

The End Is Near

1 Peter 4:7-11

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, November 19, 2017

You can go ahead and turn in your Bibles to the book of 1 Peter. And as you're doing that this morning, we're on the back half of the series called "The Suffering Church" where we're talking about how the church should handle pain and suffering. We've been in this for seven months now., we plan on finishing up next month or by the end of the year, that's the plans anyway. But we're in this series because everyone suffers. We've said that several times so far. As I was coming here to Grace Fellowship, I wanted to start out with something we all could relate to, so I thought this could be the topic, right? Everyone experiences pain.

And you could look at it like this, science tells us that it takes 22 muscles to smile and 37 to frown, you may have heard that before? And so the argument goes, "Just smile 'cause it's easier." Would anybody agree with that? Based on the sunny fall we're having here in British Columbia, frowning comes way more naturally to us. I've got two little boys and I would tell you, they were not born with a smile and chances are if the Lord ever takes them home, they'll probably not go out with a smile. We come in with a frown, we go out with a frown because life is hard. But the good news is Jesus has come to change all that, amen? The good news is Jesus has come to put a smile on your face and that's what this series is about. It's about learning how to smile when you suffer.

I read this quote to you several months ago but it's worth repeating here. In this book, "A Sweet and Bitter Providence" John Piper says that

Life is not a straight line leading from one blessing to the next and then finally to heaven, life is a winding and troubled road, switchback after switchback. And the point of the Bible is to help us feel that in our bones and not just in our heads. That God is for us in the hard times. He doesn't just show up after the trouble stops and cleans everything up. He's plotting the course and managing everything from the beginning all the way to the end for our good and the glory of Jesus Christ.

So, he's right, isn't he? You guys have been on some of these roads up in the mountains, they don't go straight, they curve and you turn around and life is that way. And the good news is God is with us through all the turns and the twists of life and that leads us to the book of 1 Peter.

1 Peter was written to people that were in trouble. If you've been with us for the last couple of months, you know it's written to people who were on a winding road, switchback after switchback, but God carried them through it all. He didn't just show up at the end and clean things up. And just to show you this, I want to read our passage to you and then talk about it a little bit. It's kind of long but I want you to get the full flow of this. If you look in 1 Peter 3:13, we're gonna read the middle of chapter 4 but Peter writes this, he says,

13 Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. "And do not fear their

intimidation, and do not be troubled,” 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; 16 and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. 17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. 18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; 19 in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, 20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. 21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

1 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. 3 For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. 4 In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you; 5 but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 6 For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God. 7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. 8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint. 10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Thank you for letting me read all of that to you but I read all of that because some say 1 Peter 3:13 is the highlight of this letter. This is what it's all about. It's almost in the middle of the book to give you a highlight key point. But here's what it's about, "Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?" Even if you're suffering, even if you're going through switchback after switchback, even if life is making you frown and raining on you all the time in November. Who is there to harm you? Who is there to cause you pain? That's a rhetorical question and the answer is, "no one," not eternally speaking. That's the flow of the book. In chapter 1, if you remember, Peter says, "You've been called and chosen and protected by the power of God, nobody can harm you because you're under God's protection, that should put a smile on your face. Nobody can get through you, without going through Him, asking His permission. You're under His authority." Chapter 2 says, "You're a royal priesthood in the holy

nation and a people for God's own possession." In other words, you are God's property, you belong to Him and He has put a "do not touch sticker" on you. He has told people you can go this far and no more. And to draw this out he mentions the government and the workplace and the home in chapter 2. And then he gets into chapter 3 and he says, "Who is there to harm you? If you prove zealous for what is good?" "In case you didn't get it before," Peter says, "let me make it clear to you now: nobody can hurt you, not in eternity." They can do things to your body, Jesus said they can't do things to your soul. That's under the protection of God.

And to give you some examples of this he mentions, Jesus and Noah in verses 18-22 and then in chapter 4 he starts off with the word "therefore." That points us back to all he has said so far. In fact, there are five "therefores" in the last two chapters of 1 Peter, because this is how it ends - with the call to action. Peter says, "I've told you all this good stuff, now, therefore here's what you do now. I've given you the doctrine, now it's time to live it out." He says, "I want you to arm yourselves and cease from sin and have good expectations," that's verses 1-6. And then he says something interesting in verse 7 he says, "The end of all things is near."

