

ARM YOURSELF WITH THE MIND OF CHRIST

1 PETER 04:01–06

Introduction

Living for Jesus Christ is not easy. When we live for Christ, really live righteous and godly lives, the unbelievers of the world reject us. They want little to do with pure righteousness and pure godliness. A godly life convicts them and demands that they live like God or else face His judgment. Therefore, the world often ridicules, mocks, abuses and sometimes kills the genuine believer. How can the believer handle and conquer such persecution when he is so unjustly treated? There is one way: he should arm himself with the attitude of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ suffered persecution and He suffered persecution to the ultimate degree. He has shown us how to handle and conquer persecution.

Therefore, arm yourself with the mind of Christ.

- I. It is dying to self, denying oneself, giving up sin (v. 1).
- II. It is doing God's will for the rest of one's days (v. 2).
- III. It is being fed up with sin, knowing that one has sinned enough (v. 3).
- IV. It is bearing the strange look by the world (vv. 4-5).
- V. It is following the example of those gone before (v. 6).

I. 1 Peter 04:01 Self-Denial and Suffering

Arm yourself with the attitude of Christ. What does this mean? First, it means to die to self; to deny oneself. Jesus Christ denied Himself to the ultimate degree: He suffered for us in His body. Jesus Christ lived a pure and righteous life and men persecuted Him for it. But He bore the humiliation, ridicule, mockery, beatings and even death in order to please God and to save men. In His body He did not want to suffer. He had a body just like ours, the body of humanity; therefore, His body wanted and desired to escape the abuse of men (cp. Heb. 2:14-15). But Jesus Christ denied Himself and went ahead and did the will of God. The exhortation is strong: "Now, you do the same thing. Arm yourself with the attitude of Christ. You are in a warfare with the desires and lusts of the flesh; the acts of the sinful nature, and they are going to destroy you unless you conquer them. Therefore, you must arm yourself; you must put on the armour that will protect you." What is that armour?

⇒ The attitude of Christ. The very same attitude that delivered and saved Christ. Christ kept His attitude and thoughts upon righteousness and salvation. Therefore, Christ gave Himself up — denied Himself — and suffered for us. We must do the same: we must keep our attitudes upon righteousness and salvation. We must die to self and suffer for Christ. We must become identified with Christ in His self-denial and suffering of death. We must identify with Him by denying ourselves and suffering for His name. Jesus Christ denied the desires of the flesh in order to please God and

to save us. We are to do the same; we are to deny the desires of the flesh in order to please God and save men. We do this by keeping our thoughts upon the suffering and self-denial of Christ. We can conquer the flesh (sinful nature) and its desires by arming ourselves with the attitude of Christ. Therefore, our attitudes and thoughts are to be armed, that is, clothed, with the very armour of Christ's attitude.

Note one other significant fact: the person who suffers in the body has "*given up sin, is done with sin once for all.*" What does this mean? When the world persecutes us, we do not want to suffer and bear the judgment of ridicule, mockery and abuse of men. Now if we give in to the fleshly desires and go along with the world, we sin and doom ourselves. But if we arm ourselves with the attitude of Christ, deny our fleshly desires and suffer for Christ and for the salvation of men, then we deny sin. We do just what Christ did: we deny sin and live righteously. Our suffering for Christ has delivered us from sin and it has caused us to give up sin, to be done with sin once for all. We have done the right thing, and in doing the right thing, we are delivered from sin. We are living righteously — all for Christ and His cause.

Another way to say the same thing is this: the person who suffers for Christ has chosen to identify himself with Christ. He has chosen to deny himself and his fleshly desires and to identify himself with Christ and His sufferings of death. Therefore, in suffering for Christ, the person is not sinning; he is living righteously. He is doing the right thing; he has done away with sin. Note this: the more a person suffers for Christ, the closer he becomes to Christ; and the closer he becomes to Christ, the more the desires and lusts of the flesh (sin) lose their appeal and power over the person.

