

One thing that's separates great athletes from good ones is their motivation. You will often see that the great players and their competitive drive is always finding something to motivate them to play to their very best. Because they never want to coast through a game they're always trying to reach their peak.

Michael Jordan, one of the greatest basketball players to ever live, is the great example of this. He always looked for extra motivation to beat an opponent and would find it no matter how trivial or insignificant. One night Jordan's Chicago Bulls beat Washington. But Jordan played bad and another player named Smith made 30 points. After the game he told Michael, "nice game." And Jordan decided he would do everything he could in the next game to dominate him. Another time during the NBA finals a player playing against Michael happened to eat at the same restaurant for dinner. He walked by Jordan's table without saying hello and it infuriated him.

I find it fascinating how great athletes and teams do things like that. They search for insults and slights to motivate them. That might help you win some championships would be really good at sports but that kind of motivation won't work for your entire lifetime.

As Christians we need to find a sustainable motivation. Something that can motivate us to follow Christ. In the day after day, grind every day life, what can motivate us and encourage us to continue in following in Jesus footsteps? Especially when we live in an antagonistic world. Especially when we live in a world that does not follow Jesus. And increasingly doesn't pretend to anymore like it may have years ago.

So this morning, we are going to look at three things that can motivate us to living like Jesus in an antagonistic world and first Peter chapter 4.

I. We should be motivated by Christ's attitude in death (v. 1-4).

Christ's death is the centerpiece of our faith.

His life and death is our hope.

But it also gives us the paradigm for our lives.

He lays down the path for us and His death should motivate us.

"Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh,"

Everything Peter says in this passage is based on Christ's death.

It is based on the suffering that Christ endured.

Not just the suffering on the cross but in all of it.

The suffering in his rejection.

The suffering in his arrest and false trials.

The beatings and mockery.

All of these He was willing to suffer.

Christ did not fight.

Christ did not raise up an army to overthrow the government.

He was raised up to overthrow sin and death.

And we are to imitate Christ.

"Arm yourselves with the same way of thinking,"

We must have the same thinking Christ had in His suffering.

Remember the context of the last passage.

We are to be willing to suffer rather than to sin.

Which Jesus was.

Jesus resisted the powers and opposition in His ministry.

Jesus resisted Satan when being tempted in the garden and the desert.

He was willing to suffer while fasting and to suffer pain rather than to sin.

And He repeatedly do so, quietly and calmly.

We need to have this same attitude.

We need to be willing to suffer rather than give into the temptations of the world.

And Peter does not mean a combative stance.

He is not telling us to take up our swords and attack the world but be ready to be killed.

He made that mistake at Christ's arrest.

He grabbed his sword and wanted to fight.

It is not that we are to be ready to fight.

We are to be ready to endure suffering.

We need to be willing to resist the temptations and invitations to sin.

Just as Christ did.

"For whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,"

This does not mean that they have stopped sinning forever.

It does not mean that suffering keeps us from sinning.

Remember the context.

This is about having the same mindset as Christ.

But it does mean that when we think like Jesus.

When we follow Him in His crucifixion,

Then we are able to cease from sin.

When we have decided that we are willing to suffer unjust treatment.

When we decide that we would rather be persecuted and mocked for righteousness.

Then we are demonstrating that we would rather obey and suffer, than to disobey and be treated well.

This is what it means.

It means our mind has so been transformed like Christ, that we are not pursuing sin.

The sufferings for Jesus feel better than the pleasures of the world.

Then we no longer engage in all of the passions and self-fulfillment the world does.

Verse 2, **"So as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God."**

This is the result of that kind of life.

And this is what we are to aim for.

That in this life

While we are here on earth.

We no longer care about what the world wants.

What are these human passions?

Verse 3, **"for the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry."**

These were all normal things.

None of this is like extreme.

It is not that there were some people who did not engage in this behavior.

It was not like most people were chill and thought these people were extreme, alcoholics, or people with issues.

No, this was normal everyday behavior.

No one would think twice about someone engaging in this behavior all the time.

And these things are all around today.

Human nature has not changed even though the way we sin has.

We still firmly believe that we are to pursue our passions and desires.

To be fully alive is to do what you want.

To be true to yourself and whatever it is that you feel.

No matter what those feelings are.

This is what all of those things are.

It is every kind of sexual sin.

This is why the Bible is usually so general about condemning sexual sin.

Because God knows humanity will always invent new ones.

Because our sexual desires are fickle and insatiable gods.

They will demand more and more and more.

Nothing will ever be enough.

But as Christians we say no.

