

We come this morning to our second to last sermon in this book—having restored Peter last week, our Savior now foretells his death. There are two things in this passage—A Future Death (vv18-19a) and A Present Duty (vv19b-23).

Having told Peter about his future death, He then reminds him of his present duty—though Peter would eventually die for Christ, he must presently follow Christ. In other words, regardless of when or how we die, we must serve Christ as long as we live.

- I. A Future Death—vv18-19a
- II. A Present Duty—vv19b-23

- I. A Future Death—vv18-19a

1. V18—"Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish."
2. John then interprets this statement for us, v19—"This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God."
3. The point is—Peter would be taken against his will by his enemies and would be forced to die as a Christian martyr.
4. Our Savior doesn't mean to imply, Peter would refuse to die, but he would be bound, and taken by force to death.
5. Because death is not a natural thing, it's the result of sin and the fall, there's a sense in which man recoils from it.
6. The freedom that Peter once enjoyed would be taken away, and he would be forced to give his life for his beliefs.
7. Now, as most of you know, the Scriptures are silent as to when and how Peter died—his death is not recorded in Scripture.
8. But according to tradition, Peter was crucified at Rome, under the persecution of Nero (who was the Roman Emperor).
9. According to tradition, Peter was crucified upside down at his request, to illustrate his unworthiness to imitate his Savior.
10. It's very possible our Savior at referred to crucifixion in the phrase, v18—"you will stretch out your hand (be nailed to a beam) and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish (to be crucified)."
11. Richard Phillips—"The expression 'stretch out your hands' was used specifically to speak of those who were laid out on a cross for execution. Just as Jesus was given His cross and then taken to the place of torment and death, Peter would be put to the cross and taken to the place of his execution, which Jesus refers to as 'where you do not want to go.'"
12. It appears likely Peter had already been martyred by the time John wrote this gospel (or at least this is implied by v19).
13. Either way, our Savior makes very clear that Peter would be put to death, even as he earlier boasted that he would.
14. Matt.26:34-35—"Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' Peter said to Him, 'Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!' And so said all the disciples."
15. And thus, while Peter originally made this boast from misguided zeal, there is a real sense in which it would come to pass.
16. This death, according to John (v19), would be a means to "glorify God"—that is, bring glory and honor to God.
17. God's love, grace, mercy, and power would be made known through Peter's future arrest, suffering, and death.

18. This is what it means to "glorify God"—to make God known—to display the splendor of His character and name.
19. Thus, at this point I want to take a few minutes and answer the question—How did Peter glorify God in His death (or, how do Christians glorify God in their death)?
20. But before I do that, let me provide this clarification—not every Christian will be expected, with Peter, to die for Christ.
21. How and when people die is determined by God, and He has chosen to bring His people to heaven in many ways.
22. J.C. Ryle—"Let us pray, while we live in health, that we may glorify God in our end. Let us leave it to God to choose the where, and when, and how, and all the manner of our departing. Let us only ask that it may 'glorify God.'"
23. And so, while not all Christians will be martyred for God, all Christians can and should glorify God in their death.
24. (1) By choosing allegiance to God over the wrath of the world—the world often says, deny God or you will die.
25. This of course is literally true with regards to our brothers and sisters who are put to death for their faith in Christ.
26. The world says—"Deny Christ and His word or die" and they say—"We would rather die than deny our Savior!"
27. Christ is worth serving even if that means we are burned on a stake, drowned in the ocean, or crucified on a cross.
28. This can be illustrated in Acts 5—the apostles were arrested, beaten, and commanded not to preach Christ again.
29. Acts 5:41-42—"So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ."
30. That is, they glorified Christ by choosing Him over the wrath of this world—He was worthy of suffering for.
31. The Jews warned them not to preach—Christ commanded them to preach—thus, they chose Christ over the Jews.
32. There was something they feared more than the wrath of the Jews, and that was the frown of their loving Savior.
33. Perhaps I can put it like this—they loved Christ more than they feared man—and this brought glory and honor to Christ.
34. (2) By trusting the grace of God in the midst of great suffering—many Christians are brought to heaven through suffering.
35. Their reasons for suffering vary—perhaps they're beaten or imprisoned for their faith, or else, they die with some prolonged sickness.
36. And yet, they face death without fear and dread! Why? Because they face death dressed in the perfection of Christ.
37. For many Christians, their death will be stretched over many months and years—they die a slow and painful death.
38. And they glorify God throughout this time, as they continually look to Christ for grace to endure this extended death.
39. They continue to trust Him—they continue to walk in His commandments—even though they carry death within them.
40. Dear Christian, none of us have received a prophecy from Christ concerning our death—we don't know the future.
41. But what we do know is this—regardless how and when we die, Christ will glorify Himself by giving us grace to endure it.
42. (3) By anticipating the glories of heaven that follow death—this glorifies God, that death is despised to be with Christ.

