

## Life Without Jesus Is A Wasted Life

1 Peter 4:1-6

Introduction: Several years ago, I had the honor of meeting Rick Barnes the successful men's head basketball coach of the University of Tennessee. I was with my friend and colleague Keith Whitfield. Keith had been a team manager when coach Barnes was at Clemson. Keith walked up and said, "Coach Barnes, you probably will not remember me, but I was a team manager when you were at Clemson." I will never forget how Rick Barnes responded. With grace and kindness, he simply said, "Keith, that man you knew back then is dead. He died years ago." What Rick Barnes meant was the angry, filthy mouth man who idolized basketball no longer existed. He had become a follower of Christ while coaching at the University of Texas. He was a new and different man from the one Keith knew years ago. He was a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), and as Peter says in 1 Peter 4:1, he had "ceased from sin." Sin no longer dominated and ruled his life. Jesus did!

1 Peter 4:1-6 builds on 3:18-22. The word "Therefore" in 4:1 tips us off. Just as Christ suffered in the flesh (3:18; 4:1), we too can expect to suffer in this life (4:1). Following Christ may not always be easy, but when you follow Jesus you can be assured of this: you will not live a wasted life enslaved to sin (4:1), human desires (4:2-3) and human approval (4:4-6). No, you will live a worthwhile and meaningful

life “in the [S]pirit and according to God’s standards,” and one prepared to meet God at the final judgment (4:6). You will live “the rest of your life” for the will of God” (*ESV*). You will make your life count for eternity! So, why is a life without Jesus a wasted life? Peter highlights four reasons.

I. A life without Jesus is enslaved to sin 4:1

Peter begins his argument reminding us that “Christ suffered in the flesh,” in the human, earthly realm. In fact, as 3:18 reminds us, “Christ also suffered for sins once for all”, our sins, “the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring [us] to God.” Grounded in this truth, he calls us to “arm ourselves also with the same understanding” or “attitude.” We need the mind of Christ (Phil 2:5). This is a call to battle as the phrase “arm yourselves” has “military connotations” (Schreiner, 199). We must be armed for the battle as faithful soldiers, especially in our minds (cf Eph. 6:10-20). In our thought life we must be ready for a life of suffering. “Christ suffered in the flesh,” in the body, and those who follow him can expect the same. We must have this mind, attitude and disposition. This preparedness for suffering is an evidence, a proof, that we are “finished with sin.” The *ESV* says “ceased from sin,” the *NIV* “done with sin.” Peter, of course, is not speaking of sinless perfection in this life. What he means is sin is no longer my slave master. Sin no longer has a strangle hold on me. Equipped with the mind of Christ, Calvin writes “we are really and effectively supplied with invincible weapons to

subdue the flesh, if we partake as we ought of the efficacy of Christ's death" (*I Peter*, 121). In Christ, by virtue of his death and resurrection, I am no longer unrighteous but righteous (3:18). I am no longer lost but saved "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (3:21). The wasted life of being enslaved to sin has been broken! I have been liberated. I have been set free. I am finished with sin. I now live for Christ.

## II. A life without Christ is captive to human passions 4:2-3

If eternity is real, and it is, then our life on earth is truly very short. Peter reminds us that we were once very much alive to sin. But then we met Christ. Now, we must redeem the time we have left (see Eph 5:16). We must "live the remaining time in the flesh [the human body] no longer for human desires, but for God's will" (4:2). There is a new priority in my life, a new master.

We are finished with sin. We are done. The sinful human passions that once enslaved me have been defeated by Christ (3:18-22). Conversion really makes a difference. I no longer live for my will, my passions, my desires, but God's!

Whatever time I have left, it is all God's! Schreiner writes, "Whatever the span of life God grants, believers are to live zealously for God as long as life endures" (p. 202). This life is brief, but my Savior will get all of it!

Verse 3 builds on and expands the thought of verse two. Peter reminds us that we have already spent enough time on a wasted life. "For there has already been

enough time spent in doing what the Gentiles [the lost; pagans] choose to do.”

We have already wasted too much time. And, what did this wasted life look like?

Peter provides an abbreviated “vice list,” something quite common in the NT (see 1 Cor 5:10-11; 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:3-5). He notes six specific examples of the wasted life we once lived. J.D. Charles notes, “The ethical standards could not be more opposite” to those that characterize the will of God (*1 Peter*, EBC, vol. 13, 343). Note a brief description of each sin.

- 1) unrestrained behavior (*ESV*, “living in sensuality”) – “unbridled lustful excess, conduct that shocks public decency” (Vaughn and Lea, 106). Moral constraint is completely absent.
- 2) evil desires (*NIV*, “lust”) – inordinate desires that pervert God’s good design, especially as it relates to sexual behavior.
- 3) drunkenness – excessive use of wine or other alcoholic drink.
- 4) orgies – excessive depraved sex parties (see Rom 13:13; Gal 5:2), a sin often linked with drunkenness (Schreiner, 203).
- 5) carousing (*ESV*, “drinking parties”) – like orgies, the word is often associated with parties or festivals of a public nature, pointing to “excessive acts of eating and drinking...vices that characterize the lives of those who are perishing and will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Jobes, 263).

6) lawless idolatry – (*NIV*, “detestable idolatry) abominable idolatries, idolatries that go beyond the pale and are exceedingly wicked and evil.

