

A Mind Set Against Sin

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Date: 27 September 2026

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[0:00] A prayer of Moses, the man of God. Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

You return man to dust and say, return, O children of man. For a thousand tears in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.

You sweep them away as with a flood. They are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning. In the morning it flourishes and is renewed.

In the evening it fades and withers. For we are brought to an end by your anger. By your wrath we are dismayed. You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. For all our days pass away under your wrath. We bring our years to an end like a sigh. The years of our life are seventy or even by reason of strength eighty.

[1:18] Yet their span is but toil and trouble. They are soon gone and we fly away. Who considers the power of your anger and your wrath according to the fare of you?

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. Now we will go to 1st Peter chapter 4 verses 1 to 6.

Once again that's found on page 1016. Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh.

Arm yourselves with the same way of thinking. For whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. So as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh.

No longer for human passions but for the will of God. For the time that has passed suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do. Living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties and lawless idolatry.

[2:30] With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery. They malign you.

But they will give you account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is why the gospel was 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 is the word of God. Thank you for reading today.

Have no doubt this morning that most of us, if not all of us. Sincerely desire to follow Jesus in a faithful way.

And I think being here this morning when we could be other places is evidence of that. But I believe all of us have lived long enough to know that it takes more than desire to follow Jesus.

[3:44] Indeed it takes more than desire to do things in life. More than desire, we need to know how to follow Jesus.

And then after knowing how to follow Jesus, we need to then, by the grace of God, put that into action. But our challenge is that we are called to follow Jesus in a world that is screaming at us to join the buffet line of many options to pursue our passions.

To pursue what we desire to do, how we desire to live, rather than how God calls us to live. That is our challenge. Our challenge is that as Jesus beckons us to follow him, the world is also beckoning us to join that line, join the buffet, and choose what we want, to do what we will, and to live as we choose.

And so the question this morning, as we come to continue our sermon series in the letter of 1 Peter, The question that arises from this passage in front of us, and that I want to seek to answer this morning, is how do we faithfully, in a world that is beckoning us to join that buffet line and choose those options, how do we faithfully follow Jesus instead of the passions of our flesh?

How do we do that? How do we do that?

[6:08] Father, we pause in this moment, acknowledging our desperate need for you. Acknowledging that we need to hear you again from the pages of your word, to speak to our hearts, to help us to follow Jesus faithfully, and to tune out the shouts of the world, to call us in another direction, to live for ourselves, and to pursue our own passions.

Father, we thank you that in your providence you have brought us here this morning. We thank you that you know us individually, and you know what we need, both individually and collectively. And so, Lord, would you speak to our hearts in ways that only you can. Would you do it for our good, that we may serve Jesus faithfully, and would you do it for the glory of your great name? In Christ's name we pray. Amen. Amen. Give me a moment.

So, these six verses that we have come to this morning, and calling us to follow Jesus, Peter calls us to give consideration to our lives.

[7:49] And when you look at this passage, Peter calls us to give consideration to our lives in three aspects. He calls us to give consideration to our present life, the life we're living now.

He calls us to give consideration to our past life. And then he also calls us to consider our future life, the life that lies ahead of us, which includes eternity.

Now, just the life that we have on this earth, but a life of eternity that is before us all.

And so, I want to use these three aspects that Peter directs our attention to as we consider these six verses, and I want us to work our way through this section of 1 Peter that we have come to this morning.

Starting with the first aspect of our lives that he calls us to consider, which is our present life. last Sunday, we considered 1 Peter chapter 3, verses 13 to 22.

[9:07] And we're reminded that sometimes we who follow Christ suffer for doing good. good. We're also reminded that Christ himself suffered in the ultimate way for doing good.

He died for our sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God. And then we also saw that God, in the end, proved that Jesus was right by raising him from the dead and exalting him to his right hand where he is now seated.

His enemy is being made his footstool. And so God vindicated Jesus. He showed that Jesus was right. And Peter promises us that if we also suffer in this life for doing good, that God will likewise show us to be right.

He will, in the end, vindicate us. And now we have come to verse 1 of 1 Peter chapter 4.

And what Peter starts out saying to us is that since Christ has suffered in the flesh, we who follow Christ should also arm ourselves with the same way of thinking.

[10:36] Because whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. I think, first of all, if we're going to understand what Peter is saying, we should understand how he's using the word flesh.

