

Spiritual Duty

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[0 : 00] We're going to be in 1 Peter chapter 4, covering verses 7-11 tonight.

In the late 1960s, in most of the 1970s, the United States experienced what became known in some quarters as the Jesus Movement.

And had all kinds of things going on. Jesus Christ Superstar. It wasn't all good. It wasn't all solid doctrine.

But as in most such movements, there were good things that rose out of that experience and some things that were not so good. Cell groups formed because people wanted to study the Bible.

There was an increase in evangelism and discipleship. And there was a lot of movement on various college campuses. Campus Crusade really had their growth in that time frame.

[1 : 32] There was a significant increase in the publication of Bibles. And like I say, some of the things were good and some not so good.

Many of the new Bibles that were coming out were paraphrases. These included the Living Bible and the Good News Bible. And the case could be made that even the popular New International Version, portions of it is a paraphrase.

Other Bibles became quite popular. The Revised Standard Version. I always remember my mom had a copy of that. When she died, I ended up giving that to my niece.

She needed it. The New American Standard Bible and the New English Bible. And now we teach out of the English Standard Version.

During this period of time, there was a rampant increase in evangelical broadcasting, evangelical publishing, and especially in Christian music.

[2 : 44] A lot of guys involved in Christian music. Hundreds of radio stations sprang up that were devoted solely to preaching and singing on Christian themes and Christian music.

About that time, there was a pamphlet that became wildly popular called the Four Spiritual Laws track.

That was written by the late Bill Bright who grew up in Coedo, Oklahoma. Ironically, his best friend in grade school and in high school was the late L.G. Beard, a member of our church.

They played together. They rode the bus together to school and lived out in the country. More akin to our times has been movements such as the seeker-sensitive philosophy of church growth.

The theory was to give people what they want to hear and they will come. I seem to recall a passage about itching ears. MacArthur, he took the different track.

[4 : 07] He said, give them doctrine and they'll come. And no one believed him. They told him, you can't build a church on doctrine. Doctrine's too boring. Well, he proved them wrong.

This movement practically threw doctrinal purity out the door though when the churches backed away from preaching doctrine. Doctrine was banned in a lot of churches.

They no longer had a love for the truth. And that's true in many quarters today. As far as church growth, the great denominations began to adopt marketing strategies taught by leading colleges and universities.

It was nothing to walk into a pastor's office and you might not see Spurgeon or, you know, Whitfield or, you know, any of the even more modern guys, but you'd see a whole row of Harvard Business Review because they were incorporating secular marketing strategies to try to build churches.

Well, what was the cost of all this? It was the elimination of the gospel message. The theory was, do not preach anything that could remotely be offensive to your people or to visitors in the church.

[5 : 43] What was adopted was a theory of inclusivism. Doesn't matter what you believe, just come and sit and listen and be sure to bring your checkbook.

That was kind of the theory. And in the midst of all that, there was a young preacher that rose up on the West Coast and he preached on the radio and he did something that was utterly unheard of to that moment.

He made tapes of his messages available and he wrote books, commentaries and books. And of course, I'm speaking about John MacArthur and one of his books exploded on the evangelical scene.

It just literally, it was like a bomb going off and it was titled The Gospel According to Jesus. In that book, MacArthur was critical of some, not all, some of the professors at Dallas Theological Seminary.

Well, that was considered in those days a form of blasphemy that you would speak out against those guys. MacArthur held in high regard guys like Dr. Walvert and Ryrie and J. Dwight Pentecost but they had some that were cut in a different mold.

[7 : 18] So John published that book and it was thought to be heretical. I've read it several times, it's an excellent book. other books in that series which he published along the way in addition to The Gospel According to Jesus, he published The Gospel According to the Apostles and a few years later he came out with a book The Gospel According to Paul and his fourth edition and the last one that he's going to do in that series is The Gospel According to God.

