

29/11/20

## “Living in Victory”

– 1 Peter 4:1-8

*Steve Christian*



Good morning. If I were to say that John had, kicked the bucket, has gone to a better place, is six feet under, and now pushing up daisies – these are all softer ways of saying that John is dead. That’s what we call a “euphemism.” It’s the choice to use a softer word when describing something that is otherwise unpleasant; it’s using language that is more palatable. A “senior citizen” is a softer way of saying an old person; “getting sacked” from your job is now called a “career change opportunity.”

Unfortunately, our society has become quite adept at replacing the word “sin” with other softer expressions like “mistakes” or “struggles” or “accidents” or “errors in judgment.” Instead of saying, “I sinned,” it’s less painful to say, “I slipped or made a mistake.” And specific sins are softened; lying is now stretching the truth; sex before marriage is now hooking up or living together; gossip is sharing some news; adultery is having an affair. You see, in a world that doesn’t want to acknowledge God, then sin doesn’t exist; and so we water it down – we call it something else.

But as Christians, not only do we need to call sin, sin; but we also need to start living from a place of victory; rather than letting sin have its way in our lives. Peter writes to Christians living in Turkey who are suffering persecution, because they are Christians. And he seeks to encourage them; rather than fight for victory, to live from a place of victory. “We don’t fight for victory, but rather from victory.” Are you striving for victory? Or living in victory?

Jesus defeated Satan, sin and death on the Cross. (Col 2:15) The only power that Satan has over us, or that sin has over us, is the power that we give to them. Are you trying really hard to have victory over sin in your life? Do you find it hard work? Do you beat yourself up every time you fall, and hear Satan’s accusations of “guilty again!” Are you striving for victory, rather than living out of a position of victory? Let’s stop giving authority to Satan that he shouldn’t have – take control of our lives, and remain under the power of the Holy Spirit.

Last week Kate spoke from the previous verses, and we see Peter calling the people to be strengthened in the face of their suffering; to stand firm. And we were encouraged to stand firm because of Christ’s example, the one who suffered to bring us to God; to stand firm because of Christ’s empowering, who speaks through us, as we witness for Him; to stand firm because of Christ’s resurrection, - our assurance that death is not the end; and to stand firm because Christ reigns with all authority, knowing our lives are hid with him. We are strengthened for suffering as we live, knowing that Jesus has already won the victory and we don’t have to give in to sin.

Chapter 4:1, “**Therefore...**” Since Christ is our example, and “**since He suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same attitude...**” The glorious results of Jesus suffering, encourage us to live our lives with the same mindset as Jesus; same attitude, same way of thinking, or same point of view. That is, with a willingness to suffer under unjust, ungodly authorities; leaving the fulfilment of justice in God’s hands; with a willingness to die to one’s own preferences for the benefit of others and for the glory of God. Jesus suffered and died, but was raised up to victorious eternal life.

So, we are called to arm ourselves with Jesus attitude. As a soldier would arm himself; take up his weapons for battle, so we are to take the same attitude that Jesus had as he endured His suffering. Paul speaks in Eph 6 of putting on the armour of God, so that we might stand firm against the attacks of the evil one. And Jesus said, **“those who stand firm till the end will be saved”** (Matt 24:13). This is not fighting from a position of weakness and vulnerability, hoping that we might win, but rather living in victory over sin and Satan’s attacks. With the same attitude of Christ, stand firm. Thus as we come to communion, we ask God to forgive us for not standing firm against sin ... and praising God for His forgiveness. Praise God that Jesus died to save us from our sin.

Communion:



If we can live with the same attitude of Christ; willing to take suffering on the chin; eager to leave justice in God’s hands; willing to put our own wants and desires aside for the benefit of others; then we’ll sin, less.

Peter says, **“...arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. 2 As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. 3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do - living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.”** (V.1-3)

Before coming to Christ, as citizens of the Roman Empire and living within that culture, they used to live in sin, seeking to please self; living in debauchery (wickedness and depravity), in lust, drunkenness, participating in wild parties and orgies, and idolatry. But now, armed with the same attitude of Christ, you do not live the rest of your earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. And the suffering that you endure as a result of persecution proves that you are in Christ. As it was with Jesus – he suffered great persecution, we may also suffer during this life, but there will come a day when sin is no more – the body will be done with sin.

Now, we might not be under much in the way of persecution, but sin is still sin. Is there an area of sin in your life that you struggle with and perhaps even tolerate, rather than seek to rid yourself of it? Do you get drunk? It’s a sin! Are you into pornography? Do you gossip – using hurtful rather than helpful words about others? Do you consistently lie? Are you still doing what the pagans do? Do you consistently lose your temper? Are you into the comparison game and want what others have? If we can live with the same attitude of Christ, then we’ll sin, less.

Now, Peter says, “arm yourselves...” No-one is going to do it for you. It reminds me of the paralysed man who sat by the pool of Bethesda in John 5. Jesus asked him if he wanted to get well. And his reply was not necessarily “yes”, but rather focussed on the fact that no-one would ever help him. Yet Jesus was standing right in front of Him, ready to heal.

