

11-19-23 Shadows: Lessons from Suffering

1 Peter 4:1-11

When we face some of the common difficulties of life, it can make it difficult to maintain a strong faith. What do we do when things are not going well at home or on the job? What do we do when we feel like we are the only one serving Jesus, when we are taking heat from people because we are trying to live for Jesus? Wait, isn't God supposed to keep the bad things in life from happening to us?

Maintaining one's faith in the midst of trials is a real challenge that most of us face at some point in our walk with Jesus. In this letter, the apostle Peter was writing to people in that situation.

Today we are going to look at what we can do to keep our faith even when times get tough for us.

Keep your faith takes:

I. **Determination and Perseverance.**

• **Read 1 Peter 4:1-2.**

- Determination: the ability to continue trying to do something, although it is very difficult:
- Perseverance: continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition
- If we are going to succeed at something, we must have determination and perseverance. We must have the resolve to complete the task at hand.

1. **Jesus was determined and persevered to do the will of God the Father.**

- In **verse 1** we are reminded that Jesus suffered in the flesh. When Jesus lived as a man, He suffered at the hand of man. This suffering was a past action with continuing results.
- What was it that helped Jesus complete His mission?
- If you are going to do something even when it is tough, you must make up your mind you are going to do it!
- Jesus was so focused on doing what He was called to do; He would not allow ANYTHING to take Him off course.
- His resolve help keep Him focused on the big picture. It would have been easy to lose focus during all the difficulties He faced.
- Jesus gave us an example to follow. What would have happened if Jesus would have quit at the first sign of trouble? We would all be in trouble!

2. **WE are called to arm ourselves with the same resolve Jesus displayed.**

- The picture we should get from the phrase "**arm yourselves**" is one of a heavily armed Greek soldier putting on his armor and taking up his weapons ready to fight.
- We are to arm ourselves with the same state of mind Jesus displayed as He carried out the will of the Father in His life.
- We must be willing to go the distance for Jesus.

Revelation 2:10, Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. ESV

- This passage does not tell us to quit when it gets tough and we will receive the crown of life, we are to be faithful until death!
- We must be prepared and motivated to stay in the fight.

3. Our determination and perseverance will benefit us.

- **Verse 1** also tells us that the one who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.
- When we are determined to stay strong, it will help us to be able to deal with sin and temptation.
- The phrase **“arm yourself”** also means we are to arm ourselves for our own benefit.
- We have a personal responsibility and a personal interest in developing the same Holy resolve Jesus displayed.
- The issue of ceasing from sin is one of the reasons given for us to arm ourselves.
- What does it mean when Peter says, **“he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin”**?
- **Romans 6** tells us we are no longer slaves to sin, the same chapter in Romans tells us we are dead to sin. This is part of the equation.
- That statement does not mean we will never sin again, but the logic is this. If you have suffered for your faith, if you have paid a price to follow Jesus, you are not going to easily fall prey to temptation or sin.
- Why would you easily give in after paying the price of suffering for staying with Jesus?
- When you resolve to follow Jesus, you will find it much easier to say no to sin and temptation.

Keeping the faith means you will:

II. Go Against the Grain.

- **Read verses 2-4.**
 - If we are going to be determined to follow Jesus, we must understand that the direction Jesus wants us to go, the path He wants us to walk is not going to be the same one the rest of the world follows or walks.
- 1. The days of following the ways of the world must come to an end.**
 - **Verse 3** lets us know that the time to pursue the course of the world is over. The time for doing that is over. The old way of life should be dead and gone. It gives us another reason why we should be determined to follow God’s path for our lives.
 - What God wants man to do is to stop responding to the old stuff that used to drive us. We are to present ourselves over to God for His service. Once you give your life over to Jesus, doing what God wants us to do is a matter of personal determination!
 - Just like in life there comes a time to move on, Peter says concerning our old way of life, it is time to move on.
 - 2. Chasing after the flesh/world leads to a dead end.**
 - The way of the world is described as a pursuit in **verse 3**. We are told it is a pursuit of sensuality, or maybe put another way, it is a pursuit of pleasing self.

- Peter mentions sensuality which unbridled pursuit of lusts, which manifest themselves outwardly.
- Lust is hidden sins that find fertile ground in the theater of mind.
- Drinking parties where drinking, especially to the point of drunkenness, is the essential part of the party. Abominable idolatries were a reference to the excesses the idol worship of the time involved such as prostitution, excessive drinking among other things. For us it is something that may violate our conviction of what is right.
- The thing you need to ask yourself as you pursue the course of the world is this, “Where does it lead you? Does this bring God honor and praise? Or is it more pursuit of pleasing self?”
- All pun intended, the pursuits of the world lead to a dead end.

1 John 2:16-17, For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life[c]—is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. ESV

3. Living contrary to others will cause us grief from others.

- Have you ever walked among a crowd of people and tried to go against the flow? If you have been on a subway, maybe you got on the wrong staircase and then tried to go back through the flow of people.
- Going against the flow will cause problems for us and it will be difficult and very laborious at times.
- **Read verse 4.**
- It tells us that when you are doing what the rest of the world around you are doing, people will be surprised that you do not run with them to the same excesses.
- We are told there will be people who will malign you for your faith, they will malign you for not following the same dead path they are on.
- That’s why I started with determination and perseverance. You might think you are a tough guy, but you don’t know what tough is, until you follow God.

The only way to keep the faith is:

III. Remember WHO You Answer TO.

- **Read verses 5-6.**
- Please raise your hand if you like to be made fun of be maligned because of your faith? How many of us like peer pressure to do what is wrong? One thing that will help us to endure is knowing that:

1. Everyone will answer to God.

- **Read verse 5.**
- Those who malign us are not our judges. Those people who would put undue pressure on you to join them in things God says not to are not the ones we have to stand before.
- It is like a young person who has a curfew of 11:00 p.m. Their friend tries to get them to stay out later saying it is no big deal. Well, they do not have to face their parents!

- God sees what everyone is doing to you. God see what is happening. Those who malign you will have to answer to God!
- **Verse 5** tells us that Jesus is holding Himself in readiness, He is prepared to judge, all the arrangements have been made in reference to judging.
- The dead and living are the spiritually living and dead. We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

2. God's desire is to see all saved.

- As we go through the tough times, as we are being mistreated and made fun of, we need to realize the person doing these things is an object of God's love.
- **Read verse 6.**
- We are all going to serve a death sentence in the physical sense because of the sin of Adam. We will all serve a spiritual death sentence because of our own sin.
- God did not provide a way to avoid the physical death, but He did provide a way to avoid to be born again after we die spiritually. The gospel is preached so dead could be alive spiritually with God and this is what God wills.

Conclusion

Are you still following the path of the world? Today you can change that. I do not care how bad you think you are; I do not care what you have done, God loves you and He wants to have you spend eternity with Him.

Are you ready to join Him through Jesus?

Jesus is the only way. When those who are saved are going through problems, we need to remember that also.

If we are going to maintain a strong faith, we need to:

God sent His Son to die so you could have your sins forgiven and so you could spend eternity with God. Are you ready?