

Being Prepared

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[0 : 00] That's true, that's true, and it probably was. Well, I'm going to tell you, you see the scripture that we have, 1 Peter 4, verses 7-11. If you want to go ahead and find that in your Bible, we're going to be getting to that in a minute.

And I'm actually going to have some assistance with my slides this time, because I figured it would be the best way since I'm going to be using this screen. So if you'll go to the next slide there, brother. Thank you.

Well, back in the day, Glenn Hawk used to wrestle on the wrestling team. I was about half the weight I am now. But one of the things I was thinking about, and I know it's kind of funny to put yourself up there, but back then on a wrestling team, I was on the first year of my school ever had a wrestling team.

And one of the things unique about wrestling is you wrestle a match. When you go together, you wrestle your own weight class. And then each individual on your team wrestles in their weight class. Now, you can have some that win, some that lose. If your team has the most wins during that match, then you win the total whole match. So sometimes individuals will do real good, but the team doesn't do well.

[1 : 17] Sometimes the team doesn't do well, but individuals do real good. Like I said, I was on the very first wrestling team my high school ever had. And so I was what they call the featherweight, the lightest person that could wrestle.

So I was the very first person in my high school to ever wrestle officially. I was the very first person to lose officially in my high school too.

So, you know, some first you're really happy about, other first you're not. As a matter of fact, my very first and only wrestling match my father came to was the one I lost.

My dad came and he never came back again. So it wasn't a bad thing. He said he thought he brought me bad luck and everything, but he didn't. Well, go to the next slide.

We're going to be looking at it. I'm going to share a little bit of scripture with you, but I want you to be thinking about what we've heard this morning. When you think of the end, what is it you think about? You know, there's going to be some scripture here talking about the end.

[2 : 18] It could be in some of the things I read, some of them spoke about that Peter is talking about the end of the Jewish state. I couldn't quite figure out how he put that together and everything, that commentator.

But another one talked about the idea that our end is when we meet the Lord, maybe through death. And that can be very true. But also the ending that Peter might be talking about is the second coming, when Christ comes back again.

And I am one from the 70s. I believe in the rapture. And I know different people have different thoughts on when it happens. But I believe it can happen at any moment. And I know others have different thoughts about when the rapture might happen.

The important thing is that we know for certain that Jesus is returning. And so we should keep that in our heads and always in our heart too. Sometimes people can get kind of upset about when you want to figure out when that's going to happen.

But still, the idea is remembering that Jesus will return. So the thing is, some people get upset a little bit. What I've heard was the idea like if the rapture happens early, then Christians have a tendency, they get kind of lazy.

[3 : 31] They think, well, we're not going to be going through the tribulation. So we don't have to worry about it. We're not going to do things. But you know, that's not what Jesus said. When we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, He wants us to be about His business.

I put a few pieces of Scripture up there I just want you to think about. Now, in Matthew 24, 42, it says, Therefore, be on alert, for you do not know the day that your Lord is coming. And we don't. We do not know when the Lord is going to be coming. So we should be on alert. We should be prepared. We should be ready. And then Jesus tells a couple of parables. And they're thinking, I'm not going to go through those. But there was a couple of Scriptures out of that that I wanted to share with you. The first one is about a landowner who gives talents to his servants when he gets ready to leave.

And this one piece of Scripture I'll read to you. It says, The landowner gave five talents to one slave, two to the next, and then one talent to the last slave, each according to his ability.

[4 : 34] So when we receive our gift, we receive the gift that God sees appropriate in us. Then in Luke 19, he tells another parable. And the first I want to use out of it is just for you to think about.

A noble man went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself and then returned. He called ten of his slaves and gave them ten menace and said to them, Do business with this until I come back.

See, that's the thing we've got to remember. We've got to be doing business until he comes back. We've got to be ready. See, these servants were put in charge of handling affairs. Just as the church is called to serve Christ in his absence and always looking for his return.

It's important for us to keep that in mind. Notice that the talents that he dispensed according to the judgment of the Lord or the person in the parable. The talents were dispensed according to the capacity of the steward.

And the talents were dispensed in order to fully equip each person. So the master or our Lord, he gives us what we need to get things done.

[5 : 42] He's got a plan. And if we are part of that plan, he's going to give us what we need to get it done. So as we look at our scripture, which is going to be out of 1 Peter chapter 4, verse 7 through 11.

