

In It for the Long Haul, No Turning Back - #8

Series: This World Is Not Our Home

1 Peter 4:7-11

Introduction: Peter, the big fisherman, whom the religious leaders of the day arrested and said he and the other disciples were unlearned men, but they had been with Jesus. He wrote two books and in his first book, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says, "This World is NOT Our Home." We are aliens and strangers; we're in the world and not of it. We just traveling through.

I have a theory about travelers. Help me out with it. When you're packing for a trip where you're not sure what to expect, and you're a little uncertain about what you're going to need, I think there's two kinds of people in the world.

Some of you already know where I'm going with this. Some of you have the viewpoint, '**it's better to have it and not need it than to need it and not have it.**' So, you pack for any and every situation. So, if that's you, just go ahead and look at somebody next to you and go, yeah, I take it all.

Then there's another kind of person in the room. The person who travels light. They can fit all they need in the many pockets of their cargo pants. And their philosophy is '**it's better to need it, not have it, than to haul it and not need it.**' And they're like, I'll figure it out if it turns out I need it.

Now the other part of my theory is that these kinds of people marry each other. Am I right?

But here's the thing, no matter whether you travel light or take it all, there are a few essentials that you must take...your phone, your ID, cash and/or credit cards, medicine, toothbrush and toiletries.

Remember that Peter is talking to God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood **[have the trinity there].**

They're suffering because of their faith in Jesus. And in chapter 4, we are told what essentials we need as we travel through this world as Christ-followers.

Grab your Bible, and turn to First Peter, chapter 4.

The title of my message today is: In It for the Long Haul, No Turning Back.

You remember that old song..."*I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back...no turning back.*"

***"The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. 8Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 9Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. 11If 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 for ever and ever. Amen."* [NIV]**

Let's PRAY

Peter covers almost everything in this brief Epistle: ***Salvation. Sanctification. Service. Submission. Suffering***

He's saying to these persecuted believers, and to us...

"You better understand salvation and know you are saved."

"You better be sanctified and set apart unto the Lord."

"You better know what it is to serve."

"You better submit to those that are over you in the Lord."

"You better get ready because you are going to suffer." There is more about suffering in I Peter than in any other place in the Bible.

Now right in the middle of this, Peter tosses in the Second Coming, when he says, **"The end of all things is near."** That means any time, any day.

Illustration: In 1945, Albert Einstein helped establish the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, who two years later created the Doomsday Clock to represent the time left until a global apocalypse called “midnight”.

When it was created back in 1947 it was SEVEN MINUTES to midnight. So, this is a SLOW clock. In 2019 it was TWO MINUTES to midnight. Now six years later it is EIGHTY-NINE seconds to midnight. And sometimes it even runs backwards.

It reminds me of a parent who tells little Johnny he better obey by the time I count to three. “One, two, 2 and $\frac{1}{4}$. 2 and $\frac{1}{2}$. 2 and $\frac{3}{4}$.” You’re never going to get there.

In 2022 UN. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, “***today humanity is just one misunderstanding, one miscalculation away from nuclear annihilation.***”

That’s how the world thinks the world will end but let me tell you the truth.

A. Jesus’ Coming Is Imminent.

He can come at any moment. He can come at any time. Now his coming may not be immediate but it is always imminent.

B. Jesus’ Coming Is Inevitable.

You cannot stop it. You cannot escape it. In fact, the second coming of Jesus is the only thing that really is inevitable. There is a chance that you and I may not die if Jesus comes back today. The only reason that death is not necessarily inevitable is because the second coming of Jesus is inevitable.

C. Jesus’ Coming Is Irreversible.

When He comes, all opportunity to be saved, all opportunity to serve God, to love others and tell lost loved ones the Good News, will be over.

That is why Peter was correct when he said that the end of all things is near. Just so you know, ever since Jesus ascended to heaven after His death, burial and resurrection, we have been in the Last Days.

MATTHEW 24:42 says, “***Watch, therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.***”

MARK 13:32-37 says, *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is."*

HEBREWS 10:24-25 says, *"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."*

I JOHN 2:18 says, *"Little children, it is the last hour;"*

REVELATION 22:7 says, *"Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."*

Jesus said, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night."

