

Unsullied in a world of sin: battling compromise with the world

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[0 : 00] And if you would turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter. If you have one of our visitor's Bibles, I think it's page 1016. Page 1016.

We're coming back this morning to 1 Peter where we left off a little while before Christmas. So just before I read, let's refresh ourselves a little bit as to what this letter is about.

Right, Peter is teaching us what it means to be an Easter people. A people whose pattern is to share in the suffering of Christ because they're being shaped through suffering for glory.

For a glory that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading as he says. That will be revealed on the last day. And the first chapter and a half or so plainly tell us that believers are what Peter calls an elect people.

Whose privilege is to be special to God and share in that glory to come when full salvation is revealed at the coming of Jesus. But until then, he is equally clear that we are an alien people.

[1 : 11] An exiled people whose path is to be strangers on this earth. And yet our calling, says Peter, is to be showing forth the glory of God now. The glory that we will one day share in.

Despite all the persecution, all the hostility that we may face. And Peter's teaching about how we are to do that forms the heart of this letter.

From chapter 2 verse 11 right through to chapter 4 verse 11. The whole section there is bracketed by concern for God's glory to be seen on earth. So in chapter 2 verse 11 you'll see he says we are to live so that people will see our good deeds.

And that some at least will therefore come to glorify God on the great day of his visitation. If you look at chapter 4 verse 11 again, that whole section ends.

Saying that we are to live so that in everything God is glorified through Jesus Christ. Well, how is that going to happen? How will we glorify God in all things?

[2 : 10] The answer, says Peter, is that when people who have experienced authentic salvation, that is Christ's authentic church, when they live in the world demonstrating authentic Christian living.

Living according to their true calling in Jesus. What is that true calling? Well, to this, says Peter, we are called. Look at chapter 2 verse 20.

Verse 24.

Verse 24. He suffered for us that we might be healed, that we might be saved from sin so that we die to sin, so that we are done with sin and live to righteousness.

No longer living for sin, for self, but for the glory of God alone as Jesus did. Now this pattern, says Peter, is to be our pattern. Because, again, chapter 3 verse 18.

[3 : 26] Christ also suffered for our sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God. Being put to death in the flesh, he suffered in this world, but made alive by the Spirit.

He was raised to resurrection life by the Holy Spirit, who has now raised him to the right hand of God, where every power and authority is under him, says chapter 3 verse 22.

And therefore, chapter 4 verse 1, since Christ suffered in the flesh, we are to be armed with the same way of thinking, the same expectation, the same resolve, to walk in his way in this world.

And we've seen already previously, if you remember, that that means willing submission, and winsome service, and even worthy suffering, so that we might be blessed, but so that above all, says Peter, in everything, God may be glorified in Christ Jesus.

So let's read then at chapter 4 verse 1, picking up Peter's teaching about this God-glorifying lifestyle to which we're called.

[4 : 41] Since, therefore, Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking. For whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, is done with sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh, no longer for human passions, but for the will of God.

For the time that has passed suffices for doing what the Gentiles will to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, lawless idolatry.

With respect to this, they're surprised when you don't join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you. But they will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

For this is why the gospel was preached, even to those who are now dead, so that though judged in the flesh, and this is not very happily translated here, so judged in the flesh according to men, they might live by the Spirit according to God.

The end of all things is at hand. Therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep on loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

[6 : 05] Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's very grace. Whoever speaks as one who speaks the oracles of God.

Whoever serves as one who serves by the strength that God supplies, in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Amen. May God bless to us this, his word. Well, if you turn with me to 1 Peter chapter 4, and the passage that we read together.

According to Peter, authentic Christian living in this world means often shining justly for doing good in the midst of a fallen culture that will often pervert God's good pattern.

In the world and in the workplace, as Peter showed us in the second half of chapter 2, and also in the family and marriage and in the Christian fellowship. We saw that in the first half of chapter 3.

[7 : 23] But it also means often suffering unjustly for doing good. Because in our fallen culture, we will find that often God's people are persecuted and opposed.

And we saw in the second half of chapter 3 that we are to be unshrinking, even in a world of slander. When the world scorns or deposes and even interrogates you with hostility about your faith and your hope in Christ, Peter says, don't shrink.

Don't be silenced. Keep speaking. Chapter 3, verse 15. Always be ready to make a defense of your gospel hope. Keep speaking for Jesus.

Don't shrink into silence. It's very easy to do that, isn't it? But we must not. But nor, says Peter, are we to sink.

