

God's Will For Our Church

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 December 2019

Preacher: Dan Oosthuizen

[0 : 00] Read that for us first, and then he's going to teach us what it's all about. So, thank you, Dan.

Morning. If you'd like to have 1 Peter open to chapter 4, we're going to continue our worship by looking at God's Word and seeing what it has to say to us today. God's Word is as relevant to us today in the year 2019 in Karageline as it was to the people to whom Peter was writing 2,000 years ago.

So, let's have a look at 1 Peter chapter 4. We're going to do something that's a bit of a challenge for a preacher, which is to do an entire chapter in one sermon. So, we'll see how we get on.

Verse 1, Peter writes, Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.

As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do, living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and detestable idolatry.

[1 : 19] They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless while living, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind, so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

[2 : 24] To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed.

For the spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or a thief or any other kind of criminal or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household. And if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?

So then those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful creator and continue to do good. Let's pray. Amen. Father, as we continue our worship through the ministry of your word, open our hearts, open our minds to receive the food of your word.

[3 : 43] Plant this truth deep in our hearts, Lord. May your Holy Spirit enable us to understand what your servant Peter is saying. Help us to apply it to our own particular situations.

And above all things, Lord, may we do everything for your glory. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Maybe you've wondered, like I have, what's God's will for my life?

Fairly common question. And we tend to mean it in terms of things like this. Should I marry this person? Should I buy this house?

Should I apply for this job? Should I be in full-time ministry? Should I shave off my beard? Someone once asked me, was that God's will for his life? That's a true story. Should I serve my guests apple pie or lemon meringue pie?

If you're inviting me over, by the way, either of those is fine. I'm not fussy. These are all fairly basic human type questions about what our lives should look like.

[4 : 46] But when the Bible talks about knowing God's will, it talks about something different. It's not about whether you should own something or marry somebody or work somewhere.

It's so much more than simply making a choice about something. Simply put, it's doing what God would have us do by what he's revealed in his word.

2 Timothy 3.16 says, All scripture is breathed out by God and is useful for the servant of God to be complete and equipped for every good work.

We don't need to go into a trance or try and have some kind of a dream or a vision or something like that. It's all here in God's word. So with that in mind, let's take a look and see what God's word tells us.

And we're going to see that Peter tells us three things. There are God's will for his church, God's will for you and me. If you have the notes, you have these. If not, feel free to write them down. To stop living for yourselves or ourselves.

[5 : 47] To start living for others. And to remember that Christ lives in us. So God's will is that we stop living for ourselves, start living for others, and remember that Christ lives in us.

So let's kick off. Verse 1. Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.

Jesus was completely without sin. Never had an unkind word. Never had an irreverent thought. Never had a sinful impulse.

And if we're honest, we can't even imagine that. In our current human condition, we cannot imagine someone who is completely without sin. Who had a total absence of sin.

But this was what enabled him to be the perfect sacrifice to atone for the sins of all those who believe. See, in the Old Testament, all the gallons and gallons of blood, of goats and sheep and bulls, all of that wasn't enough to accomplish what Jesus did as the perfect sacrifice.

[7 : 01] And so he defeated death with his own death and resurrection. And think about this. If the Son of God himself had to die to pay for your sins and for my sins and the sins of everybody who would believe, what does that say about how we ought to live our lives in light of that sacrifice?

Peter tells us at the end of verse 1 and into verse 2, have a look at it, whoever suffers in the body is done with sin and they do not live the rest of their lives for their own desires but in pursuit of the will of God.

Now remember when Satan went into the wilderness for 40 days and along comes Satan. Think about that for a second. What a moment that must have been. The Son of God in the wilderness in human form and along comes Satan who is the ultimate antichrist if you will.

And Satan says, you look hungry. What are you hungry for? You're the Son of God. Why are you hungry? Make yourself some food out of these stones. And you know what Jesus said, man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

He was really saying, I'm not here, Satan, to satisfy my own cravings and my own desires. I didn't come down here to do my will. I came down here to do the will of the Father who sent me.

