

“Living for the Glory of God”

1 Peter 4:1-6

Charles Thomas Studd was born in England on December 6, 1860. As a young man, C.T. was a highly skilled cricket player who became a household name throughout England. Yet, by his own admission, he knew something was missing in his life.

In 1877, his father Edward was converted to faith while attending a D.L. Moody crusade. Edward was concerned for the spiritual welfare of his sons. He would often come into their room to ask them if they wanted to accept Christ. C.T. would later admit that on occasion, he would pretend he was sleeping so he wouldn't have to listen to him.

One day in 1878, Edward hosted a preacher in his house. While C.T. was on his way out to play cricket, the preacher came up to him and started talking. The preacher asked him if he believed in Jesus, and C.T. said yes hoping to get rid of the man. The preacher then asked if he knew for certain he would enter eternal life when he died. C.T. was stunned. He had no answer. He was living for himself and believed nothing would happen after he died. After the preacher explained about Jesus and what He did on the cross, C.T. Studd committed his life to Christ.

For the first several years after his conversion, he would admit that he did not share his faith with anyone even though he regularly attended church and read the Bible. In addition, he pursued the things of this world. In 1884, one of his brothers became seriously ill and C.T. began to question the motive of his life. What was he doing of eternal value? Playing cricket would not make any impact in people's lives. After seeing the emptiness of pursuing worldly fame, he

happened read a pamphlet that an atheist had written. In it, the atheist said that if he truly believed what Christians claimed, he would do everything in his power to reach as many as possible. C.T. then vowed that he would give his life to reach others with the gospel.

Soon after, he went to a meeting where Hudson Taylor was speaking. When he heard about the lost in China, he along with six other students from Cambridge known as the “Cambridge Seven” dedicated their lives to serving the China Inland Mission alongside Hudson Taylor. Eventually, the call of God would lead C.T. Studd to abandon family and fortune for the sake of the nations. He would spend several years in India, and then the Belgian Congo where he would serve out the remainder of his days taking the gospel deep into the interior of Africa.

On July 16, 1931, C. T. Studd went home to be with His Lord whom he had loved so dearly and served so faithfully. The last word he spoke was “Hallelujah.”

C.T. Studd turned his back on fame, fortune, and family. What motivates someone to do something like that? I think that the driving force behind his life was reflected in something that he wrote. At one point, he wrote the following poem:

*Two little lines I heard one day,
Traveling along life's busy way;
Bringing conviction to my heart,
And from my mind would not depart;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

The only thing that will last is that which is done for the glory of God. The glory of God is to be our ultimate motivation in life.

1 Corinthians 10:31 – “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

Everything that Peter says from the beginning of the third chapter to this passage we now come to has dealt with scattered believers who were suffering persecution from the world. They lived with the very real possibility of facing death because of their faith in Christ. Peter deals with the subject of unjust suffering and shows how it isn't random or inconsequential, but is for the glory of God.

At the close of chapter three, Peter has provided us with a wonderful reminder that even in spite of suffering, we have a triumphant Savior who suffered for us and is victorious. Now, as chapter 4 begins, Peter begins to draw a conclusion and answers the question, “So what?” How does the suffering of Jesus and the triumph of Jesus impact my life? To answer this question, in chapters 4-5, Peter points us to the glory of God. We can joyfully endure suffering and hardship when we keep God’s glory foremost in our attitude and thinking. In fact, if you count it up, he mentions the glory of God some eight or nine times in these final two chapters.

From verses 1-6, I want to show you how living for the glory of God, even despite suffering and struggle, always involves at least three essential elements.

1. A strong INCENTIVE (4:1-2)

“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.”

As careful students of the Word of God, you and I should pay close attention to words that connect main thoughts. That's what the word 'therefore' does here in verse 1. The word 'therefore' connects the passage to the point that Peter has just made. Jesus Christ suffered in the flesh. He was put to death in the flesh, and made alive in the spirit. He conquered the grave through His resurrection and has ascended to heaven and is presently seated at the right hand of God the Father.

