

The Will of God, Suffering, and War

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[0 : 0 0] You're listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee. To learn more about us, visit our website at gracereformed.org.

And now, today's sermon. I want to begin this morning by making the record straight before we jump into this.

God did not choose me to stand here this morning because I have some unique capacity within me. I have no special gift that puts me above you.

I have no elevated platform that the Spirit has granted to me so that I may speak down to you from high levels of holiness.

I am a sinner who, by God's will, is proclaiming to other sinners where to find the power of Christ for all of life. Where to find rest for our souls in a world that is at war.

[0 : 5 9] Where to find hope outside of the dying dreams. And where to find the Father's will in our daily life based upon the gospel's power. A lot of what Peter has to say this morning is very pointed.

But I felt like it was necessary for us to remind ourselves that we are all receiving this exhortation this morning. Me included. So please hear from my heart as we begin to think through all this wonder that Peter has for us in this fourth chapter.

What I want to do before we jump in, some of you are visiting here, I do want to get us into the right mindset to embrace what Peter is saying. Peter is preparing the church to face the rest of their lives with the mindset of this.

Life is a fight until you die. I don't know where my brother picked this up, but he had this phrase, anytime something didn't go right, even from high school he would say, life is hard and then you die.

But it's true. It's a true statement. Absolutely no one wants to hear this though, that this is your fate. This is what your existence consists of. War is ugly.

[2 : 1 4] It destroys, it robs, and it doesn't care who it touches. Within every human is the image of God. We feel it. This is biblical. And because this is true, part of our nature is to desire to experience peace and joy and harmony and pleasure and happiness, growth, adventure and progress.

Not war. Not destruction. But then Peter says, all these things will be experienced, but that's your hope to come. We are a people of hope.

That is actually how Paul describes the Old Testament saints. They were a people of hope. We know our future is secure in Christ. We will be restored to our original design.

That is to enjoy God and glorify Him. And we will walk in the wonder of His perfection. And it's going to be amazing. And we will feast among our God and enjoy all His benefits.

This is not in my notes, but I just want to take a side note real quick. When we think about the new heavens and the new earth, it is a earth, which means there are plants and hills and mountains and water and animals.

- [3 : 25] And I don't believe we lose our memories. So all of you that know how to make amazing dishes, I will be visiting your house. And we will celebrate God's wonder together.
- Eating Mexican and Chinese and all whatever else is out there. Those are His good gifts to us. But that is not the full benefits of our hope now.
- Turn with me to 1 Peter. I just want to show us a couple of verses to get us ready to really understand chapter 4. 1 Peter 1.3, it says this. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It's living hope because it's based on Jesus. And Jesus is alive.
- So it's a living hope. Verse 13 says, Therefore, prepare your minds for action and be sober-minded. Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- [4 : 29] So where is He placing our hope? This is the second time. Outside of our circumstances, outside of our world. It's a hope that is to come. When Jesus returns. Chapter 1, verse 21.
- Who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory so that your faith and hope are in God. He keeps pointing us to where the purpose of our life is drawn from.
- It's from our circumstances. Outside of us, in a person, in the work of this person. Chapter 3, if you'll turn there in verse 15. Just one more. Where He speaks of the idea of our hope.
- 1 Peter 3, verse 15. But in your heart, honor Christ the Lord as holy. Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.
- Yet do it with gentleness and respect. So our entire life is driven by a hope that is in a person. And this person is Jesus Christ. Not only what He has done, but what He will do and what He is preparing for us.
- [5 : 36] So we have a living hope based upon grace. Grace is to receive that which we could not earn. That which we cannot keep. And that which we cannot lose. That's what grace means.
- And that's what our hope is based upon. And that's why we have it in the future. Knowing that when Christ comes, He will finish all that He has promised. So it's important to remember up to this point, our hope is not in what we have done for God or will do for God.
- Not in our performance. Our hope is in the grace that we have received and that He will finish giving at the day that He returns. So this world is now for two purposes.
- I grew up, many of you grew up hearing sermons either about how to save yourself or how to keep yourself saved. And that was the purpose of your life. The purpose of your holiness. You better obey because at the end of your life, God's going to judge you.
- And you want to make sure that you've done enough. That changes the purpose of your life. Right? Every work, every deed you do is between you and God thinking, I hope He's happy enough with me.
- [6 : 43] Let me put it to you this way. There are no interview processes to get into the new heavens and the new earth. You are either brought there by God or you are not.
- But it's important to remember this because it frees you from thinking else about your purpose of your life. And so we are left with this purpose. This is how Peter summarizes it and really we're going to unpack it this morning.

