

Studies in First Peter

"Insider Investment Information"

First Peter 4:1-11

Introduction

Let's take a look at a typical twenty-four hour period in your life. You average eight hours sleeping, eight hours working, and one hour for lunch. That leaves you less than eight hours for personal hygiene, hobbies, and quality time with your spouse and family.

Wait a minute: We forgot to subtract the time it takes for breakfast, dinner, and commuting to and from work. According to the 2000 US Census the average commute is twenty-five minutes; let's say a quick breakfast is fifteen minutes, and a dash and grab supper, another twenty minutes. That adds up to another hour, leaving you around six hours.

Not really! The real average work day is not eight hours; it's over eleven hours... So you only have about two and one half hours left. According to the Nielsen ratings company, your TV is on for an average of seven and one half hours per day. If you watch TV, *you're going backward in time!*

It's an eye-opener to see how you really spend your time. Time management specialists encourage you to keep a chart of your daily activities. When you see how you really spend your time, you are motivated to make adjustments to get the most out of your hours and days.

Peter wasn't a time management specialist, but he dealt with your use of time. He pointed out a fundamental change in your attitude towards time once you become a Christian: **Instead of thinking about how you *spend* your time, you think about how you can *invest* your time.**

Before you get saved, all you can do is spend time. It keeps tick, tick, ticking away until it's gone. Maybe you enjoyed yourself at times...

But eventually you're up against the reality of death. Someone once said about time, "You don't know how much of it you have; once it's used, you can't buy more; you can't really save it."

Once you become a Christian, you can begin investing your time. *You're going to live forever!* Everything you do that is for the Lord can pay you eternal dividends.

Peter's message in these verses are a great Christian time management curriculum. We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 It's Better To Suffer Than To Spend Your Time On Lust, and #2 It's Best To Serve By Investing Your Time In Love.

#1 It's Better To Suffer
Than To Spend Your Time On Lust
(v1-6)

In chapter three Peter pointed out that the unsaved might persecute you for doing what is right. Here in chapter four he mentioned a different problem you will encounter: **The unsaved want you to participate with them in their sinful activities!** When you refuse, they don't understand and can react quite negatively.

Out among the unsaved you should "arm [yourself]" with two things: A new *attitude* and a new *analysis*.

Your new attitude is in verse one:

1 Peter 4:1 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,

"Arm yourselves" is a military term that speaks of *weapons*. In your case, the weapon is your "mind." You are to have the "same mind," or I would say the same *attitude*, about sin that Jesus did when He was on the earth. Jesus "suffered for us in the flesh" means that He was willing to suffer rather than waver from the will of God. His own disciples didn't want Him to go to the Cross... His enemies tried to get Him to deny His mission. But He remained steadfast, suffering in His flesh to do the will of His Father though it cost Him His life.

"He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin" does not mean that you can achieve a state of sinlessness through suffering. It means you should choose to suffer rather than give in to the pressure to sin. Your new attitude is the willingness to suffer if it is necessary in order to go on doing the will of God.

You arm yourself with a new analysis in verses two and three:

1 Peter 4:2 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.

1 Peter 4:3 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.

You've already "*spent*" some of your lifetime on earth. If you are still alive, you've got "the rest" of your lifetime left. Are you going to *spend* it like you did in the past? Or *invest* it like you should in your future?

Peter simplified the question for you by contrasting your two choices. You can spend what time is left to you "in the flesh for the lusts of men," or you can invest the rest of your lifetime "for the will of God."

To further help you decide, he reminded you what it was like living for lust, which he also called "doing the will of the Gentiles." (By the way: Peter used the word "Gentiles" to refer to **all** unbelievers - whether Jews or Gentiles).

Some of your "lusts," the "will of the Gentiles" you used to indulge in, are listed:

1. "Lewdness," or the KJV more heinous-sounding "laciousness," involves getting rid of moral restraint, especially with regard to sex and violence.
2. "Lusts" are your fleshly appetites when left unchecked to pursue their indulgence.
3. "Drunkenness" is translated *excess of wine* in the KJV.
4. "Revelries" are banquets or feasts given over to wild indulgences.