Rom 6:2-4 *By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

Rom 6:6-13 *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin — because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

Ga1 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Gal 5:24 *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*

Col 3:3 *For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*

1 Pet 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

II. 1 Peter 04:02 Believer's Life: Doing God's Will

Arm yourself with the attitude of Christ. What does this mean? Second, it means to do the will of God — do it for the rest of your days. Note that the phrase “evil human desires” is plural. It is the picture of the believer being pulled every way by different persons or groups. The believer is being pulled to live like the world lives, fulfilling the desires and lusts of the flesh. Men lust after the pleasures and possessions of the world...

- houses • lands • wealth • position
- power • recognition • drink • sex
- stimulation • partying • recreation • excitement

Lusting after these things is not the will of God. God's will is for believers to live pure and righteous lives and to focus upon proclaiming the gospel of eternal life to a lost and dying world. Genuine believers do this. They do not make the lusts and desires of men the rule of their lives. The rule of their lives is God. And note the Scripture: they have committed the *rest of their days* to the will of God. This is what the mind of Christ means: just as Christ was totally committed to the will of God, so we are totally committed to the will of God. Just as His thoughts were consumed with God's will, so our thoughts are consumed with God's will. We arm ourselves with the very attitude of Christ: we become consumed in attitude and thought with the will of God, not with the lusts of men. We focus and concentrate upon living righteous lives and upon carrying the gospel to every person in the world (cp. v. 6).

Mat 12:50 *“For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”*

Rom 6:6 *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*

Rom 6:11 *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

Rom 13:14 *Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

Rom 14:8 *If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.*

2 Cor 5:15 *And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

Heb 13:16 *And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

Psa 40:8 *“I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”*

Psa 143:10 *Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.*

III. 1 Peter 04:03 Away with Sin

Arm yourself with the attitude of Christ. What does this mean? Third, it means being fed up with sin, knowing that one has sinned enough. The believer's life is divided into two parts: *his old life and his new life*. Note the force of this verse: in his *old life*, he sinned enough. He has already followed the desires and lusts of the ungodly (Gentiles) enough. He has already worked the will of the ungodly. He has walked after them, walked just as they walk, and enough is enough. The believer is no longer to fulfil the desires of the flesh (sinful nature). Note that six sins in particular are mentioned.

1. *Debauchery* (aselgeiai): filthiness, indecency, shamelessness, license, without restraint. A chief characteristic of the behaviour is open and shameless indecency. It means unrestrained evil thoughts and behaviour. It is giving in to brutish and lustful desires, a readiness for any pleasure. It is a man who knows no restraint, a man who has sinned so much that he no longer cares what people say or think. It is something far more distasteful than just doing wrong. The man who misbehaves usually tries to hide his wrong, but a lascivious man does not care who knows about his exploits or shame. He wants; therefore he seeks to take and gratify. Decency and opinion do not matter. Initially when he began to sin, he did as all men do: he misbehaved in secret. But eventually, the sin got the best of him — to the point that he no longer cared who saw or knew. He became the subject of a master — the master of habit, of the thing itself. Men become the slaves of such things as unbridled lust, wantonness, licentiousness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence (Mk. 7:22); lewd manners, filthy words, indecent body movements, immoral handling of males and females (Rom. 13:13); public display of affection, carnality, gluttony, sexual immorality (1 Pet. 4:3; 2 Pet. 2:2, 18). (Cp. Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 4:19; 2 Pet. 2:7.)

Rom 1:27 *In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.*

Eph 4:19 *Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.*

Jude 1:4, 7 *For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our*

God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

1 Pet 4:3 *For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do — living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.*

2. *Lust (epithumias)*: the word means strong desire or craving and passion; it means that the pull of sin is sometimes very, very strong. All men know what it is to lust after things, after more and more, and never to be satisfied even after the things are secured. (See note, 1 Pet. 1:14; 2:11.)

Rom 13:14 *Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

1 Pet 2:11 *Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*

1 Pet 4:2 *As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.*

3. *Drunkenness (oinophlugiai)*: excess amounts of wine, drunkenness, wine-bibbing. It would include taking drink or drugs to affect one's senses for lust or pleasure; becoming tipsy or intoxicated; partaking of drugs; seeking to loosen moral restraint for bodily pleasure.