43. Although death is a defeated enemy, it yet remains an enemy, and thus to face it confidently brings glory to Christ.
44. We are willing to face any enemy, so long as we get to Christ—Christ is worth facing death—our final enemy.
45. Phil. 1:21—"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain"—why is death gain, but because it brings us to Christ.
46. It's for this reason, history is full of Christians going to their death, joyful, as if they were going to their wedding.
47. Christopher Love (August 22, 1651: From the Tower of London: The Day of My Glorification)—"I am now going from a prison to a palace. I have finished my work, I am now to receive my wages, I am now going to heaven where are two of my children and leaving you on the earth where are three of my babes. Dear wife, farewell. I will call you wife no more. I shall see your face no more, yet I am not much troubled, for now I am going to meet the Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom I shall be eternally married."
48. Thus, in these three ways, and many more, Christians glorify God in their death, just as Peter glorified God in his.

II. A Present Duty—vv19b-23

1. V19—"And when He had spoken this, He said to him, Follow Me"—that is, Peter not only would die for Christ in the future, but he must follow Him in the present.
2. From, v20 it appears that Peter may have literally followed Christ, for he turned around and so John following him.
3. V20—"Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, Lord, who is the one who betrays You? Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, But Lord, what about this man?"
4. That is, having been told that he would die for Christ, Peter asks Jesus what about John—Would he die also?
5. Now, the Scripture simply doesn't tell us why Peter asked this question—what was the motive behind the question?
6. But I suggest that the likely answer is—Peter loved John and was genuinely concerned about his friend's future.
7. V22—"Jesus said to him, 'If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me'"—that is, it's by place to determine how and when My disciples die.
8. "Even if I determine that he should live until I return, that's really none of your business. You be concerned with you."
9. And thus, our Savior repeats His exhortation to follow Him—"Peter don't worry about John, worry about yourself."
10. V23—"Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, 'If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?'"
11. That is, the other disciples obviously misunderstood what Jesus meant, and they spread a false rumor about John.
12. V23b—"Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, 'If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?'"
13. In other words—Jesus never meant to say that John would be alive when He returned, but that Peter should merely worry about himself.
14. And so, we learn that our Savior was not merely concerned with Peter's future death, but with Peter's present duty.
15. We must keep in mind, there's at least 30 years between Jesus' prediction of Peter's death and its actual fulfillment.
16. While Peter was told he would soon die, he would not be allowed to merely sit around, waiting for this to happen.

