

1 Peter Chapter 4 v 1 - 11

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[0 : 00] Read from 1 Peter in chapter 4. Again, just as in the mornings we've been going through the life of Samuel, in the evenings we've been going through this letter, this first letter of Peter's.

And we come now to chapter 4. We're going to read the first 11 verses together. First 11 verses and look at them in a few moments.

So 1 Peter chapter 4, if you've got the church Bible, the Red Church Bible, that's page 1219. Page 1219. Here is God's wonderful word.

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude. Because whoever suffers in the body has finished with sin.

As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives or 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 : 13] They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give an 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 of sober mind, so that you may pray. Above all, love one another deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you've 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 : 21] To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. Turn then to 1 Peter 4, please, if you would.

Amen. I wonder what you would consider to be the most valuable possession that you have.

In fact, I would say, what do you believe to be the most valuable commodity in the world at this time? Oil. That's going down, of course, as we know.

We're hopefully going back up again for the oil barons. Gold. Gold. Diamonds. Well, let me put it to you that none of those things are the most precious possession that you have.

None of those things are the most valuable commodity that each of us has. There is one thing which is far more valuable than any of those things, and it is time. Time.

[3 : 25] It's the one possession that we can never get any more of. We can never increase in. We can never add to. Time is precious because it is limited. It's finite.

It is of a small amount. When something, of course, is plentiful, when something is to be found everywhere, it becomes of little value, unimportant.

But when it's hard to find, when it's something which is particularly irreplaceable, then its value soars. Our time, once it is gone, can never be recovered.

It can never be recycled. It can never be renewed. It can never be replaced. Time is precious. Time is vital.

Now, we know that's true. We forget it sometimes. We get caught up with life. We get caught up with all sorts of things, and we forget just how important life is, how important time is, how limited it is, how precious it is.

[4 : 31] Perhaps, particularly when we're young, we seem to have all the time in the world. But, of course, the reality is we don't. We know it's true, and therefore, it should be of greatest importance to us how we use our time.

It should be something that we think about and plan and are careful with more than we are with our money, more than we are with any of the commodities that we have. We need to be careful about thinking, how am I spending my time?

In fact, to waste our time is a serious crime. It's a serious thing. Even in the world, even around about us, men and women are afraid of not using their time well, not making the most of their time.

In fact, because we have so much time on our hands, we've had to find all sorts of, invent all sorts of ways to fill our time so that our life becomes meaningful, so that we don't feel as if we're just passing through.

We make all sorts of hobbies and interests and pleasures somehow to give purpose to our time. The truth is, of course, that we know, particularly those of us who are believers, know that we have, in the past, misused our time.

[5 : 47] We have squandered our time. We have wasted our time. That's what Peter has to bring to the attention of the believers here. He says in verse 3, For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do.

You've spent enough time wasting it, misusing it, using it as he puts there in verse 2, for evil human desires. And so we all have regrets.

We regret the things that we've done in the past which have wasted time, especially as Christians, perhaps those of us who became Christians later on when we were adults. We look back upon those years when we didn't know Christ, when we wasted that time, when we kick ourselves.

If only I'd trusted Christ earlier. If only I'd lived for him while I was young. When I had all the time to give him. We may even have regrets, of course, regrets about the consequences of our squandered time.

Regrets about how that wasted time has impacted and affected others, in our families, friendships, relationships, how perhaps even now it still affects the lives of those around about us.

[7 : 03] Thankfully, thankfully, though we once misused our time, though we once squandered and wasted our time, we do so no longer. A transformation has taken place.

For the Christian, there has been a change. We're not the people we once were. We don't live the lives we once did. Something has happened to us that brings out a very different result in how we use our time.

As Peter writes here, verse 2, as a result of this transformation of what's happened, they do not live the rest of the earthly lives for evil desires, but rather for the will of God.

So what's happened to us? What's happened that we now view our time differently and use our time differently? Is it just that we've grown up? We've put aside those youthful, foolish thoughts.

We just mature. We see things better. Is it perhaps we've got married now and had children, so we've settled down for a quiet life instead of the wild living?

[8 : 05] Is it simply we've just rehabilitated? We've seen the error of our ways and we're making a much-needed change. No, of course it's not that.

