

The End Is Near! Therefore Follow God's Plan of Action

by Fika J van Rensburg

The sermon emphasizes the urgency of the end times and encourages believers to actively follow God's plan of action through love and service.

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:7-11

Topics: "End Times", "Christian Living"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses God's plan of action for believers from the present moment until the end of all things. The sermon is based on 1 Peter 4 and emphasizes the urgency of the hour. The speaker highlights the importance of being clear-minded and self-controlled in order to pray effectively. The sermon also emphasizes the command to love one another deeply, putting the needs of others before our own. Additionally, the speaker encourages believers to use their gifts to serve others and to speak as if they are speaking the very words of God. The sermon concludes with the reminder to praise God in all things through Jesus Christ.

Transcript

My first love, I love the whole Bible. But when one specializes in a certain area, then you develop a deep love for that area. The same goes for your relationship with persons, be it with God or with other persons very close to you.

Picking up on the theme that Kwasisa Bantu has established for our conference, I chose this portion of scripture from 1 Peter 4. And if you, as I see you have your Bibles with you, keep it ready. But I will also give the English text of every time I speak will be on the screen. So I think between the screen and your own Bible you will be able to follow.

This part of scripture starts with the very strong statement. The end of all things is near. And it's much the same as the theme of our conference, the urgency of the hour.

The very next word in this part of scripture is therefore. So we can have the expectation that what follows builds on, it is the consequence of the statement that the end is near. And then there follows four verses and it ends in the middle of verse 11 with the words, in this way you must praise God in all things through Jesus Christ.

And we will spend the next hour actually discussing on the one hand this statement in verse 7. And then also discovering what the therefore, the content of the therefore in the rest of verse 7 and verse 8 through to 11. So the theme of our session this morning is the end of all things is near. Therefore follow God's plan of action.

In this way praising God in all things through Jesus Christ. Now let us start. So four verse seven, the very first words are the end of all things is near.

Now maybe I just want to ask Marius something. Marius, can I move around with the microphone? It will work. The words the end of all things is near, as we speak about that, I also want to convey to you, can I say in a way to empower you, how one can safeguard yourself against making a misinterpretation of the Bible.

A mistake one can make is to jump too easily from what is written in the Bible to today. So first of all, I want to look at the meaning of those words back then, 2000 years ago in the country we now know as Turkey. What was the situation of the persons to whom the letter is addressed? Blessing, can you hit the space bar once please? The space bar.

And once more, what is important is just two verses prior to verse seven. We read, but they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. If we want to be true to the message of this portion of 1 Peter, we are now going to first establish what did Peter, the Holy Spirit through Peter, say to the people in Turkey.

When we jump too easily to today, the words, the end of all things are near may sound like a warning. But it is very clear in 1 Peter it is not intended as a warning, it is intended as an encouragement. So listening to this message, it is not a matter of being frightened for the end, but just the opposite, longing for the end.

I will explain. What was the circumstances of the addressees of the letter? They were having difficult times, bad persons were discriminating against them, they did not have citizenship, they were completely open to victimization. And now the Holy Spirit encourages them to keep on doing good.

And to give perspective, we read the words of verse five. Those bad people, those persons making your life here hell, don't worry, it will not persist, it will not be permanent. You can't take them to court, the police will not even listen to you.

But you can know, they will have to give account to God. And then we read, who is ready, he is now ready to judge the living and the dead. So brothers and sisters, can you see the positive slant to the words, the end of all things is near.

It is addressed to persons and may we count ourselves amongst them. Who is longing for the return of Christ. In the end of Revelations we read, come bridegroom, your bride awaits.

Now if we come to our situation today. Of course, the word of God addresses all circumstances in every era, in every century. But as we proceed, we will keep in mind this positive stance on the fact that the end of all things is near.

Brothers and sisters, if you knew the end is here in six months. Today it is the 4th of March. And if we had the ability to know as Ernest has shown us some signs, that maybe, or not maybe, that definitely the 4th of September will see the end of all things.

What will your plans be for the next six months? We don't know when the end of all things will come. But we know two things. The end comes when I meet Christ.

That can happen in one of two ways. Either by him returning to earth. Or if it is within his counsel that I die before that time, then I will be with him.

Now I know the end of all things is near. How will you typify your own life? How will you compare your life with something in nature? And I want to use two images. A leaf from a tree.

And a hawk. It's an eagle. How, if you look at your life at present, and especially after this conference, will you compare it, will it look like a leaf falling from a tree? What does usually happen to a leaf falling from a tree? It goes anywhere.

You will see it go down, and maybe the wind will make it turn in circles, and it will go and land somewhere. If your life is without a plan, then that is how the rest of your life will look until the end of all things. It is just a matter of the leaf has loosened its attachment to the tree, and it is going somewhere.

Or maybe your life is at present like a hawk sitting high in a tree. And this hawk, you, is expecting the return of Christ. But is sitting in anticipation, waiting.

Christ will come and then all my troubles will be gone, but I will sit and wait for Him. Is your life like that? It must be like a hawk, but not sitting on the tree. It must be like a hawk diving down on its prey.

