

Live for God

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[0 : 00] This morning's reading is from 1 Peter chapter 3 beginning at verse 8 until verse 11 in chapter 4.

Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult.

On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For 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. Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.

[1 : 12] Do not fear their threats. Do not be frightened. But in your hearts, revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

He was put to death in the body, but made alive in the spirit. 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 while the ark was being built.

In it, only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water. And this water symbolises baptism that now saves you also. Not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a clear conscience towards God.

[2 : 20] It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand, with angels, authorities, and powers in submission to him.

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body has finished with sin. As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.

For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do, living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and detestable idolatry.

They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to them who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

[3 : 26] The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind, so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. Amen. Okay, please have open, if you can, 1 Peter chapter 4.

We'll be looking at the first 11 verses of chapter 4 together today. As children go, I don't think that mine are particularly unusually badly behaved.

[4 : 35] Most of the time they do fairly well. But from time to time, I do find myself saying to them, That's enough. It's time to stop. That's enough.

And Peter says the same thing here in this passage. Verse 3, You have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do. That's enough. Now, when I say, that's enough, to my children, sometimes it means, Okay, that's sufficient.

It was good to do. But any more will be unnecessary, even excessive. Sometimes it means that. But more often, when we as parents say, That's enough. What we mean is, You never should have started in the first place.

That's enough running in the kitchen. It doesn't mean, That's enough laps for today. Come back and do some more tomorrow. But in the meantime, you're allowed a rest. It means you should not have been running in the kitchen in the first place.

And when Peter says the same thing in his letter, That's enough of living like pagans. Don't do any more. Well, he's not saying, Okay, you've topped it up far enough, and now it suffices.

[5 : 45] No, he implies, It never should have been done in the first place. And that's important, Because I think sometimes we're inclined to wish That he were saying the other kind of that's enough, Or that he weren't saying it at all.

Because sometimes, Sometimes we look at the things that pagans do, And at least some of those things look kind of fun, don't they? People sin because they want to.

People behave in these kinds of ways because it is attractive. And so Peter says, Don't be inclined to think that. Don't be inclined to think, I could have a little bit more fun before I settle down.

Maybe one day in the future, I'll have a wild weekend of excess while I still can. No, Peter says, You have spent enough time on such things. And that is true, Even if you've never spent any time on those things.

Even if you've never been drunk, Never done anything that could be called carousing, Never mind orgies. Your sexual life has been impeccably chased. Even if that is true, There is still in these verses no license To pursue the things that pagans choose to do, is there?

[6 : 52] On the contrary, says Peter, Live for the will of God, Not for earthly desires. So these verses, They form the end of a section of this letter That began right back in chapter 2, verse 11.

Dear friends, I urge you as foreigners and exiles To abstain from sinful desires, Which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans, That though they accuse you of doing wrong, They may see your good deeds, And glorify God on the day he visits us.

You can see how those same ideas Are then being picked up again here At the end of this section. And the whole thing has been focused on this idea Of abstaining from sinful desires, hasn't it?

Despite being strangers in this world, Do not live as this world does. We know that this is the end of that section Because it finishes with this doxology, Ascribing glory to God In the final sentence of verse 11.

And then verse 12 starts with a fresh address, Dear friends. So concluding this section, What does Peter choose to focus on? Well, he considers what living for God will look like.

[8 : 00] And my thinking at least has coalesced Around three ideas in this section. First he says, Live for God as those who have finished with sin. Live for God despite derision.

And live for God in light of the end. Live for God as those who have finished with sin, Despite derision that may come In light of the end of all things.

Now, as we come into these verses, There are a few points that are perhaps Not immediately straightforward to understand.

None as complex as the ones we were dealing with last week, But nevertheless, One or two that we have to unpick a little bit what's going on. And the first of those makes it into this first heading. Finished with sin.

Peter says in verse 1, Those who suffer in the body have finished with sin. Now, folks, as I look around this room, I can see plenty of you who are suffering In one way or another.

[8 : 59] And I'm pretty sure that you are all still sinners. Proverbs 20 verse 9 seems pretty clear. Who can say I have kept my heart pure, I am clean and without sin?