Luke 21:34 *“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.*

Rom 13:13 *Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.*

1 Cor 6:10 *Nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*

Eph 5:18 *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*

1 Th 5:7 *For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.*

Prov. 23:29-31 *“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless wounds? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine, who goes to sample bowls of mixed wine.”*

Prov 20:1 *Wine is a mocker, and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.*

Isa. 5:11 *“Woe to those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night till they are inflamed with wine.”*

4. **Orgies** (komois): carousing; uncontrolled license, indulgence, and pleasure; taking part in wild parties or in drinking parties or in orgies; lying around indulging in feeding the lusts of the flesh (sinful nature).

1 Pet 4:3 *For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do — living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.*

2 Pet 2:13-14 *They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, revelling in their pleasures while they feast with you. With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed — an accursed brood!*

Gal 5:21 *And envy, drunkenness, orgies and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Exo 32:6 *So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry. (cp. Judges 9:27; 1 Sam. 30:16)*

5. **Carousing** (potoi): drinking parties; partying and getting drunk.

Rom 13:13 *Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.*

1 Pet 4:3 *For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do — living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.*

1 Th 5:7 *For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.*

6. **Detestable idolatry** (athemitois eidoloatriais): the worship of idols, whether mental or made by man's hands; the worship of some idea of what God is like, of an image of God within a person's mind; the giving of one's primary devotion (time and energy) to something other than God. (See note, *Idolatry*, 1 Cor. 6:9.)

1 Cor 10:14 *Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.*

Gal 5:19-21 *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Eph 5:5 *For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a man is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

Col 3:5-6 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.*

Rev 21:8 *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.*

Rev 22:15 *Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.*

IV. 1 Peter 04:04–05 Persecution and Judgment

Arm yourself with the attitude of Christ. What does this mean? Fourth, it means to bear the strange look of the world. This fact is easily understood and it is often experienced by believers. The worldly just cannot understand...

- why a genuine believer separates himself from the world and does not participate in its pleasures and in getting all of the possessions he can.
- why a genuine believer gives all he is and has to spreading the gospel around the world and meeting the desperate needs of the world.

This is particularly true if the believer participated in the pleasures and ways of the world before his conversion. Once he has been converted and begins to separate himself from his old life, his former associates begin to look at him as a strange creature, and they often begin to slander and heap abuse upon him. They ridicule, mock and withdraw from him because he no longer shares with them in the drinking parties or in the crooked and covetous ways of the world.

Note: the worldly and ungodly shall be judged. They shall give an account to Christ for all their ridicule, abuse and persecution of believers. And Scripture is clear: Christ is *ready to judge* both the living and the dead.

Mat 25:32 *“All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”*

John 5:22 *“Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son.”*

Acts 17:31 *“For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”*

Rom 2:16 *This will take place on the day when God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.*

Rom 14:10 *You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat.*

2 Tim 4:1 *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:*

Rev 20:12 *And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.*

Rev 22:12 *“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.”*

Jer 17:10 *“I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.”*

V. 1 Peter 04:06 Example of Those Gone Before

Arm yourself with the attitude of Christ. What does this mean? Fifth, it means to follow the example of believers who have gone before. God is going to judge the world. This is the reason He has seen to it that the gospel be preached. And note: the gospel was preached to believers who have already died.

=> The gospel was preached in order to judge them while they were still men in regard to the body: preached to condemn them for living after the sinful ways of men; preached to convict them of sin and righteousness and judgment.

=> The gospel was preached in order to give them life, a spiritual life, a life that is just like God's life; a life that has the power to live in the spirit forever and ever, to live just like God; a life that is eternal; a life that is eternal just like God's life.

The point is this: believers who have gone on heard the gospel. They heard the judgment and condemnation of the gospel while they were living on earth, and they accepted the gospel. Therefore, they shall escape the judgment to come (v. 5). They now live with God, possessing the very life of God Himself which is eternal life. They shall live forever and ever with God. It is this that we are to keep our attitudes upon. We are to arm ourselves with the example of those who have gone on before. We must let the gospel judge and convict us of sin, and we must repent. We must turn away from sin and turn to God. When we so respond to the gospel, we receive the very life of God Himself. We shall live with God forever and ever just like those who have gone on and now live in His presence.