[8 : 35] And the Father's will was that the Son would come and be the suffering servant. Not the destroyer of the Roman army but the destroyer of death and sin.

Not to live for himself but to live for us. So we ought not be living for ourselves, taking our opportunities, making the most of life for our own advantage and our own gain.

And maybe you've heard things like this. I was just thinking some random thoughts. Maybe you've heard things like this or maybe even thought them or said them. Who's it going to hurt? Nobody will ever find out.

Have a few more drinks. You deserve it. Well, if I don't take it, somebody else will. It's just sex.

It's not even these things themselves. Do you hear the attitude behind them? It's all about me. It's all about what I want. If it feels good, I'll do it. I am the master of my fate.

[9 : 39] I am the captain of my soul. Don't think like that, Peter says. Verse 3, you've spent enough time doing all these things. You're done with all these things.

And now, some of you, if not most of you, are sitting there thinking, but Dan, I do sin. I sin every day. And so do you, in fact. We're not done with sin.

Well, you're right. We do still sin. But here's the point. A Christian doesn't love their sin. A Christian doesn't revel in their sin.

The Apostle John actually says this. I think this is in your notes. But the Apostle John says this. If you've been born again, God's seed actually lives in you.

And you cannot go on in a lifestyle of sin. It's a theological impossibility to go on in the lifestyle of sin. And think about it this way.

[10 : 39] I'll illustrate this. Maybe this will help. Suppose I was late getting here. Like, I don't show up until half past 12. So, 90 minutes late and Johnny's preaching comeback starts early.

And you say to me, Dan, you're 90 minutes late. Don't you care about this church? Don't you care about coming here to preach the word? Don't you get how much we're trusting you and we're inviting you here to minister to us and to preach to us?

And I respond by saying, oh well, I'm sorry, but on the way here I got a flat tire. So I stopped on the side of the road and then, for some reason, I walked out into the middle of the road and along came a double-decker bus traveling 100 kilometers an hour and ran over me full force and knocked me into the river and that's why I'm late.

You're going to conclude one of two things about me. Either I'm a liar or I'm certifiably insane. And you'd be absolutely right because how could I possibly have an encounter with a double-decker bus going 100 kilometers an hour and then walk in the door 90 minutes later?

Now suppose it's not a double-decker bus. Suppose this is God himself. If God reaches down and takes up residence inside me, how could I possibly look the same as before that happened?

[12 : 07] You talk about a double-decker bus, God is billions upon billions upon billions of double-decker buses going billions of miles an hour invading your heart and invading your soul and taking up residence inside you.

It's why Jesus said you will know them by their fruit, the external proof of an internal change of heart and change of mind.

In fact, that's what repent means, to change your mind. And people might mock you for this. They usually will. Might call you names, poke fun at you, call you a holy Joe.

someone once referred to me as Ned Flanders. A few people aren't laughing because they've never seen The Simpsons, but that's okay. But I don't answer to those people.

I don't answer to anybody except God. And you know what? They will too. One day, we will all answer to God who will ask what we thought of his son.

[13 : 14] And then, depending on our answer, how did you live in light of the fact that you say you knew my son? Verse 6, the same as the believers who are now dead, their flesh might have been judged by human standards, but now they've been judged according to their faith and the fruit of their faith.

So we have to ask ourselves, are we living for ourselves? Is our spare time taken up pursuing comfort? I read an article that was from The Examiner talking about the secret codes to unlock all the Christmas movies on Netflix.

Are we spending our time pursuing entertainment, filling our belly with whatever particular cravings that we have, literal or otherwise? Do we think we're entitled to a certain way of life because we live in the West, in this country, in 2019?

or, do we follow the example of Jesus who didn't use his position to his advantage, Philippians 2 says, but became nothing, became like one of us, emptied himself of everything but love and then suffered death so that we might live.

God's will was that God himself would die so that we would die to our sin. The will of God, friends, is for his church to stop living for ourselves.

[14 : 47] Secondly, God's will for his church is that we would start living for others. Look at verse 7. The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind so that you might pray.