Our mission is to rescue the lost children of the King by sharing the hope that's in us. Right? He secures your hope. He motivates you with the hope. And then He says, now talk about it.

Be ready to give an answer of the hope that lies within you. The purpose of your life is to share it with those who have not yet believed. And then the second part of our life is not just sharing a message, but it is to reflect the glory of the King in a world that is absolutely corrupt.

Is it not refreshing to see something that is wholesome and beautiful and complete? There's a lot about art that I enjoy. I like something that reflects beauty.

[7 : 50] And you can tell it took time and talent. Right? And we can enjoy it. But the hard part is if a bird comes over and defecates on it, you're just kind of like, well, that's disgusting. Right?

That's kind of how the world feels. And when Christians come in and touch the world, we remove the stain. And we can actually reflect back its original intention. So we proclaim hope and we reclaim that which has been destroyed.

This is why Paul says whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, whatever our hands find to do, he says, do all for the glory of God. Right? That means, yes, you could actually eat tacos for God's glory.

I've done it. It's awesome. It's great. It's great. According to Peter, we have learned over the last few weeks that a massive spiritual army has one mission, though, against us.

It's to create chaos and destruction in our world. To take that which we are trying to bring, which is hope and honor to the king. They want to stop that. And this army is not one that you can see with your eyes.

[9 : 00] He says it's not flesh and blood. And the army destroys everything our king has created. Whatever they can't kill, they try and poison, distort, and leave people enslaved in lies.

And Peter is writing to comfort and encourage the church who are serving the king to keep them focused on their mission. Because their mission is not how to find satisfaction in this world, but how to save people from destruction.

That really kind of summarizes the first three chapters, preparing us rightly for what we're about to digest. He has really given us our salvation.

We didn't do anything to save ourselves, nor we will do anything to maintain ourselves. And then he secures for us our future, our inheritance. We won't take anything with us.

We will go as we came, right? And that's good news for us. We don't have to waste our time in the world. And then he gives us a new identity, right?

[10 : 07] He says, you're ambassadors, you're royal priests, you're a holy temple. You represent God to people. Now he turns and says, but what can destroy this?

What can remove our eyes? What can really take us out is chapter 4 and following. So he says this, 1 Peter 4, 1.

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourself with the same way of thinking. For whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in this flesh, no longer for human passions, but for the will of God.

Here's the outline of what we're going to cover for the next few verses. What does life look like following the king in a battle zone? First, Peter talks about the mind is our battlefield.

This is the warning he's getting into right now. The mind is our battlefield. Then he talks about, number two, the will of God is our purpose. Which is ambiguous at times, we'll clarify.

[11 : 11] The mind is our battlefield, the will of God is our purpose. And number three, resistance leads to suffering. Resistance leads to suffering. Go back and read verse 1 as we unpack the mind is a battlefield.

It's this. 1 Peter 4, 1. Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourself with the same way of thinking. Whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.

Now this last phrase, has ceased from sin. I'm going to work backwards through this verse so we don't get lost. Some of you read phrases and then you're cross-overcing and I lose you for about five minutes. So I'm going to keep you from doing that. We'll just address the first problem right away.

The only reason I know that is that that's what my mind does. I was like, oh, what does that mean? Whoever suffers in the flesh ceases from sin. I'm like, dude, beat my flesh up then because I'm so done with sin, right?

But what does he mean? We have to look at all of Scripture in light of what this has said. And when we look at all of Scripture, it means that there's a change in perspective.

