

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.
-

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. ■*