“How to Live as Suffering Saints”

1 Peter 1:13-16

“Therefore” goes back to everything Peter has written from verses three through twelve

Practical Christian living is first built on the biblical foundation of unchanging theological truths, i.e. since you know all these things are true, now live like this

What we know ought to translate into how we live

If we are going to live the way God wants us to, it always begins with our minds

Proverbs 4:23: “Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.” (NLT)

Romans 12:2: “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Ephesians 4:23: “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.”

Philippians 2:5: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”

Colossians 3:2: “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”

2 Timothy 1:7: “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

 2

“Sow a thought, and you reap an action; sow an action and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny” (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

“Gird up the loins of your mind” is not a common phrase today

Back when the Bible was written, men wore a long loose outer robe

This garment became a hazardous impediment if they had to move quickly, especially when running

The length of the robe could cause their feet to get easily caught up in it

Therefore, they would gather up their robe around their waist, i.e. loins, with a belt to prevent them from stumbling whenever a situation required them to move quickly

Spiritually, this means to prepare your mind for action

It is “to get rid of loose and sloppy thinking; to bring the rational and reflective powers of your mind under control. It means to control what you think about, those things you decide to set your mind upon.” (David Guzik, BLB)

Peter reemphasizes the importance of this by calling believers to be sober

 3

A soberminded Christian is continually alert, calm and collected in their thinking

They are seeing reality clearly and not enticed through worldly temptations which promise satisfaction but often deliver only harmful consequences and inner emptiness

The New Testament contains eight references which call believers to be clear thinking

It’s especially vital to practice this when facing suffering

It’s naturally challenging to think straight when experiencing stress or unjust circumstances

This is where hope comes into the picture

“Hope” is a certain anticipation

Christians continually practice forward thinking, particularly when undergoing trials

We know how the story ends

We know what awaits us in eternity

We know will keep His promises

We know as C.S. Lewis said, “They are far better things ahead then those we leave behind.”

 4

The revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ at His initial coming and final coming gives us great confidence as we face whatever presently comes our way

He came first to rescue us from everlasting punishment and He’s coming next to renew everything existent into an eternal state of perfection

Thus, we have hope in every single moment of this life

It’s all due to God’s marvelous grace, giving us what we do not deserve through His loving mercy

Recognizing all this we live as obedient children

True obedience is total compliance, a willing submission to God’s principles

It’s the evident trademark of genuine Christians

Notice the link between these verses and 1 John 3:1-3

Therefore, we don’t fall back into patterns of lustful living

There’s no more excuse for ungodly behavior

We are in the world, but not no longer of it

In this sinful, present world we neither find our identity nor live according to its unrighteous standards

Peter expands upon this in chapter 4:1-4

 5

We are to be holy like God in every single area of life

There’s no such thing as a Sunday only Christian where we act holy on the first day of the week but Monday through Saturday we behave any way we so choose

For the believer, holiness is to be pervasive, life-saturating, reaching into every single area of my life

But what is it to be holy?

What is the actual root meaning inherent within this term?

We usually start with good versus evil behaviors

“Holy” = “otherness”

To be holy is to be separate from, not manifesting the same characteristics

God is holy in that He is totally other

His divine character and attributes are absolutely pristine, free entirely from any intrinsic presence of what is evil

In this, He is totally other than you and me

But yet, we are called to be holy as He is holy

How can this possibly be a rational, justifiable expectation?

How can God require this from us when we when have a sin nature?

 6

What greater challenge can there for you and me than this?

Yet this call to holiness is to be seen as one of our most treasured privileges

Peter quotes verse sixteen from Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; 20:7

Understanding how we can be holy like God necessitates knowledge of positional holiness and practical holiness

We become the recipients of the first through regeneration and justification

Christ’s perfect righteousness is credited to us at the very moment we become a believer

Then we enter into the life-long process called sanctification which shapes us more into the image of Christ

The more our life reflects Christ character the more holy we will become

However, what does a holy Christian look like?

Is it a person who takes everything super-seriously, never can have fun, carries around a huge Bible everywhere they go, attends church in a three piece suit with a tie and a white shirt, can recite all the books of the Bible in succession without error, never makes a friend with a person who isn’t a Christian because such an individual is obviously unholy and therefore a adverse influence on successfully living a holy life?

 7

Holiness is to be essentially Christ-like in our thoughts, attitudes, speech and actions

To be holy is actually to be loving, giving, serving, merciful, gracious, longsuffering, practice self-control, be righteously angry against sin in every form, be morally pure, honest, forgiving, impartial, respectful, and to give God praise

To live according to all these ways is to be truly holy because none of these things are inherently sinful in any way

It is to live “totally other” in antithesis to what is fundamentally evil, corrupt, and goes against God’s righteous character

If God were to rate our actual holiness on a scale from 1 to 100 on a daily basis, what do we think would be the result?

Asking this question honestly will help to transform our lives

Our primary goal within suffering should be is to live as a holy Christian

This honors God, prompts those who are not yet believers to seek the Lord as their Savior and leaves an everlasting legacy