[12 : 12] There's a change in desire. He doesn't mean that they fully cease from ever sinning again. But it's the way in which one lives their life. Those who have changed the way they see this world, they look at it through the eyes of Jesus, their actions then follow.

Their sinful passions no longer control them. They address the problem at the source, which is the mind. So it is more of, I don't think the way the world does.

I've ceased from that. I don't indulge myself in the passions of my flesh. I've realized that destroys me. This is why Peter says this.

Arm yourself with the same way of thinking. To arm means to what? To place protective shields around something. So our minds need to be protected from the war that we face.

Where do all sins get its birth? Where do it take its genesis? It comes right in our mind. I don't think I've ever committed a sin and I go, I don't know where that came from.

[13 : 22] The demon must have come in and made me do it. How dare he? No, the demon is my own heart, my own soul, my own desires. Peter has constantly been trying to get us to see the battlefield of the mind.

So please, just as a reminder, I will put my notes out later if you want to go back and read these passages. But if not, you want to write them in your notes or in your Bible in the side notes. It's 1 Peter 1 and verse 13.

It's the first time that he mentions this. Right out of the gate. He's not even done with his introduction yet. And he says, therefore, 1 Peter 1.13, preparing your minds for action.

He introduces it but then tells you what it is. You're arming yourself with this idea we're going to get to in a minute. It says, therefore, preparing your mind for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that is to come.

Or 1 Peter 5, that we're going to get to this in a couple of weeks. But he says the same thing. But with a massive warning on it. 1 Peter 5.8, be sober-minded.

[14 : 29] Meaning, don't be intoxicated with the lies of the world. Be sober-minded. Be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

And then we come to 1 Peter 4.7. The end of all things is at hand. Therefore, be self-controlled and be sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.

He's worried about our minds. He's worried about what comes into our hearts through the gate of the mind. These are other passages that I think are worthy of mentioning if you want to write them down.

This is Romans 12.2. Do not be conformed to this world. And you have to do it in reverse. But be transformed by the renewal of your mind. If you're not renewing your mind, what is Paul saying?

You're going to be conformed to the world. There is no neutral ground. There isn't a place that you can go and say, I am safe here. I neither need Christ and I won't be affected by the world.

[15 : 30] You are either renewing your mind or you're being conformed. This is 2 Corinthians 10.5. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

Why? Because our minds wander. Some of you have been sitting here, as I have in church services, and you're like, I can't believe I just had that thought. I can't believe I just dozed off. No, I'm just kidding.

But our minds wander. And he's saying, you have to be actively saying, through a filter, is this what I should be thinking about? Take it captive. My mind does not have the freedom to wander where its flesh leads it.

But we have to guide it where the Spirit tells us to, which is through the Scriptures. What does it tell us to think about? Philippians 4.8. You know this verse. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, commendable, if there is excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

What's nice is that he didn't just say, think about better things. He's like, well, here's a list. Start with that. Here's a good list. Colossians 3.1. If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

[16 : 45] This sounds like Paul, where we're putting our hope above. Set your mind so you're focused, you're purposely driving it on things that are above, not on things that are in the earth.

So, Peter is worried that he's helped them with their salvation, secured them in their hope. He's given them a mission.

He's helped them understand their purpose. But the one thing that can trip them up is the mind. The evil forces of darkness want to control the mind. And if they control your mind, they control your entire body.

Some of us, some of you are here today, and you already feel the trap. Your heart is pounding. You feel sick to your stomach.

You know that your mind is being controlled by your flesh. It rages with sin, and every day you feel the beast that you can't put to death. And it subtly lies to you that one day you'll fix it.

[17 : 44] One day you'll remove it. Or there's other lies that we tell ourselves. No one will know. It's just in my mind. And you give it a little bit more of your mind.

And more of the kingdom of darkness now reigns in there. And every time we indulge in media that we know we shouldn't, we think to ourselves, well, it's not that bad.

It's not affecting me. It really doesn't cause me to do anything wrong. And according to Peter, you are slowly poisoning your brain. I've never counseled anyone who woke up one day and said, you know what?

This morning I had a thought I just never thought. It just came out of nowhere, John. I just decided to cheat on my spouse. I don't know where it came from. It never has happened. There's always a trail. There's always a habit.

