

Standing Fast in the Grace of God

Living for “the Will of God”

Living Seriously Before the Fire

1 Peter 4:1-11

The Apostle Peter has just reminded us in the last part of chapter 3 that Christ suffered, died, and now reigns in victory. The question that follows is simple: “If Christ suffered and now rules, how then should we live?”

In the passage before us, Peter calls believers to live on purpose — not casually and not carelessly — but with a settled commitment to the will of God.

I. A DELIBERATE RESOLVE (VS. 1-2)

A. The pattern — Christ suffered in the flesh (vs. 1a)

“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh...”

This points back to 3:18, showing His suffering was substitutionary, victorious, and purposeful (Heb. 12:2-3; 1 Pet. 2:21).

B. The preparation — “arm yourselves” (vs. 1b)

1. The word used for “arm” (ὀπλίσασθε) is a military term that means to equip oneself with heavy weaponry.
2. In other words, this is not passive Christianity — it is intentional readiness.

Romans 13:12

¹² The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us

therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

Ephesians 6:11

¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

2 Timothy 2:3

³ Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

3. This suggests that suffering is not accidental and that the Christian must anticipate conflict.

C. The purpose — live to the will of God (vs. 1b-2)

(We will look at verse 2 before verses 1b.)

1. *“That he no longer should live... to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.”*

When Peter speaks of living to the will of God, he is speaking of a settled life-direction — a conscious decision that the rest of your time belongs to God and not to your old desires.

2. *“He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin”*

a) This is speaking of the believer who chooses suffering rather than sinful compromise.

b) The term “ceased” (πέπαυται) means to stop, to cease, to bring to an end, and is in a tense (perfect middle/passive) that indicates completed action with continuing results. The literal sense is, “has come to a settled cessation from sin.”

c) The phrase “from sin” (ἁμαρτίας – genitive case) does not mean he “has ceased sinning entirely.” This doesn’t teach sinless perfection — that

would contradict other Scriptures (1 John 1:8; 1 Peter 2:11; 5:8, etc.)

➤ So, what does it mean then?

3. Verse 2 explains verse 1:

"That he no longer should live... to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

a) "Ceased from sin" is defined by:

(1) A decisive break in allegiance to sin.

(2) A refusal to live under sin's mastery.

(3) A willingness to suffer rather than comply with sin.

b) This text is aimed directly at the believers that were facing severe persecution. They were tempted to simply fall back into their old lifestyle to avoid suffering and resume former practices.

c) The one who accepts suffering rather than sinful conformity demonstrates that sin is no longer his ruling master.

Romans 6:6–7

⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. ⁷ For he that is dead is freed from sin.

d) Think about how Peter's own failure at the cross and subsequent restoration by Jesus after the resurrection demonstrates this.

(1) Peter sinned because he feared suffering (Luke 22:31-62).

(2) When he embraced suffering, he stood firm.

Peter would one day choose suffering rather than denial when, according to tradition, he was martyred for his faith.

- (3) Peter did not cease to be a child of God when he denied Christ — but he did forfeit the joy and closeness of fellowship until the Lord restored him.

II. A DEFINITE RENUNCIATION (VS. 3-6)

Living for God requires a complete break from the old life.

A. The sufficiency of the past (vs. 3a)

"The time past of our life may suffice..."

The past life is enough — it is over (Rom. 6:6-11; Eph. 2:1-3)

B. The specificity of the former sins (vs. 3b)

1. Peter lists six things here that can be divided into three groups, all moving from one to the next in a crescendo, pointing to the last in the list. (See Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-11)
 - a) Sensual sin: "lasciviousness" (sin without shame – shameless outward indulgence); "lusts" (in context here, fleshly lusts or "the inner principles of licentiousness" [Cook]).
 - b) Social sin: "excess of wine," "revellings," "banqueting"
 - (1) "Excess of wine" (οἰνοφλυγίαῖς – only time it appears in the NT). Compound word that literally means wine overflowing. It is stronger than simple "drunkenness." It speaks of drunken debauchery — it's lifestyle language.

(2) "Revellings" (κῶμος) — feastings and drunkenness with impurity and obscenity of the grossest kind (Zodhiates)

(3) "Banqueting" (πότος) — another rare word only used once in the NT — refers to a drinking match, or a drunken bout (Zodhiates).

➤ Living for the will of God requires visible withdrawal from normal social practices.

c) Religious corruption: "abominable idolatries" (ἄθεμίτοις εἰδωλολατρείαις)

Peter is not just saying they once worshiped idols. He describes those idolatries as unlawful (ἄθεμίτοις) — morally outrageous violations of God's order. The pagan worship of their past was not neutral religion; it was corrupt, indulgent, and offensive to a holy God.

C. The shock of the world (vs. 4)

"They think it strange..."

