

Part 11: Doomsday Preppers

Tyler Velin | 1 Peter 4:7-11

June 14, 2020

What would you do if you knew you only had a set amount of time left to live?

I'm sure you've all seen similar story lines played out on TV or in movies. For instance it's a common plot to have a business which looks like it's going to be shut down, and in light of the news the employees begin slacking off and playing games because it seems there's no reason to do anything else.

Or there's the doomsday preppers, where in light of the end, they work harder, and more tirelessly to try and survive by their own provision.

Then there's movies like "The Bucket List" which show two men trying to squeeze every drop of adventure of life before it ends.

Our text today begins with a statement by Peter, "the end of all things is at hand." For many of us those eight words can have a polarizing effect on us. For those in here who are not Christians, you might find some religious stereotypes being enforced with such a doomsday emphasis. Some Christians themselves might consider that Peter said this nearly 2,000 years ago, why should we believe him anymore right now? Or we can become overly concerned with reading current events into our biblical interpretation of the end times.

It was once asked to the German Pastor, Martin Luther, what he would do if he knew today was his last day. He said, in a very German way, he would plant a tree and pay his taxes.

What Luther meant when he said that was that, as a believer, he already lived every day in light of the end. Christians live under the banner of eternity, our proximity to it has no effect on the inevitable nature of it. What Christians know explicitly and what our world tries to hide behind the veil of distraction or despair is that the end is near. That end might be our physical death, or it might be the return of Jesus, but each of us will meet at least one of those in this life.

For some of us, we try to hide this reality behind the façade of distraction. This is generally what our modern culture does. We don't want to think about our death because we have no answers beyond a humanistic worldview to help us grapple with it. For many Christians we functionally live in the same way, we surround ourselves with gizmos, and gadgets, adventures and relationships which help distract us from this immanent reality.

For others, perhaps the more realistic, and yet less fun crowd, those who despair. They recognize that even from a scientific perspective we are a collection of space dust who happen to collide on the right rock in the solar system. There's no point in life, we just live, and then we die. Happiness, satisfaction, morality, those are all imaginary constructs we've made up to help distract us from our inevitable death.

But for the Christian, Peter holds up something better than a life lived out of distraction or despair. He presents a life lived for the glory of Jesus in light of his eternal kingdom.

Peter's main point today is this: A clear picture of Christian living stems from a clear picture of Christian hope. Peter is going to walk us through this in three primary ways. He's going to first speak to the **Conduct of our Minds**, from there he is going to address the **Conduct of our Hearts**, and we do all of this because of the **Culmination of Glory**.

So let me read our text once more for us this morning and then we will dive in: **1 Peter 4:7-11**.

Now remember the context of what preceded this text was the subject of Christian suffering. It's also to be noted that the context which follows is that of Christian suffering. But here in the middle of it, almost like a breath of fresh air, Peter reminds us of how we are to act because of the hope which cannot be touched by human suffering.

The Christian hope is so big that few things in this world are big enough to stop Christians from living in light of it. I heard it said once that maturity is simply having expanded time horizons. My six month old daughter cannot fathom that when she is hungry she cannot eat this instance. My two year old daughter can wait a little bit longer for a snack when she asks for one. My five and seven year old can even understand that they might be able to wait until dinner before their next meal.

Maturity allows us to understand the role time plays on our actions and our contentment. This is what Peter is after. He expects believers to expand the horizons of their time into eternity itself, and live in light of that. This is our first point today, the **Conduct of our Minds**.

Because the end is near Christians are to be self-controlled and sober minded. The two words he uses here are commands and they are synonyms, they are saying the same thing. In fact depending upon your translation it could say be of sound judgement and sober minded, or be alert and sober minded.

But before we dive into those commands we must first understand what he means when he says the end is "at hand." As I mentioned earlier, Peter wrote this book 2,000 years ago. Which might lead us to question how Peter understands the word "at hand."

It might lead us to wonder, "Whose hand?" It's certainly not our hand. Our hands are limited. We often find ourselves distressed when the remote is not at hand. But this end is based on God's hand. Meaning the next event in God's program of redemption is the end.