But when I talk to people who have stole money from their company, they didn't wake up one day and be like, I think I'm going to do that. It's wrong desires that lead to wrong actions that lead to the ultimate destruction.

[18 : 51] Peter says that resisting the way of the world is going to bring suffering. See, the world around us is going to embrace and indulge its destruction. We look at it with eyes that are open. We have a hope that is beyond their hope.

We don't need to be controlled by our bodies. And yet when we say no, we will suffer for it. This is what he says. This is powerful. He says you're going to have to train your mind to think this way.

I do ask people when I talk to people who are trapped in sin and they want to come out, I always ask them this. Did you believe that what you were participating in was going to make you happy?

And the answer is always yes. Once you indulged in it, were you happy? And what is the answer? No. That is the power of a good lie. That is the power of sin.

It blinds and lies and deceives and never satisfies. And what it ends up doing is it gets us dependent on the cycle. And we become dependent on the cycle.

[19 : 55] And before we know it, we are controlled by the passions of our flesh. Can you stop feeding the beast while you live alone? This is the warning.

Most cannot. When you are ready to stop lying to yourself that you are in control and you can control these things. When you are ready to truly be set free, this is what the power of the gospel amongst the people of God is designed to do.

That we are here to gather and be each other's strength. So you can keep trying the methods that you've tried in the past. Or we can take the words of Peter, realize that our minds must be protected, and start the fight today.

Come and tell someone that you are ready to be set free. And this leads us to why are we protecting our minds?

Peter leads us to this. So the mind is our battlefield. And it never goes away until we die. Once we die, we are set free from the war. Because we will be with the king.

[21 : 03] But until then, we have the will of God as our purpose. I never could live my life if the entire purpose of my life was to not sin.

It doesn't seem like a very meaningful life. I wake up every day and I could write a list on my wall.

It would help me do really well. Well, I haven't murdered anybody today. Ha! Check. I haven't stole any money yet. Check. No, there's got to be more to life.

And there is. Look at verse 2. He says, You don't want your mind controlled by the evil one. And you want to prepare it knowing you're going to suffer in this world. Because the world is going to constantly be drawing you back into the passions of the flesh.

So as we war, as we war, as we prepare and arm our minds to think this way. 1 Peter 4.2 So as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh. No longer for human passions.

[22 : 04] But for the will of God. Nah, Peter. Now you're speaking my language. You're giving me something that actually means. I love the king. I love my God. He is amazing.

He's glorious. And so you're saying my life has purpose when I live for his will. Now that, I can do that. That's exciting to me. Because the will of the father has been nothing but gracious towards me.

In my sin he loved me. As a child of wrath he died for me. He then covered my sins and clothed me with his righteousness. I, at every moment of every day, can talk with him.

Plead with him. Ask him for forgiveness. Even at times get angry and ask him to help me. And you want me to do his will? No one in the world has given me more than my God.

So his will sounds good to me. Now, some people though, when they hear this. Oh, the will of God. It is true. We, at times, are very worldly and selfish.

[23 : 06] I can remember thinking, Lord, I don't want to die until I'm married. I want to experience that. And now, I'm like, Lord, I'm good. Take me home. Not because my marriage is bad. Marriage is great.

Oh, it's good she's in the nursery today. It's because the world's bad. But sometimes we hear, oh, we're to live for the will of God. And what we hear is, well, man, I don't know about that.

I don't want to be poor. I don't want to be a poor missionary. That's like in the jungle. I don't want to be this unhappy stay-at-home mom or have a job that makes no money. Or I'm not married. Or I don't have kids.

Or you can keep going down. The list of the will of God seems always negative. Come on, admit it, right? Oh, man, God just wants to make me unhappy.

That's what he wants to do. The only source of happiness in this world, the only way to make sense of life, is to do God's will. If you try and pursue it in all of these things, wealth, marriage, intimacy, children, you will be disappointed because it cannot satisfy.

[24 : 11] This is the very thing Peter is saying. You're going to suffer because you're going to say, yeah, what you're pursuing in life will not satisfy. But if I pursue God's will, I will always find satisfaction.