That's the next application here: that the end of all things is near. And then you see another "therefore" right there. And I know what you're thinking as you read that, first part of this verse, now the sermon is going to get weird. No, nobody's thinking that? It seems like every time you talk about "end times" things take a turn for the abnormal, right? I want to tell you that's not, nothing new in church history. End times has always caused a lot of confusion and heartache in a church. It's not supposed to, that's the sad part about it. If your reading 1 Peter, you understand he puts this in here to give you hope, that's the reason it's here. It's to give you something to look forward to. But if you look at church history, end times is often had the opposite effect on the church.

I'll give you a couple of examples of this. In the second century a man appeared in Asia Minor (the same area where this was written to) named Montanist claiming that the world would end. And he knew when it would end, and he knew where it would end. It would end in his lifetime in a place called Pepuza a small town in Asia Minor, that's kind of convenient for him, right at the street. And to express this Montanist would sing and dance and chant his way into trances. Make a big show of things. And thousands of people followed him to Pepuza. The whole village emptied out, they left their jobs, they left their homes, they left their livelihood only to find out that it was one big lie. It was just a big hoax, Jesus did not return in Asia Minor, it didn't happen in the second century. And as a result of that, thousands of Christians, or professing Christians, left the faith. That was the first end times charlatan in church history, and unfortunately, he wasn't the last. I can give you another one.

Thomas Muntzer. During the Reformation as changes were happening in Europe, during the Protestant Reformation, Thomas Muntzer appeared in Germany saying, "The end was near," conveniently in Germany. Again, it's kind of ironic that it always happens right were these guys are. He appeared right behind Luther or behind Luther's back, to say that "The Reformation was only the beginning, it was only the spark, but the flame would be lit by bloodshed", he said. He said, "The way to bring Jesus back was through violence." He said, "Let not your sword grow cold from blood, strike hard upon the anvil of Nimrod and cast his tower to the ground." And his followers did that, they started the Peasant's Revolt which led to the death of thousands and the

almost total collapse of the German government until it was stopped and Muntzer was beheaded. But that was another end times charlatan in church history.

We could mention more like William Miller, has anybody heard the name William Miller before? The Millerites? He was maybe the most famous charlatan. His teachings led to the creation of the Jehovah's witness. He said, "The world would end on October 22nd, 1843." Which is kind of funny because here we be, right here, right? It didn't end. But with the War of 1812 shortly over in the States and the Civil War about to begin, people thought the world would end in 1843. And so, like they did with Montanist they quit their jobs, they sold their belongings, they moved to a field in Massachusetts, conveniently near where William Miller lived, to await the day. And when it didn't come, Miller said, "No, I was wrong by one year, it will be October 22nd, 1844." And when it didn't happen then, the jig was up and people were crushed. We kind of laugh at this, but it was not funny at that time. One man said that he laid in the field and he cried for two whole days because of this deception. He said he gave up everything for it.

And I don't have to tell you that this kind of madness with end times is going on today. Seems like every couple of years somebody shows up saying "The end is near, the end is near," right? You see it on the internet, you see it in Christian book stores, here's the Blood Moon, here's the Seventh Seal, here is the this or that, here's the Christ, there's the Christ, even though Jesus told us don't talk like that. You know, people, they call it newspaper exegesis. They read the newspaper and they say, "Uh-oh, the US passed universal health care. It's a one world religion, it won't be long now." I remember people talking like that. Or "No they created the Euro dollar - it's the reign of the beast. Be ready, here it comes."

And I mention all of that to point your attention to this passage. That's all not the point of end times. The point of end times is not to make us be guessing all the time, but to encourage us and comfort us. It's to scare unbelievers, to let them remember what's coming. But for believers, it's supposed to be a blessing. That's what Revelation 1:3 means when it says, "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy." Reading and hearing the words of the prophecy is supposed to bless us and encourage us. It's to build us up, not tear us down. You see, it should put a smile on your face. Revelations 16:15 said, "Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake..." In other words, it is good to be ready for the return of Christ. Revelation 22:7 says, "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy..." But you get the idea. You're blessed, blessed, blessed if you study end times and put it into practice. You're blessed if you're ready for the end. 1 Thessalonians 4:18 in a passage on the end Paul writes, "Therefore comfort one another with these words." That's why Peter puts this in here. Peter's not writing this to be controversial. It'd be kind of silly to write a controversial passage in a book on suffering. He's not saying, "Here's the Christ, there's the Christ." He's not trying to crack some code in the Bible, some secret mystery that no one's ever solved before. He's trying to give you hope.

