

Done with Sin**1 Peter 4:1-6**

In his book, *Soul Keeping*, John Ortberg shares about one of the last times he spent with Dallas Willard who had mentored him for over two decades. Willard had been a professor of philosophy at USC who wrote so thoughtfully about the Christian life and life with God. On this particular day there was a group gathered and at one point Willard began to talk about what really mattered in life. He said that what matters is the work of helping people know that God is alive and present and loves them; that the reality of the kingdom of God is among us and available; and that life is precious, yet “wasted with terrible ease.”

Someone asked Willard if he had any regrets and he said that he regretted the time he had wasted, which was shocking to Ortberg because from his perspective Willard lived one of the most purposeful lives of anyone he knew. He made the comment that he doubted that Willard even knew what a TV was. But here is Ortberg’s take on what he believed Willard meant. He said:

I think Dallas said he regretted all the time he wasted, not because he compared himself to other more efficient people, but because he began to see what life could be. I remember a phrase I had heard from him years ago, about how all of us lost souls allow ourselves to live in worry and anger and self-importance and pettiness when life with God is all around us.

(*Soul Keeping*, 191)

Life with God is all around us. His kingdom is near. We can experience it. And we have the mission of helping others experience it. But as Willard says we can waste this opportunity with terrible ease. We can miss out because we allow ourselves to live in worry and anger and self-importance. In other words, we allow sin a place in our lives that keeps from experiencing this life with God to the extent that we can. And we allow sin a place in our lives that hinders us from helping others experience this life with God. We need to be done with sin.

This is Peter’s focus as we come to 1 Peter 4. Peter wants his readers to understand that we must be done with sin, because sin will keep us from living out our true identity and it will hinder us from our calling of proclaiming the excellencies of God. And so let’s look at what Peter says about being done with sin. We are looking at verses 1-6 today. And the first thing Peter says is that if we are going to be done with sin, we must . . .

I. Take Up the Mindset of Christ (vv. 1-2)

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,*

The command that Peter gives here is to *arm yourselves also with the same purpose* that Christ had. To, *arm yourselves*, means to make sure you have the right equipment for some task. The equipment that Peter says we need to take up is the mindset of Christ.

Now, the connective, *therefore*, looks back to 3:18 where Peter said that Christ died for sins. That is how *Christ has suffered in the flesh*. Jesus had a settled resolve to obey God regardless of the consequences. For Jesus this ultimately meant suffering death on a cross. That is the mindset that Jesus had. We are to be armed with the same kind of resolve to obey God regardless of what kind of suffering that might mean for us.

And so we are to be equipped with that mindset, but what is the task? The task is being done with sin. Peter makes this amazing statement that *he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin*. By, *in the flesh*, Peter simply means the realm of the flesh; he means our earthly existence. He who has suffered in this life, has ceased from sin.

What does this mean? There are a number options. He could be speaking of conversion. In Romans 6:7, Paul says that he who has died is freed from sin. In other words, the one who comes to saving faith in Jesus has died with Christ and therefore has been set free from bondage to sin. We don't have to sin. And this is certainly true. But I don't think that this is what Peter is saying.

Another option is that Peter is saying that the one who suffers actually learns from that experience of suffering not to sin. Peter is saying that there is something about suffering that refines and transforms us and strengthens our resolve not to sin.

A third option is that Peter is saying that those who suffer for their faith demonstrate that they are willing to be done with sin. When faced with the choice of doing the easy thing and go along with the world or obey God, this person is resolved to obey God even if it means suffering. And so they choose to obey God, even if it means suffering, shows their resolve to be done with sin.

I think Peter is saying that there is something transformative about suffering. I think he is saying that when we suffer in this life it helps us be done with sin. It has a kind of mortifying effect on sin. And if we can take up that mindset of Christ, it will help do what he says in verse 2:

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.*

However many days you have left on this earth is to be lived *for the will of God*. This is the purpose of your life if you are a Christ-follower. Once a person comes to faith in Jesus, she must live *no longer for the lusts of men*. And Peter is saying that to do this we must take up the mindset of Christ of being willing to obey God regardless of what kind of suffering that choice might bring into our lives.

And so here's the question for you. Are you armed with the mindset of Christ? Have you decided that you will obey God even if it means that you will suffer?

For many Christians around the world they are faced with this question the moment they trust Christ, because to be a Christian in their context means certain persecution. And so this is not a fuzzy thing for them. They know that they have to decide that they will follow Jesus regardless of the cost.

For many of us, we are not often forced to face this question. We can obey God and often it doesn't lead to suffering of any kind or at least not to strong suffering. And so we can sort of skate by and not get clear about this question. But if we don't answer this question it is to our own detriment. And so let me encourage you to reflect on this question. Do I have the mindset of Christ? Am I really willing to obey God regardless of what it might cost me? Take some time to think and pray about this. Decide that you are willing to obey God regardless of the cost. As our culture moves further and further away from God's truth, this will become increasingly important.

We need to have the mindset of Christ if we are going to be done with sin. Peter also says that if we want to be done with sin, we need to . . .

II. Decide that You Have Sinned Enough (v. 3)

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.*

When I was doing college ministry, I remember having interactions with young guys struggling to fully yield their lives to God. The conversation sometimes went something like this. He would say, "When I get out of college I plan to get serious about my faith. But I'm having too much fun. I want to enjoy this life a little longer." In other words, it was this mindset that there would be a day in the future when it would make sense to get serious about REALLY obeying God, but not yet.

Peter is saying that whether you are young or old, a new believer or long-time believer, that when it comes to sin *the time already past is sufficient*. You've had enough time to carry out *the desire of the Gentiles*. It is time to decide that you have sinned enough.

