



**Old Testament: Psalm 15:1-5**

**New Testament: 2 Timothy 3:1-15**

## **A Living Hope – Preparing for Persecution “How Then Should We Live?”**

**1 Peter 4:7-11**

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In the first century A.D., Christians fled the city of Rome to avoid persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah, but they found no place in the Roman Empire that was not hostile to their faith.

- The Apostle Peter wrote to those Christians who fled to Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, assuring them that they had been called to endure such suffering for Christ's sake.
- Peter told them to stand firm in their faith, even while being persecuted, for God would use their response to those who were persecuting them as the evidence of His power to transform a person's world view.
- Knowing God has called the saved to suffer for the sake of His righteousness, and knowing Christians are to endure suffering as a testimony of our faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, and in view of the growing hostility against Christians in America, **“How Then Should We Live?”**

In 1 Peter 4:7-11, the Apostle Peter said, if we are to pursue holiness, even in a society that is hostile towards Christianity, and endure the suffering that command may require of us, we must make sure we have:

## 1. The Right Incentive to Holy Living – 4:7 – *“But the end of all things is at hand!”*

- When Peter said *“the end of all things is at hand,”* he was not referring to the end of time or the end of the world. Peter was referring to the culmination of God’s plan for man’s redemption at the end of this age – i.e., the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
- Peter assured them that the imminent return of Jesus Christ was at hand: it is the next major event on God’s prophetic calendar.
- No man knows when the Lord will return; only God the Father knows. (John 24:36)
- If we knew precisely when the Lord would return, we would experience “procrastination” or “exasperation,” depending upon our readiness.
- Therefore, the Lord wants us to live every day in that expectancy of His imminent return, for that is our incentive to pursue holiness, even in the midst of severe persecution.

There is coming a day when the affairs of this world won’t matter to us anymore – that could be today!

- Therefore, we need to heed the advice of Corrie Ten Boon who was arrested and put into a German prison camp for harboring Jews in her home. **“Hold loosely to the things of this life, so that if God requires them of you, it will be easy to let them go.”**
- God provided the way for Lot and his family to escape the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but when Lot’s wife looked back to that way of life to which she had become attached, God turned her into a pillar of salt.
- Soon we will be asked to “look up” and to “come up”, and we certainly don’t want to be caught “looking down” and “wearing a frown” at all we left behind.

## 2. The Right Instructions for Holy Living – 4: 7-11

**Peter outlined the three main priorities of life:**

### • **Our Relationship to God – Personal Holiness**

- Peter used the word “prayer” to describe that constant communion we are to have with God.
- Without that constant communion with God, we can get so caught up in the issues of the world that we lose our spiritual mindedness, and our moral balance.
- To pursue holiness, we must think about holy things rather than the things of the unholy world.

### • **Our Relationship to Others – Personal Love**

- Peter used the word “charity” to refer to the love we are to have and show to one another.
- After establishing our continual communion with God, our first priority is to express God’s love to our family, our church family, the family of God, and then the world.

### • **Our Relationship to and through the Church – Personal Service or Ministry**

- Peter used the word “gifts” to refer to that unique ability God gives to each person when they are born again. This gift is to be used to edify the Church.
- Salvation is not only what God has done for us through Jesus’ death and resurrection, but what God wants to do in us and through us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Peter said these “gifts” were not to draw attention to the Christian through whom they were used, but to “serve” one another.
- Peter said there were two general categories of gifts:
  - **“Whoever speaks”** – verbal gifts
  - **“Whoever ministers”** – ministry gifts

- **The basic outline for the study of Spiritual Gifts:**

- **Romans 12:6-8** – the Motivational Gifts – the burden God places upon our heart for ministry through the Church.
  - Prophecy, Ministry, Teaching, Exhortation, Giving, Ruling, Faith.
- **Ephesians 4:7-13** – the Ministry Gifts – the God-ordained positions of ministry within the church.
  - Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers.
- **1 Corinthians 12:7-11** – the Manifestation Gifts – the results or effects of the above ministries in and through the Church.
  - Word of Wisdom, Word of Knowledge, Faith, Gifts of Healing, Working of Miracles, Prophecy, Discerning of Spirits, Diverse kinds of Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues.

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***“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”***  
**1 Corinthians 12:11**

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### **3. The Right Intention for Holy Living – 4:11 – *“That in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”***

This is one of the many “doxologies” in Peter’s Epistles. The word “Doxology” means – “praise that glorifies God.”

- Peter closed this “doxology” by saying “Amen”, which means ***“let it be unto me or through me!”*** – ***“Let me live my life for your glory – every day, in every way!”***
- 1 Corinthians 10:31, the Apostle Paul said, ***“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”***
- Peter would add: ***“For that may be the last thing you do in this life before you face the Lord!”***