

**“THE REST OF YOUR LIFE”**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

In the previous passage, Peter focused on how Jesus’ death and resurrection saves us from the just judgment of God. In today’s passage, the focus shifts to another aspect of Christ’s saving work. Not only has he saved us from the judgment that our sins deserve, but he has also saved us from a life of sin. These two aspects of salvation go hand in hand, and we must not try to separate them. You cannot go to heaven without being united Christ. And you cannot be united to Christ without living a new life. Therefore, every Christian is called to reject the ways of this world and to live in accordance with the will of God.

You probably already know this. It is a basic element of the Christian faith. It is one of the vows taken when people become members in this church. But it is one thing to know something, and it is another thing to put it into practice. And that is the challenge that confronts us as we consider this text today.

**II. DO NOT LIVE FOR HUMAN PASSIONS, BUT FOR THE WILL OF GOD**

This passage makes a connection between Christ's death and the new life that Christians are called to live. While he was on this earth, Jesus suffered for sin. And through that suffering, he won the victory over sin, and he will never have to suffer for it again. He is finished with sin. And if we belong to Christ, then so are we. We are finished with sin. Yes, we still have sin residing within us, and we always will for the rest of our days on this earth. But sin's power over us, sin's dominion, has been broken. Jesus dealt with sin once and for all through his death on the cross. Those who believe in him have been united to him in his death and in his resurrection. We have died to sin and been raised to new life.

Nowhere does the Bible support the idea that being saved by grace allows us to continue living lives that are essentially the same as the lives of the non-Christians around us. Jesus saved you from sin so that you might live a holy life. Is that what you want from Jesus Christ? Do you want him to give you a new life? Or are you fairly content with the old way of life, the world's way of life? Does God really have your heart? Or does it still belong, at least in some respects, to this world? Do you want to be a person who truly walks with God? Do you want to become as much like Jesus as you possibly can? Is that what you want from Jesus? I hope and pray that it is. Because that is what Jesus offers you in the gospel. That is what salvation is about. It is not just about going to heaven when you die. It is about being saved from the love of the world so that you

might grow to love and serve God in all that you do. That is what Christ accomplished for us by his death on the cross.

Peter tells us to “arm” ourselves with this way of thinking. This is a military metaphor, reminding us that the Christian life is a life of constant warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil. And Peter is telling us that the fact that Jesus suffered for our sins means that we have at our disposal all the weapons that we need for subduing our sinful flesh, for resisting the temptations of the devil, and for overcoming the world. Those who are united to Christ in his death and resurrection have “ceased from sin.” Obviously, this does not mean that we become completely sinless when we trust in Christ. If it did mean that, then would not contain passages like this. Instead, it means that the flesh no longer rules over us. For those who belong to Christ, the power of sin has been broken.

These Christians to whom Peter was writing lived in a very decadent world, as we can clearly see by the vices listed in verse 3. I want to call your attention to the candor with which Peter speaks about these sins. He does not pull any punches. He is not afraid to talk directly about sin. And this is something that we find all throughout the pages of holy Scripture. The Bible does not shy away from speaking bluntly about evils like drunkenness or sexual immorality. Nor does it hesitate to speak positively about alcohol or sex when they are enjoyed properly. This is because the Scriptures never lose sight of the fact that evil is always a corruption of something good. Evil has no substance in and

of itself. In this sense, there is no such thing as “pure evil.” Evil is always a distortion of something that God created as good. Even Satan is a fallen angel.

This is what makes worldliness so tragic. People who pursue human passions apart from God’s will are seeking happiness in something that is broken. And this is why it makes no sense for a Christian, who has been set free from sin, to join the world in running after the things that it loves. We have been saved from that. We have spent enough time running after those worthless things. We have wasted enough of our lives already. Let us use the rest of our time, the rest of our lives, to live for God.

It is not easy to resist the allure of worldliness. But it is something that every Christian is called to do - not in your own strength, but in constant reliance upon Jesus Christ. The world is always pressuring us to be conformed to its mold. And the world in which we live is in many respects just as decadent as the world in which these first century Christians lived. There are striking similarities between our culture and that of the ancient Roman Empire. For one thing, the people of Rome came to be addicted to entertainment, most notably the savage entertainment of the gladiatorial contests. And there is no disputing the fact that we find the same kind of obsession with entertainment in our culture. Just consider the event taking place later on today: the Super Bowl. Even the most devoted football fan has to admit that the spectacle that this game has become, and all of the money that is spent in connection with it, speaks volumes about our

culture's obsession with entertainment. And there are plenty of other examples as well. Consider the ways in which existing forms of entertainment are often used to create new sources of amusement. Professional sports are used to create fantasy sports leagues; sports and movies are used to create video games; celebrities and the entertainment industry provide fodder for TV shows like "Entertainment Tonight" and for magazines like "People." We simply cannot get enough. In a very real sense we are, as the title of one book attests, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*.

