



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

1 Peter 4:1-11

1 Peter

“The End is Near”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] 1 Peter 4:1-11 is our text. I think we have maybe three more lessons after this. So we're coming to the close of the book, but let's begin with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, thank you for the time that we have together this evening to continue our studies in this first epistle that Peter wrote. We look to you to bless us as we do that. We thank you for it and the instruction that we receive from it. We learn how it is that we who have been chosen by you and have been made into a royal priesthood or to live our lives in the midst of a world that does not appreciate grace, that hates the gospel and maligns those who embrace it.

So Father, as we study these things this evening may you teach us and convict us and give us the incentive that Peter was giving to his readers as to how to live this life and to live it in a way that pleases you. We look to you to build us up in the faith this evening.

May our time be profitable so that our lives would be profitable. May this time be a time in which we are conformed of the image of Christ. May it be an enjoyable time of study and then may we have a fruitful time of prayer as we, again, approach the throne of grace and seek your blessings on your people.

So we look to you now to bless us in this hour and the young people as they meet. We pray that you'd bless their teachers and bless them as they fellowship with each other and pray for them particularly that you would guard them, watch over their souls in the midst of this evil world.

We commit our time to you now and pray these things in Christ’s name.

Amen.

[Message] 1 Peter 4:1, “Therefore since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourself also with the same purpose because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God for the time already passed is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles having pursued a course of sensuality ,lust, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.

In all this they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation and they malign you, but they will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead for the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.

The end of all things is near. Therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. Above all keep fervent in your love for one another because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaint. As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Whoever speaks is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God. Whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

One of the comforts that we have as Christians is the blessed hope, the promise that Christ is coming for us. That is a great comfort, great promise that we have and the comfort of it lies in the fact that it may happen soon.

Peter recalls that promise for his readers in chapter 4 and verse 7. He states, “The end of all things is near.” That is a great encouragement to know if you’re suffering, if you’re going through difficulty that the end is coming. That it will soon be finished, but this is particularly good news. This is the greatest hope. This is the end of all things is near because with that promise comes the end of all sorrow and with the end of all sorrow also comes great glory. That’s when it all begins. So it’s a great promise that Peter refers to here. It was a promise that the people to whom he

was writing needed to hear because they were facing persecution and they were experiencing great suffering. They were in need of encouragement.

So, he has been encouraging them and preparing them in various ways. In the previous chapter he gave them examples of others who had suffered, suffered triumphantly and he encouraged them in that way with the examples of Christ and then Noah. Based on those examples, particularly based on the example of Christ, he's the principle example in that passage, based on his example, Peter now returns to this matter of giving specific encouragement and instruction in suffering.

He writes in verse 1, “Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.” Christ suffered in the flesh. I think the new international version may have in the body. Literally in the flesh though. And he suffered to death. He suffered fully.

Since he did that, Christians are to have the same attitude that Christ had. They are to have the same approach that he had. To be willing to suffer innocently, to suffer unjustly to the end. It's better to suffer innocently. It's better to suffer for righteousness sake than it is to avoid suffering by sinning. They were certainly tempted to do that. To encourage them or to give them the motive to do that, he says that he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.

Now that is a difficult statement. As you read the commentaries, you find various answers to what Peter means by that. It certainly doesn't mean that the person who suffers never sins. Many people sin because they suffer physically. They grow bitter towards God because of their experiences. So it certainly doesn't mean that they don't sin because they suffer.

It may mean that those who resolve to suffer, those Christians who accept the cross that God gives to them, as Christ did, that they are strengthened morally with that resolve. They are strengthened and they are committed more firmly to that pattern of life as they accept that and resolve to undergo difficulty.

I think that's certainly true that resolving to be obedient and following through with that obedience leads to strength, leads to greater resolve and obedience, but it may be that Peter's counsel here is more along the lines that Paul gives in Romans 6 about having died to sin. Paul in Romans 6 speaks of baptism into Christ's death. Peter has just referred to baptism as saving us in chapter 3 and verse 21. What he

means by that, it's not water baptism. He qualifies that immediately. Not the washing of dirt away from the body, but he's speaking figuratively.

