

Pursuing Purity (Part 3)

I Peter 4:3-6

INTRODUCTION:

If you would open your Bibles this morning, in a few moments we will be reading from I Peter Chapter 4. In a few minutes we will be reading verses 1-6 and then looking closely at verses 3-6.

When we looked at verses 1-2, we asked a simple question.

Do you want to make a difference for Jesus Christ?

Then we asked a follow up question.

If we are going to make an impact for Jesus in the world around us, what is it that we need?

We could obviously put several things on that list. We need...

- The presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.
- We need a personal and vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ.
- We need a true understanding of the scripture in order to know the will of God in our lives.
- But Peter mentions that one of the things on that list must be **personal purity**. It is one thing to understand the scripture, but it is personal purity that gives us the heart to obey the scriptures.

Peter begins this chapter pleading with the scattered and persecuted Christians that they should no longer be living according to the lusts of the world but instead conform themselves to the will of God.

And he tells them to look to the cross and see Christ who has suffered in the flesh for their sins. This will provide them the passion that they need to seek purity in their lives.

When the believer looks at the cross, they not only see the wickedness of their sin, but they also see the magnificence of the Savior Who took their wrath for them. They look at Christ and say "What an amazing Savior Who took my guilt on that cross! **He died for me! He has redeemed me! He has purchased me! He has saved me!**" And something builds up inside us that convicts us that we want people to serve, praise, and worship this great Savior **Who rescued me!**

Peter knows that the path to purity will be a difficult one. He knows that difficulties and obstacles will come and discouragement will set in and he doesn't want his readers to quit and give up.

So, in this morning's scripture, he gives them three powerful reasons to persevere in their pursuit for purity. The three motivations he gives is...

1. Wasted Time.
2. Coming Judgment.
3. Resurrected Life.

All Stand and Read Scripture

1 Peter 4:1-6 (NKJV)

4 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, 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. 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. 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*. ⁵ They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 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.

As we prepare to look more closely at verses 3-6 this morning, let's bow in a word of prayer.

Prayer

BODY:

I. WASTED TIME.

1 Peter 4:3-4 (NKJV)

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. 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*.

Peter says we have wasted enough time.

I want you to note first of all that our lifetime is limited. We are living in a world that is bound by time. Our life here is not eternal. We **WILL ALL** die! In fact, for most of us, the majority of our days here on earth is already gone.

When we are young, we feel that time passes by very slowly. I didn't think I was **ever** going to turn 16 so I could drive. But I did turn 16 and I did start driving and time has moved on. For me that was over 49 years ago. Looking back it seems that the 49 years took less time than the first 16 years. They have gone by so quickly!

James 4:13-15 (NKJV)

¹³ Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; ¹⁴ whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead you *ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."

How many times have you heard me say, "I will see you next Sunday, Lord Willing." We do not know what the next Sunday will bring.

One or both of us could be dead before next Sunday. Or the Lord could come before next Sunday. We do not have a guarantee of tomorrow on earth.

Compared to eternity, our life on earth is a very short temporary stay. Do not think of this life and on this earth as your permanent home.

ILLUSTRATION:

Your life is like a cold morning in winter when you walk outside and take a deep breath of the cold air and exhale. A little white cloud of vapor appears and almost immediately fades away.

Our life is as a vapor. It appears for a moment and **POOF** it is gone!

No matter how old we are, we have already spent too much of our life chasing after the world. It is time to pursue purity and arm ourselves with the mind of Christ by saturating God's Word in our hearts and obeying God's will.

How many people say, "I know I need to get right with God and make a break from sin, but I just need a little more time".

Peter says, the time you have spent sinning is already ENOUGH!

Folks! We are not guaranteed a tomorrow. It is only by God's grace that your life has been spared until now! Think back on your life. Was there ever a time when you narrowly escaped death? If you are unsaved, God may have spared you for this moment to get right with Him and to believe in His Son!

The purpose of our life is to find God and believe in His Son who died on the cross to take away our sins so we can be made sinless before God.

We are all sinners and sin separates us from God and we can do nothing on our own to be sinless before God. The scriptures tell us that our only hope of restoring our relationship with God is through His Son, Jesus Christ. We must surrender our lives to God and seek purity in our lives. We must prepare ourselves to face God in judgment **and remain prepared** for the rest of our life, however long or short it may be, by continuously remaining faithful to Him.

WHY? Because tomorrow may never come for you. When you die, your window of opportunity is gone forever.

In this text, Peter gives us six examples of sinful worldly living. I won't spend much time on each of them because we all can identify with them.

