

1 Peter Chapter 4A

The tragic events that took place last Sunday at the First Baptist Church, in Sutherland Springs, TX have left many people stunned and perplexed, searching for answers to some of life's most difficult questions.

- I found myself praying... Crying out to God while I was listening to the appalling details of this horrendous crime against the Body of Christ.
- Because God made us in his own image tragedies like the one in Texas send our moral compass spinning out of control.
- Because God created us to be rational beings, this type of calamity leaves us dumbfounded, seeking to understand; what would possess a human being to engage in such a deplorable act of horrific carnage?
- Throughout the week, a multitude of questions have been raised and numerous opinions have been posted on social media.
- People who have no Biblical understanding, no comprehension of the revelation of God in Scripture ask: “Where was God when this tragedy was taking place?” As a believer, committed to the Word of God, how do you answer that question?

Are you able to point people to the tender care of our Good Shepherd by opening the Scriptures? Can you speak those comforting words from God and boldly tell them: “Our gracious creator is an ever present helper in time of need?”

Very often as I seek to describe the Sovereignty of God; When I try to defend His Holy Character in the public arena, I am met with disbelief and sometimes anger.

- People who don't know the Lord, are blinded by the god of this world. They can't see beyond the circumstances of this fleshly existence.
- BUT for those of us whose eyes have been opened to see the glory of God, those of us who understand from the Scripture the total depravity of man.
- Those of us who can see beyond the things that are visible, into the realm of the invisible. Know that the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Cor. 4:18)
- WE understand that those true Believers, whose lives were taken as they were worshipping at the First Baptist Church were immediately ushered into the presence of Almighty God.
- There was never a moment when they were separated from the Love of God.
- Remember the words of the Apostle Paul.

Romans 8: 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? (Crazed Shooter)

- With the Word of God in the forefront of our minds let me ask you:

Is there any tragedy, any affliction, any terroristic threat or incurable disease that can separate the children of God from their loving Father? Absolutely not.

- As believers, WE can live with the assurance that NOTHING in all of creation whether human or demonic, no circumstance or condition, no measure of persecution or corruption in this world will EVER be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ.
- The Word of God reveals the mind and heart of God to those who have eyes to see. It comforts us in our grief and binds our wounds. It provides wisdom and understanding when we face those unanswerable questions.
- AND my friends it warns us very clearly that in this fallen world we are going to Feel Sorrow, we are going to suffer loss, we will experience persecution, and we need to be prepared for it. Paul moves on in Romans 8 to say:

Romans 8:36 **As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."** 37 **No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.**

- Here in Verse 36, Paul is telling us that the People of God, those whom Peter calls "Elect Exiles" have always been targeted for oppression and even death.

Paul reminds us that throughout history, believers who are the sheep of God's fold have always been vulnerable to the harsh surroundings and predators of this world, so wherever they go, they face harm and sometimes even death.

"**All the day long,**" like Sheep we face those who want to devour us. There is no intermissions from the dangers, no break from our exposure to death. (Till heaven)

- There are spiritual forces that are aligned against us, false teachers arising from within and without the church, violent individuals who seek to do us harm.

BUT (listen!) Because Jesus Christ has overcome sin and death, we need not fear those who can kill the body, and after that there is nothing more they can do. (Matt 10:28)

- After all, for us, "**To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.**"

Returning to our study in 1 Peter, we are confronted with the painful reality that the Normal Christian Life, like the life of Christ will include some form of suffering.

- With that in mind, knowing how to face such suffering is critical to our growth and to our faith.

This morning, as we study the first 6 verses of Ch. 4 Peter tells us that we need to be:

1. Armed with the attitude of Christ
2. Aimed at the Will of God
3. Possess an Abhorrence for the Old Life
4. Live with an Anticipation of Glory

Armed with the Attitude of Christ.

1 Peter 4:1 **Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,**

- The words “Since Therefore” point us back to the previous chapter and the suffering of Christ that we saw in Vs 18.

1 Peter 3: 18 **For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,**

- The cross of Jesus Christ is the ultimate proof that suffering is not to be shunned; it is not to be feared. There are times IN the Will of God when suffering is literally the door that leads to triumph.
- After all it was the suffering of Christ that provided our redemption. His death propitiated, completely removed the wrath of God for our sins.
- Isaiah tells us it is by His stripes that we are healed. (From the devastating effects of sin)

NOW, in full view of Christ’s suffering, Peter calls us to “**Arm Ourselves**” with the same way of thinking that the Jesus possessed.