What baptism represents as Paul is doing in Romans 6, which is identification with Christ in his death, identification with Christ in judgment that saves. As we're joined to Christ, we're joined to his death and we're saved in that way. We're baptized into his death and we're resurrected into his life.

Since the statement Peter makes that the person who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that statement is a perfect tense, which means it looks back at a definite act in the past with abiding results in the present or it speaks of a present condition due to a past act.

Peter seems to be thinking of our death to sin with Christ's death so that he who has suffered in the flesh refers to the suffering that we shared with Christ when he suffered. Once for all, as Peter put it back in chapter 3 and verse 18, “The just for the unjust”, when he died a representative death for us, in which case Peter is instructing them to prepare for suffering by arming themselves with the same attitude that Christ had. That's difficult to do to have that resolve to suffer to the very end and to suffer unjustly, but they can do that because they've died to sin. Power of sin has been broken.

So as Paul wrote in Romans 6:11-12, “They are to consider themselves dead to sin and alive to God and not let sin reign in their mortal bodies to obey its lusts.”

In verse 2 Peter explains in more detail what he means by ceasing from sin. It means that the rest of their life after conversion is not lived for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. That's the way they're to live. They're not to live for the lusts of the world.

They're to live for the will of God and they are to resolve to undergo whatever they must undergo. They can do that because they've died with Christ and the power of sin has been broken. Yet the reality is the power of the world is very strong and the influence of the world is very strong. It's constantly trying to draw us into its orbit and press us into its mold and cause us to conform to it. Why shouldn't we conform to it? It would certainly make life easier if we did that.

Well, in verse 3 Peter gives the reason why we can't do that. He gives the reason for rejecting the counsel of the pagans and following the will of God. The time for carrying out the will of the gentiles has already passed he says. They have

already done a sufficient amount of sinning. “They’ve done enough of that.”, he says. They shouldn’t want to follow that kind of life again.

Then he lists the sins that used to be a part of their past life. Lust, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. It is a life without moral restraint. It is a life of pursuing physical desires, of gratifying appetites. It has no sense of God. It’s completely of one’s self and one’s physical desires, one’s fleshly desires. This is the kind of behavior that was typical of these Christians before their conversion.

Peter says in verse 4 that their neighbors are surprised that they don’t run with them anymore. That’s an interesting expression. They don’t run with them sounds very similar to what we would say and, literally, that’s what the Greek text says. They were running with them and they were living the same kind of life they did running with that herd. Was it lemmings that run straight for the cliff and they all go over the edge. Well that’s the herd that they were running with. That’s the kind of life that they were running and living.

But the sense here probably has something not quite the way we use it of just hanging out with the guys and doing the things that they do. The idea of running here is the idea of being frenetic. The frenzied pace of sin. They all used to run together into excess of dissipation. Dissipation speaks of uncontrolled indulgence in seeking pleasure.

The same words used of the prodigal son to describe his life, his loose living. It’s a wasteful life. They live that. In fact, overflowed with it. It’s the idea of excesses of dissipation. Not just dissipation, but excessively. Their life overflowed with this kind of wasteful, foolish, corrupt behavior. They lived corrupt lives.

But Christ came to save people who lived those kind of lives. He came to save sinners and to save them not only from the penalty of sin, but from the power of sin to break that power. That’s what happens when we died with Christ.

Well, these people were like those lemmings running head long toward destruction when Christ saved them and the salvation that they experienced was a very obvious salvation. Their lives changed dramatically. They no longer wanted to go to the drinking parties. They no longer wanted to go out and carry out the lusts that these other friends of theirs carried out. That surprised their neighbors and caused the neighbors to blaspheme. That’s literally what the word malign is. To

blaspheme. The New American Standard Bible reads, “They malign you.” In the original text the word you is not there. Just that they blaspheme.

