

ARMED WITH THE SAME MIND

BY B. G. ECHOLS

We must be willing to suffer for the will of God as did Christ. "Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, ^{or} ~~arm~~ ^{arm} yourselves with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin" (I Peter 4:1). His suffering was not just His death, but all He endured "in the flesh" leading up and including His death. "In the flesh" means His earthly life. The fact of His suffering is to determine the course of our life. It must be a factor ever before us. He suffered bravely without running away. He was prepared for it. His suffering culminated in His death. The suffering of Christ is used as a basis for several admonitions in the New Testament. Earlier Peter had used it as an encouragement to patience (2:20-23). Now he uses it as a basis for admonishing us to put away sin from our lives. Some of the best arguments, and some of the strongest, against sin are taken from the suffering of Christ. He died to put away sin. That should be our purpose in life.

To arm suggests preparation for battle. There are battles to be fought in forsaking sin to follow God. The mind of Christ is our defense and weapon in trials. We can change the general run of our mind. "Mind" means "intent" or "attitude" (Heb. 4:12). All true reformation of life begins in the mind. The things of the mind are our weapons. Many fail to change their lives because they say, "I can't." If we have the attitude, purpose, and intent of Christ, how will it change our lives? We will have a complete identity with Him. This comes only by faith. The mightiest armor is internal, not external (Phil. 2:5; Eph. 6:13-18). We should see ourselves as similar to Him. Then our lives will be totally changed. He suffered for us; let us suffer for Him. If we have the same mind as Christ, we will get the same treatment He and the early Christians got.

Peter says our suffering means we have ceased from sin. This obviously cannot mean that when one is baptized he will never sin again. If that were the case, much of the New Testament would never have been written. The thought is that we no longer live the sinful life we had lived. We have actively determined to cease from sin (Rom. 6:6-11). The person considered in this verse is one who at some earlier time was given the choice of suffering or not suffer-

ing for his faith. When he suffered it was because he chose to suffer rather than to sin against Christ. Because of our choice to forsake the sinful life and to live in it no more, we will be made to suffer and be evil spoken of. The suffering must be the proper suffering for our faith to be evidence of having ceased from sin. There is a sorrow that does not help (II Cor. 7:10). It produces discontent and murmuring. It hardens the heart. If we let our thoughts dwell on our troubles, if we fret ourselves, we are defenseless and exposed to selfish temptations. We must look from ourselves to Christ "that ye no longer live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (I Pet. 4:2).

The word "that" introduces the purpose of what Peter just said. Here is the purpose of putting on the mind of Christ, and the result of determining to cease from sin (Rom. 6:1-4). This was the ultimate purpose of Christ's suffering, and the proper response to it by Christians. True conversion makes a marvelous change in the heart and life of everyone converted. It changes the whole course of one's life. "In the flesh" refers to our existence on the earth. "The rest of your time" suggests the solemn thought of the shortness of earthly life. Live now in view of eternity. It is foolish to waste that little time left in following the wretched lusts of the flesh when we ought to be doing the will of God.

There is a direct contrast between the lusts of men and the will of God. Christians live a new type of life which contrasts sharply with that of the world. Here is its basis. For this Jesus taught the disciples to pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." All the various faculties of our will are to be governed by His will. A Christian's life is one in which God's will, not man's desires, is the guiding force. Christ's life is the pattern. The New Testament refers often to the contrast between the manner of life of Christians and that of the pagans. It boils down to whether we fulfill His desires or our desires (I Thess. 4:3,5). We must submit ourselves. The lusts of men are restless, shifting, and uncertain because they are ever changing. The will of God is unchanging and secure.

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