James said, "The coming of the Lord is at hand."

Paul said, "The Lord is at hand."

John said, "Little children, it is the last hour."

And that is what Peter brings up in verse 7... *"The end of all things is at hand."*

All these statements were made in the FIRST century. But here we are living in the TWENTY-FIRST century. Peter is saying that we are living on the edge of eternity. What should we be doing? How should we conduct ourselves?

I see FIVE DIRECTIVES to follow if we're going to make it for the Long Haul.

I. BE ALERT AND SOBER. (Verse 7)

Peter uses two words that are very close in meaning. The first verb is *sophroneo*, which means to be clear-minded.

The other word is *nepho*, which also means to be sober or sober minded, serious. This fits perfectly because in verse three Peter said...

I Peter.4:3 *"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."* [NIV]

In other words, no more ‘Spring Break’ attitude. It’s time to grow up. Some might be tempted to think, “If the end of all things is near, then I might as well eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die.” Wrong, we don’t PREPARE for the end by partying. We prepare by being ALERT and SOBER.

This same word is translated in Mark 5. You remember the Gadarene demoniac? That man had so many demons in him that his name was Legion, and when Jesus cast the demons out of him and they went into the pigs, who went into the sea, and the sea went them, and they all drowned, the townspeople came back and the Bible says they found this man sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And right mind here is the same word translated sober. Peter is saying, "If Jesus is coming, you need to get serious."

ILLUSTRATION: A man by the name of Dick Winters was the commander of Easy Company, the subject of the book by historian Stephen Ambrose entitled, “*Band of Brothers*” and there is a 10-part HBO series of the same name. Dick Winters memoir is entitled “*Beyond Band of Brothers*.”

What an example of an outstanding soldier, leader, and Christian man. Dick Winters led his troops through a D-Day attack on German artillery, an assault of the French town of Carentan, a bayonet charge on a dike in Holland, the cold of the battle of the Bulge, and finally to Hitler’s Eagle’s Nest in the Bavarian Alps.

And he did it all as a 20-something, just recently a college graduate. After their paratrooper training was complete, Easy Company deployed to the quaint English village of Aldbourne for nine months of preparation preceding the invasion of Normandy. On his first Sunday there, Winters attended a church service and then visited a small adjoining cemetery, where he “sat on a bench and took time for personal reflection and simply to enjoy some solitude.”

It was there he met Mr. and Mrs. Barnes, who had already lost a son in the war. They took an immediate liking to Dick. When the Army asked who among the natives of Aldbourne might be willing to billet pairs of its officers, they volunteered their home - if Winters was one of the two.

"A typical evening began with Mrs. Barnes knocking on my door before 9:00 P.M. and saying, 'Lieutenant Winters, would you like to come down and listen to the news and have a spot of tea?' Sitting around the fireplace, we listened to the BBC. Afterward, everybody would gather around the table and Mr. Barnes would read a passage from the Bible, then he would say a prayer, after which Mrs. Barnes would serve tea and biscuits or some fresh bread. Around 10:00 P.M., Mr. Barnes would then announce that it was time for bed."

Very few soldiers attended religious services while overseas, even in the anxious days leading up to the invasion of Normandy. But for Winters, going to church "became the bedrock of my character" and he only missed three services in the nine months he lived in Aldbourne.

At the small church he attended, Mrs. Barnes played the organ and Mr. Barnes served as a lay preacher and gave the Sunday sermon. Winters would shine his boots, polish his buttons, and don his best dress uniform, and then come and sit in the front row of the congregation. It was a routine that calmed and centered him in the midst of the tension and commotion preceding D-Day.

Dick Winters also kept his language clean. The major felt so strongly about profanity, he almost derailed HBO's biopic over the issue. "When Dick initially viewed the transcript for the miniseries Band of Brothers, he was offended that

Damian Lewis, who portrayed him on film, used excessive profanity throughout the series. Dick immediately wrote a letter to Tom Hanks, resigning from the project because 'I don't want these boys and girls thinking it is acceptable using profanity. You know that is not who I am.' Hanks issued a tepid apology, but he claimed it was too late in the production cycle to edit the offensive language. Dick held firm and steadfastly countered each of Hank's points of rebuttal. Winters won again and you won't hear a single word of profanity from Lewis in the series.

