

## LIVING THE REST OF YOUR TIME

1 Peter 4:1-11 *“<sup>1</sup> 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—<sup>2</sup> so as to **no longer live the rest of the time in the flesh** for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. <sup>3</sup> For the time already past is sufficient for you to have worked out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. <sup>4</sup> In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, maligning you, <sup>5</sup> but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. <sup>6</sup> For to this the gospel has been proclaimed even to those who are now dead, so that though they were judged in the flesh as men, they live in the spirit according to the will of God. <sup>7</sup> The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be of sound thinking and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. <sup>8</sup> Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup> Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. <sup>10</sup> As each one has received a gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God—<sup>11</sup> whoever speaks, as one speaking the oracles of God; whoever serves, as one 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 might forever and ever. Amen.”*

**How important is “time” to us?** Though not tangible, TIME is precious to us because it is a finite, nonrenewable resource that shapes our lives, influences our decisions, measures the extent of our lives, and establishes our priorities, and determines our opportunities for growth, development, and fulfillment. Time measures the duration of our physical existence—when our time expires, so have we!

There are two primary considerations about *time* as it affects mankind:

1. **Time is finite**—Once a moment passes, it’s GONE!
2. **Time is Irreplaceable**—unlike money or material possessions which can be earned or replaced, every second of our lives is unique and cannot be recovered. This reality makes time incredibly valuable and demonstrates the importance of using time wisely.

**For many of us, the most precious “commodity” in life is TIME!** Although we realize the priceless, expendable nature of time, we are yet wasteful in using it. In hindsight, we always regret such waste.

In recognizing the value of time, we should carefully and intentionally plan for its productive use. Too often, we become slaves to deadlines and schedules that are imposed upon us which can displace the priorities that we desire in our lives.

In his letter, Peter had a lot to say about *time* (1:5, 11, 17, 20; 4:2-3, 17; 5:6). Perhaps, his impending martyrdom affected his emphasis upon its importance. When we evaluate the limitations of our physical existence, we usually consider how we make the very best use of our time on earth. Yet, even then we seldom implement the necessary changes to improve our “time management.”

If we are convinced that Jesus is returning, we should live both anticipating and preparing for His imminent appearance. Whether Jesus comes first, or our physical death precedes His return, we should be determined to make “*the rest of our time*” count FOR JESUS’ SAKE!

**In our text, Peter describes four attitudes that can redeem THE REST OF OUR LIVES!**

1. **A MILITANT ATTITUDE TOWARD SIN** (1 Peter 4:1-3)—“*arm*” yourselves with the same purpose of Christ who chose to suffer in the flesh rather than engage in sin. A *militant attitude toward sin* is best represented by the idea of a soldier who puts on his armor and arms himself for battle. In that regard, our **attitudes** are important weapons in living Christlike—weak or flawed attitudes spell defeat. **In other words, “outlook” determines “outcome.”**

When you go into a dark room, it’s hard to see at first, but your eyes adjust to the dark, and your ability to see improves rather quickly—in other words, “*it doesn’t take very long to get accustomed to darkness.*”

We experience the same kind of effect when we encounter corrupt darkness—it *doesn’t take us long to get accustomed to the darkness of sin*—often without consciously realizing that we are immersed in sin. The one thing that will destroy “*the rest of our time*” is sin!

**Peter presented several arguments to convince his readers to oppose sin:**

1) **THINK ABOUT WHAT SIN DID TO JESUS** (v. 1). Jesus suffered the cross because of our sin (cf. 1 Peter 2:21; 3:18). Jesus came to this world to judge sin and to conquer it forever:

- He dealt with the ignorance of sin by living out holiness before the eyes of men.
- He confronted the consequences of sin with healing and forgiveness.
- In His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus rendered the final deathblow to sin!

As disciples of Jesus, our goal in life is to “**cease from sin.**” Of course, we will not reach that goal until either we get to heaven or Jesus returns—in the meantime, nothing should keep us from striving toward holiness (cf. 1 John 2:28-3:9).

**Peter did not say that suffering by itself would cause a person to stop sinning.** In fact, suffering without Jesus can cause a person to become increasingly bitter toward both life and God.

