

- ***READ I Peter 4:12-19*** More than likely we are all well aware of current state of Hollywood, Washington DC, and the like concerning the numerous allegations of sexual misconduct against many celebrities and politicians. It doesn't hardly to be as if a day goes by without another allegation being thrown out against another individual for some sort of perverse behavior on their part, and it doesn't seem as if anyone will be spared. It doesn't seem to matter whether you are an A-List celebrity, a D-list celebrity, a politician up for election, an 88 year old politician, or anyone in between...if there is even a hint of inappropriate behavior in your past then you are probably sweating bullets right now hoping that you aren't called to the carpet for your poor decision making.
- But there is one person who it doesn't seem needs to be too worried at all as to whether or not he will be accused of any of this sort of inappropriate behavior. That man is Vice President Mike Pence. I mention him as someone who need not to worry about these sort of accusations because Vice President Pence is a man who has taken necessary steps in order to make sure that he is never put in position where something inappropriate could take place. This means that he has worked under his own rules that he never dines with a woman alone and any aid who might work late with him must be a male. To the logically thinking person, these seem like pretty wise rules to live by, and wouldn't you come to know it...Pence is not one of the men that are presently accused of nefarious behavior. Actually, this story came out nine months ago before much of this current rampage of sexual misconduct allegations began to reveal themselves.
- However, I bring this up about our current Vice President because you would think that such knowledge being disclosed would bring comments of applause for his prudence, but quite the opposite was the actual response. Instead of being applauded for his virtue and caution, Vice President Pence was viciously attacked by many in the main stream media for his "sexist" and "archaic" rules and behavior. Many demanded that his practices be condemned as gender discrimination, and some even called for legal action against the Vice President. But fast forward nine months, and don't you think there are many who wish that there were more men who conducted themselves as Mr. Pence does? Wouldn't the vast numbers of allegations of sexual misconduct show that maybe...just maybe...Vice President Pence is on to something? Many wouldn't care to admit such a thing, instead they would rather continue to revile this man and others for their honorable and good behavior.
- The text we just read a few moments ago and the text we read together at the beginning of our assembly both point towards this idea of being reviled for our good behavior. Six times in these two portions of **I Peter** we find Peter giving strong encouragement to the reader to be strong in the face of suffering for the sake of righteousness. ("*suffer for the sake of righteousness*" 3:14; "*revile your good behavior in Christ*" 3:16; "*you suffer for doing what is right*" 3:17; "*if you are reviled for the name of Christ*" 4:14; "*if anyone suffers as a Christian*" 4:16; "*those who suffer according to the will of God*" 4:19) This subject was at the forefront of this letter because Peter recognized that these brethren were under attack. They were under attack not for doing that which is evil...but they were under attack for striving to be holy and righteous. While the attacks might look differently today, the truth is that the righteous are still under attack. We are still in the crosshairs of the wicked who are seeking to rebuke us and condemn us for doing those things that are good in the sight of God. This reality can be difficult to handle at times because we might become discouraged by the constant barrage of attacks against what is good and right, but I hope this morning that a study of these text will encourage us to overcome the discouragement and stand strong when we are reviled for our good behavior. Let's look at why this happens and then what we can do to overcome and remain dedicated to living lives that are in accordance with the will of God.