In using the term, "*Gentiles*," Peter wants his readers to understand that they are God's true covenant people. And as God's people we are called to live holy lives. He talked about his earlier in his letter. For instance, back in 2:9 he said that we are "*a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession*" who have been set apart to proclaim the excellencies of God. But we can't do this well if we continue to walk in sin.

Peter lists six vices that we are to be done with. The first five are all practices that refer to some kind of lack of control in certain areas of life. *Sensuality* refers to indulging in sensual pleasures without any moral restraint. *Lusts* refer to evil craving for sex, but as well, it can refer to evil craving in other areas of self-gratification. *Drunkenness*, *carousing*, and *drinking parties*, all refer to excess indulgence in alcohol and the associated immoral behavior that often comes with these things. The last vice he lists is *abominable idolatries*. He is talking about idol worship. And of course this is a vice that must be left behind because God alone is to be our sole allegiance.

Of course these are sins that we need to be done with. But if Peter was writing to us, his list of sins might include other things - materialism, or racism, or sexism or all sorts of things. The point is that whatever the sin is it is time to be done with it.

Now, I don't think Peter is saying that we will not continue to struggle with sin in this life. The Bible is very clear that we will battle sin until we die. The point here is our attitude. Do you have any sense that tomorrow or some day in the future is when you will finally get serious about sin? Peter says today is the day. Today is the day to decide that you have sinned enough.

Before we move on, let me comment on one area of sin that Peter addresses – sensuality and lusts. These are things that we are bombarded with in our culture, right? Pornography . . . sexual temptation . . . these kinds of things. And I know that this is not just a struggle for men, but I want to say this to the men. If you look in the group catalog for the summer there is a group called *Pure Desire* that will be happening. This is a group focused on dealing with sexual addictions and temptations. We've been running these groups at Faith for several years and many men have found freedom from their struggles through these groups. And so if this is your area of struggle signing up for this group might be what it takes to decide that you are done with sin.

Now, in some cases when we turn from sin we may face opposition. That was certainly the case for these Christians in Asia Minor to whom Peter wrote. And so he goes on to tell them that if they want to be done with sin, they need to . . .

III. Be Prepared for Opposition (v. 4)

⁴ *In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you;*

It is very likely that the vices that Peter listed in verse 3 were things that were part of family gatherings or cultural and religious events. And so to stop doing those things was something that was going to be a big deal that could lead to opposition.

Some of you have experienced this. Before you became a follower of Jesus there were things that you did with your friends that once you became a believer you stopped doing. The conviction of the Holy Spirit and the experience of God's love, grace and mercy having rescued you, led you to want to live in a way that is pleasing to God. At first your friends thought you were joking or that it was a phase that you were going through. They were surprised. They believed

that once you came to your senses, you'd join in with them again. But when you didn't they got mad. They felt judged by you. Not because of anything you said, but because your changed life is a testimony to the way God wants all people to live. Their sinful behavior is exposed and they don't like it. And it is very possible that some have maligned you.

This is the very kind of thing that Peter is talking about here. And we need to understand that sometimes our choosing to live godly lives will alienate others from us and we may suffer for it. We need to be prepared for this kind of opposition. If we are not, we may just go along with the crowd and do things that God does not want us to do.

Let me say this about facing opposition. Let's make sure that if we face opposition, it is because of our godly lives and not because we are unkind or self-righteous or arrogant or anything of the sort.

And so, to be done with sin, we need to be prepared for opposition. And in the last two verses that we are going to look at this morning, Peter says that one thing that can help us be prepared for opposition is to . . .

IV. Remember that God has the Final Word (vv. 5-6)

⁵ but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

People may make judgments against those who choose to obey Christ in this life. They malign them. But Peter says that God has the final word for they *will give account to God who is ready to judge the living and the dead*. There is a coming judgment from which no one will escape.

We may suffer in this life for our faith and at times the suffering can be harsh. But this truth can sustain us in our suffering because it helps us see the big picture; it helps us see our lives from the vantage point of eternity. It helps us understand that God has the last word, which is what Peter goes on to talk about in verse 6.

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.

When he says, *for this purpose*, Peter is referring to the coming judgment that he talks about in verse 5. The purpose for which the gospel is to be proclaimed is because there is a judgment coming and people need to be prepared for that judgment.

Now, what does it mean that the gospel was preached *even to those who are dead*? Some have believed that this is connected to what we looked at last week where it said that Christ went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison (3:19). But nearly all commentators agree that the context is different here. This is not linked to what Peter was talking about back in chapter 3. Others believe that this is referring to the preaching of the gospel by the apostles

and others on earth to those who were then spiritually dead. Most commentators, however, believe that Peter is talking about Christians in Asia Minor who heard the gospel while they were alive, but who are now physically dead.

And so what Peter is talking about here is the truth that human judgments are not the last word. These believers were *judged in the flesh as men*. And for some of them that judgment meant that they were maligned; some maybe suffered death for their faith. But that judgment is not the last word, because according to God's judgment *they may live in the spirit according to the will of God*.

And so in the face of human judgments we need to remember that that God has the final word. That will help us be done with sin.

I want to close by going back to what Dallas Willard said, "Life is precious, yet is wasted with terrible ease." You will waste your life if you don't come to the place of being done with sin. Sin is so destructive to experiencing the gift of life that God has for you. And so be done with sin. And sin is so distracting from our mission of helping people come to know God. And so be done with sin.

Take up the mindset of Christ. Decide that you have sinned enough. Be prepared for opposition. And remember that if or when it comes, God has the final word.