

The End Is Coming - Watch And Pray

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again for a little to the chapter we read in 1 Peter chapter 4. We had verse 7, 1 Peter 4 verse 7.

The end of all things is at hand, therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Now as we know, Peter was writing to Christians who felt very isolated in a pagan world. They were living in very difficult times and many of them had been scattered to different places. At the beginning of the chapter you read about that because Peter says, Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

But then he says, according to the foreknowledge of God. So the Christians had been scattered throughout all these different places. And no doubt they felt very, I'm sure they felt very hard done by, and I'm sure there were times when they would be questioning and wondering what was going on, what had happened to them, why the Lord was allowing this to happen.

And we always question, well we often question these things at our own personal level, when things aren't going the way that we would want or expect, and particularly when things don't make sense to us.

[1 : 38] Because we always expect, even although difficulties might come into our lives, we want that, we say to ourselves, well this is difficult, but I think I can understand a wee bit as to why or how this is happening.

But when things just don't appear to me making sense at all, and we find it really difficult to understand, what is God doing in this very thing? But God had a purpose, that's what we read there in 1 Peter 1, according to Peter and Apostle of Jesus Christ, the elect exiles, and then all the different places, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.

So, that is showing straight away that this was no accident, and that God is in control even over these things. Now it's not that God was ordering people to be harsh and evil against the Christian, but that was because of the very sinful nature of the Roman Empire at that particular time, that hated Christianity and was trying to obliterate the blossoming church, was doing everything in its power to obliterate.

And that's of course why the Christians were spreading, they were moving from place to place. But this is what was according to God's purpose. Because as they went, they brought the gospel with them.

And as they went into new communities, into new places, they lived for Christ, they displayed Christ, they spoke about Christ, and as they did that, God blessed their witness.

[3 : 24] And this is part of how the early church really blossomed and grew, was through the witness, through the testimony of his people, through the preaching and the lifestyle and the witness of his people.

So that was God's purpose in spreading the gospel out into all different places. And God still wants us to do that because at the end of the day, it's the most important thing that we could be found in doing, is living for Jesus, of speaking to people about Jesus when the opportunity is there, where we are able to share something of the gospel.

Our lives should be, and this is where we often feel that we're letting the Lord down, but our lives should display the Christ that we serve. And that's what hurts us when we realize at our times that's not the case.

That's why we ask the Lord to forgive us. But surely every day we're saying, Lord, help me to live well. Help me to live for you. Help me, Lord, that my life might be a witness to other people.

Well, that's how it was in the early church. And God had seen fit that that is the way that his word and the gospel was going to spread. So Peter is writing to these Christians who are suffering. [4 : 43] Their personal lives are lives of suffering. In fact, he tells us in verse 12, Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial which is to come upon you.

Not just a trial, but a fiery trial, which is speaking of something that's intense and hot and difficult to cope with. Don't be surprised at the fiery trial which is to come upon you, to test you as though something strange were happening to you.

This is a world you're in right now, and this is what it's going to be. So Peter tells us. Now, while a lot of this chapter, sorry, this epistle, deals with suffering, it is also an incredibly encouraging epistle. And there are various themes that appear in it. And one of the themes that Peter is so often highlighting is the example of the Lord Jesus Christ in the face of suffering.

Because he's writing to Christians who are suffering, and he says, you have to look at the example of our great Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. For instance, in chapter 2, he says in verse 21, For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

[6 : 05] Now, of course, there are many people who think that Christianity is simply trying to follow Jesus as closely as possible. That to be a Christian, you simply come to God's word, and you say, right, I'm going to try and live like this.

You see these, I'm not in any way saying that's wrong. You see these wee kind of bands people have, what would Jesus do? And in many ways that's very right. We would ask ourselves, well, what would Jesus do in that particular situation?

But some people think that it's simply an adherence to a particular lifestyle that Jesus lived that we are to try to follow.

That's the example. But we cannot adhere to that unless we first come to know Jesus personally. And this is what it's all about.