Lou Holtz, the Coach of the Fighting Irish at South Bend for several years, said this about commitment. "The kamikaze pilot, who flew fifty missions, was involved, but never committed." Many are called, few committed.

Peter says to be serious. We ought to let the second coming of Jesus affect how we think and affect how we live. We need to get serious about God's work. We need to get serious about God's will.

A. To those of you who do not know Jesus as your savior. You have never committed your life to Jesus Christ. Here's the question: what are you going to do about Jesus?

B. Now let me ask a second question to those of you who are Christians. What are you going to do about Jesus? How serious are you about God's work? How serious are you about doing God's will in your life? How serious are you about letting Jesus be a witness to the world through you and in you?

The second coming of Jesus is serious business. Ten times in the Pastoral Epistles, we are reminded by the apostle Paul "to be serious."

Since the Lord is near, and we're on this journey for the long haul

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II. Be PREPARED WITH PRAYER (Verse 7)

I Peter 4:7 "*The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray.*"

So, we're back to prayer. Prayer just keeps coming up in the Bible. It's always a good time to pray but especially when the end of all things is near.

ILLUSTRATION: Let me tell you the parable of Cowboy Jake. It's a poem???

Jake, the rancher, went one day
To fix a distant fence.
The wind was cold and gusty
And the clouds rolled gray and dense.

As he pounded the last staples in
And gathered tools to go,
The temperature had fallen,
The wind began to blow.

When he finally reached his pickup
He felt a heavy heart.
From the sound of that ignition

He knew it wouldn't start.
So Jake did what most of us
Would do if we'd been there.
He humbly bowed his balding head
And sent aloft a prayer.

As he turned the key for the last time,
He softly cursed his luck
They found him three days later,
Frozen stiff in that old truck.

Now Jake had been around in life
And done his share of roaming
But was shocked when he saw Heaven
It looked just like Wyoming!

Of all the saints in Heaven
His favorite was St. Peter
They sat and talked for days on end
And life could not be sweeter

"I've always heard," Jake said to Pete,
That God will answer prayer,
But the one time I asked for help,
God just plain wasn't there."

Peter listened very patiently
And when old Jake was done
There were smiles of recognition
And he said, "So YOU'RE the one!"

A thousand angels rushed,
To check the status of your file,
But you know, Jake, we hadn't heard
From you in quite a long while

And though all prayers are answered
And God ain't got no quota
He didn't recognize your voice,
And started a truck in Minnesota.

In Luke 18:1 "***One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up.***" What followed was the story of poor widow who got justice from an apathetic judge just by nagging him with her constant appeals.
The application was if we will be consistent in prayer how much more will we get justice from God who DOES care.

Jesus makes this statement. Lk.18:8 “**But when the Son of Man RETURNS, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?**” Jesus abruptly alludes to the end of all things and seems to connect the practice of prayer with the existence of faith. At the end of all things, the evidence of faith is prayer.

No one is going to spend time in prayer unless they believe in God and His Holy Word. The secret to maintaining the balance and calmness that we need is brought about by prayer. Peter says to be calm, use sound judgment and do it in a spirit of prayer.

In fact, there's nothing quite like prayer to sharpen our awareness to keep us alert – to make us more discerning and yet remind us who has the control. Prayer calms your spirit, but it doesn't make you indifferent. On the contrary, it reminds you that God has everything in control.

Remember back in the garden, Peter was one of the disciples who were told by the Lord: "Wait here and pray while I go over there to pray." Peter fell sound asleep. Jesus said: "Couldn't you have waited with me for this hour?"

Prayer was what allowed Jesus to submit to his arrest, and the lack of it is what made Peter resist.

When you pray, get serious about this lost world...serious about living for God... serious about loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

When we are serious in prayer, we are watchful, knowing that the end is near.

Richard Foster said, "Real prayer comes not from gritting our teeth and bearing it, but from *falling in love with Jesus.*"

Since the Lord is near, and we're on this journey for the long haul

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III. HAVE FERVENT LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER. (Verse 8)

Verse 8 says, '*Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*' [NIV]

Now, it's very interesting that Simon Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, would say above all, have love. And He's talking about the last days.