And I've got all four of them. I'm convinced that God raised up John MacArthur to lead us out of darkness to lead us away from the seeker sensitive movement and the extreme charismatic movement.

One of them said he wished he had a Holy Ghost machine gun and he would kill MacArthur with it. That was the stellar theologian Benny Hinn said that on Trinity Broadcasting.

Paul and his wife that wore four inches of makeup. Anyway, those were great books.

If you ever want to borrow them I'm glad to loan them to you. But I'm convinced that God used John MacArthur to lead us out of that darkness he began to publish his commentaries.

[8 : 55] He's now published all of the New Testament and about a fourth maybe of the Old Testament. And then he came out with the MacArthur Study Bible contained 25,000 footnotes.

If you want to know what a verse meant it's probably on there. and that was wildly successful. So what does the church need today?

Well we need scripture and to base our lives on the truth contained in those scriptures. We have a duty to the Lord to live such lives which really brings us to our lesson today.

Tonight we're going to focus on more of the fourth chapter of 1 Peter. Particularly we're going to study these words in 1 Peter 4 verse 7 to 11.

Let me read that. The end of all things is at hand. Bear in mind that was written 2,000 years ago.

[10 : 09] I wonder what Peter would say today. The end of all things is at hand. Therefore be self-controlled and sober minded for the sake of your prayers.

Above all keep loving one another earnestly since love covers a multitude of sins. 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 varied grace. Whoever speaks as one who speaks 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 be glory and dominion forever and ever amen.

Well we're going to look at three areas that are covered by these passages of scripture that I just read and there's really three questions as it works out what is our motive for spiritual duty what are the instructions for our spiritual duty and how do we intend to accomplish our spiritual duty and we have a great motive or incentive to participate in our spiritual duty contained in the first few words of verse 7 the end of all things is at hand I typically get up pretty early up at the farm I got up at four this morning and then at 6 05 I went back to bed and slept till nine

I was tired but the end of all things is at hand now we have to be careful with words used in the original language of Greek here the reason being there are many Greek words that translate end or the end the one that Peter used here is telos which does translate in but we have to exercise some care here the word telos does not precisely mean to cease or to terminate or to conclude it is more related to fulfill or to achieve a goal that's what is meant there there is reason to believe though that Peter is here referring to the Lord's return well he was talking about it 2000 years ago how much closer are we today another important word used here but unfortunately not used in the ESV is the word near the end is near that word means the end is approaching

[13 : 31] Peter tells us that the end is approaching and that it is actually imminent and that means that it could occur any moment I've said this many times you've heard it nothing has to happen prophetically for Jesus to come back for the church nothing and people always jump on that and say well you got to have the red heifer and you got to have the third temple that's Israel we're Gentiles we're the church and made up of some Jews but nothing has to happen till we hear the shofar and look up and hopefully go up there's a number of verses on all that you can read them in Matthew Romans 1st Thessalonians and Revelation if we truly believe that the end is near and even imminent that fact alone should impact how we live our lives we are faithful when we adopt an attitude of anticipation and expectancy concerning the Lord's return

I remember what the late and great Dr. M.R. Dahan and he was a doctor an M.D. but he went to seminary and preached and great great men and he had on his desk a plaque and they have a facsimile of his office even now and it's still there and it's perhaps today very famous perhaps today meaning the return of the Lord Peter lived in expectation of the return of Christ as did Paul and he had to address a whole church that said we think we missed the rapture and he said no you haven't missed it you haven't missed it earlier in this book Peter said spoke of a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 5 he spoke a couple of verses later about the revelation of Jesus

Christ the purpose of prophecy and believing in the imminent return of Christ is to motivate us to holy living to motivate us to evangelism to sharing the good news of Christ with lost friends lost family lost neighbors lost enemies the Lord's coming back I hate the thought you know family members or good friends that are going to be in final judgment before hell and they look at me and say why didn't you say something to me we saw each other five times a week you never mentioned him that's rather haunting if we knew that Jesus would not return for another thousand years we might live our lives differently than if we knew he was going to return in the next three minutes what would we do if we knew he was going to return by nine o'clock tonight