Growing up, my grandparents had a cabin near Coeur D' Alene, Idaho. I always remember driving over how excited I would get when we got to Kellogg, Idaho, because I knew that once we got to Kellogg, the next event was the Lake.

So it is with the church age that we are in right now. Christ has been resurrected, his Spirit has been poured out on his church, and the next event is his second coming. Jesus himself spoke of it this way: **Matthew 24:14**. Jesus said to the church in Philadelphia in **Revelation 3:11**, "I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown."

It's clear from the New Testament that the end is soon. But no biblical author, nor even Christ himself, tried to set a date for these events. Why?

Because the goal of Jesus and his apostles when they spoke of the end times was not to set dates, but to set our lives. It was not to set a day on a calendar, but to set a course for right action.

You might encounter people who find Christians to be crazy that they find the Bible, God's word to us, to be our supreme authority even though it was written over thousands of years ago. But one thing I love about the Bible is that despite our advancement in years, we have not outgrown the heart conditions we see in scripture. Humanity still wrestles with the same problems. We know that for some of us, our hearts are by nature procrastinators. If God would just give us a date for this thing, we would figure out a way to live for our own glory right until the deadline and then get our lives in order. But that's not how this works.

Remember what we read right before this: **1 Peter 4:4-6**. The end is the time when God judges us according to our actions. We don't know when the Lord is coming back, so we don't get the choice to defer our repentance and obedience to him. One of my favorite quotes comes from a 19th century pastor named J.C. Ryle in a book he wrote to young men. He says, **"Tomorrow is the devil's day, but today is God's. Satan does not care how spiritual your intentions are, or how holy your resolutions, if only they are determined to be done tomorrow. Young men, your time is short. Your days are but a brief shadow, a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes, a story that is soon told."**

Brothers and sisters to be sober minded is to realize that today matters in eternity. Your sin is a problem which if left unaddressed cannot be hidden by any sense of distraction. Paul says in Romans 2: **Romans 2:3-4**. Because the end is at hand, we must learn to live in light of this judgment.

But for the Christian, this doesn't lead to despair. Because we know at the end it is not the sum of our actions which save us, but the sum of our hope in Jesus' actions. And even though our actions and our obedience doesn't save us, or ability to faithfully follow Jesus shows and affirms that our trust is firmly rooted in Jesus.

Remember the wonderful hope of the end which Peter outlined in the opening chapter of his letter: **1 Peter 1:3-9**.

That hope, that prize, that joy, that wonderful outcome is at hand dear Christian. So don't lose sight of it. Don't forget it. Everything distraction promises, Christ provides. Everything despair rightly fears, Christ took on the cross.

So we know live in the shadow of that concrete event, instead of the ever shifting goalposts of culture.

Look at the purpose Peter puts at the end of verse seven: "for the sake of your prayers."

What does he mean when he says that? Well I think it's obvious. If we lack the self-control and sobriety to think clearly on the eternal realities of this life, then why would we talk to God?

If we live for the fame of culture, then wouldn't it be better to spend time chatting up our boss? If we live for sex or romance wouldn't we spend our time flirting or chatting with potential partners?

If then, we live for the reward of God then wouldn't it be natural that we constantly go to him in prayer. Here is a brutal litmus test for our souls. If we find ourselves with a general lack of prayerfulness, it might be God quietly showing you that your hope is misplaced.

In my years as a Christian and in ministry I have found that most people struggle and want to improve in their prayer life. Twice now in this book Peter has shown that a hindered heart in prayer is a litmus test for hindered hearts elsewhere. How might we fix this? We start the process of praying, and laboring for a clear hope in the God who hears our prayers.

In light of a final day which we do not know, we must be prayerfully reliant upon the God we do know.

This is the conduct of the Christian mind.

When my wife was going on a mission trip to Africa she encountered someone who said to her, "Don't have your head so far in the clouds you can't see where you're walking." His point was that you shouldn't be so focused on spiritual things that you miss practical things of this world.

But Peter is going to make the exact opposite point here. It is precisely this preoccupation with the Christian hope that pushes us to live in practical and tangible ways. This is the second point today: **The Conduct of Our Hands. 1 Peter 4:8-10.**

When we begin to number our days it can become and easy, and often too natural, tendency to turn inward on ourselves. But the hope of the gospel turns us outward. Peter shows this in two primary ways: love and hospitality.