And in the light of the last days, he says have love. Jesus said in, Matthew 24:12
"And because lawlessness is increased most people's love will grow cold."

Jesus is saying lawlessness will bring lovelessness. And you know that's the kind of world we live in today. We live in a lawless, loveless world where people are easily offended, and everybody is suspicious of everyone else. There's going to be a tidal wave of crime.

The Greek literally says before anything else keep fervent in your love. If you can't do anything else right, if you can't keep anything else straight, if you can't make anything else work, ***deeply love one another.***

The word 'love' is the Greek word '**AGAPE**'. Agape is the love of God - it is never the love of mankind. The principle here is that we are to be fervent in our expression of Agape love.

The Bible says that the agape love of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Agape is the gift of God's love, invested into each person who is born into faith through Christ.

God's agape love covered all our sins; therefore, we are to be fervent to take the agape poured into our heart and extend it toward others in the faith. Just as Agape covered our sins; if we are fervent in expressing agape toward each other, their sins will become irrelevant to you.

Why did he say, above all. I'll tell you why. Love is the greatest virtue that you can have. Now abide these three, faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is what. Love. The greatest virtue that you can have is love. But not only is love the greatest virtue, love is the greatest commandment. Somebody came to Jesus and said, what is the great commandment and Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy mind, and with all your strength. this is the first and the great commandment, and the second is like, love others...

I want to say something else, Love is the greatest testimony. John 13:35, ***By this shall all men know that you are my disciples that you have love one for another.***

It is the greatest virtue, it is the greatest commandment, it is the greatest testimony. It is the greatest motivation.

2 Cor. 5:14, ***"For the Love of Christ constrains us."*** Nothing should motivate you like a heart full of love for Jesus and especially His love for you.

Let me tell you something else, love is the greatest confirmation if you're wondering whether you are saved or not. 1 John 3:14, ***We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.***

Love is the greatest virtue, the greatest commandment, the greatest testimony, the greatest motivation, the greatest confirmation.

What kind of love is he talking about.

1. Agape Love is COSTLY

Some translations say love with a fervent love. 'Fervent' is the Greek word *ektenes*, which means to stretch out toward someone or to do something without ceasing.

It is the picture of an athlete who is straining with every ounce of his strength to reach the finish line. You see real love is costly.

You must strain to love. You must work at it. You must give it everything you've got. There is no such thing as cheap love. There is a price to pay when you love.

Paul said in Colossians 1:3, ***"We give thanks to God the father of our Lord Jesus Christ praying always for you since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and in the love which you have for all the saints."***

Fervent love is to extend agape toward someone and refuse to abandon agape love until we are established in each other's lives. It is to extend agape into the life of someone so the faults that would have offended us are covered. Just as your sins were covered by God's love, your fellow Christian's sins and failures are

covered by that same agape love. If Agape is the focus, everything else will fade under its covering.

It's when we don't recognize our own weaknesses that we hold others to a standard we also fall short of. I can see your weaknesses with perfect vision - if that is my focus.

Jesus said, "***Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.***" Luke 23:34 (NW)

- A. Forgive because God's already (forgiven) you.
- B. Forgive because you are going to need (forgiveness) in the future.
- C. Forgive because you are never going to stop hurting until you learn to (forgive)_
Love costs something. To prove to us his love and how deep his love is for us it cost God his only son. True Christian love is a costly love.

B. Agape Love is Covering

Peter here quotes Proverbs 10:12 "***Hatred stirs up strife but love covers all transgressions.***"

Hate makes trouble. Love breaks trouble. Hate starts trouble. Love stops trouble. Would you like to know whether you are a person of love or a person of hate? A person of hate tries to find a fault. A person of love tries to hide a fault.

You see, hatred takes joy in exposing the weaknesses of others. You know, there are some people that just seem to have the ability to find out something bad about somebody. And when they find it, they take great delight in exposing it. That's not love.

Love does not rejoice in iniquity. Love wishes that it never happened. And Love tries to cover it up. That doesn't say that we condone sin, we just cover it. There is a difference.

