

Peter's Survival Guide

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Date: 05 March 2023

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[0 : 00] The reading tonight is from the book of 1 Peter, and it's chapter 4, and we're going from verse 1 all the way through to verse 11, and that is on page 1219 of the Pew Bibles.

1 Peter chapter 4, beginning at verse 1. 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 him 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.

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 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.

If you were to find out that the end of the world was coming, I wonder what would be on your survival list.

[2 : 41] Maybe you would build a shelter. You would stock up on canned foods. You'd find a useful weapon. You know, there's a bunch of things we do. We've all seen the movies. If you've seen the movie *Zombieland*, then you'll remember that the lead character, Columbus, has a set of rules specifically to survive the zombie apocalypse. Rule number one being cardio, because it's pretty important to run away from these zombies. And rule number three, which I think we would all forget about, is beware bathrooms, because when are you more vulnerable than when you're on the toilet? Knowing how to live in a zombie apocalypse is pretty important if you're facing a zombie apocalypse. But it's a bit far away from where we are today. However, tonight's passage in 1 Peter, what he's doing is telling us, if you look at verse 7, that the end of all things is near. We are maybe closer to the end than we realize.

And so what this passage isn't, let me clarify, is a bunch of rules to survive the apocalypse. We're not going to get into that kind of thing. There's plenty of TV shows that try and tell us that. But instead, what we see from Peter tonight, well, we see four important rules that we can follow to help us live in a world that is coming to an end. We've seen previously in his letter, Peter's not held back on how difficult life is going to be, like life is for Christians. We are going to suffer when the world realize what we stand for and who we stand for. Peter's not, he's promised us that. But tonight, after quite a long section of that kind of reminder of the suffering we're going to get for doing good and living rightly, he gives us these four rules to help us get through. So that's what we're going to do tonight. We're going to look at four rules to survive in these times. But before we get into them, let me pray for God's help. Father God, I ask for your help to speak clearly and rightfully from your words. I pray that your Holy Spirit will be working in all of our hearts to prepare us to live rightly in the view of what is coming. And in all things, we would glorify you through Jesus Christ. We ask these things in your son's precious name. Amen. Rule number one, arm yourselves with the same attitude as Christ's. Now, slight cop-out. Rule number one has two sub-rules. So rule number one, arm yourself with the same attitude as Christ. Rule one A, live for God's will, not earthly desires.

We're seeing these from verses two to four. What does it mean? What does it mean to live for God's will, but not earthly desires? Well, verse two helps us out. If you could just look at that with me.

Verse two, as a result, they, meaning the people who are done with sin, the Christians, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God's. We're not to live for the things of this world, but the things that God wants for us.

[5 : 41] We ask the same question. What does it look like to know what God's will is? Well, again, it looks like staying away from those desires. Verse three says this, you've spent enough time in the past doing what pagans, that is non-Christians of the time, doing what pagans choose to do, living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and detestable idolatry. Peter says that for the believer, enough time has been wasted on those physical desires. Those things will not last, they will not bring satisfaction, and they will not help you when the end times come. We are near them, so don't waste your time on things that will not help. He says to them, you've wasted enough time already, you've spent enough time in the past doing them, that it's time to reorientate yourselves.

Shift your attitude to that like Christ, so you can live in a right way for what is coming. Now, shifting our attitude is not an easy thing, and especially from things like physical desires that we can so want and need, and the world tells us we should have.

It's difficult to will ourselves to focus on anything different than what we desire. However, the thing we can't forget throughout the whole of this sermon, all four rules are going to come up. The thing we can't forget is we are to imitate Christ.

And thankfully, in Jesus, we see an example of what it looks like to live for God's will and not earthly desires. If you remember in Mark 14, you don't need to turn there.

Jesus is, it's the night before he dies, and he goes to the garden of Gethsemane and falls on his knees and prays to God, asking, if there is another way, please show it to me. Jesus asked, if there's another way than this road to the cross, please give it to me.

[7 : 32] But Jesus knows that that is not what is due to him. It's not what is coming. And so he ends his prayer by saying this, yet not what I will, but what you will. Even Jesus in his life sees that God's will is the way to go.

So when we are desiring something that seems to go against God's will, yet is one of our desires, we have an example in Christ and a prayer to say, yet not what I will, but what you will.