17. He had much work to do—he had to feed Christ's sheep—he had to follow Christ—he had to work while he waited.
18. Thus, in the time that we have remaining, I want to answer this question—What does our Savior mean by "following Him?"
19. Well, before I suggest a few particulars, let me say in the broad sense, it refers to following Christ as a disciple.
20. Our Savior is re-issuing His former call to discipleship—discipleship in its simplest form is following Christ as Lord.
21. "Peter, while you have the added responsibility to feeding My sheep, this does not remove your basic responsibilities."
22. In other words—being a pastor doesn't mean you cease being a Christian, and thus, all Christians follow Christ.
23. (1) Follow Him in suffering—this I trust is the most obvious meaning—having just told Peter he too would die, He then tells him—"Follow Me"—that is, follow Me to the cross to die.
24. While Christ doesn't call every Christian to physically die for Him, He does call all disciples to suffer for Him.
25. Surely brethren, no sane person desires to suffer—normal people do not seek after suffering as something desired.
26. And yet, every disciple of Christ is called to follow Him, and that will mean, at times, to suffer just as He suffered.
27. 1Pet.2:21—"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps."
28. Now, I suggest this suffering had a unique application to Peter as a shepherd of the sheep, a minister of the gospel.
29. For Peter to feed the sheep also meant he must fight the wolves. These would come from within and without the flock.
30. There would be those who pretend to be sheep but are in fact wolves, who seek to devour true shepherds and sheep.
31. Furthermore, oftentimes true sheep don't always welcome being rescued from various things that may harm them.
32. And so, our Savior exhorts Peter to follow Him in feeding His sheep, which will result in all manner of suffering.
33. Robert Rollock—"A man that enters to feed the flock of the Lord has not only to feed lambs only, silly and simple sheep, but he must fight with wolves; as he must feed the lambs, so he must fight with wolves, tigers, bears, etc., that would devour the lambs. Yea, sometimes it will happen, that these whom they think to be lambs will show themselves wolves; yea, beside this, it may be, that one of his own flock shall stand up and devour him in the end."
34. But this is not restricted to pastors—all Christians will be hated by family, betrayed by friends, and rejected by neighbors.
35. This is what we've all been called to—"because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you follow His steps."
36. My dear friends, how was Christ treated? He was despised, rejected, the object of ridicule, reproach, and shame.
37. And brethren, it appears to me that Christians in this country will likely begin to really feel what suffering entails.
38. Christians all over the world are suffering for the faith—really suffering—and many of them are shedding blood.
39. (2) Follow Him in self-denial, Matt.16:24—"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."
40. Our Savior lived a life of perfect self-denial—He did not live for Himself, but for the good and prosperity of others.
41. Rom.15:2-3—"Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself."

42. Again, let me in the first place apply this to Peter as a shepherd of the sheep—shepherding demands self-denial.
43. But the call to self-denial is extended to all Christians—to follow Christ is to put the needs of others before your own.
44. And again, dear brethren, this is a lesson we're very slow to learn. We almost always put ourselves before others.
45. Fundamental to self-denial is the refusal to live for ourselves—this includes the use of our time, talents, and treasures.
46. (3) Follow Him in obedience—that is, to follow Christ, obviously includes we walk in the same way He walked.
47. 1Jn.2:6—"He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked"—just as Christ walked.
48. How did Christ walk! Well surely, He walked humbly and believingly, but predominately, He walked obediently.
49. Christ walked in perfect obedience to His Father—He obeyed the law of His Father that was within His heart.
50. This law is summarized in love—love to God and to our neighbor—thus we could say, Christ walked lovingly.
51. (4) Follow Him in devotion—following Christ is more than following His example, but it includes devotion to Him.
52. Perhaps I can put it this way—following Christ is not merely walking LIKE Christ but it's walking WITH Christ.
53. Or else, perhaps I can put it like this—Christians are to follow Christ with the affections as well as their actions.
54. In the olden days, and especially in the East, teachers would have disciples who lived with them and learned from them.
55. They not only followed their teaching and example, but they spent time with them—they were joined to them.
56. "Follow Me"—not merely follow my teachings (though this is true), but "Follow Me"—follow Me as a Person.
57. O brethren, what a truth that I fear is easy to overlook—at the heart of Christianity is the notion of following Christ.
58. Not just following a set of doctrines or morals—it's not just about following a confession or creed—but following Him.
59. Jn.10:27—"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me"—they follow Him because they love Him.
60. (5) Follow Him to heaven—yes, follow Him in suffering, self-denial, obedience, and devotion—but also to heaven.
61. In other words, just as our Savior lived for another world, so too, we are to follow Him through this world into another.
62. Or to this passage together into a single thought—we must follow Christ throughout live, to death, and into heaven.
63. Jn.13:36—"Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward"—that is, I am soon to return to heaven, and it's not time for you to follow Me there. But there is coming a time when you will.
64. And isn't it a comforting thought, brethren, that Christ has ordained the day every disciple follows Him to heaven.
65. Every disciple will follow Him into heaven, and that specific day has been already determined by Christ Himself.
66. As I've been thinking about this passage, it's become beautiful in its simplicity—Peter was to follow Christ until he died.
67. This is, in such sense, the essence of it all—follow Me exclusively, humbly, believingly, lovingly, and eternally.