Now, while Jesus did set us an example that we are to seek to follow, we know that the primary purpose of Jesus coming into this world was to be a sacrifice for our sin, to be the substitute in our place.

[7 : 17] So Jesus died on the cross in order to take our guilt and our shame and our iniquity and our transgression and all our unworthiness and all that we are, all the filth that we are upon himself and to make us right with God.

But he also left us this example. And it is as we embrace Jesus Christ that we seek to live according to that example.

So we mustn't in any way say, well, the example of Christ is not important. It is. It's very important. But we've always got to remember that the example of Christ for ourselves follows, first of all, getting to know Christ.

So Jesus, of course, as we say, has left an example for us, and particularly in the face of suffering. Because going back there, it tells us there as we read that in 1 Peter 2, for to this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you may follow in his steps.

who committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

[8 : 42] So that's what Peter is saying. This is the way Jesus was. He didn't look for revenge. He didn't threaten those. He actually prayed for them. But the other thing that Jesus was doing, in the midst of suffering unjustly and bearing it quietly, he did so at the same time entrusting himself to the Lord who judges righteously.

And I think there's a great lesson there for us because, you know, often in life, people can do things, things can happen in your life, and you say, that is so unjust.

That is so wrong. And there is within us a natural reaction to not only sometimes to sort this out, and at one level, there's nothing wrong with trying to sort something out when you feel that this is wrong and trying to sort it out.

But it's where you go into the whole area of revenge. And the Lord warns us against that and he says, revenge belongs to me. Judgment belongs to me.

I will repay. And, you know, this is what we have to learn to do because the Lord has an amazing way in time of turning things right round.

[10:02] And you so often, just if you watch, you will see of how the Lord will often turn things right round. It might take time, but he will.

And so this is what Peter is saying. This is how you're saying to the Christians. This is the greatest witness, the greatest testimony. And it does affect people when they see in the face of adversity and in the face of opposition, the Christian living in a different way.

But the other thing that Peter is often doing is he's projecting our minds into the future, looking ahead, looking ahead to what is to come. And he so often is picturing the glory that is ours, the inheritance that is there, an inheritance undefiled and that will never fade away, reserved in heaven for us.

And so that is why Peter is saying that, in verse 7, the end of all things is at hand. Now, what we've got to remember is that, first and foremost, Peter is writing to the Jews.

It's to the Jews that are scattered all abroad, converted Jews. And when he says all things, the end of all things, the end of all things is at hand, what he's referring to here is, first and foremost, is that all the things that had initially been promised by God with regard to our salvation and which were to be all fulfilled in Jesus Christ, it had all happened.

[11:43] Everything has been done except what there's, well, everything to that point. In other words, Jesus has come, Jesus has lived, he has fulfilled the law, Jesus has died the sacrificial death, he has risen from the dead and he has ascended up into heaven.

The next thing that Jesus is to do, although he's making continual intercession for the churches, he is to return again. And that's why Peter was then saying, and he uses that expression, that we're living in the end times.

In other words, there is the next appointment that Jesus has to a certain, what we might say, to a certain extent, in this world is this coming again.

He came once, which the Bible was prophesying over and over all the way through the whole sacrificial system, the prophets, everything, was speaking about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He came, he did everything, he has ascended back into glory and now we wait his return. So that is what Peter is really referring to, that the end of all things, that's what he's saying, the end of all things is at hand.

[13:03] So what we are doing now is waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. We're living in the end times. Peter actually was living in the end times. But so are we.

And there will be no warning given to us of the return of Jesus other than what Scripture tells us, that there are certain things that are going to take place before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we're seeing many of these things. If you go to Matthew and chapter 24 and you read some of the things that Jesus says will be before he returns and we see these very things.

But I suppose the question that we'd have to ask ourselves today is, in light of the end, the fact that the end of all things is at hand and that Jesus is going to return again, you have to ask yourself, if Jesus were to return today, would I be ready for that?