As you know, we've said this before, Peter is the Apostle of hope. Hope is a major theme in his writings, and he's writing this here to give some of that in your lives. To give you hope. He doesn't mention many details here about the end. He kind of says it and just keeps going. Because the point is to encourage us. And that's what I want to talk to you about this morning. So if you're taking notes in 1 Peter 4:7-11, here are some ways to prepare for the end. That's really

the point of this passage. As a way to encourage you, as a way to put a smile on your face. Peter gives you some ways to prepare for the end. Has anybody else looked at the horrible stuff coming on the news and say, "Boy I wish the end was here." Anybody else think like that, pray like that at times? "Jesus come back." Right? "Don't delay." You know, you see the shooting at the church in Texas and then you see, was it a school in California last week? And you want to say, "Maranatha, come Lord Jesus." And Peter says when you see those things and you pray for the end, here are some ways to prepare your heart for that. It helps you get through suffering, it helps you get through these hard times.

And the first one is this: you need to be sober in spirit. That's the first way to prepare for the end. You should be sober in spirit. Like I kind of eluded to, a doctrine of end times should sober us up for a little bit. It should wake us up. I think Jonathan Edwards said, "I don't want to do anything that I would be ashamed to do if it were the last trumpet call of God." That's what end times is supposed to do in our lives. I told you before about the plug in and the extension cord, how your life is like a short little plug in that lasts for 60 or 70 or 80 years and that's it. But eternity is like an extension cord that goes out the door and down the corner and keeps going and going and going and never ends. Peter says, "The end should remind you to think about the extension cord. It should get your mind focused on things that are bigger than this life."

And if you read in verse 7, that's what he means when he says this. He says, "The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer." The phrase, "The end of all things is near," doesn't mean Jesus is coming back now, it means He could come back now. His return is near in that sense. The theological term is "imminent - imminence". The Gospels tell us we don't know exactly when Jesus will return but we know that that's the next phase in salvation history. Jesus has died, He has ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God, and all that is left now is for Him to come back. That's what this means when Peter says, "It's near." It's about to happen in that sense. It could happen tomorrow, it could happen the next day, it could happen 100 years from now.

And so, "Therefore," Peter says. There you see the word "therefore" again. "The end of all things near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober in spirit." The word for "sound judgement" is, *sophroneo*. It comes for two words in Greek, *sophia* which is "wisdom" and *phronema* which means "mind". This word means "to have a wise mind, to have a good head on your shoulders". Some of your translations say, "be self-controlled". That's the idea. Be level headed, we might say. Don't freak out every time you see something bad happening. Don't panic and come unglued and start making end times prophecies. That's not the point. The point is to have a level head, for the purpose of prayer.

He says, you can see it this way: if Christians would stop panicking and start praying, everything would be a little different, wouldn't it? It's the idea, if we would stop worrying and start talking to God, the Lord would intervene. And the end should remind us of that, it should sober us up for the purpose of prayer.

An atheist farmer got into an argument with a Christian farmer about the existence of God. And the atheist said, "Here's what I propose." He said, "Let's both plant our crops this year and I will curse God and you call on His name and come October, we'll see who wins." And so, they did

that, planted their crops, atheist cursed God, Christian prayed to God and the atheist won. When October rolled around, he had a bigger crop, and so he went to the Christian and he said, "What do you say about your God now?" And the Christian said, "I say, my God doesn't settle His accounts in October." You see, that's the sober spirit. That's sound judgment. He didn't get all worked up and say, "Boy, maybe God doesn't exist because I have a smaller crop." He didn't even think that way. He didn't panic and start becoming paranoid. He said, "God, has bigger things in mind than my farm land."