Implied answer, No one gets to say that. So when Peter says you've finished with sin, Is he contradicting the proverb? And for that matter, After the statements in 1 Kings 8, And Ecclesiastes

7, And James 3, And 1 John chapter 1, The Bible's pretty clear That sin is an ongoing reality For all of God's people, That it's deceptive to think That we're done with sin.

So how do we fit these things together? I mean, we believe all Scripture To be divinely inspired, And we think God doesn't change His character, And therefore we assume, Well, it must be possible To resolve any apparent contradiction.

And as is so often the case When we need to do that, The trick is to look at the context. A single verse in isolation Is a very dangerous thing.

We've got to be careful to understand What the writer actually intends to say When he writes a particular sentence. And in this case, The context of what Peter's saying, The context is righteous suffering.

[10:14] Isn't it? Chapter 3 verse 17, It's better if it is God's will To suffer for doing good Than for doing evil. We looked at that a couple of weeks ago. So Peter isn't talking here in chapter 4 About suffering that occurs Just because we live in a fallen world That's filled with disease And have bodies that wear out And fail in all kinds of ways.

Peter's talking about suffering That arises specifically For speaking out about Jesus. Suffering that comes as a result Of our faith in him. Righteous suffering. Suffering for doing good.

So he's talking about wives Who have to endure The sarcastic comments and worse Of their unbelieving husbands. He's talking about slaves Whose masters delight in forcing them To work on the Lord's day And beat them for daring To want to spend time in prayer.

He's talking about people Who lose their business contracts Because they won't go and work at the You know, go and work the room At the local guild meeting. Because the meeting starts with the feast Dedicated to the local guards.

Or for that matter Ends with an orgy As part of the worship Of those idols. He's talking to people In those kinds of contexts. People who are suffering For their righteous behavior.

[11:24] He's talking about Righteous suffering. Now what does that have to do With sin? What's going on in verse 1? Well see the truth is That this kind of suffering This righteous suffering This suffering for doing good Most of it is quite easily Avoidable isn't it?

You don't have to suffer In these ways. All you have to do Is say you don't believe it anymore. And just go along With what everyone else Is saying and doing.

Just go join in With the idol sacrifice. Just follow your husband's guards. Just go with the flow.

Agree with whatever opinions Most people around you Are espousing. And you won't have to suffer For being different.

You can avoid This kind of suffering For being righteous. All you have to do Is sin. Right? To deny that God's ways Are best.

To refuse his lordship Over your life. To participate In the worship of idols. Whether ancient idols Or modern ones. This is sin. The suffering arises Because you are not Willing to give in.

[12:36] The suffering comes Because you are not Willing to sin For the sake of an easy life. And that means That when suffering Of this type arises When suffering comes Because of your faith in God It can actually be A reassurance to you.

A reassurance to see The true nature Of your resolve. That you are in fact Willing to suffer for Christ. That you are willing To choose suffering Rather than sin.

This is a virtuous course And says Peter You're in good company When you do it. Because in so doing You can follow after The example of Christ. Christ suffered In his body.

He was willing To endure suffering Because he was not Ruled by sinful desires. But instead of being Ruled by his own Sinful desires He was willing To endure agony For your sake And for mine. And even for him The desire to turn away From suffering Was there. Wasn't it? He expresses that In the garden of Gethsemane.

[13:44] He doesn't want to suffer. And yet he was willing To persevere anyway. When Peter says In the body here In verse 1 by the way. That's body in this Kind of sense of Physical as distinct From spiritual.

Life in the flesh If you want to put it That way. So he's not just Talking about suffering Kind of in the body But rather You know All of the suffering That we might experience In this earthly life.

So it applies Just as much To mental anguish as well. You can endure The suffering Of the wounding words That are thrown at you Because you do so Following in the footsteps Of your saviour Who suffered abuse Being hurled at him.

And you can do it Because avoiding sin Is a higher priority To you Than your comforts. It is in that sense That you have Finished with sin That you are willing To suffer Rather than sin And that is to you Evidence Of faith.

This demonstrates Verse 2 A desire to live For the will of God Rather than For evil human desires. When we make Those choices That result in suffering We live for God Rather than evil Human desires.

[14:59] And that may well Not be easy. But Peter invites us To do this To live for God Despite derision. He's going to come on Towards the end Of the section He's going to come on To a positive Of how he invites us To live.