To sink into sin. Such a great temptation, especially in a hostile culture where we feel alien. It's so easy to succumb to the ways of the world round about us.

[8 : 30] But no, we can't. And that's Peter's message here in chapter 4, verses 1 to 11. Don't sink. Don't slip back under the world's seduction, under its scorn.

Keep shining for Jesus. We're to be a people, he says, unsullied in this world of sin. That's our calling. And that is how we will glorify God in all things in Christ Jesus, in a world that is hostile to him.

Not by escaping from the world, but nor by being engulfed in the world. No, we are to be engaging with the world. With the world and in the world.

Speaking for Jesus and shining for Jesus. Not privatizing our faith, but keeping our faith public and seen. Testimony to Christ our Lord through lips and through lives.

But that is not easy, is it? Speaking up for Jesus in a world that is very hostile. And shining for Jesus is just as hard. It's very hard in a world that is full of the pressures to sin.

[9 : 45] And it's especially hard because our bodies are still full of the passions of sin. At least mine is. In fact, Peter says in chapter 2 verse 11 that we are in a real war.

The passions of the flesh, our sinful natures, are at war against our soul. And that's why in chapter 4 verse 1, he's quite plain that if we are going to be unsullied in a world of sin, that we need to be armed for battle.

Arm yourselves, he says, with the same mind, with the same resolve as Christ himself. Be resolved to suffer. Because let's be clear, turning from sin will involve great struggles.

And perhaps even great suffering. Now that is not what we want to hear this morning, is it? We want a solution. We want some rescue from the struggle and the suffering.

We think that's what would be victory in the Christian life. But Peter says it's not rescue from struggle. Not rescue from suffering.

[10:59] But resolve to struggle and suffer. That is the path to victory in the Christian life. And friends, that is the difference between all authentic Christian life, all authentic Christian faith, and everything that is bogus and false, and just a pagan sham, even though it might be dressed up in the language of Christianity.

As alas, there is so much of in the modern church today. It is a battle, says Peter, and we must be armed for battle. Armed with right thinking, with the mind of Christ that resolved to suffer in the flesh.

Because we too are being shaped through suffering for glory. So let's look at what Peter tells us about how to be unsullied in a world of sin.

How to be armed for this battle, which is on many fronts. And in this section here, he focuses on two things. First, in verses 1 to 6, he focuses on our personal life. The battle against compromise with the world.

The sins of the flesh, if you like. And in the second part, which we'll look at next week, he focuses on our corporate relational life. The battle against conflict in the church. The sins of the fellowship.

[12:20] But today, the focus is on the battle that we all face. The battle against compromise with the world. He's focusing here in verses 1 to 6 on the sins of the flesh.

It's all about the danger of slipping back into sensuality in our personal life. In the midst of a sinful culture. And Peter wants us to be realists, not fantasists.

We are not to underestimate the pressure that we are under. Look at verses 3 and 4, first of all. They show us, don't they, the sheer pressure to compromise and conform.

Pressure is very strong. Inwardly, because of the sinful passions within us. And outwardly, because of society's pressure all around us. Especially when the culture around us normalizes and even celebrates what is wrong and sinful according to God's will.

It's so hard to stick out as different. Every child at school knows that. So hard, isn't it? To be an outsider.

[13:29] Not to be in the in crowd, wherever the in crowd are in your school. Every man in the rugby team or the football team that he plays in knows that. The normal culture of crudity and sexual innuendo and drinking to excess and all the rest of it.

It's very hard to be in that and not join in. But it's just the same in more sophisticated realms and cultured arenas. In the arts, in the professions, in the media and so on.

All their cynicism, all their intellectual snobbery, all their scorn of the Christian faith. It's very, very hard to be a Christian in these places. But even without that, the power of indwelling sin in us is so real.

It's so menacing. All the New Testament writers, by the way, use the same language as Peter here. Peter says, our passions are at war against us. James says exactly the same thing in James chapter 4 verse 1.

Paul in Romans 7 speaks about the wretchedness that he feels at this incessant warfare. Our fallen sinful natures mean that all the desires that come naturally to us, so many of them are skewed and perverted and destructive.

[14:48] We always want to be indulging ourselves. The language here in verse 3 is very stark. Sensuality, passions, drunkenness and so on. And yes, of course, it certainly does include sexual license and all these things.