Something far more drastic was needed, far more drastic had to happen to us for us to view time and life differently to how we did before. Something had to take place so that we could become those people who use our time, the time we have remaining in this world, for the will of God.

What's happened? What's happened is this. We have become united with the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter writes at the beginning here, chapter 4, verse 1, Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body has finished with sin.

This sense of being one with Christ in attitude, one with Christ in mindset, one with Christ in life, of course, is what permeates the whole of the New Testament. Jesus himself, as he taught his disciples, said, I am the vine, you're the branches, you're united with me, you share certain things with me, life with me.

Paul, of course, throughout his letters, kept on insisting that the Christians understood that they were in Christ, which was something totally different.

[9 : 26] They were united with him in so many different ways. And Peter's used the illustration throughout his letter here of us sharing things which were like Christ.

We share his likeness. So in chapter 2, verses 4 and 5, we have this truth. He is the living stone and we are living stones. We are bearing the image, the likeness of Christ.

Something of his nature is our nature. He says later on that this Lord Jesus Christ in chapter 2 was chosen, chosen by God, verse 4.

And then we read ourselves. Verse 9, you are a chosen people. We are those, pardon me, who walk in the very footsteps of Christ. Chapter 2, verse 20, to this you were called.

Christ suffered for you, leaving your example that you should follow in his steps. We walk as Christ walked. And here we see as well in chapter 3 that he suffered for doing good and we suffer in the same way.

[10 : 33] Verse 17, for it is better if it is God's will to suffer for doing good rather than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered.

And here in verse 1 of chapter 4, we are those who share the attitude, the mind of Christ. We are united with him. That's what happens when you become a Christian. It's not simply adopting or taking on a certain set of beliefs.

It's not a change of practice in our lives so that we do things differently. It's this. We have become one with the Lord Jesus Christ. We have united with him in every part of his life and his ministry.

His life flows in us. And that means particularly in this context we're talking about here, that in his suffering upon the cross, he died to sin and we share in that death as well.

This is Paul's whole principle. We thought about it briefly last week about the baptism of the Spirit which is that work of uniting us with Christ. Romans 6 elaborates on that, doesn't it?

[11 : 40] Telling us of this baptism of the Spirit, uniting us with Christ. It tells us in verses 6 and 7. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who's died has been set free from sin.

That's exactly what Peter is saying here. Just as Christ suffered for sin and has finished with sin so we have suffered with him in the same attitude and finished with sin.

It has no part of our lives anymore. We're dead to it. We know the sinful nature's there because it keeps giving us jip. But what we choose to do is say, I'm ignoring you.

You're dead to me. You're not having any part of my life anymore. It's an attitude. It's a reality that Christ has done for us and it's also an ongoing working out.

But likewise, just as Christ died to sin and we die to sin with him, so also we now live as he lives. Here in Romans 6 again, verses 5.

[12 : 53] For if we've been united with him in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. Verse 11. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

We have been raised, as we saw right at the end of chapter 3. Saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So there's this transformation. When we were brought into life with Christ, we died to sin because he died on the cross and we died with him.

We were raised to life because he rose from the grave and lives a resurrection life and so do we. That's the transformation. That's the change. And so that affects everything. It's not just our standing before God.

It's not just our relationship with him. It's not just the journey we're on, the pathway we're on. It's also a very change of our heart, our viewpoint towards the world and our viewpoint to ourselves, our lives, our time.

The trouble is, of course, we know this. We know it only too well. We know that we are not to live for sin. We know that we've been changed.

[13 : 59] We know we're new creations. We know that we are not to spend our time on the evil desires that we once did. The trouble is, of course, we're still tempted. We're still tempted.

We're tempted because, of course, the people around about us, the majority of the world in which we live and community continue to do all the things we used to do but now know that we cannot spend our time on.

In fact, in verse 4, of course, Peter says, they, that's the people who live these ways, live in immorality and live in doing evil, living for themselves, they're surprised that you don't join them in their reckless, wild living and they heap abuse on you.

They mock you for not doing the things, for not joining in, for not going their way. And that can be hard to put up with, particularly if you're young, particularly when people who are your peers are saying these things.

Come on, join in with the crowd. Come on, everybody's doing it. Why don't you do it as well? So what incentive is there to help us, not only because we know we're new creations and we know that we have now the mind of Christ, but what incentive does Peter give here to them and to us to keep on living for God and not to go back.

