

1Peter 11-05-20a

This is Friday the 20th of May 2011. We continue our study in the book of 1st Peter, resuming in chapter 4, verse 7. We'll take a moment at the outset to focus our concentration, go before the Lord in prayer, and seek the ministry of God's Spirit, both for the one speaking and for the one's hearing, and then we will begin. Shall we pray? Father, it humbles us to see the extent of your grace and your faithfulness and your compassion in caring for us and providing for us, most of all in saving us through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for our salvation. We thank you for our standing in Him, that we have righteousness and we have peace and we have sanctification through Him. We have a blessed present and a wonderful future through Him, and He has made a way for us to approach your throne and to address ourselves to you as our Heavenly Father.

We thank you for those blessings. We thank you for the opportunity to spend time together in fellowship and in the study of your word. We pray that you will bless our fellowship and bless our time of investigation.

May each one of us find in these verses of Scripture the truths that will sustain us and encourage us and motivate us and thoroughly equip us for every good work. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

1st Peter, as you know and as I have often mentioned at the beginning of a class, but it's important to remember, this is a letter to scattered Jewish Christians in the 1st century. This is mid-1st century. This is probably written between 60 and 68 AD.

We know this because Peter's subject matter reflects a knowledge of Paul's epistles. And we saw this in the husband and wife section and some of the other things that he has said. There's clear resonance.

There's a clear familiarity with the things that the Apostle Paul taught. And of course it had to be written before Peter was martyred in 68 AD. So we have a pretty good idea of when it was written.

This is during the time of Nero and this is when the Roman Empire was increasingly disturbed and the presence of Christians was increasingly blamed for a lot of the problems. And these people are not only Jewish, which was already sort of one strike against them, but they're Jewish Christians, which was two strikes. And the third strike is that they had a completely different culture and moral understanding than these countries to which they had been scattered.

Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia and all these other places were very Hellenistic, very Greek, and with the Roman overlay. And it was entirely different. I often think of that when I see people who have come here from different countries and they're still wearing their country's costume or

clothing.

People that are wrapped in these silks and have these exotic footwear. We used to walk our girls in a stroller years ago down in Garland and it was a very multi-ethnic area. And so when we would go and walk around the park, and when I mean multi-ethnic, I mean anybody from all over the world.

You never knew if the guy passing you coming the other way was from Pakistan or the Middle East or India or Russia, but they, especially the older people, you could tell that maybe the young ones had come over and gotten established and then brought the folks over. And many times if you'd see these people in Target or Walmart or whatever, and you know that the airline food hasn't fully even settled yet, and they just look a little bit lost. Everything is different.

Everything is just completely foreign in the absolute sense of the word. Well, a lot of these Jewish families had been scattered in this way and had that experience. And there is a real tension whether or not, to what extent do you try to fit in? A lot of people from other countries have difficulty saying, well, I'm going to take off my silks and my turbans and my keffiyeh and all these other things, and I'm going to wear jeans and open neck shirts, and I'm going to look like a westerner.

If you haven't ever done this, I had only thought about it academically until I was in Lebanon, and we were told you need to blend because you're a sniper target, you're a bomb target. We were checking our car every day with a mirror, and they said you need to try to blend. Well, so there were some clothes.

And so I put on the garb, and there is one surviving picture of me in the garb with a big wad of Lebanese money in one hand and a pistol in the other and sunglasses on. I mean, I look like a terrorist. If they saw it now, I'd probably be in Gitmo or something.

But just to put that stuff on and then to walk out in the street, you feel doubly strange. You don't feel more at home the first few times, I would think. Certainly the first time I did it, I felt even less at home.

Not only am I in a strange country where I don't really speak the language, but I'm wearing clothes that I don't know if the thing is going to fall off or if I'm wearing it right. You just really fish out of water. So I just remind all of us that these people are in this tension between the old and the new, between their Israelite Jewish heritage, their customs, their traditions, their feasts, the sacrifices, all of the special things that made them unique.

And yet they are out here scattered. And this is what Peter is talking about here. And of course, we find this pertinent because we end up being sort of strangers and pilgrims, even though we've been born in our country in most cases and grew up here.

