

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Between Two Worlds

PART

14

TITLE

Living For The Will Of God

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 4:1-6



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I was asked this morning before the service if it was going to be weird to have a video of me and then me be standing here, and I said, “I don’t know.” But now I know it, it is weird, and I’m glad we got to all experience that together. So that’s kind of fun.

We’re going to be continuing our study of the Book of 1 Peter. This morning, we’ll be in chapter four. So if you brought your Bible, you can open there, 1 Peter 4. We’ll be looking at the first six verses. The title of the sermon this morning is Living For The Will of God, Living For The Will of God. What Peter is going to do is something that he has been doing throughout the letter, where he presents us with two options. He’s basically going to tell us to forsake human passions, to live for the will of God, “Don’t do this, but do this over here.” And that’s something that he’s been doing all along, sort of warning us against these other paths that we could take and encouraging us instead to pursue God for various reasons.

If you go back to the beginning of chapter two in verse one, he’s just finished chapter one rehearsing for us these truths of the gospel, telling us about this inheritance and hope that we have because of the resurrection. And then in chapter two verse one, he says, “So,” because of all that, “put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.” Later in chapter two, verse 11, he says, “Beloved, I urge you, as sojourners and exiles, to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.” Move away from these things because they’re waging war against you. Verse 10 of chapter three, he’s quoting Psalm 34, “Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it.”

Each time he tells us why. He gives us reasoning. At the beginning of chapter two, he says, “It’s if you have tasted that the Lord is good.” Abstain from these things, move away from these things if you’ve tasted that the Lord is good. The middle of chapter two, it’s after urging us to abstain from the passions of the flesh, he says, “So that,” in verse 13, “when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.” So in other words, he says, “Pursue these things, abstain from the passions of the flesh so that they might glorify God when they see your testimony.”

In the middle of chapter three verse nine, he says that we should pursue these ways of God to obtain a blessing. And now in chapter four, he’s going to give a similar exhortation or encouragement. He’s going to surround it with not only why we should do it and what it might lead to and why it might be difficult, but he’s going to tell us how we should do it, which is going to be very practical and very helpful, I hope. Let me pray, and then we’ll read these first six verses of chapter four together.

Heavenly Father, God, we ask that you would help us now. These are difficult verses to understand, and we don’t presume to be able to come to them with our own powers and mental abilities and be able to understand them. We need your help. And so, God, would you reveal yourself to us this morning? Would you, by your spirit, guide us into all truths and reveal what you want us to see this morning about you and your son, Jesus Christ? God, we pray that you would open our eyes to see Him for who He is, beautiful and glorious.

We pray these things in His wonderful name. Amen.

So chapter four, starting in verse one, this is what it says, read with me, “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, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. For the time that has passed suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this, they are surprised when you do not 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. 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 that God does.”

I think the main thrust of this section of verses is in verse two. Verse two is really the outcome that Peter is pushing for here, that he is looking for. It says, “So as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions, but for the will of God.” That’s the outcome that he is hoping for, that’s what he’s hoping to get across. And so, the first thing I want you to write down this morning is we should forsake human passions and live for the will of God. Forsake human passions and live for the will of God.

The surrounding verses, verse one and in verses three through six are really going to tell us how we do that why we should do that, why it might be difficult to do that, and what we can look forward to if we do it. But first, we have to know what does it mean? What does this outcome that Peter is hoping for? What does it mean to live no longer for human passions but for the will of God? Well, the first thing as I mentioned earlier is that there is a contrast here, right? So he sets these two things up as two contrasting options. You can either live for human passions or you can live for the will of God. And he’s hoping that you will no longer live for human passions, but instead live for the will of God.

So what are human passions? The more times I say that, the weirder it sounds, the word passions. But he lists out these examples, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. There’s a lot that could be said about that, and most of it I’ll let parents explain. But he is describing with a certain theme these human passions. And basically, I would summarize them as overindulgence, this pursuit of these things in the world in order to try to find something that they were never intended to give, which is this ultimate satisfaction. Human passions are twisted desires, where we take something in the world that maybe even God created to be good like sex, and we twist it and distort it because we’re trying to get something from it that it was never intended to give. We’re trying to get this ultimate fulfillment from it, and it just can’t give it to us.

And so like a washcloth, we wring it and wring it and twist it and twist it, trying to get something from it that it can never give. It can never quench our thirst. There's just not enough there. And so human passions are the pursuit of these things, and we twist and we turn, but God is the only thing that will satisfy our souls.

