

Ps 114:1,4
 Ps 99:5,6
 Ps 59:1,2,3,4
 Ps 10:6,7
 Hy 41:1,2,3,4
 1 Peter 3:13-4:11
 Art 37, *Belgic Confession*
 1 Peter 4:1a

Yarrow, March 6, 2011

Beloved Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Each generation of Christians struggles anew with the question of how to live in a sin-filled world. How is one to conduct oneself in relation to the unbelieving neighbour at work and on the street? Ought one to join in on the Christmas party put on by an unbelieving employer? How is one to carry himself in the lunchroom?? What guides the Christian in the discussions around the board table? How do you live with an unbelieving spouse?

The apostle Peter had written his letter to help Christians of his day answer precisely these sorts of questions.

- Most of us sitting in this church this morning are heirs to answers our fathers have given to questions as these. But Peter's readers had no Christian tradition on which to build; they had to plough virgin soil on this point. New believers in Brazil or China were not raised with the answers we receive from our parents (for their parents were not believers) and so they want desperately to tap into our heritage. That's good – but: why do we interact with the world as we do? Why do we place the boundaries where we've placed them? Can we do better? What are the principles??
 - Peter helps us to get back to basics....

ARM YOURSELF WITH THE ATTITUDE OF CHRIST.

1. What is the attitude of Christ,
2. What is ceasing from sin,
3. What does one do instead.

1. What is the attitude of Christ

Instruction of text caught in words, "Arm yourselves with same attitude."

- Term 'arm' is a military word, pictures you as soldier needing to put on your armour. Implication: you under attack, live in hostile environment. Ie, is spiritual warfare, ie, sin/Satan would try to shoot you down.
 - This very much the picture of Genesis 3:15: life is war. Antithesis. See 1 Peter 2:11; also Ephesians 6:10ff, Rev 12:12. Cf Lord's Day 52.127
 - Command is for once-off dressing so that stay dressed for battle – for war is ongoing, attacks unrelenting. Sleep, holidays in your army gear....
- ∴ Q: how arm selves? With what? Armour we need is not listed in Jane's Military Review, for it not a physical, manufactured armour. Rather: "same attitude". As what??
 - Context speaks of suffering of Christ, cf 1a. Peter had mentioned this suffering of Jesus Christ before

- Cf 3:18 (note mistranslation of NIV; should be 'suffered', not 'died'). Notice how Peter mentions Christ was righteous, yet suffered for unrighteous. Ie, strikes us as unfair suffering, yet Christ endured it.
 - Also 2:21f → Christ left you an example in manner of His suffering. Ie, not retaliate, made no threats. How possible?? Entrusted Self to "Him who judges justly." Ie, left injustice/unfairness of it all to God, confident that Lord would set things straight in His time. Assumption: God would triumph, cf promise of Genesis 3:15.
 - This the attitude (and hence conviction) Peter's readers to share....
- Yet more involved. For: what motivated Christ? Cf 2:21: suffered "for you", ie, our benefit, cf 2:24. Ie, He not concerned with self but sought benefit of *the other*.
 - What was this benefit?? Cf 1:3f: people dead in sin given new birth, ie, born → into new world view that recognizes heaven is real and so we have a Father today and an eternal hope for time to come. Today's life not as good as it gets; ahead is something more delightful than anyone can imagine. For now you pilgrims en route to life eternal....
- For Peter's readers this a delightful perspective. They'd been heathen, caught in brokenness of life, futility of thinking....
 - But rescued, born again, place in God's kingdom, glorious hope → exciting! ∴ holy, different, special, privileged!! See 2:9f.
 - Yet there's a price to pay. Ie, lifestyle changes.... For: 4:1b: "he who suffered in his body is done with sin."
 - This true of Jesus Christ, ie, despite temptation He not fall for sin. Ie, pressure was on Him to do evil, cf Matthew 4:8f; 26:38f.
 - Result: suffering. Because of Mt 4:8ff, Jesus Christ had to endure road to cross, ie, rejection of people, insults. At end of road, arrest, crucifixion. Had He succumbed to temptation in Garden, He'd get away from suffering of cross too. Point: in this fallen world, doing right before God leads to suffering. Put differently: ceasing from sin brings about suffering. Hence: one suffers *because* you done with sin, fed up with sin, put sin behind you, resist/refuse sin.
 - This the eg of Christ that elect Peter addresses are to follow. In warfare/attacks of life they to arm selves with attitude of Christ, ie, cease from sin no matter the suffering it brings, in conviction that God is the righteous Judge who will set things straight in time to come.
- Need to take this further. Does ceasing from sin really lead to suffering?? Inevitable? 2nd point:

2. Why ceasing from sin leads to suffering

Peter's readers used to be pagan, ie, unbelievers. Had the sort of lifestyle characteristic of pagans, ie, do what you feel like, cf vs 2a.

- Details? Vs 3b. Common denominator: first five sins → unrestrained desires for sex, food, drink, ie, lack of self-control, let self go. Summarize these five sins → 6th, ie, disgusting idolatry. Ie, serving self, doing what self wants, has become your idol.... This the worship of the body....