Think about living out God's will and community. The church family, that is, involves being united in love, exercising hospitality, and serving one another with spiritual gifts.

And that's what we're going to be looking at today. Now remember, Peter has been talking about all that these people have been going through, the letter that he sent out. And so when you think of the letter, it's been going out to different churches.

And things were pretty rough back then. And I'll probably approach that in a little bit. But let me share the scripture with you. Now you may have a different version, but try to follow along with me. Mine's from the New American Standard. The end of all things is near. Therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.

[6 : 41] 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 in the manifold grace of God.

Whoever speaks is to do so as one who is speaking the utterance 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 the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Go to our next slide.

So we're looking at the very first part of the scripture. It's talking about the end and then also prayer. So just be quiet for just a moment.

As we think about it, we have just moved a little bit closer to the end. Every minute of our life brings us closer to the end. And now we are closer than we were when we began this service.

[7 : 54] Peter is speaking of Jesus' return in the end time. The thing is, are you looking forward to that return? And with His return comes God's judgment, which will be imminent.

And when that happens, there will be no time to change your mind when He returns. For the unsaved, this will be a judgment of the rejection of Jesus Christ.

For the saved, it will be a judgment of our works. The things that we did with the talents that He gave us. But we can also think of it as the end of our earthly life. It could be that it may not be His return, but it might be the end of our time here.

Again, there's no time to change your mind. When that happens, that's it. So take nothing for granted is what Peter is letting us know. Peter says, therefore, for this reason, which means for this reason or consequently, he says, be a sound judgment.

In other words, practice discernment to distinguish the truth. This world, we are covered with truths all the time. People on TV, people on your phone, the radio.

[9 : 05] People are always giving you what they call their truths. Peter is telling us we need to have sound judgment. Practice discernment for that. Be serious about your walk with the Lord.

You need to be very serious about that. We all need to be serious about our walk with the Lord. We need to take it seriously in preparation. Practice the many, making sound judgments free from distractions.

Does anybody in here have distractions? I tell you what, distractions are just, it is such a common place in life. We have so many of them. You know, it used to be if you went outside, you didn't have a distraction.

But how many of us ever leave this behind anywhere? And I was thinking about it. This is such a distraction. I use my Bible when I get up in the morning to read.

I like to read. And I do use my phone sometimes when I'm reading something. I think, okay, I want to see what that is in a different version. I'll pick it up. The thing I found that sometimes if you're not careful and you pick up your, and no reflection on anybody, but if you pick this up, you're starting to read your scripture, and all of a sudden, something goes, bing.

[10 : 10] Oh, you got a message. Lord, that might be an emergency. Oh, it's my sister. Look at that little cute kitty cat. And then I get distracted. So you have to be careful because you're always getting it.

How many of us have this thing sitting on the table or somewhere in our house, and we hear that magical noise, bing, and we can't resist. We have to go find out what it's binging us for.

And so that is a huge distraction in our life. But there's all kinds of distractions. And so distractions can interrupt our mental and spiritual clarity, especially in prayer.

You know, you have to be real careful. I've been praying, having my prayer time in the morning, and I hear that little phone go, bing, or something happens, you know, and it can be a distraction.

So we have to be careful of that. And that's one of the things Peter's telling us. He said, don't let those distractions mess up your mental and spiritual clarity that you have. Focus on your faith and on your priorities of life.

[11 : 10] Try to keep those things to a minimum. And he says, be a sober spirit. In other words, practice self-control. Remain calm. Are we a calm to society anymore?

I don't think so. We are usually angry about something. Or we find fault of something. And we have trouble in this idea of self-control. But Peter is reminding us that we are to be of sober spirit, to have self-control, and to remain calm.

To be spiritually alert, meaning to be watchful, aware of the spiritual dangers and temptations around us, because they come at us at every corner and every way.

And the devil, he is like, you've heard it before, the lion on the prowl looking to devour you. And so he's going to find some way to do that. For what purpose?

Well, the purpose, he's saying, is the purpose of prayer. Meaning our communication with God needs to be clear. It needs to be pleasing to Him. And that doesn't mean that you're praying all these real nice, fluffy little prayers.

[12 : 16] God wants you to talk to Him. He wants you to tell what's on your heart. The youth are beginning to study Psalms. And if you read Psalms, there's lamentations and their praising.

With the first part of the book of Psalms, there's a lot of lamentations in there. A lot of things that are going on. And later, as Psalms goes on, there's more praises and stuff. So our communication needs to be with God, and He's clear and pleasing.