Now, there's nothing wrong with many of the things that I've said here as far as it relates to our purposes. But God has good and special gifts for our life that are far beyond what our flesh desires.

Sometimes when people come to me, they're like, John, I just don't know what the will of God is for my life. And I love this phrase. God did not invent the game hide and seek with his will.

You did. God's not hiding his will from you. He's not waiting for you to check every door. I hate that phrase. Whenever a door closes, a window opens. I'm like, oh, I don't want to go through a window.

Who wants to go through a window? That's dumb. That's dumb. The entire letter, Peter is pointing the reader toward the will of the king.

[25 : 13] Based upon the grace and mercy and kindness of the king. And what prevents us from seeing and obeying his will is our flesh. We can't really see the hope and the joy that's behind it.

I'm going to start with the simplest format of God's will and then we'll unpack it so that we can all walk away here going, I know what God's will is for me. It's not hidden. It's this.

We've already read it, but we're going to read it again. God's will is this. That we love him and we love others. It is as simple as that.

But then you ask, okay, I hear you and I believe you, but what does that look like? And Peter, he's here to help us with that. What does this look like? What does it mean to love God and resist temptation and to love others sacrificially?

Here's how the will of God has kind of unfolded in an outline. If you want to write this down, there's four areas that I think Peter kind of walked us through already. I've already introduced it to you, but here it is if you want to write it down.

[26 : 16] The first will of God is you have been saved. You are safe. No need to worry or tempt to save yourself.

The will of God is that you rest. Come to me, all you who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. It is God's will that you, your soul, every day rests in the sufficiency of God's love for you.

In the sufficiency of his salvation. Because if you don't rest there, guess what you're going to do? You're going to try and save yourself. This is why we wrote that little book, Rest. It is hard to obey the will of God if you cannot find rest in your soul.

I promise you. I know what it's like to try and obey his will and yet not quite sure know. Does he love me? Am I safe? Child, he wants you to know you're safe.

This is his will. He wants you. He started the book this way. His divine power has granted to you everything for life and godliness. Rest. Number two. One, you are saved.

[27 : 20] Number two, you are secure. You are secure. You do not worry about accumulating wealth here. You do not think about, well, if I don't provide for myself, nothing will happen.

He says, everything that you need, I will provide. You obey my will and I will take care of all of your physical needs. You are secure. That doesn't mean that at times you might go without.

There might be suffering. As a matter of fact, the whole book is about suffering. You know, sometimes we like to quote Jeremiah. I know the plans that I have for you. Plans for success and prosperity. Love that verse. And Peter's like, hello, you're misquoting it.

Let me tell you what he means. You love me, you suffer. You love me, you die. But you die with hope and dignity and joy and purpose.

So you're secure. You don't need to find your significance in the way that you look, in your bank account, in what you drive. We all feel it. I mean, there's a reason why I ironed my shirt this morning, right?

[28 : 16] I didn't like, man, that guy's frumpy. Why didn't he, like, wash his clothes? We all, at some level, feel it, right? Of course we do. But what we hear from Peter is this.

You're safe with me, child. Your identity is not in what the world thinks of you. Your identity is what I think of you. You're secure. Number two, number three, this one may be hard for those who are maybe new to our church, but Peter mentions this.

Remember the story where he descends into the underworld, and he comes out, and he likens it to our baptism? Peter's like, you've been baptized. Part of the will of God is your baptism, because when you come up out of the water, you are robed with the royal priesthood of Christ.

He calls you a living temple. The will of God is that you literally walk around going, man, I represent the king. When I was baptized by the Spirit, and when I was baptized in real life, I came up out cognitively understanding, I now represent the very thing that the gospel proclaims.

This is part of God's will. His will for you is that you boldly wear that robe, understanding the freedom that it gives others. This is why this entire time he says, we need to pray and be subject to our leaders and our governors, that we may have a boss that needs our grace, because they're a horrible boss.

