

Be Prepared

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 November 2025

Preacher: Mike Roper

[0 : 00] Well, good morning, everyone. Great to be here, isn't it? We're continuing our series in! The Book of Peter, and the title as you can see up there is Grace for the Road. And of course, the road of life can be very up and down a bit like that road there. I don't know if you ever watch Highland Cops, but you know, they've got these great long straight roads and then suddenly there's a bend and around the corner there's something to surprise them, you know, an accident or something unexpected has happened. So we need to be prepared, but we also need to know where we're going.

And as the picture shows here, our destination, as we've been thinking, is glory. It's heaven, if we're believers today. That is where we're going. That's our destination. But on the way, there are all sorts of ups and downs. And if you're anything like us in our life, we have had quite a few of those. And we go through all types of different suffering. I was never a cub or a boy scout. I don't know if any of you were, or guides or brownies or whatever. It's probably why I'm constantly taken by surprise when things suddenly come around the corner and knock me for six. But Alice and my wife, she was a girl guide, so she knows how to do things when things are surprising around the corner. She's always ready. But of course, Robert Baden-Powell use that motto, be prepared. And it stands for BP, Baden-Powell, if you didn't know that.

But the meaning of the motto is that a scout must prepare himself by previous thinking out and practicing how to act on any accident or emergency, that is so that he is never taken by surprise. And this wee lad here, Kylie Dean, he prepared for everything. He's got all 57 cub badges, which he achieved last year and got a reward for it, I think. But our two sons were in the Cubs up in Scotland when we lived up there. And my son, the older one, Ben, he won his badges in all sorts of things like camp craft, map reading, art, stamp collecting even, and modelling. I mean, you know, making models. And oh yes, sewing, which his mum was particularly pleased about.

So, yeah, he won all those badges. But yeah, that's the idea, isn't it? You prepare for life, you prepare for the unexpected. Learning skills to help them navigate through life in different challenging situations they might face in the future. If you get lost in a desert or something, you can read your map and find your way out, that sort of thing. But the first letter that Peter wrote, that we're looking at, he wrote to the early churches across Asia Minor, we know now as Turkey. And it has this same message running through it. Be prepared, be prepared. You're like foreigners living as exiles in what sometimes uncomfortable situations, even a hostile world even. And in those days they were. And eventually they were persecuted quite badly by Emperor Nero and lost their lives for it. So they were being prepared for, as living in, as exiles. So we need to be alert, don't we, to situations as they arise as Christians. Prepare for all eventualities. And that can include, and does from time to time, some in other countries more than perhaps here, but real suffering for what we believe. We need to be prepared for that. And this is what the drift of this passage is.

[4 : 03] He reminds them, of course, of their status during the letter. Earlier on, we looked at the fact that we are aliens or exiles. You're a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession.

So that's what God is to us. We are a treasured possession of his. He urges them as foreigners and exiles to live such good lives among the unbelievers, that though they may accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God. We've already looked at that.

He gives guidance then to slaves, to be obedient to masters, which sounds a bit counterintuitive. And then he talks about being obedient to national authorities, how to behave as wives and husbands, as we saw last week, and so on. But then later on in the letter, he finishes up saying, be alert and of sober mind. Be alert, be ready, be prepared, be alert of sober mind. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. So resist him, standing firm in

the faith. And that's what we're about this morning. As Christians, then we need to be prepared. So the passage we're looking at this morning is very relevant to us, helping us to prepare ourselves for living well as Christians, and what can be a very challenging environment, particularly in the day in which we live, where very often we're seen as being negative or counter-cultural. And that may include a certain amount of suffering. So this is it. But the message is to all of us. See that in verse eight, it says, finally, all of you, all of us in this room, be like-minded or of one mind in our determination to be prepared. And this preparation is in three areas.

Interesting, the first one is be prepared to do good, even when facing suffering. If you notice in our Bibles, the heading is suffering for doing good. Peter repeats this time and time again throughout the letter, and particularly in this chapter, verse 11, 13, 16, 17, if you want to look at it. Do good, do good, go about doing good. Doing good is good, that sort of thing.

