

For Pete's Sake  
Living for God's Sake  
1 Peter 4:1-11  
July 30, 2017

In 1978 I enlisted in the USMC. Going into the military was one of the only options I could think of as I was contemplating as I was looking at finishing high school. I knew that I didn't want to go to college and I knew that I didn't want to follow in my dad's footsteps and be a plumber. I also knew that I didn't want to be a pastor. The "old lady" across the street told me I'd make a great pastor and I knew there was no way. The Marine Corps looked like as far away from pastoral ministry as I could get so, I signed up. I left for 11 weeks of boot camp in August of 1979 and when I got off the bus at Parris Island I knew that my life would never be the same.

The first thing that happens is that you lose everything. Clothes, shoes, wallet, pictures, watch, everything. They give you a pair of boxers and a t-shirt to put on and then it's off for shots. Then it's off to the barber. The barber takes the clippers right down the middle of your head! It's at that moment when you know that you belonged to the USMC. Your life is not your own any longer, you're under new management.

Friends, when we give our lives to God – while the moments of transition are usually not so harsh, the reality is the same...we are no longer our own. Our lives must now reflect the character and will of our God. This is the essential message that Peter is trying to communicate to the Christians dispersed throughout Asia Minor. He wants them to know that their lives do not belong to themselves: they belong to God. Through hell and high water, through ups and downs, through triumphs or trials, in sickness or in health, and even through suffering, hard times, and sometimes death – we are to live a life that is pleasing to God. We are to live a life that honors God. We are to live a life that brings praise to our God.

So, how we can live a life that God would be pleased with? The first verse of chapter four says we need to adopt the same attitude as Jesus Christ. Wow! Now, that seems daunting and somewhat impossible, doesn't it? Jesus Christ, who is eternally God, left heaven and took on the form of a human being. Now that's a sacrifice. He traded His comforts for our discomforts. He traded His perfection for our imperfection. He paid the ultimate sacrifice, by living and then dying for those who would believe and accept Him as Lord. Peter says this about Jesus in chapter 3 verse 18: ***"Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but He died for sinners to bring you safely home to God."*** Yes, Jesus was willing to sacrifice His own human body. Discomfort, pain, suffering, hurt, betrayal, rejection, isolation – Yes! He was willing to experience all of that for.....You! Now, that's love! And even more than that, we should consider the attitude that Jesus exemplified through His suffering. He didn't complain, he didn't lose faith, he didn't quit when things got hard – brothers and sisters, He gave us a beautiful and complete example of how we are to endure suffering and live our lives.

So, Peter is very clear with his letter to this group of believers. He is pleading with his audience to understand the weight and depth of Jesus' sacrificial life and exhorting them to adopt the same attitude. He's encouraging these believers, who are living under persecution and opposition, to live in a way that pleases God. So, if we are going to live a life that brings glory and honor to God, we must – **Embrace suffering with a Christ-like attitude. (v.1-5)** Peter is encouraging these believers to look at suffering like Jesus looked at suffering. I love the first reality that he points out; here's the first reality – trouble, suffering, pain, etc. doesn't last always. In other words, the worst that one can do to a believer is end their life. But to die, Peter is saying, means that we go to the land of "No more" – no more sin! You know what that means? We go to a place that has "No more" sickness and pain, "No More" failures and let downs, "No More" deception and lies, "No more" racism and sexism, "No more" hate and division, "No more" Big I's and Little "You's.... When we endure suffering with a Christ-like attitude we are rewarded with the eternal presence of God – a place of "No More".