But in fact, the words are actually quite general. And they include all kinds of unrestrained bodily desires. It's not just about drinking sex. It's about living in a self-indulgent way, both bodily and, notice, also in the mind.

He speaks about lawless idolatry. Paul makes clear, doesn't he, in Romans chapter 1, that that means living for anything that is created, instead of living for God the creator, viewing that as our goal.

But you see, that whole way of life, living for what is created, that has been embraced wholeheartedly by our Western culture. Not only as normal, but as to what we're to aspire for. We even call it the consumer society. Our whole lifestyle, our whole economy. And therefore, terrifyingly, in the end, our national security is not built on production, but on consumption.

[16:04] On living to consume. To feed our present existence. To have more and better things all the time. To have more, to use more, to satisfy more, through spending more.

Generally more of what we don't actually have to spend. To satisfy our present earthly existence. This is the world's view of our age and our culture, isn't it?

That's what Peter says in verse 3. The Gentiles want us to do. How to live. The Gentiles, he means all of those who are not. The Israel of God. God's own household who belong to him through faith in Jesus Christ.

It's the culture of the world all around us. But you see, we who live in that world and breathe its air, we're taught it in our schools and in our colleges, swayed by our politicians, swayed by the media and so on.

Even though we are, because of our calling in Jesus, we are strangers, we're aliens in this culture, we are inevitably affected by it. Don't deceive ourselves to think otherwise. We're creatures of our age.

[17:19] And it's so hard, isn't it, to detach ourselves and see clearly with a different way of thinking. To do as Peter urged right back in chapter 1 and verse 13, to be sober-minded, setting our hope fully not on this world, but on the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

In his eternal kingdom. That's where we belong, not in this present world of sensuality. And it's so hard for us. Perhaps especially hard for us in the West because of the very complex relationship between Christianity and the culture that we live in.

There's a very real sense, isn't there, in which Christianity created our modern Western culture. And certainly it was the Protestant Reformation that laid the foundations of Western culture as we have known it for the last 500 years.

Both in Europe, that's true, and across the Atlantic in America. And yet that very culture now has come to corrupt Christianity. It's become a great threat to Christianity.

I want to spend just a few moments on this because I do think it's so important that as Christians we grapple with this. We understand how our culture has developed and how it's changing so rapidly.

[18:44] I want to quote from a book on the history of Western civilization by Professor Neil Ferguson. Some of you will know of him. He's a professor of history at Harvard and a senior fellow of Jesus College in Oxford.

Actually, he happens to be Glaswegian. He was born and bred here. Now, Neil Ferguson is an atheist. But in charting the rise of Western civilization and its impact on the whole world over these last 500 years or so, he cannot but recognize the pivotal role of Christianity and particularly Protestant Christianity.

He generally agrees with the assessment of Max Weber, the German sociologist. He was famous for coining the phrase that the Protestant work ethic. He agrees with him that the economic dynamism of the Western world was largely due to the consequences of the Protestant Reformation.

Although, I think Neil Ferguson shows a greater insight when he speaks of what he calls the Protestant work ethic. It was the Reformers' great scope and great focus on the Bible that led to such a priority of reading, teaching literacy, of printing.

And through that, all the education, all the enterprise, and of course, at the same time, their focus on personal responsibility. Under God and not profligacy. So from his perspective, at least, as an economic historian, Neil Ferguson says this, perhaps the biggest contribution of religion to the history of Western civilization is this, Protestantism made the West not only work, but also save and read.

[20:23] And he shows the huge beneficial effects that all of this has had on the rise of Western nations over these centuries. And very interestingly, he also cites evidence that throughout the British Empire, it was not so much just where the British went, but it was where the Protestant missionaries went.

But there was vast improvement in literacy and education and so on among the peoples. And, in fact, he also says there is compelling evidence that it was the level of Protestant missionary activities in these countries that has proved to be one of the best predictors of post-independence economic performance and political stability.

Isn't that striking? You won't hear that on the BBC. But wind the clock forward to the Western world after the 1960s and how different things are.

It's hard to tease out, isn't it, why, after the post-war years and especially since the 1960s, Christianity has declined so precipitously in Europe in particular, particularly, I'm talking about in the public place in society.

Well, Ferguson argues that certainly one big influence was the legacy of Sigmund Freud and the whole school of psychoanalysis that he spurned. It's so negative about repressing any desires that come from within us.