Because that's a very, very searching question. In fact, it's really probably the most searching question we can ask ourselves. Were Jesus to return today?

[14:09] And he may. Am I ready to meet with him? Or have I to get myself sorted? In other words, have I got to, do I need first to come to know him as my Lord and Savior before I meet him as judge?

Because when he returns, we're coming in to the judgment. And that's why it is so important that before we meet him as judge, that we know him as our Lord and our Savior.

And that's what the great gospel message is. And that's the great invitation. And that's what the Lord is saying, look, everything has been done. All the doing has been done.

There's nothing more to be done. It's all done. Will you please ask me to become your Lord and your Savior that I might become the King and Lord of your life?

Because as we said, there's nothing else that's going to happen before the return of the Lord. And you know one of the things that Jesus kept emphasizing while he was here that his return was going to be very similar to the day of the flood in the days of Noah and in the destruction of Sodom in the days of Lot.

[15 : 33] And what Jesus was emphasizing there was the normality of these days. Because although Noah was a preacher of righteousness for 120 years in the building of that ark on the day when the great waters of the deep were broken and when this cataclysmic flood just enveloped the world there was nothing on the morning of that day that the people got up and said pooh you know what I think Noah's right.

See look there's something happening. There was nothing. Because it tells us that on that day people were eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage.

What Jesus was highlighting was the absolute normality of the day. It's just like every other day. And then it came. And he said it was exactly the same with regard to Sodom.

When Lot tried to tell his sons-in-law of what the Lord was going to do and that when he was pleading with them to go to come with him and his daughters they laughed at him.

They looked at him as one who mocked. In other words they thought he was joking. Because there was nothing in the sky or anything to indicate that the Lord was just about to rain destruction down upon the cities.

[16 : 59] And so Jesus says when I return it's going to be just like that. There's going to be nothing in the morning that's going to say Jesus is coming. today. So that is why so often we're told in Scripture be ready watch for you know not when the Son of Man will return.

This is something that we're told over and over so often. And so that's why we have to ask ourselves are we going to be ready? And even if Jesus is not going to return in our lifetime then we're still going to have to leave this world and meet with him.

And we you and I I know how quickly time is passing. Time moves so quickly. And we see it in all its different outworkings in people's lives.

You see the mighty grow weak and the fast becomes slow and beauty fades and just everything begins to slow down. But you know it's an awesome thought that the day of opportunity will one day be over.

The end of all things is at hand. For the Christian that day will be wonderful because it will be the end. The end of suffering. The end of trials. The end of temptations.

[18 : 18] It will be the end of sorrows. The end of death itself. The end. You know it's something that we can really really look forward to. Look forward to this glorious inheritance where we're brought into the immediate presence of Christ to live with him and to share with him forever and ever.

But for those outside the kingdom the end of all things it's going to be the end of God's mercy. The end of God's grace. The end of the gospel invitation.

The end of all the privileges and blessings that God has given in this world. And so it's in light of this that Peter says when he says the end of all things is at hand.

Therefore be self controlled and sober minded for the sake of the gospel. That's what he's telling us here.

And when we talk of being sober we often tend to think of sobriety simply in terms of strong drink.

[19 : 29] where a person is intoxicated or a person is sober. You tend to think of purely in terms of that. And while it does include that, it includes far more than that because the Bible in its dealings with sobriety so often, yes, there are times it does mention drink, but it mentions everything else.

It's regarding food, money, time, leisure, work, everything, it's regarding what we are.

There has to be this area of self-control over our whole lives. In other words, people can be intoxicated by life.

People can be, they're not sober with regard to their work because their work consumes them. their work is everything to them. They can be like that with their homes, that they almost worship their home, or even your family, which, and don't get me wrong, these are the great blessings to have in life, but nothing must take priority.

We have to have a balanced view in life. We have to live with a self-controlled, sober-minded way because we live in a day that is liable to deaden our thinking.

