



VERSE BY VERSE MINISTRY
INTERNATIONAL

TEACHING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

1Peter - Lesson 4A

Chapter 4:1-11

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- Hopefully our minds have recovered from the free association exercise we explored last week
 - Peter took us through a series of points to prove one basic point
 - God may very well expect His church to suffer in the midst of doing what's right according to His will
 - And that our obedience in the face of suffering and persecution mirrors Jesus' own experience
 - As He did it opened up salvation on the cross
 - It mirrors the experience of Noah who did good only to be mocked and shunned,
 - Yet His obedience saved his family and the world with it
 - And Peter said this was far better than the alternative, to suffer for doing what's wrong
 - Like those demons that heard Jesus' proclamation when He descended
 - And like all those who have been disobedient and will be placed in subjection under Christ on the day of their judgment
 - And from this Peter's letter moves into Chapter 4 with a continuation of thought while at the same time a new direction building
 - A new emphasis on our growing anticipation of Christ's appearing

1Pet. 4:1 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

1Pet. 4:2 so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

1Pet. 4:3 For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.

- Peter's fourth chapter begins with therefore (*oun*)
- Since Christ was willing and obedient to suffer in the flesh He took upon Himself
 - We are to arm ourselves in the same way for the same purpose
 - Peter uses the word *hoplizo* which means to equip a soldier
 - The sense here is of one preparing for a battle
 - And Peter then says we are armed with the principle he's been teaching from the end of Chapter 3
 - The principle that we do good in order to be obedient to God
 - And that obedience often leads to suffering
 - It's almost as if the present reality of suffering for the sake of Christ is proof that we are on the right track

- And I think that's Peter's point in the second half of verse 1
 - The one who is suffering in the flesh has ceased from sin
 - The suffering here is a reference to the one suffering for doing what's right
 - It's been Peter's theme since 3:17
 - It's the same reason Christ suffered on the cross as He obeyed the Father
 - It's not a reference to penitent suffering
 - The idea that I purge myself of sin through personal penance or self-induced suffering
 - This is a verse misused by Catholics and others to justify such mistreatment and to defend purgatory
- And when we are suffering for doing what's right, then we have ceased from sin
 - Not in the sense that we have forever overcome sin
 - The verb for ceased (*pauo*) is in the perfect tense, has ceased, and not in the aorist tense
 - The aorist tense is a completed action that continues indefinitely
 - The perfect tense is a state that remains true only for a point in time
 - In fact the word *pauo* literally means stopped, as in paused
 - Peter declares that whenever we find ourselves suffering for our obedience – for doing what's right – we can be sure that in that moment we have ceased from sin
 - One excludes the other
 - Do you see how this would be encouraging for the persecuted Christian?
- Even as the tidal wave of trial and tribulation came upon these readers, they could rest in the fact that they were living obediently and with an assurance that God found favor with them
- To live, as Peter said, for their remaining days in the flesh to the will of God and not for the pleasure of their flesh
 - This is radical stuff
 - Once we are saved, we now have an obligation to reset our life's course
 - We re-chart the path our life takes
 - Where before we made decisions and set goals based on what we liked, and what we wanted, and what felt good or seemed good or pleased the ego
 - Now that we belong to Christ, all that changes
 - Now we live for but one purpose – to do the will of God
- What a dramatic change
 - Not merely the refraining from a life lived to the pleasure of the flesh
 - But that all our priorities come from God's will
 - This means that not only must we take captive our thoughts and actions to align with God's will

- But we must seek God's will, and know His will
 - We can't remain ignorant of it
- And that requires prayer, and Bible study and the counsel of godly brothers and sisters
 - It takes work and dedication and seriousness of purpose
 - It's a commitment greater in effort and scope even to the ones we make to our family or in the pursuit of our professions
 - And maybe most difficult of all in our culture, it requires that we displace many things on our schedules that we like and prefer
 - And allow God to replace them with other priorities
- In our day, we're talking about stepping back from the sensuality and allure of most television programs
 - Or perhaps the trap of a 60-hour a week job
 - Or the pursuit of fitness, or some hobby or any number of other activities that the enemy conveniently places in our path to keep us too busy to do God's will or too distracted to even ask
- In Peter's day, the distractions came in the form of the pagan culture that surrounded them in the cities and towns of the diaspora
 - You can see those concerns in Peter's next statements

1Pet. 4:3 For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.

