

1 Peter

Entrusting
Ourselves
to a
Faithful
Sovereign



1 Peter 4.1-11

Living for the End

I'm not sure if you have heard lately, but there is a national election coming up on Nov. 3. Some high-profile Christian theologians have weighed in recently on the matter. One wanted to tell Christians that he wasn't going to vote for either candidate without directly stating it because both candidates are sinful. A friend of his wrote respectfully to show the fallacies of his friend's article and reasoning. A third theologian wrote to speak of how we should view this election in terms of what is at stake in the days ahead, not just in matters of abortion but also religious liberty. If you don't know who I'm talking about, I'm talking about Piper, Grudhem, and Mohler, in that order.

One of the reasons I felt led to preach through 1 Peter is because I sensed the immense importance of this election. It really does carry the importance of determining the trajectory of our nation in terms of religious liberty. But the church has not been dependent on religious liberty to exist. Religious liberty helps us to exist without concern for retribution by government simply for theological belief. I hope the church in America does not have to learn what life is like without religious liberty, but the church in Asia Minor 2000 years ago learned what it was like to spread the gospel and live as a community that represents life with God, even amidst cultural persecution. You see, to declare Jesus as Lord is to make a political statement. Yes, we should participate in government. I do not believe abstaining from voting frees us from responsibility for the decisions of a government by the people for the people. But we serve a God who has declared rights over His people and over the world by means of His Son's resurrection by the power of the Spirit. So, let's look at 1 Peter 4:1-11 to see how God's people should represent their greater home while in this world, as we live for the end that is still to come in fullness.

**4:1 Therefore, since Christ
suffered in the flesh, arm
yourselves also with the same
understanding—because the
one who suffers in the flesh is
finished with sin—**

**2 in order to live the remaining
time in the flesh no longer for
human desires, but for God's
will.**

3 For there has already been enough time spent in doing what the Gentiles choose to do: carrying on in unrestrained behavior, evil desires, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and lawless idolatry.

**4 They are surprised that you
don't join them in the same
flood of wild living—and they
slander you.**

**5 They will give an account to
the one who stands ready to
judge the living and the dead.**

6 For this reason the gospel was also preached to those who are now dead, so that, although they might be judged in the flesh according to human standards, they might live in the spirit according to God's standards.

7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be alert and sober-minded for prayer. 8 Above all, maintain constant love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins.

9 Be hospitable to one another without complaining. 10 Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God.

**11 If anyone speaks, let it be as
one who speaks God's words; if
anyone serves, let it be from the
strength God provides,**

**so that God may be glorified
through Jesus Christ in
everything. To him be the glory
and the power forever and ever.
Amen.**

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Peter tells us that the proper follow up to the teaching on Christ's resurrection is how we should then live. Jesus has overcome the world and its temptations. Peter tells us that we are to have the same perspective as the risen Jesus. We should consider ourselves to be done with sin. There are two options before you. You can choose to act according to faith in Christ. The world can't make you disobey God. The world can't make you rebel against the Spirit. The unbelieving world is running in direct opposition to your pursuit of Christ. For you to run with the unbelieving world again, you'll have to go against your new nature as a born-again Christian. You will have to jump lanes and run backwards. Btw, in this metaphor the world is blind and willing to trample you if you don't stay in constant stride with them.

This choice is more than mere option. It is a battle that goes on in this world, a battle that starts in your mind. Long before the world passes by again, calling you to forsake your faith for their pleasures, the decision is being made in your head whether you will remain true to our Triune God or give into temptation. Are you proclaiming the victory and power of God to yourself? Are you reminding yourself that true and pure pleasure is found at the right hand of God? Life in a world scarred by sin is hard. You need to choose the right difficulty and prepare yourself to live according to truth amidst that difficulty. Prepare yourself today and every day to live for Christ before you walk out of your door, before you turn on your smartphone screen. You need to determine if you are willing even to suffer physically for the sake of obeying Christ Jesus. When Peter talks about choosing this perspective for the remaining days in the flesh, he is simply referring to physical life. You are to choose to live for Christ regardless of the consequences every morning, every day for the rest of your lives.

Are you a coffee drinker? If you are, how old will you let coffee get and still drink it? Something happens when you let coffee sit too long. It gets old quickly and you have to make a fresh pot of coffee. When it comes to choosing to live for Christ, don't drink yesterday's coffee. Arm yourself each day with living for Christ.

Live in light of God's eternal judgment and the good news that saves you from it.