John 5:24 *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*

Rom 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

2 Cor 4:11 *For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.*

Phil 1:21 *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*

1 John 3:14 *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. ■*

LIVE UNDER THE SHADOW OF HISTORY'S CLIMAX

1 PETER 04:07–11

Introduction

Believers often suffer. They suffer ridicule and abuse on the job and in their community. They suffer all forms of persecution at the hands of their neighbours, fellow workers, employers, competitors, school mates, society and civil authorities. How can the believer handle and conquer suffering? By living under the shadow of history's climax. Note verse seven: "the end of all things is near." All things are soon to be consummated; the climax of history is at hand. Jesus Christ is returning and He is returning soon. Our suffering is to end; we are going to be freed from all the sufferings and trials of this corruptible and evil world. And not only this: the consummation of our faith is to soon take place. We are going to see Jesus face to face and be given the glorious privilege of living with Him and serving Him forever and ever (cp. Rom. 13:12; Ph. 4:5; Jas. 5:8; 1 Jn. 2:18; Rev. 1:3; 22:20).

How can we handle and conquer all the trials and sufferings of this life? By living under the climax of history. How do we live under the climax of history? By doing five things.

- I. Live being clear-minded and self-controlled (v. 7).
- II. Live watching and praying (v. 7).
- III. Live with fervent love (v. 8).
- IV. Live showing hospitality and do it cheerfully (v. 9).
- V. Live using your gift (vv. 10-11).

I. 1 Peter 04:07 Be Clear–Minded and Self–Controlled

How do we live under the climax of history? We live lives that are "clear-minded [sophronein] and self-controlled." This means to be serious and to have a sound mind; to be in control of oneself and to be self-restrained; to be calm and sensible. The believer lives under the climax of history; he keeps his mind upon the return of Christ by doing three things.

1. He keeps a serious and sound mind about everything. He is not a jolly, back-slapping, frivolous type of person. He takes life seriously, knowing that man has a purpose for being on earth, that life is the most meaningful and significant possession that man has. Therefore, he measures the importance of things. He measures all things in light of eternity as well as time. He considers the future as well as the present. He knows that his life could be snatched from him overnight by some accident or by the news of some disease. The believer who keeps his mind upon the climax of history, upon the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, is a sober person; he is a serious and sound minded person.
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2. He controls and restrains his desires and lusts and appetites. He never gives in to excess — to the lust for more and more. He controls sex and uses it for marriage. He controls desire for food and uses it for health. He controls the desire for material possessions and uses it to meet the needs of his family and the desperate needs of the world.
3. He is calm and sensible about all things. He is not overly shaken by trouble, problems or circumstances that arise within his family, employment, society or world. Family problems and world events just do not shake him. He is concerned but not shaken. He does not get overly excited with recreation, sports or any other happening of life. He enjoys the happenings and experiences of life, but he keeps a sensible perspective of all things and gives each thing its proper place.

Rom 12:3 *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

1 Th 5:6-9 *So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our LORD Jesus Christ.*

Titus 2:11-12 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.*

1 Pet 1:13 *Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

1 Pet 5:8-9 *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

II. 1 Peter 04:07 Watch and Prayer

How do we live under the climax of history? We watch and pray. The word "self-controlled" (nephate) means to stay sober and alert and awake at all times. This says two things.

1. The believer is to keep his mind sober, always watching. He is not to drink intoxicating beverages or take drugs or do anything else that dulls and numbs his mind. He is to keep his mind sober and alert at all times. He is not to be escaping reality; he is to be grasping reality. He is to be praying always for all things, and he cannot be praying if his mind is dull and numb because of drink and drugs.
2. The believer is to keep his mind alert, keep it from being sleepy-eyed and lazy and wandering about. The mind is always thinking; it is always upon something; it is never without thought. Therefore, the believer is to keep his mind alert and active. He is to control his thoughts even to the point of captivating every thought. Every

moment that his thoughts are not engaged with the necessary activities of life, he is to focus his thoughts upon prayer. Even while carrying on the activities of life, he needs to flicker his thoughts to prayer here and there. He needs to acknowledge God in all His ways. This is what it means to watch and pray. The believer is to stay sober and alert to every opportunity to pray.

