

Live for the Will of God  
1 Peter 4:1-6

Being on foreign soil can be an unsettling and unforgettable experience.

- My first overseas trip: Australia [hard to pick a longer trip!]
- Many moments stick out
  - I'll never forget the accent as soon as I got there.
  - Then we started driving on the wrong side of the road!
  - They told us to not "drink the water out of the toilet" – that woke me up.
  - I saw animals that I had never seen before!
  - I kept looking for Outback Steakhouse but couldn't find it.
- I was definitely not home. I was a guest.
- Those who travel to parts of Africa often come back and comment on how different certain things are, like the need to put away your watch: "You're on African time, Doc" as they have told me before. Not at home.

The same kind of feeling happens in sports when you play an away game.

- There's a big difference in being the home team and being the away team.
- People don't like you on the road!
- Booed as they introduce you
- I was heckled as a player at different colleges
- Last year: Nats/Cards – Lady jumped on my case when I got off the plane! I couldn't see another fan with a Nats hat

As Christians we face a similar situation here now.

- We are not at home here, regardless of how much we love our country.
- We're on foreign soil.
- We're playing an away game.
- We're citizens of heaven. "We have no lasting city, but seek the city to come." (Heb 13)
- We may face the boos and opposition.

Right now, we live in a largely secular culture, who embrace a secularized worldview. Our values, pleasures, interests, and more are different from this world.

Peter has been drilling into our heads this point: We have an **exiled identity**.

- His audience had a double exiled identity: kicked out of Rome, and not yet in heaven.

What should we do, and what should we expect as we live as strangers and sojourners?

Peter exhorts us to live for God's will and gives us some gospel motivations for doing so!

**#1: Living for God's Will – Our Calling (4:1-2)**

Peter reminds Christians of their calling to live for the will of God, emphasizing that this will entail suffering.

But Faithful Christians would rather suffer than to sin.

(1) imitation, (2) preparation, (3) indication, (4) dedication

### **A. Imitation (v. 1)**

Peter says, “therefore” to link back to the previous passages.

Christ is our model for Christian living. (3:18ff; 2:21ff).

- And since his life involved suffering we should be ready to suffer as well.
- This suffering is the prelude to glory.

Christians will suffer in this life, despite what the prosperity gospel teaches.

- If you follow Jesus, you may not have great health and material prosperity.
- Look at Jesus Christ.
- He was perfect, and he suffered.
- He suffered for doing good.
- He suffered for doing God’s will “I always do that which pleases the Father”

So don’t envision a faithful Christian life devoid of suffering.

- We’re not home yet. Glory is coming later.

### **B. Preparation (v. 1)**

So Peter says, “arm yourselves with the same way of thinking.” [same attitude as X]

- Get the right attitude about life and suffering.
- This is military language. This language is used elsewhere: **Rom 13:12ff**; 2 Cor 10:4; Eph 6:11-17; 1 Thess 5:8

This warrior language is important because **grit and discipline** are necessary for faithful Christian living, particularly in regard to the suffering we will encounter doing God’s will.

- Like a soldier, prepare for battle, prepare yourself for suffering as you follow Jesus.

**Remember that we’re not strangers on this earth, living as carfare tourists, but as committed soldiers.**

- The battle rages all around us.
- Recall the language in 2:11, 1:14

Christ died not only to lead us to God but to equip us for the battle for holiness and goodness in a pagan society.

- So don’t be unaware of the battle!

Peter has been talking about **readiness** throughout the letter: **1:13; 3:15.**

“**Arm yourself**” is something you need to do everyday.

- You can read the Bible and pray anytime during the day, but I think it’s wise and good to do this in the morning because your devotional life is like arming yourself for the war to come in the day.

- It gives you the mindset you need about truth, goodness, beauty, and falsehood, evil, and sin.
- It gives you the right perspective about sin and suffering.
- You go meet your challenges with the mindset: **“I’m finished with sin”**

If you’re not armed then you are vulnerable to temptation and sin.