But as believers, there is a tension, especially as our American culture drifts further and further from its roots. We find ourselves more and more as strangers and pilgrims in our own land. And you hesitate to turn on your television for what you're going to see and what you're going to hear.

You hesitate to pick up a magazine in a waiting room. You hesitate to go to the Internet. More and more places, there is a conflict and there is the warfare of who are we supposed to be in Christ and who is the world telling us we should be and who is the world encouraging us and drawing us into becoming.

And to what extent do we simply personally resist and to what extent do we try to say as a community we should stand up and turn this country around. We should gather together. A number of years ago, we had the moral majority and Jerry Falwell organized the resistance and we're going to be a political force.

And there was a great theological debate at the time. Is that proper for Christians to do? And arguments on both sides. People said, well, look, you know, Jesus didn't picket the slave markets.

He didn't go down and protest the Roman rule. He didn't encourage anybody to civil unrest or disobedience or passive resistance or anything. He taught the word of God.

He talked about the kingdom and he didn't seem to get involved. You know, there were slave markets in Jerusalem. There were slave markets in Galilee.

There were Roman occupations. There were injustices happening in the Roman courts every day. There were injustices being done by the Pharisees.

And he denounces them for who they are and what they have turned the worship of God into. But he doesn't get down to cases. He doesn't say, let me tell you what happened in the Sanhedrin the other day.

His resistance is spiritual. It is saying, draw near to God. Prepare yourselves for the kingdom of God.

Prepare yourselves for the king of that kingdom and so on. And so people look at this and they say, well, you know, how far do we take this? What do we do as people who don't belong and who can't endorse and can't go along? Our young people have doubly the struggle. Everybody wants to be accepted and fit in.

And yet you must morally compromise if you're going to fit in to the current culture. You can't not. So this is a very pertinent section of Scripture for us because Peter is talking to people in this situation.

It was 2,000 years ago, but it's pertinent. And as we pick up in 1 Peter 4, verse 7, I want to hasten

to assure you that I did not, with any malice of forethought, on the day before the predicted end of the world, decide that we would start with a passage that says the end of all things is at hand. It is purely coincidence.

I didn't plan it. I don't know how it happened. It just kind of dawned on me.

Actually, this evening when I was thinking, well, you know, I left off at six. We'll start at seven. I thought, oh, well, isn't that coincidental, shall we say? But I'm sorry.

This is where we are. And don't read any more into it than is intended. But this is where we are.

The end of all things is at hand. Now, how? Why is Peter saying this? Well, you remember in the first six verses he said, because Christ has suffered in the flesh and in the flesh means more than just in his body. It means his time in the flesh.

We saw this in the preceding section. There is a contrast between what goes on in the earthly realm and what goes on in the spiritual realm. And we are sojourners here, but our citizenship is in heaven.

That palatuma that Paul talks about, it's in heaven. And so Peter has been making a similar case that Paul makes in other places, that we have to live here, but we have our eyes on the future. We have our eyes on the return of the Lord Jesus.

And so he says here, because Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same attitude, the same mindset that he had, which reminds us of what Paul says, let this mind be in you which also was in Christ Jesus, who emptied himself, took on the form of a servant, came in the likeness of men, being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself, became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross, therefore God hath highly exalted him, and so on. You know those verses. Well, this is the same idea.

Arm yourselves with the same mind. And you remember the beautiful word that Peter uses for arm yourself, that the hoplites, that's a group. You don't have one hoplite.

You have a long row of hoplites, each shield overlapping the other. It's a cooperation. It's a community.

And half of your shield is guarding the man to your left. And you are being guarded by the shield of the man to your right. And you don't advance unless you've got those guys on each side.

And Peter has made a strong point out of fellowship and maintaining community, Christ among you, the hope of glory, not just in you, but in whom in is among you. It's the very same phrase when Jesus said, you know, the kingdom of God is in your midst, in whom in. And there is a strong emphasis.

Peter says, look, you are scattered. You're out here. But one of the things that is going to help sustain you is don't lose your sense of community.

