

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

August 15, 2021

SPEAKER

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SERIES

Between Two Worlds

PART

19

TITLE

Happily Ever After

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 5:8-14



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For those of you who are guests here, welcome. We're glad you're here, and to all of our college students, it's awesome to see you back as well, and so hope you had a great summer, hope you had a great year for some of you. I know it's been an interesting one, but we're glad to see you. If you have, and you had a Bible, if you would turn with me to 1 Peter 5. If you're brand new to this, meaning, brand new to opening a Bible, 1 Peter is near the end.

It's not at the end, but it's certainly on that end, and we're in chapter 5. That's the big number in the book when you find it, and verse 8. We've been walking through the last 19 weeks. We've sort of gone verse by verse through this letter, and today, we get to the end happily ever after, and so let me pray. Father in heaven, we come before You and in need. We're in need of You doing just what You have written in the Bible, and that is that without a outpouring of Your Spirit, that we will not be able to understand spiritual truths, that we will not be able to apply them to our life with any skill, with any credibility or with any endurance, and so we ask that You would open our eyes.

We ask that You would just envelop this place, that You would remove distractions, that You would take away our fears, that You would take away everything that we might be thinking about that is less important than Christ, and that You would help us to see this morning just the blazing picture that Jesus Christ is the God of grace. Grace, we're so thankful for grace, and so would You speak to us through weakness? Would You glorify Jesus, and as we open these words, we pray that You would open our heart. We pray that You would plant these deep within, that You would water seeds that have been planted long ago and You would help us to believe and trust and obey, and so we look to You in faith. We love You, and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

We're at the very end, verse 8, and it's entitled Happily Ever After, which is something that we all search for in life, and if we're really honest, every single one of us knows that searching for our happily ever after, that sort of that place or that state that we can all sort of imagine when we kind of get to that place where we're happy for good, when we know joy and peace and contentment, and it's not going to just evaporate in a matter of two or three minutes. It's going to be there for the long haul. We can all affirm and imagine the idea that sometimes happily ever after can feel like searching for that ring that's lost at sea, and no matter how many times we dive down and come up without a ring in our hand, the fact is, is that our hearts simply won't let us stop diving and looking. We know it's there. In fact, you look at every single expression that flows from humanity, it all bears witness.

Everything that we would produce with a life bears witness to this hope that we have, that one day, that we're going to know happiness forever. You think about the songs, even the songs that we sing this morning, they imagine a day, a day when all sin is going to be removed, when happiness is installed in our heart, and it's installed forever. We think about the things that we do. We think about goals and resolutions. We think about our motions and our movements. All of them are reaching for this happiness.

Every time you open up the fridge and you open them, you're going to, "What do I want right now for a snack? What's the basis?" Typically, it may be, well, it may be healthy, but really, "So what's going to make me temporarily happy?" Happiness is something we drive towards. In fact, even when we, as human beings, we create things like countries, and then we write declarations of independence, it's interesting, in our country, we found it absolutely necessary to declare a right to pursue this happiness, to be happy forever.

Then, you look at our fairy tales. It's amazing how our fairy tales, which are written from our own pens that are strapped to our own hearts, they always find happily ever after. That happily ever after is written on our heart, and the reason it's written on our heart is because it's written in our Bible. If you have a Bible in your hand, it talks repeatedly throughout the whole thing, happily ever after. It may not use those exact same words.

Peter's not going to use those exact same words, and yet, that is precisely what we find, that heaven, this state of happily ever after is the certain future of every single follower of Jesus Christ. You will know it if you know Christ, and so here, at the end of his letter, sandwiched between a very sobering reminder of the danger of spiritual peril and of the evils that surround us, and in between that piece of bread and the provisions that God has given to help us endure, it's interesting, Peter points our hope to heaven for the 12th and final time, and this is what he says, starting in verse 8. He says, "Be sober-minded, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world, and after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you."