Thought 1. Imagine how much better the world would be if believers prayed all the time! How much better the world would be if God were really sought this much! If His people never left the throne of God seeking His love and power for the earth!

Mat 7:7 *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”*

Luke 12:37 *It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.*

Col 4:2 *Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.*

1 Th 5:5-6 *You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.*

James 4:7-8 *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

1 Pet 5:8 *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

III. 1 Peter 04:08 Love

How do we live under the climax of history? We live with fervent love for one another. The word “deeply” (*ektenes*) is an athletic word. It means to be fervent; to stretch and reach out; to strain and exert to the utmost degree just like an athlete in a race. It has the idea of burning and boiling and of being passionate about loving one's brother in Christ. Note how a fervent love is far more than the human love of warm feelings and attraction. It is far more than sentimental and caring feelings for a person.

The believer is to love with the ultimate love, the love of fervency. And note: fervent love is to be put before all else. It is the most important duty of the believer. We are to strain every ounce of energy in our minds and hearts to love. This means that we love others even when they...

- hurt us • abuse us • persecute us • oppose us
- injure us • ridicule us • mock us • speak evil against us

The most wonderful thing happens when we love each other with a fervent love: a multitude of sins is covered. What does this mean?

- => It means that when we love, we are not hating and reacting and sinning.
- => It means that when we love, we are living with a forgiving spirit and we are forgiving others, not living with a sinful and unforgiving spirit.
- => It means that when we love, we are more likely to reach those who do evil toward us and thereby to win them to Christ and to a life of love and ministry upon the earth.

John 13:34-35 *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

John 15:12 *"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."*

Rom 12:9 *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*

1 Cor 13:13 *And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*

Col 3:14 *And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

1 Th 3:12 *May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.*

1 Pet 1:22 *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.*

IV. 1 Peter 04:09 Hospitality

How do we live under the climax of history? We show hospitality and we do it cheerfully. The early believers had to open their homes to one another or else the church would have had difficulty surviving. The reasons are clear:

- => When missionaries and evangelists travelled about, they needed a place to stay, and many of them were poor. The inns were just too dirty and immoral; therefore, room and board had to be provided for them.
- => When believers were persecuted and forced to flee to other cities, they had no place to live.
- => When the jobs of Christians required them to travel, they needed homes to stay in because of the unsuitability of the inns.
- => In addition to this, we must always remember what William Barclay points out: there were no church buildings until about two hundred years after Christ. Therefore, the early believers had to meet for worship in the homes of willing believers. (*The Letters of James and Peter*, p. 302.)

Hospitality was an absolute essential for the early church, and it is an absolute essential within the church today. Why? For love and care and ministry and close fellowship. It is almost impossible to maintain a loving and caring church and a dynamic ministry unless

believers are fellowshipping together in their homes. In fact, Christ taught that we are to use our homes as centres of Christian love, fellowship and outreach. This is a fact that is often unknown or ignored (see *Home Evangelisation*, Lk. 9:4; note, 10:5-6).

Note that we are to open our homes without grumbling, that is, without murmuring or complaining. We are to willingly and cordially open our homes, open them joyfully expecting great things of God.

Thought 1. What would happen if we began to set up a home within every community for Christ, a home that was a centre for love, fellowship, worship and outreach. May God touch the hearts of many ministers and churches to adopt the very method laid down by Christ Himself (see *Home Evangelisation*, Lk. 9:4; 10:5-6).

=> The overseer or minister must be given to hospitality.

Titus 1:8 *Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.*

1 Tim 3:2 *Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.*

=> All believers must open their door — even to strangers in need.

Heb 13:2 *Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.*

=> All believers must use hospitality as a means to minister and use it without grumbling.

Rom 12:13 *Practice hospitality.*

1 Pet 4:9 *Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.*

=> Widows in particular are to use hospitality as a means to minister.

1 Tim 5:10 *And is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.*

V. 1 Peter 04:10–11 *Spiritual Gifts*

How do we live under the climax of history? We use our gifts ministering as good stewards of God. The word “gift” (charisma) means the very special ability given to the believer by God. Note that the gift is from God; it is not a natural talent. The believer could not have attained nor secured the ability himself. It is a spiritual gift; that is, it is given by the Spirit of God for spiritual purposes. It is given to the believer so that he can fulfil his task on earth.

