

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
Living in God's Will for God's Glory

1 Peter 4:1-11

July 29th, 2018

Main Point

When followers of Jesus live in God's will, they encounter God's power and display God's glory.

Getting Started

In 1 Peter 4:1-11, the message Peter gave could be summarized with one short phrase: live in God's will. He knew that pursuing a godly lifestyle would mean sticking out in society. Because of their faith, the early Christians turned away from habitual sin according to God's known will and sought to live righteously. Their lives looked different from those around them. And many in the watching world ostracized them for that very reason. Should this deter them? No. They were to pursue godly living, regardless of the consequences.

Following Christ according to God's will is evident in our day-to-day lives by the actions we take and do not take. Others notice our choices and may respond with negative talk, even slander. Still, we should be encouraged. God will one day judge each person, both those who follow Him and those who don't. For believers, we can look forward to eternal life with Him that will make the present seem short by comparison.

Living in God's will also means serving others using the gifts God has given us. We will explore two kinds of gifts in our study which Peter says God has given believers to serve others: speaking gifts and serving gifts. God's will includes loving others by serving them.

The good news is that those who desire to live according to God's will experience His power and presence and ultimately display His glory. God empowers believers who want to honor Him by living in God's will for his glory.

Observation

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says about a particular topic

Ask a volunteer to read 1 Peter 4:1-2.

What's your initial response to a time of hardship or suffering? Where or to whom do you turn?

When have you experienced hardship or suffering for doing the right thing?

In these verses, Peter reminded his readers that Jesus endured immense physical suffering to the point of death and his followers will also face hardship and suffering as we pursue righteous living. Instead of being surprised by suffering, believers should be prepared for times of suffering. We're commanded in verse 1 to "arm" ourselves with the knowledge that because Jesus suffered, we're empowered to turn from sinful behavior and seek to follow God. Believers will still face temptation and struggle with sin's influence, but Jesus' death bought our victory over sin's power. In Christ, we can turn from sin and the desires that once shaped our lives before coming to Him. We're called to live the remainder of our lives for God's will.

As believers, what tools are we provided to help us live out the teaching in this verse? Which ones have you found to be most helpful?

Ask a volunteer to read 1 Peter 4:3-4.

What about your lifestyle do non-Christians find strange? What do they find surprising?

When we recognize the seriousness of our sin and turn from it, our lifestyle choices will change. Our thoughts, attitudes, and actions will all be shaped by the reality of the gospel.

It's important to note that others will recognize these changes in our lives. And, some won't congratulate us. Instead, they'll be against this change of direction. We can be confident in our desire to live righteously, but that doesn't mean we won't experience resistance for it. Others who are still participating in habitual sin may seek to mock us, harm our reputations, or say harsh things to us. We should be prepared.

In what day-to-day scenarios should Christians be prepared to experience slander or verbal persecution for doing what is right?

What encouragement would you offer a new Christ-follower who may be struggling with letting go of habitual sin?

Ask a volunteer to read 1 Peter 4:5-6.

What encouragement did Peter give for those who face suffering at the hands of others due to their faith? How is this a warning for non-Christians?

What do these verses reveal about the outcome of living for yourself versus following God?

A day of final judgment will come for every person. For believers, this means that death is not the final word. While everyone will face death, Christians are given the hope of an eternal life spent with the Lord. Written specifically to Christians, Peter's words were meant to encourage them to persevere. They were to stand firm, continuing to pursue godly living.

Ask a volunteer to read 1 Peter 4:7-11.

Why does Peter encourage his readers to be self-controlled and sober minded? What does this mean?

Read Proverbs 19:11. Compare this verse to 1 Peter 4:8. How are these two verses alike?

How does Peter instruct his readers to show hospitality to others? How we show hospitality to others is very important!

How does Peter instruct his readers to serve as good stewards in verse 10? What does he want them to steward?

Peter mentions God's varied grace. What does he mean here? How does God's grace come in different varieties?

In verse 11, Peter identifies two categories of serving. What are those two primary categories of serving? How does Peter instruct people to exercise their spiritual gifts?

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Take some time to assess whether you are living for your own pleasures or for the will of God. Spend some time in silent prayer, asking God to reveal this to you. Peter does not provide space for any middle ground between living for God's will or your own pleasures.

The lives of unbelievers have not fundamentally changed from the first to the twenty-first century; believers should have nothing to do with such behaviors Peter identified in verse 3, even when their nonparticipation means that others will malign or ostracize them. Determine not to join in these sinful practices. Let your group know how they may help you follow God's will despite criticism and pressure to go with the flow.

Are you living a self-controlled and sober minded life? Peter in verse 7 seems to suggest that a lack of self-discipline will negatively impact your prayer life.

Who does God want you to show earnest love to this week? Consider that earnest love covers a multitude of sins. What does that mean? Discuss this as a group.

Has God gifted you with a speaking or a serving gift? Share with the group how God has led you to exercise the gifts He has given to you.

