

1 Peter

Week 8: Living for God's Will -- 1 Peter 4:1–11

There is a kind of clarity that only comes when you finally decide what you are living for. Before that decision, life is a thousand small negotiations, a little of this, a little of that, trying to keep everyone happy, including the part of us that still wants the old life. After that decision, things get simpler. Not easier, but simpler. You know which way you are facing. Peter wants his readers to reach that clarity. He says it is time to be done, once and for all, with living for our own cravings, and to live the rest of our earthly lives “for the will of God.”

Peter makes the appeal in a striking way. Since Christ suffered in the flesh, he says, “arm yourselves with the same way of thinking.” He pictures the believer as a soldier strapping on armor before battle, and the weapon is a settled resolve: I am finished with sin. The person who has made peace with suffering for the sake of Christ has, in a real sense, broken sin’s power to bully them, because sin’s threats lose their grip on someone who is willing to suffer rather than disobey.

He is honest about the cost of this with the people we leave behind. Peter says our old companions are “surprised when you do not join them” in the same flood of reckless living, “and they malign you.” Anyone who has walked away from a former lifestyle knows the strange pressure of old friends who feel judged by a change they did not choose. Peter steadies us: those who malign us will give account to God, who is ready to judge the living and the dead. We do not have to win that argument. We answer to God, not to them.

And then Peter turns the whole thing toward love. Because “the end of all things is at hand,” he says, be clear-minded and prayerful, and above all “keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.” Show hospitality without grumbling. Use whatever gift God has given you to serve others, so that “in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.” Living for the will of God turns out to be less about white-knuckled rule-keeping and more about a life poured out in love. So read this passage and let it bring you to that clarity: to know what you are living for, and to spend yourself on it.

Group Discussion: Peter says it is time to be done with living for our own passions and to live instead “for the will of God” (vv. 2–3). What makes it so hard to settle, once and for all, what we are living for? What changes in a person’s life when they finally reach that clarity?

Personal Reflection: Peter says our old companions may be “surprised” and may “malign” us when we no longer join them in their former way of life (v. 4). Where do you feel pressure from old friends, family, or culture to go back to a way of living you have left behind? How are you handling that pressure?

Read 1 Peter 4:1–11

Study Questions

1. Peter says, "Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin" (v. 1). What is the "way of thinking" Peter calls us to arm ourselves with, and how does a willingness to suffer for Christ break the power of sin in our lives?
2. Peter says we should "no longer" live for human passions but "for the will of God," because we have already spent enough of our past in such things (vv. 2–3). What is one area where you are still living partly for your own cravings rather than for God's will? What would it look like to settle that question this week?
3. Peter says that those who malign Christians "will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead," and that the gospel was preached so that people might "live in the spirit the way God does" (vv. 5–6). What does this teach about the certainty of final judgment and the purpose for which the gospel is proclaimed?
4. Peter acknowledges that former friends are surprised and may malign us when we no longer join them (v. 4). Whose disapproval do you fear most when you choose Christ's way over the old way? How is that fear of people shaping the choices you make?
5. Peter writes, "The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers" (v. 7). What does Peter mean that "the end of all things is at hand," and how should the nearness of the end shape a Christian's self-control, sobriety, and prayer life now?
6. Peter ties self-control and sober-mindedness to "the sake of your prayers" (v. 7). How healthy is your prayer life right now, and what undisciplined habits, distractions, or excesses are crowding it out? What is one step toward the clear-minded, prayerful life Peter describes?
7. Peter says, "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins," and then commands hospitality "without grumbling" (vv. 8–9). What does it mean that love "covers a multitude of sins," and why does Peter place love "above all" in the life of God's people?
8. Peter commands earnest love and ungrumbling hospitality (vv. 8–9). Where is your love for fellow believers more grudging than earnest, more calculating than free? Whom could you welcome, forgive, or serve this week in a way that costs you something?
9. Peter says, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace," so that "in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (vv. 10–11). What does this teach about spiritual gifts, Christian service, and stewardship, and how does serving with our gifts bring glory to God rather than to ourselves?
10. Look back over the whole passage. Peter calls us to be finished with sin, to live for God's will under pressure, to stay clear-minded and prayerful, and to pour ourselves out in love and service for God's glory. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth from 1 Peter 4:1–11 you most need to carry into this week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Romans 6:1–14, dead to sin and alive to God in Christ; Galatians 5:24, those who belong to Christ crucifying the flesh; Proverbs 10:12, love covering all offenses; Romans 12:6–8, using our gifts in proportion to the grace given; 1 Corinthians 10:31, doing all things to the glory of God