Your desire is for God's will to be done in your life. That's what we should have. God's will to be done in our life. Trusting in Him and His will. You're seeking His guidance and His understanding.

And if you're not praying, you're not seeking His guidance. You're not seeking His understanding. You have to pray to do that. You have to have that communication. Go to our next slide.

Now here's something that we've heard over and over again, all through the Scripture. Above is to love one another. And you notice how Peter starts out. He says, above all. This is kind of like a command.

[13 : 19] He is saying, above all. And the reason he's saying this is because the end's getting near. So we need to make sure we're practicing this. He says, keep fervent.

Now this word fervent, kind of like in the Greek, is kind of like the stretching taut muscles of a runner, a winning runner and everything. And so he's saying, which means to continually prepare, continually practice.

When I was in wrestling, you would continuously practice day after day after day. just to get on the mat for six minutes. But you would practice hours and hours, build your endurance up just for those six minutes.

So for us, we need to be doing that. We need to stay fervent in our love for one another. Be ready, preparing and practicing that love for one another. Now, what are we keeping fervent?

Our love. Your love is saying you don't want to be selfish with it. You love unselfishly just as Christ loved unselfishly. And who are you to love?

[14 : 24] One another. See, Peter is talking to them in the church, the church family. We need to love one another. Love one another is a continuing command of God.

Loving one another is a demonstration of walking as Christ. It's doing things the Jesus way. Love covers all transgressions, as spoken about also in Proverbs 10, verse 12.

And then love, as coming out of James 5, 20 says, turns a sinner from the errors of his way and will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sin. Loving one another is demonstrated through our patience with each other.

Which I know we always have patience with each other, don't we, brothers and sisters? It's overlooking and forgiving unkindness. We never get upset with each other or what anybody ever says about us or makes a little comment.

I've been standing back there many times and had somebody tell me, oh, Glenn, you're getting a little chubby. Or look at that hair, you're getting a little gray back there and everything. So, you know, it can happen. And so sometimes people can take that and be hurt.

[15 : 31] But it's also practicing that self-control and seeking the best of others. And it makes up for a lot of our faults. You know, I think sometimes, I feel like I get along pretty good with folks in our church.

Because you know what? I love my church family. I really, truly do. And I know the evidence of it is you've got to put up with my faults. Because I have many of them.

My wife often says, Glenn, why did you say that in church? Or, you know, or why did you do that?

And everything. You may have hurt somebody's feeling. And everything. And she's right.

Sometimes I just kind of blurt things out.

But you guys love me so much that you're willing to quickly forgive me of that. And I appreciate that. And this is how we're to relate to each other. Caring for each other. Now, the church, as a church family, I want you to think about it.

And don't, I'm going to ask you to do something real quick. Don't, not your spouse, not your child, but turn to somebody who's not relative to you or something and just tell them, say, I love you.

[16 : 39] Look at somebody right now. Amen.

Now, hey, be sure to put this in action. It doesn't do no good just to say the word. You've got to put it in action. And that's what Peter wanted them to realize.

Because at the time, the church, where he's writing his letters to, they have government that are being hard on them. They have society that's being hard on them. There's a lot of things going on. Next slide. So, one of the things he points out to them, he says, I want you to be hospitable to one another. Now, that's not a word we use much anymore.

We think of hospitality. We think, kind of thinking of going someplace like a hotel or something like that. But he was telling them they need to be hospitable to each other because it was critical for the survival of the early church.

[17 : 40] See, the early church, as I was telling you a minute ago, he's speaking to, they're experiencing tribulation. They're thinking of the end because they feel like they're almost probably living in the tribulation. The Roman government is persecuting persecuting the early church, persecuting the Christians.

And actually, if I remember correctly, even Nero, who was one of the ones that persecuted a lot of the Christians, especially, he's becoming into power. He used to take Christians, cover them with tar, and set them on fire to have like a light out in his gatherings and stuff at night.

He would take, he would do cruel things. So, they were experiencing this from the government.

They were experiencing from different religious sects. other people that worshipped other gods

would do things to attack them because of their beliefs.

They would also be persecuted from their society because people didn't understand this thing about loving each other or having one God and having a Savior who was the Son of God.

And so, they would be persecuted. So, Peter's trying to encourage them. This meant for them to be inviting community in their home sometimes to stay. It meant bringing them in, feeding them, caring for their needs, protecting them when they need protection.