1. The first example is Walking in LEWDNESS.

Lewdness is defined as a lack of constraint or self control when it comes to lust and sexual desires and a having a shamelessness about it.

If you turn on the TV you will find that nearly every network show portrays and promotes every kind of sexual immorality that you can think of.

But the world's ways are not God's way.

2. Next Peter refers to LUSTS.

Lust is the desire to have something that does not belong to you. We tend to think of lust and put it in one category of sexual immorality, but it is actually much broader.

1 John 2:16 (NKJV)

16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

These lusts are passions. They include greed. Our world is driven by greed. We need more money, we need more stuff, we need nicer clothes, we need bigger houses, we need newer cars, we need, we need, we need! **If it is convenient, we may even steal it.**

And PRIDE! Man is driven to be his own man, to have power and importance, to do things HIS way, and to be SOMEBODY in this world.

But none of these things have eternal value.

3. The course of this world includes lewdness and lust. But then Peter adds DRUNKENNESS. Drunkenness means habitual intoxication.

We live in a society of drunkenness and habitual intoxication. It can be alcohol, illegal drugs, or even excessive prescription drugs. When we participate in intoxication it causes our minds to be impaired and it causes us to think and do immoral things.

But God wants our minds and actions to be pure and clear and focused on heavenly things.

4. Next Peter includes REVELRIES.

Revelries refer to rioting or out of control celebrations or festivals. In Peter's day this would have referred to religious festivals or national festivals and celebrations.

We probably indulge in revelries mostly through sports and music. When we have tailgate parties or riots after a game that get out of control. Or when we attend music concerts where lewd music is listened to and lewd behavior prevails.

5. The fifth example of sinful worldly living is DRINKING PARTIES.

It is exactly as it sounds. Parties organized for the very purpose of drinking alcohol and getting drunk and participating in everything that goes along with it.

6. Then Peter adds a final thing: ABOMINABLE IDOLATRIES.

As Peter concludes this list, he puts his finger on the root source of it all. All of these other things stem from this one. The course of this world is one of IDOLATRY!

I am convinced that there is only ONE living and true God and ultimately there is ONE idol (ME!).

And for you, that idol is YOU!

Sometimes we have made an image of it. Sometimes we have left it unnamed and made no image of it. But at the end of the day, the issue is, we have taken God off of His throne and put ourselves there. We have rejected the will of God and decided that we are going to follow our own heart and do what we want and it leads to the five other cravings that Peter just listed for us.

IDOLATRY is the root problem!

Peter says we have spent enough time chasing after those things. We have spent enough time being our own God.

This is the course that everyone of us started on when we were born. The truth is that all of us here have spent time in these sins. Lewdness, lust, drunkenness, revelries, and drinking parties.

If not actually participating directly, we have seen it on TV and the internet and have laughed at it, took personal pleasure in it, and enjoyed it from afar.

We should remember what Paul taught us.

Romans 1:32b (NKJV)

³² ...those who practice such things are deserving of death, (they) not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Remember that Christ warned us that He who looks at a woman and lusts after her in his heart has already committed adultery.

We have all sinned before our Creator, and continue to do so, even against our sincere desire to be pure.

We like to think of ourselves as a person who **occasionally** does sinful things. We do a **few isolated acts** that we should not do.

When the Bible says that we are sinners, this is not exactly what it means. It means that at our core we are contaminated and putrid. You are not just doing a few sinful things, you are **sinful to the core**. I like to illustrate it this way.

ILLUSTRATION:

If you were to pour a quart of sugar in a bowl and stir in a half pint of vinegar. The vinegar would destroy the purity of the sugar. The vinegar would eventually dry out and leave the sugar as a **discolored chunk of contaminated worthlessness**. Even though

you could take that chunk of discolored sugar and grind it back into granular form and even though you could add whitening to it and make it white again and make it look like pure granulated sugar, it will never again have the taste or smell of pure sugar. It is forever contaminated and stinks!

This is what sin has done to us. It has taken the perfect person that God created, and like vinegar in sugar, sin has contaminated us to the core. We are **infiltrated** with sin.

We are all completely corrupted by sin. We want to put ourselves first. That is the course that we have followed. And Peter here says it has all been a waste.

Notice in verse 4 he describes this course of the world as a "**flood of dissipation**". A dissipation refers to that which is worthless. Peter wants us to look back at the wasted minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, and even years and weep. **What a waste!**

Then He wants us to look at the limited time we have left and be repulsed at the thought of wasting any more of it chasing after the course of this world.

