

Living in Community  
October 21, 2012  
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1 Peter 4:1-11

Opening question: When you are planning to go on vacation TOMORROW, what usually happens TODAY? Or, when you get a call that a long-lost friend is in town and they are on the way to your house...what happens? Here's another example: In 2008 a movie introduced a new expression into our vocabulary...BUCKET LIST. What was the point of the movie? Anything on YOUR BUCKET LIST?

Here's the point: Sometimes a "deadline" can provide an amazing sense of urgency! As Christians, we are to always live like Jesus is coming back at any minute. That's what Peter writes about in this morning's text.

1 Peter 4:1–11 (ESV)

Stewards of God's Grace

4 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, 2 so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.

3 For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. 4 With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; 5 but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 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.

7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. 8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

- Verse 1 points back to 3:18 which we looked at last week:
- "...Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God,"
- Verse 1 says BECAUSE Christ died for us, we are to "arm ourselves"...a military term.
- When would someone "arm" themselves?
- In verse 1, with WHAT are we to arm ourselves?
- If we are to take on the "same way of thinking" as Jesus, how does He feel about sin?
- Unfortunately Satan is very subtle with sin.
- Warren Wiersbe tells the story of going to a restaurant with a friend:

*It was one of those places where the lights are low, and you need a miner's helmet to find your table. We had been seated several minutes before we started looking at the menu, and I remarked that I was amazed how easily I could read it. "Yes," said my friend, "it doesn't take us long to get accustomed to the darkness."*

*There is a sermon in that sentence: It is easy for Christians to get accustomed to sin. Instead of having a militant attitude that hates and opposes it, we gradually get used to sin, sometimes without even realizing it. (Bible Exposition Commentary)*

- Verse 1 says "...whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." Question: Is it saying if I am a believer in Christ I will no longer sin? What do you think it means?

The AMPLIFIED VERSION of the Bible helps us to understand verse 1:

1 Peter 4:1 (Amplified Bible)

So, since Christ suffered in the flesh [a]for us, for you, arm yourselves with the same thought and [b]purpose [patiently to suffer rather than fail to please God]. For whoever has suffered in the flesh [having [c]the mind of Christ] is done with [intentional] sin [has stopped pleasing himself and the world, and pleases God],

- If we have the mind of Christ about sin...HATING IT, the power of the Holy Spirit living in us will enable us to avoid a lifestyle of INTENTIONAL sin.
- Look at verse 2. How are we live INSTEAD?
- Verse 3 says we've "spent enough time", WASTED enough time on sin. Then Peter gives us a review of the kinds of sin these people had wasted their lives on and were to avoid: "...sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry."
- Verse 4 - When a Christian STOPS living that kind of life, what is the reaction of the pagans we used to "hang with"?
- Question: Have you ever felt this kind of reaction from unbelieving friends?
- Question: If a friend asked: "Do you think you're better than me?" how would you respond?
- Look up 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 and Ephesians 2:1.
- What do those verses remind us about our unbelieving friends?
- Sometimes we suffer not only ridicule or abandonment but PERSECUTION. Verse 5 of 1 Peter 4 says..."but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead."
- In other words, God will hold those who PERSECUTE his people ACCOUNTABLE.
- Verse 6 could be confusing if we are not CAREFUL Bible scholars.
- 1 Peter 4:6 (ESV) - 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.

Warren Wiersbe clarifies this verse:

*We must not interpret 1 Peter 4:6 apart from the context of suffering; otherwise, we will get the idea that there is a second chance for salvation after death. Peter was reminding his readers of the Christians who had been martyred for their faith. They had been falsely judged by men, but now, in the presence of God, they received their true*

*judgment. “Them that are dead” means “them that are now dead” at the time Peter was writing. The Gospel is preached only to the living (1 Peter 1:25) because there is no opportunity for salvation after death (Heb. 9:27). (Bible Exposition Commentary)*

- Verse 7 transitions us from how we are NOT to live to how we ARE to live in light of Christ’s sacrifice for us.
- What does verse 7 mean by “The end of all things is near...”?
- Even if Christ’s return to earth is one hundred years from now, considering the unsaved, how is “the end of all things” near?
- The last part of verse 7 gives us the first of FOUR URGENT COMMANDS: “Therefore, be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.”
- Example: KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON (1939 WWII poster in England)

