you to notice that Jesus doesn't say, "in this world you (may) have trouble", or "in this world you will have trouble" but I will take the trouble away. Or, "in this world you will have trouble" but I will deliver you out of that trouble. No, He is not saying any of those things regardless of what many say, He does not promise us heaven on earth. No, "it is in this world you will have trouble" but because of my Cross, glory awaits! That is what Peter is alluding to here. Believers may

be condemned in this life and this world as fools. Being thought of as “strange” but we will yet “live by the Spirit” and “according to God” in this life and the next! So take heart, your suffering and alienation are not in vain!

Beloved, it is very easy to become discouraged. When we find ourselves failing constantly in those same areas of our life. When we feel I guess, as though we are just treading water or going backwards in our walk with the Lord. Satan tells us to give it up. Come back to me he says. Yes come home, and all will be forgiven all will be well. Why cause yourself this anguish over some vague promise of some kind of future peace? Just live for now. It's all you have! But as tempting as it sounds, we know that he lies. Indeed, “he is the father of lies.” Meaning that all manner of deception and falsehood finds its root in the Evil one. “In the world you will have trouble but take heart, I have overcome the world.” Yes Jesus has gone to the Cross, we have the victory in Him. Praise God! V7 “the end of all things is near.”

Friends, notice how just after having spoken about the fact that Jesus is “the judge of both the living and the dead,” Peter now warns that “the end of all things is near.” The truth is, that both Christians and pagans like to think that death is way off in the distance, don't we? I believe, that hidden deeply in the heart of every atheist and idol worshipper, is the thought that, ‘when I'm 99 years old and riddled with cancer, perhaps even at death's door, I'll turn to God, and all of those good things will be mine, even as they have been in this life!’ Because we know that Paul said in Romans 1:21 “for although they knew God they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him but their thinking became futile.” So then there is no doubt, that buried within the DNA of all of humanity, is the inherent knowledge that God exists. And that one day, there will be a reckoning that must be paid! But in our “foolish thinking” we choose to believe that death is way off in the distance. And as when Noah was building the ark, we believe that we have plenty of time. And yet like that farmer who built his bigger barns so that he “could eat drink and be merry,” God comes to us and says, “you fool, this very night your life will be demanded from you.”

No the reality is, that “the end of all things is near.” Even in the recording of the patriarchs before the flood, who lived great ages unimaginable today, (Methuselah living till he was 969 years old) even so, of all of them but one, are written four small but significant words. “And then he died.” As Les Stewart says at funerals, it is the ultimate statistic: one from one dies!

Beloved, even those of us who do own the scriptures, do we really believe that “the end of all things is near?” Think about it. When the time approaches to do something of great importance, as it gets closer, we are I guess, more and more fervent and excited even perhaps frantic in our efforts, to be completely ready and prepared for the event. Yet when it comes to the very end of the world, and all things that we know of this life cease to be, what kind of preparations are we making?

While preparing this message it struck me: we prepare for our death with a will so that those whom we love receive our worldly goods when we are gone. But are we preparing for our death when ultimately, we are going to be taken into the presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords who is “going to judge the living and the dead?” But how do we make such preparations? Well may I suggest, that Peter gives us the key. “The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.” In v8 he writes, “above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.”

He then goes on to describe what that love looks like in its various forms. But from v 7-8, what we learn of our heavenly preparations, is that they're all about the mind and the heart! V7 in Greek, literally, we read, “be of sound mind and sober so you can pray.” So then it is the complete opposite

to that list that he gave us in v3 isn't it. Yes "be of sound mind and sober (clear minded) so you can pray." It suggests, that by us prayer be given great importance. That it is not to be some afterthought or something which is squeezed into our busy lives somehow. "Of sound mind and sober." The kind of words which attend the reading of a will. Something that has been given consideration and thought. In the eyes of God, prayer is a weighty thing dear friends!

Often do we read of Jesus Himself, going off to pray alone. If He felt the need, how much more then should we? Revelation 5:7-8: "He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the 4 living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the Saints." Brothers and sisters, have you ever thought of your prayers like that, that they are in effect part of your offerings to God? That they rise up into His very presence? Yes prayer is a weighty thing dear friends. But how much weight do you place upon it? We must "be of sound mind and sober so we can pray." Because the end of all things is near."

So firstly these heavenly preparations are about the mind and then in v8 they're all about the heart. V8 "above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sin." Brothers and sisters, there are those who will tell us that our loving deeds in effect make up for our sins. That they even out the scales, so to speak. But no. This can't be true. Only Christ can atone for sin. No, what Peter is saying is that though our faults toward one another be many, when we act in sincere love toward each other, those many shortcomings are far more easily forgiven and covered over. Yes those whom we have inadvertently hurt or offended find it easier to overlook, to cover up as it were, those things. So sincere love, "deep love covers a multitude of sins." Yes we are far easier to be forgiven our faults, when we act in sincere love toward one another. But this kind of love, does act! But that is for next time.

Let's pray.