[15 : 15] Not to go back, even when we're tempted to. Well, the first thing he says is this, and it's so very important. Verse 5, they will have to give account to him who's ready to judge the living and the dead.

Why don't we live the way that we used to live? Well, because we know that what we do will be judged by God. How we use our time will be judged by God. We're accountable to him and must give an account to him about how we will live.

Those around about us judge us by their human standards. They think we're wasting our time being in church on a Sunday. They think we're wasting our time in reading the Scriptures, in prayer, in evangelism, in the things that we do.

The reality is this, that every one of us will have our time judged by God. We're told there that the reason that 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 world judges human standards. Those who've lived for Christ in the past and now died, people look back and then think, what a waste of life, what a waste of time. But they live as those who know that they will be judged by God.

[16 : 30] They are those who live with spiritual priorities, heavenly priorities. And indeed, the second reason there, of course, is this. Not only that we'll be judged, but we know that death is coming.

Why? Because many people have already died. We know that we're not going to be here forever. We know we haven't got this great, huge amount of time that we can waste.

Here's a question for you. Did Methuselah know he was going to live to 969? Yeah? Let me think about that one. Don't think about it now. Think about it later.

Did they know they were going to live that long? Well, there we are. We aren't going to live that long. Okay? We aren't going to live that long in this world. People have died. People are dying.

We know that life is short. It's only for a time. Even believers. And for that reason, it's so important that the Gospel was preached. Remember, we thought about this last week.

[17 : 27] This is the reason the Gospel was preached. It ties in what we were saying about Christ preaching the Gospel through Noah in the days before the flood. That's the understanding of this strange event which we read about here in chapter 3.

Christ preached the Gospel through Noah to those who did not obey, who did not receive the Gospel, and now they are being judged and await judgment. Death is real.

You're young, but you're going to get older. And by God's grace, you may get older. We know, sadly, don't we, that life has no certainties.

Children sadly die. Young people sadly die. We cannot be guaranteed anything in this world. In fact, more than that, as believers, we know that time is short.

Verse 7, the end of all things is near. Dear brother prayed about the return of the Lord Jesus. That's the end, isn't it? Christ is coming again. Nobody knows when he's going to come again.

[18 : 26] We can't predict how long it will be. It's absolute foolishness for just to try to predict when he will come again. And sadly, as Christians, we can be foolish. But it's near.

It's nearer today than it was yesterday. That's for certain, isn't it? It's nearer today than it was last week or last year. It's nearer today than it was when Peter wrote this letter. Christ is coming. The end of all things is near.

It's the old sandwich board, isn't it? The end is nigh. Mocked and laughed and ridiculed, but it's true. When I was younger than I am now, and I'm still very young, of course, growing up in the 70s and the 80s, there was always the threat of the nuclear bomb being dropped and we were always told we'd get a three-minute warning.

You're going to get a three-minute warning. What's the point of a three-minute warning? And people would talk about, what am I going to do for three minutes while I'm waiting for the bomb to drop? You know, there's something that said boil an egg or something. You know, there's no need to panic because that's exactly what I would do or most of us would do if we had a three-minute warning the bomb's dropping.

You'd think, well, you just wouldn't know what to do, would you? You'd just be frozen with a sense of fear of impending destruction. No, we're not to panic, aren't we?

[19 : 46] Yes, Christ is coming. Yes, the end is near. Yes, life is short. Time is precious. So, how should we, what should our attitude be? We're told we should have the attitude of Christ.

What should it be? Well, here it is, verse 7, therefore be alert. Be aware. Recognize the time. Recognize the time is short. Recognize that life is brief.

Recognize that we have only an allotted amount in which to live. And be of sober mind. In other words, self-controlled. Use the time.

Let's not be controlled by time, but control our time. We can find it, can't we? Time just running away with us. We feel like that. For me, Sunday comes immediately after Monday.

It just comes so quick, again and again, and we can feel we're being pulled along, rushed along. We mustn't do that. We need to take hold of our time. Be sober minded.

[20 : 41] Be self-controlled. So that you might pray. I wonder why he says that. Sober minded so you can pray. Well, we need to be really asking, Lord, what do you want me to do with my time?

What is it you want me to be about? What is it that I'm to use this time for? How do you want me to live? I wonder if that's how we approach each week.