1Pet. 4:4 In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you;

1Pet. 4:5 but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

1Pet. 4:6 For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.

- In a somewhat sarcastic style, Peter tells his readers they've had time enough to indulge themselves in the pursuits of the unbelieving world
 - Peter uses the term Gentiles in its culturally traditional sense
 - From the Jewish point of view, Gentiles were unclean, ungodly and unlikely to ever change
 - And Peter's audience – whether Greek or Jew – had apparently been living according to these practices at some point in the past
 - Or perhaps still were to some degree
 - Their lives were driven by a collection of behaviors that typify an out of control, flesh-driven lifestyle
 - Sensuality – a lack of self-restraint in all matters of the flesh

- Lusts – depraved cravings and a preoccupation with satisfying those desires
- Drunkenness – the word literally means being soaked or dripping with wine
- Carousing – a party atmosphere that contributes to wickedness and a lack of self-control
- Drinking parties – here’s alcohol again
- Finally, idolatries of all kinds
- If Peter was concerned that his readers might still be prone to such behaviors
 - Then we must give some attention to the present reality of these errors in the church today
 - We have had our fair share of time devoted to such things
 - We’ve had time spent in that world, and we of all people should know better than to ever want to return
 - Precisely because we have been there and we know the lie
 - It’s time to live for God’s will and not for our own, especially now that we have tasted the kindness of the Lord
- And when we step back from that lifestyle, Peter says we will be noticed
 - In verse 4 Peter says the pagan world will pause from the carousing and drunkenness just long enough to notice that we aren’t joining in
 - Not that a Christian must abstain from alcohol or be so uptight that we stand out for looking pious and judgmental
 - We’re talking about standing out in how we find joy and fulfillment in serving the Lord
 - Take note of the end of verse 4
 - The world’s surprise at the Christian’s distinctions, their self-control and refrain from evil practices, often leads to them maligning us not joining us
 - We can’t be naive or unrealistic about the impact of our witness
 - We stand as a light in the darkness, but only when God opens eyes, unstops ears and makes a way available in the heart of a person
 - Only then will they receive the truth

John 1:5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

John 1:9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

John 1:11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

John 1:13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will

of man, but of God.

- Only when God has done a work in the heart of a man or woman to produce faith
 - Only then can that person respond to what they see and receive the Gospel
 - Otherwise, they will merely hate what they see in us because it reveals their sin
 - And once again, in this we follow in Jesus footsteps

John 15:20 “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

John 15:21 “But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.

John 15:22 “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

John 15:23 “He who hates Me hates My Father also.

John 15:24 “If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.

- Jesus’ testimony was to save those who the Father gave to Him
 - Those who believed in Him and called out to Him
 - But it was also to stand as a witness against the disobedient
 - And our witness in Christ’s place fulfills both purposes
 - And those who reject the message will be called before the judge upon their death

Heb. 9:27 **And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,**

- Then Peter adds a word of encouragement
 - He says the gospel has been preached for this very reason
 - It has been brought to the dead that they may become alive in the spirit by the will of God rather than be judged in the flesh as they should
 - This is one of those cornerstone doctrinal statements of New Testament Christianity
 - In fact, if we understand verse 6 properly, we have most of what we need to understand all of Christian doctrine
- In all, there are three vitally important principles in Peter’s sixth verse of Chapter 4
 - First, he says that the gospel has been preached to the dead
 - Since this verse comes so closely on the heels of Peter’s mention of the spirits

in prison, we may be tempted to return to that earlier context to explain this comment

- But based on the text itself, we shouldn't do that
 - Peter has moved on, he's talking about something new here
 - He's talking about the spiritually dead
- He says the gospel is preached to those who are dead
 - It's in the same sense that Paul says:

Eph. 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,
Eph. 2:2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world,
 according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now
 working in the sons of disobedience.