"To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it. She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. Greet one another with the kiss of love and peace to all of you who are in Christ."

Who are in Christ. If you happen to be somebody who has come today, and you do not know Christ as your Savior and Lord, I want you to know that everything that I just read, and in fact, every single verse in Peter is written directly and specifically to Christians who are being persecuted because of their faith. There's not a verse in 1 Peter that is directed specifically to inviting you and pleading you to believe, and yet, the entire book is an invitation and a plea to all humanity to hold to the hand of the God of grace. If you don't know Christ, you look around the world that every single faith system in the world, it is the opposite of grace. It's a system that says that if you do enough, think enough, come to church enough, read the Bible enough, pray enough, give enough, then maybe God will allow you the joy of His presence, until we get to one, and it's the person of Christ who comes to us and He says He's the God of grace, and from the God of grace comes the grace of God.

The grace of God that says that if we would simply put our faith and trust in His accomplishments, that He came and He lived without any sin, He died on a cross, He was buried in a grave, and then He rose from the dead because He is the King, He's the son of God, that He gives us eternal life. He takes away our sin. We enjoy a relationship with Him, and so if you don't know Christ, what we just read is still informative for you. It's still helpful, and what I hope is that when you hear the commands and instructions that Peter, at the end of his letter, is giving to people who are in Christ, that means they are Christians, that you will come to the place to where these very instructions to Christians maybe even melt some of the ice of unbelief in your own heart, and you would be inclined this morning, even as you listen to Peter call out Christians for how we're living our life, and that you would see that following Christ is not only a trade up because you get the gospel, because you get grace, you get forgiveness, you get God Himself, a relationship with Him, but you also get all of the benefits of being His family member, and that is instructions and warnings and community and life and peace and love, and so I invite you to listen and I invite you to trust. For those of you who know Christ, Peter gives three parting shots to us at the end of his letter, and they're all critically important.

I've already referred to them, so let me state them. Number one, "Be alert to the real danger of the evil one." For the third and obviously final time, we're told to be sober-minded. We were first told in chapter 1 verse 13 to be sober-minded. Chapter 4 verse 7, he says, "The end of all things is at hand, therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded," and now here, in chapter 5 verse 8, he says, "Be sober-minded, be watchful."

The only way for you to understand the need to be watchful is for you to hear and understand the story of the Bible, the narrative of redemption, and it begins in the beginning. God created the heavens and the earth, and He created the world in unimaginable peace. Many of us can imagine peace, but we cannot imagine the kind of peace that's described in the garden and is described in heaven because we have so few categories of experience of what it would actually be like to live in a world with no sin, no guilt, no shame, no embarrassment, no insecurity, no anxiety, no depression, no selfishness, no fights, no funerals, no grocery store temper tantrums, no car seats, no villains, no wars, no walls. Imagine a life, imagine relationships with no walls. After a failed takeover of heaven, the Bible says that Satan was thrust out of heaven to the earth, and there, he found a man and a woman, and he went to them and he tempted them.

In spite of all the provisions that God had given and the vast generosity of God, He says, "All this is for you, except this one, this one instruction, this one prohibition, one thing, one restriction." Satan says, "That one restriction proves that He's not for you." We found His one instruction to be too overbearing, and so the Bible says that humanity sinned against God, and all the sudden, happiness came crashing down and walls began building up. Let me tell you something, Satan loves walls. He's a wall-builder, and we think of walls and we think brick and mortar, but if you've ever had a friend and you've ever had a friend where there's a broken relationship with that friend, you know the concept of a different kind of wall, that's full of animosity and fear or anger or jealousy or bitterness or resentment or rage, to where there is something you cannot see with your eyes, and yet you feel it.

In fact, some of you, you're sitting next to someone right now, and there's a wall, and you know it. You both know it. Satan loves to build walls. He loves to build walls between husbands and wives. He loves to build walls between parents and children.

