

Equipped to Live
October 16, 2016
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1 Peter 4:1–11 (ESV)

Picture the scene, a mother says to the kids, *“I’m going to the store and while I’m gone I want your rooms picked up. When I come back I want to see you making a lot of progress on that mess!”* **What is the first thing the average kid does when Mom pulls out of the driveway?**

Picture another scene, same concept but bigger “kids.” In the military they have “surprise” inspections. “Surprise” sounds too much fun like a birthday party. Perhaps they should be “shock” inspections. In business there are “surprise” audits. **What’s the point of these examples?**

Big Idea: Jesus is coming back and His followers need to be living like we expect Him. Not living like we used to live before we met Christ; but living, loving, and serving in ways that glorify Him. In this text Peter tells us how.

¹ 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.

- Verse one: Because Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead we need to “arm” ourselves with the same attitude Jesus had about sin.
- That military term tells us this is a daily battle and we have to be alert.
- A.W. Tozer said, *“Spiritual Christians look upon the world not as a playground but as a battleground.”* ¹
- Next, Peter says if we’ve suffered in the flesh we’re done with sin. That’s an interesting statement. Scholars have various

interpretations on how suffering for Christ purifies us and draws us closer to Him.

- I lean in the direction that Peter is speaking of identifying with Jesus' suffering and sacrifice for us. Romans chapter six talks about this.

Romans 6:2 says...How can we who died to sin still live in it? ...all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death...We were buried...with him by baptism...in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ²

...our old self was crucified with him...so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.³

Galatians 2:20 (ESV) Says it another way,

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- Because Jesus died for my sins I should feel the same way about sin that he does: sin is my enemy! When I followed Jesus as Lord I put my old life to death because of His death. My PATTERN of sin should cease. Let's be clear, I'll still sin but sin shouldn't be my lifestyle.
- Verse two says for the rest of our lives a follower of Christ should live not for human passions (what my sinful self desires,) but for the will of God.
- Verse three says, "Don't live the way the pagans live." For example, sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. Peter describes extreme examples of sinful pagan living.
- Our life before Christ might not have been as extreme as that description, but before we get too smug, keep Galatians 5:19-21 handy.
- Hopefully none of us who are Christ-followers are acting out the plot of the "Hangover" movies. Still, we have to question ourselves: *"Am I still holding on to any old sinful behavior that's left over from my days before Christ?"*
- When Christ cleans up our lives our friends will notice and not be happy:

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.

- Your pagan friends will put you down, but don't let it get you down.
- **Why is the changed behavior of a Christian an irritant to their unsaved friends? How should a believer deal with this?**
- Verse five says they'll have to face God one day. That should motivate us to do everything we can to live in a way to draw them to Christ.

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.

- The exact meaning of verse six is debated among scholars. The most likely meaning is that Peter is reassuring these believers about their Christian friends and family who had died.

Warren Wiersbe writes:

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... The Gospel is preached only to the living (1 Peter 1:25) because there is no opportunity for salvation after death (Heb. 9:27).⁴

- Next, Peter tells us why we should have a sense of urgency in how we live: "The end of all things is at hand;"
- Jesus is coming back and we need to live like we're expecting Him.
- Some might question the fact that Peter was saying, "the end is at hand" so long ago. **Was he just mistaken about the timing of Jesus' return? If Jesus hasn't returned yet what did Peter mean?**

- Jesus' life on earth, death on the cross, and resurrection from the dead completed everything necessary for Him to come back to earth as King.
- We're in a waiting period as He gives sinners a chance to respond.
- Because Jesus could come back at any time, Peter tells us how to live.

...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.

- Living for Jesus in a world filled with sin is serious business.
- Jesus is coming back, the clock is ticking, and time is running out for those around us. Because we're living in a world that's coming apart, followers of Christ need to be self-controlled and sober-minded.
- On the other hand, if Christians run around like "Chicken Little" yelling that the sky is falling, what does that say about our faith that God is in control?
- Example: I want my doctor to be serious, sober-minded, but not panicked.
- How can we be serious and sober-minded but not panicked?
- It starts with our prayer life. When the world is coming apart around us the first thing to be serious and sober about is prayer! Don't panic; pray!
- Verse eight quotes Proverbs 10:12: "...love covers a multitude of sins."
- We could have spent the whole lesson on this wonderful verse.
- **What do you think it means? How do you think Peter meant it here?**
- Look at each phrase in verse eight:
 - o Above all – Our highest priority in human relationship (one another)
 - o Keep loving...earnestly – Continuously, strain, like an athlete
 - o Because love covers a multitude of sins – loving = forgiving

- Summarizing seven and eight: Followers of Christ need to engage in serious prayer and strenuous forgiveness.
- Verse nine adds to that formula: Happy hospitality! That means using your guest room and your kitchen for Jesus.
- In that time inns were dangerous, seedy, and expensive. There were no restaurants. Also no church buildings where early Christians could meet.
- The first century church met in homes. The gospel was spread by traveling evangelists who relied on the hospitality of believers.
- Use your guest room and kitchen for Jesus and don't grumble about it! **Why did Peter throw that last part in?** (Example: The three-night rule.)
- Note: This is for everyone. Everyone can pray seriously; forgive strenuously; and provide happy hospitality. You don't have to go to a seminary to learn to do any of these!

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.

- God has given each of us at least one spiritual gift to serve others. (For a full study on this check out 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Romans 12:6-8.)
- Peter divides spiritual gifts into two broad categories: speaking (communicating) and serving. He gives us three instructions:
 - If using the gift of communication be sure you're communicating God's words (oracles) and not your opinions.
 - If you're serving others look to God for the strength needed.
 - All our service should be for His glory not ours, because Jesus is worthy of all glory and power forever!!

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Jesus is coming back and His followers need to live like we expect Him. Not living like we used to live before we met Christ;

but living, loving, and serving in ways that glorify Him now and when He returns.

- Peter has given us some specifics on how to live, love, and serve.
 1. Live differently! Is my behavior enough like Jesus to be different?
 2. Pray seriously! Is my prayer life serious business? Do I pray or panic?
 3. Forgive strenuously! Do I strain and stretch to overlook small stuff?
 4. Host joyfully! Do I joyfully use my guest room and kitchen for Jesus?
 5. Serve willingly! Am I using my gifts for His glory, or sitting and soaking?

- How can we remember to check ourselves in these areas this week?
- We said Jesus is coming back and the clock is ticking for the unsaved.
- This week every time you look at a clock or your watch ask: “The clock is ticking, Jesus is coming back, am I living like I’m expecting him?”
- If you have a smartphone why not set an alarm at a certain time each day to ask yourself: Am I living differently; praying seriously; forgiving strenuously; hosting joyfully; and serving willingly? Use the concordance or topical index in your Bible to have a quiet time on each subject.

Jesus is coming back, are we living like we expect Him?

¹ Tozer, A. W., and Harry Verploegh. *This World, Playground or Battleground?* Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1989.

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Ro 6:2–4). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Ro 6:6). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁴ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 420–421). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.