Rom. 4:16 For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance
 with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not
 only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of
 Abraham, who is the father of us all,

Rom. 4:17 (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in
 the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead
 and calls into being that which does not exist.

- God gives life to the dead
 - Before faith, we existed in a state where our inner being, our spirit, was dead in the sense that it was separated from God and did not know or care for the things of God

Rom. 3:10 as it is written,

"THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

Rom. 3:11 **THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,
 THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;**

Rom. 3:12 **ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS;
 THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,
 THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."**

- So Peter's first principle is that the gospel is being preached to a dead people
- His second principle is even simpler
 - The dead unbelieving must be judged for the sin of the flesh
 - For the wages of sin are death
 - All who sin are due judgment, and God being perfect in judgment can't overlook sin and excuse it
 - He can only judge it rightly, for that is true righteous justice

- Finally, Peter says that God provided a solution to this problem
 - According to God's will, He is making us alive in the spirit
 - The preaching of the gospel to a dead and condemned people can, according to God's will, result in new life
 - A spiritual rebirth that brings new awareness and opportunity to obey and serve the living God
 - And this Peter offers as encouragement
 - For though we will be maligned for our willingness to do what's right, we are nevertheless hopeful that God will bring us the blessing of seeing others come to the understanding that God has granted us
 - That we might be useful to God for that purpose, even if it comes through our suffering, because that's how Christ Himself did His work for us
- Peter then continues to encourage...

1Pet. 4:7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.

1Pet. 4:8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

1Pet. 4:9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

1Pet. 4:10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

1Pet. 4:11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

- Peter follows his encouragement concerning the spread of the gospel with some of the most important pillars of Christian fellowship and service to one another within the Body
 - He addresses:
 - Prayer
 - Love
 - Hospitality
 - Contributing with our spiritual gifts
 - And doing everything to the glory of the Lord
- But with each of these directives, Peter offers a sensible reason behind its practice
 - For example, he says the church needs to be of sound judgment and sober so they can be ready and available for prayer
 - Because the end is near
 - What a powerful reminder to all of us
 - We should carry a hopeful expectation at all times that the end is near

- And I think Peter means not only the ultimate end of Christ's return for His church
- I think he also means the end for each one of us
 - Whether due to our own natural death or perhaps because the end comes upon us in persecution of the church
- But whatever the case, the end is always right around the corner
 - And therefore we are to be sober, not drunk, whether by excessive alcohol consumption or in some other lustful pursuit
 - Because when we give in to that lifestyle, we displace some other good pursuit
- And he says be fervent in love for one another to cover a multitude of sins
 - When times are short, and persecution comes, love among the brethren is at a premium
 - And it is something that must be cultivated
 - We must intellectually make a decision to show agape love
 - To serve others first and put their needs above our own
 - To be self-sacrificial
 - And this attitude among the believers will correct for a multitude of sins and offenses
- Likewise, be hospitable without complaint
 - Give shelter and comfort to those who need it
 - And don't begrudge their need, which defies true love
- Serve with your gift
 - There are two pieces of advice we could give to the church in any day, both in Peter's day and in our day, that would be revolutionary to the vitality and maturity of the church
 - The first is a life-long dedication to studying God's word
 - The second is an equally dedicated life of serving in our spiritual gift
 - Not just any kind of service or some random pattern of service
 - But daily serving the Body of Christ and doing so uniquely in the gift we've been given
 - Of course doing so requires we come to know and understand our gift, and then seeking to mature in practicing it
 - And then making time for using it rather than using time to our own desires
- So if you have the gift of prayer, you recognize it and practice it for the benefit of the Body to the glory of God
- If it is encouragement, then you counsel and comfort those in the Body who need it
- If it is service, then you seek ways to work for the needs of the church

- If it is teaching, then you teach
- If it is giving, then you put your industry and sacrifice into practice for the benefit of the church
- And so on...making service in your gift a priority in your life
- And then Peter sums up the advice by saying
 - No matter how you serve
 - Whether in gifts of utterance like teaching, preaching, or encouragement
 - Or in gifts of action like service, prayer, giving, etc.
 - In either case, give God the glory, because it was by His hand that you were even available and able to do such things