

Living In The Light Of The End

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[0 : 00] Okay, let's turn to this passage of Scripture, 1 Peter 4, verse 1 through to 11.

! Now, I'm not going to dig into everything here. We'll do a fairly quick move in the first few! I want to particularly get to verse 7 and onwards. But the word or the chapter starts, depending on which version you read, this starts with since, but the next word is the important one, therefore. Other translation starts with therefore. And what is therefore therefore?

It's a great question. So, something has just been said in the previous verses that are so important. So, when you look at the sandwich that we're looking at, the meat and the sandwich, on the other side of both sides of the sermon, you have a message on suffering.

And the word therefore, I think, according to various commentators, and I'll take their word for it, the main focus for their attention is most likely verse 18 of chapter 3, where it says, for Christ died. This is speaking to people who are suffering for the name of Jesus Christ, for doing good.

For since 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 in the Spirit.

[1 : 45] Now, of course, you go to chapter 1, you hear we have a living hope that Jesus...we have this living hope through Jesus Christ because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And because of that, we have an inheritance. We have a living hope, a relationship...because of a relationship with Jesus, like we have an anchor into eternity where He is at the right hand of the Father. And then He explains, and by the way, your inheritance, there's going to be no squabble over your inheritance on this one. This is big enough for all who believe. Your inheritance will never spoil or fade or perish.

Fantastic. And it's so clear. And now we're called to live in the power of God until He returns. And here you have, again, Him focusing on Jesus in this whole melee of suffering that they were facing in the churches in Asia Minor, Pontius, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

They were going through a really hard time. Peter is writing probably...I'm saying this in front of a guy who teaches the students probably around 65, 66 or so AD. So just before Nero, the events in Rome, etc., took place and all the other dreadful events around that time, there was a lot of pressure on the people.

There was a lot of social pressure on the people to conform with the social...the ways that things were happening in the world, there was a lot of pressure in every way. You can see it here in the text.

But also, these people were suffering for doing good. They were suffering because of the name of Jesus. They were being isolated, persecuted, beaten, perhaps in some instances to this point, and certainly were later on in the coming years. And to me, it's like Peter is looking ahead and he understands full well, trouble is coming. And the only sure way to deal with that trouble is to be in Christ, to know Christ, to have the strength of Christ, to have the presence of the Holy Spirit dwell in you, and the power of God in you until Jesus comes again. And so that's the reason that the therefore, I think, and commentators suggest most of them anyway, some others have other ideas, of course, but just it includes this. For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous. He's the righteous, we're the unrighteous, to bring us to God, to bring you to God.

[4 : 33] And he was put to death in the body, but was made alive in the Spirit. And in all intents and purposes, I believe this is important in terms of what is being said in a moment, there will be this continual mocking of believers who die. Look, you're dying just like the rest of us. Where's your God now?

And familiar echo, isn't it, from around the cross, the mocking of Jesus. Oh, you said, you said you would destroy the temple and in three days.

Could you imagine? And in three days, Jesus Christ raised from the dead. The grave couldn't hold him.

Peter, Peter saw Jesus die on the cross, saw the empty tomb. Peter and John and the rest of the run back and lock themselves in a room full of fear. Jesus appears. The resurrected Lord and Savior appears in the locked room. So why do you think he's writing to them, reminding them again and again of the privilege and the beauty of being in Jesus Christ, the righteous one, the righteous one who died for the unrighteous. This is God's gracious mercy reaching an unrighteous world, reaching me, reaching you.

An undeniable act of mercy and love. And that's what he's saying to them. He's reminding them of that very same thing. Christ suffered in the flesh. Arm yourselves with the same sort of thinking.

[6 : 26] It's almost echo of what Paul wrote in Philippians about the humility of Jesus Christ. Have this same trait of humility as Christians, as Jesus did, displayed as the one who was before all things who took upon himself flesh and came into the world and suffered and died. Have the same humility as Christ. Here, as Christ suffered, be prepared to suffer with Christ.

And that's, I mean, listen, if I'm going to ask you again to put up your hand, you didn't want to go, none of you, I'm really surprised that none of you want to go into the refugee camp. Very disappointed. But now, hands up for some suffering.

You probably didn't come to church today to go, yeah, I'll have some suffering. Or maybe you are feeling stresses and strains and issues with the body and everything else. Or maybe you are being mocked and abused for following Jesus and his culture. But that's the main thing here. It doesn't mean that God doesn't care about your bodily ailments or anything else. But the particular issue is that they are standing out because of their faith in Jesus.