There's a wonderful illustration of this in genesis chapter 9. Noah had gotten drunk, and he had gotten so inebriated that he had disrobed and was lying totally

naked. There were 3 sons there: Ham, Shem, and Japheth. When Ham saw his father, he came out and told his brothers and made fun of his father.

But the Bible says that his two brothers took a blanket and backed up to their father without looking and covered his shame. That is what Peter is saying here that God's people ought to be doing. It is a covering and concealing love. It is a love where people can come in and not only understand that their faults will not be criticized but that their faults will be concealed.

The person, who believes Jesus is coming, "the end of all things is at hand," will love other Christians. "Love covers a multitude of sins." In fact, the love of Jesus covered all our sins.

I Corinthians 13:8-10... "***Love never fails.***" We fail, but love doesn't. God is love.

Since the Lord is near, and we're on this journey for the long haul ...

IV. BE HOSPITABLE TO ONE ANOTHER.

Verse 9 says, 'Use hospitality one to another without grudging'

You see Christians not only ought to open their hearts to one another they ought to open their homes to one another.

Hospitality is a gift. It means, "lover of strangers." This means you look around after church and make friends. It means having people over at your house that you have never had over before.

When Jesus said, "I was a stranger, and you took me in," that's hospitality.

The hospitable person looks for people before and after church that they don't know. I Timothy 3:2 ... "A bishop (pastor/elder) must be hospitable."

Titus 1:8 ... "A lover of hospitality, a lover of good men." Spiritual leaders must love to meet and greet people they don't know.

And we ought to do it without grumbling. You see a man's home is not his castle if he's a Christian a man's home is God's castle. And God's castle ought to be open to others.

Since the end is near, almost here ...

Since the end is almost here ...

V. MINISTER TO ONE ANOTHER AS YOU ARE GIFTED (Verse 10)

Verse 10 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.*'

All of us are stewards. A steward is one who manages the possessions and the affairs of another. He is the manager. He is an overseer, and his responsibility is to use that which belongs to another in a responsible way. Now we are stewards, Peter says. And we are stewards of two things that God has given to all of us. His Grace and His Gifts

God's grace is like the rainbow, multicolored. God has given all of us a gift. You are gifted. At least one and maybe more but at least one spiritual gift. We have that gift not for our enjoyment but for the Holy Spirit's employment.

Every Christian is gifted. And every gift is to be used to edify the church and glorify God. We are to be stewards of God's grace and His gifts.

Verse 11 ends with a purpose clause that reveals a logical reason why we should stay sober and pray? Why be fervent in love? Why demonstrate hospitality? Why serve one another?

1 Pet 4:11... 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 for ever and ever. Amen." [NIV]

CLOSING:

What is the purpose of end-times prophecy in the Scriptures? Two things:

(1) To let us know that Jesus can come any time.

We are to look for His coming, pray for His coming, prepare for His coming, long for His coming, love and serve, and witness because He is coming.

The purpose of studying and preaching prophecy is not to find out the meaning of 666. It is not to find out who the beast is. It is not to debate the length of the Tribulation. It is not to determine if we are pre-trib, mid-trib, or posttrib. The purpose of prophecy is to declare that Jesus is coming again. Secondly,

(2) To show us how to live until He gets here.

We are told that before Jesus gets back, many will fall away giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. We need to stand in the gap and preach the Word of God like never before. Peter said, live in the light of His coming, the end of all things is at hand.

Jesus said that we are to occupy till He comes. If we really believe that He is coming, we are not going to have our heads in the clouds of prophecy, we are going to have our feet on the sidewalks of soul winning.

Illustration: I heard of a man who was interviewing one of the astronauts who was going to the moon. He said, when you get to the moon, and after you have done what you went to do, how are you going to leave. He said, we'll get in the lunar module, fire the rockets, the engine will lift us from the face of the moon.

And then this reporter said, what if the rocket doesn't ignite. What if the engine doesn't work? How much time will you have. He said, we have 6 hours life support. The reporter said, what will you be doing during those 6 hours. **He said, I'll be working on the rockets and engine.**

We need to be sober. Watch and pray. If Jesus comes today, will you be taken or left. Saved or lost. And those of you who are saved, are you using the gifts that God has given you. Is your heart filled with love? Are you longing for Him to come?