In your life, you must have a very clear target, and everything you do must be geared towards reaching that target. This portion of Scripture wants to, if you are like a leaf today, it wants to move you. Maybe you are already a hawk, but maybe you are waiting for Christ to return passively.

Expect that this Scripture will empower you with a plan of action, God's plan of action, so that everyone witnessing your life will become very clear to that person, this man, this woman has a specific target and is going all out for that target. A plan of action. Now, we can use many models, theories about a plan of action, but I want to use one such model.

At the very far end is the goal. And that goal, you will see, is not tangible. You cannot touch it.

You cannot take a photo of it. But then, moving back, there is an objective. It is the step just prior to reaching the goal.

And it is tangible. You can touch it, you can describe it, you can take a photo of it. Then, moving even closer to where I am now, there are strategies to enable you to reach the objective.

And then, actually where my hands and my feet touch the ground, there are actions. And if you have now lost me, don't worry. Because the rest of our minds working together will be about explaining this plan of action.

My starting point is, we have in these five verses, we have God's plan of action from today to the end of all things for you. Now, two applications. First of all, although you are a minister of the word, this plan of action is in the first place for you as an individual person.

So you must do two things as you listen. On the one hand, what is God saying to me about my life? And on the other hand, my congregation or the project which God has mandated me to do. So that is the

second application of this plan of action.

As you put your mind to what we will be doing now, grasp both. On the one hand, what is God saying to me? My name is Ruth Pullman. And what is God saying to me? On the other hand, God has mandated me, God has entrusted either a congregation or maybe a project, maybe here at Kwasi Zabantu, I have a specific task.

I will be applying this plan of action to both areas. Just to put a picture in your mind, we have the goal. Then on the way to the goal, we have the objective.

On the way to the objective, we have different strategies. And for each strategy, there are different actions. Now, let us read this portion of Scripture.

I will read every verse, blessing, and then you repeat the Zulu, please. Verse 7. Verse 8. Verse 9. Verse 10. If anyone serves, you should do it with the strength God provides.

In this way, you must praise God in all things through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

God's plan of action. The goal is clear from the middle part of verse 11. In this way, you must praise God in all things through Jesus Christ.

So we can say that the goal, the very end of the whole plan, where everything heads, where everything points, is to praise God in all things. My life, that is the target where the hawk is diving towards. To be able to do that, I have to have an objective.

And this objective is stated clearly in the second part of verse 7. It's a very clear command. Be clear-minded and self-controlled. Just a few brief words about what that means.

How can your mind be clouded so that it is not clear? The easy one to identify is when you abuse drugs, whether it is alcohol or other chemical drugs. What does alcohol and other drugs do? It clouds your mind. It disables you to be able to discern what is wrong, what is right.

Some translations in English, I don't know what the Zulu says, even has for be clear-minded it has be sober. Is that what your translation says? Be sober. But putting alcohol and other drugs aside is the easy part of this exhortation.

There is something else that can cloud your mind, that takes away clear-mindedness. And that is when you are too busy. When your program is too full.

When you are so busy with the things of the Lord that you have no time for the Lord of the things. I know I sin in this regard. But Peter knows me well and he knows my sin.

If you are a hawk with the clear target, then there comes this admonishment today. Make sure that you are not overextending yourself. You are not having too busy a schedule.

If you are not clear-minded, then you are forced into crisis management. And we know what crisis management is. You don't do the important things, you just do the urgent things.

Today the Lord is halting you in your tracks and telling you, if you want to reach the goal, be clear-minded. Check your schedule. And if there are things that clocks it, repent.

Your prayer should be, Lord, show me those things that I must retain in my schedule. Those things that I must weed out, put aside, on the margin. The second part of the objective is be self-controlled.

Actually, it's not a good English word, self-controlled. For a person born again, what does self-control mean? Self-control means the Holy Spirit is in control of my life. Obeying this command means that before I do something, before I agree to do something, I will first ask, what is the guidance of the Spirit on this matter? To the extent that I have reached this objective of being clear-minded and self-controlled, there will be a specific result.

And it stands in the end of verse 7, so that you can pray. I'm sure you will nod your head in agreement. When you are not clear-minded, when you have a speed wobble in your life, you cannot pray.

You don't even have the ability to really listen to your wife or your husband or your children. How can you listen to God? Maybe you are experiencing a low ebb in your prayer life. And this could be the reason.

You are not clear-minded, you are not self-controlled. We have the objective. The objective to reach the goal is clear-mindedness and self-control.

Now our scripture portion gives three strategies to reach this objective. Let's look at the first strategy. Verse 8, above all, love each other deeply.

It's such a clear command. I need only recapitulate, just a short summary. This type of love means the best for the object of my love, the best for you, not for me.

In what I'm doing, I'm motivated by what is best for you. And you will see this command ends with the words, deeply. May I ask, Blessing, what is the deeply? How will you translate it from the Zulu into English? In Zulu it says the unended love.

Unended, which is better than the English. I want to explain. That deeply actually means while extending yourself.

It means without throwing in the towel. It means I will not stop loving when I don't get acknowledgement from the other party. So it is not love on an emotional level, deeply, so that you have a warm feeling in yourself.