We recognize that sexuality is only meant to be enjoyed in a godly marriage between one husband and one wife.

And it is not just meant to be about pleasing the senses.

It is not about meeting sexual appetites.

Even then, it is about honoring, serving the other person and glorifying God with our bodies.

We don't just get to do whatever we want.

Verse 4, **"With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery and they malign you."**

The world is so blinded by its sin that it cannot fathom us not engaging in it.

It cannot understand how we would not sin.

How we could not sin along side them.

How we could not join in their orgies and drunken parties.

Why would not approve of adults doing whatever they want sexually with whoever they want as long as everyone is consenting?

Why would we not believe gender is fluid and people can be whoever they want to be despite what God seems to have chosen for them?

You generally will not be maligned by the world.

Unless you refuse to join in their sin.

Unless you refuse to celebrate their sin.

As soon as you take that stand, even if you do it with gentleness and respect, as we should.

Then you will be maligned.

Despite this, we have to not engage the passions of the world.

We live as those who are following Jesus.

Who are willing to crucify their flesh.

Who are willing to suffer here.

Even if it means denying themselves what their body longs for.

And we need to be motivated not by fighting.

Not by a desire to win.

But we should be motivated by Christ's attitude.

We should be motivated by how Christ faced this opposition.

II. We should be motivated by the coming judgment (v. 5-6).

This must be on our minds.

When are you are in conflict or a disagreement, things can get heightened.

Your heart beats faster, your mind races, and you lose perspective.

We cannot allow that.

We have to remember Verse 5, **"but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead."**

This is one of our foundational beliefs as Christians.

It was in all the earliest creeds.

We believe in Jesus Christ who will come to judge the living and the dead.

All of us are accountable to Him.

The end of Ecclesiastes 12 reminds us that God will bring every deed into judgement including every hidden thing.

It won't be to see if there is more good than bad.

It will be comparing everything we have done to the Holiness of God.

Perfection is the standard and we will see how we measure up.

And no one can escape His judgment.

If you die without repenting.

If you die without anyone discovering all of your sins and hidden crimes.

You have not escaped justice at all.

You are headed right to the judgment seat.

All of those who have died before us.

Including all those people we think got away with things,

They will have to give account to Jesus.

The dead do not escape it.

You often see people try to escape judgement.

A respected community leader or pastor is caught and arrested for sexually revealing themselves to a child.

Then suddenly the next day they die from suicide.

Or people who have been rich and widely successful are caught in fraud and imprisoned losing all of the luxury they had.

So they die in order to try and escape judgment.

They do not escape.

They will still have to face Jesus and the judgment seat.

And all of us who are living.
We must give account to Christ.
To give an account means we have to own up to our lives.
We have to stand there and answer for what we have done.
The times we hold back our hands from doing what we should.
The times our hands did evil.
God saw all of it.

Verse 6, **"for this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead,"**

This is why we need to hear the gospel preached.
Because we are all in trouble on that day.
Without the gospel we will all be found guilty and condemned.
This is why Jesus came to preach and die.
Because He came to be our intercessor.
That our evil deeds could be washed away.
And we could be found righteous.

I also think this could refer to those who Christians who heard the gospel and died.
We preached to them and they heard us.
So that after their death when they stood before Christ, they were declared righteous.

that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does."

There is judgement coming.
Christianity is firmly clear on the coming judgment of God.
But the message of the gospel.
The message of Jesus, is that there is hope.
There is hope even for the dead.
Even for those who are dead in their sins.
Even for those who have lost all hope.

Even for those who believe that they are far too gone.
That they have sinned far too much.
That God could never look past all they have done.
The gospel is preached to them.
The offer of Christ's salvation is made.

That they might live in the spirit.
That the Holy Spirit may come and make you born again.
That you may have new life.
That you might have a chance to live for Christ.

If hearing about the coming judgment of God fills you with fear and terror.
There is good news.
Jesus died on the cross for you.
He is willing to wipe your slate clean.
Is will over look your every mistake past present and future.
All of your sins can disappear and you can be judgment righteous.

Just come to Jesus in faith.
Believe that He loves you.
Accept the forgiveness that He offers.
All you have to do is acknowledge that you do not deserve it.
And give your life to Jesus.

And Christ will make you alive so that you can live in the spirit.
So that we can walk in the footsteps of Christ.
Instead of following in the footsteps of death.

III. We should be motivated by the consummation of all things (v. 7-11).

I get a kick out of survivalists or preppers
People who are plotting for the end of the world.
They prepare by building elaborate storm shelters.
They stockpile all sorts of imperishable food.