You will be isolated. You will be an island awash in a Gentile sea of dissipation and cultural depravity if you don't seek out and encourage and maintain assembly, fellowship, mutual encouragement and support. You're not alone.

Find people of like mind and make an effort to maintain that, because the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. We are all members of the body. So he says, arm yourself with the same mind.

And what is that mind? And the word is not for, and I encourage you to, if you don't mind marking your Bible, scratch out for and put that. This is what the mind is, that if you're suffering in the flesh, it's worth it because you have ceased from sin. You've paused, you've taken, you've put it away.

So that we no longer live the rest of the time in the flesh for the lust of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles. I did some more work on verse three, by the way.

And before we get to verse seven, I just want to clarify a few things. I came to realize that there's been quite a bit of modification to the majority text, the Byzantine text that the King James is based on at this point in 1 Peter. And if you go back to the sinful text, the Westcott-Hort text, that says we cut out everything that we can't find duplicates for and so on, a lot of this is not in there.

When it talks about our past lifetime, and really, even the best scholars, like, well, I probably wouldn't know who they were if I named them. But just let me assure you that it really is probably a better text to take some of these additions. It's a difficult construction.

And the scribes and the copyists would tend to try to smooth things out. Sometimes somebody studying would think they had it figured out, and they would make a marginal note. They died.

The next person came along and copied their text and incorporated the notes into the text, and it got added. It became amalgamated. So there's an end bios here, or a bios that talks about time of life or lifetime.

But bios is not in the best texts. And it's so assured that that doesn't belong. They don't even mention it in the textual commentary on the Greek New Testament.

They don't even bring it up. It's such a certitude that it doesn't belong. And yet that's what the King James is based on.

But let me give you what I think is a much better translation for this, because it makes a lot more sense. Look at how this reads. We have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the

Gentiles when we walked in lewdness, lust, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.

Now stop and think about this. Remember who the audience is. A lot of these are faithful Jews.

They're converted Jews. They're Christian Jews. The reason they're scattered is because of their faith.

Why would Peter be saying, well, we spent enough time in debauchery and drunken parties and lewdness, and these people are saying, who are you talking to? Even when I was a Jew, I was a legalistic Jew. I was trying to achieve righteousness by my own works, and then I found Christ and found faith, and praise God, I've claimed His righteousness by faith. But who are you? I find this rather insulting.

I don't think I'm even going to hear the rest of the letter. Well, it just does not follow. And when I got to looking at the Greek, I thought, you know what, that isn't what he said, especially when you get back to a better text.

And what he's saying here is, let me find it. One thing about this text is the verse numbers. There it is.

Arcetos. Sufficient for, I'm going to give you a really woodenly literal translation, starting in verse 3. Sufficient for the having gone a long time, the purpose of the Gentiles. What he's saying is, we have spent sufficient time going along with.

It doesn't mean doing or accomplishing. It means going along with. And you can see, because it's caught Erichomai to go according to, and they say, well, this is walking or accomplishing, and it does mean that in some context.

But in this context, it means we've spent enough time trying to go along to get along. We haven't. These people are doing these things, and we're out there, and we can't change them.

We can't turn their culture around. There's too few of us and too many of them, and we've had to put up with it. We've had to go along with it.

Our neighbors are carousing and debauching, and the next day, you know, we smile when we see them at the market. We're not throwing a big fit. We're not trying to, you know, make martyrs of ourselves here.

We can't change it, but we just have to kind of smile and go along. And we've done that for long enough, and there are two different words that talk about going along. The first one is par-erichomai.

There has been sufficient time going along, par-erichomai, going beside, para, alongside,

erichomai, to go. We've traveled beside this long, for a good long time. We've done that enough.

And then it says, in doing the will of the Gentiles, and when we walked in these things. But it doesn't mean to walk in. It means to have done what the Gentiles wanted.

The Gentiles don't want to hear that their actions are evil. They don't want to hear that somebody thinks and looks askance at their culture and their behavior. And he says, we've spent enough time sort of being intimidated by this environment, and we had a negative approach.

