

February 13, 2022

1 Peter 4:1-11

Living today for That Day!

Introduction:

Thank you so much for the privilege of being with you this morning. I want to thank Pastor Paul for the privilege of opening God's Word this morning to the Cornerstone family. I also want to officially welcome you to FEB Central. Last fall your leaders went through a process of affiliation and we were thrilled to have the Cornerstone family join FEB Central and our Fellowship. For those that may not know a lot about the Fellowship let me take a couple moments to explain. You are now part of The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada, over 500 churches across Canada. FEB Central is one of five regions of that Fellowship of churches and includes almost 290 churches in Ontario and English-speaking Quebec. **Our region covers almost 1 million square km.** FEB Central ministries serves our churches helping them thrive on mission for the gospel of Jesus Christ. We do this by working with our churches in three key areas: church planting, leadership development and church health. You are now an interdependent partner with the churches of FEB Central and our Fellowship.

We are stronger together. As an example, under COVID, the FEB Central family has been able to plant 13 new churches, despite the limits, and 8 more new plants are in the planning stages.

Thank you for your prayers, your financial support, and your engagement with our Fellowship family.

Invite you to turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter 4. I think you would all agree with me that the last 2 years have been extremely challenging for our world and for the church. The circumstances have sparked a lot of conversation among believers about what is happening and what it all means. Some have wondered is this the beginning of the end. Every world crisis tempts believers to try and discern God's plan for Jesus' return. Trying to discern God's exact chronology for the second coming is deeply flawed (Scripture and history show this). Jesus was so clear that no one knows the hour or day of the Son's return (see Matt. 24:36; Acts 1:6-8). Yet many keep trying to predict the exact date and repeatedly these predictions fail. Most of the modern-day cults started with specific failed predictions of the return of Christ. Even in recent years many predicted the new millennium would be the time of Christ's return. People like Harold Camping and Jack Van Impe were sure that 2011 or

History is littered with sad and tragic outcomes from these predictions. Many have probably heard of the high-profile murder case of Chad and Lori Daybell who thought the return of Christ would be in July 2020. They have now been charged with the murder of Lori's children.

2012 would be the year. When it didn't happen, they just kept moving the dates. **Illustration – Chad and Lori Daybell.**

Clearly, God doesn't want us to approach the return of Christ as something we can put on a calendar. But this doesn't mean that the second coming of Jesus isn't important to how we live. The Bible presents it as critical to how we live. It isn't wishful thinking. Our job isn't to try and figure out **the when but the how** to live in light of its certainty. Jesus is coming again to finish what He started in the world and in our lives. We are called to live everyday with this eternal perspective, to be ready, because it might be today. **Big Idea: We are to live today for that certain day, suffering and serving like Jesus. "The last day is hidden, that every day may be regarded" (Augustine).**

The absolute reign of King Jesus in history and my life is certain and may be today, so the question is how should that change the way I live today, tomorrow and the next day?

TEXT: 1 Peter 4:1-11.

Development:

STAND, READ, PRAY

1 Peter 2:21: "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps."

What does it look like to live today for that Day? It looks like choosing the same approach to life that Jesus had. Peter says "**Therefore since Christ suffered in his body**" we should choose to have the same attitude as Jesus (**v. 1a**). **We need to suffer like Jesus (vv. 1-6)**. Peter is looking back to what he has said about Jesus in **chapter 2-3 (2:21-24; 3:18)**. **Jesus suffered unjustly, the righteous for the unrighteous so that we could be right with God.** Jesus' suffering is unique, but in another sense, we are called to follow His example (**1 Pet. 2:21**). He patiently endured mistreatment out of love. Peter says **arm yourselves with the same courageous and loving attitude**. This word translated "**arm yourselves**" is used of soldiers putting on their armor. The call is to be ready; get it firmly fixed in your mind that suffering, being misunderstood and mistreated to the point of even death, is part of your identification with Jesus Christ (**temporary but necessary**). Jesus resolved to live as a stranger in the world, and so should we. He didn't expect health and wealth and only smooth sailing. He expected hardship and knew that those who choose God's will against the will of others are embraced by some and rejected by others.

This teaching is hard for us in the West, where we are constantly shaping our lives for comfort and acceptance. We want healthy bodies and bulging wallets, not hardships and hurts.