So it may mean that they blaspheme God. I think that Peter probably does mean they blaspheme or they malign you, but it seems very likely that they would be blaspheming God as well. Blaspheming the God that these people serve. So it’s a combination of that. They revile these people and everything that they stand for. They don’t like it.

Now we might ask the question why would they do that. Why would non-participation provoke this kind of response. They’re not hurting these people. They’re not attacking them. They’re just not participating in the life that they lived.

Well it causes that kind of response because non-participation implies condemnation. They don’t want to drink with them. Well what’s the matter. Is something wrong with my drinking. Well they know there’s something wrong with the way they’re living their lives. They know that instinctively. They have a conscience that constantly bears witness. It may be a conscience that’s not quite as clear as it was at one time because of all the sin that they’ve committed, but it’s still there and they don’t like to be reminded of that. So they respond in that way. They don’t want to be exposed to their failures.

In Ancient Greece there was a man named Aristides. There’s a well-known person in ancient Athenian history lived at the time of the Persian Wars. He was one of the main leaders of the city. He was a great man. A man who was known for his honesty and he was called Aristides the Just, but he was put on trial and it had to do with politics and how the city of Athens was going to defend itself against the Persians. His opponent was Themistocles. He wanted to go with strengthening the navy and Aristides wanted to strengthen the army. So there was this debate.

They cast votes. The loser was to be ostracized or to be exiled from the city of Athens. That vote was being taken on Aristides. Before it was taken, a man approached him, an ignorant man who didn’t know who Aristides was. At least didn’t know him by his face. He was campaigning to get rid of Aristides. He asked him, “Would you vote for his own banishment?” Aristides asked him, “Well what harm has Aristides done you?” The man said, “None. I’m just tired of hearing him called the just.” Wanted to get rid of him because we don’t like to have someone reminding us of what we’re not. That bothered that man to constantly hear about the

just, the honest one. We like to get rid of that kind of thing because men like the darkness rather than the light. That was the case with these individuals.

So they slandered the Christians. They mocked their God. They mocked their whole new course in life. That's to be expected when we begin to live for Christ. We can't live for the world. You can't walk in the darkness and walk in the light. When we stop walking in the darkness, the darkness attacks, the darkness slanders, it maligns, it blasphemes. Old friends turn away. They turn out to be not good friends at all 'cause they have nothing in common with the Christian who is also an indictment on their way of life, but unbelievers can't escape the responsibility or the consequences of their actions. Peter writes in verse 5 that, “They will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”

Now that shows really the insanity of sin and unbelief because men think that by not considering death and people in polite society usually don't talk about death. That's a subject that you avoid in regular conversation.

Now Christians will talk about it because we have hope, but for most people, they don't talk about death. They just close it out. They think that by simply not considering death and not considering judgment that it won't happen, but it will. It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment. No one will escape judgment. Judgment could happen at any time because as Peter says, “God is ready to judge.” He's ready to do it. Nothing to delay it but the very will of God. There's nothing to delay it but the gathering in of his elect, but he's ready to do that. It can come very soon Peter says. That's at least implied in that word ready.

Second Peter chapter 3 in verse 10 he writes, “The day of the Lord will come like a thief.” How does a thief come? Well if he's a good thief, he comes when you're not expecting him to come when you're not ready. That's often how things happen. That's often how death happens. People aren't expecting it. Maybe they're in the prime of life and in a moment they're gone. Suddenly they stand before God.

It's the dead that Peter speaks of in the next verse in verse 6. This was the reason that the gospel was preached to them to the dead when they were alive on earth so that they would avoid the judgment that he has just spoken of, verse 6, “For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead. That though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.” He's speaking here of dead Christians who have died. They're Christians.

They're saved, but they died. Physical death is judgment on all men due to Adam's sin and the gospel doesn't necessarily save us from that. I say necessarily that it does not necessarily do so because some will be saved from that. Christ returns. They'll be caught up to meet him in the air and they won't experience death. It's a hope that we have, but for the most part, Christians, like non-Christians, experience death.