However, **a suffering person who has a relationship with Christ can experience victory over sin.** Indeed, if we yield ourselves to the Lord and adopt the same attitude toward sin as Jesus did, we can begin to see the old “*addicted to sin*” nature transformed by the Holy Spirit, whereby we begin to manifest the new life in Christ.

2) **ENJOY THE WILL OF GOD** (v. 2). The contrast is between human desires and the will of God. If we are committed to the will of God, we will intentionally devote “*the rest of our time*” in serving God and resisting the world. The will of God is not a burden imposed by God, rather it is a passion that comes from the heart of God (Psalm 33:11)—it is the visible expression of His love. The will of God reminds us that we do not live on good intentions nor by trying to make the best of bad situations, we live victoriously through His divine promises.

3) **REMEMBER WHAT YOU WERE BEFORE YOU MET JESUS** (v. 3). Reflecting on our past life can be discouraging if we focus on the wrong that we have done. But Peter turned His horrific sin into a powerful motivation—remembering that he had been a persecutor of believers (1 Timothy 1:12ff), Paul was driven to do even more for Christ.

In our case, it’s important to remember the bondage and heartache that sin produced in our lives so that in our salvation, we celebrate the forgiveness of sin, the power of His presence, and the joy of our eternal relationship with Christ.

“*The desire of the Gentiles*” is a reference to the influence upon mankind that functions to conform the unbeliever to the ways of the world (cf. Romans 12:2): *sensuality, lusts, and carousing* describe the evil appetites that entice us.

*Drinking parties and abominable idolatries* refers to ungodly activities such as drunkenness and prostitution—**anything that becomes an ungodly priority is a form of idolatry!** Though perhaps not physically guilty of such flagrant idolatry as worship of other “gods”, our “lesser” sins of idolatry still necessitated the crucifixion of Jesus.

2. **A PATIENT ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LOST** (4:4-6). Before people are saved, they cannot understand the radical heart change that believers experience when we trust Jesus as Lord, are baptized by the Holy Spirit, and, thereby, become born-again children of God.

In this world, it almost seems routine for people to ruin their reputations, wreck their bodies, and destroy their relationships through the consequences of their sinfulness! We lament such sinfulness and bemoan such consequences, but we understand the “*wages of sin.*”

However, if an addict is reformed, or an immoral person repents, and they passionately describe how the Lord saved and delivered them, folks are often skeptical of their testimonies and often try to dismiss the miraculous nature of their life-change.

In that regard, Festus told Paul, “*You are out of your mind*” (Acts 26:24). Of course, the people believed the same thing about the miraculous life of Jesus (Mark 3:21).

As believers, it is important for us to be patient with the skepticism and ungodliness of the unsaved—of course, that does not mean we disregard or dismiss their lifestyles or excuse their sinfulness. But we must remember that unsaved people are blind to spiritual truth (2 Corinthians 4:3-4), powerless to overcome sin, and dead to spiritual joy (Ephesians 2:1ff; Colossians 2:13). Salvation is not a personal decision to clean up one’s life—it is the miraculous work of God’s Spirit by grace through God’s gift of faith!

Christians should expect unsaved families and friends to resist and oppose our transformation by God’s Spirit since such changed lives and attitudes make little sense to the unsaved and which often tends to show their sinfulness. However, their negative reaction to the positive difference that Christ makes in our lives often provides us the opportunity to share the reason for our “weirdness”(i.e., witness) in Christ (1 Peter 3:15).

Indeed, the unsaved may judge us and reject us, but one day, God will judge them. Instead of arguing with them or pointing out their ungodliness, we should pray for them, and remembering how we were before our salvation, and also remembering that without Christ, they face a horrible future. It helps to remember the attitude of Jesus (2:23), as well as the attitude of the Apostle Paul (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

**We must interpret 1 Peter 4:6 in the context of SUFFERING**—otherwise, we will get the idea that there might be a second chance for salvation after death. *Looking closely, the verse indicates the proclamation of the gospel to those who lived in the past. Those who lived before the New Covenant had the opportunity to be saved by looking ahead in faith, while we are saved by looking back in faith.* The gospel is preached only to the living (1 Peter 1:25)! There is no opportunity for salvation after death (Hebrews 9:27).

