

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
Paul Gunn, Pastor

LIVING IN CHRIST

1 Peter 4

July 19, 2020

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To get the most from the message today, turn to First Peter in the New Testament and follow along with me. It's a small book in the Bible, but it is action-packed. It is theology-dense, and it requires us to study and dig deep.

I have three points to my message. Through suffering with Christ, Christians:

- Live in victory over sin.
- Live and serve in urgency.
- Live to bring glory to God.

The “*therefore*” at the beginning of Chapter 4 requires us to look back at the end of chapter 3 to see the subject.

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 3:21

*And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.*

**EXPLANATION:** This scripture makes it clear that baptism is a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The “*therefore*” that begins Chapter 4 references “*the pledge of a clear conscience toward God*” - the call to live above reproach, to be less consumed by what we sacrifice in our Christian walk and more attentive to the sacrifice that Christ made for us. It means having the mind of Christ in spite of circumstances.

The Christians that Peter wrote to here were living in the area we call Turkey. They were scattered around. Some were Jews and had become Christians, learning that the covenant had been fulfilled, that Jesus didn't come to do away with Moses' law

but to fulfill it. It changed everything. Other people outside of the Jewish faith were included in, grafted in. We are those outsiders, but we're not outsiders in Christ. We are part of the body.

So, "living in the mind of Christ", living for Christ, living in Christ teaches us several things.

## **THROUGH SUFFERING WITH CHRIST, CHRISTIANS LIVE IN VICTORY OVER SIN**

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 4:1-2

*Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. <sup>2</sup>As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.*

**EXPLANATION:** At the end of verse 1 and moving into verse 2, we see an imperative - a demand from God, through Peter: arm yourself with the same attitude. That is the attitude of Christ, who conquered sin.

Without the phrase "*since Christ suffered in his body*", we'd be at a loss with this verse. Suffering in the body without Christ wouldn't mean we were done with sin. But, because Christ finished the eternal consequence of sin for those who turn to Him, we too are done with sin.

Because Jesus finished with sin on the cross, we are not only called to *make* that complete break with sin, or told we *will* make that complete break with sin, or encouraged that we *can* make that complete break with sin -- No, through Christ's sacrifice, we *HAVE ALREADY* made that complete break with sin.

Because we are not yet glorified through Christ, because of our Earthly existence, we won't reach our complete break with sin until we are with Him in heaven, but: IT. HAS. BEEN. DEFEATED. FOR. US.

In the meantime, through the continual sanctification by God in our lives, we are to regularly and actively put sin behind us.

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 4:3-6

*For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. <sup>4</sup>They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you. <sup>5</sup>But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. <sup>6</sup>For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.*

**EXPLANATION:** There's some harsh wording here. We must remember that Peter knew this audience. In fact, the epistles are written by men who knew the congregations and Christians they were writing to. Peter was not an outsider coming in and accusing the church of unfamiliar sins. He rebukes them, but he does so passionately and with purpose.

Instead of leaving them in shame of lifestyles of former sin, he emphasizes the call to live according to God. Peter uses both truth and grace in his message. Imagine if we modelled that in all of our conversations today.

A portion of this passage that often confuses readers and fuels scholars is verse 6: *For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.*

Some denominations, and even some theologians, believe that this indicates a second chance at salvation after death. I don't believe that's what Peter is saying here. We have to remember the context. Peter is talking about suffering for Christ and dedicated to his kingdom.

If we look at it quite literally, I believe it means that the dead, whom while they were living were followers of God, suffered a similar plight to Peter's congregation and now live with God in heaven.

Not only do we live a life that has defeated sin, but ...

## **THROUGH SUFFERING WITH CHRIST, CHRISTIANS LIVE AND SERVE IN URGENCY**

Peter is leading us to a focus on heaven. As you'll see, this focus is what sets us up to truly live in submission to God and to continually deny sin.

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 4:7

*The end of all things is near, therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray.*

**EXPLANATION:** Let's just pause for a minute. This is speculated to have been written anywhere between 62 and 64 AD. These believers fully expected Christ to return during their lifetimes. And here we are, 2020. As foolish as it may seem to the world, how far more foolish it would be to believe that this time is not even more near. Peter's message was urgent then and remains urgent today: The end of all things is near.

And Peter goes on to lay out what some call a New Testament "ten commandments".

First, at the end of Verse 7, he says to (1) be of sober mind and, as some versions say, (2) watch unto prayer.

Many Christians consider this verse when taking a stance against alcohol. That's a sermon for another day. But the word sober in this verse takes on a meaning that warns against "wild-thinking." And, honestly, the wild thinking that Peter is referencing isn't necessarily overtly sinful.

One Christian writer [Wiersbe] gives good examples in his commentary. He said this: "Often we hear of sincere people who go 'off balance' because of an unbiblical emphasis on prophecy or a misinterpretation of prophecy. There are people who set dates for Christ's return, contrary to His warning (Matt. 25:13 and Acts 1:6-8); or they claim to know the name of the beast of Revelation 13." He says, "I have books in my library, written by sincere and godly men, in which all sorts of claims are made, only to the embarrassment of the writers."

I remember the booklet “88 Reasons Christ Will Return in 1988” and in early 1989, I remember Johnny Carson making fun of that, saying there was a new book “89 Reasons Why I Was Wrong.”