The gospel saves us from permanent death with the resurrection to come, but the immediate experience of death is generally the experience of Christians. Everyone dies, but through the gospel though men die physically, they live in the spirit according to the will of God. They live eternally. They don't experience the second death. They don't experience the judgment to come.

This verse has been used to argue for a second chance after death. The gospel has been preached even to those who are dead. So the idea has been, see, there is an opportunity after death. People can die and then still hear the gospel and respond, but that, first of all, doesn't fit the context and, secondly, it doesn't fit the rest of scripture.

There are no second chances. Wayne Grudem in his commentary writes, “What kind of warning would it be to say that God is ready to judge people for wickedness and then add that it really doesn't matter much what they do in this life for there will be a second chance for the to be saved after they die?” Well it's a good point. That's not a very strong warning that God's ready to judge when, well, when he judges I get another chance anyway and then I'll be a little more sober and wise and I'll respond then.

It's hardly an incentive for these Christians to persevere in the faith and to suffer persecution and go through terrible persecution. He'll call up the fiery ordeal in the next passage. It's a chilling kind of description of persecution, but it's hardly an incentive to avoid that if they could take the easy road of debauchery and avoid the slanderous comments of their neighbors and the hostility that would come if they don't deny the faith and then just receive forgiveness after it's all over in the next phase in the next world.

The context doesn't favor this idea of second chances and the rest of the Bible precludes it as well. The story of Lazarus and the rich man. The rich man wasn't given a second chance. He would certainly have seemed to be a good candidate.

He wanted to come back and tell his brothers about judgment. Then no second chance was given to him.

In Hebrews 9:27, which I read just a moment ago, “It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.” Well, there are no second chances and judgment is incentive to persevere under trials to endure persecution faithfully to the end and be a witness. Judgment is coming.

Now Peter adds further incentive. Christ is coming again and it may be soon. Verse 7, “The end of all things is near.” Which means that all of the major aspects, events in God’s plan of redemption, his plan of salvation, have occurred. The crucifixion of Christ with the giving of the Holy Spirit, everything that is necessary has taken place. All things are ready. The stage is set, as it were, for Christ to return and establish his kingdom.

Now I don’t think that Peter meant by this that this might happen today. That he was telling his audience that it might happen today because in verse 12 he mentions the fiery ordeal that they could expect in the future. Peter himself knew that he was not going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air alive because he’d already been told that he would die a martyr’s death.

Christ told him that in John 21:18-19. You remember? Told him how he would die. So Peter knew that he was going to die. He’d have to die before the Lord returned ‘cause that prophecy could not go unfulfilled, but the meaning of his statement is that the stage was set for the Lord’s return. The events could begin to unfold any moment, which would bring about the return of Christ. So it was a real hope for that generation as it is a real hope for every generation of the church. It’s a hope for us. We should be looking for it. That should stimulate effort on our part to a sober life.

Peter writes, “Therefore be of sound judgment and sober spirit.” In other words, make wise choices in this life. Use your time well. Now that’s true for all of life. That’s how we’re to live our life, but specifically here Peter is speaking of prayer and how we are to pray. He says, “The reason for being of sound judgment and sober spirit is for the purpose of prayer.” It’s so that they pray more effectively and more appropriately. Prayer’s very important in the Christian life. We’re to be devoted to it. We’re to be earnest in it.

I think if we are honest with ourselves, we probably don't pray nearly enough. We don't take that seriously enough. I'll confess that up front. I find myself working away on a lesson and I've got to get this done. I've got a timeline I'm working on. I've got deadlines. I'll pray later. I'll pray later. You find yourself not doing it. That's foolish and that's contrary to scripture. That's contrary to what Peter is saying here. We're to be sober so that we will be effective in prayer and able to pray appropriately. So to do that we need to be alert. We need to understand events around us.

One of the commentators pointed out, “We can do this very well by reading the newspaper, when we drive to work. We see things around us. We see what's going on. We know what's happening. We're alert to the events of life.”

But I think particularly Peter must be speaking in terms of what's going on in your assembly, in your Christian fellowship. Being alert to who has particular needs and being able to pray for them.