[21 : 55] It's so positive and sympathetic with the great erotic life impulse that Freud spoke of. And you see, to Freud, civilization, as it then existed with its Christian moral foundations, with its Christian framework, was fundamentally opposed to man's natural instincts, to his most primal urges, as indeed Christian morality most certainly is.

But Freud's solution was ever to get rid of all that opposition, to let it all hang out. And of course, that's what our culture has been doing ever since.

And so, Neil Ferguson says, for the West's most compelling critics today, not least radical Islamists, the 60s opened the door to the post-Freudian anti-civilization, characterized by a hedonistic celebration of the pleasures of the self, a rejection of theology in favor of pornography, and a renunciation of the Prince of Peace for grotesquely violent films and video games that are best characterized as war-nography.

So, we live in a culture saturated with hedonistic celebrations of the pleasures of the self. Or as Paul says, worshipping the creature, not the created.

Or as Peter says here, idolatry of the body and of the mind, sensuality and indulging passions. That's how the world wants us to live.

[23 : 32] And on this side of the Atlantic, at least in my lifetime, the Christian morality that underpinned our whole culture has virtually been extinguished in less than 50 years.

Neil Ferguson also has some very interesting things to say about Christianity across the Atlantic in America, where there is still much more Christian influence in society, at least influence of the church in society, but that too is changing.

He says that where the church is influential or successful, if you like, I know he's focusing on America, I think this is also true here in Europe, increasingly so, and it's important for us.

Where the church is deemed successful, he says, it's because it has cooperated with the culture and been conformed to it. These churches flourish, he says, because they have developed a kind of consumer Christianity that verges on Walmart worship.

It's not only easy to drive to and entertaining to watch, it also makes relatively few demands on believers. On the contrary, they get to make demands on God so that the prayers consist of an extended series of requests for the deity to solve our personal problems.

[24 : 52] God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost has been displaced by God the Analyst, the Agony Uncle, and the Personal Trainer. Americans, he says, have drifted a very long way from the Protestant work ethic in which deferred gratification was the corollary of capital accumulation.

And he quotes Max Weber, Protestantism, that is, biblical Christianity as we know it, it works with all its force against the uninhibited enjoyment of possessions.

It discourages consumption. And if that restraint on consumption is combined with freedom to live and strive for profit, then the result will inevitably be creation of capital through the ascetic compulsion to save.

But by contrast, says Neil Ferguson, we have just lived through an experiment in capitalism without saving. I'm talking about the global financial crisis which broke on the world a few years ago.

He says it was a crisis made in the Western world as a result of overconsumption and excess financial leverage. In other words, borrowing what we don't have to spend on consuming what we don't need.

[26 : 11] By contrast, says Neil Ferguson, look east and what do you see? I quote, the rise in thrift and industry in Asia has gone hand in hand with one of the most surprising side effects of Westernization, the growth of Christianity, above all in China.

And he has some fascinating things to say about that in China today and I encourage you to read his book just for that chapter alone. But why am I mentioning all of this? Well, because friends, we need to get under the surface of what Peter is saying to us here.

He is not just saying to us Christians should avoid sexual immorality and drunkenness and parties. He's saying something much deeper, much more profound than that.

He's saying to us that we are inevitably creatures of our own time and our culture. And just like fish in the sea that are surrounded by water and used to living in water, they can't see water.

They don't realize they're submerged in water. And we're so submerged, aren't we? A culture of hedonistic celebration of the self, of consumption, so submerged in consumerism that we just assume it's normal.

[27 : 36] And we don't realize sometimes that we're being so greatly conformed by it. In our own personal lives, the way we think about almost everything.

And increasingly in the consumer ethos of the modern church. But if we do realize this and if we do turn our face against this way of living and thinking because we have grasped the biblical gospel truly, that ours is a future hope, a deferred gratification of our deepest desires, we just don't realize how radically different that thinking is and how radically different we will inevitably look to the whole world right about us.

And nor do I think do we realize how hostile the culture will become towards us. Just because our difference, our refusal to bless such a way of life deeply offends and wounds the sensibilities of our compatriots.

and that's verse 4, isn't it? The world is first surprised that anyone should possibly think differently about life than they do and then becomes deeply offended at this outrage and they malign you.

As the NIV puts it, they heap abuse upon you. Well, that was the first century. It was a polytheistic world, a pluralistic world in the Roman Empire and no one would have given tuppence if people worshipped a god called Jesus alongside all their other gods.

[29 : 14] But if, because you worshipped Jesus, you then refrained from all the ancestral traditions, you declined to be involved in all these cultural activities with everybody else that they considered to be normal, then, my goodness, there was a great stink.