Chuck Swindoll writes:

*“The secret to maintaining...balance and calmness is prayer. When something alarms you, pray. When current events confuse you, pray. If the world looks like it’s spinning out of control, pray. Prayer sharpens our awareness so that we are able to be more discerning. It gives us genuine hope and confidence in Christ in the midst of confusion. When you’re panicking, you’re not praying. When you’re reacting, you’re not trusting in your sovereign God.”*

- Verse 8 says: “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.”
- That word “earnestly” or “deeply” (*ektenē*, “stretched” or “strained”) was used to describe the taut muscles of an athlete who strains to win a race (cf. *ektenōs* in 1:22). A Christian’s unselfish love and concern for others should be exercised to the point of sacrificially giving for others’ welfare. Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (1 Pe 4:8–9). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
- Question: How does love cover a multitude of sins? Be very practical.

Robert Thornton shared this personal story:

*In the middle of one of my parents’ more memorable disagreements, my father jumped up from the table, grabbed two sheets of paper, and said to my mother, “Let’s make a list of everything we don’t like about each other.” Mom started writing. Dad glowered at her for a few minutes, and then wrote on his paper. She wrote again. He watched her, and every time she stopped, he would start writing again. They finally finished. “Let’s exchange complaints,” Dad said. They gave each other their lists. “Give mine back,” Mom pleaded when she glanced at his sheet. All down the page Dad had written: “I love you, I love you, I love you.” [Cited by Robert L. Thornton.] — Illustrations for Biblical Preaching: Baker Book House.*

- Verse 9: Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.
- What does “hospitality” mean to you? What does “hospitality” mean to the Ritz Carlton?
- The Ritz Carlton Credo:

- *The Ritz-Carlton Hotel is a place where the genuine care and comfort of our guests is our highest mission.*
- *We pledge to provide the finest personal service and facilities for our guests who will always enjoy a warm, relaxed, yet refined ambience.*
- *The Ritz-Carlton experience enlivens the senses, instills well-being, and fulfills even the unexpressed wishes and needs of our guests.*
- I did a word study on that word “hospitality.”
- 5382. φιλόξενος philoxenos; from 5384 and 3581; loving strangers:— hospitable(3).
- How does verse 9 say we are to show hospitality? Why do you think it says that?
- “Showing hospitality to one another.” Who is “one another?”
- In Luke 14:12a Jesus said,
  - “Then Jesus said to his host, ‘When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends.’” (NIV) Did he mean we should not invite our friends over?
- The God’s Word translation renders it in a good way:
  - “Then he told the man who had invited him, ‘When you invite people for lunch or dinner, don’t invite only your friends” [Emphasis mine] (Luke 14:12a, God’s Word Translation)
- Verse 10: “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace”
- Every Christian has at least ONE and sometime MULTIPLE SPIRITUAL GIFTS
- How can we find out what our SPIRITUAL GIFTS are?
- Theologian Frederick Buechner said: *‘Vocation is where our greatest passion meets the world’s greatest need’*. What is YOUR PASSION that meets a GREAT NEED?
- Verse 10 says we are to be “good stewards” of our gifts. What does that mean?

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- If we ARM OURSELVES with the “mind of Christ” toward sin, we won’t live the way we used to. Oh, we’ll still sin. However, the POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT will keep us from an INTENTIONAL PATTERN of sin.
- When that change happens, some of our old unbelieving friends won’t understand and some may ridicule or even persecute us. Don’t be surprised...be PATIENT and ask God for strength to be a LOVING WITNESS.
- Verse 7 tells us “the end of all things is at hand.” Some might get caught up in debating whether Christ is about to return or not. The fact is, scripture tells us we don’t know the hour or the day. Here is what we DO KNOW. “the end of all things (on earth) is at hand” for SOMEONE every day and every hour. Someone around us is about to slip into eternity at any moment. We need to live like Peter challenges us to live in light of that reality:
- We need to “Keep Calm and PRAY!” Stop panicking and START praying!
- Love others DEEPLY...STRAIN those LOVE MUSCLES to do it!
- Show HOSPITALITY to ALL PEOPLE...and don’t GRUMBLE when we do it!
- Be good STEWARDS and MAXIMIZE the Spiritual GIFTS God has entrusted to us!
- And, we’re to do all this with our ultimate goal in mind from verse 11: “...in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”