I. We shouldn't be surprised when we are reviled & hated for our good behavior.

- A. This is exactly what Peter says in **I Peter 4:12**, *"do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you."* This wasn't said to chastise the disciples or make them feel as if it wasn't any sort of big deal, but it was a simple statement that this type of thing must be expected when we live as God would have us to live. The truth is that we live in a world where the words of Isaiah from **Isaiah 5:20** still ring true. In a portion of his book where he is giving great warnings to those who would go against the will of God, he focuses in **v.20** on those who would call that which is evil good and that which is good evil. He pronounces a woe on them who confuse light with darkness and bitter taste for sweet taste. Basically, Isaiah is saying that those who see to rebuke those who do God's will by saying that they are evil are in danger of incurring the full wrath of an angry God. You would hope that people would get the point, but the truth is that people continue to revile those who do good as if they are evil. Unfortunately, this has always been a struggle for mankind.
- B. Think back with me to the time of Noah when he was building his ark and preaching a message of repentance and safety from the coming judgement. For about 120 years Noah put in tremendous effort to prepare the ark for the saving of lives both human and animal, and I believe it is safe to assume that Noah was not shy about letting people know that a terrible tragedy was about to take place. (**II Peter 2:5**) Sadly, we know that it was only Noah and his family along with the animals that were delivered from the waters. Assuming Noah had not been shy about warning people of the coming flood, could you imagine the backlash this *"preacher of righteousness"* must have received from those who heard his words of warning. He was probably mocked by many and seen as the crazy man who thought the sky was falling...yet even while reviled he continued to do the will of God to the point that his obedience is highlighted multiple times. (**Genesis 6:22; 7:5,16**)
- C. Just as Noah continued to obey God in the face of probable ridicule, so too we must recognize that our following of Jesus will often put us in a position where we will be reviled, ridiculed, and hated. Jesus says a much to the Apostles as they are being sent out to proclaim the good news of repentance in **Matthew 10:22**. *"You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved."* Basically the same message is again delivered by Jesus in **Mark 13:13** where Mark gives his version of Jesus's foretelling of the destruction of Jerusalem. Prior to **v.13**, Jesus warns that there would be times when His disciples would be dragged before courts, flogged in synagogues, and required to stand before governors and kings to give the testimony of their faiths. (**Mark 13:9**) It wasn't that these were bad people. No, no in fact these were the best of people. I think we have firmly established that we should expect for those who practice sin to revile us when we practice doing what is right, but why is this the case? Why do people hate us simply because we behave in a godly way?

II. The wicked are convicted of their sin by our good behavior.

- A. I think the answer to that question is that the wicked are convicted of their sins when they see godly people living their lives in a righteous way. Notice what is said about Noah in **Hebrews 11:7**. In this verse, the Hebrew writer says that Noah *"condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith."* How did Noah do such a thing? He condemned the world by his obedience to God. He condemned the world by preparing the ark for the saving of his family. He condemned the world by doing what was right, and in doing so the world hated him, and the same thing will be true for us. When we live lives that are good, godly, and righteous then we too are condemning the world, and we will be hated for it.
- B. Squeezed in between these two texts that we are focusing on is a portion of **I Peter** that might help us to see this a bit clearer. In **I Peter 4:1-4**, we see Peter speaking to disciples about the fact that they would be maligned or hatefully spoken against for the fact that they didn't run around carrying on in the same sin as the world around them.

In context it seems as if Peter could be speaking about instances where a Christian might have participated in these things in the past, but would no longer do so because of their commitment to Christ. Those people we used to run with would be surprised by our change of heart and revile us. Or it could be that people are just surprised that we don't participate in things that otherwise seem normal and acceptable to most people.

- C. Regardless of the way we look at these verses, we can probably all imagine the reaction from those in the world, right? *"What do you mean you won't come out drinking with us after work? Are you some kind of goodie goodie or 'holier than thou' type of person?"* We can easily imagine this, or maybe we have even been in this very situation ourselves. We are hated because our commitment to godliness because it makes other people feel as if they are doing something that is wrong. Their consciences will feel guilty, and people don't like that feeling at all. They also might realize there is truth to our type of approach to life when they see us not suffering in the ways that sin often leads people in. Sadly, instead of changing things in their lives...their failures and our successes often just leads them to hating us all the more. Yet, we are not the first to have such a thing happen to us. In fact, we have a perfect example of one who withstood revilement of the highest degree, yet without reviling in return. He is the one for whom we do strive to be holy.