I imagine we'd be out talking it up telling people I always remember I asked a wife said if you knew you were going to die in 30 minutes what would you be doing and she said making lists for my husband this is how you iron a shirt this is how you defrost the ice maker I'd be making lists so the apostle Paul talked about in addition to Peter he talked about the sudden return of Christ these are his words in 1 Corinthians 15 behold I tell you a mystery we shall not all sleep that's death for the believer we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable and we shall be changed for this perishable body must put on imperishable and this mortal body must put on immortality you know it's interesting that term the twinkling of an eye has actually been researched by men a lot smarter than I am it takes the human eye about one tenth of a second to blink and it's a protective device it moistens the eyes now a twinkling is not a blink it's different light travels at 186 thousand miles per second that's fast a twinkling is the time it takes light to hit the front of the eye and travel to the back of the eye just that speed right there traveling at 186 thousand miles per second well if you do the math which

I'm terrible at that is about six billionth of a second that's a twinkling don't think I'll get saved when he comes back and I hear the trumpet and it's in the twinkling of an eye you got six billionths of a second to get saved and that's not enough time guys at that speed when the Lord returns it's not going to be any time to get saved it must have already happened when Jesus was on the mount of ascension he told his disciples this in response to a question they asked him!

[20 : 17] Acts chapter 1 verse 6 and 7 so when they had come together they asked him Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel these were Jews they wanted to know about the kingdom and he said to them Lord Jesus speaking it is not for you to know times or seasons that the father has fixed by his own authority don't be troubled by all that God the father has got that all worked out every bit of it so the return of Christ is fixed by the authority of the father and there are certainly indications that the time of his return is approaching it would seem to me the world stage is being set for the return that doesn't mean he's coming back today tonight tomorrow my lifetime but

I'm convinced of this he is coming back he is coming back and there's no reason that might not happen tonight but the precise day and hour hidden from us that's a good thing because we probably live differently but we should live in biblically balanced expectancy expectancy! expecting the return of Christ should energize all true believers to live a life holy knowing that they could be thrust into the very presence of the Lord in a twinkling of an eye that's an amazing thought

well did the Lord leave any instructions for our spiritual duty I've already read it once but I'll do it again the end of all things is at hand therefore this is his instructions to us be self controlled sober minded for the sake of your prayers above all keep loving one another earnestly since love covers a multitude of sins 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 oracles of God whoever serves as one who serves by the strength that God supplies if you read this passage slowly you will discover there are many commands contained in it consider these commands realizing some will be inadvertently left out by me but this passage that I just read says exercise that's the language of a command exercise sound judgment exercise a sober spirit because that will aid in your prayers love one another fervently be hospitable to one another do not complain that touches us all employ your gifts by serving one another be good stewards of the grace of God speak the utterances of

God and serve by God's strength rely on God's strength well there's basically nine commands contained in five verses of scripture and God commands of course throughout that we obey scripture we are to consider the cost in living a life of such obedience it is one thing to believe such obedience is much too difficult but we should examine the words of Christ in Matthew's gospel chapter 11 verses 29 and 30 take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light God has called us to obey his commands by the power of the indwelling spirit he then enables us to fulfill those commands he doesn't leave us as orphans consider this passage out of the book of Ephesians and then we'll consider a couple of other passages this is Ephesians chapter 5 starting at verse 15 look carefully then how you walk not as unwise but as wise making the best use of the time why because the days are evil if Paul lived in evil days what do we live in what are these days therefore do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is and do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery but be filled with the spirit addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing and making melody to the

[26 : 39] Lord with your heart giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ Philippians 4 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me that's pretty definitive!