1. "Strange" (ξενίζονται) — to regard as foreign or abnormal.
2. The believer's restraint felt alien to the world.

D. The sobriety of judgment (vs. 5-6)

Peter is addressing the question: "If believers are slandered, mistreated, and even killed — how does justice prevail?"

1. The certainty of the divine judgment (vs. 5)
 - a) *"Who shall give account..."* — the mockers will answer to God.

b) *"Ready to judge the quick (living) and the dead"* — universal, unavoidable judgment (See Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1)

(1) Literally, the living ones and the dead ones.

(2) The phrase "ready to judge" is eschatological, pointing forward, not backward.

(3) When Peter says Christ will judge the living and the dead, he means no one escapes His judgment — not those alive when He comes, and not those already in the grave. The mockers may seem secure now, but they will stand before Him.

2. The vindication of the righteous (vs. 6)

a) *"For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead"* — because judgment is certain, the gospel was preached even to those who have since died.

➤ Peter is encouraging living believers by pointing to believers that have died.

b) *"That they might be judged according to men in the flesh"* — earthly condemnation, possibly pointing to persecution and martyrdom.

c) *"But live according to God in the spirit"* — though the world judged *"them that are dead,"* and even killed them, they are alive before God. The world's verdict is never the final verdict.

III. A DISCIPLINED RESPONSIBILITY (VS. 7-11)

If judgment is certain, and if eternity is real, then how we live is important.

The little word "but" that begins verse 7 does not signal

contradiction here. It simply marks a shift in thought. Peter moves from the certainty of judgment to the urgency of how believers should live in light of the coming end.

A. Serious minds (vs. 7)

1. *"The end of all things is at hand"* — this speaks of redemptive-historical nearness.
2. There are two commands here:
 - a) *"Be ye therefore sober"* (σωφρονήσατε) — sound minded, clear thinking.
 - b) *"And watch unto prayer"* — stay sound minded so you are able to pray.

Ephesians 6:18

¹⁸ Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Colossians 4:2

² Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

- c) Simply put, clear thinking fuels prayer.

B. Serious love (vs. 8-9)

1. *"Above all things have fervent charity"* — the phrase *"fervent charity"* (ἐκτενῆ) literally means stretched-out love. In its use here, it means love that extends itself.
2. *"For charity shall cover the multitude of sins"* — "Love to another shall so cover or hide a great

many imperfections in him, that you will not notice them" (Barnes).

Proverbs 10:12

¹² Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

3. *"Use hospitality one to another without grudging"* (vs. 9) — hospitality without internal complaint.

"Hospitality" (φιλόξενος) — compound word that literally means love or kindness to strangers.

➤ When persecution rises, love must deepen.

C. Serious stewardship (vs. 10-11)

Peter moves from attitude (vs. 7), to love (vs. 8-9), to function (vs. 10-11). This is church stewardship under pressure.

1. The distribution of the gift (vs. 10a)

"As every man hath received the gift..."

- a) Every believer has received at least one spiritual gift; no believer is empty-handed; no believer is unnecessary.
- b) The gift is received, not earned.

1 Corinthians 12:7

⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

2. The direction of the gift (vs. 10b)

"...even so minister the same one to another..."

- a) "Minister" (διακονοῦντες) — serving.
- b) The purpose of our gift is not for self-promotion;

it is for the strengthening of others.

3. The disposition of the steward (vs. 10c)

"...as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

- a) As we've seen, stewards don't own — we answer to the Master.
- b) "Manifold" (ποικίλης) — variegated, multi-colored, diverse. We don't all have the same gift, but we are all necessary.

4. The regulation of the gift (vs. 11a)

There are two categories of gifts here:

- a) Word gifts — governed by Scripture: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God..."

"Oracles" (λόγια) — divine utterance. It means to speak in submission to God's revealed truth. The one who speaks must speak under Scripture's authority, not personal opinion.

- b) Service gifts — governed by dependence: *"If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth"*

(1) "Ability" (ἰσχύος) — strength, might. This is not strength or might or ability from within ourselves, but is supplied by God.

(2) The one who serves must serve in reliance upon God, not reliance upon self.

5. The destination of the gift (vs. 11b)

"That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ..."

The goal of every gift is not recognition — it is

God's glory.

- Living for the will of God ultimately means living for the glory of God.

Conclusion:

Peter has shown us in this text what Christian living looks like that is lived with seriousness and godliness. It begins with a deliberate resolve — choosing the will of God over the lusts of men. It continues with a definitive break from the old life, trusting that God will judge justly. And it expresses itself in disciplined responsibility — clear mind, fervent love, and faithful stewardship.

Living for the will of God may cost us comfort, reputation, or even our own safety, but the end is at hand, judgment is certain, and God's glory is always the goal.

And as Peter will show us next, when the fire comes, this kind of life will be the only life that stands.