

# The Mind of Christ

## 1 Peter 4:1-11

April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2013

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### Introduction

Peter is writing his letter to many Christians that are dispersed throughout the region of Bithynia, Galatia and Asia, all of which today is modern Turkey. It is apparent that he expected his letter to travel around between the churches so that all in the region could be instructed. The recipients of the letter were clearly being persecuted (1 Peter 1:6) and he tells them that the suffering of Christ affects the way that they are to live.

As Christians, we must realize that there is a stark antithesis between Christianity and the world. We act differently, we talk differently and we say “no” to many things that the world wants to do...frequently, *not because things in and of themselves are sinful*, but because the twisting and perversion of things is what we must refuse. We must acknowledge this antithesis, and the way we work within this difference is not to blur the distinctions, but rather to be wise in how we see the beauty, glory and hope that exists in those distinctions. We can't mix the mind of Christ with the mind of the world without destroying our faith.

- ❖ <sup>1</sup> Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, <sup>2</sup> that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.
  - ◆ Because Christ has suffered, even to the point of death, betrayal and separation, we should similarly seek to persevere through the trials and hostility that we may encounter in our walk with God. Christ was content to rest in the will of His Father and we are taught in Hebrews 12:2 that Jesus looked to the joy that was on the other side of his sufferings and endured the shame and pain of the cross. The way that Christ dealt before and during His suffering becomes a model for us in the trials and hardships that are brought before us.
  - ◆ The world runs after things which are temporal and have no power to save. The flesh rules in their life and they are completely unable to subdue it and typically they have no desire to subdue the flesh. But when our eyes are opened and our hearts made new, our priorities change and our new eyes are able to see the futility of life apart from fellowship with God. The reign of the flesh comes to an end and now we are equipped with the Spirit in subduing our flesh until the day when our bodies are made new or redeemed and its weaknesses are put away.
  - ◆ The sufferings that God brings to us are evidence of our adoption as sons. Often times we wish God could teach us lessons less painfully but we would not be as likely to learn the things that God wants us to know. The lessons learned through trials and suffering generally are sanctifying and useful in maturing us out of sinful weaknesses. These lessons are blessings from God and a means of teaching us, with the mind of Christ, to cease from sin.
- ❖ <sup>3</sup> For we *have spent* enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.
  - ◆ When the Spirit of God makes us new through rebirth and indwells us, this event always brings change. When we are inhabited by the Holy Spirit, He begins to sanctify us and lead us in truth and wisdom. Before our new birth, we are slaves to sin and we would chase after any manner of abominations. But when we are purchased out of this darkness we are set free from the bondage of the past to now walk in the light with God.
  - ◆ The kinds of activities that Peter lists are actually very *natural*; this behavior is in line with the nature of those who have not been converted. Because it is so natural for them, they are puzzled why someone would refuse to live in that manner.
- ❖ <sup>4</sup> In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with *them* in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of *you*. <sup>5</sup> They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.
  - ◆ With the mind of Christ we are able to understand the thoughts of the world and see them for what they are, thoughts that lead to death. When persecution comes, we must be prepared and even *qualified* to receive it. Jesus led a public life carrying out the works the Father had for Him. It those righteous works that endeared Him to those who believe and the same works that condemned Him before the wicked hearts of the world.
  - ◆ The world does not have an intellectual problem with the Gospel, rather they have a *sin* problem with God. As we experience the growth and maturity that the Holy Spirit work into us, this acts like light illuminating the world around us...and the world hates that kind of light because it exposes evil deeds for what they are.

- ❖ <sup>6</sup> **For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.**
  - ◆ This is a wonderful verse that has provided no shortage of interpretations. So who are these that are being preached to? Some might connect this to the previous chapter where Christ preached the disobedient spirits. But the verse itself seems to suggest that these to whom the Gospel was preached, received it and even though they physically died they are still alive to God in the Spirit. Worldly men might have despised them for their faith and might have even killed them for their faith. But the important thing is that the judgments of the world don't matter—it is the purpose and judgments of God that will stand forever.
- ❖ <sup>7</sup> **But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.**
  - ◆ Peter warns them that some conclusion of events is imminent and calls them to pray with seriousness and watchfulness. Some take this end to be the destruction of Jerusalem which would occur in only a few short years. Others take this to be anticipating the second coming of Christ which has now been anticipated for nearly two millennia. Either way, the warning is strong and these Christians are called to labor in prayer.
  - ◆ Peter seems to be giving them a call to action as something ominous approaches...it would be foolish to become drowsy in complacency. He is telling them to take advantage of the peace (relative) that they enjoy now because a time is coming when they won't have the same opportunities. Likewise, when we hear the doors of our liberty closing, we don't want to look back and wish we had taken better advantage of greater opportunity.
  - ◆ Peter exhorts his readers to be serious and watchful *in their prayers*. Faithful praying is hard work but it accomplishes much because God has said that He accomplishes much through prayer. We should learn how to ask God for things and constantly be alert so that we know what to ask God to do.
- ❖ <sup>8</sup> **And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”** <sup>9</sup> **Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.**
  - ◆ Loving one another, with the love given to us by God, is one of the most powerful testimonies to the world of the life of Christ. This love is fervent because it is filled with kindness, sacrifice, generosity and, as Peter mentions, it is able to cover many offenses. This covering does not simply hide the offense, we should consider the offense to be gone.
  - ◆ Hospitality is very hard work, but it is also very powerful work. Sometimes it is hard to imagine that setting a table or preparing a skillful meal or offering a cold drink and a comfortable chair is all powerful work. But God ministers to us as we show these graces to one another and we declare the goodness of God to the world.
- ❖ <sup>10</sup> **As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.**
  - ◆ As God has divided up the manifold graces amongst the brethren we should realize that this is how God builds us into a community. We cannot be so content with our own gifts such that we find no need in being ministered to through the gifts given by God to others. We are a single unit, a community, a body—just as our triune God is.
- ❖ <sup>11</sup> **If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (NKJV)**
  - ◆ The speaking could be referring to those who teach in the office of Elder or it could refer to those who offer less formal words of instruction, admonishment or encouragement to the body—or Peter is addressing both kinds of speaking. Either way, we should not speak to each other carelessly, but instead we should speak with Christ's mind and speak as though God were speaking through us.
  - ◆ As you minister your gifts to others you should consider yourself engaged in the work of God. God gives these gifts to strengthen the body, to impart courage to one another, and to help them persevere through the trials and afflictions that may come our way. These gifts are evidence of God's love for us by providing everything we need for life and happiness.