Since Christ suffered in the flesh, since He suffered in the body on our behalf, therefore... Do you see how it all fits together? Since Jesus suffered for us, these believers to whom Peter writes should not fear their own suffering. They must not become discouraged and assume they had been abandoned by God to their circumstances. Instead, the example of Jesus served as a strong incentive in their lives. It served as an incentive to:

Possess the mind of Christ

“Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking...”

Calling them to intentional living, Peter says, “Arm yourselves.” This is the main verb in this entire section.

“Arm yourselves” — *verb that means to put on armor*

The idea being expressed is that of taking up weapons like a soldier would in preparation for combat.

Kenneth Wuest — *“The Greek word translated ‘arm yourselves’ was used of a Greek soldier putting on his armor and taking his weapons. The noun of the same root was used of a heavy-armed foot soldier who carried a pike and large*

shield...The Christian needs the heaviest armor he can get to withstand the attacks of the enemy of his soul.”

Peter reminds us as Christians that we are not vacationing our way to heaven. We're not on a Carnival cruise. Instead, we are soldiers on foreign soil. God has left us in the world not to function like tourists, but like ambassadors.

This ought to serve as a reminder that the Christian life is not a playground—it is a battleground. It involves struggle and pain as we wrestle against spiritual forces that wage war against our souls. Jesus suffered and died to equip us for spiritual battle. I'm afraid that far too many of us in the church expect the Christian life to be a cakewalk until we get to heaven. We're surprised we come under attack for our faith, or when things don't go according to plan. The reason we're surprised is that we fall under the wrong assumption. We've developed a wrong mindset about the nature of the Christian life.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones — *“Not to realize that you are in a conflict means one thing only, and it is that you are so hopelessly defeated you do not even know it. You are unconscious! It means that you are completely defeated by the devil. Anyone who is not aware of a fight and a conflict in a spiritual sense is in a drugged and hazardous condition.”*

Notice the attitude that Peter tells us to arm ourselves with.

“Since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking.”

We are to operate under the same way of thinking that led Jesus to the cross. The primary weapon that Peter says we need in life is the same way of thinking that Jesus had. We are to live for the same purpose that Jesus lived with. What was that purpose? Suffering for the glory of God.

This 'same way of thinking' that Peter is referring to is a willingness to serve, suffer, and even die for the glory of God. You and I can endure any suffering when we live with a willingness to forfeit our lives for Christ's sake.

The 'mind of Christ' is fully described in Philippians 2:5-8.

Peter had learned this lesson of suffering firsthand.

Matthew 16:24-26—“Then Jesus told his disciples, If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?”

To be armed with the same way of thinking that Jesus had is to be willing to go forth and die for His sake. It is willing to face shame and endure ridicule and bear reproach for His sake. It is willing to be seen as nothing in the eyes of the world for His sake.

Paul said that this was the principle that motivated his life:

2 Corinthians 4:7-12—“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who love are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.”

The idea is that the gospel was being advanced through suffering. And that is the way that it always is advanced.

The gospel is not advanced by those who are unwilling to be inconvenienced. No, it is advanced by those who arm themselves with the same way of thinking that Jesus Himself had. The good news is that we have been given the mind of Christ. His Spirit indwells us.

The question at hand is this: “Will I intentionally arm myself with Christ’s attitude?” Will I surrender my life daily to Him on an altar of obedience?

Pursue the will of God

“...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.”

In other words, the example of Jesus Christ serves as the incentive for us as His followers to possess His attitude and confidently pursue His will over our own.

The phrase ‘ceased from sin’ means that the believer no longer serves sin as master. There has been a complete transformation of character and life. The gospel seed that takes root in the soil of a repentant and receptive heart will bear the fruit of a changed life.

John Stott once said that every Christian has a biography that consists of two volumes—B.C. and A.D.

Before Christ entered our lives, we had no power to withstand sin. Our minds were completely blinded by it. We lived in pursuit of our appetites and were unable to do otherwise. However, once Christ took up residence in our lives, He supplied us with strength so that we could cease serving sin as a cruel master.

Romans 6:6—“We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.”