But for now Verse 3 Is concerned with Turning away From evil human desires. Turning away From what pagans Choose to do. Do not live In debauchery, lust, Drunkenness, orgies, Carousing, or detestable Idolatry.

Now whether you do Or don't have Personal experience Of these kinds of things Or you're perhaps Inclined to look At such lives With a kind of Wistful longing. If you wonder Maybe whether The occasional exception Might be made Because it would Make life easier.

Or just because You think it might Be fun. Peter is clear That such behavior Characterizes evil Human desires Not a desire To live For the will of God.

And for the people To whom Peter's writing These kinds of things Are part of the Everyday experience Of most people. If you want to be A successful businessman Well you need to be Part of the guild.

[16:09] And that means Participating in the Guild banquets Which are dedicated To the local guard Of the town Where you live. It's part of the Everyday.

That's just part Of doing business. Now you and I Perhaps we might be Forgiven for looking At this list of behaviors And thinking Seems a little bit Remote.

Or maybe for thinking I should have made sure To get to it A couple of weeks earlier Before the young people Headed off to university. It's a little bit more What we associate With that kind of Situation isn't it?

But the truth is That such behavior Maybe it's a more Regular occurrence For students But it's hardly Unheard of For these kinds of Things that Work Christmas parties You go away To training courses And conferences These are the Sorts of things That happen.

People don't Grow out of it As much as we Might wish to pretend. And just as much Now as was the Case when Peter Wrote People are surprised When we don't Join in with these Kinds of behaviors Aren't they?

[17:13] And sometimes That surprise Reaches the point Of the end of verse For that you have Abuse heaped on you. See in Peter's day The idea of A religion The idea of a God Making exclusive Claims It was At least offensive And frankly Bizarre.

What kind of a God Would do that? Everyone knows There's hundreds Of gods all around. How can you Possibly say There's only one God? It's obvious to Everyone They're all out There. The only question Is which one's More powerful And which one's More likely To give you What you need Or what you want?

You can worship Whichever gods You want Is the attitude Of the day. You can worship Whichever gods You want But don't you dare Criticize me For worshipping My gods. And frankly Why on earth Wouldn't you Want to join In with Worshipping them?

Get whatever You can. See it's not So very far Away from today Is it? We live in a World which Believes that Something can be True for you.

We've Relativized Truth Haven't we? We live in This society Which is all Very tolerant. All very tolerant Right up to the Point where you Question any of it.

[18:33] At which point You're suddenly Dismissed as Intolerant And are no longer To be tolerated. Well Peter says This is the reality You should expect.

That people will Heap abuse on you When you choose To live a sober And sensible life. Why? Well because Your choice to do That implicitly Casts judgment On their Licentiousness.

But verse 5 Peter's clear. It isn't the Judgment of your Peers which Really matters. It isn't their Abuse that Counts most.

The more Fundamental truth Is they Themselves will Be judged. They will have To give an Account. And so Says Peter Live for God In light of The end.

Verse 7 The end of all Things is near. Judgment is Coming. The day when Both you And those Who abuse You Will be Judged By God. And that Universality Of judgments That's the Point that Peter's Working towards In verse 6.

[19 : 40] The fact that Some people Have died Is no Exception. One commentator Says the whole Point of Evangelism Is to prepare People for The day When they Must give An account Of themselves To their Judge.

Physical Death Does not Exempt Those who Reject The gospel In this Life From judgment Nor does It render The gospel Ineffective For those Who committed Themselves to It when They heard It in this Life.

This is Why we Proclaim The gospel Because Judgment Is coming. Death Doesn't Prevent God From punishing The wicked.

