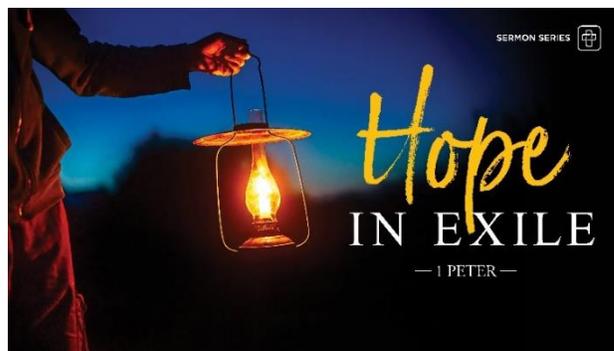


Living Like the End Is Near

1 Peter 4:1-11

Brandon Stern July 26, 2020



What a privilege it is to worship the one true and living God. Let's continue in worship to this great God by turning in our Bibles to 1 Peter 4:1-11. In this passage, Peter is wrapping up a section he began back in chapter two, beginning in verses 11 and 12. This section is the heart of Peter's letter. So I'll begin with 1 Peter 2:11-12 to build the context for today's passage. Peter writes:

¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and exiles to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul. ¹² Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits.

Throughout this main section of the letter, Peter has been concerned to help his readers understand what it means to live as God's people in the world. In doing this, he has consistently been pointing us back to Jesus. As Christians, our calling is to follow in the footsteps of our Savior. We don't do this in order to earn God's favor, but because—as Peter reminded us at the very beginning of this letter—God's great mercy has given us “*new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*” (1 Peter 1:3).

In light of this new birth God has accomplished in us by His grace, we are now to abstain from sinful desires that wage war against the soul and instead conduct ourselves honorably among the Gentiles. This is Peter's focus as he wraps up this section. He wants us to no longer live for our own sinful desires, but for God's will, because we're God's people. So as we turn now to God's holy Word, let's ask God to make our hearts humble and submissive to His precious Word.

Holy Father, by Your grace and mercy You have saved us and made us Your people. What a blessing. We have done nothing to deserve this. It is all the result of Your Holy Spirit's work in our lives. Jesus, You are not only our Example, but our precious Savior. You are the

One Who lived the holy life we could not live and willingly died for all of our sinfulness. So, we ask that by Your Holy Spirit You would work in us to make us more like You. We want to live for You. Use Your Word now to convict us of sin and transform us more and more into Your image. We need Your grace to be Your holy people, so help us now we pray. Amen.

Let's look to God's Word now, beginning in 1 Peter 4:1.

Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same understanding—because the one who suffers in the flesh is finished with sin—² in order to live the remaining time in the flesh no longer for human desires, but for God's will. ³ For there has already been enough time spent in doing what the Gentiles choose to do: carrying on in unrestrained behavior, evil desires, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and lawless idolatry. ⁴ They are surprised that you don't join them in the same flood of wild living—and they slander you. ⁵ They will give an account to the one who stands ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶ For this reason the gospel was also preached to those who are now dead, so that, although they might be judged in the flesh according to human standards, they might live in the spirit according to God's standards.

⁷ The end of all things is near; therefore, be alert and sober-minded for prayer. ⁸ Above all, maintain constant love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Be hospitable to one another without complaining. ¹⁰ Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, let it be as one who speaks God's words; if anyone serves, let it be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

This is the Word of our God. May He work its truth and grace into our lives today.

As I mentioned a little earlier, Peter's desire for his readers—and for us as well—is that we no longer live for our own sinful human desires, but for God's will. We see this right here in verse two, don't we? Look with me at the end of that verse. Peter says we are to live “...no longer for human desires, but for God's will.”

It's important for us to understand what Peter means when he says human desires. Peter is not saying all human desires are wrong. For example, there's nothing sinful about desiring to eat, drink or enjoy the love and companionship of friends. Rather, what Peter is getting at is when our legitimate, God-given desires go astray, when what we desire becomes

more important to us than pleasing God and submitting to His will. This is why other translations use the phrase “the lusts of men,” getting at the idea of inordinate desires or evil human desires.