So you might say, well, that's a bit of a no-brainer for us Christians. That's what we do, don't we? We go around doing good. We follow Jesus doing good. That's what we do. And in fact, sometimes people call us do-gooders, and in a rather derogatory way, we're just so focused on doing good that we haven't got time for anything else. I'd go out and enjoy ourselves with them. But nothing about us is particularly good, is it? Nothing could be further from the truth. There's nothing inherently good about us.

[7:18] We're all sinners saved by God's grace, if indeed we're saved by Him. God's amazing grace. And earlier in the book, in the letter, Peter's already dealt with this. We must realise that we're not saved by doing good and from our goodness inherently. In the last chapter, Peter tells us that we're all sheep going astray. And by his wounds, by his wounds, we are healed. So it's not that we're particularly good about anything. We're quite the reverse. We're people who are inherently not good. And we sin, and we do things that are wrong, and think things that are wrong. But by his wounds, we are healed, and we are clothed then with the righteousness of Jesus. So we declared righteous or good through what Jesus has done. So we understand that, not what we have done. So what is Peter driving at here when he again and again, he instructs us to do good or be good or do good things?

And it's not so much about what we physically do to help others. You know, for example, doing a shop for an elderly neighbour or volunteering in some charity. We've only got to look at children in need this weekend, where people just as outflowing of goodness really and in compassion for children.

And wanting to help others, 45 and a half million, I think, to the latest score. So isn't that amazing? There's something inherent that wants to see good done and be good. And as Christians, we should be at the forefront of that. Of course we should.

But what does Peter here mean by doing good? It's something a bit different. As Christians, if we look more closely at the text, it's all about our attitudes. Our attitudes of mind, what's going through our mind, our hearts, in our relationships with each other, and with those not yet in the kingdom, in the kingdom of God. It's the good that we show by our attitudes towards others. So in verses 8 to 9 there, you can see, be sympathetic. Love one another.

Be compassionate. Be humble. These are all wonderful things, aren't they? And our dealings with others. Don't get your own back. Or give as good as you get. I tend to be a bit like that. You know, someone insults me, I want to get them back. Probably from my earlier South London days, you know, that's what you did. But that's not how we are as Christians.

[10:09] If somebody preached you badly or insults you, don't get your own back. That's really what Peter is saying here. Give as good as you got. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing.

In other words, be like Jesus, who was goodness personified. And when he was challenged and he was insulted, he was treated badly, he turned the other cheek. And he's our example here.

It's far more difficult for us, isn't it, to get our heads around this and actually behave and do these things. But that's what Peter is instructing us to do. And perhaps it would be good for us just for a moment to reflect on this last week. How have we been with our relationships with people around us?

Have we been compassionate? Have we been sympathetic? Have we loved others? others? Have we been humble regarding others better than ourselves in our relationships?

Especially in the church fellowship. And maybe something has happened. It did happen, actually. I can't tell you what it was about, but something did really get my hackles up this week. But when we're faced with situations like that, how do we respond? Perhaps you just think about how you've

responded this week.

[11:38] Have you responded in the right way, the good way, doing good in that sense? Let me encourage you though, if you sort of look back and you think, well, no, I haven't always been like that.

You confess that, you think, no, there was a time this week or several times this week where I couldn't say I've been hyper sympathetic or compassionate or humble or good in that sense. But take, yeah, let's just look at Peter himself, this impetuous fisherman that just wanted to always be on the right side.

He said he had to learn the hard way. Just remember that, do you remember that incident in the Garden of Gethsemane? Jesus was being arrested and Peter was indignant.

How dare these people come and arrest my lord, my master? And he drew his sword and sliced off the ear of the high priest's servant, Malchus.

[12:36] Jesus immediately turned around and he said, no, Peter, that's not the way. No, no, no, no, no. And he healed immediately the servant's ear.