- Now Peter says to his readers (regenerated people as they are): you've spent enough time doing what pagans do, ie, stuff of vs 3b. You now Christians ∴ different lifestyle – ie, follow Christ's example, including being ready to put up with some suffering, cf 1a.
- We wonder: does becoming Christian really have to lead to being different? To suffering??
 - Yes. Christian not only washed by Jesus' blood (ie forgiven); also renewed by Jesus' Spirit, ie, regeneration (cf 1:3). This regeneration leads to change of lifestyle, cf 2b. Ie, no longer do stuff of vs 3. But reaction of friends, family, workmates is: you're odd, weird.
 - Cf vs 4: they think you strange.... ∴ call you names, cf 2:11. See 4b: "heap abuse on you." Result: you rejected by friends of youth, family, workmates.... Ie, suffer....
 - This generates temptation – who wants to lose friends, family, workmates, who wants to be outcast!! So: suffer more....
 - ∴ instruction of text: follow eg of Christ! As He not give in to sin to save own skin, you go do the same.
 - To encourage: promise of vs 5, ie, those who heap abuse need to give account to "Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead." This obviously Lord God Himself.
 - cf days of Noah God judged world, ie, had Noah build ark → only 8 saved, ie, *rest all perished* (cf 3:20b). Ie, perished because ignored Word of God.
 - In Noah's days God judged/punished only living, ie, those who had died before flood not affected by flood. So could say, on basis of what eye sees: they escaped judgment of God.... But Peter: in coming divine judgment even the dead will need to give account, for death not means of escape from God.
 - That why (vs 6) Peter (and others) in past preached gospel to those who are today dead – for they will be judged. People may say someone lived a full life (and now it's over; he who has the most toys wins...), but there's more coming, ie, Great Judgment before throne of God. Those who embraced gospel will "live according to the spirit," ie, eternal life. And rest obviously will not....
 - So Peter's readers not to get discouraged by fact some people had good life in eyes of men; people not final judge. Nor should they melt in face of pressure of rich/influential. One day they to appear before Judge.... Cf Art 37 *Belgic Confession*.
- Where this leaves readers? They born again, ∴ same attitude as Christ, ie, done with sin. Not give in to temptation, to social pressure of friends, etc. They boo you → too bad, suck it up – in conviction that ultimate right/vindication on your side because Christ triumphed.
 - ∴ Q for you: to what degree selfish desires drive you?? You have contacts in business, perhaps family in world, friends of past/present. To keep them you tempted to participate in their lifestyle, ie, self on throne, own passions/desires important – as it is for them. *Do you satisfy them??*
 - Do not say this is warning/admonition can't be true for you. We all heard of elder in neighbouring congregation, family man, to all outward appearances had all heart could desire. Yet fell for precisely this. Would you dare think you better??

- Peter tells his readers to ‘arm themselves’ with attitude of Christ. Child of God *meant* to be dressed in armour of Christ’s attitude, but so tempting to drop that armour for while.... Hence command to arm selves again.... This instruction so very much for *us* too!
 - But if to stay away from “evil human desires”, what to do instead? What does living “for the will of God” (vs 2b) look like? This 3rd point:

3. What does one do instead.

Judge is soon coming. See vs 7: “end of all things is near.”

- Ie, in face of opposition/abuse/suffering, take encouragement from fact it soon over – and those who oppress will receive their just reward.
 - That conviction leads to relaxed attitude:
 - Cf ‘be clear minded’. Point is: ‘be sensible, moderate’, ie, since aware Christ coming soon to judge/deliver you, you stay calm, optimistic, in good cheer; you know something your co-workers who tease your Christianity don’t know.
 - ‘be self-controlled’. Ie, sober-minded, level headed. So: not upset by trials. Same point as above
 - Purpose: so that can pray. Ie, keep eye on Christ-who-comes so that can speak with Him, tell Him of struggles/trials. This interesting thought. In oppression/unjust suffering we tend to think in terms of how to defend selves, what to say to persuade others not to oppress. But focus not to be on own suffering or on how to talk offenders out of oppressing us, for battle is far deeper, ie, spiritual..., and enemy defeated. So: eye on Victor (cf 3:22), ie, pray..., seek His guidance, strength.... For prayer mighty, cf James 5:16b.
 - More, vs 8: “love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins.”
 - Pt here is that fallen human nature wants to lash back at wrongs done so as to vindicate self. To insist on rights (you feel you have) over against enemies/oppressors is understood to be waste of time; they have upper hand. But with church, circle of redeemed you can also be victim of wrong. If then you lash back at brother who wronged you, you set situation up for him to lash back in turn – because now he thinks he was right in first place re what he said about you.... So get vicious cycle.... Result: church internally divided.... In face of hostility of world, this weakens witness of church, isolate brothers and sisters so that temptation to give up gospel, return to heathendom/world increases....
 - ∴ Peter: end is near, ie, soon receive glory. Then who cares whether you were right or wrong.... So: break cycle of lashing out, be least, take the wrong on the chin. This what Christ did, eg, did not retaliate against Peter when he denied his Lord. Downplay other’s wrongs, love them, cover their weaknesses, sins.
 - This hard work, for takes much self-denial. Remember: it not about you. This life not as good as it gets....
 - Again, vs 9: “offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.”
 - Suffering, ridicule from unbelieving world leads to loss of friends, family, etc. Where shall Christians find support, encouragement? From each other. But requires open houses..., ie, hospitality.... In our congregation we know each other for long time. Not necessarily so amongst Peter’s readers, ie, strangers come to faith, appear in

church. Then what?? Open house to each other!! Adopt these people as new family – even if know their questionable past.... See Christ's example, cf Luke 15:1f.

- So: those who came to faith/church not to feel unworthy of receiving love/care either! Give selves, accept how Lord looks after you through new brothers and sisters of church....
- Once more, vs 10: use gifts you have for mutual benefit...
 - God has chosen particular people to life eternal, regenerated them, joined them to His church. These persons been given particular gifts – why?– for mutual edification. So: use your gifts to be the one living body Lord wants you to be. Help/encourage each other in midst of life's struggles.
- Why such attitudes?? *This how Christ did it!* You engaged in same battle against same enemy.
 - But enemy defeated through Christ's work on cross (3:22), so don't get discouraged by trials that be. Rather, keep eye fixed on Victor. He coming soon to judge, then you vindicated. So live/act in difficulties as He did, patiently....