What Peter is contrasting here is a life lived to satisfy your own sinful, inordinate desires with a life lived according to God’s will. We see this clearly in the context, don’t we? Look at verse three where Peter describes what a life lived for your own sinful desires looks like: “*For there has already been enough time spent in doing what the Gentiles choose to do...*” What’s that? They carry on in “*...unrestrained behavior, evil desires, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and lawless idolatry.*”

Peter doesn’t mince words here, but is cutting right to the chase. Enough is enough. This kind of sinful living is not what God has saved you for; rather, it’s what God has saved you from. You are to be God’s holy people, proclaiming the praises of the One Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Peter’s point here is that there has already been enough time spent living in the darkness of your sinful desires. You belong to God now, so it’s time to live to please Him.

There’s an urgency to what Peter is saying here. As verse seven says, “*The end of all things is near...*” There’s no time to lose. It’s time to stop living like a pagan and start living like a Christian. This is Peter’s concern, his burden, throughout this section. He wants us to no longer live for our own sinful desires, but for God’s will.

Peter is doing much more here than simply saying, “Stop it.” Peter knows firsthand how much easier said than done this really is. Peter knows how pressure from the world—specifically pressure from a young slave girl and a few people around a fire—can so quickly cause someone to deny Christ. Peter knows it’s not easy to stay faithful to Christ when the current of the world is pulling in the opposite direction. So Peter wants to share what he has learned through trial and error about living for Jesus.

In order to discover what Peter has to say to us today, we are going to ask and answer three main questions.

1. Why do we struggle living for our own sinful desires and how can we fight against that?
2. Why should we live for God’s will?
3. What does living for God’s will look like practically?

That’s where we’re going today. So let’s look at our first question.

1. Why do we struggle living for our own sinful desires and how can we fight against that?

In answering this question for us, Peter speaks to two kinds of pressures we face. The first pressure is external and the second is internal. Let's look first at the external pressure we face to live for our own sinful desires. Look with me at verses three and four again. Peter writes:

For there has already been enough time spent in doing what the Gentiles choose to do: carrying on in unrestrained behavior, evil desires, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and lawless idolatry. They are surprised that you don't join them in the same flood of wild living—and they slander you.

What Peter is talking about here is the difficult reality of living in a world that does not understand or appreciate your commitment to Christ. Often this begins with surprise, doesn't it? Your coworkers or friends may question why you aren't doing the things they're doing or why you don't think about things the way they think about those issues. They might say things like, "Loosen up, man. Live a little. Why do you have to be such a killjoy?"

But sooner or later their surprise often turns into slander. Your lifestyle no longer just surprises them, it's now starting to offend them. They don't view you as a team player. You're different. You have different values and they don't like that. It's unsettling. It feels threatening to them. They may even start to feel judged, not because you're necessarily judging them, but because your life is serving as a contrast to their own, so they hate you for that.

Through a variety of ways your unbelieving family, friends and neighbors begin to slander you. "How can you think that way? You're so narrow-minded. You're on the wrong side of history. Don't stand in the way of progress." Or their attacks may be more subtle, so they talk about you behind your back. Or maybe they just stop talking to you altogether. After all, they may not even want to be associated with someone who believes and lives the way you do.

Whatever they do, one thing is sure: you will feel the pressure to give in and fall in line. You will begin to wonder if it's worth it to follow Christ, especially when a few compromises here and there could make your life so much easier. Maybe you could have that friend-circle you've always wanted, or the promotion that keeps passing you by. Maybe you could have a seat at the table or be part of the inner circle. All it would take is a little compromise, a little willingness to go with the flow. The truth is, what makes this so hard is that we all like to be liked. None of us enjoys feeling on the outside.

So Peter is honest with us. This will not be easy, Christian. The world will continue to pressure you to live for your sinful desires, to join them in the flood of wild living. Peter is calling us today, by God's grace, to resist that pressure. Do not let the surprise and slander of the world draw you back into its sinfulness.

So that's the external pressure we face to live for our own sinful desires—the surprise and slander of the world around us. Now let's look at the internal pressure we face. Look with me at verses one and two:

Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same understanding—because the one who suffers in the flesh is finished with sin—in order to live the remaining time in the flesh no longer for human desires, but for God's will.

What Peter is doing here is what he's been doing wonderfully and beautifully throughout this letter: he is presenting Jesus' life as our example to follow. He's saying, "Look to Jesus." Jesus was willing to suffer instead of sin. Jesus chose the path of obedience and suffering instead of disobedience and comfort. Although we see this throughout our beloved Savior's life, don't we see it most beautifully in the garden of Gethsemane the night before He died?