[20 : 57] And we live in a day where we become so used to sin. And we become desensitized to sin. And we live, I mean, today, lifestyles have so, when you think back to how it was when you were younger, to where we are today.

But there's a kind of an acceptance and we just say, well, that's the way it is. And you know, when sin, when you're surrounded with sin, and of course, because we're sinners ourselves, and there's a

kind of, there's a part of ourselves because we're sinners that sympathizes with sin. There's this part that's there. And so as we're bombarded with it day after day, it's so easy to just kind of adjust our thinking and to become complacent and to begin to have an acceptance of things that they're wrong, but God doesn't change.

That's why the Lord says you have to be sober-minded, you have to have this sane mind in all these things. And so we need to be self-controlled.

We need to be self-controlled with regard to our Christianity because it's very easy to slide into one of two ways. Either to become very legalistic.

[22 : 17] Some Christians, that's the way they go. They become very legalistic. And it's very easy to become legalistic because there's something within us that wants to adhere to law.

And people can become very hard and harsh. And that's often what happens when people become really legalistic. They become very hard in their thinking and harsh.

But then it's possible to swing the other way and say, well, I'm not under law, I'm under grace. And because I'm under grace, I can do whatever I want. I can live however I want.

And there are many Christians today who, you know, what the Bible says, we live in the world but we're not of the world. But many Christians live today and they live in the world and they forget that part, not of the world.

And it's almost hard to distinguish who's a Christian and who's not. The Lord says both these ways are wrong. We need this self-control, we need this sober-minded so that we are aware, we're alert, we know where we are.

[23 : 24] There has to be this balance where we live by grace. But we live in the fear of God, seeking to live according to his word.

Now, the A.V. translates in here where we have the end of all things is at hand to be sober. And it says that we are to watch. That's what it says, watch unto prayer.

And you see the translators, and in a sense both translations are right. Because really what this word is talking about is it's having a sound mind and thinking and evaluating correctly about what you have.

Having this mature, alert way of thinking. And that's what we are required to do. To be aware, to be clear in our thinking, to have this alert, watchful, assessing everything.

And it tells us that this is for the sake of your prayers. Now, this word watch, which is translated into the A.V., has a kind of a wee slant onto military terms.

[24 : 42] Like what you would do if you were a guard. But if you think of it in that way, into military terms, and think about it, if you were a commander, or you're the general of an army, and you're on a campaign, there are three areas that you really have to watch.

And we can apply that spiritually. First of all, the first thing you'd be doing as a general or the commander of your army, is examining your own troops. How are my troops?

What's the morale like? Are they nourished? Because there's no point in going to fight in an empty stomach. Are they suitably equipped? Are they prepared?

Are they ready? Are they ready for war? That's one of the things that a commander would be doing. And likewise, we need to examine ourselves.

It's one of the things that we're told over and over and over again. The Word of God says, take heed to yourself. The Word of God says, examine yourselves whether you be in the faith.

[25 : 52] There are so many times the Word of God is saying, check it out, check it out how it is with you. And we've always got to remember that when we examine ourselves or check things out spiritually, we do so with the Word of God.

Not simply just looking in. Because our heart will tell us, tell us, doesn't always tell us the truth. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

So if we make an assessment of ourselves purely because of how we feel or how we think we are, we'll get it wrong. We always need God's Word. So that's the first thing the commander of the army will do, is check out how it is within themselves.

So that's what we need to do. We need to be alert. We need to be watching. And this is always attached to prayer. The second thing a commander would do is he would be watching and he would be alert for the enemy.

It's always important to know and to be on guard because the enemy can strike at any time. And again we're told in the Bible, be vigilant because your enemy as a roaring lion goes about seeking

whom he may devour.

[27 : 02] in the book of Job where we have this picture of Satan and he's coming to devastate the life of Job. The word that is talked about the way he's got the idea of patrolling.

That's really kind of the way Satan is because he's termed the God of this world, the prince of the power of the sea, the prince of the power of the sea. He's patrolling about. And we've got to realize that the enemy of our souls is on patrol.