Such behavior clearly is contrary to the will of God. Indeed, it is vile, warped and approaches the uncontrolled lust of an animal. How foolish and wasteful is such a life. This life is party to party and not much more. And, one day the light will be turned out because the party will be over.

### III. A life without Jesus is applauded by the world

4:4

Peter tells us we are “strangers and exiles” (2:11), spiritual foreigners in this world. Unbelievers immediately see this when we do not join in “the same flood of wild living” of v. 3. Their response is two-fold: 1) “They are surprised” and 2) “they slander or blaspheme you.” Lost people are stunned by our behavior. They simply cannot believe we will not join the party of unbridled lust. After all we should “eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die” (1 Cor. 15:32). “We only go around once, so you better grab all the gusto you can!” To restrain yourself from sin, a forgotten word in our day, is crazy. It is foolish. Such people should be mocked, laughed at, ridiculed and scorned, for the fools they are. Schreiner is helpful in putting the 1<sup>st</sup> century situation in context, and also drawing helpful parallels to our own day. He writes, “Pagans are surprised that believers do not participate in what they consider to be normal cultural activities; in response they criticize, defame, and revile believers and thereby also the God they

worship...unbelievers were at first puzzled and then outraged by the failure of believers to participate in activities that were a normal part of Greco-Roman culture. We see such a reaction in Tacitus when he says Christians have a “hatred of the human race” (Ann. 15:44). Pagans would feel this way because idolatry was woven into almost every dimension of their lives, from life in the home to public festivals to religious observances and even social occasions...public festivals, in which the gods were venerated, were considered a civic duty in the Greco-Roman world. In particular veneration of the emperor was simply a mark of good citizenship, and the deifying of the emperor was especially pronounced in Asia Minor. Those who failed to participate would be social outcasts just as today American citizens would look with suspicion on those who refused to take the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. We can imagine that those who did not fit in with the mores of society would be discriminated against in daily life and that they would be the object of abuse.” (Schreiner, 204).

However, Schreiner wisely adds, “sharp words can easily turn to sharp swords” (Ibid). If the world claps for you, and praises you, you are probably running with the wrong crowd.

#### IV. A life without Jesus is not prepared for judgment

4:5-6

This life is not all there is. This is one of the most crucial errors made by those who do not know God, “the Gentiles” (pagans) of v. 3. They may mock and slander

followers of Jesus (2:21) in this life, but as the great preacher R.G. Lee said, “Payday is coming!” Slanderers of v. 4 will give an account to the one [God] who “stands ready to judge the living and the dead” (v. 5). Judgment Day is coming for those who are alive and those who have died. No one will escape. Pastor Adrian Rogers says, “Public enemy number one is sin” (“How to Win the War with Sin,” 5-15-88). Judgment Day will show this is true. The word “account” in v. 5 is courtroom language. Here it has the ring of final and eternal judgment. It is inescapable. It will happen. You cannot buy your way out of it. There will be no bartering or negotiating at the bar of God. Here comes the Judge and his coming is sooner than most expect (v. 7).

Because eternal judgment is certain, we preach the gospel (v. 6). The lost, unbelievers, are not ready. Verse 6 is subject to misinterpretation, but a careful reading clears up any confusion. Adrian Rogers is again our helper. His pastoral hand is a great assistant. “Now what on earth does that mean? [“The gospel was also preached to those who are now dead”]. You say, “Pastor, does that mean there’s a second chance to be saved after you die, the gospel’s preached to dead people?” Well, the gospel was preached. Now look at it very carefully: “For this cause the gospel was” – past tense- “preached also to them that are dead.” When was the gospel preached to them that are dead? When they were alive. It doesn’t say, “Now is the gospel preached to them that are dead.” “Was the gospel preached

to them who are now dead”—it was preached to them when they were alive, and they got saved.

Now, men judged them in the flesh. They said, “They’re weird; they’re not worthy to live.” And they put many of them, out of [human] judgment, to death. And many of these Christians that Peter was talking to were put to death. But listen. That was men’s judgment upon them. They were judged according to men in the flesh but they live according to God in the spirit [or “Spirit”]. They’re God’s dear children. And they’re in Heaven with our Lord right now. And that’s the reason Jesus said, in Matthew 10:28, “Fear not him which is able to kill the body, but able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”” (Ibid).

Believers rightly understand the rest of the story. Tragically, unbelievers don’t. Death is not the final word. This life is not all there is. Resurrection and judgment is. On that day, will your life be seen as worthy or wasted? The answer is of eternal consequence.

Conclusion: As I write these words I have just learned of the death of my beloved sister and friend Adrienne (A.D.!) Miles. She was a wonderful colleague and teacher at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and Judson College. She bravely battled cancer for over 3 years and went home to be with Jesus on May 5, 2024. Hers was not a wasted life. She understood suffering better than most. And,



she was a lady enslaved to Christ, captive to God's will, applauded by her spiritual family and prepared to meet Jesus!

As she knew that her life on this earth was drawing to a close, she was a fountain of wisdom. Concerning suffering I don't think it could be said any better, "I believe that God allows bad things in our lives for a reason and that he uses everything, but especially hard things, to draw people to him. I didn't want my suffering to be silent [as allusion to a Facebook page she started], I wanted it to point to Jesus—the God who hears, the God of all comfort, the God who heals, the God of unfading love.... I want my journey to encourage others to taste and see that God is good even when situations are bad; his mercies never fail." ("Remembering Adrienne Miles," SEBTS.edu). Adrienne's life indeed was not a wasted life. Praises be to God.