And they're being isolated and persecuted and mocked because of it. And so, here you have him trying to encourage these people. Arm yourselves with the same thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. Now, as soon as I read that, that first time when I was studying it, I'm going, hmm, that sounds odd. Now, I think it'll explain that this is not saying you have arrived at perfection because verse 7 says otherwise. And 8, okay, we'll just get there. So, hold your horses.

I'll try and do this quickly. Now, what are we done away with when we become a Christian? Are you saying to me? I don't think there's anybody who can tell me that they are perfect? In fact, I know you can't. Right? And that is not what it's saying. However, what I believe it is saying is this, that when you're in Christ, you have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness and death and transferred through him, the righteous one who laid down his life into the kingdom of light and life.

[9 : 03] But we're still in the war. We're still in the battle. What that means, I believe, is that Satan no longer has a hold of you. He may buffet you in your life. Whatever you're going through, he may buffet you in your relationships. But he doesn't have the victory. Jesus has the victory. And in Christ, we share the victory. So therefore, the chains are broken. I am set free. The chains are gone.

I'm alive. But I'm alive in a war still taking place. There's still spiritual warfare. There's still battles. I still battle with my own mind. I still battle with my own heart. And on every single day, I'm called to live on the power of God and the gifts of God. Not only his gift of mercy, but the gifts that he gives me to practice the Christian life every day. That's my battle.

And I'm assuming you're in it with me. Because that's what you are in Christ. That's the battle. The victory is won. The battle continues until that living hope becomes that reality of the return of Jesus. And you stand with him. Access given, complete access through his life, death, and resurrection.

You're in him. Nothing, nothing, nothing can separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. And that is that truth that is in the midst of the battle of hatred and culture, pressure, and everything else. Ill health, spiritual battles, depression, everything. That's where you stand as a believer.

It is not about perfection. I love the story of Spurgeon. I may have shared this the last time. I always do. And I forget where I've shared it. Where the guy apparently said to him, he believes that he has a ride of perfection. Did I share this the last time? Anyway, I'm going to share it again because it's a good one. Because I hope it's true. Or maybe it's one of these stories. Anyway, Spurgeon was really interested in this guy after the service when the guy said to him, he believed that he had arrived at perfection. And he says, right, come round to lunch because I want to hear more about this. And so the man is eating lunch with Spurgeon. And halfway through, Spurgeon has a glass of water. So Thomas, Spurgeon has a glass of water. And Spurgeon throws a glass of water in his face. Don't worry. I'm not that mad, even though people might think it.

[11 : 57] The man, as was described in the quote, was incandescent with rage. Spurgeon's response? Ah, the old nature, nothing a glass of water can't resurrect. And that is not, it's pointing to the fact that you're always battling with your own mind, with your own heart. And the only way you overcome it is in Christ. First of all, for my sin entirely, but for every day when you have the gift of repentance, you have the gift of love coming up, you have the gift of all the things that God gives you to deal with these things, the beauty of the Christian life is every day we need help. Every day we get help. Every day you're called to use that help. And it affects everybody else in the body of Christ when you do it. So we're going to kind of rush through. So these guys had been set free from a way of life that everybody else was living. They were under pressure. So live the rest of your life, the rest of your time in the flesh, no longer for human passions, but for the will of God. There is the great battle you and I endure. The great battle is your will and God's will. We still suffer from this problem as Christians, you know. There are things that I pray for that is clearly my will.

But clearly not God's will. And this is a constant battle. And I think it's helpful to us when we approach God and we're asking, when Peter is asking them, so live for the rest of your time, whether it's a day or several years, it doesn't matter. No longer live for the flesh, the things that gave you gave you moments and glancing pleasures, but live now with passion for the glory of God.

Live with passion for the glory of God. There is the battle that takes place in our lives and the challenge that we face. So the next couple of verses. Now here's the mocking element. For the time for the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want you to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinky parties, etc. Lawless idolatry. This is, I don't believe, is this is the entire list that could be put there. There are plenty things that we can be living for that doesn't necessarily fit in any of this, but as the same outcome. But I think we all see the outward behavior in all of that. But lawless idolatry is more of a heart thing where it really begins to take place. That is one of the big things that we have as human beings who struggle to come to God, not only about our will, but what we love most. But when you're hearing about the righteous one who suffered and died and gave us life as a righteous sacrifice for the unrighteous, who we didn't deserve any of it, but were offered and given, it was given to us, a fallen, broken world.