I don't know how often you think about the end times. We're starting a series on it in Middleton soon but basically there's two kinds of people when it comes to the end times. They're the ones who can't get into it and there's the ones who can't get out of it.

The ones who never want to talk about it and the ones who want to talk about nothing else. Questions about when it happens, what happens, what the signs will be, all things like that but really, whatever your view on the end times is, the question is the same.

Jesus is coming back. Are you ready? And the writers of the New Testament, just like Peter here, they certainly exhorted people to live every day of their lives as if the next person they met was Jesus.

He's coming back, Peter is saying. Therefore, be alert, be ready, be sober, not taken up with the things we just looked at and this is interesting, look at the end of verse 7, so that you may pray.

[16 : 07] Now, no matter where you are in your walk, if you've been a Christian for 20 years or for six weeks, you probably figured out you can't walk this journey by yourself. None of us can because we all have ups and we all have downs.

That's the nature of this life. It's the main point of Peter's letter. It's easy to be a believer when things are on the up, when things are going well. But what happens when things go badly?

You see, a lot of us are like the prophet Elijah because even though he had great victories, including defeating the prophets of Baal, the very next thing that happened was he ran off into the wilderness, he was alone, he was depressed and he was even suicidal.

And the angel of the Lord appeared to him with some food and water and said, Elijah, eat something because the journey is too great for you. You can't do it alone, Elijah.

You can't do it alone, Peter. You can't do it alone, Dan. You can't do it alone, Karageline. The journey is too great for us. And without prayer, this is just a social club.

[17 : 16] A nice Sunday morning with tea and coffee. We need the power of God in our lives, friends, and we get that through prayer, through his word, through fellowship with one another.

And we do this, verse 8, because we're to serve one another. Love one another, verse 8 says. Verse 9 says, offer hospitality to one another. Because Jesus died for us and because Jesus is coming back, God's will is that we should live for others.

Serve one another. And to do this, look at the end of verse 9. This is profound. The end of verse 9. To do this without grumbling. Now the Greek word is interesting.

It doesn't really mean loudly complaining about something. You know, such a terrible day today with the rain and traffic and whatever the case might be. It actually means something more subtle.

Muttering. Murmuring. Begrudging. We know all about that in this country. Begrudging. What's our attitude in serving one another?

[18 : 21] This is the point. When we're serving one another and living for one another, what are we thinking? What are we feeling? So maybe I'm working on a sermon during the week.

Am I just going through the motions? Because I have a deadline? Sunday? Quarter to 12? Or am I filled with gratitude to God who gives me the opportunity to come and preach his word?

Or how about this? When there aren't enough Sunday school teachers or musicians or whatever, tea and coffee servers, and we find ourselves on the roto week after week after week after week, are we bitter?

Do we get resentful? Or do we honor God in our lives by killing our pride? Forgetting that it's not about us and being gentle with other people in our service?

Or how about this? And I'm preaching to myself on this one too. When we're trying to meet up with somebody to encourage them, someone who's suffering, maybe isolated, to encourage them and to minister to them and they keep postponing and they keep making excuses that can sound made up or whatever.

[19 : 39] Do I quit? Do I give up? Do I harden my heart against them? Or do I pray to God that I love that person the way God loves them?

In other words, friends, are we joyful as we live for one another? Not viewing it like a chore or something we have to do, but as a way to participate in the work of Christ who is the chief servant of all.

verse 10, use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. One of the beautiful things about the church is that we're all different.

We're not all robots. Alex read from Romans 12 earlier. Later on today, have a look at 1 Corinthians 12. The amazing picture, we won't look at it now, but it's an amazing picture of how the church is one body with many parts and we all look different.

We all have different nationalities and speak different languages and we all have different gifts that God gives us to serve one another. Paul says, by one spirit we were all baptized into one body to serve one another.

[20 : 52] And some of you, verse 11, some of you have gifts associated with speaking, preaching, teaching, Sunday school, leading Bible studies, that kind of thing.