See Again This is Maybe A familiar Idea To us Now Of You know After death Kind of Reward and Punishment But again It's a little Bit more Of a foreign Idea As Peter Writes That people's First expectation Is you get The blessing From the Gods Right now You can See who's Right with The gods Because they're The ones Whose crops Are growing They're the Ones whose Families are Growing Who have Hundreds of Sons and Daughters You can See The blessing Of the Gods In front Of you And Peter Says no That's not The full Truth Death Isn't The end Death Isn't An escape Judgment Is coming It doesn't Prevent God From punishing The wicked And death Doesn't Prevent him From being Our redeemer It doesn't Prevent him From redeeming Those who Trust in him Even if In this Life he Does not Appear To be Our Deliverer His power Extends To the Dead And so The end Of all Things Is a Comfort To those Who rest In Christ And Verses 7 to 11 As well As a Comfort It's a Call to Action A call To behave In certain Ways In light Of the Coming End And there's A fourfold Challenge In these Closing Verses So we'll Look at Each dimension Together First Verse 7 The end Of all Things Is near Therefore Be alert And of Sober Mind So that You May Pray It's an Interesting link That one Isn't it Because I Don't know About you But I'd Be inclined To think That this Kind of Clear minded Right thinking Well why Would you Want that Well back To chapter Three So that You'd be Prepared To give An answer I mean Level Head Is certainly Going to Help With giving A clear Answer For why You have Hope But here That's not The most Important Thing He's back To prayer It was his Motivating Objective

[22 : 21] When he Addressed Husbands In chapter Three Verse Seven Wasn't It Husbands In the Same Way Be Considerate As you Live With Your Wives And Treat Them With Respect As the We Can Partner And As heirs With You Of the Gracious Gift Of Life Into Not First And Foremost An Emotional Experience It's Not Supposed To Be Driven By Emotion It's Entirely Legitimate To Bring Your Emotional Responses To God But It Isn't Supposed To Be Your Emotion That Drives What You Pray

Or How You Do It For Peter Prayer Is About Thoughtful Communication Sober Careful Considered And I Think This Idea Of Alertness That Comes Through Here In Verse Seven Alert And Of Sober Mind This Idea Of Alertness Conveys To Me A Kind Of A High Degree Of Engagement With What's Going On Be Alert To The World Around You And Again You Might Think Well You Need To Be Alert To The World So You Can Avoid The Danger Of Suffering And Persecution Or So That You Can Devise Clever Strategies To Solve The Problems No No Be Alert So That You Can Pray Be Alert To What's Happening So That You Know What To Pray About Be Alert To What's Going On So That You Know What To Bring To God In Prayer Alert And Sober Minded I

Don't Know About You Maybe Maybe It's Just Me But I'm Not Sure Sober Minded Is How I Would Characterize My Press I've Thought A few Times That Maybe I Would Benefit From A More Deliberate System Because The Truth Is When I Sit Down Thinking I Should Pray Now When I Sit Down And Do That Half The Time My Mind Goes Completely Blank And The Other Half I'm Off Into What's On My To Do List And Before I Know I'm Up And Doing Things Instead Of Sitting And Praying Prayer Requires Alertness And A Sober Mind It Requires Deliberate Intent Now I'm Not Saying It's Wrong To Just Sit Down And Get On With It I'm Not Saying You Need A Spreadsheet In Order To Plan Your Prayers Don't Let Me Put You Off By Raising The Bar As It Were But I Am Saying For Me At I'm Pretty Sure Some More Sober Planning Would Help Not Least Because It'll Bring Me Back To What's Next On The List Of Things When I Drift Off

Into Other Unconnected Things And Away From Prayer I Know Maybe You're Better At It Than Me But I Think It Would Help Me Second Verse Eight Love Each Other Deeply Because Love Covers A Multitude Of Sins Peter Is Bringing To Mind Proverbs Chapter 10 Hatred Stirs Up Conflict But Love

Covers Over All Wrongs Now First Up Let's Be Clear When We Talk About Covering Sins That Does Not Mean Cover In The Sense Of Cover Up Like We Use The Term Today In Fact I Think Maybe It Time For Translators To Find A Different Phrasing Because We're Not Talking About Hiding Something From View We're Not Talking About Pretending It Didn't Happen We Don't Mean Let's Avoid The PR Disaster Above All Else It Is Not That Kind Of Covering No We're Saying Love Actually Transforms Situations Not That Love Pretends Things Didn't Happen Love Transforms The Reality Deep Love