Patrolling about, seeking. He's looking for inroads all the time. Who with? With God's people, number one. Because they are always trying to strike at the glory of God.

And the greatest way he can get at the glory of God is to get at God's people who are God's representatives here in this world. So he's busy, he's patrolling. So we need to be vigilant, we need to be on guard, we need to have the armor on, we need to be ready.

Paul says, we are not ignorant of his devices. In other words, Paul says, we're learning about the strategies, but you have to be on guard.

[28 : 13] And the third thing that a commander or a general would do if he's watching is he would have to have an awareness of his own resources, of all the backup, of all that they have.

Yes, you see, they need to know how things are within their own camp, but with regard to all the resources that they can rely upon. And so it is for us.

And of course, the source of all our resources is the Lord. And what resources we have. Because the Lord says, yes, you're fighting. But it's for me.

You're not on your own. At no point are you on your own. And the Lord has provided grace sufficient for us. He has provided and he has promised grace.

He has promised help in a time of trouble. He has even promised a way of escape and temptation. He has promised us guidance and direction in life. And so as the captain of our salvation, he tells us to be alert, to watch.

[29 : 20] And this is finally, just in a word for the sake of your prayers. In other words, the Lord wants us to pray intelligently.

He wants us to pray with a sense of knowing exactly what's happening. Knowing where we are in this world. What's happening in this world.

Because so often we can pray and it's slumbering prayer. It's not alert prayer. It's going through motions. Our devotions.

You know, the Christian can spend long enough going through devotions and hasn't a clue what they've read after they've read it. There's no idea what they prayed for after they prayed.

Because their devotions are sleepy. Well, that's what the Lord is saying. That's not how it's to be. You're to be alert. You're to be on. You're to be watchful. You're to be on guard. You're to be vigilant.

[30 : 17] Remember how Jesus, when he was with the disciples before his death in the garden, every time he came back they were asleep. Remember he said to them, can you not watch with me for one hour?

Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation. You need to be on your guard. You need to be vigilant. And also, with regard to this, in this alertness, this watching, it's also watching for the answer.

Because you know, sometimes the Lord is sending answers and we're not recognizing them. We should have the spirit of Elijah, remember, as he prayed and he prayed. He kept sending the servant, go and see any sign, any sign of the answer.

As Elijah was wrestling with the Lord, Lord, for rain, for rain, the servant would come back. No, there's nothing. No, nothing. Elijah didn't give up.

But he kept praying and he kept watching. And then eventually the servant came back and he says, oh, I see a little cloud in the horizon, just about the size of a man's hand. Elijah knew.

[31 : 27] There's the answer. The Lord's coming. Here's the first sign of it. And that's how we should be. So that there should be this alertness and this awareness of what we're doing with regard to our prayers so that we know what we're praying for, that we pray intelligently, but that we're also praying in a way where we're watching and waiting for God to answer.

And the good of your soul is dependent upon this. And the good of the church is dependent upon this. And the good of this world is dependent dependent upon this because this is the way that we're to be.

Let us pray. Lord, we give thanks that your word challenges us and your word shows us how we should be. So often we recognize that we fall short of what you require of us.

But you know the desires of our heart and the desires are that it would be as your word says. And we pray, Lord, that you will give us this sense of alertness so that we may pray intelligently, that we may pray according to your word, and that we may have this desire for your glory's sake in this world.

Help us, Lord, to be watching and to be waiting as you bring an answer to us. And we pray then that you will bless each and every one of us, that you will bless our homes and our families and all whom we love.

[33 : 02] O Lord, may every single one of them hide under the shadow of your wings and that they will be kept by yourself. Do us good, we pray, and cleanse us from our every sin, taking us home safely.

In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. We'll conclude singing in Psalm 130, the 130th Psalm, and we sing verses 5 and 6, Psalm 130.

Psalm 130, verses 5 and 6, sri gi'm doach jiu jiu jiu ve■ for exp exam Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[35 : 54] Thank you.