This word flesh, we find it in the New Testament regularly, and it's used in two particular ways. One, it's used to talk about our sinful nature.

Things pertaining to the flesh, the passions that we have that are contrary to what God desires for us. The New Testament uses flesh in that way. But it also uses flesh to simply refer to the body.

And that's the way that Peter is referring to flesh in these verses. And I want us to see this. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to substitute body for flesh in verses 1 and 2.

I want you to follow along. Since therefore Christ has suffered in the body, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the body has ceased from sin.

[11:44] So as to live the rest of the time in the body, no longer for human passions, but for the will of God.

So what is Peter saying in verses 1 and 2? I think the first thing we need to see, very important, Peter is saying to us that behind the suffering of Jesus was a particular mind that he had.

And that's the mind that he calls us to arm ourselves with. He says, in the same way just as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking.

The same way of thinking, the way of thinking that Jesus had that enabled him to suffer in the flesh. And how did Jesus suffer in the flesh? Jesus suffered in the flesh because he died to his own will and he lived to the Father's will.

That's why Jesus came. In John 4, 34, Jesus said to his disciples and he says to us, he says, my food is to do the will of him who sent me and accomplish his work.

[13:06] Jesus said, doing the Father's will is more sustenance to me than food itself. That's more necessary to me than food itself.

Later in his ministry, as Jesus was hours away from his crucifixion in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prayed a prayer three times. He prayed, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. And understand this, crucifixion hung over Jesus for the entirety of his life and he knew it. He didn't just know that he was going to die, he knew how he was going to die.

And as he was in Gethsemane, hours before his crucifixion, as the cross loomed before he prayed, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

And three times he said, nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done. Brothers and sisters, the Apostle Peter calls us to arm ourselves with the same way of thinking.

[14 : 32] Peter's words should be clear to us that if we're going to live a life of following Jesus, it's not going to be a cakewalk. He says, we need to be armed with a particular mind.

The mind that Jesus had, that doing the Father's will was his greatest priority. And see, that's where the suffering is.

The suffering is there because we desire naturally to do otherwise. We desire to live and fulfill our own will, our own desires. But we're called to embrace this mind and live for God's will.

will. It's the only way that we will follow Jesus on this earth. Now, what does Peter mean in verse one when he says, whoever has suffered in the flesh or the body has ceased from sin?

Is Peter saying that if we suffer that we wouldn't sin anymore? Well, the Bible will contradict that and also our own experience contradicts that. nowhere in Scripture does it teach that.

[15 : 51] Yes, we will grow in sanctification, we will become less sinful and more Christ-like over time, but we will not ever in this fallen world be free from sin.

sin. And that's not a license to sin. That's not to be casual with sin. We are to fight sin, we are to resist temptation, but the reality of fallen people in a fallen world is that we sin.

I think the English Standard Version study Bible gives a very helpful note to explain what Peter means when he says whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.

That's what it says. Peter's point is that when believers are willing to suffer, the nerve center of sin is severed in their lives.

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[17 : 10] And why is this? It is because of what sin is. sin at its very core is doing what we want to do.

Sin at its very core is pleasing ourselves rather than pleasing God. And we see that in our forefathers Adam and Eve. They chose to do their own will against God's will.

And brothers and sisters, we are no different. All of us are naturally born with a bend towards doing our own thing, doing our own will, pleasing ourselves rather than pleasing the Lord.

And so to serve the Lord, we must die to ourselves. And it's not one and done. It is a ongoing commitment to die to what we desire to do and live for what God would have us to do.

and this is ongoing suffering. This is ongoing suffering that we are called to do if we are going to do the Father's will.

[18 : 28] And so why do we need this mind that is set against sin? Peter tells us in verse 2, he tells us that it is in order that we might live the rest of our time on earth in our bodies no longer for human passions but for doing God's will.

This reference to the rest of our time in the flesh is referring to our present life, this life that we now live. That's the rest of our time in the flesh.

It's all that Peter is talking about. We know he's not talking about our past life because that chapter is closed and we can't open it. And he's not even talking about our future life because our future has not yet been opened and only God can open it if he so wills to open it.

All we have, brothers and sisters, right now is the moment that we have and the very breath we're breathing in this moment. Our next breath is not guaranteed.

It is not guaranteed that we will walk out of this building today. It is not guaranteed that we will see the morning. The only thing that we have right now that we truly have is the very moment we have in the very breath that we are now breathing.