Then you know by the wisdom of God and the light of God and His truth, you know that living that way with all the other elements you can add to it, you know that is not the best way to live.

So he's saying, don't allow this stuff to get into the body. Whatever is taking place, don't allow this stuff to take root in the body of Christ. And we need to be honest about it. We need to be careful about it. We need to be gracious when anything happens. And we need to be very careful when we condemn others. Because there, for the grace of God go I and go you. And that's the challenge we always face. How do you deal with it? I think it comes out clearly in a few moments.

[16 : 02] The next verse. And with respect to this, they are surprised when you don't join them in the same flood of debauchery and they malign you. But they will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. So we will give an account. And they are living their lives as if they're not going to give an account. And in light of that, you can see where the mocking is coming from.

Oh, see, look at you. Look at you poor people. At least we're free to live as we want. And ultimately, it's a sense of idolatry where they fill their lives and reject God in extreme senses. But you can do it without doing any of these things. So that's where we need to be careful. A flood of debauchery. They malign you. But they will give an account.

They will give an account. The next verse explains a bit of that. The next two. Or, well, the next one until we get on to the bit I want to really get on to. For this is why the gospel was preached, even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the Spirit the way God does. You know, when you look at a believer dying, you see the flesh dying.

And these people, no doubt, were mocking them, seeing like there's nothing to this religion of yours. But when you're in Christ, you are raised by the Spirit. You will live in the Spirit.

And that is the powerful message of the gospel. They might see the flesh and condemn you and mock you. But you're alive in Christ. You stand in Christ.

[17 : 49] The Lord sees you, knows you, and will not let you go. The challenge of all our lives. The challenge of being mocked. Oh, you're not one of these born-again folks.

Are you? No. I was with, I called the Fat Fathers when our boys were training at Lost County. And one fella turned around to me one day at the balcony when we were watching the boys play.

And he says, you're not one of them born-again Christians, are you? To which I kind of knew him enough to go, is there any other kind? Well, I mean, one of these kind of weirdos.

What do you mean? And then he tried to explain. But he was kind of shocked that I replied, is there any other type of Christian? You can't be a Christian unless you're born again. That's the point. So that's, you face that, and I believe it's going to get a lot worse in the coming days, months, and years.

It's going to get worse. And I think the temptation is to live in fear, or to even relent, to melt in. But you don't melt in when you're in Christ.

[18 : 55] You stand out, but you're empowered to do so. And when you're now realizing we're living in the end times, look at verse 7. At the end of all things is at hand.

And I'm not wearing a thing in me with the end is near. I believe that what this is referring to is that ever since Jesus Christ came into the world, suffered and died, and was raised again from the dead, and ascended to the right hand of God the Father, meant that he was now bringing the end times into being.

A lot of us have spent a lot of time thinking about the end times, when it's going to happen. The answer is always, are you in Christ? You're ready. I don't care what anybody says.

You go, but, but, but, no, no. That's the thing. Be ready today. If Christ came this very day, be ready. Be in Christ. That's you being ready.

So, in one sense, the end times has been started from the arrival, the promised Messiah coming and fulfilling his calling in laying down his life as a perfect Lamb of God.

[20 : 05] And then it starts the ball rolling until the second coming. Okay? It's been a long time, hasn't it, since all this happened? So, we don't know. But we live life whenever it is, even if we knew it was a thousand years away.

You're called to live every moment of your life for the will of God, for the glory of God, because he has saved you and loved you and still does and will help you repent and change when you fail and fall.

But now you see the end time ethics, if you want, of a biblical church living in the challenges of life. And at the end of all things is near.

Therefore, be self-controlled. Now, this is really surprising to me. When you don't necessarily know what's coming and you just read it barefaced as you're beginning to look at the text.

Therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Or the NIV may put it, or another translation might put it, for prayer.

[21 : 10] Be sober-minded and self-controlled for prayer. So, what stands out for a Christian and a congregation of people, believers, is the place of prayer.

It's the first thing that's mentioned here. In the challenging times of persecution. You're calling us to prayer. Peter, what are you doing?

We're living in fear of our life. Yeah. Be sober-minded based on the fact that you're in Christ, that Christ has died for you, and nothing can separate you from the love of God. This is your temporary home.

When He comes again, He will make all things new. All things new.