- Sometimes you have like 5 seconds to make a decision between God’s will and human passions.
- And if you’re prepared, you will be able to say no to sin and yes to God.
  - How will you react when someone frustrates you? In anger or gentleness? Being armed makes a big difference!
  - Many of you live in the competitive business world, which carries all kinds of temptations to cheat or compromise your integrity, or be unfaithful to your spouse.
  - Some of you work for a boss that may ask you to compromise your integrity.
  - Relationship with boyfriend/girlfriend can easily drift into sin if you’re not mentally and spiritually prepared to stand firm.
- You need inner strength to say, “I am finished with sin” in these moments.
- You need strength to not complain when you suffer for righteousness sake.
- When faced with the question: will you choose God’s will (even though you may suffer for it!) or your selfish passions,
- Your preparation/attitude/mindset will make all the difference.

### **C. Indication (v. 1)**

When you suffer for godliness then it is an *indication* that you have renounced sinful passions and are dedicated to God’s will.

It’s a powerful indicator that you are a new person.

There’s a provenness to your faith that comes with this.

It gives evidence that you have: **“you have ceased from sin”**

This doesn’t mean we can’t or won’t sin.

- It means that because Christ now lives within us, we have a new relationship to sin – we have been released from sin’s dominating control.
- We can live for God’s will because we have been freed.
  - “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (2:24)

“You have ceased from sin” is in the perfect tense and indicates something that has taken place in the past.

- This is similar to Romans 6 – the Christian at conversion has died to sin – died to the old life.
- Those who are willing to endure scorn and mockery for their faith show that they have triumphed over sin. That he or she is no longer under its dominion.

When you suffer for godliness then it is an indication that you have renounced sinful passions and are dedicated to God's will.

It's an indication that you believe Jesus is better!

#### **D. Dedication (v. 2)**

- What are we dedicated to now? *Doing God's will.*
- Not "human passions" (*human* means unredeemed humanity)
- Even though it might mean suffering, we're resolved to glorify God by doing his will.
- "The rest of the time" – you may have lived for the passions of the flesh, previously, but for the rest of our lives we're to live for God's will.

These verses are similar to Romans 12:2

<sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

What does this look like practically and positively? We know what it doesn't mean (fulfilling our lusts)

Verses 5–6 conclude with a reference to the final judgment, and Peter continues with that line of thought in v. 7a stating that the end is near. Since the end is near, live according to God's will. He spells that out:

- Be alert and sober for prayer,
- sacrificial, forgiving love
- hospitality
- use your gifts, whether speaking or serving.
- motivation: in all they do is to see God glorified through Jesus Christ.

Imitation: Following the path of Jesus will involve suffering.

Preparation: Be ready to suffer rather than to sin.

Indication: Willingness to suffer for godliness indicates you're a new person.

Dedication: Resolve to live for God's will for the rest of your life on this earth.

#### **#2: Living for God's will – Our Motivations (4:3-4)**

Peter gives us past, present, and future reasons for dedicating our lives to God's will.

#### **A. Past (v. 3)**

He says, "the time is past" for doing what Gentiles (unbelievers) do.

- Enough already!
- However much or little you've sinned in the past, it has been enough!
- You don't need more time for rebellion!

He then sketches out what the "human passions" looks like with six terms

- Sensuality – without restraint (passions) regarding sexual sin

- Drunkenness, drinking parties, orgies, and lawless idolatry together describe what took place during Roman feasts and pagan worship practices. These events also involved a lot of sexual sin.
- **Here is one of the main reasons for the persecution they faced: not participating in that which was normalized.**
  - Seven Churches Series: Trade Guilds had idols, immoral practices...
  - It was a way of life, “everyone is doing it”
- But this lack of self-control regarding food, drink, and sex are not limited to these events.
- Christians can commit these sins everyday if they don’t arm themselves for the war.
- “lawless” idolatry probably means rebellion against God’s law.

All of that is over! You don’t need to give any more time to it. (cf., 1:14)

- Don’t think, “Well I never got to sleep around before... I never got to drink beer with a three foot long funnel... I never got to dance with a lamp shade on my head... I need more time to sin!”

No! You’re finished with it!

Arm yourself with this way of thinking!

We are strangers here and we live differently.

## **B. Present (v. 4)**

He says that people will be surprised and may even malign you now, for living out this exiled identity.

People may think you’re strange but that’s because you’re a stranger!

This is an important reminder in our day, as sin gets normalized.