And the first Christians were thought arrogant and rude. They were called killjoys and haters of culture, haters of humanity itself, as well as traitors to the whole Roman cultural way of life.

It was the exclusivity of Christianity that was greatly offensive in the first century. And isn't that also the 21st century?

Of course, society will tolerate Christians and the church so long as it continues simply to write letters criticizing the government for its welfare reforms.

The BBC, the liberal left, they'll sing the praises of any bishops and archbishops who do that forever. But if the church or if a Christian prominent in public life will say no, we can't accept the views of naive secularist politicians that all religions are really the same and therefore what we must all do is just keep moderate, not too extreme, and everyone must just privatize their faith and not make it public.

[30 : 42] We wouldn't like that. Or if we say no, we cannot accept that marriage and sexual morality can be manipulated and modified to mean whatever you want it to mean to justify sexual immorality.

No. We don't like that. or if we say no, we must insist on the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus Christ as the alone revelation of God, as the alone redeemer of human beings.

And so we can't do anything other than proclaim that all other gods are no gods and all other gospels are false gospels. Well, friends, then, if that is what we proclaim in public, make no mistake.

People will malign you. They will heap abuse upon you, says Peter. And then you will be even more tempted to conform and to compromise and to slip back into doing what the pagan world wants us to do.

It wants you to join in doing. Join in the flood. Go with the flow. When society normalizes behavior that's wrong, uncritical indulgence, unbridled consumption, worship of the created and not the creator, it's very, very hard not to conform.

[32 : 12] It's very hard not to slip back. When you're a doctor or a nurse, perhaps, and your career progress may depend upon you helping to abort unborn babies in the theater, how hard it is to stand apart and refuse to do that.

How easy it is to rationalize to yourself using all the euphemisms that our culture likes to use. It's about contraception. It's about choice. It's about a woman's right and all of these things.

How easy. Or if you're someone who has or has had struggles of same-sex attraction, how desperately hard it is not just to battle your inner struggles, but not to be seduced by the world's siren voices that are telling you to be yourself, to express yourself, to indulge yourself, and the world's vitriolic scorn, if you dare to say no, I think it's wrong to do that.

I won't embrace that lifestyle. I won't do that. And how tragic it is, indeed, how culpable, terrifyingly culpable, people. And sometimes that seduction and that scorn comes from the church, from those who would dare to speak for Christ and his church.

We're so easily beguiled, aren't we, by a world of self-indulgence, by a world of consumerism. It's consuming itself to death, quite literally, isn't it? Most of our main illnesses now are not due to deprivation, but to do with overconsumption.

[33 : 47] That's the big problem in the world today. How back to front, how upside down we've become in our thinking. But the Bible says that is what happens when you turn the truth of God into a lie, when you worship the created order, not the created.

Everything becomes twisted. Think of marriage. I heard a rare sensible politician say recently that never has marriage been so cheapened in our society, and yet never have weddings been so expensive.

How utterly bizarre that is, but it's true, is it not? And actually it's serious, it's very serious. Because you see, real marriage and the purpose of marriage as part of God's good order of creation, it is increasingly devalued and even despised, and yet the wedding day is becoming increasingly worshipped and idolized.

To the extent that many people get themselves into enormous debt just to pay for it, and often will postpone their marriage for months and maybe even years and years until they can go and have the great big special wedding that they must have to satisfy their own grandiose plans, or to impress or to at least fit in with the expectation of the culture all round about us.

This is madness, but idolatry is madness. It is irrationality personified. It's so easy for us Christians to be caught up in that, isn't it?

[35 : 23] I've known young couples, Christian couples almost make themselves ill, put such huge strain on their relationship, so it's almost broken up, because they're so taken up with the plans for their wedding day.

So listen, those of you who are engaged now, don't be like that. Don't let your life be destroyed, because the Gentiles want you to plunge into the same madness that they're plunging into.

In myriads of ways, the sheer pressure to conform to the world's ways is so, so powerful.

But Peter says the time that is past suffices for doing what the world wants us to do. We are to be done with that. So what's the answer? Well, he says we are to arm ourselves with two things.

Firstly, verses 1 and 2, the saving pattern of Christ. Since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, that is the same intention and resolve to suffer.

[36 : 34] Suffering for the Christian, he says, is to be expected, not avoided. That's the consistent teaching of the Bible. Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted, says Paul to Timothy.