5. "Drinking parties" is *carousing*. Instead of a banquet, you go bar-hopping.
6. "Abominable idolatries" is something *worse* than idolatry! Often idol worship involved sexual practices. This describes immoral idolatry that was forbidden even by human law.

The unsaved have a problem with your refusal to participate in their activities:

1 Peter 4:4 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*.

"Flood of dissipation" gives the idea of you plunging into these activities; but rather than being a refreshing swim, you are swept away by a flood. The unsaved will "[speak] evil of you." It means they will verbally abuse you. Your non-participation in their sin implies a condemnation of their sin. Rather than repent, they would rather appease their consciences by abusing you.

Peter's analysis of time spent in this lifetime on lust continued with a look at the afterlife. He described unbelievers in verse five, then believers in verse six.

1 Peter 4:5 They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

The unsaved might temporarily appease their consciences by abusing you, but they can't avoid God. The unsaved will all "give an account" of their own life at the Great White Throne Judgment of God. It will be a terrible accounting as they see how far short they fall of the glory of God. God is "ready to judge the living" means you could face death and judgment at any moment. **You don't know how much more lifetime you have - either to spend or to invest.** The phrase "the dead" reminds you that death doesn't end life. Once dead, unbelievers are consciously alive and aware in the afterlife, where final judgment awaits them.

Peter contrasted the afterlife of believers in verse six:

1 Peter 4:6 For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

"Those who are dead" describes *believers* who had died. The "gospel was preached" to them **while they were alive** and they were saved. They died physically. Physical death posed a dilemma in the minds of the first century Christians who were looking for the imminent return of Jesus to Rapture them without ever dying. Peter comforts them about their deceased loved ones: They were "judged according to men in the flesh" means they died physically, just like all men. But even though they died like other men, *after* death believers "live according to God in the spirit." Rather than face the terror and torment of judgment and then Hell, they will live forever in the blessed presence of God in heaven.

You could summarize what Peter said by saying, "*You've already wasted enough time living in sin!*"

What if you don't have this colorful testimony of drunken revelries and abominable idolatries? You still can benefit by the analysis. You don't have to drink poison to believe it will harm or kill you.

It's better to suffer (if necessary) than to waste your time on lust. Peter went from better to best:

#2 It's Best To Serve
By Investing Your Time In Love
(v7-11)

Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is? Peter did... And he told you in verse seven:

1 Peter 4:7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

The "end of all things" reminds you that history is moving towards a definite goal and purpose. Since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, God has been working in and through human history to save lost men and women. All of the major events have already been accomplished. There is nothing preventing Jesus from

Rapturing the Church home. The Middle East is being set as the stage for the awesome events explained in Revelation and other prophetic Scriptures. "The end" really is "at hand." Rather than waste time on lust in a world that is perishing, you can **invest** your time. Peter thought that perhaps the greatest investment of your time would be to pray. "Be serious and watchful in your prayers." "Serious" can be translated *sober*. If you avoid the lusts he listed, your mind will be sober for prayer.

What does Peter mean by "watchful?" Perhaps he was thinking back to the time in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus asked him to "watch and pray" but he and the other disciples fell asleep. Sleep is necessary; *but not as necessary as prayer!*

After you get up from your knees, the next best investment of your time is to be active among other believers in the Church. Your key investment, your blue chip stock, is "love for one another":

1 Peter 4:8 *And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."*

"Love" is *agape* love - not a feeling, but an activity of always doing what is best for others regardless your feelings. "Have fervent love" means you *exert* yourself. In English we might use the words *be stretched in your love*. You are stretched to the limit by the demands of the needs of others but your love can never be exhausted since *agape* is the gift of God.