Peter was reminding his readers of the *Christians* who had been *martyred* for their faith. They had been falsely judged by men, but then in the presence of God, they received their true judgment. It makes no difference about what others might say about us, either in opposition or judgment, because the final and true Judge is Almighty God.

We must hear the Word of God and fear the God of the Word—not men, nor their word (1 Peter 3:13-17; Matthew 10:24-33). In this life, we may be judged by unjust human standards, but one day we shall be in the presence of the Lord (“*in the spirit*”) and shall receive the true and final judgment: “*Well done, good and faithful servant!*” (Matthew 25:21, 23).

3. **AN EXPECTANT ATTITUDE TOWARD CHRIST** (4:7) Although most first century Christians expected Jesus to return in their lifetime (cf. Roman 13:12; 1 John 2:18), the fact that He did not return did not invalidate His promise to them (2 Peter 3; Revelation 22:20).

All of us should live in the expectation that Jesus could return at any moment. The important truth is that we shall indeed see Jesus one day and shall stand before Him to receive our reward. Of course, how we live today determines our heavenly reward.

We must neither become worldly dreamers that disregard the possibility of His imminent return (2 Thessalonians 3:6ff.) nor zealous fanatics that dare to confidently predict the time of His return—NO ONE KNOWS!

Peter gave guidelines that will keep us in balance regarding the Lord’s return:

1) **Be sober** (v. 7) – “keep your cool,” particularly as it concerns predictive prophecy regarding “end times.” We know that such predictions are erroneous since “*no one knows*,” and inevitably lead to ridicule, embarrassment, and a disregard for Scripture.

Sober-mindedness implies “sound judgment” that faces life realistically and practically, free of delusions and impulsiveness (cf. 1 Timothy 3:2, “*pastors*”; Titus 2:1-6, “*church members*”).

The practical application of prophetic scriptures is the encouragement to be faithful every day with the understanding that today could be THE DAY (Luke 12:31-48).

2) **Watch unto prayer** (v. 7)—if we are sober-minded, we will be alert and prayerful about life and ministry. Prayer is the key to anticipating, understanding, and accepting the will of God.

4. **A FERVENT ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SAINTS (4:8-11)**

If we are really anticipating the return of Jesus, we will be concerned about others and our relationship to them.

1) **Fervent love** (v. 8)—love is a certain measure of a true believer in this world (John 13:34-35). For the sake of the gospel, Christians need to love one another and be united in heart. Such love is not a matter of emotion, or even agreement, but it is a willful decision to treat others the way God treats us.

In that regard, we can and should love people we don't like, including our enemies! Such love should be "*fervent*"—intentional and eager. Fervent love *covers* sin in that it motivates us to "*hide sin*"—NOT OUR SIN but the sin of others. In such love we confront the sinner but keep their sins confidential and refuse to spread it about in gossip and slander (Proverbs 11:13; 17:9).

In that regard, we must not misuse prayer whereby we turn "prayer concerns" into a "*spiritual*" form of gossip whereby the particular sins of others are named so as to invoke "*more intelligent prayer.*" Both the "*Golden Rule*" and the promise of Jesus should motivate us to *cover* the sins of others—after all, the Lord chooses to forgive and not remember confessed sins (1 John 1:9; Hebrews 8:12)!

2) **Be hospitable** (v. 9)—hospitality is the intentional willingness to open our hearts and our homes to others. When we share with others, we share with Christ (Matthew 25:35, 43). Our purpose is to promote fellowship and glorify the Lord!

3) **Minister with your spiritual gifts** (vs, 10-11)—genuine Christian love will always result in service. Each believer has at least one spiritual gift which is individually and intentionally given by God for His glory and for building up His church (Romans 12:1-13; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:1-16). Not only are we servants of the Lord, but we are responsible for being stewards of what God has given to us.

There are speaking gifts as well as serving gifts—both are important to the life and ministry of the church. Some gifts are *public* gifts, and some are "*behind the scenes*" gifts. Regardless of the specific gift, each is given to serve the Lord's church and must be used both to glorify the Lord and to bless His church!

Regarding the phrase "*oracles of God*", we must be very careful that when we share God's Word that we are not misquoting, misinterpreting, or misusing it.

**So, how long is the rest of your time?** ONLY GOD KNOWS! Don't waste it! Invest it for Jesus' sake!