There in the garden Jesus cried out to His Father, "Is there another way to save sinners? Let this cup pass from Me" (Matthew 26:36-39). Even as He contemplated the horrors that awaited Him the next day as He would bear the sins of His people on the cross, He prayed to His Father, "Not My will but Yours be done." For our beloved Savior, there was no amount of suffering that would cause Him to disobey God's will. He was obedient even to the point of death on a cross (Philippians 2:8).

Peter is calling us to follow His example. Look with me again at verse one. At first it seems a little strange. Peter says, "...the one who suffers in the flesh is finished with sin..." Now, Peter does not of course mean that after we suffer, we no longer struggle with sin. Suffering doesn't have this magical sin-removing quality about it. No, the point Peter is making is that when we willingly suffer for obeying God and continue to persevere through it, we show that obeying God and not avoiding hardship is what's most important to us. In this sense, we are finished with sin. A line has been drawn in the sand and we have chosen to suffer with Christ in obedience to God's will rather than taking the easier path of living for our own sinful desires. In this way, we show that by God's grace we have made a clear break with sin. We're saying, "I'm with Jesus, not with the easier road of my sinful desires."

Don't miss what Peter is saying here. A life lived for God's will is often harder and will require much more suffering than a life lived giving in to your sinful passions. This is the internal pressure we face. It's easier to give in to our sinful desires than to submit them to God's will. That's why the pagans live as they please. They do not live to please God, but to please themselves.

Again, let's look at verse three. Notice how Peter describes this:

For there has already been enough time spent in doing what the Gentiles choose to do: carrying on in unrestrained behavior, evil desires, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and lawless idolatry.

What all these sins have in common is they provide quick and easy fixes. Ever since the fall of humanity, the inordinate use and abuse of sex and alcohol have been easy and enjoyable sources of escape, pleasure, comfort and control. After a long day, it's easy to just want to escape from it all, take the edge off, nurse your hurting ego, satisfy your lust for power or your need for affirmation. Whatever you may be going through, sex and alcohol are sure to be able to make it all better. With just a few clicks or a couple of drinks, the hardships and troubles of this life can be forgotten.

Sadly, we have seen this proven all too true throughout this pandemic. Halee Scott, writing for [Christianity Today](#), notes:

Health officials issued warnings about drinking during quarantine, citing the 55% increase in alcohol sales in the week ending March 21st when "shelter in place" began. Other reports indicate that on-line alcohol sales jumped more than 243% during the pandemic. Coronavirus-induced drinking memes have swept across the internet, showcasing a nation's coping mechanisms for times of crisis.

Porn use has also increased dramatically during this time, with one leading porn site reporting an 18% increase in web traffic. So what about you this morning? How have the past several months of sheltering in place gone for you? Have you given in to the internal pressure to find an easy escape? During this pandemic, have you found yourself turning to alcohol or porn to be your refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble?

Please don't misunderstand me. Sex and alcohol are not evil. They're not the problem. Rather, like everything God made, they are good gifts from our good God that He has given us to be enjoyed in submission to His will. God created sex to be enjoyed exclusively in the context of

marriage and for alcohol to be enjoyed in moderation. These are good gifts of God. Our problem comes when we allow our desires for these good gifts to become more important to us than pleasing God. When that happens, this causes us to want to color outside the lines, so to speak, of how God intended His gifts to be enjoyed.

So for those of you who enjoy alcohol, let's ask ourselves the tough questions. Are you enjoying it in gratitude to God and faithfulness to Jesus Christ, or has it become too precious to you? Has it become something you feel you need and you've just got to have it? Are you able to exercise self control and gladly go without it for a while? When you do drink, are you drinking more than you should? What's most important to you—what you want or what God wants?

Whatever your particular struggle may be—porn, alcohol or something else—God is calling each of us, as His people, to live the remaining time in the flesh no longer for human desires, but for God's will. There has been enough time spent living in foolishness and sin. It's time to resist the external and internal pressures of the world and follow our Savior on the path of suffering and obedience. But how can we do this?

Peter's answer is to adopt the mindset of Christ. Look again at verse one: *"Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves all with the same understanding..."* I love what one commentator says about this verse. He writes, "We need to develop the mental disposition of Jesus." That's good. I like that: the mental disposition of Jesus. In other words, we need to resolve to think like Jesus. We need to take on the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:15-16). We need to arm ourselves with His understanding. Like Jesus, we need to expect suffering.

