

Lesson 9

1 Peter 4:1-11

I. Christ: Adopt the Mindset of Christ (vv. 1-2)

Peter begins this section by grounding everything in the work of Christ. "Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking." The Christian life begins with Jesus. Peter is not simply telling believers to admire Christ's suffering, but to adopt Christ's mindset toward suffering. The command to "arm yourselves" is military language. Just as a soldier prepares for battle before entering the fight, believers are called to prepare themselves mentally and spiritually to follow Christ even when obedience is costly.

Peter is calling Christians to settle in their hearts that they would rather suffer for doing what is right than return to the sins from which Christ has saved them. The believer's life is no longer centered on fulfilling sinful desires, but on pursuing the will of God. Everything that follows in this passage grows out of that decision.

II. Holiness: Leave Behind Your Former Life (vv. 3-7)

Peter reminds his readers that they have spent enough time living according to the passions and desires of the world. His point is not to encourage endless debates about exactly where every line of sin is drawn. It is easy to become distracted arguing about technicalities while missing the larger point. When Peter mentions sins such as sensuality, drunkenness, and idolatry, he is describing a life centered on self-gratification. I believe that most of them can be summarized into the category of sensuality is not limited to the sexual connotation that it has in our culture. It is any approach to life that asks, "*What will give me the most pleasure?*" rather than, "*What will bring God the most glory?*" A person can be driven by entertainment, comfort, success, popularity, or countless other things instead of Christ.

Peter's message is simple: we have spent enough time living for ourselves and are now called to live for God.

Peter also acknowledges that the world often reacts negatively when someone begins following Christ seriously. Friends, classmates, coworkers, and family members may be confused when a believer no longer participates in sinful behaviors that might have been common place previously in the relationship. Some may even mock or criticize those who pursue holiness. Peter wants believers to understand that this should not surprise us. Faithfulness to Christ has always carried and will always carry a cost.

At the same time, believers can be encouraged because God sees everything. Peter reminds his readers that every person will one day give an account before God. We do not need to seek revenge or constantly defend ourselves because God judges perfectly and righteously.

This leads into Peter's statement that:

"The end of all things is at hand."

Peter is not predicting that the world would end within a few years of writing this letter. Rather, he is teaching that God's redemptive plan has reached its final stage. Christ has come, died, risen, and ascended into heaven. There is no additional revelation or event that must occur before Christ returns. Because Christ could return at any moment, believers are called to live with self-control, and soberness of mind. The expectation of Christ's return should not produce panic or speculation. It should produce a life of prayer and faithful obedience.

III. Love: Above All, Love One Another Earnestly (vv. 8-9)

After speaking about holiness and prayer, Peter turns his attention to relationships within the church. "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly." Peter is not teaching that love replaces the other commands. Rather, love is meant to shape all the other commands. It is the atmosphere in which Christian community is meant to function. We pray for one another because we love one another. We forgive because we love one another. We encourage because we love one another. We serve because we love one another. We show hospitality because we love one another. Peter describes this love as earnest. It is persistent, intentional, and sacrificial. This kind of love continues even when relationships become difficult.

When Peter says that love "covers a multitude of sins," he is not saying that love earns God's forgiveness. He means that loving believers are willing to extend grace, forgive offenses, and pursue reconciliation rather than keeping a record of every wrong. In a church filled with sinners, this kind of love is essential. Without it, every mistake becomes a conflict. With it, believers learn to show the same grace to others that Christ has shown to them.

IV. Service: Use Your Gifts for God's Glory (vv. 10-11)

Peter then shows one of the primary ways that love expresses itself: serving others. "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another." Notice that Peter says each believer has received a gift. Every Christian has been entrusted with abilities, opportunities, and resources that are intended to benefit the body of Christ. Peter broadly describes two categories of gifts.

The first set of gifts involve speaking. This includes teaching, encouraging, sharing wisdom, and communicating God's truth to others. Those who speak should do so carefully and faithfully because they are handling God's truth. The other set of gifts involve serving. This includes hospitality, helping others, meeting practical needs, caring for people, and countless other acts of service. Those who serve should do so in dependence upon God's strength rather than their own. It is not us who owns the gifts it is God and we are merely called to be stewards of the gifts we have been given.

Big Idea

Because Christ suffered for us believers are called to pursue holiness, love one another earnestly, and use their gifts to serve one another so that God is glorified through our lives.

Application Questions

1. What are some ways we today can be tempted to live for comfort, popularity, or pleasure rather than God's will?
2. What situations at school might require you to "arm yourself" with Christ's mindset before they happen?
3. Have you ever experienced negative reactions because of your faith? How did you respond?
4. In what areas of your life do you need more self-control or sobriety of mind?
5. What is one practical way you could show hospitality or kindness this week?
6. What do you think controls your decisions most often: the will of God or the desire for comfort and approval?
7. When people disagree with your beliefs, are you more concerned about their opinion or God's opinion?
8. What does your use of time reveal about what you truly love?
9. Do you view serving others as a privilege or as an inconvenience? Why?
10. What motivations drive your desire to be accepted by other people?
11. What sinful desire do you find hardest to leave behind?
12. Why do you think we sometimes show more love to ourselves than to God's people?
13. When you serve others, do you secretly hope to be noticed or appreciated?
14. What does your life currently say is most valuable to you?
15. If someone observed your life for a month, would they conclude that God's glory is your primary goal?
16. What is one area where God might be calling you to stop living for yourself and start living for Him?