

Living for the Will of God in a Hostile World

First Peter 4:1–19 (NKJV)

Peter has just pointed us to the suffering of Christ—His cross, His victory, His triumph. And now he draws a straight, practical line from what Jesus endured to how we are to live.

Armed with the Mind of Christ

Peter begins:

“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.” (First Peter 4:1 NKJV)

In other words, if Jesus went to the cross for us, then we should take up a cross-minded way of thinking. Peter is not saying that a believer becomes sinless, but that the believer no longer makes peace with sin. When a man truly comes to Christ, something changes at the deepest level: sin stops being a lifestyle and becomes a grief, a battle, a contradiction.

This harmonizes with what Paul teaches:

“How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” (Romans 6:2 NKJV)

A new life begins when the old one is surrendered. The cross is not only the place where Jesus paid for sin—it is also the place where we learn to say no to the old master. We are no longer owned by sin. We are no longer required to obey those cravings and impulses that once ruled us.

And that leads right into Peter’s purpose statement:

“That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.” (First Peter 4:2 NKJV)

That is the Christian life in one sentence. Not living for impulses, not living for appetite, not living for the crowd—living for the will of God.

A Clean Break with the Old Life

Peter reminds his readers what their past looked like:

“For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.” (First Peter 4:3 NKJV)

Peter is saying, “That chapter is done.” The world offers endless ways to waste a life: sensuality without restraint, pleasure without boundaries, intoxication without sobriety, entertainment without conscience, and worship without truth.

Then comes the predictable reaction:

“In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.” (First Peter 4:4 NKJV)

When you stop running with the crowd, the crowd often gets offended. Some people will mock you. Others will slander you. Some will pressure you with that familiar question: *What do you do for fun now?* Translation: *Why will you not join us anymore?*

But a believer has a different compass now. A different Master. A different purpose. And that difference exposes the emptiness of the old life—so the world often responds with criticism.

Peter then gives the sobering reminder:

“They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.” (First Peter 4:5 NKJV)

No one gets away with anything forever. Every life will be evaluated, every choice weighed. The tragedy is not merely that people sin—it is that they spend the gift of life on what cannot last, and then stand before the living God empty-handed.

Living with Urgency and Prayer

“For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead... But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.” (First Peter 4:6–7 NKJV)

Peter’s point is not panic—it is perspective. If the end is near, then distractions are dangerous. If time is short, then prayer becomes essential.

The Christian who lives wisely learns to number his days. Not with fear, but with focus. Not with despair, but with purpose.

The Priority of Love in the Church

“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’” (First Peter 4:8 NKJV)

This is one of the great proofs of spiritual maturity: not how quickly we notice faults, but how faithfully we love people through them.

Love does not mean pretending sin does not exist. It means refusing to live in constant offense. It means learning how to forgive, how to be patient, how to bear with one another, how to protect unity. In a church family, love often shows itself in what we choose not to make an issue.

Then Peter gets intensely practical:

“Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.” (First Peter 4:9 NKJV)

Hospitality is not just entertaining. It is opening your life. It is making room. It is caring for saints in real, tangible ways. And Peter says, “Do it without grumbling.” In other words, serve with a willing heart—not a resentful one.

Stewarding Gifts for God’s Glory

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” (First Peter 4:10 NKJV)

God has entrusted every believer with something—abilities, opportunities, resources, spiritual gifts. None of it is random, and none of it is meant to be buried. We are stewards. We are managers of grace.

“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.” (First Peter 4:11 NKJV)

If you teach, teach as someone handling God’s Word—not casually, not carelessly, not for attention, but with reverence.

If you serve, serve in God’s strength—not your ego, not your ambition, not your need for approval. Do your best with what God has supplied, and leave the rest with Him. The goal of all ministry is not admiration—it is worship. That God may be glorified.

When Trials Come, Do Not Be Surprised

“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you.” (First Peter 4:12 NKJV)

Peter says, “Stop acting like this is unusual.” Trials are not strange in a fallen world. Opposition is not strange when you belong to Christ. The refining fire is not strange when God is purifying faith.

“But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when help His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” (First Peter 4:13 NKJV)

Suffering with Christ leads to joy with Christ. There is coming a day when His glory will be revealed openly. The world that mocked Him will see Him. The world that rejected Him will answer to Him. And those who belonged to Him will rejoice with a joy beyond words.

“If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” (First Peter 4:14 NKJV)

Not every hardship is persecution, but when believers suffer for Christ, God meets them with a special strengthening. His presence does not abandon His people in the fire.

Suffering for the Right Reasons

Peter gives an important warning:

“But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters.” (First Peter 4:15 NKJV)

There is no honor in suffering for sin. If consequences come because of wrongdoing, that is not persecution—that is discipline, or justice, or the harvest of poor choices.

“Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.” (First Peter 4:16 NKJV)

If you suffer because you belong to Jesus, do not be ashamed. Wear His name with honor.

A searching question comes to mind: if you were accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Judgment Begins with the House of God

“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (First Peter 4:17 NKJV)

Peter is not saying believers are condemned. He is saying God purifies His own first. He refines His church. He disciplines His children. He trains His people.

“And if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (First Peter 4:18 NKJV)

If salvation required the blood of the Son of God, then no one should treat the gospel casually. If the cross was necessary, then sin is serious, and eternity is real.

The Safe Place for a Suffering Believer

“Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.” (First Peter 4:19 NKJV)

Here is Peter’s closing instruction: commit yourself to God and keep doing good.

Not bitterness. Not retaliation. Not despair.

Entrust your life to the God who made you, the God who saved you, the God who holds you. He is faithful.

Practical Application

- Break cleanly with the sins of the past. You have spent enough time living that way.
- Expect the world to misunderstand your change—and do not let that pull you back.
- Live with urgency: serious-minded, prayerful, awake.
- Love the ekklesia family fervently, and choose forgiveness over offense.
- Use your gifts to serve others and bring glory to God, not attention to yourself.
- When trials come, do not interpret them as abandonment. They may be refinement.

A Challenge for Believers

Take inventory today: Are you living for the will of God or the lusts of the flesh? Are you sober-minded and watchful in prayer—or dulled by distraction? Are you using what God has entrusted to you, or burying it?

Commit your soul to your faithful Creator. Keep doing good. Keep loving the body of Christ. Keep speaking hope. And keep your eyes on the glory that is coming.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

If you have never surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, hear this clearly: you will one day give account to the Judge of the living and the dead. But God, in mercy, has made a way for you to be forgiven.

Jesus shed His blood on the cross to save you from sin. He rose from the dead, and His resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

You can turn to Him now—confess your sin, ask for His mercy, and trust Him to save you. He will forgive you, change you, and give you a living hope that will never put you to shame.