He loves to build walls between people with this skin color and that skin color, and this ethnicity and that ethnicity, and this level of poverty and this level of riches. He loves to build walls. God loves to tear his walls down, and so God sent His Son, Ephesians 2, to break down the walls between God and man and between man and man. 1 John 3:8 says that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, and if you've ever built anything in your life, and in midstream of building it, somebody came and intentionally broke it, well, then you can understand just how angry Satan is, that Jesus would come and He would take everything that he had constructed and building this world in such brokenness, and Jesus busted it all up, and he's not so happy about it. The Bible says that he hates Jesus, and the Bible says that he hates people who love Jesus, so if you're a Christian, you have a target on your back.

You are known by the enemy. You wear a different jersey than you once wore, and Peter wants us not just to accept, but even acknowledge the kind of opponent that we have. I recognize that we live in the West, and in the West, our cultural insistence on everything has a natural cause, leaves us to think that Satan is some form of mythology, but listen to me. If we don't acknowledge the risk of Satan himself, we won't account for him and our days, and so Peter says, and this is important you understand this, these are persecuted Christians. It's very easy to say, "They are my enemy. They're the ones who are trying to imprison me, hunt me down and kill me, and to think they're the primary problem in my life," and the apostle Paul says, "Don't you ever forget that our primary war is not with flesh and blood, through the spiritual forces in the heavenly places," and Peter wants us to understand the enemy, and so he gives us four descriptions of him in one verse.

The first thing he tells us is he's our adversary. The word adversary means opponent. In legal language, it's the plaintiff. If you're a defendant, you come to court, and there is a prosecuting attorney, and he is making accusations against you, that is Satan. Jesus says the Holy Spirit is our advocate, our defense attorney, so He stands in front of us, shielding us from these accusations, but let it be known, is that you have somebody that, Revelation 12, if you are a part of the brothers and sisters in Christ, you have somebody who loves to accuse you to others.

He's your adversary. He's real, and he's there. Not only is he an adversary, he's also ... When it says the devil, what I want to show you right now is what that means. We think devil and we think red costume, Halloween, pitchfork, little horns.

The word devil is the noun form of a verb that means to slander. The word devil means liar. We don't think about it like that. If somebody comes to your house though, this Halloween, three kids, they come up and you go, "Oh, what do we got here? Oh, we got a princess, and we have an astronaut, and we have a liar."

Well, I would encourage you not to say that, but in your mind, that's what you need to think. You see the word devil, and you need to think someone is lying. That's what Jesus said. In John 8:44, Jesus said, "Look, when he lies, he speaks out of his own character." It's like drawing from a well, that's the water that's within him, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Satan does not sink teeth into your flesh, he sinks lies into your heart, and so then, the third thing that he tells us about our enemy is that he prowls, and he prowls seeking someone to devour. He wants to kill you. Jesus said this. He goes, "Look, let me just tell you about this person. He wants to steal from you, kill you and destroy you."

That's just what Jesus said. Years ago, like 25 maybe. I mean, how old ... A long time ago, I had the opportunity, and for those of you who are college kids, I want to encourage you to consider a program with the IMB, where they take you for two years, you have an opportunity to go ... Sometimes less than. For me, it was six months, have an opportunity to invest some of your critical, energetic years of your life around the world, seeing what God is doing and being used in remarkable ways.

I went to Zimbabwe, and when I went to Zimbabwe, I had opportunities all over the whole country, but one day, we were up in the North. Up in the North, there's the largest game preserve in the whole world, and near this, there was this guy's house, who was this really wealthy person, but he had four pet lions. First time I met him, walk out, he's got one arm, because he got too close. I'm not kidding. You're like, "He's joking."

I'm really not. I'm not joking, and it was interesting that, so we get there at night, so we know they're out there because we've been told, "Hey, he's got lions out there," and they're all caged and everything, but then all night long, you can kind of hear them, that low growl, and you're like, "That's impressive." You could just hear all night long. In the morning, wake up and I go out there, and there's these two huge cages. I don't mean like cage like huge.