Part of the motivation for this willingness to suffer is that when we suffer in faith, we become more obedient to God (**v. 1b**). Peter can't be saying we become sinless or that suffering itself purifies people. Lots of people who have suffered a great deal still sin and there are those who become bitter not better in suffering. The idea is that through suffering the break that we have made with sin becomes clearer for us. Being one with Jesus means we leave behind the old life connected with self and now we have a whole new life that is lived for God and others. But this new identity must be renewed daily. Suffering helps us to see and embrace this break with sin more clearly. Each time we suffer unjustly, we have a choice to make. Will it be the path of least resistance, going along with the values of my fallen world and personal desires, or will my life be about God (even though it leads to short term loss). That this is the idea is made clear in the next verses (**vv. 2-3**). The point is that we have changed masters (**God not sin**). Living for me is no longer my MO as a follower of Jesus. **The point that Peter is making is that we need to decide before hand what our mindset is going to be before we ever get there. Illustration – bakery.** A Christian must have the right attitude if they are to live the right life. My life is no longer about me; it's about God! We need to be resolved and count the cost, no matter what comes (the good, the bad, or the ugly).

Each time we choose obedience to God over self-gratification we need to understand that it can be costly (**v. 4**). Peter says when we come to faith in Christ and it is about Him, some won't like that. Some (even those closest to us) may misunderstand and may even malign us. **“What happened to you? Loosen up!” “What is wrong with seeking to be happy?”** We may even be condemned as a “life hater, a killjoy.” But total autonomy does not bring thriving. **True freedom is living within the limits God created us for.** Your life seems like an assessment of theirs and the only way to keep living as they are is to view you as the problem.

A man decided it was time to shed some excess weight. He took his new diet very seriously, even changing his driving route to avoid his favorite bakery. One morning, however, he arrived at work carrying a gigantic coffee cake. His fellow workers looked at him, puzzled. But he just smiled at them and explained. **“I accidentally drove by the bakery this morning and there in the window was my favorite cake! I felt that this couldn't possibly be an accident, so I prayed, ‘Lord, if you want me to have one of those delicious coffee cakes, let me have a parking spot directly in front of the bakery.’ “And sure enough”, he said beaming, “the eighth time around the block, there it was!”**

Peter then attempts to encourage these believers in the face of this opposition (vv. 5-6). Patiently live today with that Day in view. He challenges them to have an eternal perspective. It is short term pain for long term gain. Any suffering is temporary. God will have the final word. God will set everything straight. Many will see when they stand before God that they chose short term gain and exchanged it for long term pain. Jesus will make the wrongs right and reward the right. Our job is not to be judge and jury but to give them the gospel, to point them to Jesus. Knowing how the story ends means, like Jesus, we don't have to worry about justice; God will take care of that. We can entrust ourselves to God and respond in love in the face of hostility, pointing people to God's love and reconciliation in His Son so they are ready to stand before God. The decisions we make in the face of injustice now impact the trajectory of our eternity and that of others.

Peter goes on. *We need to serve like Jesus (vv. 7-11).* The other way we prepare for that Day is by giving our lives away in service, even as Jesus served us. Peter begins with **“The end of all things is at hand” (v. 7a).** What does he mean? Literally, it is **“the end has drawn near.”** It is shorthand for the next step in God's plan is Jesus' return. His coming is close and ready to happen at any moment (cf. **Jas. 5:8**). But wait a second, these words were spoken almost two thousand years ago, and still the Lord hasn't returned. Maybe Peter was mistaken. **Peter was already familiar with this criticism of the teaching of Christ's second coming (cf. 2 Pet. 3:3-4, 8-9).** The key is to understand that Peter isn't talking about an exact chronology here, as though he knows the calendar date of the return of Christ. He is talking about the **certainty of it** and the **big picture of God's plan. The next great act in God's drama of salvation is the return of Jesus.** Jesus has died, risen again, and ascended to the right hand of the Father. The Spirit came and the church was birthed. For NT believers, the entire church age was considered **“the last days.”** They saw themselves running along the edge of the final event of history; at any moment they could turn into the final chapter of God's redemption. In this sense it was always five minutes to midnight (cf. **Rom. 13:11-14**).

Because of this certainty, Peter says we need to live a certain way. We need to be ready for that Day. How do we do that? He is going to challenge us to be engaged in giving our lives away to serve others (God's will; see v. 2). He gives four different commands. **First**, he says be self-controlled and sober minded so you can pray effectively (v. 7b). Think clearly about what counts and what is important (**about how this day impacts that day**). Don't do what others do and just numb yourself to the brokenness of the world. This clear headedness is necessary so that we can pray effectively for all the various situations of life around us. We need godly discernment to recognize the schemes of the evil one and pray for the deeper root causes not just the surface symptoms (praying during COVID – margin).