Of course, that is not the only parallel between our culture and that of ancient Rome. Also like Rome, our culture is obsessed with sexual immorality. Now, the problem here is not that we are too interested in sex. It would not be a problem if people were simply interested in the proper enjoyment of sex within marriage. But that is clearly not the case. Instead, our culture's interest in sex focuses upon every conceivable context except for that of marriage. And nowhere is this more evident than in the pornography epidemic that is ravaging our culture. A recent article in the journal *First Things* cites a study that reports that 40% of internet users visit pornographic sites at least once per month. The percentage climbs to 70% when it is limited to men ages 18-34. 50% of hotel patrons purchase pornographic programming during their stay. And most disturbing of all, 90% of children ages 8-16 have seen online pornography. (Jason Byasse, "Not Your Father's Pornography") It is truly an epidemic, and it is destroying countless lives. And the problem goes even beyond the lurid world of the pornographers. It extends to movies,

television shows, advertisements, and clothing styles. We find indecency and immorality almost everywhere we turn.

We are living in a lustful, self-indulgent culture; a culture that is always looking for a new thrill; always looking for a new form of amusement. And this brings us back to the questions I asked earlier: Who has your heart? Does God truly have it? Or does it still belong to the world? What is it that you love? What is it that you are living for? As we consider such questions, we do well to think about that day when we will all stand before the Lord Jesus Christ, the day of judgment; the day when we will be called to account for how we used our lives on this earth. What do you want Christ to see when he looks back on your life? What kinds of regrets do you think you will have on that day? Let me tell you what you will not regret. You will not regret it if you decided against using alcohol, or anything else, to drown your sorrows. You will not regret it if you refused to make play the ultimate goal of your life. You will not regret it if you kept yourself sexually pure. You will not regret it if you remained faithful to your spouse, both with your body and with your mind. You will not regret any of those things. But there is one thing that you will regret. You will regret the fact that you were not more faithful to your Lord. You will wish that you had done more to honor him, more to serve him, more to glorify him, with your life. That is the only thing a Christian will regret on that great day. Live your life with that day always before you.

Before I conclude, I want to say a word about the meaning of verse 6, since it is a verse that could easily be misunderstood. This verse is not saying that the gospel was preached to people after they died. Instead, it is saying that it was preached to people who are now dead while they were alive. The translation provided by the NIV conveys this well: “the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead.” The point being made is this: Christians still face death in this world. We will all die, unless we happen to be the generation that is alive on the day when Jesus returns. And death is an aspect of God’s judgment. It was because of sin that death entered into the world. But even though we all taste death, those who have received the gospel have the certain hope that they will live with God forever.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

In his spiritual autobiography, *Confessions*, Augustine tells the story of his friend Alypius. Like Augustine, Alypius eventually converted to Christianity and was even made a bishop in the church. But prior to his conversion Alypius had a compulsive interest in the gladiatorial games that were so popular in the Roman world. If there had been a fantasy gladiator league in those days, you can be sure that Alypius would have participated in it. Listen to Augustine’s description of how Alypius got sucked into that savage world:

“He held such spectacles in aversion and detestation; but some of his friends and fellow-pupils on their way back from a dinner happened to meet him in the street and, despite his energetic refusal and resistance, used friendly violence to take him into the amphitheatre during the days of the cruel and murderous games... When they arrived and had found seats where they could, the entire place seethed with the monstrous delight in the cruelty. He kept his eyes shut and forbade his mind to think about such fearful evils. Would that he had blocked his ears as well! A man fell in combat. A great roar from the entire crowd struck him with such vehemence that he was overcome by curiosity. Supposing himself strong enough to despise whatever he saw and to conquer it, he opened his eyes. He was struck in the soul by a wound graver than the gladiator in his body, whose fall had caused the roar...As soon as he saw the blood, he at once drank in savagery and did not turn away. His eyes were riveted. He imbibed madness. Without any awareness of what was happening to him, he found delight in the murderous contest and was inebriated by bloodthirsty pleasure. He was not now the person who had come in, but just one of the crowd which he had joined, and a true member of the group which had brought him.” (VI.viii)

The world around you often functions like Alypius’ friends. It employs various forms of “friendly violence” to try to get you to join in on its pursuits. It is continually trying to seduce you, urging you to open your eyes and drink in its pleasures. But you do not have

**Sermon on 1 Peter 4:1-6**  
**OT Reading: Psalm 1**

**Grace PC, Laconia (2/3/08)**  
**An Exposition of 1 Peter, No. 15**  
**Rev. Andy Wilson**

to be like poor Alypius. You have spent enough time on such things. Live the rest of your life for God. Arm yourself with the right way of thinking. Arm yourself with the conviction that Jesus Christ's death sets you free from sin. And you can be sure that if you are so armed, nothing will be able to carry you off to the arena of worldly pleasures.