- 1 Note: believers are to *use their gifts serving and ministering to one another*. Every believer's task is to use his gift to build up believers in the church and in witnessing and ministering to the world. What are the spiritual gifts that God gives to believers?

The great tragedy is that most believers just do not know anything about spiritual gifts, yet God covers them in His Word. They should be diligently studied (see notes, Rom. 12:6-8; Cor. 12:8-11; Eph. 4:11).

Mat 10:42 *“And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”*

Rom 12:6-15 *We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.*

1 Cor 12:4-11 *There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.*

Gal 6:10 *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

Eph 4:11-12 *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*

2. Note: the believer is to serve by faithfully administering God's grace. Scripture says he is a steward of God's grace. The steward was a slave who was given the responsibility of the master's estate, both his home and property. He was in full charge of all the affairs of the master. The believer is the steward of God; he is in full charge of the grace and gift which God has given him. No one else can look after or use the gift he has. If it is to be used, the believer has to use it. Think about this: the awesome responsibility has been placed into our hands. No one can exercise the gift of the believer except the believer himself. The only energy and effort that can

arouse and use the gift is the believer's own energy and effort. If he fails to exercise and use his gift, then the gift lies dormant and is never used. He fails in his task. His mission upon earth is unfulfilled. And he has to face God as a failure in life. He failed to use the gift God had given him, failed to complete his task and mission upon earth. But note: this is not to be the case with believers. Believers are to use their gifts, and they are to be as faithful as enslaved stewards in carrying out their tasks upon earth. Two gifts in particular are mentioned. They are covered in the next two points.

Mat 25:14-15 *"Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey."*

Luke 19:13 *So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'*

1 Cor 4:2 *Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*

1 Cor 6:20 *You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

1 Tim 6:20 *Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge.*

1 Pet 4:10 *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.*

3. Believers are to *serve by speaking the Word of God*. This would include such gifts as teaching, preaching, exhortation, prophesy and the other gifts that involve proclaiming the Word of God. Note: we are to speak as one speaking the very words of God. This means two things. We are to speak for the Word of God and the Word of God alone, and we are to let God speak through us. We are to depend upon God to do the speaking, totally depend upon Him.

Mat 28:20 *"And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

1 Cor 14:3 *But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.*

Eph 4:11 *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers.*

2 Tim 4:2 *Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction.*

Titus 1:9 *He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.*

Titus 2:11-15 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-*

controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.

4. Believers are to *serve by ministering with the strength of God*. This would include such gifts as hospitality, visiting, mercy, giving and the other gifts of ministering to people. Note: the believer who ministers is to do it in the ability and strength of the Lord. This also means that we minister acknowledging that our strength and ability come from God and from Him alone.

The point is this: How can we handle and conquer suffering in this life? By living under the climax of history. By being so occupied and set upon our ministry and task upon earth that nothing deters or sidetracks us. We are to be obsessed with God's gift and call, with the mission and task He has given us. We are to be so obsessed that absolutely nothing, not even suffering and persecution, can keep us from using God's gifts and from completing our task and mission.

Mat 10:42 *"And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."*

Gal 6:10 *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

1 Chr 16:2 *On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.*

2 Cor 9:7 *Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

James 1:27 *Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*

5. Believers are to *serve so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ*. This is the sole aim of the believer. He does not preach or teach to draw attention and gain a name for himself. He proclaims God's Word in order to glorify God through Jesus Christ. He does not minister, visit and give to secure recognition, honour or praise. He ministers to stir praise and thanksgiving to God in the name of Jesus Christ. God and Christ alone deserve all the praise and dominion throughout the universe. No man deserves this: God alone is sovereign.

Mat 5:16 *"In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*

John. 15:8 *“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”*

Rom 15:6 *So that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 Cor 6:20 *You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

Heb 13:15 *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise the fruit of lips that confess his name.*

1 Pet 2:9 *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

Psa 9:11 *Sing praises to the Lord, enthroned in Zion; proclaim among the nations what he has done.*

Psa 67:3 *May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. ■*