

## Dealing With Montezuma's Revenge by Jeff Strite

1 Peter 4:12-4:19

OPEN: Next week Ryan and Trisha Seybold will be here to present their new ministry at Show Low, Arizona where they'll be managing the American Indian Christian Mission (AICM). It's a ministry to the Navajo and Apache tribes in that area and they've done a great job there for a number of years.

When I was preaching at my first church I took our youth group there to Arizona to do a VBS at AICM. Our kids had a great time and made such friends amongst the kids from the Indian tribes that they hated to go. But once our week was done, we set off to see a little of the old West, going to swim in the Salt River and traveling down to Tucson and eventually to Nogales – half of which is in Arizona and half is in Mexico. This was before you needed passports to cross into Mexico and all we had to do was present ourselves to the guards at the border and we were in a foreign country. My family bought a tall bottle of pure vanilla (it took about 10 years to use it all) and I bought a shirt that fit me... until we put it through the washer. Then it fit my 2 year old nephew.

We had a great time... but there was ONE thing we warned the kids NOT to do. Do you know what that one thing was? We warned them NOT to eat or drink anything because of the danger of something called Montezuma's Revenge.

But ONE of them didn't listen... and she was really sick for a couple of days.

Every year about 20% to 50% of international travelers—come down with Montezuma's revenge. And it is NOT a pleasant experience.

And there are times IF you travel abroad that something will not go right. It might not be Montezuma's revenge ... but just about anything can go wrong and as a result (if that does happen) your experiences there will NOT be pleasant.

Now here in I Peter 4, God is warning us that there will be times as we live in this world that our experiences will not always be pleasant. Earlier in I Peter - God reminded us that we are not citizens of this world.

He started out this letter addressing us "To God's elect, STRANGERS in the world..." 1 Peter 1:1

And He told us: "Dear friends, I urge you, as ALIENS AND STRANGERS in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul." 1 Peter 2:11

And "... live your lives as STRANGERS here in reverent fear." 1 Peter 1:17

Then, since it's true that we're not of this world, Peter tells the church "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you." 1 Peter 4:12

You're aliens here.

You're strangers here.

This is NOT your home.

It's like the old Spiritual says (sing it with me):

"This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through.

My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue

The angels beckon me from heaven's open door

And I can't feel at home in this world anymore."

We are strangers in this world and we will have difficulties here. In fact, the Bible has always been very straightforward about the fact that as Christians we will face opposition.

Jesus said "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Matthew 5:10-12

And again: If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. John 15:19

Paul wrote: "...everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" 2 Timothy 3:12

And just a few verses before our text for this morning Peter says: They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you." 1 Peter 4:4

As a man once observed: "If you want to follow Jesus you had better look good on wood." Berigan

So God tells us:

**DON'T BE SURPRISED** if you face persecution.

DON'T BE SHOCKED if people give you a hard time about your faith.

ILLUS: Just last week an actor named Matthew McConaughey accepted an Oscar for best actor. In his acceptance speech he thanked God and said that the blessings in his life had come from the Almighty and not from any "human hand."

When other speakers made their speeches, the crowd would enthusiastically applaud. But when McConaughey finished, the audience's response was tepid. They clapped politely but with very little enthusiasm.

They were not comfortable with an actor giving thanks to God.

Afterward the twitter universe exploded with insults:

"OK so you really deserved it.... Just stop the stupid god talk,"

"I thought we could get through the Oscars without someone thanking god but no he had to ruin it."

"Ugh, I hate McConaughey... I can't believe he's thanking 'god'"

"As soon as they mention God, my brain gives up and tells me to drink more wine."

You'd have thought this guy had praised Hitler or had come out of the closet as a secret Ku Klux Klan member. The very mention of God was enough to give some people indigestion.

DOES THAT SURPRISE YOU?

ILLUS: A few weeks ago Purdue University caused a stir. A couple who were Purdue alums had donated \$12,500 to Purdue's School of Mechanical Engineering, and to honor his donation the school decided to name a conference room after him. They even asked him to supply wording on a plaque to be hung in the room.

The donor asked that the plaque say: "To those who seek to better the world through the understanding of God's physical laws and innovation of practical solutions."

The officials in charge of the Engineering Dept. decided that the mere mention of God was offensive and could be considered a government endorsement of religion. THEN without notifying the family, the university installed a plaque that only mentioned the donor's parents.

Understandably, when the donors found out... they were a little miffed. And they hired lawyer to get Purdue's attention on the matter. THEN other alumni began withholding their own donations.