For One Another Means That The Multitude Of Sins Need No Longer Be Brought To Mind And It Means That Not Because We've Brushed Loving One Another Means Forgiving One Another Doesn't It Love Isn't About A Warm Fuzzy Feeling First And Foremost Love Is About What You Do How You Act And Perhaps Sometimes The Hardest Aspect Of Loving Actions Is How You Respond When You're Wronged When There Is A Need To Forgive When Someone Sins Against You How Do You Respond Well Love Prompts Us To Forgive This Is Vitally Important In Our Homes And In The Context That Peter Is Writing About He's Thinking Primary About The Fellowship Of The Church Isn't He He's Talking About How Brothers And Sisters In The Church Relate To One Another Love Covers Over A Multitude Of Sins

[27 : 23] Sometimes Sometimes Churches Divide Over Issues Of Truth And Orthodoxy But At Least In The Wednesday Afternoon Connect Group Last Week We Were Talking About How Often Those Kinds Of Questions Of Different Doctrines Different Beliefs Often Those Kinds Of Questions Are A Mask An Excuse For A Division That Actually Exists Because People Have Fallen Out With One Another Because There Is A Reluctance To Forgive Because There Is Not Enough Love There Peter Says That Should Not Be Remember Chapter Two You Like Living Stones Are Being Built Into A Spiritual House To Be A Holy Priesthood Being Built Into One Spiritual House Or Remember The Call To Be Like Minded Back In Chapter Eight Of Verse Three Unity Unity Unity Unity Is A Great Virtue For The Church Says Peter He Writes To This Embattled Church This

Church Suffering Persecution This Church That If It's Going To Survive Must Curb The Kind Of Behavior That Will Split It From Within They Must Love They Must Be Ready To Forgive And Maybe It Doesn't Feel So Acute Today Because The Persecution We Suffer Is Less Intense Isn't It There Isn't An Immediate Threat To You Or To Me Of Imprisonment But The Danger Of A Fractured Church Is Just As Real Maybe We're Not Being Forged Together By Adversity But If We're Going To Be A Credible Witness Then We Must Be United And More Importantly To Skip Ahead To Verse 11 We Must Love One Another So That In All Things God May Be Praised Through Jesus Christ That's The Objective That God Will Be Praised It's The Objective Not Only For The Service Of Verse 11 But It's The Objective For The Whole Of This Section Indeed It's The Objective For The Whole Section From Chapter 2 Verse 11 Onwards In

Fact Even More Than That It's Our Objective In All Things Isn't It The Glory Of God Above All Love Each Other Deeply Because Love Covers Over A Multitude Of Sins Third Offer Hospitality Without Grumbling Verse 9 Again The Choices That Peter Makes Are Interesting Aren't They Why Is This The Specific Act Of Service That He Chooses To Call Out From The More General Call To Service Of Verses 10 And 11 Why Is Hospitality So Vital Well It Does Seem Likely That There Was A Particular Need For Hospitality In That Day You Know Without The Network Of Hotels And B&Bs; And So On That We Have Today When Itinerant Apostles And Evangelists They Were Dependent Upon People Offering Hospitality For Them To Do Their Work And Without Dedicated Church Buildings They Were Meeting In People's Homes When They Met To Worship God They Needed The Hospitality Of The Brethren And So We Question Whether The Need Is So Acute Today And Maybe We Are Tempted To Give Ourselves A Pass And Say Well You Know I Don't Need To Be Hospitable Because The Situation Is Not The Same But Peter Talks About One Another In This Verse He Doesn't Say Offer Hospitality Particularly To Those Outside He Doesn't Say Offer Hospitality To Visitors He Says Be Hospitable To One Another Sure Sounds Like That Applies More Locally Than The Visiting Preachers And If You Want To Talk About Opening Homes For Worship Well Let's Notice That Doing So Was To Very Visibly Very Publicly Align Yourself With The Church When They Were Hospitable In That Way When They Had Those Meetings In Their Homes They Invited Persecution Upon Themselves Didn't They They Publicly Aligned Themselves With That And Peter Says Do It Anyway So Folks Let's Not Cop Out Of It Today Because It's A Bit Inconvenient Because

They Were Called To Do It In Much More Difficult Context Now Hospitality Looks Different In Different Context We've Talked About This Before But Let's Remember That Church Is Family And That Means Inviting People In Without Expecting The House To Be Immaculate Because The Time The Welcome The Love Is Infinitely More Important Than Whether You Have Matching Plates Or Even Whether You Have Enough Chairs To Sit On You Can Be Hospitable With Almost Nothing If You're Inviting Family Members Into Your Home And The Church Is Family Then Should You Not Be Inviting Your Church Fourth Final The General Call Of Verses 10 And 11 Peter Says Each Of You Should Use Whatever Gift You Have Received To Serve Others As Faithful Stewards Of God's Grace In Its Various Forms If Anyone Speaks They Should Do So As One Who Speaks The Very Words Of God