It realigns our vision, our attitudes to be on God first and not ourselves. Another example Jesus has given us is in the Lord's Prayer. We've already said it tonight.

In the Lord's Prayer, that third line is, your will be done, your kingdom come. Again, Jesus prays that God's will would be done. Jesus teaches us to pray that God's will would be done and not our own.

The more we ask for God's help regarding this attitude shift, the more we will receive it, the easier it will be to make the hard decisions. But it's not just through prayer. We need to understand God's will.

[8 : 37] Through the study of his word and through the help of his people around us, the clearer it will become. It won't become easier, but it will become clearer. These things will not be easy.

But this is the kind of suffering Peter's talking about at the end of verse one. Because whoever suffers in the body has finished with sin. When we fight these earthly human desires, we are fighting and suffering in the body, but we know that we will be free from sin.

So that's part one. Live for God's will, but not earthly desires. And rule one B is trust that everyone faces judgment, but believers will live in the Spirit.

Trust that everyone faces judgment, but the believers will live in the Spirit. Now, this is a second part of that attitude of Christ, because that is our heading rule number one. Arm yourselves with the attitude of Christ. And the second part is trust in God's judgments.

We've seen throughout lots of Peter's letters so far, if you've been with us these past weeks, that the Christian is going to suffer for living differently from the world. When we live distinctively, we will be seen as outsiders and treated like outsiders.

[9 : 48] And here, once again, Peter is saying if we go against the earthly desires, all the things he mentions in verse three, it will surprise the people around us. They might even heap abuse on you, to use the language of verse four.

Some of us will already have experienced that in a variety of different ways. Maybe for some of you, it's by avoiding drinking at a sports team social. Or maybe you've chosen to take your children out of classes at school, where they're teaching things that go against what the Bible believes. Maybe you've spoken out against something you find unethical at your workplace. Maybe you've missed out on a promotion because of it. Maybe you've come from a country where you're at risk of being imprisoned for living distinctively.

Maybe the abuse you will receive for living this kind of life is that your family will reject you. What Peter is doing with these four rules is preparing us for the worst.

Some of us here today will face those, we will face that. How are we to cope with it? Well, Peter is not just saying, look, bad things are coming, deal with it. Put up with it. And then eventually Jesus will come back.

[10 : 55] That is not what Peter is saying here. Instead, Peter gives us something to focus on. He helps us shift our attitudes in the suffering. It gives us confidence that the world cannot shake no matter what happens.

And this confidence is rooted in God's judgment of others and of ourselves. Verse five says that everyone will have to give account for what they've done to him who's ready to judge.

If you look there with me. The Christian can live for God despite the pressure of the world because we know that each and every person will face God and have to explain their actions.

What this does when we face difficulty is it relieves us from worrying about how to respond or what to do to those people. We don't have to think about what we need to do when rejection comes. Instead, we are free to continue living lives according to God's will. It allows us to focus on God's will as the priority, not how to live according to the world. It's what Peter's been getting at again and again throughout this letter.

[11 : 58] Because we know that when God does return, he will judge everyone who's alive and dead. Judgment is a very challenging truth to be confronted with.

Maybe you're new to church. Maybe you've never heard this before. It's really worth thinking about because it's what the Bible teaches. There will come a time when God who created all things will return and he will judge everyone according to their actions.

Now you may think you don't abuse anyone or you live a really nice life. Maybe you think you're a pretty decent person in general but you're still going to have to face up to a judge who will call into account everything you've ever done.

There's no hiding the good things or the bad things. And what the Bible teaches us is that when God comes on that day, no one will be able to stand before him. You may be a pretty decent person but all of the bad things you do are still there and they still add up.

We are all sinners. This is not just true of the non-believers. This isn't me standing up here from a high place saying you're going to have to deal with this. Every single one of us are due punishment from God.

[13 : 07] We're due to be judged because we've rejected God in the way we live. But the other thing the Bible teaches us is the only chance that we can face God's judgment and come away from it without facing the punishment is by being absolutely perfect and innocent.

And we just, we cannot do that ourselves but we need to rely on someone who is completely perfect. But thankfully someone has done that for us. If we go back to chapter 3 verse 18 maybe Joanne could put it back on the screen we had it up earlier.

Chapter 3 verse 18 says this. 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.