Prayers: safety from COVID? More important is safety from eternal judgment. Constitutional freedoms? Or freedom in Christ to be what God created us to be!

Second, we need to “**above all**” love one another deeply (v. 8). **Love is the MVP of Christian virtues.** Peter adds, love “deeply” or “earnestly.” Love as Jesus has loved you. The word is used of athletes straining their muscles to win a race. This is a strenuous, costly love that covers over a multitude of sins. Where this kind of deep love is present, offenses are forgiven and overlooked (cf. Prov. 10:12). It nurtures unity and peace.

The **third** command is a tangible expression of the second (v. 9): “**Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.**” In the first century there weren't motels and hotels like we have today. Christians were dependent on other Christians for their hospitality. This was especially true of those who were being persecuted and had to seek refuge in other locations. This hospitality was costly (time and money). That is why Peter adds, do it without grumbling. Joyfully treat others with the costly love you have been shown by God in Christ. **Finally**, we live today in light of that Day by **servicing each other with the resources** God has given into our hands (vv. 10-11a). Each of us has been uniquely blessed by God with different ministry gifts and abilities (**two categories: speaking and serving gifts**) which we are to faithfully steward and manage by using them to invest in the lives of others. The variety of God's grace gifts are endless (sharing God's truth; sharing God's love). Whatever is used for God's glory and the good of others is really a gift.

Figure out your sweet spot and then use that to bless others. Be part of the construction crew not the demolition crew.

After church, where she had been taught about the Second Coming of Jesus, a little girl was quizzing her mother. "Mommy, do you believe Jesus will come back?" "Yes." "Could he come this week?" "Yes." "Today?" "Yes." "Could he come in the next hour?" "Yes." "In a few minutes?" "Yes, dear." "Mommy, would you comb my hair?" If Jesus is coming back, and He could in the next few minutes, then I want to be ready when he comes.

Conclusion/Application:

So, what do you do, knowing that Jesus' return is certain?

Illustration – little girl. One day we are all going to stand before God and give an account for what we did with the grace He has given us? The need is to be at our post when He comes. The mission is to **suffer and serve like Jesus so you can point others to God's incredible love, mercy and grace through faith in His Son.** You give yourself to God's mission with passion no matter what the opposition or how trivial the task. You give yourself to God's work, His way, with His resources, for His glory and the good of others. You don't stop working and go find a bunker somewhere and wait for the day and the hour of Christ's return. You don't stand on a hill looking up waiting for His soon return. You don't try to sort out the puzzle of world events. You give yourself to loving God and loving others (especially the family of God) as God has loved you in Jesus Christ. You do that when it is hard (when you are being treated unjustly -- like Jesus), and when it is easy. This means we are to make every day count for Jesus!

"The last day is hidden, that every day may be regarded"
(Augustine).

Quit your job and sell everything? Stand there looking up into the sky, waiting? Or try to discern when it will happen and put it on your calendar? NO, NO, and NO!

Intelligent people believe only half of what they hear. Discerning people know which half to believe.

Warren Wiersbe talks about giving a message on prophecy when He was young pastor and he tried to explain everything in it. A friend of his who heard the message said to him after, **“Brother, you must be on the planning committee for the return of Christ.”** His friend then drove home his point when he said, **“I’ve moved from the planning committee to the welcoming committee.”** . . . All Christians may not agree on the details of the event, but we can agree on the demands of the experience. He is coming and we need to be ready, whenever that happens. That means we need to be at our post, representing and reflecting Jesus to our sphere of influence when He comes again.

Chuck Swindoll sums it up: “First, it might be best for you to understand what you don’t do. You don’t sit around, listening for some bugle call or looking for the rapture cloud. You don’t quit work. And you don’t try to set the date because “the signs of the times” are so obvious! You do get your act together. You do live every day (as if it’s your last) for His glory. You do work diligently on your job and in your home (as if He isn’t coming for another ten years) for His Name’s sake. You do shake salt out every chance you get . . . and you do shine the light . . . and remain balanced, cheerful, winsome, and stable, anticipating His return day by day. Other than that, I don’t know what to tell you. Except, maybe, if you’re not absolutely sure you’re ready to fly, you get your ticket fast. As long as they are available, they’re free.