We know it’s not wrong to have questions, to study, and to contemplate the meaning of certain scriptures, but we must do so with sound judgement.

Next, Peter says to (3) have fervent love.

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 4:8

*Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*

**EXPLANATION:** Some versions say “*Have fervent love for one another*” instead of “*love each other deeply*.” The word “fervent” carries with it the idea of someone practicing or training relentlessly toward a goal. It exhibits intentionality (Wiersbe). A dedicated husband and father doesn’t stop being a father because he has a rough week. A dedicated athlete doesn’t throw in the towel because she is emotionally distracted.

You find it difficult to love someone? Okay, yeah - Peter suspected that ... because Peter was also human. He says to love fervently. Pray for it and practice it.

Fourthly, we see the call to (4) be hospitable.

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 4:9

*Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.*

Hospitality was a staple in early Christian culture. Loving each other looked like giving selflessly, even to the point of inconvenience. Often, persecuted believers needed a place to stay for a short while. The disciples even frequented homes of fellow believers, seeking encouragement and necessity.

Now, Peter calls them to (5) use their spiritual gifts:

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 4:10-11

*Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. <sup>11</sup>If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

**APPLICATION:** Often, Christian culture confuses the spiritual gifts God gives us with the fruits of the spirit, the evidence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, listed in Galatians 5. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are calls to live and walk in step with the Holy Spirit. It's not a sprinkling of qualities that we may or may not have.

Have you ever said, or heard someone say, "I'm just not a gentle person" or "You're more patient than I am," or "Fight fire with fire, don't give in!" While they're common colloquialisms (phrases) in our language, the weight they hold should give us pause before we use them.

Next time you're tempted to believe that you just don't have self-control, ask the Lord to reveal a way to move past that which you feel so chained to. The next time you start to speak harshly about another person, remind yourself that you are embedded with the gentleness of the Holy Spirit.

**EXPLANATION:** What Peter is talking about here is the spiritual gift or gifts that we receive upon salvation. These are listed in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues. All of these require study and understanding and lack of understanding of these gifts can lead to chaos.

These spiritual gifts can be divided many ways, but primarily they're categorized by both speaking and serving. Because we have the Holy Spirit and are called to live in step with Him, we have at least one of these gifts of speaking or of service.

And the purpose of having and exhibiting these gifts is, as Peter says, "*so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever.*"

In Verses 12-13, Peter troubleshoots the issues that he knows will arise for Christians, by calling them to not only (6) expect persecution, but to (7) rejoice in suffering.

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 4:12-13

*Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup>But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.*

This is the theme throughout all of First Peter: Christians will suffer persecution, whether it be social, familial, physical, or official -- and through that we should rejoice, knowing that the battle has already been won.

Moving to our last point today ...

## **THROUGH SUFFERING WITH CHRIST, CHRISTIANS LIVE TO BRING GLORY TO GOD**

Lastly, Peter calls them to (8) cast away shame, (9) glorify God, and (10) commit to the Lord.

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 4:14-16

*If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. <sup>15</sup>If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. <sup>16</sup>However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.*

**EXPLANATION:** Peter explains the distinction between suffering a consequence for a sinful action and suffering in the name of Christ. They're two totally different things. We are called to suffer for Christ and because of Christ.

Peter's words were very intentional in Verse 16. He calls them Christians, and while it is a word that we are identified by, it didn't hold the same meaning for first-

century believers. “Little Christs,” “Christ Follower,” “Christ Wannabes” might be a more accurate depiction of what the word meant.

Reading the verse in that context, we see that Peter is using a specific and close-to-home remark that his audience regularly heard. It was a term that pagan culture used to shame, mock, and degrade early believers. Peter tells them not to be ashamed but to bear the name with pride through Christ.

**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 4:17-19

*For it is time for judgment to begin with God’s household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? <sup>18</sup>And,*

*“If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”*

*<sup>19</sup>So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.*

**EXPLANATION:** Peter ends this chapter with a reminder of who it is that they praise. God has many titles: Savior, Master, Father, Lord, Healer. Peter intentionally chose to use Creator.

While God is all these things and more, Peter is referencing a quality of God that provided comfort to the early church. In Acts, when the first church was opposed, they prayed, addressing the Lord as “*God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is*” (Acts. 4:24). As the Creator, the one who started it all, the one who holds the planets in place, the one with all the creative power - this same God is the God who provides for and protects the persecuted.

**INVITATION:** I trust today’s message has made you think and inspired you to action. If you know Jesus as Lord and Savior, a reading of First Peter will challenge you to live more sincerely for the Lord. If you have never repented of your sin and trusted Jesus, you need to do that today. The scripture is clear. Jesus said in John chapter 14: *I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the father but by me.*

I talked with a man earlier this week who clearly identified as a follower of Norse mythology. I asked about his relationship with God, and he was clear that he

doesn't follow the God I know. I felt sorry for him, but he was firm. Maybe in the future, I'll have an opportunity to talk with him about the God of the Bible who came to earth as his own son, born of the virgin Mary, lived as a human because he was 100% human while also being 100% God, lived a sinless life, was crucified and died as the propitiation of our sin.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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Thanks to Jennifer Anderson for her editing assistance.

Sincerely, Paul Gunn  
Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
Nashville, Tennessee  
USA