We're not going to go along with that, but we didn't really have a positive alternative. We're refraining. We're withdrawing and kind of closing the doors and windows and surviving in this culture.

And Peter says, we've done that long enough. And you think, ah, well, is he going to have a call to protest, to arms, to action, social justice? What's he going to say? But it's really interesting what he says after this. But all of these words say, there has been sufficient time.

You have had to abide this and abide with it and in some ways facilitate it. These Jewish families, Jewish businessmen, set up shop. What do you do if you're running a meat market and you know that the people are buying this stuff to go have a big debauchery party? You know that's what they're going to do.

And in some way, you're not selling them the alcohol necessarily, but maybe you are because in the ancient world, there wasn't anything wrong with alcohol, but you knew that when you sell it, it's going to be abused. You know when you are facilitating, you are giving them the supplies to have a debauch, and you're going along and you're just smiling and saying, well, you know, that's great. Have a good time or just saying nothing.

He says, you've got a better alternative than just walking along beside and putting up with this. And of course, I'm thinking, wow, this is a great passage because what are we supposed to do? Should I join the ones that are picketing the abortion clinic? Should I go down here and try to shut down some house of ill repute or protest a bad movie or boycott Walmart because they're giving special benefits to homosexual employees? To what extent should we take up some sort of resistance in the culture? Because there is an argument that seems persuasive that evil prevails when good people do nothing. So how much should we do? Should we just be heavenly minded and wait for the kingdom or should we resist in some form? Well, this is what he's talking about.

That's why it's such an interesting passage. So he says, there's been sufficient time to have done what the Gentiles wanted. Maybe all the Gentiles wanted was just leave me alone while I continue my life of evil or just sell me the supplies I need or just be quiet and don't report me to the authorities when you hear screams and whatnot, when there's abuses going on.

You just be quiet and we'll leave you alone. We've done that long enough. And interestingly, there

is a contrast here.

Look up in verse 2. The one who's got that mind that I'm going to do whatever it takes because I am through with sin. I'm through with it. I'm tired of putting up with it.

I'm tired of cooperating with it. I'm tired of turning a blind eye to it. I certainly don't want to be committing it myself.

I'm through with it. This is the person suffering in the flesh. If suffering is what it takes, fine, because I am through with sin.

So that, with a view toward no longer living the rest of his time. See the contrast? There's been enough time doing this other. We're not going to spend the rest of our time for the lust of the flesh of men, but for the will of God.

And the word for will here is thalema, the thalema of God. This is God's sovereign, divine will and purpose. This is what God reflects in Scripture.

If we're going to cease from sin, remember metanoia, change of mind, away from dead works and faith toward God. You turn away from one thing and you turn toward something else. It isn't enough to sit there and say, I'm really hungry, but I'm not going to eat.

I'm on a diet. I want to lose weight. Wonderful piece of cake in the refrigerator, but I'm not going to eat it.

I'm not going to eat it. You can't just sit there resisting and saying no, no, no, no, no. Well, you can, but it's miserable.

What's better is to turn from a thing and toward something else. Put your energy in a positive direction. The Bible is replete with exhortations to do this.

Change of mind away from dead works and a change of mind toward faith in God. Swap it. Redirect it.

Turn the negative into a positive. Same thing here. There has been enough time going along with this stuff with the Gentiles and trying to conform and trying to dodge the landmines of their purposes.

The man who's got this mindset, look, sin and me parted ways. We'll be spending the rest of his time for the will of God. There's been enough time.

There's been sufficient time going along with, walking along beside, and in some ways facilitating the purpose of the Gentiles. And you think, well, is it the lemma here as well? It's bulimai. Our word volition comes from bulimai.

The B becomes V, et cetera. The decisions, the policies, the premeditated actions of the Gentiles, they've chosen this path. They've decided this is how they're going to live.

And we've spent enough time trying to tippy-toe through their stuff. And it says when we walked in, but it says when we went along with. They didn't walk in it.

The Greek preposition in means in, by, or with. It can be sort of dative, locative, or instrumental. And locative means beside, with.