III. We can look to Jesus as our example of how to respond when we are reviled.

- A. Back in **I Peter 2:18-24**, we see Peter drawing the reader's attention towards the One whom we can look to as an example of how to handle ourselves when we are reviled for our good behavior.
- B. Peter speaks to those who might be making a living as a slave or a servant. He says that they ought to give respect to their masters, those who are good to them and even to those who might not treat them so well. He then draws their attention to the One who was treated most unjustly for simply doing the will of God, Jesus Christ. *"Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously."* (**I Peter 2:22,23**)
- C. Someone might object with, *"but Jesus was God so He has special power that we don't have. It's as if He wasn't even tempted to respond to the terrible treatment."* Friends, this just isn't the case. The Hebrew writer tells us just the same that we can look to Jesus as our High Priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses because He experienced them just as we experience them. He was tempted just as we are tempted, yet He overcame them all without sinning. (**Hebrews 4:15**)
- D. So when we find ourselves in these types of situations where we are being reviled for our good behavior, we must keep in mind that we are sharing in the *"sufferings of Christ."* (**I Peter 4:13**) It is at these times especially that we must *"sanctify Christ as Lord in 'our' hearts."* (**I Peter 3:15**) We must acknowledge the holy nature of our Lord Jesus and remember that He first suffered through innumerable reviling for His righteous behavior...yet He remained holy. It is His perfect example that can give us hope that we can do the same. But it isn't just His example that we can look to for encouragement, but we can also be like Him in the fact that He did everything He did with a goal in mind.

IV. At the end of the day, we are a blessed people when we suffer for righteousness sake.

- A. We too need to be willing to endure the reviling of others because we have a goal in mind, and that goal is to be a people that are pleasing to God. Because we serve a great and loving God who is very much willing to bless those who are willing to suffer for His name's sake.
- B. Back in **I Peter 2:20**, we see Peter speaking to the fact that those who are willing to endure harsh treatment for doing what is right will find *"favor with God."* They will find favor with God because they living to be like the one who gave His life for us. This is why Peter can write such things as he does in this letter. It is why he can write, *"For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong."* (**I Peter 3:17**) In suffering for doing what is right, we can maintain this *"good conscience"* towards God knowing that we have sold ourselves out in order to avoid being reviled. (**I Peter 3:16**)
- C. In simple words, we *"are blessed"* when we are *"reviled for the name of Christ."* (**I Peter 4:14**) We are blessed because it become so obvious that the Spirit of God is with us and He is guiding and strengthening us in this way. He is with us in our enduring of being reviled just as He was with those who suffering mistreatment in **Acts 5:27-42**. The Apostles were questioned for their good behavior of preaching the Gospel of Jesus. They were threatened with death, yet after the words of Gamaliel were heard, they were only beaten and then let go. The reaction of the Apostles and the other disciples is just so amazing in the fact that they rejoiced in their affliction because they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. This blessing wouldn't be experienced by anyone other than those who would be willing to endure the reviling that comes from those who hate us for our good behavior.
- D. These examples of Jesus and the Apostles strongly show us the blessed life of the one who is willing to suffer for the sake of righteousness. Sure their immediate circumstances could be better, but they were willing to endure such hostility and do what is right because they knew that they could *"entrust their souls to a faithful Creator"* who would protect them from destruction. (**I Peter 4:19**)

So the question remains for us...which path will we choose. Would we rather suffer at the hands of God for being a murderer, thief, evildoer, or troublesome meddler? Or would we rather suffer for a short time at the hands of evil men who hate us for simply doing what is right? I'll tell you one thing I firmly believe. I believe that Vice President Pence would much rather be right where he is than being in the shoes of those who have been accused of misconduct. Sure he might have caught some flack for his "old school" approach, but it has certainly saved him a lot of heartache in the end. May God help each and every one of us to be like our Lord Jesus who was reviled for His righteousness, yet He didn't return such. May we be the type of people who endure the hardships of righteousness knowing that our souls are entrust to a faithful Creator who is waiting to reward us as faithful in the last day.

PRAYER *Our great Father in heaven...we recognize that we live in a world in which we will often be hated and reviled simply because we seek to live in a way that honors and glorifies You as God and the Leader of our lives. In those times, we ask that you would please strengthen us to be like Your Son who did not revile or return evil for evil. May You help us to endure until the very end so that we will be able to stand before You our Righteous Judge to hear those wonderful words, "well done, My good and faithful servant." Thank you Lord for the strength and deliverance that You provide and may we all put our faith in You and endure to the end. We offer this prayer in the name of our great example, Jesus Christ...amen.*