- The key word in this paragraph is found in the command, “**Arm Yourself.**”
 - This is a military term which speaks of picking up your weapons or putting on your armor.
 - We find the term in Ephesians 6 where Paul tells believers to, **take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day,**

Here in 1 Peter 6:1, we are called to “**Arm ourselves with the same way of thinking**” that Jesus had. Namely, He came into the world not to enrich himself with the treasures, not to seek pleasure but to suffer. Listen to Jesus’ words in John 12:

John 12: 23 **And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.**

- As Believers we follow the example of Christ even if that includes a cross.
- History tells us that the Apostle Peter followed the Lord all the way to the cross. He was crucified upside down because he did not consider himself worthy to suffer in the same way as His Lord.

Thousands of martyrs throughout church history have armed themselves with the mind of Christ. They have freely, even joyfully given their lives in humble sacrifice for the glory of Christ their Savior. One observer commented on Johnny Rodgers walk to the stake on which he would give his life for Christ saying, “Rodgers walked like a man who was headed to the wedding altar and not to his death.”

- Now listen, I am not saying that we should go out looking for ways to suffer. I am not endorsing self-flagellation as a path of holiness.

You don't have to go out looking for suffering, it will find you. According to Peter, all who believe should have the mind of Christ and be ready to face suffering.

Peter goes on to say, “**Whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,**”

- What is He saying here? This is another difficult text to understand.
- I believe that this text is best understood in light of Romans chapter 6; let's look at verse 7.

Romans 6: 7 **For one who has died has been set free from sin.**

- You might say, wait a minute I'm not dead. Well no, you aren't dead physically BUT if you are IN Christ, when it comes to the power of sin, YOU died along with Jesus on the cross. Take a step back and look at the context:

Romans 6:1 **What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?**

2 **By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?**

4 **We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.**

- In God's eyes, if you are in Christ, you died with Christ to the power of sin and you have been raised by the Spirit, empowered to live a new life.
- That's why Paul says:

Romans 6: 5 **For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.**

- NOW that you are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ, now that you have been made a new creature in Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, you are free to live your life “**Aimed at the Will of God**” that brings us to our second point.

1. (*Believers are to live their lives*) Aimed at the Will of God

1 Peter 4: 2 **so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.**

For those of us who are “In Christ” our Biography is written in a two-volume set.

- Much like the history of the world, there is a “BC” volume and thanks be to God there is an “AD” volume. There is a “Before Christ” Volume and there is an “Anno Domini - Year of the Lord Volume” describing the work of God’s grace and the Lordship of Christ in our lives.
- If, in the mercy of God you came to faith as a child then the BC volume of your biography is smaller than the AD volume. Praise God for that.
- If you came to faith later in life, then the BC Volume is larger, and it is most likely a well-worn volume. Of course, that would make the AD volume smaller but delightfully fresh and new.
- Either way, like Human History the sovereign appearance of Christ in the course of your life has brought an end to one volume and the beginning of another.
- This second volume of our Biography is different from the first. In the first volume we lived in the pleasures of our flesh, the second volume has a whole new plot a new storyline aimed at the will of God.

Just as Peter commanded us to prepare our minds for the suffering that is part of our heritage in Christ, Peter now tells us to **arm ourselves** with a commitment to do the will of God and to abandon our former way of life.

You see, it is in the MIND where our New Nature and the Old Man of the Flesh intermingle. It is in the mind where we chose to yield to the leading of the Spirit or succumb to the desires of the flesh.

- In light of this ongoing battle, it is essential, it is mandatory that we constantly renew our minds by the Word of God.
- Paul provides us with wisdom for the battle in the book of Romans.

Romans 12: 2 **Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**

- The world around us is constantly exerting pressure on us to conform to its unholy standards. And Paul commands us to push back, to resist.
- J.B. Phillips translates Paul’s words this way, “**Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into it’s mold.**”

Instead of being conformed to this world, Paul commands us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds through consistent reflection on the Word of God.

- Discerning the Will of God is a glorious byproduct of consistent reflection, ongoing meditation on the Word of God.

Sadly, my friends, much of the modern evangelical church has abandoned this slow and steady process of renewing the mind and discerning the will of God through continual meditation on the Word of God. Many in the church today think:

Why should we put forth all that effort, all that hard work when we can simply ask God to tell us and listen for that “Inner Voice” to guide us?

- We know from the Bible that God leads his beloved children by the Holy Spirit. We know that God opens doors that no man can close, BUT we have to ask, Is that subjective inner voice really the voice of God, or is it my own heart which the Bible says is **deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked:?** How can we know when it is God speaking?

Well we know that The Bible is the inspired, infallible and all sufficient Word of God. We believe that the Word of God is able to revive our souls, able to make a simpleton wise, able to rejoice the heart and enlighten the eyes.