[19 : 57] We have nothing else. we have to live the present. And how will we live the present? Will we live the present?

There are only two options and Peter lays them out to us. He says we have two options. We can pursue the passions of our flesh, we can pursue our human passions, or we can pursue God's will.

Look at how he says it again in verse 2, but I want to start in verse 1 because the two are connected. Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves 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 the flesh, no longer for human passions, passions, but for the will of God.

Those are the two options. We're going to live for human passions, or we're going to live for the will of God. There is no in between.

And sometimes we would readily say, well, I know I'm not really living for the will of God, but then we are reluctant to say, I'm living for human passions.

[21:26] And brothers and sisters, if it's not one by default, it's the other. And Peter says that this willingness to suffer, this willingness to die to ourselves positions us to be able to live for the will of God instead of living our lives on this earth to pursue human passions, to pursue what pleases us, to pursue what is wise in our own eyes, and really what is sin, rather than pursuing God's will.

love. And so I think it's a question that we all need to soberly ask ourselves and answer. What is the pursuit of my life?

What am I living in the moment for? Am I living to do my best to do the will of God? Or am I living for my passions? Am I living for what I want to do as opposed to what God would have me to do?

You know, a lot of times we talk about God's will, and God's will could seem very evasive and elusive to us, and it is not. God's will, first and foremost, fundamentally, is generally revealed to all of us in this book.

This is God's will. And we are called to embrace this. We are called to seek to live by it.

[23:16] This is to be our rule for living. This is to be our rule for thinking. This is to be the way we see the world, and we live in this world.

God, in his kindness, has preserved his word, and given it to us, and tells us live by it. The psalmist says, God, your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path, and that is, as we go through this life, this word is to guide us.

There are many people who are preoccupied with knowing God's specific will for them. Brothers and sisters, the path to knowing what God would have us to do in the details of our lives is in this book.

To find ourselves in this book, to take it seriously, read it, to reflect on it, to meditate upon it, and then to obey it.

And then that positions us to be able to pursue God's specific will in our lives through prayer, through sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, who will lead us and guide us and direct us into truth.

[24:32] Jesus said that's why he was sending the Spirit, so that he would be with us to lead us and guide us. But brothers and sisters, that would not matter to us if our desire is just to do our own thing.

One of the mistakes that we make, and when I say we, I'm speaking very, very broadly, is that we see the Christian life, we see coming to Jesus as an add-on into our lives.

It's kind of something we put in our back pockets to secure us that if we die, we go to heaven. But that's not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that when we belong to Christ, we follow him. We live for him. We want to do his will. And he has revealed that to us in his word. And so, brothers and sisters, how important is God's will in his word in our lives?

What do our lives look like on a daily basis, on a weekly basis, as it relates to this book? What do our lives look like on a daily basis, as it relates to praying to God, and seeking guidance, and seeking his wisdom, as we navigate this life?

[26:16] I pray God will open our eyes and help us to see the wisdom in choosing to live moment by moment for the will of God, and not for fleeting, empty, human passions.

Amen. And whatever suffering that we experience in the process of dying to ourselves, dying to our will, it leads to a more godly and a more holy life.

In verse three, Peter tells us that our past life of not living for God suffices, it's sufficient, for the sinful lives that unbelievers are currently engaging in.

I want to put it another way, what Peter says to us is that we are to consider that the sinful lives that we previously lived are enough.

We don't need to add to it. And this brings me to my second point, our past life. Look again at how Peter says that in verse three. He says, for the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless

idolatry.

[28:01] Brothers and sisters, the lives that we've lived in the past, whatever they were, and however we live them, however long we live them, it was lived fulfilling our own desires.

To one degree or another, it may have been white-collar or blue-collar, but it was still pursuing our own desires. A life away from following Jesus is a life that is self-centered, that is self-willed, and is doing our own bidding, and not what the Lord would have us to do.

Peter says that's enough. And so when we look around and we see unbelievers who are living for their own selfish pleasures, we shouldn't be tempted to go to that life.

We sang moments ago, where else shall we go? Where else shall we go? You have the words to eternal life. When we see others living the way we used to live, reminding us the way we used to live, there should not be any enticement, brothers and sisters.

There should be repulsion. There should be thanksgiving that God has rescued us from such a way of living. Let me look at this list that Peter gives us in verse 3.