The only way that any of us could be confident before judgment on that day is if Jesus takes our place. If the perfect righteous man takes the place of the unrighteous so that we can be brought before God.

Moving on to the next verse. The reason the gospel was preached is so that we don't have to worry about coming judgments. It means that as a Christian when you believe this truth and when you trust that Jesus died for you if we face human judgments we realize that it does nothing for us.

[14 : 25] Look with me this is verse 6 let me just read out verse 6 for this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead so that they may be judged according to human standards in regards to the body but live according to God in regards to the spirits.

The believer has the gospel to hold on to that when we are judged in this body by human judgments we can trust that we will live in the spirit according to God. That's why chapter 3 verse 18 is helpful it says that Jesus suffered and died in the body but lived in according with the spirits and those two phrases are true of us today.

As Christians we will be judged by humans in the body but we will live in the spirit with Christ. When we face staunch opposition who reject us abuse us imprison us we know we're being judged by human standards but these punishment in the body it shows us that we are living in the spirit and we can be guaranteed that in those last days when the judgment comes we will live forever with God.

We're able to face anything today because we know what is coming. John Payton who we've been looking at in the past few weeks in our morning services if you've been around for our church family focus he was a missionary who went to the Pacific Islands to spread the gospel and he interacted with the tribe of cannibals and before he went people were telling him do not go to this tribe of cannibals you will die and John Payton says this I confess to you that if I can live and die serving and honoring the Lord Jesus it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by cannibals or by worms and in the great day my resurrection body will rise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen redeemer.

What John Payton is saying there is it doesn't matter what the people of this world do to me they will judge me by their humanly standards and in his case they may eat me but so long as we live for God's will we will live in the spirit forever we will be resurrected with Jesus.

[16:29] Payton knew the end result was resurrection for our bodies no matter what happens now. So rule number one of Peter's survival guide is arm yourself with the attitude of Christ putting God's will before any earthly desire confident that whatever happens to us now for the way we live we trust that when God's judgment comes we will live in the spirit no matter what we've suffered in the body.

Rule one arm yourselves with the attitude of Christ. Rule number two moving on to the next little section this is verses seven and eight the end of all things that we're talking about is the judgment that is what Peter is preparing us for and because that is coming that is near and is just as near for us now as it was then we are to be alert and sober so that you pray.

So that's rule number two be alert and pray. This is a really big secret that Peter is sharing with us but it's not really a secret. In order to survive and thrive in this world now when we're facing persecution and suffering we need to be alert and sober so that we pray.

To put this into sports analogies we need to play with our heads up we need to be playing heads up football in life. We need to see what is going on around us we need to know who is there what they're doing and most importantly we need to have our heads beyond the world now looking straight to the horizon living and praying in light of Jesus' coming return.

Jesus promised that he will return like a thief in the night we won't know when it's coming so we need to have our eyes open not just looking around us we need to not just be looking we need to be praying for these things too.

[18:14] Notice it's be alert and sober minded so that you may pray. As we see the world around us we're to ask for God's help for his support for his wisdom for his perseverance and strength.

Prayer is the natural outbox for the concern we have about our lives. For most of us when we look around the world today we often are fearful and anxious and we can despair at the state of the world.

Every time we load up our news app you worry what horrible thing has happened today. And so Peter tells us that we need to be sober minded we need to realise why these things are happening and we need to trust God's words and hand over all of our worries to him.

I wonder if it's because in today's day and age we're all much more likely in our stress and anxiety to bundle all of our worries in to hold them tightly within ourselves to suppress them down so we never actually have to deal with the effects.

And we do that instead of letting it all out to God and being open and honest with how we feel we think if we just ignore it and ignore it and ignore it and ignore it eventually it'll go away. It's what I've been feeling recently but what Peter calls us to do in the situations when we're stressful and anxious is to pray.

[19:36] It's to be our first response to anything that we encounter. We've already mentioned what it looks like to pray for God's will and that's really important but that's not the only time we pray. We

need to pray for ourselves when we're struggling when we have things going on when we're nervous when things are good we need to give thanks in prayer.

We need to pray for our friends that they may be strengthened to live as Christians if they are or that they may come to know Jesus if they don't. We need to pray for our world and everything that's going on we need to live to him.