So, be sober-minded, self-controlled for prayer. I mean, do we see the value and the wonder of speaking to our Father in heaven and be amazed that we get to do this?

[22 : 26] Don't allow suffering to distort the call to prayer personally, collectively, whether you speak there or not.

It's a collective gathering, coming together and praying, and the Holy Spirit helps and intercedes even when we can't say the words. That is mind-blowing.

When we understand that and see that in terms of response to suffering as a Christian, the first thing He says, for the sake of prayer, for the sake of communing with God and speaking with your Father in heaven, be self-controlled.

Be sober-minded so that you can pray. Next. Then, above all things, love one another.

This happened before, didn't it? I think the title in the previous sermon was Love One Another or something like that. So, He's reminding them again. In the midst of the heat of the battle that takes place, love one another.

[23 : 36] It is usually something that erodes very quickly under pressure. Love one another. Earnestly.

Earnestly. Because others, as Christians, are those that God has loved and shed His blood for through Christ.

And am I going to say I'm not going to love them like Stephen taught us? Going to love them like God loves them?

It's such a challenge to us. Why? Sincere love. It's love. Love. Biblical. Challenging. Corrective. Healing.

Love. Love covers a multitude of sins. And am I so glad that I read these verses on the basis of the previous verse in chapter 1. All the way back to chapter 1.

[24 : 33] It's not talking about perfection. But perfect love. This sincere love. This biblical love that understands that God has forgiven me.

And will forgive others. That I'm a vehicle of grace and mercy. Love. Forgiveness. It's not that we kind of hide our sins as such.

We are there with one another and say we'll walk with you. Don't walk away. Repent. Return.

We're with you. I think the church has been terrible at times. In this area. I don't mind saying it because I think it's true. Far too many have sought help.

And it feels like they just go. Boot out the door. But love isn't squishy, squishy, washy love. In that sense. It's a corrective love.

[25 : 35] If you're willing to receive that love. That love will correct you. That love will walk with you. That love will change you. That's that radical love that you're receiving. But it will be a transformation.

It will lead you to a place. Where like David. You repent. And confess. Lord I've messed up. I screwed up again. Help me.

And so here you have this incredible testimony. Of what a new testament church looks like. Awaiting the end times. It is a church.

Where we love one another earnestly. Because love covers a multitude of sins. Quickly and I will thrash on. Show hospitality. Show it. Show it. Show it. It's. And go back to.

Show hospitality to one another. Without grumbling. So. It's almost like hospitality and grumbling. Are kind of countering one another. When we allow that grumbling spirit.

[26 : 32] Within. Within the body of Christ. It will be called to show hospitality. To one another. Without grumbling. And as we have received a gift. Use it to serve one another.

Here's the body of Christ. One of the biggest failings. I believe in the church of Jesus Christ. Is to depend on one person. One person. Failure.

It's a body of believers. Where the body has received at least a gift each. Multiple gifts perhaps.

And the body thrives when the body is working. Led. But working. Show hospitality to one another. Without grumbling. As each of you has received a gift.

Use it to serve one another. Like to love one another. As good stewards of God's varied grace. Now isn't that amazing? What an image. God's varied grace in every way in here.

[27 : 31] Calling some to maybe become pastors. And someone else is being called out. And helped to confess. Bless and repent. And someone else is discovering the wonderful healing.

And the peace of God. And that's how it works. God's varied grace in the midst of all of the life of the body of Christ. That is alive in Christ. Imitating Christ.

That's your calling. And we need to use the body of Christ as leaders. Next. Whoever speaks.

Well there we go. Not on time. Sorry Donnie. You've got 10, 15 minutes over is it? Sorry about that. I apologize. Whoever speaks as one who speaks oracles.

I don't know if I could describe myself like that. But anyway. Speaks oracles of God. Do it as God has called you. Do it as you're sharing the word. Don't be afraid to share the word with one another.

[28 : 32] It is the very thing. It's the very truth that you need. And the very wisdom that you need for every day. Whoever serves as one who serves by the strength that God supplies.

Isn't that good news? I don't need to be super gifted. But I have the strength of God to help me use my gifts. And I need to depend on that source.

In order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Just hear that final word of praise and adoration.

Call yourself. Call yourself out as you walk with him. Are you walking with him as he intended? Are you walking with each other as he intends?

Do so. Do so. For the glory of him. Loved you. Saved you. Will. Who has redeemed you.

[29 : 33] And will come for you. Amen.