[19 : 00] See, following Jesus can and will be costly. It's a reality. If you are open with your faith, not in a mean way, but I mean sharing Christ.

When somebody speaks up, be willing to say, oh, I'm a Christian or, yeah, I believe in the creation, you know, and doing things and you're going to find people are going to look at you different.

I recall in times when working in the university, I can remember having people over certain departments that would kind of make fun of me because they knew I was a Christian. You know, they would make comments, you know, they were going to tell a story or joke and say, well, we won't, you just stay over there because you don't need to hear this because you're a Christian. I actually had those words spoken to me for. You'll be misunderstood. Sometimes it's from coworkers. Sometimes it's from family. Sometimes it's just in the world in general because of our beliefs and what the Lord has told us we try to live not a worldly life but a godly life and people don't understand that and they say we are hypocrites or we're, I'm trying, we discriminate.

There's all kinds of words that they use that we're haters and stuff and sometimes you're just left out because you're a Christian. Sometimes it happens even from family. I have, I have a family member that invited me to one of his events one time.

[20 : 22] I didn't think, I didn't do anything wrong. He didn't invite me back no more and found out that the reason kind of was he didn't think I fit in that well and everything. I thought, I was having a good time but evidently I didn't fit in and I know why it is because I love the person very much but they had lots of alcohol and stuff and I don't, and I knew I didn't need to drink anything there because I didn't want to give a wrong impression but it bothered them because I didn't so they never invited me back again and so, and I still love them and I know they still love me they just don't invite me to their parties and everything and you know, so you get those experiences and it can be hurtful and everything but we need to learn to be hospitable to each other to look after each of others' needs.

Remember, we may reject sin but we love each other and how are we to do this? How did he say to do it? Without complaint. That's kind of hard to do because we like to complain and we can find things like that and even in our own church, I'm going to be honest with you, I think I am one of the biggest sinners of all sinners.

Now some people might say, well Glenn, you seem to, you know, you teach Sunday school and that stuff but I really do because you know what? I feel like the more I know about God, the more accountable he holds me and I have problems sometimes doing what he wants me to do, acting the way he wants me to act and so we need to look at each other and be hospitable to each other and even when we think, well, that person's not behaving very well, I don't, they're probably getting what they deserve.

We're not, I don't feel like I need to help that person. We need to love each other and I'm talking about the church family. We need to be encouraging, loving each other, meeting the needs that we have, protecting each other in whatever way the Lord tells you.

So we need to learn to be hospitable if we're in different ways and the Lord will give us the way that we should do this. Let me see the next slide there. And we are to serve each other and that's a little bit different.

[22 : 22] Each one of us have a special gift. Everyone who accepts Jesus Christ receives the Holy Spirit and everyone through the Holy Spirit has at least one special gift.

I would dare to say that you probably have more than that but as in our skit, sometimes people have just trouble finding that one. It's there but we have a tendency that we have this preconceived way of what we think those gifts.

Everyone has a gift. That special gift is a spiritual talent or an ability given by God through the Holy Spirit. That special gift is used and to be used generously in serving others.

We take that gift. Your gift might be helping somebody in times of need. It might be helping them build something. It might be bringing them something neat. It might be sharing a kind and gentle word to them.

It might be just putting your arm around. It might be saying, you know what, I've been praying for you this whole week or calling them up and just saying, I had you on my mind I was thinking about there's so many gifts that the Lord gives us and these gifts He gives us and He wants us to be a good steward of these gifts.

[23 : 37] Our talents as I mentioned earlier and when I was speaking you've been given these and you should be good stewards. Remember a steward as we've been told earlier in our study is one who manages what is not theirs.

So the gift that we have has been given to us is not really our gift. It's a gift that the Lord has given us and so we should use that gift. And these gifts are diverse, they're varied and their abilities grant from God and everything.

And so we need to remember that these gifts have been given not just so we can have a gift but so we can serve each other. So keep that in mind. Think about that. And then as we think about this idea of being a good steward, we have examples of being good steward in our spiritual gifts.

In scripture as he finishes up he says whoever speaks let it be as God places the words in your mouth. Let the words be divinely guided in other words.

Let those words be of God. Remember the words are the message from God. That's the gift. But be careful to speak his words and be faithful to the gospel.

[24 : 45] Sadly that doesn't always come out of our mouth when we speak. Sometimes we can get carried away by what the world tells us and we want to integrate that into our whenever we're speaking.