Have you noticed throughout the Gospels that Jesus was never shocked when people hated Him? Instead, He expected it and even told His disciples to expect it as well. In John 15:18-19, Jesus says this:

If the world hates you, understand that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you.

Peter's not making this up; he heard it somewhere. Further, when Jesus was tempted by the devil, He consistently submitted His desires to the will of His Father. In John 4:34, Jesus even says, *"My food is to do the will of him who sent me."* This was the mindset of Jesus Christ: He was fiercely committed to the will of His Father, prepared and ready to endure any suffering that obedience to His Father's will might entail.

So my question for you is have you armed yourself with this understanding? Have you mentally prepared yourself to withstand the onslaught of the pressures of this world? Have you made the decision that when the time comes, by God's grace, you will stand with your Savior? My concern is that far too many of us—myself included—have come to believe that following Jesus should be easy. This is because, for many of us, following Jesus has been easy. We've been able to follow Jesus and, by and large, enjoy the acceptance of the culture.

However, as you are all very well aware, the cultural tide is turning. In small and sometimes even big ways, we will be forced to choose between the acceptance of the culture and faithfulness to Jesus Christ. That will not be easy. So today we must arm ourselves with the understanding of our Savior. We must be regularly immersing ourselves in the Word of God, allowing the truths of Scripture to saturate our minds and hearts. This is how we gain the mind of Christ. It is only in doing this that we'll be able to resist the pressures of the world.

So in answer to our first question, "Why do we struggle with living for our own sinful desires and how can we fight against that?" Peter has explained that we face the external pressures of the world's surprise and slander, as well as the internal pressure for an easy, trial-free life. The solution Peter has provided for us is to arm ourselves with the same understanding as our Savior, Who perfectly obeyed the will of His Father, even at tremendous cost to Himself.

2. Why should we live for God's will?

Suffering wasn't the end of Jesus' story, was it? And it will not be the end of ours either. It's to this glorious hope that Peter now directs our attention as he prepares to answer our second question, "Why should we live for God's will?" If it's this hard, why should we do it? Look at verses five and six. Peter writes this about the pagans:

They will give an account to the one who stands ready to judge the living and the dead. For this reason the gospel was also preached to those who are now dead, so that, although they might be judged in the flesh according to human standards, they might live in the spirit according to God's standards.

Simply put, Peter is saying is that we should live for God's will because final judgment awaits those who reject God's will, but everlasting life and joy await those who live for God's will. Can you see the short-sightedness of sin? Although it provides easy fixes and quick shots of pleasure, eventually the party will end, then the time to give an account before the holy and righteous Judge of all the earth will come.

For all those who have chosen to live for themselves and reject God's will for their lives, they will be judged and sentenced to an eternity in hell. Peter writes, *"They will give an account to the one who stands ready to judge the living and the dead."* So my plea for any of you who are here today or who are listening online who have not submitted yourself to Christ is do not continue living for your sinful desires. Do not think that this life is all there is. Do not be that short-sighted. Instead, confess your sin to God and ask Him to rescue you from your foolishness and sin. God is so eager and able to save anyone who turns from their sin and trusts in Him. So do not delay. The end of all things is near. Today is the day to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And for the Christian here today who by God's grace seeks to live for God's will, you have the promise that you will one day live forever with God. We see this in verse six where Peter is connecting the Christian's experience to Christ's experience back in 1 Peter 3:18. There he describes Jesus' death and resurrection, His path through suffering to glory, like this: *"He was put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit."*

Similarly, Christians who have been "judged in the flesh" —that is died—might live in the Spirit forever with God in resurrection life. Just as we follow Christ in suffering, we will follow Him in glory. So the good news of the gospel is that we do not just share with Christ in His suffering; we also share with Him in His victory. So yes, the road of suffering is often long and hard, but the glory, joy and life that await us on the other side far outweigh the cost of living for God's will today.

Dear Christian, please hear me. On the authority of God's Word, I am saying to you that whatever suffering you may face today for living for God's will, it will be worth it in the end. Death does not nullify the promises of God. When King Jesus comes back to this earth, all those who have sided themselves with Him will be shown to be on the right side of history. He will establish His Kingdom on the earth and we will live with Him forever on this restored earth, free from the curse of sin.

On that day, the suffering you have faced for following Jesus, for siding yourself with Him, will seem so light and so momentary compared to the everlasting joys that await you in the new creation. Sin will be done away with and all of God's redeemed people will live under God's good rule and blessing for all eternity. God's Kingdom will have come and His will will be done on earth as it is now being done in heaven (Matthew 6:9-13).

