



**KIAMA ANGLICAN
CHURCHES**

Be Clear Minded and Self-Controlled

Sermon - 1 Peter 4:7-11

Mark 14:32-42 / 8am - Exodus 34:4-10

Steve Stanis 15/11/2020

Relationship with one another (v7-11)

Peter has made eternity our goal and he stresses the importance of keeping an eternal perspective in our present-day lives. The first six verses of chapter 4 outline a worldly perspective - living for earthly desires. Yet Aiden challenged us last week to be made right in Christ, in each individual's life of faith, "Solitary = Victory"!

Our sermon today begins at verse 7 where Peter is challenging us to live a new way with a heavenly perspective. God calls us to live with Spirit-filled desires. These are mine only because God has planted his Spirit in me. My desire must be to pray, to meet with other believers, to give practical help and to use my God given gifts in this short life for the blessing of others and always for the glory of God.

Peter gives us some guidance as to how to live with a heavenly perspective.

(Verse 7) *"The end of all things is near. Therefore, be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you may pray."*

To live with a heavenly perspective...

We are called to be clear-minded, meaning to be alert to be vigilant, to be attentive.

And self-controlled, meaning to be sober mind, to be earnest, serious, solemn.

About the responsibility to pray...

The great danger facing us is that we fall in love with this world and fall asleep spiritually. The end of things will come on us like a thief in the night. Pray for the coming of the kingdom of God and for your strength to endure and escape the trap of spiritual apathy. Pray that you may be able to stand before Christ when he returns. We must pray that everything we do is for the glory of God (verse 11).

Peter says that by word and action I must be a blessing to others because this will bring glory to God. Verses 8-9 speak to us about how to live together in word and action with a heavenly perspective.

"Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaint [without grumbling]."

Verse 8 requires us to love each other deeply. Love needs to cover over a multitude of sins. Our love needs to be the kind that covers each other's sins. The focus is on the call of love that enables fellowship in spite of sins; that is other-centred love.

Verse 9 requires that we be hospitable without complaint or grumbling. Do you think this grumbling is just about cooking a meal or cleaning the house? Don't you think Peter is referring to grumbling about people? Love covers over sins. Let hospitality be without grumbling. Love says, "I'm just going to cover over the things about which I could complain or grumble." But God's amazing word to us this morning: love covers sins, so that hospitality—real heart-felt fellowship—can happen.

Romans 6:1: *What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?*

By no means! We are to confess our sins. We are to faithfully submit to the Word of God. And we are to forgive because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Ultimately, for love to cover sins, we must be forgiving.

We return to Verse 11, so *"that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."*

Verse 10 speaks of using our gifts. Whatever your ministry, do it in the strength God provides. *"Administering God's grace in its various forms"*. I must use my gifts for God. **Everyone** has

received a spiritual gift! Not one of us has been left out. We are to use that gift.

Peter instructs us to serve one another as faithful stewards of the **overflowing, always grace** of God. That means every gift has its own particular grace, too. So make it urgent to be a blessing by using your spiritual gift to serve others.

What a privilege to be a channel of God's blessings!

Relationship with outsiders (v12-19)

Let's begin with the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:11-12. They come straight after the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount.

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

These words must be part of Peter's thinking as he addresses this subject of suffering. The question of suffering for these believers in Peter's day was very real. This letter was written around AD 62-64; this predates the Great Fire of Rome; the fire Nero lit and did nothing to stop. Nero falsely blamed the Christians for this fire.

As Peter writes this letter, guided by the Spirit of God, he recognises the persecution of Christians will be a recurring phenomenon for believers. *God's people should have a heavenly perspective and an attitude to suffering that shows the world the difference Jesus makes.*

Verse 12: *"Don't be surprised at the fiery ordeals that come upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you."*

Does that relate to your heart and mind in your life experiences? Are we surprised by suffering? I recall a

moment when I realised what potential personal suffering for Christ might mean:

In 1989 Nicki and I were heading to Greece to meet my family. On the way we stayed with a Christian family in Vienna, the capital of Austria. Instantly we connected deeply in the unity of our faith in Christ. We worshipped in a large home Church and we heard about the work of Brother Andrew (Open Doors), taking Bibles into and behind closed doors.