[32 : 26] If Anyone Serves They Should Do So With The Strength God Provides So That In All Things God May Be Praised Through Jesus Christ To Him Be The Glory And The Power Forever And Ever Amen So Peter Talks About Speaking And He Talks About Serving And In Those Two Things Surely He Encompasses Or At Least Implies All That One Might Do As Faithful Stewards Of God's Grace Surely It's All Within That Broad Compass Of Speaking And Serving Paul When He Writes He Enumerates More Examples Of Gifts Peter Seems Content To Just Offer These Two Broad Headings Maybe He Doesn't Want To Give Us The Excuse Of Not Seeing A Particular Gift On The List Peter Says Whatever Gift You May Have You Are To View It Not As A Gift For Your Benefit Not As A Gift For Your Convenience But Rather As Something That You Are Called To Care

For God's Grace The Steward Doesn't Possess Things Himself The Steward Is Called To Care For And To Use That Which Belongs To Another So That Means That The Gift That's Entrusted To You By God Is Not Ultimately Yours But You Are A Steward Of It And Therefore That You Do Not Have The Right To With Hold That From The Purpose To Which He Intends To Employ It You Don't Have The Right To Withhold God's Gift From God's People Because He Didn't Give It To You To Bury It In A Hole In The Ground He Didn't Give It To You To Line Your Own Pockets He Gave It To You To Use In His Service So So If You Have A Great Voice Or You Have Instrumental Gifts Then Why Would You Not Use Them

To God Speak To Ruth If You Have A Patient Spirit And You Can Make Complicated Ideas Simple Which Is Not An Easy Thing To Do And Engaging For Children Ready For Them To Understand If You Can Do That Then Why Would You Not Help With The Children's Groups Speak To Paula If You Have A Natural Affinity For Technology Well Maybe You Can Help Us Improve The Reliability Of The Live Stream Why Wouldn't You Serve God's People That Way If You Know How To Offer An Encouraging Word To Those Who Are Feeling Uncertain And Anxious And Down In The Dumps Then Why Wouldn't You Prioritize Visiting Others In The Church Who Struggle In Those Ways If You Can Read Carefully And Enthusiastically Why Wouldn't You Want To Read God's Word To God's People Each Of You Should Use Whatever Gift You Have Received To Serve Others Folks If You Can't See How Your Particular Gift Could Be Of Service Well Let's Talk About It Maybe We Can Figure It Out Together Because Peter Seems Pretty Clear That We're To Be Stewards Of God's Gifts And If On The Hand You're Feeling Uncertain About Whether Or Not You Have Gifts Or Uncertain About Whether They're Good Enough To Actually Serve God And Others Well Let's Take Note Of The Second Half Of Verse 11 Peter Says Serve With The Strength God Provides It's Not About You God Will Provide The Strength That You Need And Some Of Us Need To Be Reminded Of That When We're Tempted To Do Things In Our Own Strength And Some Of Us Need To Be Reminded Of That Need And According To These Verses The More Visible God's Provision Of Strength The

More Obviously It Is Him Doing It Not Us Then The More Obviously The Final Part Of This Section Will Be True So That In All Things God May Be Praised Through Jesus Christ It Is Glorifying To God When People Can See Him At Work Not You To Him Be The Glory And The Power Forever And Ever Amen Let's Pray Lord Jesus Thank You That You Are Enough Thank You That Your Willingness To Suffer On Our Behalf Has Won For Us Confidence In The Day Of Judgment That As We Near At The End Of All Things That We Are Free To Serve You Seeking Your Glory And Not Our Own In The Strength That

[37 : 29] You Give To Us That As You Call Us To These Tasks That We Know Are Beyond Us That You Promise To Provide Us The Strength That We Need To Do That Which You Intend From Us So Keep Us Diligent As Faithful Stewards Of The Varied Grace Of God We Pray Amen That