Things that tend to be quite public. And still in verse 11, towards the end, some of the rest of you have gifts that Peter broadly calls serving gifts. Setting up, tearing down, making and bringing food, sound control, administration, things that aren't necessarily public in the same way, but things which impact people in very tangible, visible ways.

You're all good at something. You know what better than I do. But regardless of what it is you're gifted at, the Spirit gave you those gifts in order that you might live for other people, not for yourself.

I've been doing public speaking since I was four years old. Started off doing school fesh, then going on to drama and debating and public speaking competitions and all that kind of thing.

I could always do that, but it wasn't until I became a Christian that those gifts that I had, God changed my mind so that I would use them to give God glory.

[22 : 10] Not to win the next debate, not to win the next argument, but to glorify God and to live for other people. And we do this not by our own efforts, but by the power of the Spirit.

And that's why, friends, if you've ever wondered, that's why we pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Because only God will accomplish God's will.

And we want it, if we want to be a part of that, if we want to see God's will done as we live to serve one another and live for one another, then we have to be prayerful.

Because otherwise all the things we just talked about, being resentful, getting hard-hearted, bitter, all these things are going to come back. We need to be prayerful so that we can be humble, sacrificial.

In both our service and in our prayers, we need to mimic Jesus who said, the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

[23 : 18] And in the same way, when we serve sacrificially, when we live for one another, what we're actually doing is we're lifting up Christ and saying, here he is. This is a picture of what this looks like.

Because we're saved, friends, so that we can point other people to Christ. Yes, by our words, but also by our actions. The way we live, not just our own personal holiness, but the way we live for one another and serve one another.

Just like it was God's will for the Son to die for the church, it's God's will for the church that we should live for one another. Thirdly, and finally, God's will for the church is to remember that Christ lives in us.

Verses 12 to 14. Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.

But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed.

[24 : 35] For the spirit of glory and of God rests on you. This is the theme that runs all the way through Peter's letter, from start to finish. When things go wrong, when bad things happen, where is God?

Has he forgotten about me? Have I done something wrong? We won't turn to it, but think all the way back to the very beginning, if you can, of Peter's letter. The very first sermon I ever preached to you.

Peter told us that this suffering is like a refiner's fire that you use on gold to weed out all the impurities and to clean it up, to make the gold pure.

And he's saying, don't be surprised when the fire comes because it's not something strange. It's not something unusual. It's not something out of the ordinary.

Suffering is something that God allows us to go through to develop our Christian character, to see what is our response to this suffering, to learn to trust him, to rely on his own strength.

[25 : 41] Not my strength. When I got the phone call one morning and my sister had hanged herself, was I going to rely on my own strength in that moment? There's no way.

This is so that despite what life throws at us, whether it's people mocking us for our faith or suing us because we won't bake a cake for their wedding or bullying at work or school or sickness or unemployment or whatever it is, you still, verse 13, rejoice that we participate in the sufferings of Christ.

Christ. And if it's all ourselves, we can't do that because this is the key. Christ lives in you. God lives in you.

We don't do this ourselves. We didn't wake up one day that we had all this faith stuff figured out and decide that we were just really smart and made ourselves believe the right thing.

Ephesians 2 says that we were dead. Not sick. Not unconscious. Dead. Dead in our sins and our transgressions and that God made us alive.

[26 : 54] And he didn't just bring us back to life and then say, off you go then, figure things out for yourself, but he actually took up residence inside us. I don't know if many of you have the King James.

I'm a bit of a King James aficionado. And Galatians 2.20 says this, I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live. Yet, not I, but Christ liveth in me.

And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. I am crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I live. Yet, not I, but Christ lives in me. Friends, if our faith is in Christ and we suffer in this life, even though we're doing nothing wrong, like Sam was talking about this morning, even if we're doing nothing wrong, Christ still lives in us.

God's will is that we remember this in the good times and in the bad times. You might say in sickness and in health.

[28 : 08] For richer, for poorer, this is a covenant that God himself has made with us by taking up residence inside us. Christ lives in you.