You and I don't need other people's help – we need Jesus help. If we arm ourselves with the same attitude of Christ, then we'll sin, less. And our war with sin is won in our minds! We are to have a militant attitude toward sin because it is destructive, deceptive, decay-producing and death-delivering. We must be both vigilant and diligent. This takes us back to chapter 1 Peter 1:13: **“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober...”** Peter picks up on this again in 5:8: **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”**

“Arm yourselves!” Paul says in Romans, **“Do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.”** (Romans 6:12) Rather, **“let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”** (Heb 12:1)

Run with perseverance; throw off that which entangles; don't let sin reign; be vigilant; be sober, arm yourself! You know what it is that so easily entangles you. Arm yourself with Jesus attitude. Every time you fall; every time you are tempted – Pray! Take control of your mind.

Now, if we can live with the same attitude of Christ, then we'll have a greater witness into our non-Christian contacts. Peter speaks of the non-Christians who are watching his persecuted brothers and sisters in Turkey.

V.4-6, **“They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you. 5 But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.”** (v.4-6)

Your godly behaviour intensifies your suffering or persecution. V.4, **“They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you.”** Our godly behaviour is a threat to non-Christians; because if there is a God as we profess, then they don't want to acknowledge that they sin and will one day be judged for it. And so, they seek to get us to renege on our faith; to live like them so that they don't feel any conviction or shame or guilt. And they refuse to call sin, sin.

But, v.5, we will all have to give an account for the way we live – the spiritually dead as well as the spiritually alive; those who are alive today, and those who have already died. You and I will be judged and will have to give an account for the way that we have lived our lives. Are you ready for that? For me, I know I am a sinner, and that I can only appeal the mercy of God, on the basis that Jesus death on the Cross paid the price for my sin. As a result, I try to live for God's glory. Where do you stand before God? Have you acknowledged Jesus as your Saviour? If not, then you will hear Jesus declare, “depart from me, for I never knew you.”

Now, v.6 is not suggesting that someone has gone to those who have died and preached the gospel to them. Rather, just as the spirit of Christ spoke through the prophets of old, the gospel has been preached through the godly witness of faithful Christians; faithful God fearing, God honouring people, to those who have rejected it and are now spiritually dead.

But Peter is seeking to encourage his readers by reminding them that their persecutors, will be judged and held accountable – so leave justice to God. But also, that their godly behaviour is a wonderful witness to the power of the gospel – being prepared to live differently, and to suffer for Christ; looking forward to eternity. For us too, we should not underestimate the power of our witness as we live godly lives.

So, are we fighting to try and gain victory over sin, or are living in the power of the gospel, and in the same attitude as Christ – experiencing victory over sin, and thereby increasing our witness for Christ? If the world sees that we struggle with sin, this lessens the effectiveness of our witness.

In the following verses Peter then gives some practical pointers about living together as Christians; being clear minded, self-controlled, loving one another, offering friendly hospitality, serving one another – all to the glory of God. So, living with the same attitude of Christ affects the way that we live in community.

Maybe you've been prompted today to consider more deeply the attitude with which Jesus approached life, and how that may affect the way that you live your life.



In closing – have you ever heard of the ermine? 🌀 It's a small animal in the weasel family around 30cm long, known for its snow-white fur. Many years ago, its fur skins were used to make robes for the nobility and royalty in Europe, and therefore hunters were eager to capture them. But the ermine has an instinctive drive to protect its white glossy coat from being soiled; and so hunters would smear black tar around the entrance to their den. This made capturing the elusive ermine so much easier, as it considered protecting its skin more important than saving its life. The ermine would rather face yelping dogs and be captured and killed, than to compromise its virtue. For the ermine, purity is more important than life itself.

How about for you? How important is breaking the grip of sin to you? Is purity and being right with God, more important than the enticements of this world; what this life has to offer? Is purity more important than sin? For us, purity saves our lives into eternity. We must arm ourselves against sin, with the same attitude of Christ to live in victory, and gain eternal life. Let's do away with the euphemisms and call sin what it is; sin. And ask God for forgiveness and cleansing. And if you've not acknowledged Jesus as your Saviour, do it today.

Jesus said, **“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.”** (Matt 10:32) Come forward as we sing our closing song and acknowledge Jesus as your Lord and Saviour.

So, a quick precis of the letter thus far... “To God's elect, strangers in the world, a chosen people, a royal priesthood, called to be holy as He is holy; though you may suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed; do not repay evil with evil, but rather bless those who persecute you. Arm yourselves with the same attitude of Christ and you will no longer satisfy evil human desires, but rather live within the will of God, and for His glory.” Amen.

How marvellous to be a child of God!

Song: TN 263 How marvellous

Hymn 57n Praise my soul the King of heaven

Hymn 387n Be Thou my vision

Hymn 075x I stand amazed