Peter gave both an *example* and an *exhortation* at the end of the verse. The example is the very real probability that other believers in the Church will offend you and sin against you. The exhortation is that "love will cover a multitude of sins." This is a quote from Proverbs 10:12. It can be applied in several ways:

1. First, it can be applied to mean that love is blind to the faults of others. You can go on loving them regardless their shortcomings - **as they do the same for you!**
2. Second, it means that you can be mature enough to overlook many petty or even significant offenses done against you.

3. Third, it means that, though at times you cannot ignore the sins of others, you can keep matters confidential - covering it from others who have no need to be involved.

(Peter had been thinking about Noah... Drunk after exiting Ark... "uncovered..." by Ham... Covered by Shem and Japheth...)

Your fervent love among the brothers and sisters in your Church is seen in two ways: How you *serve* them, and how you *speak* to them.

How you serve them is the subject of verses nine and ten:

1 Peter 4:9 *Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.*

1 Peter 4:10 *As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

Peter used the word "hospitality" to compare the Church to a household. The Church is not a factory... It is not a seminary... It is not a business... It is a **household**.

Every household has a Master. In our case, it's Jesus. He's gone away, but will be returning soon. We are each of us "stewards" in His household. Jesus has given us each areas of service within His household while He's away. "Minister" is the word for *deacon*. It literally means *to wait tables*. Here it does not refer to the office of a deacon, but to the general idea of serving one another. You are **all** *stewards* called upon to *deacon* one another - to wait on one another's tables.

You serve in two ways: You receive a "gift" (or gifts), and you receive the "manifold grace of God."

Let's think first about "gifts." Peter was referring to what we call the gifts of the Holy Spirit. There are five lists of these gifts in the New Testament: Romans 12:6-8; First Corinthians 12:7-11 & 12:28-30; Ephesians 4:11; and First Peter 4:10.

How many gifts are there? No one knows. ***The lists are not exhaustive!*** There is a limitless variety of gifts and giftedness. Still, the lists give you a framework from which to identify which gift or gifts

God has given you. Just remember, when you read the lists, gifts must be **given** to you. You cannot *earn* them or *learn* them! You can enhance your gifts once you recognize them. But they are from God.

You discover your gifts in fellowship with other believers. You get involved serving and, as you serve with "fervent love," you discover how God *has* and how He *hasn't* gifted you.

Besides your gifts, there is the "manifold grace of God." "Manifold" means *diverse*. I would suggest that what Peter intended for us to understand was that **all** of your natural talents and abilities can also be used for serving so long as they are performed with grace. You may not have a particular gift in some area; but you can offer your talents and abilities to God and He can give you grace to perform it for His glory. For example: We are going to start a Spanish translation ministry. You may not have a gift for teaching... But can you speak both Spanish and English? *Then God can provide His manifold grace for you to serve!* He can take the natural abilities and talents you have and use them for His glory.

We move from serving to speaking in verse eleven:

1 Peter 4:11 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, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Peter was not just talking about those who teach or preach the Word of God. He was addressing **everyone** who "speaks." Anytime you open your mouth, "speak as the oracles of God." "Oracles" are things spoken from God to man. It's not that you go around all day prophesying to everyone you encounter. It's that you realize that every word you speak to someone can be an investment in eternity. It doesn't mean we can't ever have any fun, or joke around; you don't become a Christian zombie. But you ought to consider your words more carefully.

Peter summarized by saying, "if anyone ministers..." He meant whenever you serve or speak, and he was talking to *any* and *every* Christian. "Do it as with the ability which God supplies." Whether it is

your **gift**, or by allowing God's **grace** to permeate, you invest your time by serving your brothers and sisters. It is your best investment to love one another fervently.

Conclusion

Peter ended this section by saying,

...that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Here is an insider tip: Jesus, "to whom belong the glory and dominion forever and ever," **is coming quickly!** Don't spend anymore time; invest it.

(If you're not yet saved... All you can do is spend time; you're investing nothing for your future).