Above all, Peter says, *Keep loving one another*. Here specifically he's not talking about love for God, or love for people in general (though he would affirm both of those) he's talking about love for your brothers and sisters in Christ. Specifically for churches who live in tumultuous times Peter knows that love for each other must be essential in the church.

Remember the primacy Peter already gave love earlier in his letter: **1 Peter 1:22**. We are saved so that we might love one another earnestly, from a pure heart.

This assumes that if we are sober-minded on the eternal nature of the Christian life, this would be what we seek to do above all else because we understand that we have been loved by Jesus.

What motivated Jesus to take on flesh, live amongst a group of people who constantly miss his point, be mocked, persecuted, murdered and condemned in the place of sinner? Love.

Look at how Paul put it, and how it is tied to our hearts: **2 Thessalonians 2:16-17**. Jesus loves sinners. To repent and believe in Jesus is to ultimately and finally be converted, but it is first and foremost to be loved.

And because Jesus loved those who were his enemies, we can keep loving those who are our brothers and sisters in the faith, even when we act in boneheaded ways.

That's what Peter is assuming here isn't it. Why must we keep loving one another in the church? Because love covers a multitude of sins.

Later this month we are going to have an open house at our new warehouse. When you walk into it you will notice that it feels very much like a warehouse, probably more so than our current warehouse feels.

But you want to know the primary difference between a building which feels cold and warehouse-y and our current building which feels a bit more hospitable? Paint.

When you go to that building you'll notice the walls and floor are relatively gross, but I can assure you when we moved into this building they were the same. What's the difference? Paint.

Love is the paint that covers the Christian church. We are going to run into gross stains in the life of others, and Peter here says that we must learn to paint over what might be offensive at a surface level with a good portion of lovely paint.

Now Peter isn't saying that if one of the pillars which holds the building up is about to crumble we just slap some paint on it. He isn't saying that leaky roofs are fixed by painting the drip stain on the floor. Those all require to be moved towards in constructive ways, but for things which are less significant (small interpersonal offenses), we can cover them with paint.

Look at how Solomon puts it: **Proverbs 10:12**, consider also **Proverbs 19:11**.

If we as a church are unable to keep loving we will nit-pick and offend each other out of the church. If we are unable to overlook misspoken words, awkward conversations, and slight offenses, we will find ourselves exhausted with the task and weary of the bride which only Jesus himself can fully cleanse.

Peter is assuming that in the spirit of love, there are smaller sins and offenses that we can overlook in our brothers and sisters. Now there is a big difference between overlooking a sin out of love for someone else, and overlooking a sin because of love for your own self.

We can overlook a sin because we love ourselves too much to put ourselves in awkward situations of confronting sin that ought to be confronted. To overlook that isn't to love one another, but to selfishly love yourself.

We can overlook a sin because we want to feel like we can take the morally superior road, and instead we never express the sin but log it away in our score card of morality. That's not loving one another, that's using others to bolster your own self confidence.

But because Jesus loved us fully and effectively and we too are still a work in progress, we can learn to love our brothers and sisters who themselves are still a work in progress.

Peter continues in saying that our love isn't just defined by what we don't do, but also by what we do participate in, namely hospitality. Read with me **1 Peter 4:9-11a**.

Peter's second way that the conduct of our hands is to show up is that believers are to *show hospitality to one another*.

Specifically without grumbling. You see in the early church there were no church buildings. Sometimes churches were able to meet in public spaces, but more times than not local churches met in the houses of local families.

On top of that most churches didn't yet have local pastors. It was for this reason that Paul sent Titus to go and help churches establish their own pastors. Which meant that generally these house churches were cared for by a traveling band of preachers and apostles.

Hospitality was the essence of the church. If people were unable to open up their houses, the church couldn't gather. If people were unable to support the traveling preachers, or their own pastors, there would be no public teaching in the churches.

It is here we see one of the best pictures of a theology of the church. For Peter the life of the local church was not meant to be carried by a few select "professional ministers" instead the ministry of the church was dependent upon the hospitality of the whole body. If the wonderful work of Christ made God's holiness a hospitable place for sinners, then the church should become a hospitable place for the gospel to grow as well.