But we have to be faithful to the gospel and to the word. We have to remember that when we speak to people if we have the opportunity to speak not just in speaking in front of people but there's nothing wrong with telling people listen if you're lost we want you to accept Jesus Christ and tell them you know accepting Christ is a wonderful gift.

You get eternity with God. To be rejected is not a gift. So we need to we need to be there we need to share that gift of speaking. And he says whoever serves serves not under their own strength but through God's strength.

Remember God will abundantly supply the needs that we need. Now these gifts each person receives a gift. The gift is to serve others.

The gift from God is something we accept and we use this gift to submit to his will. To do what he wants us to do. Sometimes God asks you to use that gift in places or times that you do not want to use it.

[25 : 56] God will say go over there and speak to that fellow. Or stop and help that person. And you're thinking well Lord dinner's at the table I don't want to I can't keep everybody waiting.

Or you know what I know about that person that person you know they kind of get in their own troubles. But sometimes we need to remember that we are to be good stewards of those gifts especially in the church family.

We are here to encourage to love and to serve and to provide hospitality and to help each other. And so we need to these gifts are to serve others.

And using them distributes God's grace. So every time you are using your gift you're distributing God's grace. What a great way to evangelize in the world because when they see you sharing a gift or sharing with somebody else the person that you may not even be doing anything for they see it. It makes a difference in their life. They see what you've done. And that is a spiritual gift that God gives us. And God is present working through these gifts.

[27 : 02] He's always working through these different gifts that we have. And He's always there doing it. He provides us the strength to use those gifts too. And the gifts are all tied into together connected in the evangelism of those around us.

God has a purpose. God has a plan. We may not know the full extent of the plan but we know He calls us to be a part of it. So what we need to do is we need to step into that plan and trust Him to get things done.

Now these gifts they honor and they magnify God through Jesus Christ who modeled all these gifts. Think about it. On the night before Jesus' betrayal as He gathered all His disciples together He showed love to them.

He was encouraging because He knew what was getting ready to happen. So God was Jesus was showing love for one another. Then He demonstrated hospitality in the Last Supper.

He provided food. They were sitting there together. They were having a dinner together that He knew was going to be important. They needed it. And He shared that hospitality with them. And then He showed them how to serve one another when He started washing their feet.

[28 : 12] Something that none of them expected and they were all kind of amazed by. They didn't know what to think about that. So, last slide. So, when we are living out God's will in our community, the church family, that's us, it involves being united in love.

It means exercising hospitality. It means serving each other with spiritual gifts. Now, this is the way the church family glorifies God.

And at the very end of the scripture that I had for you today, He said, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. You know, that's the same verse that's spoken in Revelation 1, verse 6.

And then He says, Amen. Now, what does Amen mean? So be it. It's used to end the emphasis on the truth and certainty of what has been said.

And so, when we read the scriptures, we know there is a truth. We know there is a certainty in this. We know that Christ is going to return. Whether it's soon or whether it's later.

[29 : 28] And if He doesn't return in our lifetime, we know we are going to come upon death one day. We know that's a certainty. And so, we want to be about His business, about loving each other, about showing hospitality, and about serving each other.

So, as we take this time and we're getting ready to, are we going to do the supper or the last song? So. Okay, we get ready to do this. I want you to think about, Christ gave us an example as we shared this last segment.

Where are you at in this? How do you feel about it? Is Peter speaking to you? Do you feel like that you comprehend and you understand all this? If not, read this and practice these things of loving each other.

Having it, showing hospitality and serving one another with the spiritual gift you have. And if you're not sure what that spiritual gift is, seek Him. And He will show you what that gift is. He'll tell you. He'll show it to you. Let's bow for prayer. Father, we thank You, Lord, for bringing us here. We thank You for Your love. We thank You for Your mercy. Lord, there is no greater thing to me than when You have put us in church family.

[30 : 40] Lord, Peter is encouraging the church families and the church for the times that will be hard before them. To give them encouragement of what You have to give.

Your love. how You show hospitality to us and how You have shown us how to serve others. So, Father, let us each search our heart this morning.

Each one of us think about, Lord, where are we at with this? And, Lord, encourage us. Let us encourage each other, Lord. Let us not ever walk away thinking, you know, nobody at that church cares for me.

Nobody loves me. Lord, let no one ever leave not feeling the love of Christ through us. In Jesus' name, Amen.