[29:41] Peter is describing the sinful conduct that was prevalent in his days some 2,000 years ago. And we quickly see how humanity is the same across the ages, across the generations.

Nothing has changed. What Peter wrote 2,000 years ago accurately still reflects the way so many people live in their lostness and in their blindness.

Engaging in sinful conduct. And then Peter says, and they think it's strange when God's people don't join them in that conduct, which Peter calls a flood of debauchery.

And debauchery is excessive, unbridled indulgence in pleasure, seeking pleasure, seeking experiences that God never made us for.

The ultimate pleasure that God made us for is himself. And when we go to some external source to try to give pleasure other than what God has designed, that is idolatry.

[31:02] Peter also says, not only do they find it strange that we don't join them, he says in verse 4, he says, such people they malign us, speak evil of us, when we don't join them.

In verse 5, Peter gives a sober warning. He says, but they will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

and here in verse 5, we should see that Peter is not only pointing to the judgment that awaits those who are living lawless lives of debauchery.

It should be evident that Peter is also reminding us that we too one day will be judged for the lives we live in our bodies. And this brings you to my third and final point.

How do you think about your future? If you're like most people, you think of your future in terms of days and weeks and months and years.

[32:26] That's how most people tend to think about or talk about their future. future. But once again, brothers and sisters, all we have is the present moment.

That is all we have. The future is uncertain. It's uncertain. our future has two certainties.

Our future and the future of all humanity, every single person alive, there are two certainties in their future. And they are death and judgment.

And Peter is pointing us to both of those realities in this verse as he appeals to us about the wisdom of living for the will of God rather than for the human passions that shout to us to go in another direction.

Those are the only two certainties. And in verse 5, Peter says to us, he says that one day we are going to give an account for the lives we live on this earth to the one whom he describes as is ready to judge the living and the dead.

[33:56] Not getting ready. He's ready. He's set to judge the living and the dead.

God. And Peter wrote these words 2,000 years ago. Some 2,000 years ago, he wrote these words and he said even then he was ready.

And there's only one thing that Scripture tells us that holds him. It's his patience, his long suffering, that we would come to repentance.

And here's what's certain for each of us concerning death and judgment. All of us has one of two outcomes.

We are going to receive eternal life and be with our Lord forever or eternal damnation and be with Satan and his angels forever in the lake of fire.

[35:14] Those are the only two certainties, the only two options. There's no in-between. It is one of those two places.

And brothers and sisters, death and final judgment are much closer than we would like to think. Death and final judgment are much closer than we would like to think. And again, Peter says to us, the judge is ready and he is going to judge the living and the dead. And it's a reminder to us that when the Lord returns, he's not going to return to an obliterated world. AI is not going to destroy humanity or anything else is going to destroy humanity. No, our Lord is going to come back. There will be people living. And the dead will be raised and we will all be judged.

look at how Peter says that in verse 6. He says, for this is why the gospel was preached to those who are dead.

[36 : 44] For though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does. now this verse of scripture, some people take this verse to mean that or to support the view that Christ, when he died, went to hell and preached to the dead.

We talked about that last week in chapter 3, verses 18 and 19. And again, there's nothing in scripture that teaches this idea of a second chance once we have died.

And so verse 6 clearly does not mean that. And to understand what verse 6 really does mean, we have to identify who this term, those who are dead, is referring to.

I want you to look at verse 6 again. Look at verse 6 again. But this is why the gospel is preached even to those who are dead.

Who are those who are dead? Notice that Peter doesn't say those who were dead. He's not talking past tense as to refer to some event that happened that Jesus preached to those who were dead some time ago.

[38 : 15] Instead, he says those who are dead. And what Peter's referring to is those to whom the gospel was preached and they simply died.

And what he's saying is that though they have been judged in the flesh as people are, as people are generally, and what he's referring to there is you realize that when we die, that is a judgment of sin. When we experience physical death, it is a judgment of sin. And all people experience it. But Peter's point is that those who belong to Christ, those who have the gospel preached to them, those who belong to Christ, Peter says though they die like everybody else, they're going to live in the spirit as Christ does.

And this is the point that I think we need to remember. You see, unbelievers, and there are people who would say they're atheists, and they say, listen, in life you live and then you die.

And according to life under the sun, that's what we see. we see the righteous living and dying, we see the wicked living and dying, and that's all that we see.