To respond with grace, with love, compassion, rather than reacting. I think there's a little motto there, never react, always respond thoughtfully and carefully.

Don't react to your first instincts. So that's our first practical lesson. How can we be like this in the coming week? How can we do good in this sense when we're dealing with other people and those around us?

Have you got your sympathy badge, your compassion badge or your humility badge? Are you displaying it as you go around and relate to others?

But what's our motivation in doing this sort of good? Well, let me ask you, do you love life? Do you want to see good days? I think we all do, don't we? We want to love life and see good days.

[13:39] Peter refers us back to Psalm 34 here in verses 10 to 12. Let's just read it. However, whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.

They must turn from evil and do good. They must seek peace and pursue it, for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer.

But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. So watch your tongue. Don't be deceitful. Turn away from evil. Do good, as we've been thinking. Good in our attitudes and our relationships with others.

always chase after peace rather than conflict. And why? Because these character traits are good and they're right in God's sight. That's what God applauds in us.

And he is against all those that do the opposite, do evil. So if our hearts and minds are right and we have Christ-like attitudes that we've been thinking about, then of course our good deeds that flow from those attitudes will have God's approval.

[14:46] Just as an aside, I remember a lady in our previous church whose husband was not a believer. She actually became a believer after they got married.

Became a Christian. Was baptised and he really didn't like it. He was out for having a good time and doing this, that and the other that she felt no longer comfortable with.

And he became unfaithful. He found someone else he could do these things with. He was verbally mocking. He was abusive. And the marital relationship was broken. But interesting, they remained business partners.

They ran a business together. And they continued living together. And she remained faithful. She remained patient, long-suffering. And repaid insults with blessing.

And she brought up her family while supporting the business while all this was going on. And she really suffered for being a Christian. But she never gave up winning her husband for Christ.

[15:51] And I'm not saying here that people who are really suffering abuse should just ignore it. I'm not saying that at all. There are occasions that God and Jesus actually gives us license to do that if we're really suffering abuse and so on.

But she suffered all her life. This went on and on. And she was entitled to divorce him because of his behavior. But she never gave up.

And she died without seeing him change in any way. But later on in life, and this is the point, just a bit later on in life, he realized what a life he'd lived.

And he repented. He confessed his sins, how awful he'd been to her. And so he put his faith in Christ. And he was saved. And part of that, I'm sure, was because of the example that she'd given to him.

So these things can be powerful. The next thing that we're going to move on to is to be prepared to give a response, especially when we're suffering in some way.

[17:00] Verse 15, Peter instructs us, doesn't he? Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. The hope that you have.

And let's have a quick look at the context. Peter is speaking to suffering Christians here. They're being insulted or they're being persecuted. Even in those circumstances, Peter's saying, be prepared to respond in a way that draws those who taunt or mistreat you to Christ.

Now, that's quite a tall order, isn't it? For the most part, if we develop right attitudes and behaviors, people generally will respect us.

We're seen to be good and people around us will recognize that. But as Peter says, who's going to harm you if you're eager to do good? But he doesn't stop there. We need to be prepared for the times when we're doing good, doing what's right and good and wholesome.

But because we're known to be Christians, we're made to suffer for it. In fact, if we should respect it, is really what Peter is saying here. He encourages not to fear the threats of others or be frightened by them.

[18:20] In fact, we're especially blessed by God when we suffer in this way. Think about that for a minute. Suffering is blessed by God. What do I mean by that?

There's something very powerful, isn't there? When someone is being verbally attacked or for no reasons, he stays cool and doesn't retaliate. It's not what their opponents were necessarily expecting.

And those issuing the threats might begin to feel ashamed of slacking the person off, slacking you or I off. And they may ask a question, why don't you even retaliate? What's this all about?

What motivates you not to fight back? You always stay calm. What's driving you? And this leaves the door then wide open to tell your story and express your faith in Jesus, the one that you love, who suffered willingly in your place and my place to set us free.