See, prophecy reminds us of that. It reminds when God settles His accounts. It reminds us when He's gonna deal with the earth. He makes us take a step back for a minute and look at the bigger picture. I can't think of anything the church needs a little more today than a sober spirit, would you agree with that? Sometimes Christians need to calm down a little bit or maybe we should get more worked up about other things than the things we normally do. And it seems like every time something bad happens, we flip out and say, "The sky is falling. The sky is falling." As if we thought the world was gonna get better. Or every time there's trouble, we throw our hands up in the air and say, "I give up. I give up," as if the shooting in Texas knocked God off His throne. Let me tell you something friends, it didn't knock God off His throne, He's still up there, He hasn't gone anywhere. No one stole His crown. No one else is calling the shots. And you have to have a sober mind to remember that. You have to be level headed for the purpose of prayer. When you see all these things, all these crazy things happening, you should pray. That's the response to this. You shouldn't say, "The sky is falling." You should say, "Lord, You are sovereign and I trust in You." You don't grieve as those who have no hope. Corrie ten Boom's, who survived the concentration camps in World War II, she said, "Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God." That's the idea here.

And that leads to the next way to prepare for the end. And that is: to love one another. Peter says, "You have sound judgment," and the next, "You need to love one another." It's interesting, as he's writing this in this time. The things he's talking about here are so simple and basic to the Christian faith. He says, "Have a level head." And the next thing he says is, "Love one another." If you're look in verse 8, he says, "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins." Peter starts off with "Above all" or "On top of it all." "First and foremost," he says, "Above anything else, keep fervent in your love."

The word "Fervent" there is, it describes a horse running at full speed. The word was used in Greek to refer to someone stretching and straining with all their might. That's how you're supposed to love each other, he says, with all your might, with everything you have. You hold nothing back, especially when it comes to forgiveness.

That's what the second part of that verse refers to, "Love covers a multitude of sins." That's the way you love one another. You don't hold a grudge, you don't take revenge. When you think of Jesus coming back, the last thing that should be on your mind is vengeance toward another brother in Christ. That's completely backwards, right?

It says in verse 9, this is another example of love, "Be hospitable to one another without complaint." It's another way to love people. In the ancient church, Christians were usually poor, so hospitality was difficult. You were barely getting by yourself, and so the thought of having

someone stay with you and eat your food and breathe your air was kind of hard. And Peter says, "You do it without complaint." I read this and I was thinking of the Italian proverb that says, "Fish and visitors stink after three days." Some of you will get that on your drive home and you'll realize that's pretty funny. But Peter says, "You can't talk like that. You can't think like that. You are to be hospitable without any complaining." But the point is, you love people fervently, that deeply in the NIV, or intensely, in one translation of the Bible. When Jesus returns, you don't want to say, you wish you would've done more for others, amen? When He comes back, you don't want to say, "I wish I would've loved people more." Nobody says, "I wish would've made more money," on their deathbed. Nobody says, "I wish I would've worked harder or had a better golf swing or gone on more business trips." They say, "I wish I would've spent more time with my family. I wish I would've spent more time with my friends. I wish I would've done more for my church."

In his book, "Don't Waste Your Life" John Piper tells a story of an elderly man who came up to his dad after the service and said, "I've wasted it. I've wasted my life." And the dad said, "What do you mean?" and the elderly man said, "I didn't love anybody, I just lived for myself." One of my professors told us in seminary about a guy he met in ministry who had just retired from 30 years on the mission field and that guy said he wasted it. And my professor said, "What are you talking about? How did you waste your life?" And the guy said, "I did it all for myself." You don't want to say that. Peter kind of takes your chin for a minute and points it past the things of this life and he says, "Look, when you're at the wedding supper of the Lamb and you're sitting next to the martyrs and the people in the ancient Church who died for the things of the faith, you don't want to tell them how much money you had in the bank." Who cares, right? You don't want to tell them, "I went to the beach every Christmas, or summer, or whatever it is." You want to tell them what you did for Christ, that's what he's saying here. A famous Greek scholar was once asked if he thought it was strange to serve on a committee to translate the New Testament and a committee to feed the poor and he said, "No, it's not strange, because in both, I'm upholding the New Testament." That's the idea here, if you're gonna live out the Word of God, you have to love people. It's so sad that so many people that are focused on end times can often be such hateful people - any doctrine on the Bible, not just end times, pick any doctrine. They yell at people, they holler at them, they argue all the time, that's not the point of this. The point is to teach you to love. That's the application. If you miss that, you miss everything. If you catch that, you catch everything.

And that leads to another way to prepare for the end. Have a sober mind, be sober in spirit, love one another. Here's a third one: use your gifts. This is how you show sober judgment and love one another is by using your gifts; using the talents the Lord has given you, for the church. Verse 10 goes on and he says "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." As Peter is telling us the basics here, very simple things, it's kind of Christianity 101, he mentions our special gifts, which is one word in Greek, *charisma*, from which we get the word "charismatic", someone who emphasizes the gifts. They refer to a special talent the Lord has given each of us to use in service in the church.