At that point Purdue's Engineering Dept. decided that maybe money was the better part of valor... and reinstated the reference to God.

Now, the President of Purdue is a godly man. And I'm pretty sure he was caught as much by surprise as anyone else... and I'm pretty sure someone in Engineering was called to the office to see the Principal and have a "talk".

But does it surprise you that someone in Engineering would be offended at the mention of God?

Peter says it shouldn't surprise us.

But it does surprise me.

Particularly here in America where most of us grew up in an atmosphere where God's name was honored and spoken reverently. Nowadays God's name is used as a punch line or a throwaway curse word. I've even seen Christians use the term OMG in regular language or on an internet conversation.

Our nation has grown more and more godless.

More and more offended at the name of Jesus.

More and more offended when a Christian decides to take a moral stand.

I could spend hours telling you stories of people who've lost their jobs, been suspended from schools or had their diploma threatened, or had their business fined or sued because they tried to take a stand for God or they refused to endorse something immoral.

I'm sorry, but it surprises me.

More than that – it makes me angry.

But as frustrating as some of our nation's anti-God attitude has become you and I've still got it pretty good here the United States.

ILLUS: Back in the 4th century, there was a gathering of leaders of the church at Nicea. 318 delegates attended, and of those 318 only about 12 of them had NOT lost an eye or lost a hand or didn't limp on a leg lamed by being tortured for their Christian faith. (Vance Havner).

In spite of the growing opposition to the name of God and the cause of Christ, we've STILL got it pretty good here in the United States.

Now, I know that, but frankly, I tend get to get a little upset when I hear about believers being insulted and belittled and threatened. I get angry when I hear of people losing their jobs or businesses because they stand for God.

But Peter says that's NOT the attitude I should have.

Do you remember what emotion Peter say I need to have when I suffer for Jesus? (I'm supposed to REJOICE)

"... REJOICE that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be OVERJOYED when his glory is revealed." 1 Peter 4:13

And ... "if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but PRAISE GOD that you bear that name." 1 Peter 4:16

Rejoice?

Be overjoyed?

Praise God?

That doesn't make any sense!

(PAUSE)

But that's exactly what Jesus said in the sermon on the mount:

"BLESSED are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. REJOICE and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Matthew 5:10-11

So Jesus says I should rejoice.

But that still didn't make any sense to me.

Then I did a little thinking about why people get angry with Christians.

Jesus said "All men will hate you BECAUSE OF ME" Matthew 10:22

They'll hate us because of Jesus???

Why would they hate Jesus?

Well, the Gospel of John puts it this way: "...Light has come into the world (Jesus), but men loved darkness instead of light BECAUSE THEIR DEEDS WERE EVIL." John 3:19

Let's go back to that scene at the Oscars. Why would so many in Hollywood be so upset with the mention of God? They got upset because they knew that when McConaughey said God... he meant Jesus. And there's a special message attached to Jesus that they did NOT like!

The message: "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

The name of Jesus declares that without His sacrifice all those folks are going to hell. The name of Jesus declares that their drug use, and their sleeping around, and their foul language and immoral behavior is wrong. It's evil. It's darkness.

Many of them are party people. God's not welcome at their parties. But what they don't realize is that when Jesus comes back – THE PARTY'S OVER!!

But why should they get upset with McConaughey?  
It was just an acceptance speech!  
Well – his acceptance speech was a reminder of the fact that judgment Day is coming.

You see, God is actively convicting people of their sins. Jesus told us that "When (the Holy Spirit) comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment" John 16:8

The Spirit's job is convict folks of their sin.  
To convict them of their need for righteousness in their lives.  
And to remind them that there WILL be a Day of Judgment  
People don't want to hear that.

And the reason people get so upset with us and with people like Matthew MccConaughey is that we become one of the agents that God's Spirit uses to convict men of their sin, their need of righteousness and the fact that there will be a coming judgment. We're one of the tools God uses to remind these folks of what they don't want to think about.

Paul writes: "we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. 2 Cor. 2:15-16

ILLUS: How many of you have you ever been to a funeral? Up at the front of the hall is the casket with the dearly departed within.

And what do see surrounding that casket? (Flowers).

For about 30 years of preaching I've done numerous funerals and been around hundreds of flowers. What do you think flowers remind me of?

That's right. Death.

I don't have any flowers in my house. Now I don't mind flowers out in the garden (I can admire them without getting close enough to smell them) but if I get close enough to those flowers they have a sickly scent. They smell like death to me.