Peter then moves from encouraging exhortation to wise instruction. In verse 2 he wisely warns these Christians to not fall into the trap or temptation of living to fulfill their own desires. If we are completely

honest at this point, we know that we all fit into this category. All of us – want what we want! And we want it now! And, to make matters worse, we live in a culture that promotes getting what we want, at all cost. We don't live in a culture that celebrates, honors, and promotes self-control or self-sacrifice. As a matter of fact, we're amazed when we see it and if it's captured on video it quickly goes viral. We live in an individualized, Me, Myself, and I culture. And Peter is wisely instructing these Christians, these people that should know that this world was not their own – to not live to please themselves, but instead, live to please God. Live to do God's will. Live to fulfill God's dream. Live to be and to do what God wants for your life and for the world we live in. If we are going to live a life that brings glory and honor to God, we must – **Live to please God, instead of living to please ourselves. (v.2)**

Friends, here's the truth: we are all made in the image of God and that means that we have the potential, as we talked last week, to be good people in the eyes of God. But, there's a question we all need to consider – will I live a life dedicated to pleasing God, or will I live a life that is displeasing to God. Christ redeems us from our fallen state, and reconciles us to God, and puts us on the right track. That means we now have the ability, with the commitment to adopting the attitude of Christ and following His example, to live in a way that is pleasing to God. Let me say it another way, without Christ, our desires have the potential to be so self-centered that we can miss the mark God intended for us, and the Bible calls that sin. Peter says that before the presence of Christ in our lives, we were evil and godless, immoral and full of lust, our desires were to be drunk and to be involved in wild parties, and most of all – we put other people, places, or things (any noun that you can think of) before God. Peter is essentially telling these Christians, and all of us, that if we are going to live a life that brings glory and honor to God that we may not be popular in the eyes of the world around us. (v.4) We **may not be popular, but we are called to be peculiar.**

This might be the toughest reality when you consider living for God, instead of living for yourself. This means that you live with a Biblical worldview. This means that when God says yes, you say yes. This means that when God says no, you say no. This means that, as believers, we condone what God condones, and we oppose, what God opposes. Ouch! Right? And Friends, this is not easy. Taking a stand for God was not easy for these Christians that were persecuted and opposed, and it's not easy for us today. But Peter brings up the reality of eternity. One day our Loving God is going to settle the books. One day, this world is going to be over. One day, it's not going to matter what the political climate is, or what the cultural context is. One day, God is going to judge the world. I love that; Peter is not threatening believers, or trying to preach fire and brimstone, but lovingly he reminds them that one-day God is going to judge the world. And because of this reality, he not only tells these believers what not to do, he also tells them what to do: if they are going to live a life that brings glory and honor to God. He's essentially telling these believers to live their lives with the end in mind. And these truths apply to us today: In fact, we can all begin this process, starting today. You ready?

1. **Be Kingdom-minded** – I love the way the ESV translations makes this point. It says in verse 7: ***"The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers."*** Peter is telling these Christians that they must come to God in prayer, in a way that God prescribes. Meaning this: a lifestyle that is contrary to God negatively impacts our prayers, and a mind that is unChrist-like, also impacts the effective of our prayers to God.
2. **Be loving** – Verse 8 says we are to love deeply. We live in a world, and a church climate, sadly, that is sometimes full of judgement and division. But this text is encouraging and exhorting believers to live in **deep love**. Furthermore, the text tells us what happens when we live in love. Love covers a multitude of sins. Love doesn't push sin under the rug, or condone sin – no, love covers a multitude of sins. Love says that we approach one another privately with wrong-doings. Love says that we have truthful dialogue. Love doesn't allow someone to live in deception. Love covers a multitude of sins and allows us to forgive each other.
3. **Be hospitable** – Wow! Most of us look at our homes as the private place where we can get away from everyone. God is telling us to open our homes to others who need a meal or a place to stay. Our homes are to be places of love and comfort to those in need. Can you image a world where people

were welcoming like that? That same attitude needs to happen here at church, Gods house. Some of you have probably thought about being a part of the hospitality ministry at the church, but for whatever reason, have decided not to – but Friends, this is one matter-of-fact way that you can live out this passage, by simply being hospitable in the house of God. Jesus told His disciples that the world would know that they are His disciples by how they loved one another. Hospitality is an outward demonstration of our inward transformation.

4. **Be generous** – I don't know what God has gifted you with. But you know; and whatever it is that God has gifted you with, you ought to be generous with the gift. You ought to allow God to strengthen and energize you in such a way that people can be helped and benefited from the gifts that God has given you.

And just think, when we are sober-minded, loving, hospitable, and generous – we can come together in great praise and glory and honor to our God.