I'm talking about like each of these two sections of seats in the middle, right? 15 feet high, two lions in each one of them, and right down the middle, just like this, there's a pathway. It's about eight feet wide, and I found it so intriguing that morning to walk down the middle, and on each side, two lions are just, they're just walking with me, right? Then, I thought, "Well, this is kind of interesting. I wonder if what happens if I run," and so I ran down the backside, and then I started like faking them out.

I was playing with them, and suddenly, the guy comes out and he goes, "Don't get too comfortable because your intentions are not their intentions," and he had one arm to prove it. When we treat our enemy and when we treat evil like it's a puppy dog that we get to pat on its head, don't get too comfortable with evil because your intentions in it are very different than his intentions towards you. The fourth thing that he tells us about our enemy, and not only that, but he loves to roar. Isn't this interesting? Most of the time, we think of Satan in the Bible, we think of a snake, right, quiet, slithers in, and all of a sudden, we have something that ...

Like you don't hunt by roaring. They prowl quietly, and what he says here is, "He prowls towards you," but another thing he loves to do is to roar, and the idea here is he wants to intimidate. He likes to shake our confidence. He loves to silence our confession. He loves to tear apart our faith, and so let me give you two things that the Bible tells us, one from the apostle Paul and one from Peter right here in verse 9, of what we're supposed to do to respond to this enemy.

The first thing is this, is, "Let's remain sober-minded to the devil's schemes." The first thing I would encourage you to remember, if you go anywhere else in the world other than the West, what you'll find is an absolute agreement that there is more going on than natural causes. You go all over Africa and Asia, and what you find is the spiritual reality that here in the West, we have [dinned 00:20:00] down by our greed and by our lust to where Satan is more than happy to stay camouflaged for the us to think that he's a myth so that he continue to just wreck the whole world over here, but around the world, you see manifestations of evil in the physical realm all over the place. It's not a game around the world, and so the first thing we have to do is to acknowledge his presence because if we don't acknowledge his presence, we won't account for it, and if we don't account for it, then we won't stand against the schemes of the devil. Now, what are the schemes?

The word schemes is the word methods. He has methods, and it's this, is to identify your weakness, and then exploit it. Let me show you. In James 1:14, he says, "Look, each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire." Now, I love this, and I've already mentioned this a few years ago, but if I had a big piano up here, like a real one with strings, and we took turns and we came up and we simply opened it up and sang into it, it's amazing is that the note, the tone of your voice sends airwaves, and they begin to shake, and the string that aligns with the tone of your voice will begin to shake.

Now, it won't thunder, but it'll just vibrate just a little bit, and if you can understand that, then you can understand the schemes of the enemy. This is what he does. Satan patiently sings, lies over the strings of our own heart to be able to find which ones shake, so he comes to us. They don't all shake the same and they don't all shake at the same time, and so he comes to us and he goes, "Hey, what do you think about this?," and some of us are like, "Who would ever even want that?" He's like, "Okay, that's not yours."

"Let me try another one. What about this?," and all of a sudden, we're like, "Ooh, that looks interesting," and he's like, "Oh, you like that, do you? Let me jot that down. Okay. Let me think," and then he goes, "But I noticed that you have this amazing level of like courage and this optimism that you want to obey the Lord, and so how about we throw in a little ..."

"Nobody will ever know." Now, all of a sudden, there's a temptation, and then there's secrecy. "No one will ever know." You're like, "Ooh, man, that's even more appealing." "Okay, not quite there yet."

“Well, how about we throw in just one last thing, and that one last thing is this, you deserve it. You deserve it. In fact, God, the God that you’re trying to please is the One who let you down. You can punish Him right now by go ahead and just enjoying this.” It’s lie after lie after lie, and so you have to be aware of his schemes, and then the second thing he tells us to do is to build up a resistance with the truth.