When Peter says whoever has ‘suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,’ he is referring to the believer that has become united by faith to Christ’s death and resurrection. Spiritually, he has ‘ceased from sin’ as its slave.

Physically, many of these to whom Peter’s writes had faithfully carried the reproach of Christ all the way up to death. Some of their loved ones had physically died for their faith. When a Christian dies, he or she is immediately transported from the presence of sin and suffering and into the presence of God. This was no doubt meant to be an encouraging word of hope to these persecuted believers. Many of their friends and loved ones had died at the hands of local officials. They, too, were facing death. But they needed to be reminded that death merely escorts the Christian into the presence of the Savior.

Psalm 23:4—“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me.”

The sting of death is sin and has been removed. In the death of Jesus, death has been put to death. So why fear it any longer? This is Peter’s reasoning. Because the believer no longer lives under the fear of death and dying, he or she is free to fearlessly pursue the will of God.

In verse 2, don’t miss the contrast between passions of the flesh and the will of God. It is a contrast of desire. The passions of the flesh refer to a selfish, self-motivated way of living that has self at the center. In contrast, you and I have strong incentive to no longer live for ourselves but in pursuit of the will of God.

Whose will are you currently pursuing? I used to think that life was about me filling in the details of what I wanted and then asking God to sign off on it. Instead, life is more like handing to God a blank sheet of paper and trusting Him to fill in all the details.

Peter's point here is that in Jesus Christ, you and I have a strong incentive to arm ourselves with the same way of thinking that is willing to forfeit our lives in pursuit of the will of God. Out of a failure to live this way, I wonder just how many:

- mission trips have not been taken
- witnessing opportunities have not been seized
- divine calls have not been obeyed
- financial sacrifices have not been made

And it all because of an unwillingness to die, to lay down our lives for Christ's sake. We've not truly begun to live for the glory of God until we're first willing to lay down our lives for the glory of God.

I wonder what a simple change in motivation would do in your life? Self-glory is replaced by pursuit of God's glory.

Peter says that living for the glory of God involves a strong incentive, but then notice also that he says it involves:

2. A necessary PERSPECTIVE (4:3-5)

"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. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same

flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”

We need the right perspective when it comes to ungodly living, undesired ridicule, and unavoidable accountability.

Ungodly living

With respect to the motive that undergirds our life, he says that the time is long past for doing what the pagans want to do. Christians live markedly different lives than pagans do.

Peter contrasts the will of God to human passions, which describes the purely humanistic way of life.

You'll notice that Peter uses six rather graphic terms to describe pagan pursuits in life. All taken together, these terms paint a sordid picture of a sensual lifestyle that seeks to gratify only the flesh.

Galatians 5:24—“And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

A crucified life no longer pursues pagan passions. Godly living for God's glory now characterizes those who have passed from death to life. The thing that is so liberating about our relationship with Christ is that, now, He Himself fills the void in our lives that we once tried to fill with all this other stuff. Now that the void has been filled, the gnawing emptiness that once existed is gone. Our longings and desires have changed.

Not only do we need perspective on ungodly living, but notice that Peter says we need perspective when we face:

Undesired ridicule

All of this makes the Christian stand out from the rest of the crowd. What result will a godly lifestyle often have in a world that is hostile to faith? At some point, it will provoke criticism over a sense of truth and values.

“With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you.”

Peter uses the word ‘blaspheme’ there, a word that means to slander and defame. The world doesn’t embrace our same understanding of truth. What’s precious to us is not precious them. Our faith means that we stand out like a sore thumb. It makes us...well, weird.

It is his character, the underlying motive of the believer’s life that causes him to stand out. Not a bumper sticker you stick on your car. Not simply going to church on Sunday morning. Not simply posting pictures of Jesus and cats on your Facebook page. It is all too easy to appear to be a Christian as certain times and certain places.

Rather, the apostle Peter is describing a life of integrity in which your internal attitudes match your external actions at all times and places. He’s advocating a life of discipleship.