Time is running out, he says. Don't waste anymore time. Prepare for eternity!

There is a second motivation for purity that Peter gives us. Not only should we be motivated by **wasted time**, but also by **coming judgment**.

II. COMING JUDGMENT.

1 Peter 4:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with *them* in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of *you*. ⁵They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

Peter says that the world will not understand why we have chosen to leave this world of worthlessness that they so enjoy. Since they cannot understand, they think we are weird and make fun of us.

John 15:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Peter wants you to understand that if you step out of the course of this world, the world is not going to like it and you will incur their wrath. But I want you to know also that when the world attacks you for seeking purity, it is not really about you, it is about Jesus.

John 15:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you.

Peter says when they start speaking evil of you, there is something that you should know. Look at verse 5.

1 Peter 4:5 (NKJV)

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

Peter says when they start speaking evil of you, remember that they will someday have to face God in judgment.

Galatians 6:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

Everyone will have to give an account of their lives before God in judgment. It is a terrifying thing to fall in the hands of the living God. No one is going to escape judgment. The people who have died and the people who are alive when Christ comes again, will **ALL** face God.

The evil deeds of man may be long forgotten or never even known by men. Death may have come after a long comfortable life of sin. But then comes judgment before an all remembering God.

Jesus told us how we would be judged.

Matthew 25:31-46 (NKJV)

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. ³³ And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶ I *was* naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’

³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? ³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.’

⁴¹ “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’

⁴⁴ “Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ ⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these, you did not do *it* to Me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Christ is teaching us that how we treat others is how we are treating Him. Peter is saying, "Know this. Judgment will not escape those who have mistreated us.

Do you see how this is a motivation to pursue personal purity?

When the mocking is the loudest from the world. When those who scoff at us seem most successful. When they seem so smart and we seem so foolish. Peter says "DON'T QUIT!" because one day their judgment is coming. They may look smart now, but they won't look so smart on that day. Continue to persevere.

Peter gives us the motivation of wasted time and coming judgment and then he continues with the motivation of a resurrected life.

III. RESSURRECTED LIFE.

1 Peter 4:6 (NKJV)

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.

In this life, when we are dead and buried, it will appear to this world that our life was a waste. They will say this Christian was foolish. He died just like us and he refused to enjoy the pleasures of this world. If Christ does not return and raise us from the dead, they will be correct. But one day, we will be raised. And then death will be swallowed up by victory. This is how Paul describes our resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:50-58 (NASB)

⁵⁰ Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY. ⁵⁵ O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; ⁵⁷ but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.

It may appear to the world that Christians are often defeated. But, we know that resurrection is ours. Jesus rose from the dead by the hand of His Father to confirm this promise to us. Persevere in pursuing purity.

When Peter calls us to purity, he calls us to die to what we want, to what we think, and to what we desire and instead be shaped and formed entirely by God's will by conforming to His instructions for our life.

CONCLUSION:

I ask you this morning. Are you still wasting your time here on earth chasing after worldly things that have no eternal value?

Is your soul still a "discolored chunk of contaminated worthlessness"? God has sent His Son to die on the cross for your sins so that you can have that "vinegar" removed from your soul and make you pure again and white as snow!

John 3:16 (NKJV)

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

You **know** that you are a sinner. God tells us that you **MUST** come to Him by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. You must repent of your sins and seek His forgiveness and be buried with Christ in the waters of Baptism for the forgiveness of your sins. When you are lifted up out of the water into a new life in Christ, you are promised that you will receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Then you must seek a life of purity with God. As Paul spoke in...

Acts 22:16 (NKJV)

16 And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

We are not guaranteed a tomorrow. When you die, your window of opportunity is gone forever.

I plead with you, use this short vapor of time to find God and believe in His Son who died on the cross to take away your sins so you can be found sinless before God.

THIS IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT! LISTEN CAREFULLY! In reality, you are exchanging what you do during this fleeting moment of life for an eternity (this is time never ending). You are exchanging it for either an **eternity** of torment with Satan and his fallen angels or an **eternity** in the presence of God. The scriptures say you are either for God or you are against God. Do you **really** want to be against **God**?

If you were to die without Christ, can you imagine what you would be willing to do in order to have this opportunity just one more time before you had to face your Creator in judgment?

This is my favorite promise from Christ.

John 10:27-28 (NKJV)

27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

If you have not accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, do it today. Don't wait until you have cleaned up your life. **You don't clean yourself up to come to the Christ; you surrender yourself to Christ, to let Him clean you up!**

He is Lord.