And it goes back to the para in the earlier word. So it doesn't mean that these people to whom Peter is writing were drunks and revelers and so on. But they, in some sense, have had to abide it, facilitate it, avoid resisting it, or whatever.

In regard to these, and this makes sense of verse 4. Now look at verse 4. In regard to these, they think it's strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation. These people never have run in the same flood of dissipation with them. And the Gentiles always thought it was strange.

They were pulling back. They were not joining in. But they were still having to abide it.

And Peter says, look, you can spend all your time fretting and stewing about the evil of your culture and about what these neighbors are doing, and you're preoccupied with the boulamai, with the volative actions of your contemporaries, your society, your culture. But we spend enough time worrying about that, walking along beside it, and of course, walking along beside it, you're looking at it, you're aware of it, you're thinking about it, you're trying to decide what to do about it. And he says, look, these people are going to give an account, whether they are living, whether they are dead.

They will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. This is why people have always heard the message, people that are living and people that are dead. The gospel is preached to them that are dead so that they will be judged.

They might be judged according to men in the flesh, and the judgment of men is very hit and miss. They're getting away with all kinds of things, and there's a great sense of outrage and injustice and moral indignation that this stuff is going on, and there's not anything you can do about it. You just have to walk along beside it.

You have to put up with it. In some cases, you kind of feel like you're a part of it because you're not somehow resisting it and stopping it. Peter says, look, you leave them to the judge of the quick and the dead.

They're going to stand before him and give an account. But now, verse 7, here's where we are tonight. The end, the telos of all things is at hand.

There's been some fresh scientific stuff done, by the way. They're still trying to figure out how to make people live forever. They're still looking for the fountain of youth.

Some people went and saw a movie about the fountain of youth last night. Science is looking for the fountain of youth. You remember me telling you in the past, years ago, I told you about DNA and how the ends of those molecules, those spiral molecules are bound.

It's just like a shoelace. It's like a twisty shoelace. And at the end are these, you know, the little things on the end of your shoelace.

I was going to remember. I actually sat down and memorized. There is a name for the end of a shoelace, that little plastic deal.

It's got a name. And I memorized it, but I'm old and I forgot. You can look it up.

It's one of those obscure words that nobody, it's a great crossword puzzle answer. Well, in a molecule, those things are called telomeres. Telomeres.

Telos means the end and mere is something, a little thing on the end. It's a telomere. Well, every time your cells divide and your DNA gets replicated, the telomeres get shorter.

And this is a ticking clock because your cells will typically divide a certain number of times. This is why there's really nothing you can do about aging. Your cells have to divide or you won't live.

But when your cells divide, your telomeres get shorter. And when they get to a certain point, it says, it's like the alarm. You're too old to live.

Goodbye. That's what the telomeres do. And so what science is doing is saying, you know what, if we could just find a way to make sure those telomeres don't get short when the cells divide.

Why? We could extend human lifetimes. We could double, triple, quadruple human lifetimes. They seriously believe this.

Well, now they have started to figure out the mechanisms to preserve the telomeres. You remember in the scriptures when it says that in the last days, men are going to be crying out for death and it will not come to them. They'll be so miserable.

I believe that one of the possible ways in which that prophecy will be fulfilled is that man monkeying with his own DNA is going to create a living hell on earth for himself. Other things will happen. It's kind of like, would you rather die at 75 from an instantaneous massive heart attack or would you rather die at 77 from a long lingering cancer? And people say, oh, but we've done such wonderful things to reduce heart attack and stroke.

Well, I mean, that's great unless you end up going out in the thousand yards of ground glass. And I know somebody personally to whom this happened and he was cursing the doctor who

heroically brought him back. Despite the fact that he had signed a DNR during his bypass operation, his heart stopped.

And according to the DNR, they should have let him go. But the doctor thought we can save him and got the paddles and after great heroic efforts brought him back. So he survived the bypass to go out a long, painful and extremely depressing for him.

I mean, lost all interest, sat staring at the wall, miserable death. And the only rise you could get out of him was to curse the doctor that brought him back. And one reason I bring that up is this is sort of a commentary on what people think is the definition of good.