Unavoidable accountability

People may ridicule us for our faith and the way we live it out. Society may ostracize us. We may have a target on our back. But what they don’t know is this:

“but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”

The time is soon coming when every individual man and every individual woman, when every person who has ever lived and who is alive now—regardless of a person’s race, regardless of a person’s political persuasion, regardless of that person’s religious creed—he or she will one day stand before the Judge.

We are destined to appear before the Lord Jesus Christ!

Living for the glory of God involves a strong incentive, a necessary perspective, and last of all, notice it involves:

3. A main OBJECTIVE (4:6)

“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.”

When we live with the glory of God in mind, the gospel is kept front and center. I am to arm myself with the same way of thinking that Jesus had, surrendered to suffer if need be, in dogged pursuit of the will of God—for this is why the gospel was preached.

The main objective of our lives must include suffering for the sake of the gospel. ‘Those who are dead’ refers to those who had lost their lives under persecution. Though they had been judged as being worthy of death by human courts and pagan officials, they lived on. Death cannot kill eternal life! Life in the spirit is what only God can give.

If we were to fast forward 100 years from the time that Peter wrote his letter, we’d meet an old Christian bishop in Smyrna by the name of Polycarp. Church history records the way that he died at the hands of his persecutors. He stood before the proconsul of Smyrna, who before an angry mob sought to persuade him to

deny Christ: “Swear by the fortune of Caesar...Swear, and I will set you at liberty, reproach Christ.”

Polycarp declared, “Eighty-six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury. How then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?”

The proconsul then pressed him once again, threatening him by saying, “I have wild beasts at hand; to these will I cast you, unless you recant. And if you despise the beasts, I will cause you to be consumed by fire.”

Polycarp then said, “You threaten me with fire that burns for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but you are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly. Why tarry? Bring forth the beasts. Bring forth the fire. Bring whatever you choose. But know that you shall not persuade me to deny Christ, my Lord and Savior.”

Only the glory of God could motivate someone like that. I wonder this morning, is it enough to motivate us?

Do you want your life to count for something? I surely do. I don't want to waste my years with selfish living. I don't want my days to end with a sigh.

*Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

The rest of C.T. Studd's poem says:

*Only one life, yes only one,
Soon will its fleeting hours be done;
Then, in 'that day' my Lord to meet,
And stand before His Judgement seat;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,*

Only what's done for Christ will last.

*Only one life, the still small voice,
Gently pleads for a better choice
Bidding me selfish aims to leave,
And to God's holy will to cleave;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Only one life, a few brief years,
Each with its burdens, hopes, and fears;
Each with its days I must fulfill,
living for self or in His will;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*When this bright world would tempt me sore,
When Satan would a victory score;
When self would seek to have its way,
Then help me, Lord, with joy to say;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Give me Father, a purpose deep,
In joy or sorrow Thy word to keep;
Faithful and true what e'er the strife,
Pleasing Thee in my daily life;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Only one life, yes only one,
Now let me say, "Thy will be done";
And when at last I'll hear the call,*

*I know I'll say "twas worth it all";
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

If the glory of God is what truly matters, then arm yourself with the same way of thinking that Jesus Himself had. When it came to suffering, Paul said:

Acts 20:24—“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”

If you are not a surrendered disciple of Jesus Christ, then what is keeping you from coming to faith in Him? Turn from your sins and trust in Him. He died and rose again in order for you to be saved and possess eternal life. But you've got to surrender to Him. A decision must be made!

If you've made that decision, if you know that you have been saved, can you rightfully say that the glory of God your ultimate motivation in life? Peter says that we are to think like Jesus. We are to crucify our passions. We are to have different goals and ambitions. If your goals in life are no different than those who don't know Christ, then how might you need to begin living differently with a different motivation?

“Father, I praise You for the power of Your Word. Your supreme glory is the only thing that matters. As those who have passed from death to life, may the glory of God be our ultimate motivation in all things. May we glorify You even through suffering and hardship in life, Lord. And as we do so, give us opportunity to show forth Your grace to those who do not know You. May we always be armed with the same attitude of Jesus, willing to lay down our lives for the glory of God and the advancement of the gospel. In Jesus' name, Amen.”