[29 : 39] Some of you might be in a relationship where the spouse is not kind and gracious, and that our grace in response to them could lead them to the truth. Part of the will of God is that every day we wake up and say, I have been baptized into the royal priesthood of my king, and he chose me to be the representative to the world.

You see, I don't choose you. The elders don't choose you. Your spouse doesn't choose you. It's a good thing, because I'm not sure I'd be chosen. Jesus says, I cleanse you. I cover you. I employ you.

And baptism is that symbol of our death, burial, resurrection, and sending. And then lastly and fourthly, part of the will of God is we are commissioned.

We are saved. We are secure. We are baptized. We are commissioned. This is why he says, be ready to give anyone an answer of the hope that lies within you. He says, but do it with joy.

What attacks every single one of these is allowing the world to come in, control our mind, control our passions, and what do we end up doing?

[30 : 51] We either start trying to save ourselves. We start accumulating wealth. We start finding our identity in this world, how people see us. Our mission changes. Instead of being the representative of God, our commission changes.

And so the will of God is not complicated. You can ask yourself, am I fulfilling the will of God? Do I believe that he has saved me? Do I believe that I am saved? Do I believe in my commissioning as being a baptized believer in every area of my life?

Then yes, you are doing the will of God no matter where you are. But when you finally decide to take on the war in your mind, and you are, I'm going to do my purpose in life.

I'm going to fulfill the will of God. This is where you're going to find yourself in point number three. This resistance to the world does lead to suffering. Resistance leads to suffering. Look at verse, so 1 Peter 4 verse 3.

For the time that past suffices for doing what the Gentiles would not do. So anytime he uses the word Gentile, he just means those who are the unbelievers, those who reject God.

[32 : 02] Living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this, they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery.

And they malign you. I think it's important that Peter says they are surprised. Because these aren't strangers. The people that you yell at on your phone because you're watching this video and you're like, I can't believe that.

I'm so against what they're doing. They're not going to be surprised because they don't know you. But your neighbor will. Your spouse will. Your family members will. Now, when you decide, no, this is not how God has called us to live.

This is not in reflection to his honor and glory. This is not a part of his will. I can't be a part of that. Remember, he says to do this with meekness and gentleness. He says, they're going to be surprised because they're close to you.

They know you. And those who live among us, the closest ones to us, I think, is where we might find this. When we don't laugh at the inappropriate joke, we don't steal from our employer by clocking in early, we refrain from overdrinking, resist dressing in a sensual way to draw attention, you will be mocked.

[33 : 30] You will be pushed aside. You will be rejected. It's interesting. I just want to back up. But Peter says, arm yourself.

Be ready to be rejected. He's like, arm your mind with this so that it doesn't throw you off. Live your life loving Christ with all the benefits, fulfilling his will, and be prepared to be rejected.

Let your mind get ready for that. It is not good logic to think. Everyone is doing it, so I must be okay.

We fall into this trap. Parents, you feel this pressure. I know. I feel this pressure. I have four children. Your child has no idea what they are fighting.

Now, they are very good at convincing you. They do. And they will make all kinds of promises to you that they have it under control. But just remind yourself, did you have it under control when you were that age?

[34 : 33] Did you know what you were doing at that age? But your children are so much wiser than you are. How could they be? You raised them. Sorry. Sorry. That's how I feel about my kids.

I'm like, I don't trust you. I don't trust me. What are you talking about, man? They're blind to the dangers that await them. And if you're going to let the world teach them how to find the dangers, they're lost already.

This is what brings the most concern. I want you to think about it this way. If someone does not profess, I have been saved by the king. I've been baptized by the king.

I live for the will of the king. If they don't profess that, and that's not what drives their life. Listen to how Paul describes people and what drives them. I've said this before.

But this is Ephesians 2.2. It says that the world is following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. And what is he causing them to do?

[35 : 38] Verse 3. Carry out the desires of the body and the mind. And he is so good at what he's done, what he does. He's been doing it for thousands of years.

That to us, it's subtle and harmless. It's subtle and harmless. We must teach our children that God is the one who governs our body and our minds.

We are not free to govern ourselves. We are not to be trusted. We live for his will and we live under his promises. And we represent him and what he says and what he does.