Are we ready? So here's another practical thing. Are you ready to tell your story about what Jesus has done for you? I'm willing to share it. Have you thought about it?

[19:29] Are you ready? Particularly when you're going through a difficult time and then by your reaction, people say, well, what is it you believe? Why do you behave like that? And you're ready to give an answer.

Just one thing to add here. You notice how Peter says we should answer when sharing our faith and hope? With gentleness and respect.

With gentleness and respect. I think there's a general principle here. When we share our faith or stand up for Christian values, how do we come across to others?

Do we come across as disrespectful and aggressive? There's a bit of a tendency there when you look in social media today in certain quarters that people can become very aggressive and dismissive of others, even Christians, in talking about the things that we believe in.

Are we doing this with gentleness and respect? It's very powerful. You know, when we're doing these things, perhaps we put posts on Facebook or we say something on TikTok or whatever your thing is.

[20:39] What are we aiming to do here? Are we just banging the drum, stating our views, dismissing what everybody else says?

And there's a place for this, I understand that. But what is our motive? Are we out, are we doing this to attract people to our wonderful Saviour Jesus?

Or are we pushing people away? This is what it's about. It's engendering this, this desire to know Christ more. And are we doing that when we put stuff out?

Someone said, you know, be winsome. Yeah. And win some more for Christ in all your communication. So there's a lesson for us there as well, isn't there?

We need to keep a clear conscience in the things we say, verse 16. And then finally, we need to be prepared for eternity. And this is where we're leading into what we've been thinking about early on, where Jesus Christ is Lord.

[21 : 40] He turns our attention to Christ, Peter does. suffering in any way for being a Christian, like these people that Peter was addressing in Asia Minor. And perhaps for us here, it's not direct persecution, but perhaps you have a partner or a family member or a boss or a work colleague that's hostile to your faith and there's a constant drip feed of mockery or misunderstanding.

And it hurts, doesn't it? It takes its toll. But it really helps in these situations to look beyond all that to Jesus, our Saviour. Peter reminds us in verse 18, Jesus also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous to bring us to God.

So in a sense, we can't expect anything different because as Jesus suffered, so must we. And in fact, it's actually much more positive than this. It's not sort of putting a brave face on things. It's more positive than this. God uses all forms of suffering to prepare us for an eternal future with him. How does that happen?

Well, Peter explains in Romans 5. He says this, he says, we all sow glory in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character and character hope.

[23 : 00] And hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. And so you can see that there's a progression here, isn't there?

Perseverance. He develops perseverance when we're going through difficult times. That produces character and character produces hope. And the job of the Holy Spirit is to work through these sufferings that we're going through to prepare us for heaven.

So, you know, maybe you are going through particularly tough circumstances right now for whatever reason. But take heart because this is part of being prepared for heaven.

This is what the Holy Spirit is doing in your lives. Well, now we come to verse 19. And this is a bit of an issue really. It says this, after being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits, to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah when the ark was being built.

in it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water. And then he talks about baptism being like the flood. Wow, what's all this about? Yeah, Jesus was raised to life in the spirit of the resurrection.

[24 : 15] But then he made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits. So what spirits are these? And where were they imprisoned? Well, if the truth be told, no one really knows for certain what Peter was getting at here.

Even Martin Luther said, a wonderful text is this and a more obscure passage, perhaps, than any other in the New Testament. So that I do not know for a certainty just what Peter means.

So I don't stand much chance, do I really? And they're trying to explain this. But having said that, one thing we can be absolutely certain about is that something extraordinary happened at the cross at Jesus' subsequent resurrection.

What was going on there? Not only did he save us from God's judgment because of our sins, he also defeated all the cosmic powers of evil. Think about that.

He defeated all the cosmic powers of evil and Satan himself, as Paul says in Colossians. He says this, having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

[25 : 26] So it was a kind of proclamation, after he was resurrected, it was a kind of triumphant proclamation of victory over all that's evil, all evil forces, all evil spirits, including, presumably, these imprisoned spirits that once rejected Noah's warnings.