Ah, I just love how the Bible is so complete and telling us to flee so many different things, including sin and idolatry and immorality and error, but he never tells us to flee the devil. Instead, what he tells us here in verse 9 is to resist him, and how we resist him is that we remain firm in, it says, your faith. Now, if you look in your Bible, if you have one, if it’s an NIV or several other translations, it’ll say resist him firm in the faith. I actually think the word, the is a better translation, and yet it’s personalized, which is why the one that I use uses your, and you say, “Well, why are you even going there?” This is why.

Some of us, we think that when it comes to spiritual battle, when it comes to fighting temptation, that it’s up to the tenacity and strength of our own faith, that if we can hold fast enough, if we can grip tight enough, then we can have success on this day, and so some of us, there’s this temptation, whether it’s immorality or pornography or whatever, and we think, “If I can just grip hard enough to my tenacity, then maybe I’ll win,” and that’s not what Peter’s saying. What he’s talking about, why the faith is so important is because Jude tells us that there is the faith that’s been passed down from God to humanity, the historical body of Christian truth and doctrine. It’s the Word of God, and once the faith becomes your faith, it’s personalized, suddenly now you have something to fight with. You see, if you go into the battle and the only thing you have is your own strength, you will lose, and so he says, “What you have to do is you have to go in with the Word of God that becomes your faith because you’re believing in the Word of God, but it is the Word of God, is the only thing that can fight a lie.” If he comes with lies, we have to come with truth, and isn’t that what Jesus modeled for us?

In Matthew 4, Satan comes to Him. He tempts Him three times. Each time, He quotes Deuteronomy by saying, “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone. It is written, don’t put the Lord, your God to the test. It is written, worship Him alone.”

“It is written.” Then, it says, “And the devil left.” Do you know what that means? It means our ability to resist will be proportionate to our knowledge of what is written. Think about Jesus modeled for us.

Just imagine if this was true. Just imagine if spiritual victory against evil was contingent upon your ability to be able to draw from the book of Deuteronomy. Some of us are like, “What is Deuteronomy?” It’s a book of the Bible. “Is it in the front or the back?”

It’s near the front. I know I talk to you frequently about reading the Bible on your own, and this is simply one more evidence of why it’s so critically important. Oh, it’s important to come. We’re going to the next point. It’s all about community, but you will not get enough truth in one hour if you don’t get into that truth every

day of your life to fight what's coming, and so read your Bible.

The second thing I want you to see that He tells us as Christians is to be connected to the strong provision of Christian community. God knows endurance is difficult, and so He plants us in the forest of community where our roots can intertwine. If you go out West and you see the big redwoods, what you'll find is these massive trees in width and circumference, but also in height, and you can only imagine by looking at them how deep the root structure of those trees must go, and then you learn they actually have a very shallow root ball, one of the most shallow of all the trees, and yet, God has created them in such a way that they're always found together. It is created, those roots not to go deep, but to go wide, and so what redwoods do, in spite of all of their size is their roots don't go that far down, but they go out and they interlock with other redwoods, and so one's always holding up another. Storms come, and everybody's helping. Everyone else survive.

That's the church. We're all pretty shallow by yourself, but together, together, we can endure, and so what does He say? "Resist," verse 9, "Knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood around the world." One of the ways you resist is don't resist alone. He says, "Don't forget, you're not alone," and then he says, "And I want you to know I'm not alone. I'm not alone."

He starts talking about the people who were with him. He says, "By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you." Now, we don't know exactly what role. This is Silas. If you've ever read Acts 15 and 16, it was Silas who's on a mission trip with Paul, and they get in prison, and they're singing in the prison. That's Silas, same guy.

