

Pastor Daniel Waldschmidt – 1 Peter 4:1-11 – August 6th 2017

The Christians that Peter was writing to were going through a really hard time. You see they had left their old lives of sin and they were living for God now, which is great. But the problem was that they were now getting made fun of and being ridiculed for not participating in those sinful activities anymore. Our passage says that **“They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you.”** Under that kind of verbal persecution they might be tempted to give up and go back to their old sinful life. And so Peter writes to them to strength them and encourage to keep living for God despite the persecution. And throughout the letter Peter gives them three reasons to keep living for God. First, keep living for God because Jesus suffered too. Second, keep living for God because God will vindicate you when he comes on Judgment Day. Third, keep living for God because you might save people on Judgment Day.

The first reason Peter gives to keep living for God despite the persecution is because Jesus suffered too. He says in verse 1, **“Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body.”** The first and most important reason to live for God is that Jesus died for you. Just about every morning I say the catechism with my two sons. And we get to Luther’s explanation of the second article and I say, Jesus bought us “not with gold or silver but with his holy precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.” When Martin Luther wrote that he was actually quoting 1 Peter. Peter reminded them early in the letter, that before they lived a lost, empty way of life, but Jesus bought them with his own blood. In our passage he says that they had spent time in the past **doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.** They had done that in the past but Jesus bought them with his holy precious blood and the Holy Spirit called them to faith through the gospel. Jesus bought you, not with gold or silver but with his holy precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.” And why did he do that? Luther says, “All this he did that I should be his own and live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.” The reason we live for God is because Jesus bought us with his own blood to redeem us from our empty way of life.

Now the people whom Peter was writing to understood that and they were changing their lives. Instead of living for their sinful desires they were living for God. But as I said, because they stopped their former sinful activities their friends started to say hurtful things about them. And Peter reminds them that Jesus suffered and since we are followers of Jesus that means that sometimes we might have to suffer too. But that suffering can even discipline us to say no to sin. That’s why Peter says: **“Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.” (1 Peter 4:1)** Christians never purposely look for suffering but when suffering sometimes does come into our lives it can even train us and discipline us to say no to sin. So the first reason to continue living for God is because Jesus suffered too.

The second reason Peter gives for continuing to live for God despite persecution is that they will be vindicated on Judgment Day. Peter says **“they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”** God was going to hold the persecutors accountable for their persecution. Christians shouldn’t give up on living for God because as Peter says **“The end of all things is near.”**

If we think of the Parable which Jesus told in our Gospel, the Christians were the wheat and the persecutors were the weeds. And like Jesus said in our Gospel, **“the weeds will be tied into bundles to be burned and the wheat will be gathered into God’s barn.” (Matthew 13:30)** You see when the

persecutors heaped verbal abuse on the Christians, they were really rejecting God, and the result of rejecting God in unbelief all the way through to Judgment Day is an eternity away from God.

Of course, no Christian wants that for an unbeliever. Like God we want all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. And so the third reason to live for God is that you save some people so that they will be saved on Judgment Day.

So the Christians at Peter's time were wondering, "What do we do?" People are saying hurtful things about us. What do we do? Do we say hurtful things back to them? No, Peter says in chapter 2, what you should do is: **"Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." (2:12)** Peter says that is you continue to live for God, some of your persecutors are going to come to their senses, believe the Gospel and be saved on Judgment Day. Some weeds are going to turn into wheat when they see that you continue to live for God despite the persecution.

So for example in chapter 3, Peter tells Christian wives who have unbelieving husbands: **"Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives." (1 Peter 3:1-2)**

A little later in chapter 3, Peter says, **"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander." (1 Peter 3:15-16)** So you keep living for God because your life is a testimony to God and what God has done for you.

Why hasn't Judgment Day come yet? It's because God is patient. And he wants more people to be saved. So keep living for God and keep giving the reason for the hope that you have, because there's still time on the clock, and there's still room in heaven. Amen.