Text: I Peter 3:18;4:1
Title: "Living Courageously in the Face of Pain"

INTRODUCTION

We've been talking these days about "Living Courageously." What is courage? Courage is an attitude of facing and dealing with things that may be dangerous, difficult or painful, and not running away from it.

And if that is the definition of courage, then Jesus Christ is the supreme example of courage.

Our Lord understood from the beginning that His life would end in this way. He understood that He had stepped out of heaven and become a human being for the purpose of bearing man's sin and iniquity on the Cross so that we might be saved.

And Jesus knew that the sufferings would be intense. There would be despair. (We talked about living courageously in the face of despair.) There would be betrayal. (And we talked about living courageously in the face of betrayal.) And Jesus understood that the sufferings of the Cross would mean pain … physical pain. And today let's watch Jesus and learn how to live courageously in the face of pain.

Turn to I Peter 3:18:4:1. Peter was an eyewitness to at least some of the physical pain Jesus endured on the way to and then hanging upon the Cross. No doubt that was in his mind as he wrote…

1 Peter 3:18 (NIV) - For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,

1 Peter 4:1 (NIV) - Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.

Now just go back for a moment and look at those words in v.1 … **"Christ suffered in his body…"**

I guess one of the greatest challenges to our faith is this whole matter of human suffering and physical pain. Most of us have asked at some point in our lives, "Why does it have to hurt so much?" We have watched our loved ones suffer in pain and we ask "Why?"

Without throwing out easy answers, we know that some of the explanation of pain in our lives and in our world has to do with the Fall … the plunging of creation into suffering because Adam and Eve sinned, and then passed the sin gene on to each of us.

But the Cross tells me something else. There's a place for pain in the plans of God for my life. As a part of fulfilling God's plans for His life, Jesus Christ "suffered in his body."

ILLUSTRATION - In the book *The Life of Christ* this is how Frederick Farrar describes crucifixion:

> "A death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death can have of the horrible and ghastly—dizziness, cramps, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, shame, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of intended wounds—all intensified just up to the point at which they can be endured at all, but all stopping just short of the point which would give to the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness. The unnatural position made every movement painful…and while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pang of burning and raging thirst. One thing is clear. The 1st century executions were not like the modern ones, for they did not seek a quick painless death nor the preservation of any measure of dignity for the criminal. On the contrary, they sought an agonizing torture that completely humiliated him."

Jesus endured incredible physical pain through the crucifixion. Is there anything I can learn from Jesus' experience with pain?

1. THE RIGHT <u>OUTLOOK</u> ON PAIN

1 Peter 4:1 (NIV) - Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude …

OUTLOOK = attitude

So there was an "attitude" that Jesus possessed throughout the sufferings He endured. What was that attitude? It was an attitude of courage. It was an attitude of hope … hope that somehow God was doing His work through the pain He was enduring. There was no complaining … no whining … and no self-pity.

ILLUSTRATION – A few years ago the great cyclist Lance Armstrong did an interview with Forbes magazine about the pain he had endured in his battle with cancer. At first his attitude was horrible. After months of chemotherapy, Lance ate Mexican food, played golf, and lay on the couch. One day his wife, Kriston, said, "You need to decide something: Are you going to be a golf-playing, beer-drinking, Mexican-food-eating slob for the rest of your life?"

> Lance said, "This conversation changed everything … Within days I was back on my bicycle. For the first time in my life, I rode with real strength and stamina and purpose. Without cancer, I never would have won a single Tour de France. Cancer taught me a plan for more purposeful living, and then in turn taught me how to train and to win more purposefully. Pain and loss are great enhancers … I become a happier man each time I suffer."

But the Lord Jesus is our greatest model, our greatest example. And we must arm ourselves with the same attitude He possessed. When it says, "Arm yourselves" in v.1, the word was the word that referred to a soldier putting on his armor. With the same determination and care with which a soldier puts on his armor, Christians are to adopt Christ's "attitude"

So to live courageously we need the right outlook on our pain. But Jesus also shows us there is …

2. THE RIGHT <u>OUTCOME</u> FROM PAIN

Do you mean that there is something that can come from pain other than misery? Absolutely. God uses pain to work out His best purposes in us and through us.

1 Peter 4:1 (NIV) - Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.

NOTE SHEET: ***The right <u>outlook</u> on pain insures the right <u>outcome</u> from pain.***

God is working out His purposes in our lives through pain. It was true of Jesus.

Note: Jesus did not need pain to purge Him of sin; He was sinless. But Jesus endured pain as part of the Father's plans to help us to be "done with sin."

QUOTE: C.S. Lewis wrote a book entitled *The Problem of Pain*. And in that book he says, "God whispers to us in our pleasures ... but shouts in our pains."

One of the great outcomes of pain is that it shapes us into the likeness of Jesus when we have the right outlook.

ILLUSTRATION – Several years ago I remember having a conversation with a friend who was experiencing insomnia, not being able to sleep at night. I quipped to him, "Yes, I have a sleep problem, too. Every time I put my head on a pillow I fall asleep." I was just joking around, but inside I knew there was a bit of youthful pride that I didn't have trouble sleeping. Later that week I was sitting in a worship service in our church listening to a guest preacher, when I began to feel a sharp pain I my back and legs. I barely made it through the worship service. I was in excruciating pain. My doctor treated me with medication, shots and therapy, but he basically said it will take time for my back to heal. For the next three weeks, I slept no more than 1-2 hours at a time. And through it all I knew exactly what God was saying to me in the midst of that pain. Was God punishing me for my pride? I don't think so. But I know he was speaking to me in my pain, and shaping me into the man He wanted me to become.

I say again, one of the great outcomes of pain is that it shapes us into the likeness of Jesus when we have the right outlook.

ILLUSTRATION - Karen Watson was one of four missionaries who were killed by terrorist in Iraq in 2004, including two people who had been members of our church, David and Nikki McDonnall. Karen had counted the cost of following Jesus. That's why she left a letter with her pastor before going to Iraq. She went to provide humanitarian relief in the name of Jesus—but she was gunned down in the country she came to serve.

> The letter began, "You're only reading this if I died." It included gracious words to family and friends, and this simple summary of following Christ: "To obey was my objective, to suffer was expected, his glory my reward."

You see, the Cross screams at us that somehow the glory of God can be manifested in our lives through pain.

1 Peter 2:24 (NIV) - He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

LORD'S SUPPER

Text of Luke 22:19-20 NIV