And of course have plenty of guns.
That way whenever the end of all things is at hand they are ready.

God does not call for us to prepare that way.
Instead he calls us to something more.

Verse 7, **"The end of all things is at hand;"**

This is how we are to live.

We are to live as if that day is coming soon.

As if the end of the world is around the corner.

As if any movement we will stand before God.

Because the end of all things is at hand.

Throughout the New Testament, the apostles repeatedly say that we are in the end times.

And most of the time their focus is not on Armageddon and the end of the world.

They are not thinking about apocalyptic calamities.

They are thinking about the eschatological realities.

Because most of human history was spent waiting for the Redeemer to come.

Waiting for the Savior to appear.

Waiting for salvation to come to the people of God.

And now it has come.

Jesus came, died, and was resurrected.

The culmination is here.

This is less about armageddon and the end of the world.

But God's plan for salvation and the reconciliation of all things in Christ is here.

The resurrection has come.

We are in the last stages of redemption.

Colossians tells us that Christ is reconciling all things to Himself.

He is going to put all things right.

That is what is happening.
So we need to live in light of that.

We need to live as if Christ is putting the world together.
Our eschatological hope.
Our hope in Christ fixing all things.
Our hope in Jesus as the victorious Savior.
That should inform our values.
That should inform our identity.
That should inform our sense of worth and everything about us.

"Therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers."

We are to be self-controlled.
When the end of times and all things is coming, keep control of yourself.
We should be able to do this as we meditate on who Christ is.
As we fix our eyes on our eternal hope.
As we recognize where the world is heading.
As we recognize that the people of God are heading towards a wedding feast.
As we remember that this world is temporary and not our home.
This should enable and help us to control ourselves.
And it should keep us from losing our minds.

And we are to be sober-minded.
We are to keep our minds under control.
To not let our minds be polluted by the world's thinking.
To not be overwhelmed with substance.
To not have our minds controlled by our devices.
To not be filled with the rage of the world.
Prayer can help sober our minds.
Sober minds lead to prayer.

Our prayers do not need to be long.
Sometimes short prayers are all that you need.
A short prayer in the morning.
A quick word.
The one word Jesus prayers.
In my darkest hardest moments, I just say the name of Jesus over and over
and over again.
And it is enough to clear the cobwebs from my mind and soul.

"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly,"

Above all, love one another.
This is the highest command.
We love God with all our heart body and mind and we love each other.
This love needs to be earnest.
It is not a slow love.
It is not a love we have to work at.
It is not a love that we show reluctantly because we are not happy about it.
We love earnestly.
And we have to keep and maintain this love.

"since love covers a multitude of sins."

What a lovely verse.
Our love should cover the sins of others.
Because this is what the love of Jesus does for us.
His love covers up all of our sins.
It looks past them.
It washes us clean.
And instead, He covers us with love.
We need to love others in the same way Christ loves us.

Proverbs 10:12 **"Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers up wrongs."**

Love in the christian community kills sin.
It does not allow it to flourish.
Love is what stops others from sinning.

We respond to the sin of others with love.
Because we long for their sin to stop.

“Hate the sin not the sinner”

We can say that. But I think this gets misunderstood so often we should probably stop.

Because we are to love the sinner.

That like Jesus our love would impel and compel to stop.

The love of Christ stopped so many sins.

Think about the love Christ showed Peter.

Peter denied Christ three times and betrayed him.

Yet Christ loved him.

And when Christ came back He kept asking Peter if he loved him.

Why did he repeat it?

Partially to help it sink into Peter's hear that He was loved.

Jesus loved sinners.

And His love made them want to be made new.

Our love should be the same.

When people are in our church hand in our lives, we should love them in a way that makes them want to be better.

It should compile and invite them to follow Jesus.

It should make them want to put down their arms and come into the arms of Christ.

“show hospitality to one another without grumbling.”

We need to do this.

And we should do it gladly.

Hospitality is always costly.

Whether you enjoy having people in your home or not.

For all of us it takes work.

You have to get the house ready.

You may have to clean.

You get out the nice dishes and make your best meals.
And when they are there you work to be a good host.
You don't just let them in and ignore them.
You make sure they are comfortable and keep them entertained.

There are some people who when they come to your house, you are counting down the hours until they leave.
You want to get them out and as soon as they leave you feel relieved.
My in-laws are visiting this week and this is not how I feel about them don't worry.
But there are people like this.
There are people you love having over.
And there are people you do not want to invite to your house.
Never in a million years would you want them to stay a night.
That is not Christian hospitality.
Our homes and our lives are to be open.
We should have people at our table that are sinners.
We should have people at our table that are far from God.
We should have people in our homes that are going to mess things up.
And we should do all of that.
We should show this kind of hospitality without any grumbling about what it costs us.
Without grumbling about anything.