Now, he's hanging out with Peter. We don't know exactly what role he had, whether he was the scribe, where Peter was talking 1 Peter, and Silas was writing it down, or if he was the messenger who brought it to the people, or maybe he was both. We don't know exactly, but we do know this, Peter wasn't alone. He had somebody helping him, and then he goes on, and notice what he says in verse 13, "And she who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings." Who is she who is at Babylon?

It's a code word. Babylon is Rome. She is the church. This is the church in Rome. He's writing from Rome, and yet, it's illegal to have a church in Rome at this time, which is why all these Christians have left, but there's a few left.

There's still some left in Rome, and so what he does is not to draw the attention of anyone that might catch the letter to recognize that there's still a church in Rome as he uses a code word when he says, "She who is in Babylon. Your brothers and sisters, who you left because you had to leave, they send you greetings. I'm with them. They're encouraging me, I'm encouraging them," and not only that, but there's another guy. His name is Mark.

“Mark, my son,” I just love this, and so does Mark. He greets you also. In Acts 13, Mark joins Paul on the first mission trip. Things get tough, and Mark runs home. Two chapters later, we get to Acts 15.

Paul’s going to ... He’s packing for his second mission trip. Mark says, “Hey, I think I want to go,” and Paul says, “No trips for quitters.” That’s a paraphrase, but that’s what he said, right? They broke fellowship. They’re angry with each other, a wall goes up, other believers enter into this, and so there’s more division that’s going on, but at the end of Paul’s life, He writes one last letter, 2 Timothy, and at the end of it, he says, “Hey, would somebody get Mark and bring him to me because his gifts and skills would be so profitable right now in this prison ministry?”

There’s reconciliation. What happened to Mark. Why did Paul regain trust? What happened to him? Peter happened to him. Peter, who was so familiar with what it was like to fail in public, took Mark under his wing, became a spiritual dad, investing in him, encouraging him, loving him, saying, “It’s going to be okay.”

“It was a bad day, it really was, but it’s not the only day and it’s not your last day.” Because of that relationship between Mark and Peter, we have the gospel of Mark. It should be called ... I say should. It should be called the gospel of Mark.

That’s what God chose, but this is Peter saying, “Sit down for a second. Be my scribe. Let me tell you my account of the life of Christ.” Just imagine the treasure we would miss if Peter hadn’t said, “Mark, let me invest in you.” We need one another, and so at the end, verse 14, he says, “Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.”

When he says, “Greet one another with the holy kiss, with the kiss of love,” even today, you go overseas to this part of the world and how you greet one another, you put your shoulders, hands on their shoulders, mutually same time, and you kiss one side, you kiss the other on the cheek. Everyone, not just Christians, everybody. It’s just ... This was simply a culturable norm. This was an expression of affection that people gave to one another, who knew and loved each other, and what he does is he applies it to the church and he says, “Whatever cultural expression is appropriate wherever you happen to live, practice love towards one another and let peace, the peace to all of you who are in Christ.”

He says, “Let there be peace to all of you.” What I hope you can simply see is the importance of being together. We need one another. I know this is a crazy time in the world, and there’s some people who were still at home, compromised for all kinds of realities physically, reduced system to where like being sick is just so much more prone, but let me encourage all of us, it doesn’t matter where we’re at, we need people. Let’s not neglect meeting and encouraging one another.

This is what Hebrews tells us. He says, “Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting meeting together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” In 1729, there was this lady, I say lady, 18-year old, whose mom, dad, brother and fiancé were all imprisoned for their faith in Christ, and then killed. She, Marie Durand, was in prison when she was 18 years old. She was imprisoned in a tower called the Tower of Constance, and she was there because of her faith in Jesus Christ.

16 years later, she was given freedom if she would renounce her faith, and she refused, and so for 38 years, she lived in the Tower of Constance with 30 other women, and her legacy is really just a beautiful story. You should read it sometime. Her legacy was that she became, even though she was one of the youngest in the whole room, the source of encouragement to keep people and to give them hope and to help them not to renounce their faith, even though renouncing their faith would lead to their immediate freedom. You go to that tower today, and you’ll find a stone coping around a hole, and etched into that stone coping is one French word, resist. There was their understanding of how they would do, verse 9, resist him, standing firm in your faith.