Everything we see as we look around should be handed over to God in prayer. I've been reading *The Hiding Place* by Corrie Ten Boom who is a Christian who in World War II rescued many Jewish people in Nazi occupied Netherlands and the thing that struck me most and there's a lot of striking things about this book but it's her reliance on prayer.

Every single thing she does is based on prayer. Every feeling every emotion every action she needs to do she prays about no matter how big or small she relies on prayer for practical emotional and spiritual help from the Lord.

That's the kind of awareness Peter is calling us to. Total reliance on God in prayer as a response to what we see and think as we await Jesus as we suffer as we're persecuted as we're rejected by friends as we're left behind because we don't do the things others think are goods.

[21 : 04] We're to pray to God for strength to carry on. Rule number three above all love one another. This is from verses eight to nine let me read those out above all love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

For some of us this survival tip may be a bit easier if Peter actually said okay now go and build a concrete shelter under your flat with steel coated walls and fill it with you know that kind of usual end of the world stuff.

It'd be way easier if he gave us that practical advice. Some of us struggle with people. Some of us are extremely introverted or we just struggle socially.

Some of us just don't like spending time with others. We love our company more than ourselves.

Peter is telling us that one of the most important things we can do to survive as the people of God is to love one another above all else.

Peter opened this section of his letter back in three verse eight by saying this all of you be like minded be sympathetic love one another be compassionate and humble.

[22 : 16] The way we survive in this world when the end times are coming in the struggle and suffering we face is by loving one another. The church needs to be the place where we feel safe and loved and welcomed when the world around us is getting more and more hostile.

We need to build one another up despite the attempts of the world to bring us down. Loving one another is not an optional extra. This isn't something we can just do when we have time or the energy.

And it is real hard because loving other people opens yourself up. You have to welcome people into yourselves and give them parts of you. It means sharing when we're struggling sharing in our victories as well but despite all the difficulties whether you're an introvert or an extrovert loving people is hard we need to realize that it's incredibly worthwhile.

Helping one another grow up in trust of the Lord building deep relationships it's so hard but so necessary. Peter gives us one example of how we might love one another but there are infinite ways we can love one another.

One of the examples he gives us is to offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Hospitality is key to loving other people well. Now I think when most of us hear the word hospitality we think feeding people having them run in our homes and having dinner.

[23 : 40] And it's worth saying that is an amazing way to show hospitality especially as a church. Opening your home inviting people in and just giving them a simple meal is one of the best things you can do. To spend time to love your church family it's so important and I'd encourage you to do that.

Open your home host people have them feed them chat to them love them well. Wonderful relationships can be built by doing this with a whole host of people.

The more people you invite the more people you get to know. In a large church like St. South it's really difficult to get to know people but investing in a small number and showing hospitality is great.

And hey maybe you're a family and you want to invite students around I'd recommend doing it because they make really great babysitters and it's a really great way for students to love families.

But what I want to say now is that feeding people and hosting in your home is not the only way to hospitality. It's a good one and it's one we do regularly but it's not the only way. Maybe you're unable to do that.

Maybe you just don't want to. Maybe you can't cook. Maybe your flat's too small. Maybe you just can't afford it. That's okay because hospitality is not about food. It's about welcoming. It's about welcoming others into our own lives.

[24 : 51] It's about opening up to the stranger and welcoming them and getting to know them. So one simple way that every single one of us can love each other through hospitality is it tea and coffee time.

It's seeing someone who's new who looks like they don't really know anyone and going over and saying hello asking their name and what they do. Maybe hospitality looks like seeing someone sitting on their own and going over and sitting beside them and not sitting beside your own friends. Maybe hospitality looks like doing to your coffee volunteering in that way to provide opportunity to others. Outside of the evening service hospitality it doesn't need to be something we add into our lives.

Often we're hesitant on this reason because we're thinking my life is so busy as it is I can't add more in to be hospitable. But if hospitality isn't adding more it's welcoming people into what you already do.

Are you someone who loves going on walks climbing Monroe's doing all those things? Hospitality can just look like inviting some people to go with you and chatting away. Do you like board games or video games we'll invite a friend around who might enjoy doing that and get to know them that way.

[25 : 59] If you're just going to the shops why not text someone and say hi I need to go to Tesco do you want to come with? Extending the invite to people who maybe don't feel like they're a part of the family yet doesn't have to be difficult or fancy or new.