Wasn't that good that we developed the technology? Wasn't it good that we used it to save someone's life? Well, in a short term human perspective, it seems good. There is a way that seemeth right unto a man. The ends thereof are the ways of death.

We don't have the omniscience. We don't have the master plan that God has to know what's good. And we trust that God does know what's good.

And even when things seem abrupt or painful or incomprehensible to us, we are in the hands of an all-knowing, all-loving God. If you're a materialist and an atheist and you think there is no afterlife and it's all here, you're in the hands of the guy that's guessing what's best and they don't know. The end of all things is at hand, the telos, the finish.

Now, was Peter wrong about this because he said it 2,000 years ago? How true was it in A.D. 63, let's say? It's been an awful long time and the end of all things hasn't come, so how could he say the end of all things is at hand? Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, word of God, alive and powerful, every word from the mouth of God, how could he say this? Where are the people that got this letter now? How close was the end of all things for them? A matter of years. The Lord may or may not do something earthquake-y tomorrow. I've told people all week long, I think it'll just be the sense of humor of God.

He'll bring the Lord Jesus back tomorrow just to show us that we are not as smart as we think we are. All these pastors are getting on, poo-pooing, herald-camping. If he would happen to be right, it would just be the absolute cancellation of so many errors.

I was going to bring you, I actually had that 1994 book, but I can't remember. I think I may have loaned it to somebody. I couldn't find it.

You can't believe the torturous numerology. He thinks the Holy Spirit left in 1988, that we're no longer in the church age, etc. He thinks that the great earthquake at the end of the tribulation is tomorrow, that we've been in the tribulation for the last 23 years.

Error upon error upon error, from my perspective, and I will be humbly apologizing and eating a

big plate of crow. If the Lord says, Sam, Harold was right and you should have... I'll be the first to go up and shake Mr. Camping's hand and say, Sir, I just wasn't smart enough to figure it out and I give you full credit. I really don't think so.

But the end of all things is at hand. What does it mean? Listen, it could be tomorrow. It could be Sunday.

It could be next week. It could be 2012. It could be the end of the Mayan calendar.

It could be 2025. It could be 3025. It could be 4025.

I have no idea, but I can tell you from the word of God that for you and for me, the end of all things is at hand because we are not, relatively speaking, we are not going to live much longer. Some of us have got double digits of years. Some of us may have single digits of years.

Some of us may have single digits of hours or days. You just don't know. You do not know.

The end of all things is at hand. It is as near as your last breath and it is true. It was true when Peter wrote it.

It is true now and it will evermore be true until the Lord Jesus comes back and brings about the end of all things. The end of all things is at hand. Therefore, do what? Get busy and fix your culture and societal environment.

Therefore, get out there and paint that sign and picket that brothel right now because the end of all things is at hand. You have got to hurry up and fix this Roman society before the Lord comes back. You have got to hurry up and get this prostitution and this debauchery and this idolatry fixed before Jesus comes back.

Does this make any kind of logical sense in the flow of Peter's thought? Not to me. What is he saying? Deinvest. In the same way that in the last chapter he said don't be so invested in these power plays and these abuses of authority and whether or not it is fair.

Pull back and invest in heaven. Remember that was the message of chapter 3, right? Now he is saying if you have got that mind that was in Christ Jesus who for the heavenly joy that was set before him endured the cross. If you have got that mind my job is to cease my association with sin.

And the interesting thing is the way this has been translated and construed by the translators and interpreters is you have got to try to get rid of your personal sin. That is really not the problem for these people. These are Christian Jews.

Which of the Jews do you think became Christians? The apathetic, indifferent, I don't care anything about the law of Moses but wow this Jesus thing really grabs me. It was the faithful

Jews. It was Jews like Paul, largely.

I am sure there were a few. But largely it was observant Jews. It was Jews who had a V8 moment and said oh this is what the law of Moses, this is what David was talking about, this is what the prophecies of Isaiah meant.

And these are largely observant Jews, morally righteous people. Their problem is not sin. What is the Jews' historic problem? Righteousness by works.