And if you try to seek that satisfaction through sex or drinking, you will find yourself adding more and more in quantity or variety to try to find true satisfaction, but it will never be quiet enough. It becomes an endless trail of empty pursuits. Well, if one drink didn't satisfy my soul, maybe two drinks will. Maybe three will bring fulfillment. Maybe I need a whole drinking party and other people to drink with me. Maybe if we drink all night until we can't stand up, then we will be fulfilled. But like Solomon says in Ecclesiastes, it's like chasing the wind. You cannot find ultimate satisfaction in anything other than God. And so, Peter hopes that we will stop living for these human passions and instead live for the will of God.

But what is the will of God? I grew up thinking that the will of God was this mysterious thing that was really hard to find out what it is. Is this thing shrouded in mystery that I'm going to miss it somehow? I'm not going to know what the will of God is for my life. I'm not going to know what school to go to or who to marry. I'm going to miss the will of God for my life. And it was this thing that created fear in my heart. But the Word of God is really clear what the will of God is. First of all, there's this universal will of God, this big global plan of God, that His gospel would go forward, that light would penetrate the darkness, and that people from every tribe, tongue, and nation will stand around His throne and give honor and praise to Him. That is the will of God.

But even for the individual, the Bible is clear. What is God's will for your life? He makes it clear, 1 Thessalonians 4 starting in verse three, it says, "For this is the will of God: your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual morality, that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God." Very similar language. The will of God for you is your sanctification. God desires for you to be holy like he is holy. God desires for you to repent of sin and believe in Him, which means believing that His ways are best. It means believing that rejecting sin and pursuing God's ways of living leads to the most good and the most satisfaction.

Now, if you're a Christian, I want you to ask yourself, do you struggle to believe that? Maybe a better question is, where do you struggle to believe that? Where do you struggle to believe that God is better? What does the world hold out to you that sometimes looks better than what God is offering? Is that the accumulation of material things? Is it lust? Is it drinking or some other form of escapism? What is it? Forsake human passions and live by faith for the will of God. If you're not a Christian, I would ask you to consider whether or not you've come to the end of your empty pursuits. Have you gotten to the end of enough of the world's promises to realize that they will never deliver? Forsake human passions and turn to God by believing in Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Son of God, came to set you free from empty pursuit, so you could pursue something that is meaningful and fulfilling and gives real life.

God's calling us to forsake human passions and live for the will of God, but that isn't always easy to do. My question is, how are we supposed to do this? A lot of you hear that and you think, "Yes, that's what I want to do. I want to forsake human passions and live for the will of God, but I fail over and over again." So what are we supposed to do? Are we supposed to just try harder? Are we supposed to make a more sincere commitment next time? This is a summary of my teenage years in the faith, failing before God and making an evermore serious commitment to live faithfully before I'm only to fail again. I went through this cycle of trying and failing and trying and failing only to realize that trying harder never worked. Putting more parameters around myself, trying to block things off, trying to have more accountability, none of those things ever helped me root sin out of my life. So what are we supposed to do? Look back at verse one.

It 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." This is the main command in these verses. This is what we are supposed to do. So the outcome that Peter is looking for is in verse two, that we would forsake human passions and live for the will of God. But this is what he's telling us to do. He says, "Arm yourselves with the same way of thinking." The second thing you can write down this morning, and it's related to forsaking living for human passions, instead living for the will of God, we're going to do that armed with the attitude and example of Christ. By arming ourselves with the attitude and example of Christ.

So let's think about what he is saying here in verse one. He starts with this phrase, "Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh." So he's looking back and connecting to what he's just said at the end of chapter three verse 18, where he said, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit." So he's talking about this suffering that Christ has already endured, "Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh," because that is a reality and because it had a life-giving effect on us, we are to arm ourselves with the same way of thinking. Our response to that is to arm ourselves with the same way of thinking.

Now, Peter is making a military reference here. When he says, "Arm yourselves with the same way of thinking," he is talking literally about arming yourself, the way you would arm yourself to go into a battle. Now, he's going to arm ourselves instead of with weapons and shields and helmets, we're going to instead arm ourselves with a kind of thinking." Well, what kind of thinking is that? It's the kind of thinking that Christ had as he was suffering on the cross. As he suffered in the flesh freeing us from sin, He had a certain kind of thinking, and that's the kind of thing keen that we're to take on. So what is that thinking?