Live in light of God's eternal judgment: (this life is like a dress rehearsal—Rick Warren)

Both the unbelieving world and God are ready to judge: one's rejection is certain, limited, and inconsistent in application; the other's judgment is fair, eternal, consistent, and based on Christ. You can only choose one judge to appeal to for mercy.

Because I've lacked energy but also have felt sickly, it's easy to watch more tv and scroll through facebook. The world seems so backwards with inconsistent logic lately, with many being willing to sacrifice the humanity of anyone who does not agree in every detail with oneself. Would you really choose to appeal to the mercies of the world instead of the grace of God in Christ? When put simply in that light, who wouldn't choose the grace of God? But that may not be how you are presented with the choice.

You may hear the offer as an opportunity to:

Someone just insulted you. They don't know you and you don't have to live with them. So tell them off. The world approves that reasoning, but God forbids it.

The world says it's just one little look at someone's body other than your spouse or that it is just another drink or that the lie is justifiable because of all the potential good that could come from it.

Like Paul Sheaffer taught us last week, people will act according to the god they worship and be conformed in character to that god. The world whispers that it is okay to say you believe in Jesus as long as you agree to live like them. But the moment that you insist that your faith determines your actions, determines your manner of speech, determines what you can and cannot do, the world begins to raise their voices and attempt to push you around. Peter speaks of those who are judged according to the flesh but made alive by the Spirit. Peter is not speaking of two different groups but of Christians. The world is going to judge us, whether in a formal court setting or in the court of popular opinion. People who do not have God's standards as their own will manipulate and change the standards by which they judge as time goes on. You cannot please everyone, but so many in this world today expect you to please all of them. There is a judge who will have the last say. And there is only one way in

which people will be declared right and free from eternal punishment. This is your situation. If you are in Christ, aren't you glad the gospel was preached to you and that you believed? You the sinner could not even hold up to the expectations of the world. Try comparing yourself to everyone on social media. If this is your only means of determining your self-worth, you will only frustrate yourself and feel inferior, either because you aren't as good as how others present themselves or people attack you. But there is a judge who is righteous, who made you to know Him and relate to Him. He is Father to those who pass his judgment. But you will fail his judgment if you try to make yourself right. Instead, He has made the way to new life with Him by means of faith in Christ. Aren't you glad that He has had someone tell you that you can have new life? That new life is not just for judgment one day but for living now. Who will you choose to be your preferred judge? The unbelieving world or God? Both will judge you, but with which one do you want to make your home? The world will seek to condemn and destroy even their own, but God gives life and joy to those found in His Son.

I said earlier that the choice is one you need to make every day, but Peter tells us that we are already well into the day of creation. When he says the end of all things is at hand, he's not just talking about timeframe. He's talking about God's purposes. The culmination and goal of all things is at hand. Christ has already won the victory. The church has been formed. God's representative people are being gathered together while in this current state of the world. God has kept his promise to gather all nations to Himself in Christ. How then should we live according to this truth?

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This first instruction seems obvious right? Is it so obvious that you don't even do it?

What do you fill your head with daily? Do you muddle it with everyone else's basic thoughts and whims? Do you distract it with constant entertainment for the sake of becoming a sharper acting critic? Is your goal self-gratification achieved through what you eat, drink, or use to self-medicate? Peter also doesn't say to boastfully declare what is your preference and opinion so that everyone then feels exactly the way you do just because you said it. He starts with prayer. That is the reason you are to guard your mind and keep it clean, so that you can pursue a relationship with God without unnecessary hindrances. Sadly, I think many of us easily lose sight of this priority. One study I heard a few years ago found that most Christians prayed for less than 5 minutes a day.

One reason you may pray so little is that we think of prayer as only personal. Yes, we should have personal times of prayer, but we must also pray with the church. Can you list the names of 5 other Christians with whom you have prayed over the past month? You should be able to, whether through time with your community group or through our corporate prayer opportunities. The daily prayer call happens Monday through Saturday from noon to 12:30. The number is 518-263-8026. We are to be people of God who speak with God, who ask God to be glorified, who ask God to bless the other person. There will be a direct impact on how you live for Christ according to how you pray. Begin valuing the time needed to properly respect your heavenly Father, to live in relationship with Him. If your goal is to live in perfect harmony with the Triune God forever, you should get into the habit of speaking with Him now.

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4. The goal of our faith is almost fully realized: Love one another with an enduring love that preserves church relationships.