Hear me carefully. Not salvation by works as you hear everybody construe Romans and so on. Righteousness by works.

They had no doubt they were saved. They were not worried about being saved. They were worried about how much am I going to get in the afterlife, how much am I going to get in this life.

God blesses the faithful. Let me demonstrate some faithfulness and wait for the blessing to rain down. This is what Paul says in Romans.

Having a zeal for God but not according to righteousness. Trying to establish their own righteousness instead of appropriating the righteousness of God. Right? That's their problem.

These are Jews and they're Jewish Christians now. Sin is not their problem. Personal sin is not their problem.

The environment of sin is their problem. Having to walk along beside lewdness and lusts and drunkenness and revelries and drinking parties and abominable idolatries. When did idolatry cease being a problem in Israel? Try 586 BC.

That was the laser treatment that totally expunged that particular tumor in Israel. There is no idolatry in Israel for the next 500 years until the nation goes out. Abominable idolatries.

These people didn't walk in those. How do commentators wrestle this into shape? They say, well, Peter is actually talking to a lot of Gentile Christians who came out of idolatry. And if that shoe fits, I'm sure they would wear it.

But it's weird. We've spent enough time doing the will of the Gentiles, oh Gentiles, to say, it would be like somebody writing to us and saying, you've done enough doing the will of the Americans. Wait a minute.

I'm an American. What do you mean? I'm no longer an American because I'm, am I no longer a Gentile because I'm a Christian? Neither Jew nor Greek. I mean, it just kind of gets all crumbly around the edges.

This is, he told us in the beginning who he's writing to. These are the pilgrims called by God to be scattered, to be the point of the sphere, to carry the faith of God to Gentile regions. They were

scattered for a reason.

Their life makes sense. Their location makes sense. Their struggle against this culture makes sense.

God has put them there to shine as lights in the midst of crooked and perverse cultures. So, the end of all things is at hand. You are closer than you have ever been to that great kingdom, that great future reward, all the promises of God.

Therefore, be serious and watchful in your prayers. He doesn't say be serious and watchful in your refraining from debauchery. Be serious and watchful in throwing out all the booze.

Be serious and watchful in cutting off associations with bad company. What does he say? Be serious and watchful in your prayers. This is a great insight into the role of prayer in our lives.

We need to pause here and take our break, but the thing to take away from this section of Chapter 4, I would suggest, is when we are vexed, like Lot dwelling in Sodom, our righteous soul is vexed, we have to make a choice. Shall I go out and do something about this rotten culture? The message of Scripture is tend to your spiritual life. Your best contribution is to be someone who has ceased from sin.

They are going to think it's strange that you do not run with them. Some of them are going to ask you a reason for the hope that is in you, and the only salvation for a rotten, debauched culture is Salvation, capital S, Jesus Christ in the heart and in the soul. You cannot, by resistance, fix a rotten culture and a debased, debauched ethical sense.

There is nothing you can do to fix it anyway. Your best contribution, if you care for the people around you, if you care for the country that you see going down the tubes, is to be the best Christian you can be, to have a mindset that I have stopped from sin. That's my light shining.

That's my reflection of the glory of God that will draw anyone who has a hope or a prayer of being transformed and being saved. That's our call to action. Our call to action is to be more and more serious in our prayer life, more and more serious in our dedication to the cause of Jesus Christ as individual believers and as a fellowship of believers.

That is the light that shines. That is the attractive Christ. Dr. Krizzle had a sermon called The Attractive Christ.

Another time he preached it, he called it The Magnetic Christ. He had such a gift for titles. You read some of his titles and you think, I have got to hear that sermon, not even knowing what it's in or what it's about.

You hear the title and you think, wow, The Magnetic Christ. I've got to hear that. But Jesus Christ, to anyone who has a glimmer of interest, I will draw all men unto myself, he said.

Well, he draws them through us. We are his presence on earth. And we've got to be the best, most Christ-like presence we can be.

That's what will do the most good. Let's pause here and take a break. When we come back, we'll pick up in verse 7.