I have a friend who tells me frequently and tells other people frequently, “I pray for you every day.” He'll ask me, “What can I do for you?” I say, “There's nothing you can do for me. What can I do for you?” “Pray for me.” I said, “Well you pray for me, too.” She says, “I pray for you more than you know.” That's an encouragement. We need that.

I will be interested to see when I get to Heaven and look over my life, that may be too painful an experience for Heaven, but if we do that, we'll see all of the disasters and the follies that we were spared because people were interceding for us in prayer. You'll be grateful for that. I'm grateful for it.

But we need to be in prayer for one another and diligent in that. Pray for the church. Pray with wisdom is what Peter's saying. Pray with a correct evaluation of things and according to God's will. Prayer won't be effective if we don't pray according to God's will. So we need to know what the will of God is. We need to know the things of God. This is tied to the end of all things is near.

Eschatology has ethical implications, which don't lead to what one commentator described as eschatological frenzy. The church had been in existence some 30 years when Peter wrote this epistle. The end of all things is near and yet the end has not yet come. Christ has not returned. Not because of any delay on the Lord's part. Not because of any negligence on his part. It has not to this point been

his purpose to return. His plan is still unfolding, but the reality is two millennia have passed and another millennia may pass before he comes.

We do not know when Christ is going to come. We know that he's going to come. We know that he may come in our lifetime. We're to be living for that, but we also know that we're not to be setting dates. We're not to be engaged in this kind of frenzy. That is the word that's been used to describe certain attitudes towards it.

We're not to spend all of our thoughts on eschatology, on the future figuring it out, thinking about it. We can't figure it out. Whenever somebody's got a plan of how it's going to unfold, I just dismiss it because I know it's not going to happen that way. I don't know how it's going to happen. I don't know how all things are going to come together, but when somebody thinks they've got the idea or the solution or the scenario of how future history is going to unfold, I just don't believe it.

What we are to do is learn about eschatology, take it seriously. Because of the abuses some people tend to dismiss it. That's wrong. We should understand future things, future events, but not at the expense of everything else. We're to know the whole counsel of God to have a developed theology. It's all important. It's all practical. It all has its effect upon us.

To do that we're to know the whole counsel of God and we are to live lives responsibly now. Our lives are to be a witness. This is one of the great things that Peter has in this first epistle. Our lives are to be a witness both in word and deed. Doesn't do a bit of good to have the right words if your life is a shambles. If you have a disorderly, chaotic life, best not to say a word than have that kind of reputation follow the presentation of the gospel.

So Peter is saying in all of this that these people, we as well, are to be orderly. We are to have responsible lives. We are to be working with our hands, as Peter told the Thessalonians. Be diligent in that.

That's what Christ is to find us doing when he returns. He's to find us in the midst of our labors working diligently at whatever he's called us to do. He's called you to run a dry cleaners, then be diligent doing that. If he's called you to be a lawyer or a housewife or a school teacher, whatever, be diligent doing that so that he finds you doing what you're supposed to be doing when he returns.

He may come soon. So Peter develops the kind of life that we're to be living in the meantime. It is a life of love. Verse 8, “Keep fervent in your love for one

another because love covers a multitude of sins.” When love abounds in Christian fellowship, offenses are dealt with and they’re forgotten. When love is not abounding in a Christian fellowship, then jealousy and anger abound and divisions result and that’s a terrible witness to the world.

So Christian love doesn’t broadcast other Christians’ failures. It doesn’t gossip. It covers those failures. Love seeks the good of others before its own interests or desires, its own curiosity for what’s going on. It seeks the good of others first. That finds practical expression, love does in hospitality, which Peter urges in verse 9. “Be hospitable to one another without complaint.”

The word for hospitality literally means love of strangers. If we take it literally like that, then I would suggest that the strangers are Christian strangers because this is love for one another in the Christian community. So they are to be helpful. They are to be hospitable to Christians, even when they don’t know them. Now that requires sacrifice, but we are to do it without complaint. Literally without grumbling.