This is the wonderful future God has in store for His people and this is the wonderful future that by God's grace we can begin to experience in the church today. So let's not wait to

live for God's will until Christ comes back. Let's start enjoying the blessing and good life of God today. This leads to our third question.

3. What does living for God's will look like practically today?

So what does living for God's will practically look like today? What does it look like to live for God's will and not for our sinful desires? Peter answers this in verses 7-11. Look with me again at the text:

The end of all things is near; therefore, be alert and sober-minded for prayer. Above all, maintain constant love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, let it be as one who speaks God's words; if anyone serves, let it be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Notice how remarkably different a life lived for God's will is from a life lived for sinful desires. A life lived for sinful desires is a life lived for yourself. It's focused on what makes you happy and what's best for you, giving very little thought to God or others. But a life lived for God's will focuses on loving and serving others, all for the glory of God. Notice what Peter says. Just skim your eyes over the passage:

- *"Maintain constant love for one another..."* (4:8)
- *"Be hospitable to one another...."* (4:9)
- *"Serve others..."* (4:10)
- And we're to do all this *"so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything"* (4:11).

Let's look a little more closely at what living for God's will looks like practically today. Because the end is near, instead of getting drunk, we are to, "Be alert and sober-minded for prayer" (4:7). There is to be a thoughtfulness and intentionality about our prayer lives. We are to be alert to our own spiritual needs, to the pressures we're facing externally and internally, and also to the needs of those around us. *"The end of all things is near..."* This is a call to thoughtful and intentional prayer.

Then in verses eight through nine, Peter calls us to constant and costly love for one another. He writes, *"Above all, maintain constant love for one another, since love covers a*

multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining.” Our love for one another is not to be based on the subjectivity of our feelings, but in a commitment to persevere in love for one another no matter the cost. We are to happily and without complaining open up our homes and our lives to one another.

In calling us to do this, Peter is well aware that sin will continue to raise its ugly head in our relationships. So he tells us to be willing to cover over one another’s sins with our love (4:8). This doesn’t mean there’s never a time to confront someone about sin. The Bible is clear that loving someone sometimes does mean confronting them about sin. However, what Peter is getting at here is a call to commitment to let love absorb and cover the many little slights and sins which, if left uncovered, could lead to disunity, bitterness and hatred.

Isn’t this an important word for us today? We are in a cultural context where differences of opinion can so quickly divide us. Do not let that happen. Do not let someone’s position on a mask be a source of division for you. Let love cover that. Do not let someone’s thoughtless comment in person or on social media cause you to grow embittered toward them. Let love cover that. Like our Savior, commit to maintaining constant and costly love for one another. That’s how He’s loved us and that’s how He’s calling us to love one another.

One of the practical ways Peter says to love one another is by serving each other with the gifts God has given us. Look at verse ten again. Just as each and every one of us has received a gift, what are we to do with it? We’re to use it to serve others as good stewards of the varied grace of God. So the gifts and abilities you have do not ultimately belong to you. They have been given to you by your gracious God to be used to love, serve and bless those around you.

What brings God glory and pleasure? When we as His people live, not for our own selfish desires, but for His will by loving and serving others and so displaying His character to the world around us.

Look at verse 11:

- *“If anyone speaks, let it be as one who speaks God’s words...”* Minister the word of Christ to one another. Encourage one another with the truths and promises of Scripture.
- *“...if anyone serves...”*—don’t look to your own strength for that.
- *“...let it be from the strength God provides...”* Why?
- *“...so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything.”*
- Because *“To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.”*

In conclusion, God’s Spirit is calling us to recognize that the end of all things is near. So we are not to give in to the pressures to live for our sinful desires, but like our beloved Savior

Jesus, we are to resolve to live for God's will by committing ourselves to sober-minded prayer, constant and costly love, faithful service to others—all for the glory of God, knowing that we have a glorious future ahead of us. This is what God has saved us for and this is what God's grace will empower us to do. As Peter says in 1 Peter 5:10-11:

The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while. To him be dominion forever. Amen.

New Covenant Bible Church

4N780 Randall Road, St. Charles, IL 60175

(630) 584-2611 ♦ www.newcbc.org

All Scriptures quoted directly from the Christian Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

Text provided by sermontranscribers.com ♦ emily@sermontranscribers.com