[39 : 49] Peter says there's more to it than that. Peter says those who belong to Christ, that death for them is not final.

They are going to live again. As I did last week, let me stand on the shoulders of Wayne Grudem and share his commentary on verse 6.

This is what he says. This, meaning the words that Peter wrote in verse 6, this would comfort the readers concerning their Christian friends who had already died.

They may have wondered, did the gospel benefit them, since it didn't save them from death? Peter answers that the reason the gospel was preached to those who died was not to save them from physical death, meaning they were judged in the flesh like other men.

But to save them from final judgment, they will live in the spirit like God. therefore the fact that they died does not indicate that the gospel had failed in its purpose, for they would surely live forever in the spiritual realm.

[41 : 18] Brothers and sisters, this should comfort us as well. Death is not final for us. And it's one of the reasons that the Bible refers to death in the New Testament in particular about being asleep, because that's really what happens for God's people.

We fall asleep. We saw that last week with Stephen, says that he fell asleep. And that falling asleep is only related to our physical bodies that people see that looks like it's sleeping when our body is laid out.

Because the Bible teaches us that when we die, we are absent from our bodies, but we are present with the Lord, and in many ways, we're more alive with the Lord than we are in this body on this earth.

Brothers and sisters, it should do all of us well to hear the words of the first scripture reading from Psalm 90 this morning.

God is the only one who is eternal. He is the only one who is everlasting. thing. Psalm 90 describes us in two ways, as a dream and as grass.

[42 : 40] As a fleeting dream and as perishable grass. That is the best description of the lives that we live in. And that is true no matter how long we live on this earth.

It's still like a dream and it's still like grass. And what awaits us is judgment. Final judgment before our judge.

That is what awaits us. And therefore we need to embrace the prayer of the psalmist. We need to embrace this prayer that he prays.

Lord, in light of my life being a dream, in light of my life being grass, would you teach me to number my days. That I may apply my heart to wisdom.

That I may not waste my time on this earth following after human passions that have no longevity beyond this life.

[43 : 48] And to be praying, Lord, would you teach me to number my days. And that is not trying to figure out how long we're going to live. That is to recognize that our days are numbered. Our days are numbered.

Our days are set. A sovereign God has determined how long we're going to be on this earth, and only he knows that. And we look around this room, and we have different age groups this morning, but you know what?

We're not going to die in any chronological order. It's not going to be the oldest dying first. It's not going to be the sickest dying first. It's going to be determined by a sovereign God, and we all need to number our days with wisdom.

And what's the evidence that we are living with wisdom? The evidence that we're living with wisdom is that we are using our fleeting days on this earth to do our best, to do God's will, to become acquainted with this book, that has the words of life, and to treasure it, and to grow to love it, and to go to relish in its wisdom, and the gift that it is to us, and to be able to see it the way Jesus saw it, that it is his food, it is our food, and is what we desire to live for.

The next event on God's calendar is the return of Jesus Christ. The consummation of human history, and the final judgment that will determine where we spend eternity.

[45 : 46] glory. And the good news for those of us who put our trust in Jesus, is that the judge is also our savior. The one who will judge us is the one who has saved us.

And in 1st John chapter 2, John refers to Jesus as our advocate. advocate. He's our lawyer. He's the judge, and he's the advocate, and he's the savior.

And therefore, we can stand before that judgment with confidence in him. Not confidence in ourselves, not confidence in our good works, because our best works fall short.

God, I pray that for all of us, the one thought in our own hearts when we stand before the Lord, is that I sought to do your will.

Not that that is going to be of any merit where he says, well, you know, I'll just bump you up and give you a full passing grade. No, it's not that.

[47 : 10] That is just what mercy requires. That's the debt that we live in because of how merciful God has been to us. And so, brothers and sisters, let us consider these two options before us as we live life.

Are we going to pursue human passions, or are we going to, by the grace of God, live for the will of God, knowing this book, obeying this book, and praying and asking the Lord to lead us and guide us as we live in this world.

Let's pray. Father, would you help us to hear your word and heed your word?

Would you show us what it is to live wisely, and seeking to do your will and not our own.

Help us not to overestimate the time that we have on this earth, remembering that all we have is the present that you sovereignly allow us to have.

[48 : 28] We don't have a future promised. all we have is this moment. Would you help us, Lord, to live for your will and for your glory.

Amen.