- According to Hebrews 5:14, the constant handling of God’s Word will give me discernment so that I can distinguish good from evil.
- By God’s Word, I am able to comprehend the Will of God and resist those fleshly passions that once controlled my life.

Volume 2, the AD volume of my life must be lived in submission to God’s revealed Word. Then and only then can I discern the difference between **human passions** and **the will of God**.

Moving on, I would like to think that this next point is a no brainer, a verse that I really don’t need to expound upon, but I have attended enough birthday parties, graduation parties and wedding receptions to know that not everyone who names the name of Christ has an Abhorrence for the Old Life

- You remember how I said earlier that our lives are broken up into two volumes? The “BC” volume and the “AD” volume?
- Well here in verse 3 Peter reminds us that the “BC” volume has ENDED. In our new life, we should live with an abhorrence, a hatred, a real distaste for the Old Way of Life. (Volume 1)

1Peter 4: 3 **For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.**

Peter tells us what our hearts already know, that we have spent more than enough time in the pursuit of sensual pleasures, appeasing the various lusts of our flesh.

- No matter how many years you have wasted pursuing alcohol, narcotics and pornography, IF you are “In Christ” that chapter of the book should be closed.

- The mere mention of the old life and all of its illicit practices should arouse a sense of remorse for past excesses as well as a thankfulness to God for His great deliverance.
- Solomon who knew a few things about sensual indulgences wrote:

Proverbs 23:29 **Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes?** 30 **Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine.** 31 **Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly.** 32 **In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder.**

- Friends, there are many hardships, many painful trials that come into the lives of God's people but the redness of eyes, the bite of the serpent and the sting of the adder should no longer be among us.
- As a matter of fact, our old friends should be astounded at the dramatic transformation that God has taken place in our lives.

1 Peter 4:4 **With respect to this** (To the old way of life) **they** (your old buddies) **are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;**

- Because you no longer run with them to the bars every weekend, because you walk away when they start telling their filthy jokes, because you read your Bible at the lunch table, they think you're weird!
- If you are young and tell your friends at College that you are saving yourself for marriage; If you stand for biological gender identity, you will be considered hateful and you will be maligned for your views.
- Your co-workers will think that you have gone off the deep end and you become the brunt of their jokes.
- What they DON'T know is that they will be held accountable before God for their immoral lifestyle and for every idol word that comes out of their mouth.
- Peter puts it this way:

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

- As we saw in chapter three, when Peter pointed us to the judgment of God that came upon the whole earth through the flood, God is ready even now to bring about his final judgment.

In view of the inevitable judgment of God Peter finishes his thought by remembering those in the church who had already passed from this life into the presence of God where they now live in the Spirit.

- That brings us to our final point for today, Believers are to arm themselves with a genuine hope and Anticipation of Glory

1 Peter 4: 6 For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

- While the wording that Peter uses here in Vs 6, can be a little confusing, I believe that He is seeking to comfort the believers who were experiencing suffering and persecution.
- Remember this epistle was written at the time when Nero was Emperor of Rome.

Well, here in Vs 6, it seems that some of the Believers had been put to death for their faith. They were “**judged in the flesh the way people are.**”

- It is in the face of this ultimate suffering, the martyrdom of some that Peter encourages God’s elect exiles saying that when believers are judged in the flesh and put to death, they actually continue to live eternally in the Spirit, the way that God lives.

AS it was in Peter’s day so it is in ours. The persecution exercised by a lone gunman in Texas, a man who possessed a radical hatred for Christianity exercised his judgment against the members of the First Baptist Church BUT by the grace of God and for His Glory those He sought to destroy continue to live in the Spirit the way that God does.

Friends the first volume of our biography had an ending point, That glorious day when God gave us new life, when the old life past and the new life came.

- The Second Volume of your biography Has No Ending! By the Work of Christ, death has been destroyed and resurrection life has come.
- That is why we can say with confidence, “**To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.**”

1. As believers, we should Arm ourselves with the attitude of Christ and be prepared to endure suffering whenever God in his sovereignty allows it to enter our lives.

2. We need to continually search the Word of God so that we may know and live in accord with the Will of God

3. We must turn away from the Old Life and by the grace of God walk in the Spirit

4. We can live every day with a joyful Anticipation of the Glory that is to come.

IF you are with us this morning and your life is driven by the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, if you are still chasing after the sparkle of the cup, enduring the redness of eyes and the bite of the serpent:

- I call you to repent of your sin while you still can and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
- He is the one and only Son of the Living God who came from heaven to suffer and die for the sins of those who would believe.

- Repent of your sins and Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ today and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to live a brand new life!