Peter writes that we are to love another with a kind of love that is willing to overlook awkward or annoying acts by other believers. This is the kind of love that is needed to keep a family acting in unity. Yes, there are actions against one another that need to be acknowledged as wrong and forgiven so that you maintain unity, but there are many more actions between family members that are overlooked because of love for one another. If you have made through life to the point of becoming an adult, then you have practiced this kind of love. You have decided to love someone beyond their awkward jokes, beyond their impatient seriousness. You have loved someone with all their trying idiosyncrasies. Why? Because you saw it better to have that person in your life as they are than to push them out for not becoming just like you. Peter is telling you by the Spirit that you are to choose to love the rest of the church in that way. So does that mean that you will be accepted even if you are a mess up who bothers people from time to time for not getting everything right? I sure hope so. You should feel accepted with the church if you are being sincere in your relationship with the Lord and others. Thankfully, love does not let us stay as we are. This kind of love from others promotes us into a greater level of maturity. But this is not first about us. We are to love with such unity-promoting love because of God's love for you in Christ. We are to love as the people of God because we anticipate the full realization of the new heavens and new earth in God's presence.

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At that time we will realize that we belong in a greater way than our earthly homes only anticipate. Peter says that we are to be hospitable to one another without grumbling. First, the idea of hospitality was built on the idea of hosting out of town guests who had no place of their own to stay. There weren't Holiday Inns on every corner. But Peter seems to have something different in mind than offering a bed with mints on the pillow. He's talking about making the church feel welcome, as if they belong with you. I'm going to ask a question, and I want you to focus on whether someone's face or name immediately jumps into your head. Then I want you to ask God why that person came into your mind. Here's the question: Who is the person or people that you would not include in our church if it was up to you? If someone came to mind and it had nothing to do with their denial of the faith, then you need to ask God to clarify what you are harboring in your heart about that other person.

Have you ever been in a situation in which you are dependent on someone else's hospitality but made to feel like you are a nuisance? Grumbling or making frustrated faces about a guest changes a kind gesture into an awkward situation that everyone just wants to survive and get out of quickly. Prayer should affect your love, which should make you willing to do what it takes to help others feel at home, like they are friends, like they are family. Each of us has a part to play in seeking to make others around us feel welcome. Are you pursuing in-depth relationships while also keeping the door open for others to feel like they can enter into your friendship in the church?

If God owns everything, then we are stewards. If the church is house of the Spirit, then we are to be conformed to His standards, not others to our preferences. Will you be a steward of hospitality without grumbling? I hope so, because we are the church that is anticipating eternal life according to the resurrection of Christ.

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Gregg Allison points out that the evangelical church has developed a proper interest in the Holy Spirit in the recent past after being deficient in our appreciation of the Spirit. One of the ways we have not appreciated the Spirit is in terms of spiritual gifts. We have thought of spiritual gifts as tokens dropped in our pockets to be at our disposal whenever we feel like they benefit us to use them. This passage tells us that the gifts that we have are to be used according to the strength that God provides for the benefit of the rest of the church. The actual gift we all have is the Spirit himself, who manifests Himself in all believers for the building up of the church. God has designed the church in such a way that we must depend on each other. No man is an island, and no single Christian forms a church. If the church is the community that anticipates what life will be like in the presence of God for eternity, then we need to depend on the Spirit to work through us to love and care for each other as a representation of God's love and provision. Do you consider yourself essential to the health and message of the church? According to this passage, if you are part of this church you are essential to the church's health and message. God has determined that you are to help serve this particular church in particular ways. Peter doesn't get into the discussion of all the possible expressions of the Spirit's gift. That's on purpose. The focus is not to be on the expression of the gifts but on the Spirit you depend on and on the church for whom you express the gift. As you depend on God to give you strength to encourage, serve, teach, support, challenge, console, or whatever manifestation of the Spirit's work God has given you to build up the church, you help other believers get a glimpse of what eternity with God will be like.

You remind them anew of the grace of God in Christ. Are you tired of how this world has been acting lately and the hopelessness it seems to spit out every day? Then do something about it. And I'm not talking about voting on Nov. 3. Choose to live for Christ daily. Live in light of our eternal home with God. Preach the gospel, including to yourself. Let it drive you to prayer. Keep your head straight for the sake of prayer. Pray with and love your local church. Be dedicated to them as family and help them feel at home with you. Let that feeling of home be a glimpse of God's welcome for them, one that is not begrudging at all but joyful. And take it to the next step of actively serving them in such a way according to how God has shaped you and gifted you by the Spirit. You may not feel like you are changing the world, but you are shaping the church in such a way that lets the world know that Christ's resurrection has changed everything. And there's no vote that can take Him off of His throne.