Well, fortunately, Hebrews 12 tells us what He was thinking or what His motivation was. It's a readiness to suffer in the near term to gain a greater reward. It's a readiness to suffer in the near term to gain a greater reward. When Jesus goes to Jerusalem, and He's arrested and He suffers, it's not a surprise to Him. In fact, at least three times He tells His disciples He's headed to Jerusalem in order to suffer. He will be arrested, and He will suffer at the hands of the Gentiles there. He predicts His suffering at least three times. In fact, in Luke 9, right after He predicts His suffering for the third time, He says, "And then He set His face like flint to go to

Jerusalem.” In other words, He decided with purpose to go and suffer. Why? What was His thinking? Because it’s that same thinking that Peter is calling us to arm ourselves with. In Hebrews 12:2 it says, “Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross.”

Why did He endure the cross? Why did He embrace the suffering? For the joy that was set before Him? He knew there was a greater reward. That greater reward was to sit at the right hand of God the Father. It says at the end of that verse, “Seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” That reward was to enjoy the glory of the redemption, and that joy was you and me, the people that He paid to redeem, that He would enjoy us forever, that He would enjoy the fruit of His sacrifice for all time. The thinking that we are to take on, that we are to arm ourselves with, that Peter is applying now to a group of people who are facing hardship and suffering is he said, “There’s a readiness to suffer in the near term to gain a greater reward.”

He goes on to say at the end of verse one, “For whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.” So here he’s making a connection between this real suffering that Christ has done in the flesh paying for our sins and this suffering that we do, where we partner with Him in suffering, join in His suffering, both by faith and actually to where His death becomes our death. Paul says something similar in Romans 6. It’s very clear there. Romans 6:6, “We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin, for one who has died has been set free from sin.” This is what Peter is reminding us of, that we died with Christ by faith, and so the power of sin over us is gone.

We are free from sin, no longer enslaved to it. And that wasn’t always true of us. In Ephesians 2, it says we were once enslaved. We were once dead in our transgressions and sins. We were led around by the prince of power of the air. We were enslaved to his ways. But now we are free. So Peter wants us to look back at the example of Christ and take on the attitude of Christ, and he wants us to look forward to the joy that is set before us.

So how are we supposed to put away human passions or sins that haunt us or entangle us? Just very practically speaking, what am I supposed to do? What does this mean? We’re to arm ourselves, so we’re to prepare for battle with this kind of thinking, that we would be looking back at what Christ has done, seeing that we died with Him, we’re dead to sin, and then at the same time, looking forward to this hope that we have. For the joy set before us, we would endure. Looking back, knowing that we’re dead to sin, looking forward, knowing that we have something much better to live for. In Hebrews 13, the writer of Hebrews finishes his thought about Jesus at the beginning of chapter 12, and then he runs through this list of things that we’re supposed to do. And then he circles back to this example about Jesus in the middle of chapter 13.

In verse 12, he says, “So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through His own blood.” And so he’s talking about this suffering that Christ endured, that He went outside the gate of the city. So He went outside the city, which was a moment of shame and reproach. And so, the writer of Hebrews says,

“Therefore, because He did not let us go to Him outside the camp and bear the reproach that He endured.” In other words, join Him in His suffering. The question is, why would we do that? Verse 14, one of my favorite verses in all of Hebrews says, “Because... “ Why would we leave the city and embrace reproach? Why would we do the difficult thing? “For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.”

If you don't believe that or understand that, you will never do these things that God is calling us to do.

Here we have no lasting city. So why would we run after these human passions? These things that we have the opportunity to run after here in this life, they will not last. Here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. We seek it by faith. The next few points are shorter. They're just adding to what Peter has already said. Verse three adds argument for what Peter is teaching. It says, “For the time that has passed suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.” We should forsake human passions and live for the will of God because the time we have already wasted on human passions is enough. You can write that down if you're taking notes this morning, the time we have already wasted on human passions is enough. In other words, any amount of time that we have spent pursuing these things and running after them like they're going to fulfill us has been wasted already.

So why continue running after those things? If you're not a Christian, my appeal to you is turn from those things and turn to Christ. If you're a Christian here this morning, my appeal to you is if you have built a web of justifications around some human passion that you're clinging to and holding onto, the time that you have spent running after that is enough. Today is a day of repentance. Don't wait for tomorrow. Don't wait for another day to pass. Today is the day to turn and run to God. Forsake human passions and live for the will of God.