That was particularly needful in that day when there were not convenient inns or hotels. We’re so used to that. Well, if a Christian wouldn’t put us up, we’ll stay in a hotel. In fact, we might prefer to do that today, but if we lived back then we wouldn’t.

You read the Old Testament and the Gospels as well, people often times slept outside under the stars and sometimes because there was no room. There weren’t many inns. The inns that they had were very disreputable places. They were very uncomfortable. They were pretty uncomfortable here in America a couple hundred years ago.

I was in Williamsburg many years ago. We went on a tour of the city, the town that they’ve reconstructed. One of the places that I went was an old inn. They showed us the different rooms and they explained how they lived. They showed a room with a large bed and said two, three, four people would sleep in it, strangers. That’s not the kind of inn I’d want to stay in.

So inns have not been particularly nice until fairly recently. So it was needful for them to be hospitable to one another, particularly in a time like this. A time in which Peter wrote his letter, which was a time of persecution and hostility, which would make it all the more difficult to be hospitable, but that’s the kind of life they

were to live. Might be a life that has its inconveniences, but that is an act of love and love is a work of the spirit. It's a fruit of the spirit and it's to be manifested in a Christian's life.

Within the fellowship of the church, the love of God will be manifested in our helping one another through hospitality, but also through the use of spiritual gifts. In verses 10 and 11 Peter speaks of the gifts. This is one of the four passages in the New Testament where we have spiritual gifts listed. They are not gifts that are given for our own advancement. They're given for the benefit of others.

Verse 10, “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” Each Christian, every Christian has received a gift, has received at least one gift. Some have received more, but every Christian, every one of you in this room who's a believer in Jesus Christ has a spiritual gift. It's not a natural talent. It's not a natural ability. You all have that as well, but this is something added to you when you believed in Jesus Christ and you received the Holy Spirit. You received a gift or gifts.

Now there are many gifts. Some are verbal, such as teaching and evangelism. Others are non-verbal, like help, service, giving, mercy. All these gifts have a variety of uses. In other words, there are different ways in which they're used. That's an expression of what Peter calls the manifold grace of God or the many faceted grace of God or the variegated, the many-colored grace of God. Not every teacher teaches the same way. Within the gift of teaching there are all kinds of variations on that.

There's many variations I guess as there are different personalities. Different people are influenced, affected positively by different types of people and different types of teaching. There are different kinds of evangelists. Some people are very good at personal evangelism. Meeting someone on an airplane and sharing the gospel with them. Others are more effective in a more public forum.

It's the same with all of the gifts. There are all kinds of ways to use the gifts. There are many, many different ways. So a person can have a gift of service or mercy. A number of people in the church and they can all be used differently and effectively. So not all service occurs in the same way. There are all kinds of ways to use gifts.

In the church that is vital, the church that is really healthy is a church that has members that are actively engaged and using their gifts. Well think what we would

be like as a church if all of us took our gift very seriously and employed that gift. I don't mean by that everybody tried to be a teacher because being a teacher is only one aspect. If all this church had were teachers, it'd be a sorry church. Who'd turn on the lights. Who'd keep things going. Who'd take care of the sick. Who'd be giving wise counsel. There are so many things that need to be done.

We need to be active in doing that. That's what a healthy church does. That's what Peter's telling us to do. Use your gift. The parable of the talents speaks very much to this issue and speaks very much to this church as it does to every church because the point of that is that God in the meantime in between the time that the king has left and the king is going to return, he's given his servants gifts and talents to invest.

So what are you going to do with the talent that God's given you. The talent meaning the piece of money, the spiritual gift. Piece of money in the parable which represents the spiritual gift that God's given. Are you going to bury it or are you going to invest it because the day's going to come when he's going to return and then we must all give an account for how it was used.

In verse 11 Peter lists some of the gifts. They're really more like categories than gifts. This is the shortest of the four lists of gifts that are given. I take it to be giving a category of the gifts of service and speaking. He gives the direction of their use.