I think we can unravel this just a little bit further. We look at the reference to the great flood and the comparison Peter makes to our baptisms. You can read all about the flood in Genesis 6-8.

What is Peter getting at here? The flood was God's judgment on the human race, if you remember that, when the flood came. The human race had become completely corrupt.

It says, back in Genesis 6, every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. Verse 11, the earth was corrupt in God's sight and full of violence.

Does that remind you of anything today? So much so that God regretted that it even created humanity, it says. And you wonder how God must feel today when he looks at his world and sees all the violence and all the evil that's going on down to us humans.

[26 : 43] But God was incredibly patient then, as is one of the messages that comes through. And through Noah, who trusted him, he warned the people all the time Noah was building the ark.

And that could be up to something like 120 years. They lived for a long time in those days. However, no one listened to Noah's warning. And the only ones that were saved eventually when the actual floods came were Noah and seven other members of his family who took refuge in the ark.

And it's a dramatic picture of what we face today. The ark is symbolic of Jesus himself. Jesus warns us time and time again in the Bible that God's judgment on the world and all humanity is coming. Not by a flood, because we still have the rainbow coming, don't we, to promise that wouldn't happen again. But this time it will be by fire. We don't like thinking about these things, do we? But the only way of escape is to take refuge in the ark, in the ark of Christ, in Jesus himself.

That's the only way we'll escape the judgment of God and trust our lives to him. In other words, be prepared for eternity. If we die to ourselves, put our faith in Christ alone, defeated death, he will raise us up to be with him in heaven forevermore.

[28 : 09] So the message here is, if you haven't yet entrusted your life to Jesus, take heed of these warnings. Now is the time when God is being very patient until that time comes.

Now is the time of grace, God's overwhelming grace and he can reach out and rescue and touch you and you can flee to the ark and be saved. There's something even more amazing here.

He compares being saved through the flood with our baptism. Verse 21, this water, the eight being saved through the water of the flood symbolises baptism that now saves you also.

It doesn't mean to say that through the act of baptism we're saved. Of course it doesn't. Peter's already dealt with that. But there's a symbolism here. Baptism is a symbol of being put right with God.

We go down into the water, we're showing that we've died to our old sinful ways and we've now faith in Jesus who died for us on the cross. And we're showing that we have new life in him now through his resurrection.

[29 : 14] So the flood, Peter talks about being saved through the waters of the flood. What does that mean? Well I think it's a picture of God's amazing overwhelming love and grace.

It washes away all our sins. The evil in our hearts is just washed away by the work that Jesus did on the cross and we're safe in the ark of Jesus.

We're saved through the water. We're protected from God's impending judgement. You think of all the evil that's swept away in the flood and that is a picture of the greatness of what Jesus has done. He's not only that he swept away all your sin and mine as we put our faith and trust in him. It's all gone. Sins past, present, the future swept away. The overwhelming grace and floodwaters of the love of Christ have swept it all away and we're safe in Jesus, in Jesus Christ.

That's the picture that's being Peter's painting here. We're protected from God's impending judgement and that's his contract with us. We need to have a clear conscience towards him and it's really amazing isn't it?

[30 : 27] This unbounded love and grace of Christ that has saved us and washed away all him and that's what's going to happen. When Jesus returns, all evil, everything that we see around us, all the badness, the violence, all the things that were happening in the days of Noel will be swept away and only goodness in Christ will remain.

And that's the picture we get at the end of this passage. Jesus sits victorious at God's right hand with the angels, the authorities, the powers in submission to him. This must have been a huge comfort to the people that Reepeter was writing to, suffering unjustly for their faith and it's a huge comfort for us too, isn't it?

To know all that we're, even if we're going through all this suffering that it will come to an end. We're going through any spiritual attack, any temptation, all these things are only temporary, they'll be washed away and Christ is victorious sitting on the throne and one day it'll all be over and we shall be in our, inherit these places that he's gone to prepare for us in heaven.

Praise his name. Thank you.