In verse four, Peter reminds us of the opposition that we will face when we live differently than the rest of the world. He says, “With respect to this, they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you.” The next point to write down if you're taking notes is, even though people will malign you. So forsake human passions and live for the will of God, even though people will malign you. The world will be surprised, and the world will malign you or speak evil of you. Why are they surprised? Because turning away from human passions is not normal. That's why they're called human passions. It's what everyone is running after. And so, when you don't participate, it's shocking. It's surprising. Well, why aren't you joining with us in this pursuit? And why do they malign those who live for the will of God? Well, it's because you are a reminder of coming judgment.

When we don't jump in and join in the flood of debauchery, which just means corruption and running after things that are not good, when we don't join in that, it's a reminder to everyone who sees us not joining in that they're doing something that they know they should not do. Romans 1 is really clear that everyone on the face of the planet knows that there is a God and knows that they will be held accountable to Him. But it

also says that they spend their lives suppressing the truth of God with lies. Their conscience screams within them, and they build this network of justifications to push that reality down. They don't want to think about it. They try to deny it. Paul puts it this way in 2 Corinthians when he talks about the effect that we have as Christians in the world, he says, "For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life."

What he's saying is when we're around other believers and they see us living by faith and choosing the things of God, it's this encouraging thing. It's like an aroma of life. It's this reminder, "Yes, we are moving in this together." But when we are around those who are perishing, he says we are the fragrance of death to death. We are a reminder of what they know to be true but spend their whole lives trying to deny, that there is a judgment coming. "There is a God that created me, and I will be held accountable." And they know it. And so they are surprised but they will face judgment, which is exactly what Peter says in the next verse, verse five, "They will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead."

This is Peter's way of comforting those who are being mistreated. They're being maligned. They're being persecuted. And he's saying, "Don't worry, God is the ultimate judge." You live for Him. You live under His authority. And if people malign you or mock God and mock His authority, they will answer to Him for that.

So we're to arm ourselves with this same way of thinking, to be prepared that we will be maligned, that people will be surprised. Just over a week ago, I got back from student camp. I haven't been to student camp the way I went to student camp a few days ago in a long time. I was a camp counselor at student camp this past year, which is something that only people under the age of 30 should do. But it was a really sweet time. Jared and his team did a wonderful job planning it and putting it together. It was a real blessing. One thing that student camp offers, this opportunity, is having conversations with students that you would never normally have, walking to and from places, discussing the Word after worship services.

One of the things that I was reminded of, one of many, is I was reminded talking to them how real this is to them, that a lot of our students have a real desire to live out their faith and to be bold in their witness and to live for the will of God. But they know that if they do that they will be maligned. They will be rejected. They will face backlash on some level. And maybe they don't even know how it will come or when it will come, but they know it will come. And it is a real difficulty that they face. As they talk about their desire to live out their faith, this is a real hurdle for them. And it's why Peter includes it here. He knows it's going to happen. He knows it's a hurdle for each of us.

So if you're a student here this morning, I want to encourage you that here we have no lasting city, but we seek a city that is to come. One of the things I remember about being in high school and middle school, and even into college, was that your campus and your school feels like the totality of the universe, that this is the only thing that matters. "What these people on this campus think of me, that is everything that's going on in

the world. And it feels so overwhelming, and it feels as if life and death hangs on the opinions of these people that I am surrounded with.” But let me remind you that your high school, your university campus is not a lasting city. It will fade away. But we seek a city that is to come.

Adults, it’s not that much easier for you. That’s why this series, this letter that Peter is writing is so to us. We are living between two worlds, and we’re feeling it more and more with each day that passes. The culture used to appeal to us to just be accepting of what they wanted to do. But now they expect us to celebrate what they want to do. And there’s this growing pressure, this growing tension that we feel strung between two worlds. What we need to know is that they will be surprised when you don’t join in, and they will malign you, which is why Peter is telling us, “Arm yourselves with this same way of thinking.” Be ready. Know that it’s coming. Be ready. Be ready to suffer in the short term to gain the reward that is coming in the long term. Be ready.

Finally, when we are armed with the mind of Christ and live for the will of God, we do it with the hope of eternal life. The last note I want you to make this morning... Actually, I lied, it’s the second to last note I want you to make, is that we would forsake human passions and live for the will of God with the hope of eternal life. With the hope of eternal life. Look at verse six, “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.” And that is a confusing verse.