“Whoever speaks is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God.” Which doesn't mean that when a teacher gets up and speaks he's to claim that his words are the very words of God so you better listen to him. It means that those who speak, those who teach are to do so with all the seriousness of one who is handling the word of God or with the carefulness of one who would be speaking God's words. This is a solemn thing to be teaching the word of God. It's a solemn thing to be proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's a solemn thing to be representing Christ verbally to others.

He says, “Whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies.” Service is a time-consuming thing. It is a tiring endeavor, but the strength is not our own. The source of our strength and our energy is God and that is an inexhaustible source of strength, energy, wisdom and all that we need. He gives it.

We walk by faith, which means in part at least, that we are to do what's right. We are to do what the situation requires. We may not want to do it, but we know it must be done. So we do it. We step out in faith and God will supply the strength. When we're exhausted, God will supply the strength.

You've read the stories of Whitfield, the great 18th Century evangelist, came over to America from England. Had great ministry in England. Crossed the Atlantic I forget how many times. Seven times; something like that. He literally wore himself out in the ministry. He would be exhausted after preaching the gospel. He was very popular. Thousands of people would flock to hear Whitfield if he was preaching.

He'd finish preaching for an hour, hour and a half, two hours and he'd lie there exhausted. He'd get word that a crowd was forming over in the next county. Thousands of people are gathering.

I remember hearing one account that they thought he had died. He hears that. He sits up. He gets on his horse. He goes and he preaches some more. That's how he lived. God gave him the strength to do that. He led a supernatural life. That's what the life of faith is. As we walk by faith, we experience the blessing of God just as Peter did when he walked on the water. He didn't walk on the water 'cause he had some great skill at staying on top of the waves. He walked on the water 'cause he kept his eyes on Christ and Christ gave him the ability and that's the way we live our lives.

Well, Paul recognized the weariness that comes with service when he gave the encouragement in Galatians 6:9, “Let us not lose heart in doing good for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.” So don't stop running the race. Don't stop serving Christ. That is how the church is blessed. That's how the work of God is furthered by consistent, diligent service from us, but the ultimate purpose of service is not us. That we're not the ultimate goal of it. The object is God. We serve. God strengthens so that, Peter writes, “In all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

In everything we do, our words, our deeds, our motives, everything is to be done to God's glory. To the glory of Jesus Christ. That's to be our goal. That's our purpose. We don't glorify God by neglecting people and neglecting our responsibilities. It all is part of glorifying God, but the great goal and the motivation in all that we do is to glorify God.

So how do we get that motivation. How do we have that as the impetus for what we do. Well, I think we do it by study, by reflecting on who Jesus Christ is, who the triune God is, what the triune God has done for us, how he has saved us, what it cost Christ, cost the Father to gain our salvation, to understand that, to think deeply on it. You can never reach the end of that subject. To reflect deeply on the things of God and to do so with prayer. To ask God to each us.

Ask God to make these things real and significant in our lives and look to him to do that. He will do that. If we apply ourselves to that, he will do that. That's a prayer that he will answer 'cause it's a good prayer and it's a prayer according to his will.

The glory belongs to him. It doesn't belong to us. We should remember that. All that we do in our service, the dominion belongs to Christ. He will rule. We look forward to that and in the meantime, he's to have the dominion in our lives. Our lives are to be a constant submission to him constantly giving him increasing dominion in our lives. Constantly looking to him to rule more consistently in our lives. To be more and more submissive to him. To him be the dominion. That's how we're to live our lives.

We should remember that the end of all things is near. That should have an ethical implication for us. So be busy about the work of the Lord today. May God help us to do that. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for the instruction that Peter gave to those people of Asia Minor nearly 2,000 years ago, an instruction that applies today. What an amazing thing that we can take a letter that was written so long ago, an ancient document, and it speaks to today just as appropriately as it did then. It's just as much for us.

We thank you for the encouraging words that he gives us and for the high standard. We pray that we'll meet it. We pray that we will live lives that please you. Live to your glory and not our own. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.