Be armed, therefore, resolve to suffer. For, he says, whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased, is done with sin.

The decisive break with sin, the decisive change of life that comes from Jesus is evidenced by the resolve to suffer for him no matter what.

The resolve to be different no matter how much it costs us in life, no matter how much contempt it brings us in the world. These are very trivial examples.

It's like going on a proper diet to lose weight. In my experience, if you want to do that, you have to resolve to be hungry. There's no half measures, it's all or nothing.

[37 : 33] But when you start feeling that empty feeling in you all the time because it becomes permanent, well, there's a sense of joy, there's a sense of satisfaction because it's the evidence that you're burning calories, you're losing weight, the catabolic state has set in.

If you're not, then it's not happening, you're getting nowhere. And it's a life topic at the moment because the staff are on a competitive weight loss with a weigh-in every Wednesday after the staff meeting, so watch us fade before your eyes.

That's a trivial example, but it is Peter's point, isn't it? the resolve to stand for Christ, whatever the cost, the struggle and the cost that is being born is evidence that someone is on that road to glory

because he's on the road to the cross.

And the resolve to suffer, not sin, it has a great purpose, verse 2, do you see? so that we will indeed no longer live for the will of man, but for the will of God, for his praise and for his glory.

And to live for his glory in this world, we need to be armed with the saving pattern of Christ, the real Christ, resolved to suffer for him so as not to slip back from him.

[38 : 57] And then finally, Peter says in verses 5 and 6, to survive this battle, we also need to be armed with a strengthening perspective of real Christianity, which always has its hopes set, looking forward to the revelation of Jesus, and doesn't judge by present circumstances, by present human perceptions.

So easy for us, isn't it, to allow present realities to fill our horizons, especially when we're under pressure. here. We're so focused on the here and now that we tend to judge everything by what we see, according to human reasoning.

But no, says Peter, you must be armed with the divine revelation about future certainties that tower over present realities. Don't forget God.

That's what the world does, verse 5. But those who judge you now will be judged themselves by God one day. Those who interrogate you now will be interrogated.

They will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead, all people who have ever lived. And you, verse 6, and all indeed who have responded to this gospel during their lifetimes, including those who have already slipped away and died, you will receive the promised glory of your full salvation, the resurrection life by the Spirit of God.

[40 : 21] Death is not the last word. According to man, it is. People die. That's their judgment, according to man. And scornful people were no doubt saying, look, you Christians die just like the rest of us.

Death is the end. So what's the point of all this self-control? What's all the point of this self-denial and waiting for something in the future? Why not live for the present as we do?

Get what you want. Fulfill yourselves. That's the humanist creed, isn't it, in a nutshell? But no, says Peter, according to God, it is not so.

Death is not the end. Hebrews 9 says, it's appointed for man to die, yes, once, but then comes judgment. And on that day, Christ will appear to save all those who have eagerly awaited him.

Eagerly awaiting their bodies being brought back to life forever by the same Holy Spirit, this chapter 3, verse 18 says, brought the Lord Jesus back to life after he had suffered in the flesh.

[41 : 30] This verse is an exact parallel of that. What happened to him is guaranteed for those who love him. What a perspective that is. What a strengthening perspective for every struggling, suffering Christian.

God will do right. Make no mistake. He will judge the persistent scoffer, but he will save the penitent sinner.

And that's a great encouragement to us, and it's also, isn't it, a great warning. Don't sink. Don't slip back under the world's seduction, under the world's scorn.

Yes, the sheer pressure to conform is great, but the saving pattern of Christ will lead us if we will arm ourselves with his resolve to suffer so as to overcome sin.

And the strengthening perspective of real Christianity will encourage us as we set our hope fully on the grace that will be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[42 : 41] So, friends, don't shrink. Let's keep one another shining for Jesus until that day. Amen.

Let's pray together. The Hebrews writer says, Therefore do not throw away your confidence which has great reward, for you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.

For yet a little while in the coming one will come and not delay, but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back my soul has no pleasure in him.

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed. We are those who have faith and preserve our souls.

Lord Jesus Christ, arm us, we pray, today and every day with the same mind that was in Christ Jesus who resolved to walk only one road, the road to the cross, because he knew that was the road for the joy yet set before him and the glory of an eternal prize that can never be lost and will never be defiled or tarnished or fade.

[44 : 11] Keep us with our hand in yours we pray, for we ask it for the glory of Christ. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you and the answer can you be