- If you uphold biblical marriage, or no sex outside of marriage, people will think you’re weird, and they may be condescending or hateful.
- This verse sounds like Peter is alive today!

This is great verses for you **students** – you’re peers may think you’re weird.

- You cool with that?
- I’m no model for suffering, but I did face opposition, **particularly in college for following Jesus.**
  - It was small compared to what many face, but it was real.
  - **Woodyard: “Throwing pennies at him, mocking him”**
  - What we also found is that those same guys would come to us for answers, for help, and some of them came to faith.
- Sometimes people are angered, sometimes attracted to the faith.

This is particularly real to those who grew up in a different religion and convert to Christianity.

So get ready for it.

I don't mean that you have a weird personality (I have met a lot of weird Xians!), but weird because you don't choose to run with the crowd.

To be sure, you need non-Christian friends, otherwise you will be very idealistic and unrealistic about the world, and unable to be a faithful witness.

But you must remain separated from sin, though not isolated from people.

And when you choose to not join "the flood of debauchery," brace yourself for ridicule.

### **C. Future (vv. 5-6)**

Peter points us to the eschatological reversal that will happen: unbelievers (those who are surprised and angered by our pursuit of God's will) will be judged; believers will enjoy life eternal.

#### **Unbelievers: Coming Judgement (v. 5)**

We must remember that while we may suffer from the words and actions of unbelievers, but their judgment is coming.

- Therefore we don't have to avenge for ourselves.
- God will settle all accounts, and his infinitely better at this than we are.
- Instead of retaliating we pray for them.

Unbelievers will give an account to him who is "ready" to judge the "living and the dead" (note the universal scope of coming judgment)

- We're to be "ready" to give an answer for our hope.  
We're to be "ready" for battle.
- Jesus is "ready" to judge the living and the dead.

4:7 – this end is near.

We take the long view when it comes to sin and suffering.

#### **Christians: Life in God's Presence (v. 6)**

I think the best way to take verse 6 is how the NIV and the CSB does it; they insert the word "**now**" – the gospel was preached to those who are "now dead."

- They do that for clarity.
- The gospel was preached to people who have since died.

I don't think this is teaching a second chance of repentance to people who are dead.

He's talking about what happened to the people who believed in the gospel and have now died.

- These believers have eternal life! (To be absent in body is present with the Lord - 3:19).
- Peter is saying that the coming judgment will not only bring unbelievers into judgment but it will also reverse the judgments of unbelievers.

Unbelievers were maligning Christians for living for the will of God, and they may even put them to death “in the flesh” (or mock them for dying like everyone else), but the Christian knows that death is not the end!

You can imagine unbelievers looking at Christians who believed in everlasting life and the return of Christ.

- Yet, they saw Christians die just like everyone else!
- “What’s the point of the faith and godly living if you’re just going to die!?”
- What’s the point of “living for the will of God?”
- “You’re going to die, why do you care?”
- They couldn’t see beyond physical death.
- They viewed the death of believers as proof that there was no real advantage to being a Christian.

Was it in vain that the gospel had been preached to those who have since died?

- No! Because death is not the end!
- The gospel was preached to them so that in they may live in God’s presence!
- God will vindicate them, and give them resurrection life in the world to come.

What a word of hope to believers!

What a word of comfort to those who have recently lost loved ones!

Christians will be with our Christ forever, and we will rise with a new body and enjoy a new heaven and a new earth.

We will live *in a new realm* – a spiritual realm, “the way God does.”

To be faithful in a pagan society, we need to take this long view.

Judgment awaits those who reject Christ, and here the focus is on those who are surprised by our ethics and angered by them.

But glorious life awaits believers!

So we can endure people laughing at us, or hating us for our commitment to God’s will.

In fact, we should expect it, because this world is not our home.

And these verses remind us of the urgency and importance of evangelism; today is the day of salvation.

**Let us share the hope within us, to everyone around us!**

**Summary:**

- **Live for the will of God!**
- **Remember you've said goodbye to the old life!**
- **Remember you're a stranger here!**
- **While you may suffer now, glory awaits you! You won't regret having lived for God's will.**
- **Tell people the good news before they die!**
- **Be thankful for the hope that you have in the gospel!**