You don't have to have a three course dinner every time you host people. You don't have to start a special event to be hospitable. Loving each other comes in every part of our lives. Above all else love one another it covers over a multitude of sins.

It covers the sins of our brothers and sisters when they wrong us. It covers the sins of the world when they turn against us. Rule number three of Peter's survival guide helps us rally together as a church family and support one another in the most difficult times.

When the world turns against us we should still be standing side by side. And importantly Peter adds we're to do this without grumbling. Without grumbling about the people you're loving and without grumbling to God who's asking us to live that way who's telling us to live that way.

The church we are to be joyful people in the face of adversity and loving one another in this way is the way that we can be unique to the world. It brings joy into our lives and if you need a reminder of what joy looks like in the Christian life and you weren't here this morning do go back and listen to that sermon because it's all about where joy comes from in the Christian life.

[27 : 24] We are still exiles and foreigners that's what Peter's told us in this letter. So what we need to do is gather together as God's exiles and support one another through love and hospitality. So let this sermon be an opportunity for you to go out and love one another well.

Finally rule number four of Peter's survival guides serve one another to the glory of God verses 10 and 11. Now rule number four might sound similar to rule number three and in some ways it is because we're serving one another but we're here encouraged to serve one another with whatever gift we've been given so that we glorify God.

That's the key here glorify God in how we serve one another. Every single one of us tonight have been given different gifts and Peter uses two examples he says it may be a gift of speaking which could be something like preaching or even just encouraging people teaching the Bible to kids leading Bible studies doing kids and youth work or it could be gifts of service things like administration or catering or prayer ministry or being on the worship team if you have financial skills if you're good at organizing events or even if you're good at graphic design these are all gifts of serving and there are many many more besides what I've mentioned and all things whatever gifts you've been given what we need to do is recognize they are from God and steward them rightly we need to use them to serve others as we live awaiting the end of all things to help each other get by but it's not just for the other people that we need to do that although that is very important the reason we need to steward our gifts and use them in this way is to glorify God these gifts are all

entirely from him when we serve it is purely because what God has done for us so when we use these gifts we are honoring all people and giving thanks to him and when people see us using our gifts they can give thanks to God for what he's done the kindness he's given us you'll be rightly praised as the God who gives all good things people will see what he's doing and give him praise accordingly we cannot and should not take credit but rather pass it all on to God he continues to work today and is glorified in all he does and we do these things in the strength God provides so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ these are four rules but every single one of them is based on the example of Christ it is because of what happened in chapter 3 verse 18 that Christ died in the body but lived in the spirit the righteous for the unrighteous that we can do these things none of these things will take us to God you can't love the church so well that God will welcome you in rather we have to constantly look to Christ and trust him because it is only through him that these things can happen just like we are to arm ourselves with the attitude of Christ we are to act like Christ we are to live like Christ we suffer because he suffered and we will live because he lived Peter finishes his survival guide with this phrase to him be the glory and the power forever and ever amen and it's the only way to end all our thoughts when we contemplate what is happening in the world when we contemplate how the Christian will be treated but when we see what God has done for us he is worthy of all praise as we await the end of all things brothers and sisters Peter promises us that the world will be surprised by our actions we will suffer and people will abuse us we are not left without hope to just survive we are not left with nothing to do instead we have these rules to follow arm yourself with the attitude of Christ focusing on God's will and avoiding earthly desires be confident be confident that God's judgment is coming that in Christ we will still live in the spirit no matter what happens to us now and let's help one another survive let's love one another let's be alert and pray for one another and let's serve one another to the glory of God and God alone to him be the glory and the power forever and ever amen let me just pray before the band come up father God we thank you that you have sent your son the only righteous person to die for us that we may be brought before you that we may live in the spirits father we thank you for these examples these rules you've given us to follow to try and help one another live in this time of suffering and persecution and oppression father help us live these things out shift our attitude towards Christ's shift our attitude that we may focus on what you've done for us that we may focus on your will above all else and that we be confident that you are in complete control and that your judgment will be righteous and true father help us to pray in all times help us to love one another deeply and help us to glorify you in every single thing we do Lord help us to remember that it is all for your glory and not ours so father to you be the glory and the power forever and ever amen