I wonder if that's how we approach each day. Lord, today, we've set out our plan, haven't we? We've set out where we've got work, and we're going to do the washing, and we're going to do this, and we're going to do that. But I wonder if we ever stop and say, Lord, in the time I've got today, what do you want me to be doing?

How do you want me to be living? In one sense, the answer to how we are to live is given us for us here. How are we to use our remaining time usefully and well? Well, Peter gives us a very great challenge in these last few verses from 8 through to 11.

And the first thing he does is he tells us exactly what we need to do above all else, love each other deeply. We often think of the Apostle John as being the Apostle of love, and that's true.

[21 : 55] He speaks in his letters about loving one another. Well, Peter's laid it on thick, though, hasn't he, about loving one another throughout the letter. Chapter 1 and verse 22, he says this, and now that you've purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply from the heart.

And there in chapter 3 and verse 8 as well, finally, above all, again, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another. Here it is in verse 8 of chapter 4, above all, love each other deeply.

This is the commandment Christ gave his disciples, isn't it? A new commandment I give to you, love one another. We know that it's the fulfillment of the Old Testament law. Paul says if we love, love covers the law.

If you love God and you love the people, then you won't break any of God's commandments because love fulfills them all. It's the one absolute, certain, definite, sure thing that we know God wants us to do is to love one another.

And so ultimately, whatever we do with our time, if we do not do it with love, it's completely worthless. Whatever we do with our time, unless we do it with love, it's completely worthless.

[23 : 17] That's not my words, is it? You know who says that? Paul, doesn't he? 1 Corinthians 13. Listen again. If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I'm only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I have the gift of prophecy, can fathom all mysteries, all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, do not have love, I am nothing. Forgive all I possess to the poor, give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

So, let me put it in this way. It's better to Hoover the carpet with love than to preach a hundred loveless sermons. It's better to wash up with love than to conduct a thousand Sunday school lessons, that lack love.

It's better to clean the toilets with love than to die a martyr's death as a missionary without love. That's what the Bible's saying, isn't it? That's mind-blowing.

To me, that's revolutionary and it's jolly hard. Love. Anything that I do for the Lord, if I'm not doing it with love, anything I do for my brother, I'm not doing it with love, then I'm not doing God's will.

[24 : 31] I'm not using my time as I should. That's hard, isn't it? But before we get too mushy about love, because we do when we think about love, we get all sort of mushy.

What is love about? Peter says it means the total acceptance of another person, no matter what they've done to me or to anyone else, because he says love covers over a multitude of sins.

So when he's talking about love, he's particularly, especially centering that love upon forgiveness, acceptance, equality, care for those around about us.

See, life is too short to be bitter. Life is too short to bear a grudge against someone else or to carry a chip on your shoulder.

To love means I will be generous with everything that I have, with everyone I meet. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. That phrase hospitality doesn't just simply mean have a meal or let somebody stay over.

[25 : 40] It means basically give of everything that is yours for others. My possessions, my time, my tears, my hugs, my ears, everything I share with others.

That's what love is, isn't it? As Christ had that attitude, he gave everything to anyone who asked. And to do it, to give those things, to sacrifice, to share in such a way that I do not do it because I must do it.

It's my duty to do it. It's my job to do it. It's what people expect me to do. I do it because it makes me feel good about myself compared to others.

I'll do it because nobody else will do it. None of those attitudes will do. None of those attitudes are Christ-like. None of those attitudes are loving. It's got to be always love.

Every other motivation is wrong apart from love. You see, the reason for that is this, verse 10.

[26 : 51] Whatever we do share with others is not our own anyway. Anyway, the time that you and I have is not my time or your time. The money we have isn't my money or your money. The possessions we have don't belong to us.

Everything is given to us. Each of you should use whatever gift you've received to serve others. Now, we like to sort of narrow that down and we like to say, well, whatever gift, he means, you know, whether we're good at accounting or whether we're good at preaching or we're good at Sunday school.

Those sort of gifts. No, gifts mean everything that we've been given by God. And that's everything. Has anybody here got anything that they've not received from God?

Of course not. But it means this as well. Whoever we are, none of us is useless. None of us is giftless. None of us is inadequate.

Because each of you, he doesn't just say those of you who've received a gift. In other words, you special select sort of Christians, you know who you are.