We do it together. The last thing, “Be straining towards the coming glory of heaven.” Woven through Peter as a way of life, explaining 12 different times that only makes sense, if you believe in heaven that provides happily ever after, and so you see in verse 10 and 11, he says, “After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To him be dominion forever and ever.” Sometimes we hear this word, calling, and oftentimes we hear it when somebody is like a pastor, “I was called to the ministry.”

“I was called to be a missionary,” but like, I wonder what that is. All of us in this room have actually been called. All of us. Let me tell you what it is, right? It simply means that God speaks to us.

It’s like a call, “Hey, I want to call you. I have a message for you,” so He calls. God calls. That’s where it starts, and then that message that comes to us, it propels a passionate response to do something. When we were in our sin and He called us to Himself, we were motivated to admit our need for Christ, to believe in Him and confess Him as Lord.

When we now open up the Bible and we see instructions in His word, and suddenly, they absolutely come alive in our heart, what happens is that calling from God actually generates a movement in us that we have to act. “I have to call my friend and apologize today because of what I’ve read in the Bible.” It’s a calling, and here, he says that we’ve been called to eternal glory in Christ. We’ve been called to think about hope, and what this does is it generates among those who hear this calling a desire to be fierce in determination to prepare our minds for action, and to be sober-minded, and to set hope fully on the grace that we brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, and so let me encourage you to respond, to respond to this calling with determination. I’ll be totally honest with you, I’m going to miss Peter, 19 weeks.

I just love this book, and I just have grown to love Peter because he has so much sympathy for me. It makes me have so much sympathy for him, and it would be absolutely foolish for us to miss what he's tried to do 12 different times in five chapters, and that is that wherever we're distracted because of pleasure or because of pain on the earth, Peter repeatedly takes our chin and he says, "Look up. Heaven's coming. Happily ever after is coming." It's like, "How do you respond with determination?"

"Have you trusted Christ? Are you meaningfully connected to Christ? Are you meaningfully connected to His people? Are you carrying each other's burdens? Are you preparing your mind with what is written in the Word of God?"

"Does the call to heaven, the call to hope, the call to perpetual happiness, does it motivate anything in your life this afternoon?" Peter says it must. Too much is riding on it. If you knew heaven was going to be the doorway of your afternoon, what would you do before that doorway? Live with vigilance and live together.

I want to ask you to go ahead and do something we don't normally do. You're like, "He's going to pray. He's going to have to stand. We're going to sing." Go ahead and stand up.

I know. You can go ahead and stand. What we're going to do, we're going to sing two songs, and what we want to be able to do is this. We want to carry each other's burdens. I'm going to pray, and after I pray, as we start singing these two songs, there's going to be a bunch of people who come up here in the front who are ready to receive you, and what that simply means is this, is that if you happen to be carrying a burden that's simply too heavy to carry, we simply want to intertwine our prayers with your prayers and to help carry you this afternoon, and so as we sing, you can simply walk out the aisle, you just come straight down, you share your name. You can share, "Hey, this is the thing that's heavy on my heart," and there'll be somebody here who wants to pray with you, so let me pray for us. Father, I pray now as we consider these things, as we consider the reality of heaven that's before us, the provision of community and the reality of evil around us, we want to wrap our arms around one another now, and we need You to wrap Your arms around us.

We need You, so I pray for those who are contemplating Christ, that You would use this time to draw them to trust in Your Son, and for those of us who know Christ, I pray now, Lord, that for those in particular who are heavy laden and burdened, Lord, that You would use this time, that You would give them courage, that You would draw them to come forward and to be able to receive the encouragement from the family of faith, so use this time for Your glory and our good. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.



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