And he mentions some of these gifts by name in verse 11, if you notice, he says, "Whoever speaks, is to do as one who is speaking the utterances of God." That refers to speaking gifts, gifts of teaching and preaching. Then he says, "Whoever serves, is to do so as one who is serving by

the strength which God supplies", that could be a reference to gifts of service, or helps, it could be a reference to all the gifts. In some sense, all the gifts are service gifts. But the point is, this is how you love one another, by using your gifts. This is how you keep a sober spirit.

Each one of us has a ... each believer in Christ has a spiritual gift or a mixture of them, and God gave it to us to use them. You know, if you read through the list, it's interesting if you read through those lists of gifts in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, Peter doesn't write out the list here. But if you read that list, gifts of mercy, faith, wisdom, giving administration, discernment, teaching and preaching, service gifts, all that stuff, they're all to be used for others. There's no such thing as a spiritual gift that was given to you for the benefit of you. That not the point of them. You can't sit in your room all by yourself and use your spiritual gift. That's not the way God intended it to be. Now, you can sit in your room and learn Scripture, and pray and do things like that, good things. But to use the gifts, you've got to be around others.

The reason for this is simple. God has made each of us unique and He has given us a unique mixture of gifts. One author said that that just as each of us has a fingerprint, that is totally different from everyone else's, so each of us has a mixture of gifts that is totally unique. Some of you are good at administration and helps and mercy and they're all mixed in there together in who you are. Some of you are good at serving and wisdom and discernment. Some of you can fix a car. I have never understood how you can do that. I think it was C. J. Mahaney said something like, "Every time I put air in my tire, I'm afraid my tire's gonna blow up in my face. And my friends are gonna come to my funeral and say, 'What in the world?'" - kind of silly. But some of you can do that. You're gifted in serving in ways like that. But on the flip side, you would hate to sit up here and give a sermon. The Lord has wired us all differently. And the point of these gifts is for us to use them.

You could say it this way, Christianity is not a lazy religion. You are saved by grace, but you are saved by grace to work. There are lazy religions, by the way, there's not too many of them, but there are some where you show up one day a week and do a few things, and that's it. Then you go on the rest of your week as if nothing ever happened. You say a few prayers, light a few candles, make a chant or two and then it's over. This is not like that. Peter calls us, if you notice in verse 10, he calls us "good stewards of the manifold grace of God".

The idea of a steward is that you're taking care of something that doesn't belong to you. You're taking care of it until you give it back. God has given you grace, He has given you mercy. He has been kind to you, so that you can use the gifts in this lifetime. I think it was Richard Baxter, the Puritan, who said, "If you find this life easy, you're gonna find it hard to answer for it in the next life." Because you're supposed to be practicing your gifts. Several years ago, a blind man graduated at the top of his class from college. And at the ceremony, he said that half of the credit should go to his friend who had no arms. It's a pretty interesting story, it's a true story, but they made a deal when they first came to campus that the blind man would carry their books, if the armless man would show them around to class. And they did that, and both graduated together. But, I think the church is like that. We're all blind or armless or need help in some way or another. That's why God gave us these gifts, so we could help one another. And that's the point here. This is how we prepare for the end.

And that leads to one more way to prepare for end times. I mentioned being sober minded, loving one another, using your gifts. Here's one more, and it kind of ties all of them together, do it all for the glory of God. And this is how you do all these things. You do it all for the glory of God. God's glory is the motive behind all you do. It's the guiding principle. He says in verse 11, just to read the whole verse there, "Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Verse 11, if you notice, well, you can't really tell in English, but it's one long sentence in the Greek. I didn't count how many words, but it looks like there's 25 words or more. In English, there's two commas, two semicolons, and two periods. It's almost as if Peter started praising God and he couldn't stop. The theological term for this is a doxology. It's a formula of praise. It's like he started thanking God for His love and the gifts and His grace and he just kept going. But the point is, all this comes from God. That's the point. It all flows from Him. It's said that in heaven, nobody glorifies man for anything. All the glory goes to God. It's the same way in the church. It's the same way in the end. When Jesus comes back, no one's gonna give man credit for anything. It's all gonna go to God. "Every knee will bow, every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