Colossians chapter 3 verse 16 and 17 let the word of Christ dwell in you richly that's a command teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God and whatever you do in word or deed do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the Father through him and I think while we're at it we should also consider this passage in 2nd Timothy chapter 1 verse 7 and 8 for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self control therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord nor of me his prisoner that's

Paul speaking but share in the suffering for the gospel by the power of God I've met with people all over the world that suffer or suffered for the gospel and they never back down whatever happened I met a young pastor in Vietnam and they're going to release him after six months in prison for good behavior he said no no give me another six months I haven't witnessed everybody yet well they didn't know what that meant so they left him in six more months and he finished out witnessing to everybody in that prison and finally at least for tonight how do we intend to accomplish our spiritual duty well this verse is to guide us in everything

God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to him belong glory and dominion forever and ever and then he closes it amen so we live in a dark and hostile world it is growing darker every day what should be our intention in such a world as ours our intention should be that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ and those words really serve as a doxology doxology serves as an expression of praise and glory offered to the triune God to the Father the Son the Holy Spirit and the only acceptable doxology is that which is offered through the Lord Jesus Christ the breadth of this doxology is that it should be done in every area of Christian duty and responsibility every area now theologians like to argue whether this passage in 1st

Peter is directed at God being the Father or Jesus and I kind of wrestled with that a little bit and I came up with what I think is the best answer and the best answer is yes directed at both we should make it our life's work that we honor the Father and the Son forever and ever we're going to do it in heaven why not start now we should want to honor the triune God Father Son and Holy Spirit in all that we say in all that we do and then the real difficulty in all that we think even down to our

subconscious mind now Paul covered this fact in his inspired writings Holy Spirit wrote this had Paul take it down 1 Corinthians 10:31 so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do do all to the glory of God ask yourself when you're doing something is this bringing glory to God you know if I did that my days would probably be not very filled out with dumb stuff asinine stuff well again one of the great motivators of holy living and expressing the glory of God in all things is the return of Christ the net result of focusing on the return of

[32:17] Christ is to live a life of personal holiness love for the Lord one another serving the church evangelizing friends evangelizing the lost evangelizing enemies now we can't become so focused on the rapture that we're no earthly good and we can't be not focused at all on the return of Christ by focusing on all the problems down here I find it very poignant that the Holy Spirit concludes this portion of scripture with the word amen every word in the Bible is God breathed and has a purpose for being there that is a beautiful word amen and it means let it be let it be we could probably even say make it happen

Lord as does Dr. MacArthur in his commentary on 1 Peter I will quote the words of J.C. Ryle he was the bishop of Liverpool England he was an Anglican bishop but in the reformed tradition Bishop Ryle lived from 1816 to 1900 he almost made it to the 20th century somebody said no he made it no no it starts 20th century started 1901 his degrees in the language of today would have been a bachelor of divinity a master's of divinity and a doctorate of divinity Dr. Ryle wrote the following a holy man will follow after spiritual mindedness he will endeavor to set his affections entirely on things above and hold the things of earth with a very loose hand he will not neglect the business of the life that now is but the first place in his mind and thoughts will be given to the life that is to come he will aim to live like one whose treasure is in heaven and to pass through this world like a stranger and pilgrim traveling to his home that's a great quote it's taken from Bishop Ryle's classic book holiness it was first published in 1879 it's still in print today it really should be required reading for all of us ironically one of the great theologians that was a student of Bishop Ryle they didn't live at the same time but he often quoted Bishop Ryle in his theology and he talked about being a stranger and a pilgrim traveling through let's close with a word of prayer and father we thank you for your grace and your mercy your love for us which knows no height nor depth it's infinite lord we thank you that we have a soon returning king and that every knee will bow and every tongue confess to the glory of god the father that Jesus Christ is lord and what a privilege we can do that in this life we don't have to wait until the next life although we will do it then also every knee will bow lord i thank you for these men i thank you lord that you give us opportunity and that our church supports this class and the women upstairs lord may we honor you and bring glory to your name and all that we say and do and think we pray in Jesus name amen