Some people have said that it’s talking about Christ descending into hell, related to the end of chapter three that Brian was talking about last week, and that He’s preaching to the people who are now dead. Nothing in the New Testament, though, would lead us to think that. We always interpret what is unclear by what is clear. The NIV probably translates this best when it says, “For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead.” What Peter is doing is he’s drawing a contrast here between the people in verse five, who were maligning the brothers and sisters and who are going to face the one who’s ready to judge the living and the dead, and he’s saying, “This judgment that’s coming, that they are facing, is why the gospel was preached to those who are now dead, those who believed the gospel.”

Now, given their context, these are Christians who are being persecuted. He’s talking about how even though they’ve been persecuted, some of them maybe even put to death, there is a hope that goes beyond that death. So he’s saying that the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead so that though judged in the flesh the way people are, in other words, even though their bodies have died, just like everybody else, they might live in the spirit the way that God does. Peter is making a distinction for believers who have died having heard the gospel, that their death doesn’t mean the same thing as everybody else’s. In the context that they’re in, it’s very likely that the persecutors are mocking them saying, “Hey, we thought you believed in a resurrected Christ. We thought you believed in eternal life. We thought Jesus was going to come back and get you all. Where is he? You guys are dying just like everybody else.”

And so Peter is reminding them, making a distinction, “This is why the gospel was preached to them who are now dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.” They are not dead, they are alive with Christ. And just like in 1 Thessalonians, they will be the first to rise when He returns. So Peter is pointing to this eternal hope that they have. The bottom line is that he’s highlighting the hope that we have as Christians, that even though our physical bodies die like everyone else’s, we go on living in the spirit until the day of our resurrection. So how this hope of eternal life change the way that we live today or help us to forsake human passions and live for the will of God? How does it relate to this thrust that he is looking for? Why is he bringing this up now? Well, it’s a thrust of the whole letter, really. As Peter is writing to these people who are suffering, they’re in very dark days, and it seems very hopeless for them. And what he gives them as a buoy of hope right from the beginning is he says, “You have an inheritance that is imperishable, unfading, kept in heaven for you.”

And what he’s saying is that it cannot be taken away. You have this inheritance, this treasure that’s been given to you, this eternal life. And regardless of how dark it may get here, you cannot lose it. You have an eternal hope. Just like Jesus, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, Peter is saying for the joy that has been set before you, believer, endure this life. Even when it is difficult and even when it seems dark, remember the hope you have.

So now, really, the last thing I want you to write down is this one application point for this morning. Let’s arm ourselves with the attitude and example of Christ. This is really the one thing that Peter is asking us to do in these six verses, this main thrust, this command that he’s giving us, arm yourselves with the attitude and example of Christ, this mind of Christ. And how do we do that? By remembering this hope that we have day in and day out. Preach the gospel to yourself. Remember what Christ has done, that He suffered in the flesh to reconcile us to God, that it’s not based on our performance, it’s not whether or not we’ve done well, or we haven’t done well, it’s based on His righteousness, that He has given us forgiveness and new life. We have to remember these things each and every day. Why? Because we’re quick to forget. And one day where we go without remembering this good news is a day that those human passions begin to look really appealing.

But we must remember, my friends, that here we have no lasting city, but we seek a city that is to come. Let’s pray, and then let’s preach the gospel to ourselves through the Lord’s Supper. Heavenly Father, thank you for the hope and promise of Jesus Christ, this good news that has been delivered to us, that because of the work of Christ, His life and death and resurrection, we can have hope in Him. We can have forgiveness of sins. We can have new birth. We can have inheritances imperishable, undefiled, unfading, and kept in heaven for us until the day we see Him face to face. God, give us faith to believe it, I pray. Help us to live in light of it. I pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

As I said, one of the ways that we remember and celebrate what Christ has done for us through His life and death and resurrection is through taking the Lord's Supper together once a month as a church family. This is something we do as a church family to proclaim our common faith and display our unity around what is most important, which is the gospel. And this celebration of Christ's work is only for those who have professed faith in Him. So if you have confessed your great need for Christ's work on the cross and are seeking to live in a manner worthy of the gospel through repentance, faith, and grace, then this time is for you, and this celebration is for you.

We're instructed in the New Testament to examine our hearts before we participate in this proclamation. Specifically, we're supposed to examine our hearts, confess our sins, and examine our relationships within the church. So we're going to do that now. And if the Lord reveals a sin in your heart, confess it to Him. And if the Lord reveals a broken relationship within the church family, then move to mend it. So let's be quiet now before the Lord and prepare our hearts to take the Lord's Supper together.



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