Is there anything that ought to cause us to praise God more than this? That Christ lives in us? Verses 15 and 16. Don't suffer because you break the law or you gossip or you meddle in other people's lives because all of us, believer, unbeliever, just as I was saying, we're all going to answer to the king of the ages one day and we're going to have to give an answer as we stand in that judgment.

Even the righteous, you know, the people who always seem to do the right thing, people who always seem to do the good thing. Peter says, even they don't have an easy time of this. It's almost impossible for them, so imagine what it's like for the unrighteous.

And I was thinking how to illustrate this. We'll call this a preacher's story. You can read into it what you will. A preacher once went to visit an elderly woman in the hospital and she was near the end and the preacher said to her, when you stand in front of God, what will you say?

What will you do? And she said, I'll tell him that I've raised eight children and that I worked these hands to the bone and I'll lift up these hands and I'll say, I didn't have any time for church or for Jesus or for any of that sort of stuff but I did my best and I'll just hold up these hands.

[29 : 48] And the preacher replied, you're too late, dear. Somebody beat you to it. Somebody got in line in front of you and he already held up his hands and God has no eyes for anybody else.

If we think we can convince God that because the way we lived our lives or reacted to our circumstances makes us righteous, makes us right in his lives, then frankly, we're on a hiding to nothing.

unless those things were the proof of a heart that believed that God raised Jesus from the dead and confessed with our mouths that Jesus is Lord.

That it is only the righteousness of Jesus that makes us righteous. And because once again, Christ lives in us. As we finish, let's think about this.

Do we know these things? Do we really know that God's will is for us to stop living for ourselves? For that next pint?

[30 : 57] For that next bit of gossip? For that next bit of comfort, entertainment, whatever the case? To be holy as God is holy? To take our new selves and not to live for ourselves, but to throw ourselves into living for others.

And doing all these things because Christ took up residence in us. Not because we want to be really good people, although we do, but it's because Christ took up residence in us and his righteousness lets us stand before the Father and be counted as righteous.

Remember that we have this rock-solid assurance, what Peter called in chapter 1, this living hope that we'll never die because of the work of Jesus on the cross who said, it is finished.

There's nothing else to do. In verse 19, with all these things, it's simple. Let's commit ourselves to the one who created us and continue to do good.

Because it's all about him, friends. This isn't about us. It's not about our families or jobs or careers, whatever the case might be.

[32 : 13] It's about him. Because life will be hard. Life is hard. But let's keep going. Let's keep loving one another.

Let's keep bearing one another's burdens and weeping with those who weep and rejoicing with those who rejoice and living for one another. Remember that it's only by Christ's strength that we keep going.

Don't try to do this by yourselves. Submit yourself to the Lord in prayer. Come to the fountain that never runs dry and drink from the living water.

Let's remember that whether it's the land of plenty, whether it's the barren desert, whether we're on top of the mountain or in the valley or the noonday sun or the pitch of black, God came to earth and took up residence in you and in me.

And those whom he draws to himself will never be brought out of his hand. They will be lifted up on the last day. Let's remember the words of the old hymn.

[33 : 29] King James, old hymns. I'm on to old stuff today, apparently. The old hymn, I hear the Saviour say, Thy strength indeed is small. Child of weakness, watch and pray.

Find in me thine all in all. Amen. Let's pray. Amen. Gracious Father, we give you praise for what you've done for us.

It's not always easy, Lord. It's not always easy in this world of sin, death and decay to declare boldly the praises of you who brought us out of darkness and into the light.

We ask you, Lord, for help. Lord, we know that you live in us. We don't often feel it. Help us to be aware of your presence in us. Give us strength day by day to simply keep going.

To love one another as you love us. To serve one another as you came to earth to serve and become a ransom for many. Give us the strength to keep going.

[34 : 47] Whether you give or whether you take away, help us to do everything for your glory. And as we come to a close and finish in song, help us once again to elevate our voices and our hearts to commune with you, to enter into your holy of holies and to get a tangible sense that you do indeed live in us.

Be with us, Lord. All for your glory. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.