Here's what I love about Peter's vision of gospel hospitality: even though his culture assumes a primary application for those who have homes, he goes on to show that everyone has been made a steward for hospitality because all of us have received something from God.

It's easy to long for someone else's gift: if I could give that much money I could really serve the church, if my home was better suited for hosting I could better care for people, if I was a better cook, less socially awkward, the list goes on and on. While many of those things could be true, Peter instead shows us that each of us has been given different gifts according to God's varied grace to his church.

Look at how Peter puts this: **1 Peter 4:10**. Here Peter plays a little bit of a word game that is lost on us in English. He says as each has received a gift, in Greek *charisma*, use it as good stewards of God's varied grace, in Greek *charitos*.

Each of us has a gift, *charisma*, because God has given all believers grace, *charitos*.

To be a Christian is to be given a gift by God which makes you a blessing to those around you. It is no personality quirk, it is a gift God has given you upon conversion through the Holy Spirit. The sum of what God has given you was meant to be spent in the service of others. Everything that God commands of us, he generously provides for us in the gospel.

Look at how Paul puts this: **1 Corinthians 12:4-7**.

How do you know what these gifts are? Generally I tell people to consider how God has wired you and what God has given you.

If you're someone who is terrified of public speaking and faints every time they are in front of a large group of people, I doubt God gave you the gift of preaching. But if you naturally gravitate towards encouraging people, it could be that God has given you that gift. If you naturally gravitate towards providing for others, God could have given you a gift of generosity.

If God gave you skills of fixing things, use that to serve the church. If God gave you a home, use that to serve the church. If God gave you a massive inheritance, use that to serve the church. College students, in this season of summer, God has perhaps given you the gift of free time, how might you use that to serve your brothers and sisters in your church?

The goal of all the gifts God gives us is to glorify God and love others. Look at how Peter puts it: **1 Peter 4:10-11.**

Whatever you have, whoever you are, if you have been saved by Jesus, because of the hope we have for us in heaven, we labor to glorify God and love others in light of that.

When you are discipling or comforting those who are around you, your words of gospel encouragement are not due to your infinite wisdom, but the power of God's word. When you serve with your home or your wealth or your skill, you don't serve out of your power, but out of the strength that God himself gives.

Which means everything we do as the church ultimately is done to glorify Jesus who created the church. That's the last point today: **The Culmination of Conduct. 1 Peter 4:11.**

It is to Jesus Christ that all glory and dominion belong forever and ever, so the sum of our life lived in light of the end is lived for his glory.

We talk a lot about glorifying God here at Sovereign Hope. It is such a big idea, but if we are not careful it can become an undefined idea. If left undefined it can prove the troupe that if everything glorifies God, nothing glorifies God.

In other words we can easily say that we are living our lives for the glory of King Jesus, but if we can't point to the ways in which that shows up, it might be that we have missed the point. But here Peter gives us some clear and kind bench marks.

First, are you living life in light of the eternal reward which is yours in Jesus Christ? Does the hope of heaven captivate your thoughts and comfort you in your sorrows? When we sing songs about heaven, does it make our hair stand on end at the reality that God didn't build heaven for himself, he built it for us! What joy we have in heaven.

Second, are you loving those around you by being longsuffering and gentle with sinners? Are you able to overlook superficial sins because you know you don't need to validate or vindicate yourself because Jesus already has?

And third, are you using your words as God's words, your gifts as God's gifts, your strengths as God's strengths to make the church a more hospitable place for the gospel to not only be heard, but seen and felt by those who encounter us?

Why do we do all of this? So that we ourselves and those around us might see the glory and goodness of this King Jesus in every corner of our life. One beautiful day everyone will see the glory of Jesus in his second coming. But for now, God has given for the world to see the glory of Jesus in the lives of his church, even when times are hard.

Because Jesus is the forever and eternal ruling king, our greatest joy will be serving him in the "then" of the New Heavens and the New Earth. But God in his mercy has given the church the privilege of working even for his glory in the now of this broken world. So let us be sober minded in our hope and vigilant in our love as Jesus' church.