And if you don't, it's not neutral. There isn't like a neutral way. It's either you represent the king of darkness or you represent the king of kings. So when your child leaves your home, when my children leave my home, we want them to look at themselves for who they are.

Not only in their identity, but what they are representing. What's driving their heart? What passions do they have? We want them to see that you're a child of the king and we want you to be ready to give an answer of why you say no and why you say yes.

[36 : 48] And why you present yourselves in the way in which you do. Instead, we often hand them over to the enemy to fill their minds with no filter, with no warning.

And there's a slow poisoning that happens and the lies seep in, giving fuel to the personal side that destroys them. And then we wonder why they have hard hearts and the battle is so hard for them.

And we get tired of the fight. As parents, we all get tired of the fight. I don't care what age they are. If you don't fight for your children and you don't help them understand the battle of the mind and the joy of Christ and the will of God for them, Satan is already fighting for them.

He's fighting you in every turn, in every way. Because, well, what does he describe as? The God of this world. He controls the evil that is here. This is why Peter says, be sober-minded, be watchful, because he's going to devour.

And so we can't just sit neutral anymore. This is why my heart breaks often and I think of many different ways. We provide parenting seminars, parenting books and podcasts.

[37 : 58] Because I really feel that this war is real. And our children are the prey of the next generation. If we just sit back and be neutral about this and blind to it, our children are going to reap the corruption.

I will say this. It's the last thing I want to say. I don't want my children to obey because Dad said so. And I grew up that way. I have parents that love me.

A lot of times what they wanted me to do didn't make any logic. But I want them to truly see Christ and the hope of Christ and the desire of Christ and contrast it. Look at what the world promises it gives you and then look at the results.

The most beautiful people in the planet who we love watching on screens are the most unhappy. And we also like to look at that part of it.

I mean, there's a reason why in the line there's these weird magazines. It's like, they're great on screen, but man, look at them in the real life. And we're like, I would never do that. But I love reading when you do. So let's keep reading.

[39 : 07] 1 Peter 4, 5. But they will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. So these people that malign us and mock us and make fun of us, we don't need to judge them.

They have their own day coming if they don't find the hope of Christ. For this is why the gospel is preached even to those who are dead. That though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

This can sound like a confusing verse. Peter is not saying we preach the gospel to dead people. He is saying that even those who have heard the gospel and are now dead, they received the temporal punishment.

They died. But what they're going to receive is the reward, which is to live as God did, or is. He's alive. And those who reject God and live according to the passions of their flesh and give in to the desires of the mind, they are going to receive their...

They may not... They may live now, but they're going to receive their judgment. And what happens to those who killed them? They will then face eternal suffering.

[40 : 27] This is a side note and a little bit of why we're doing the GRN about the ordinary means of grace and the purpose of the church. This is why we don't seek justice for ourselves now. God did not hand us a sword. He told Peter to put it away.

Today, we suffer as ambassadors for the king, which means we actually give our life. We will die for the gospel. All the disciples did, from what we know, maybe save John, who literally was exiled to an island, so we can go ahead and put John in that category.

They suffered for the sake of the gospel. They didn't bring a war about. They didn't fight back because they understood they aren't fighting the flesh and blood that's in front of them. The enemy they're fighting is the one that's controlling them, the spiritual realm behind them.

So we die for our mission. We die for the will of God. Sometimes we, you know, I'll ask a husband, are you willing to die for your wife? He's like, yeah, man. Totally would die for her.

I said, great. Maybe you should first try to live for her first. Right? Live your life for her. Lay it down. Prove it while you live. It's more beneficial that you live sacrificially while alive than, my husband died for me, but he's no longer here.

[41 : 30] This is why he uses the phrase living sacrifice. So we die for our mission. We make it the purpose of our life. Verse 7.

The end of all things is at hand. Meaning that the end is near. We just don't know when it's coming. I love people who like talking about end times theology.

Because, well, we've predicted the coming of Christ like 17,000 times so far. I'm like, yeah, I'm going to not do that because I don't want to be one of the fools up in heaven going, I can't believe I predicted that was dumb.