[27 : 52] Each of you should use whatever gift you have received. You've all received a gift. It's come from God and it's for one purpose, to serve others. But notice this.

It's to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. How does God make his grace known in the church? How does God make his grace known in the world?

He does it through you and me. We are grace givers. We are grace pipes. We are those through whom the grace of God is dissipated, shared, spread out.

And there's not one of us who can say, I can't do it. There's not one of us who can say that I'm inadequate. Because even then, he goes on to pick up two examples. Speaking and serving, which really cover everything.

Speaking and serving. Whatever you do. The person who speaks, they should do it with the words that God has given them. Don't think that you've got to come up with the ideas.

[28 : 56] Don't think that it's up to you. God has given you the words. You use the words God's given you. You're dependent upon him. Reliant upon him. You've got nothing in yourself.

Your bank is empty. Your ability is, by itself, is worthless. And those who serve, serve with the strength that God provides. I don't mean to make this, get us, in one sense, legalistically bound up.

But in one sense, there's this. None of us can say, I've got nothing to give. None of us can say, I'm sorry. You know, I'm just a bystander in the life of the church.

I'm just a watcher. I'm just one of those who cannot give. And we've got to be very careful. When we say that God has given the gift, we can't also say, or be careful not to say, well, of course, that's not my gift.

That's so-and-so's gift. They've got the gift for washing up. They've got the gift for hoovering. They've got the gift. We've got to be very careful that we don't actually start to, as it were, put ourselves in a place where we don't do anything because we say, well, I haven't got the gift.

[30 : 08] Many of us have gifts which are common to all. Well, the question is really this. Am I keeping hold of it to myself or am I using it? I like watching occasionally things like Flog It and Antiques Roadshow and places like that.

And what I always find really interesting is when they find like a dinky toy from the 1950s or 60s or even from the 70s when I was a boy. And I thought, I had one of those Batman cars.

And they say, if you'd kept it in your box and never damaged it, it was worth £1,000. Oh, I've got one of them at home. It's got a wheel off it. It's broken and the figures have disappeared and all this paint's scratched.

But the point of the matter is that the people who made that dinky toy made it to be played with, made it to be enjoyed, made it to be fun. They didn't want it just kept in a box, hidden away, so 50 years later it can be brought out and sold in an auction.

And so it is with the gifts that God has given every single one of us. God doesn't want us just to keep hold of that gift and say, well, you know, I'd like to polish up my gift and put it on the mantelpiece and say, you know, aren't I good at this?

[31 : 15] God wants us to take it, use it, let it get dirty, let it get damaged occasionally, let it get abused. Because in doing so, we are manifesting the grace of God.

We are showing the grace of God. We are those who are receiving and sharing the grace of God. And that's the end goal of all the time that we have.

Peter isn't saying, and I want to make this very clear, Peter isn't saying, if you don't spend all your time in prayer, reading the Bible, evangelizing and being in church, then all the rest of your time is wasted. He's not saying that.

If you enjoy yourself and go to the beach or have a swim, not in Whitby, wouldn't suggest it, but somewhere where it's nice and warm, then you're wasting your time and abusing it.

No, he's not saying that. What he is saying is this, your attitude needs to be the same as Jesus. Lord, my whole life, everything I do, I want it ultimately, ultimately to glorify you.

[32 : 11] I want it ultimately to be the purpose that in my life I show that Jesus lives in me and I show that he is working in me and through me and I want him to be glorified and praised.

Dear friends, we've been given time, precious time. And the wonderful thing is that God can take and use your time and mine, limited as it is, inadequate as we are in ourselves, and he can use it to do glorious, wonderful, marvelous, praiseworthy things for him and be a blessing to others too.

And he can do that because we've been united with Christ. Let me close with these words of Paul in Ephesians in chapter 3, words that I often end a sermon with or service with, which are so very encouraging.

Ephesians 3 verse 20, Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work, and here's the key phrase, two words, within us, not in the pastor, not in the elders, not in the so-and-so and that person, but within us, each and every one of us.

He's able to do immeasurably more. He's able to do more than we ask or imagine. His power is at work within us. To him be glory. In the church. And in Christ Jesus.

[33 : 42] Throughout every generation. Always. And forevermore. Amen. Amen. Amen.