Now other people smell flowers and get an entirely different message.  
For them flowers smell like love.  
Like life.  
It's a good smell for them.

That's what Paul is telling us here in II Corinthians 2. He says that when Christians get together they smell of life to each other. That's why we just sit around all Sunday morning and smell each other - because we smell so good.  
But you get us outside the church building and into the world - the world smells death on us. Our scent smells of death to those who are facing judgment... and people hate us for it.

Just this past week I was reading a story out of the Old Testament and something struck home for me. I was reading about David and King Saul. For those of you who don't know the story, the first king of Israel was a man named Saul. When he 1st took the throne Saul had been a righteous man. But after a while his power started going to his head and he began to disobey God. It got so bad that eventually God told Saul he was going to be replaced.

But then God did the oddest thing. 1 Samuel 16:14 tells us:  
"Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him."

God sent an evil spirit to torment Saul?  
Why on earth would God do that?  
Well, the Bible doesn't say... but I've got a pretty good guess.

I believe God sent that tormenting spirit on Saul... to bring him to repentance.  
I believe God hadn't completely given up on Saul and wanted to give him another chance to redeem himself. And that evil spirit was the tool God intended to get Saul's attention. I believe God wanted to bring Saul to his knees in the realization that things had once been good with God and maybe they could be good again... if Saul came back to God.

So Saul is plagued by this evil spirit. It's a terrible experience and he pleads for relief. It's then that an advisor tells Saul he's heard of a young man who plays the harp so well that if they could just hire him to play for Saul, maybe the evil spirit would depart.  
Who do you think Saul ends up hiring to play the harp for him?

That's right – David!

And it worked.

“Whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.” 1 Samuel 16:23

God brought David into Saul's court to remind him of the joy he could have if he became obedient. And Saul could have heard the words about God that David would sing as he played. He could have repented of his arrogance and self-centeredness. He could have decided to change his heart and turn back to God. But all Saul cared about... was getting rid of the torment in his soul.

Then Goliath came on the scene.

And David killed Goliath

And suddenly David becomes Saul's best warrior.

David fights against Saul's enemies. He defends Saul's throne. He became Saul's right hand man.

But then Israel becomes so impressed by David's exploits that they write a song about him. I'm not sure about the tune, but the words go like this:

"Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." 1 Samuel 18:7

From the day Saul hears the song, he becomes consumed with jealousy. And from that Saul seeks to kill David. For the next 3 years or so David has to flee for his life and hide in deserts and in caves.

But why?

What had David done wrong?

Nothing.

David had simply become a smell of death for Saul. His presence reminded Saul of his fate. And God had placed David in Saul's court to remind him of that fate... and to try to convince him to change his mind before it was too late.

(CLOSE)

Now, my point is this: The reason we should rejoice when the world hates us is because their anger proves that we're doing our job right. If we do what we should be doing there are people who WILL get mad at us.

Now we shouldn't be getting folks angry because we're annoying or obnoxious. God doesn't want to get offensive and belligerent with people. If our message is about how

irritating we can be then we've failed.

The message shouldn't be about US... it should be about God.

Notice, David didn't try to get Saul upset.

David did everything he could to make Saul's life better. He did everything he could to protect and comfort his Saul. Saul wasn't upset with David because of something he'd done wrong. He was upset because of what David did right. David was the smell of death to him and David's actions were a billboard reminding Saul of God's judgment. In the same way, every Christians should be the best workers, citizens, family members they can possibly be. They should go out of their way NOT to be offensive or difficult.

But if we do our Christianity the way we should people will get angry. And that can be a good thing. Because once people get angry about our faith... they can begin to pay attention to the Savior we serve. And maybe – just maybe – they will repent and turn to Christ.

ILLUS: D.L. Moody was walking down a Chicago street one day when he saw a man leaning against a lamppost. The evangelist gently put his hand on the man's shoulder and asked him if he was a Christian.

The man was immediately furious and looked like he wanted to hit Moody. The man raised his fists and angrily exclaimed, "Mind your own business!"

Moody was taken back and for a couple of moments didn't know what to say. But then he smiled and told the man "I'm sorry if I've offended you, but to be very frank, this IS my business!" (Brett Blair, Sermon Illustrations, 1999)

If we do our faith right, we will offend people. It's part of who we are and who we've been called to be. If people get offended by our faith, that may be the only instrument God will be able to use to get someone to think about our Savior and what He came to offer them.

So we should rejoice when people become offended. It means our message is getting through.