But he's saying, listen, the end is near. Never live like that. Therefore, be self-controlled and be sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. I'm going to answer that for the sake of your prayers in a whole other sermon series.

We're going to get to it next week. But before we close, none of this matters if we don't turn back to the point of this entire passage. We began in verse 1, 1 Peter 4, 1.

[42 : 33] Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourself with the same way of thinking. I think this encapsulates all of what Christ suffered for us on our behalf.

Not only how did he see suffered injustice, but he suffered on our behalf. This idea of armament and warriors, we know this language. This is 1 Peter, I'm sorry, Ephesians 6.

If you just want to write this down. But I want to read it because the connection is so powerful. Listen to how Paul says this. So he tells the church the first three chapters, you are safe in Christ. Look at what Jesus is for you.

Chapters 4 and 5, this is how they're to function as a church. To be one in Christ. And to share the gospel. And then he's like, alright, now this is what can stop it. You're not wrestling against each other.

Stop fighting each other. That's not where the war is at. The war is in the realm that you cannot see. So he says this, finally, at the end of his letter. Finally, brothers, sisters, be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might.

[43 : 32] Put on the whole armor of God that you might be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. And what is the armor? This is what is important. What protects us? When Peter and Paul both say, arm yourselves, it is always and forever Jesus Christ.

He is our hope, our salvation, our future, our joy, our purpose, our satisfaction. If you walk out of here thinking, I'm going to try harder this week not to sin. You might as well just give up.

Because you're going to sin. He didn't say, stand in the strength of your commitment. Stand in the strength. I mean, how many of you have said, I know you have because you're human like me. I will never do that again.

I think I have a wall of check marks that say, I will never do that again. I will never do that again. That is me standing in the strength. I should have said, Father, in my own strength, I have done it again.

I have turned my heart away. I did not listen. I let my mind be filled with lies. My flesh took over. Instead of me, according to Hebrews 12, Romans 12, somewhere 12 too, it says that we need to be renewing our minds.

[44 : 41] Why? Because we will be controlled by them if we do not. So we walk each day remembering who Christ is, what he's done, what he's promised, what his will is for our life.

So that, one, we can have the joy of being free from the passions of our flesh. That we can see the holy, what does he say? I must quote this verse a thousand times a day.

Walk by the spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. I'm telling you, I quote it constantly because it's true. I want to be reminded that what I'm about to do is very fleshly. And I need to think about what Christ is for me, what he's done, his power, his strength.

I'm going to stand in the strength of the Lord. And in his might, I realize what I'm about to indulge in is not going to satisfy me. Lord, help me say no. Help me say yes to your will. And there are times that I don't have the strength.

And I call up a brother. And I'm like, man, you've got to speak some logic to me because everything in me wants to do what is wrong. And they sit across the table and they go, well, I was going to ask you to do the same. I'm like, oh, man, we're in trouble.

[45 : 43] We need each other, right? So my encouragement to us, we need to take this serious church. I hope our church is a place for those of you that are trapped in the prisons of your minds that you can come to your brothers and sisters and confess that.

We are not going to judge you. There is no one that is here that is free from the prisons of our minds. Some of you have experienced it. And I would love to have you stand up here and testify.

Some of you experienced confessing your sin and receiving hope and joy and restoration and freedom and accountability. And actually have a purpose in your life far beyond afraid of being caught.

It's the worst way to live. Afraid of being caught. And Peter says, you want to live now in the flesh for the will of God, not I don't want to be caught. Amen.

Father, I am so thankful that as a sinner, as a weak, weak man, as one who struggles in the flesh, I have brothers and sisters who will sing to me, speak with me, preach the gospel to me, take communion with me, who confess their sins with me so that we all might be strengthened, that we all might understand the will and purpose of our life.

[46 : 58] Lord, let this not be a church where we judge each other, but we look to each other with grace and mercy, that we might be freed from the passions of our flesh.

In Christ's name. Amen. Thanks for listening to the sermon podcast of Grace Reformed Church in Spring Hill, Tennessee, where everyone is in equal need of grace.

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