This is not how we are to feel.
We are to love them.
We are to willingly give to them and serve them.
Because true hospitality is costly and expensive.
It should cost us to be truly hospitable.

And we should do that without complaining about the cost.
Without whining about how they treated us or acted towards us.
Because we are doing it in love.

Remember the warning and encouragement from Hebrews 13:2

"Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it."

When we are willing to invite strangers in our homes.

Sometimes they are angels.

And the fact that we don't know it means they might not act like angels.

They may just act weird and annoying.

What a gift an opportunity.

How embarrassing would it be to stand before Christ.

And hear Jesus tell us about a time we were given an opportunity to be hospitable to an angel, and we just spent the whole time complaining.

Or even worse, we said no?

"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another,"

Our gifts are not for ourselves but for others.

The talents and spiritual gifts that all of us have been given are not for ourselves.

Notice that each of us has received a gift.

God has given all us things.

He has given us blessings, talents, and passions.

And we are to use those to serve each other.

To serve our church.

To serve our fellow believers.

And to serve our world.

This is not usually how the world thinks about its gifts.

It thinks about what talents it has and how to use them for themselves.

"as good stewards of God's varied grace."

Notice that God's grace is varied in some ways.

Now in the most important ways, God's grace is not varied.

He offers grace and salvation to all of us.

No matter how far gone we are.

He does not only offer to save some, but all of us.

But God does vary his grace in other ways.
He does not equally distribute talents.
Some of us are more gifted than others.
Some of us are more gifted in one area of our lives than others.

Some of us have been gifted with better financial situations than others.
Some of us have been gifted being born in a better country than others.

The question is how do we use all of these gifts?
We are to be good stewards of them.
We need to have the mindset of a steward.
To recognize that you do not have all you do because of your hardwork or ability.
We have what we have because of the grace of God.
It is His on loan to us.

And He expects us to be good stewards.
To use it all in a way that pleases Him.

Verse 11, **"Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God;"**

He uses the example of those who are gifted at speaking.
Those who speak in church like pastors or elders.
Those who lead our Bible studies like have been happening this week.
Those who help teach our children on Sundays and Wednesday.
We need to speak and act as if we are speaking for God.

This does not mean that my words now are the very words of God.
But we should be aware of what we say.
We should speak as if we are speaking for GOd.
We should take greater care in what we say.
We should not just let it rip and say whatever jokes what to come to our minds.

We should not just be giving all of our hot takes and controversial opinions.

We should speak in a way that is trying to serve God and others.

But I don't think this is just a throwaway application for preachers. I think this is true for all of us who speak.

Any of us who have tongues should speak as those who speak for God. As those who are witnesses on behalf of God.

"Whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies."

This is just a general application at the end.

Because all of us should be those who serve.

If you are a follower of Christ, you are commanded to serve others.

And so we should do so.

And we serve not in our own strength, but in God's.

He is the one who enables us to serve.

He gives us the strength.

He gives us what we need.

Because we cannot do any of this on our own strength.

I tell you what, preaching might seem easy.

You just get up and ramble on for while till time is up.

I couldn't do this week after week if the Holy Spirit did not come and fill me.

You wouldn't be able to serve our kinds in the back without God's strength.

You won't be able to show good hospitality without God's strength.

You won't be able to give to the poor without God's strength.

Whatever area you serve God in, you need His strength.

And the good news that He provides it.

And we should serve like it.

As if God Himself in in our bodies helping us.
Because He is.

"in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ."

We do all of this for God's glory.
Not for human praise.
Not for recognition or achievement.
Not so that we feel better and accomplished.
We do everything that God may be glorified.

"To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. amen."

Because to God belongs everything forever and ever.
He deserves all of our glory.
He has dominion over every square inch of the universe and the cosmos.
He has dominion over our very lives.
That should motivate us.
Our motivation is the glory of God.
His coming to reconcile all things.
And Him finishing the work He began on Calvary's hill.
It should begin with our lives.

CONCLUSION:

- We should be motivated by Christ's attitude in death (v. 1-4).
- We should be motivated by the coming judgment (v. 5-6).
- We should be motivated by the consummation of all things (v. 7-11).

This is what can motivate us.
This is what should motivate us.
As we keep our eyes fixed on Christ.
On what He did, will do, and is doing right now.
Let us go forth from here as those motivated by Jesus Christ our Savior.