

3rd Sunday after Easter

Date 26th April, 2015.

Introduction: Greetings to each one of you. I appreciate you all for coming to this morning service from far off places, regularly. It shows your love for God and also your desire to worship the lord in His Holy temple.

Today is the third Sunday after Easter. Let me confine my meditation to the epistle text, 1 Peter 2: 11-20.

“Unimpeachable living/worthy /Godly living is the answer to persecution: 1 Peter 2:11-20”

St. Peter wrote this letter to the Christians both Jews and gentiles. With the Spirit’s mighty filling, Pentecost had brought a radical change in the life of Peter. Now Peter who had already endured beating and had faced death at Herod’s hands, comes forward to encourage and strengthen his dear brethren of Asia to face the coming sufferings, which he perhaps already involved in the cruel Neronian persecution.

Peter now writes these words. To face the challenge of persecution, Godly life is the answer to the believers. In other words they must be ready to endure the coming suffering. He writes/illustrates here some of the virtues how a person might endure suffering?

1. Abstain from fleshly lusts: V11. Peter addresses them as sojourners and pilgrims which means –not being at home and not being among our own people. We are not at home on earth where there is so much evil. Therefore you must abstain from fleshly lusts which means- all the desires of sinful human nature. In other words not to indulging the flesh in its corrupt desires: having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children.[2peter 2: 14]

The reason why they must abstain from fleshly lusts is this: 1peter 2:11b. Fleshly lusts wage war against the soul. As sojourners and pilgrims, we are looking forward to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away,

reserved in heaven. We must not give ourselves into the power of lusts. Because the result of the fleshly lust is this: James 1:14,15—when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Peter, therefore urges the believers, abstain from all the fleshly lusts: the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh.

2. Keep your behavior excellent among the gentiles: V13—How is their behavior? --that they may glorify God on account of your good deeds. Tertullian, the church historian praises the Christians here. When the pagans deserted their nearest relatives in plague, Christians ministered to the sick and dying. When the pagans left their dead unburied after a battle, and cast their wounded into the streets, the Christians hastened to relieve the suffering. As a result the gentiles would think about this and change their faith and life and thus to be converted to Christianity. Gentiles come to Christ through the good works of the Christians.

3. Submit yourself to every human authority:V13. Peter says ‘such is the will of God’. The Christian recognizes the divine principle of government as personified in civil rulers as kings, presidents, prime ministers, governors and persons commissioned. The Christian perceives the necessity of those functions which rulers are bound to discharge. The Christian’s duty towards the civil government is submission, loyalty, cheerful obedience. Yet this obedience is within certain limits and is subject to certain reservations. When the ruler is disloyal and violates the constitution, there are cases in which even resistance is allowable. The Christians must obey because it is the will of God. Bible says-all authority and power is given by God, rather allowed by God.

4. Act as free men, not using your freedom as a covering for evil, but uses it as bond slaves of God: V16.

The Christian must take up a position of complete independence within and profess himself out side. What Peter meant is that Christians must not be hypocrite. A man does not profess to be better than he is, but loudly asserts that he is not a slave. If you use freedom as a covering for evil, it is not a true freedom. It is a moral slavery.

The Jews boasted much of their freedom and never acknowledged their subjection to any other power, but only to God. But what matters is this: they who were converted to the Christian faith, whether Jew or gentile, were made to feel that they were the children of God, that His law was the supreme rule of their lives. So they were subject to Him alone. They were free from sin and condemnation. They acknowledged Christ as their supreme head. They were not to submit to the chains of slavery, not to allow their consciences to be bound.

Therefore, the only true freedom lies in being servants of God whose will it is that you should be good subjects. Not free from all restraint, not at liberty to indulge in all things but bound to serve God in the faithful obedience of His laws.

5. Then the fifth virtue of Godly living is: Honor all men, love brotherhood, fear God, honor the king: V17.

To whom honor is due, according to the place, station in which they are, whether they are Jews or gentiles, rich or poor, believers or unbelievers, all men must be respected, because Christ honored every human being in his earthly ministry from a common man to the rich. So we are obligated to honor all.

Not only honoring all the men and women but love brotherhood both by words and deeds, show affection to those who are Christians and non-Christians irrespective of religion, nation, faith, creed, color, social and financial status.

Then fear God- this fear not like a servant-master fear, but fear God out of love which is called the covenant grace of fear. This shows the reverential affection of God.

Finally honor the king, the climax of honoring: whether Caesar, the Roman emperor, or a wicked, persecuting Nero or any other king or governor---honor him. A king who rules according to the laws of the land and for the good of the civil society is deserving of great honor and esteem from all men. Some kings are not. As children of God we must honor the kings who are not good and kind. Because Christ honored the laws of the Roman govt. by cheerful subjection and observance, by payment of tribute, so we must honor all authorities, love our neighbors and fear God.

6. Servants: Be submissive to your masters with all fear not only those who are good and gentle but also to those who are perverse/corrupt: v 18.

Whether household servants or slaves in a relation of servant-master, Peter says be submissive to your masters with all true fear,--not intended to mean any unmanly cowardice, dread of punishment but be submissive to the masters. The servant is bound to do his duty, though the master may be wicked and perverse. It is difficult to obey to the masters who are corrupt or wicked. But for God's sake we must be submissive. For example: Jesus submitted Himself to the wicked king, Herod, to the unjust Governor, Pilot.

7. Final virtue for a Godly living is: Bear sorrow when suffering unjustly: V19.

Peter argues here, what credit is there if you sin and are treated harshly, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. Other translation says you are blessed.

Endure grief- means that which is suited to produce grief or that which is wrong. Suffering wrongfully- suffering injury or where there is no justice. It has a particular reference to servants and to their duty. When they are abused or little and no security against being wronged, it is a special character of those who were in that condition, to be able to bear wrong with a proper spirit. The principle virtue is to exercise patience under wrongs.

When you suffer for what is right and endure it patiently, Peter says it finds favor with God. It is acceptable to God. you are blessed by enduring suffering for unjust doings. Jesus said, you will be hated by all on account of my name, but the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.[Mark 13:13]. This is exactly what Christ did in His life and left for us a model that we should follow. Our Lord endured pain and suffering- suffered to the point of death when he was judged unjustly. Yet He did not open His mouth, yet he was silent before the authorities. What a model it is for us to follow.

Application: Friends! To be a true Christian is not an easy task. Godly living, or practicing Christ-like life is a great challenge before us, but it is only possible with the power of Christ.

M.K. Gandhi said about Christ and the life of Indian Christians:

1. "I like your Christ; I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ." Is it not true in our lives?
2. "If Christians would really live according to the teachings of Christ as found in the bible, all of India would be Christian today."

Friends! Let us examine our lives in the light of God's word this morning.

1. To lead a Godly life, how are you abstaining from fleshly lusts? Lust of the eye, lust of the mind? Lust of the heart? How do we look others/opposite sex? With what motives and intentions? Your friendships? Your relationships?
2. How is your behavior? In the family life? In the church? In the society?
3. How do we use our Christian freedom? As a covering for evil and wickedness? Or exercising it as the children of god?
4. How do we honor men? Love our neighbors? Fear God and his presence?
5. What about our submission to the authorities who are gentile and corrupt?
6. Are we suffering because of our wrong doings? Or Are we bearing suffering for the good deeds or what is right and just?

Jesus said, Blessed are you when men cast insults at you and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of me.

May the God of the Holy Spirit help us all to live a godly and worthy life which is pleasing to God. Amen.