We had negotiated for a visa into Hungary; at that time the communist regime still had a closed border. The following week Bibles were to be driven into Romania through the border of Hungary - false floors in a Kombi Volkswagen, escorting one driver, false seats sitting up high. Australian Passports at this time were considered to be helpful for the illegal endeavour of crossing Bibles into a country closed to Christianity.

Would we help? Aged 25, naïve but believing in the spread of the Gospel we said, yes. What happens if the Bibles are found? Potential jail, turned around, fines all possible. The possible suffering we did not really grasp at the time in what God had called us to do.

There was thorough checking by the many police at the cold war border of Hungary. We got our reality check on the actual day when we began to shake. Guns, dogs, torches looking all over the vehicle, in bags but not lifting up the false floors. Hundreds of Bibles reached Romanians.

This experience taught us to seek to be open to how God will use your life regardless of the suffering we may face. Suffering has a real place for the Christian in life. When you and I as believers face suffering, will those watching notice the difference Jesus makes? Will we have a heavenly perspective in our view of Christ at these times?

Listen to the urging of Christian suffering in verse 13: *“Rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.”*

In the immediacy of trials remember the big picture; get a future perspective. One day the whole universe will acknowledge that Jesus is Lord. We will be a part of that celebration. When we are gripped by fear, when we feel under siege and alone, we don't need to hear that others are worse off; we rejoice not **in** but **through** suffering. We need a heavenly perspective; the Spirit of God works in our heart to bring joy.

Verse 11c: *“To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen!”*

From the future to within the present suffering for God - turn your face to Christ.

Verse 14: *“If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you”.*

Peter emphasises this point that to suffer trials for Jesus' name is not a misfortune to be resented in self-pity. But rather a privilege in which to thank God and in which we will experience God's blessing.

“For the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you” are words that take us back to Exodus and Moses' shining face. Also the story of Stephen whose face shone as he was stoned.

Acts 7:55-56: *“But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.*

“Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

We only get the strength to manage this sort of trial when we understand the Spirit of God rests on us as before, now and

forevermore. Painful trials are not abnormal – the pain of suffering for Jesus' name is given perspective as I learn through the experience to trust in Jesus and depend on his Word.

Do we come to Jesus thinking all our troubles will disappear? Following Christ gives no assurance against pain and suffering.

Verse 15: *“If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.”*

Peter describes a diversity of criminal behaviour; there is a suffering we should seek to avoid. Don't suffer because you have made unwise choices or improper interference in other people's lives. Your call is to be salt and light. You must live in the footsteps of Jesus to bring glory to God.

Verse 16: *“do not be ashamed”*.

Peter is the master of shame; remember he denied Jesus three times. But he has learnt from his mistake. He does not want shame to drive us. He says do not be ashamed in the experience of trials.

Have you ever had to stand up for Jesus' name in a dangerous or difficult circumstance? Would you?

Verse 16: *“...praise God that you bear that name.”*

What a lifetime of difference for Peter...from ashamed to praise of the name of Jesus!

Verse 19: *“So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.”*

Mark's Gospel in chapter 14:32-42 gives the account of Jesus praying in Gethsemane. We read of Jesus' testimony of the spiritual guidance and strength that he needed to glorify God in the extreme sinless action of dying on the cross to save the

world from the consequences of sin. He took on the greatest suffering we could ever know and yet remained faithful to his Creator. There is no better example of prayer, suffering and our eternal promise.

God is faithful and is always with us. God is in control. The temptation is that, as soon as trials hit, we wonder where God is? In the midst of trials, commit yourself to your faithful God.

Also verse 19 - continue to do good. Trials can bring paralysis based on resentment against God or resentment against someone who has harmed us.

Don't be paralysed.

Continue to do good.

Conclusion

So this week keep an eternal perspective in your present day lives.

Be a blessing to all you spend time with because...

...(verse 11) *"in all things God must be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and power forever and ever. Amen."*