This is something that might be helpful to say, if you're trying to figure out whether an end times teacher is true or not, one basic question is, does his teaching glorify God or himself? All those guys I just mentioned to you, all those false teachers, Montanist, Thomas Muntzer, William Miller, they all gave glory to themselves. And in some cases, this can be really extreme. You guys remember the name David Koresh? You might remember that, the whole Waco story from the 1990s. He put a bunch of people in a compound in Waco, Texas. I think the FBI raided the compound, they had a shootout and several died. But, David Koresh was an end times teacher. He said he came to fulfil the Seven Seals of Revelation, among other things. One of his followers, talking about glory, one of his followers said that David Koresh is the Messiah and the first man born into God-consciousness. I want to tell you, when you hear anybody talking like that, you can just write them off as a false teacher. David Koresh said, "If the Bible is true, I am the Christ." Well, the Bible is true and he's not the Christ. But one basic way to tell that is, he was giving all glory to himself. Sign of a true teacher is he gives glory to God, glory to Christ. Another way to say this is, you shouldn't worry about the future, because you know how things are gonna end. God will be glorified, amen?

Peter ties the two thoughts together. The paragraph starts off in verse 7 with, "The end of all things is near," and it finishes with, "To God be the glory." The future should give you hope. It should give you something to look forward to. The book of 1 Kings says that when Solomon built the temple, everything was quiet. You couldn't hear anything in it. The rocks were made somewhere else and then brought to the temple and the temple grounds were quiet. I was reading someone this week who said that it's like that when the Lord builds His church. Sometimes the Lord builds His church in quiet. Sometimes you can't hear what's going on. You see all the craziness of the world around you and you doubt and you fear and you get all worked up, while the whole time, the Lord is working in quiet, silent ways. But the good news is, we know how it's going to end. God will get all the glory.

So let me ask you this morning, do you believe that? Do you believe God will be glorified in the end? Maybe say it this way, does it put a smile on your face? Do you look to the future and smile or do you look to the future and frown? Are you optimistic about it? Are you positive? Are you confident God will do amazing things, wonderful things, things too great to understand? Or do you go around saying, "The sky is falling, the sky is falling." As Peter is writing here, does the future change you? Does it soften your heart? Does it make you love people more and glorify God and use your gifts? If not, you're missing the point of it. If not, you're missing the idea. God gave you stuff about the future to change you and give you hope.

At the time of his death, Johann Sebastian Bach had written more than a thousand songs and was considered by some to be the greatest composer of all time. But interestingly enough, at the top of each song, Bach wrote "Jesu Juva" or "Jesus, help me." And at the end of each song, all thousand songs, he wrote "Soli Deo Gloria" or "To God alone be the glory." I think that's what Peter is saying here. This is how our lives are as Christians. You start off with "Jesus, help me", "Jesu Juva," you end it with, "To God alone be the glory." He is worth it. He is worthy. When the world comes to an end and everything is made right, all the glory will go to God. When Jesus comes back, and He returns to take us home, all the glory will go to Him. When he comes back to deal with all the crazy stuff you see on the news, He will be glorified. And if you're a believer in Christ this morning, you will have a smile in your face, amen? Let's pray and thank Him for that this morning.

Father, we thank you for the future that we have in Christ. We thank you for the hope that we have in Christ. We don't have to fear, we don't have to be afraid because of what You have done, not because of anything that we have done. Lord, we rejoice in that. We thank you for that. I do pray for those who are suffering this morning. This series is all about the topic of suffering and handling pain. I know we have some dear ones here in our church who are going through a tough time. Lord may this passage encourage them to look to the future for their hope. May they see what Christ has done, what Christ will do, and rejoice in that.

Lord, if there's any unbelievers here this morning, I know we've already prayed for this, may we pray for it again and may the end times wake them up and may they think of the future and be rattled a little bit. If they don't know You now, they won't know You then. And if they haven't come to You now, they won't come to You then. And so, I pray, Lord, if there's any unbelievers here who have rejected Christ or who are rejecting Him now, You would soften their hearts, draw them to Yourself, teach them the love of the body, the love of Christ, and save them. Lord, may You be honoured in our church as we move forward together as believers. May You be glorified as we seek to learn Your Word more every week and apply it to our lives. We pray this in Christ's name, amen.