Prayer

Close your group time in prayer. Thank God for the promises we're given in His Word. Ask Him to give your group members courage to pursue godly lives even when they face opposition so that your lives will bear witness to God's righteousness. Ask God to help group members serve each other using the gifts God has granted in his multifaced grace.

Commentary

4:1-2. Therefore, connects this chapter to the discussion of the sufferings of Jesus Christ at the end of chapter 3. The suffering that Christ endured was, in part, because of the righteous life that he lived. Believers in similar fashion should arm yourselves also with the same attitude. As believers in Jesus Christ, we are to adopt the same attitude Christ had toward his suffering. We are to be willing to suffer because we have chosen to live righteous lives. We are to think as Christ did about obedience and suffering: to be convinced that it is better to do right and suffer than to do wrong. Because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin does not suggest that the believer, because he suffers for doing what is right, will never stumble or sin again. A Christian does not, through suffering, magically vault to the level of moral perfection. Verses 1-2 indicate that believers take seriously their struggle against sin and their commitment to obedience. By following this counsel, you demonstrate to others that obeying God is the most important motivation for your life, more important by far than avoiding hardship and pain. The Amplified Bible's rendering of this section clearly

conveys the meaning Peter wished to communicate: “So, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same thought and purpose (patiently to suffer rather than fail to please God). For whoever has suffered in the flesh has done with (intentional) sin— has stopped pleasing himself and the world and pleases God” (1 Pet. 4:1-2, AMP).

4:3. This verse says quite bluntly that our experience of sin is sufficient. The Greek perfect tense emphasizes that the kinds of activities listed in verse 3 are over; this part of our lives is a closed chapter

The staccato-like descriptions come quickly and clearly— without detailed explanations. The original readers knew precisely what was meant. Debauchery and lusts refer to unbridled and unrestrained living. They describe a person who knows no restraints, has no checks and balances for life. Specifically, such a person has no restraint when it comes to sexual morality or violent behavior.

Drunkenness, orgies, carousing also stand together. “Drunkenness” emphasizes the habitual nature of a person’s sin. The other two terms could be translated as “drinking parties.” These two words originally described a group of friends coming home from a big athletic contest. Along the way, they imbibed their favorite beverage and then stopped off at the local gathering place and drank one too many. They were out having a good time, grabbing for all the gusto, and disturbing people in the process. For believers, that is not part of our present experience; it is in the past.

Detestable idolatry simply reinforces this point. In the first century, sexual and alcoholic excesses had become idols in many people’s lives. Believers may continue to struggle with the temptations of these kinds of activities, but they must remain a part of our history.

4:4. Continuing in these activities, unbelievers will think it strange that you do not plunge with them. “Think it strange” suggests that the nonbeliever will be astonished or surprised that you don’t run with them. Unfortunately, their response does not remain neutral. To “think it strange” also suggests that they become offended. That offense is not silent. They heap abuse on the believer. In other words, they defame and injure the reputation of the believer, primarily with verbal abuse and slander. Nonbelievers of every era tend to resent the convicting purity of the believer’s life, and as a result, the Christian becomes the victim of their slander. Through such slander they seek somehow to justify their own behavior by painting the non-participant in a negative way.

The letter never moves far from the dominant theme of suffering. Believers serious about righteous living will invariably suffer. One way they suffer is from verbal abuse.

4:5-6. Why should I stand against an ungodly life? What support do I have? The answer comes loud and clear: the coming judgment. This judgment is near (v. 7). It will be universal, for it will embrace all the living and the dead. Unbelievers will have to give an account of their lives but will not be able to withstand the divine scrutiny. God is ready to judge, so this judgment could come suddenly, without warning.

Those people who practice these things and who abuse Christians for failing to live the same way may seem to have the upper hand for the time being, but the last word will be with God. He is already prepared. A time is coming when the world as we know it

will come to an end and God will judge the world. Those who are still alive will face God, and those who have died will be raised up to answer for themselves before God.

4:7 The end of all things does not mean Peter was expecting Christ to return in a few weeks or months. It means, rather, that all the major events in God's great salvation plan – culminating in the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost – had already occurred. Therefore, Christ's return could happen at any time: it was at hand in Peter's day; and it still is today. But the imminent arrival of the end is not a call simply to look into heaven and wait for Jesus' return. Instead, believers are to be self-controlled and sober minded, so that they may be devoted to prayer and maximize their usefulness in God's kingdom.

4:8-9 Enduring love for others testifies that a person is living in light of the future. True love covers a multitude of other people's sins. Where love abounds, offenses are frequently overlooked and quickly forgotten. Hospitality, much admired in both Greco-Roman and Jewish sources was much needed in an era when inns could be dangerous and unpleasant.

4:10 All believers have received at least one spiritual gift from God, and they are not to hoard these gifts but use them faithfully as stewards of God's grace.

4:11 Peter divides spiritual gifts generally into speaking and serving gifts. Those who speak must not propound their own ideas but faithfully declare God's words. Similarly, those who serve must not depend on their own strength but draw their strength from God, so that God alone may be glorified through Jesus Christ.