Rather it is, remember, to love is hard work. It is tiring work and you have to have energy so that you can keep it up. There is a reason for this command stated very clearly.

Because love covers over a multitude of sins. We must understand this clearly. This does not mean love covers up sin in the way that to allow it to fester like a bad cut.

But it means that I will not highlight the deficiencies and the sins of my brother or sister. Rather I will cover it not for that person but for other persons for the world. Love will force me to go to that person in private and to say, this thing you did, I covered it for you, for the outside people, but it is wrong.

But this reason also has a kickback. When I act in love, my love also covers my sins. Let me explain.

If in my relationship with Phil Mulefe, I will make the mistake to address him as Mulefe, and not as Phil. If I do this outside of love, he will have reason to be cross with me. But if I do it in love, my love will cover this sin, this mistake.

So you see, your love covers two ways. It covers the sins of other people, but it also covers the sin of the lover. That is the first strategy, love each other.

The second strategy we have in the very next verse. Verse 9, offer hospitality to one another. Again here, before we interpret it for our own situation, we must go back to millennia.

What does hospitality mean? It means to welcome strangers in your house. Back in the first century, the Christians had to travel long distances and they were dependent on the hospitality of fellow Christians at their point of arrival. So listening to this strategy, making this strategy part of your life is, make space under your roof for fellow Christians in need of a roof.

Obedying this command in a literal sense is easier than obeying it in a figurative sense. To offer hospitality means to make space for somebody to be part of your circle of friends. You know how an intimate circle of friends, you enjoy each other, you understand each other, you share so much.

And it is a sacrifice to open up this comfortable circle to a stranger. But we see the clear command. It is the second strategy.

You cannot bypass this command and think you will reach the point of being clear-minded and self-controlled. And there is a condition for your hospitality stated clearly. You must show hospitality without grumbling.

What is grumbling in Zulu? Okonona. Does it mean you moan and you say it is such hard work? Complaining. How often do we not do this? We show hospitality and we have a mask of a smile and being friendly.

But inside your heart or maybe to your closest friend you will say, I am so sick and tired of those people. Obeying this command means that you show the characteristic of God who has given you a spiritual roof, a place in His house without grumbling. That was the second strategy, offer hospitality.

The third one is in the next verse. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others. What God has given to you is not for your benefit.

He is using you like an instrument, like a tool to do work through you to another person. You are just the manager. You don't own it, you don't benefit from it.

Others must benefit from it. And the rest of the verse says how it should be used. Faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

That word administering actually means to do the slave work. My Lord is giving me something, His grace. And His command to me is go and serve my people with this grace.

So we can say the third strategy is that you should use your gift to serve others. Now we have to move one level down. I don't know in Zulu, but in English there is the good idiom that says, now the tire hits the tar.

Now it is the time at this stage, stop talking, start doing. Action. We can say, now I have all the tools.

I have my spade, I have a wheelbarrow, I know what to do, I know how to do it. Now I must do it. In a wonderful way, the Spirit has guided Peter to give for the third strategy, two actions.

Maybe it is like a good teacher giving one example and then leaving the other two for us to show that we can find it by ourselves. The third strategy is use your gift to serve others. And the first action is the beginning of verse 11, if anyone speaks, and this speak actually means to bring the word, to preach.

You should do it as one speaking the very words of God. What does this action entail? Have the gift of speaking the word of God, of preaching. It must be more or less everybody.

The guideline here is, when you speak, in a way you must become transparent, you must disappear. Although the people hear your voice, it must be the word of God that appeals to them. The second action is another gift stated in the rest of verse 11, if anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides.

Now this word serves has a specific meaning. We can say it is a technical term. It is the gift of ministering to other people.

Let's give a few examples that will be the most clear. It would be like preparing meals, it would be like doing the dishes, it would be like preparing this hall for the conference. Those kind of activities.

So we can say that these two examples of action plans, the one is on the side of speaking, and the other one is on the other side of doing, working with the hands. To do this kind of manual work is hard work, it takes a lot of strength. And therefore the command is, do it with the strength God provides.

So we can say we have these two actions. Now what about actions for strategy one? And at this stage, blessing, I want, now we must join. The big teacher, the Holy Spirit through Peter, has given us two examples of actions for the third strategy.

Now we want actions for the first strategy. It must be very practical. You have the Spirit in you.

You have come to this conference with the prayer that the Lord will open new vistas to you in your ministry. Now share with us, where do you stand? Where you sit, you can just put up your hand and give an example of what you think can be an action, a very concrete thing that you can do or that you can mobilize your congregation to do. Let me make it even easier.

As you sit, just turn to each other, four or five or six persons, discuss this matter. I give you two minutes. Two minutes.

I praise the Lord for your enthusiasm. I must share with you, maybe you know it, but enthusiasm actually means to have the Spirit in you. For other people, enthusiasm will just mean to really feel strong about something.

For us as Christians, it means more than that. Let's hear the first action, please. May I first ask your name, please? Jane Bata.

Jane, can you share with us one very concrete something that you are doing or that you plan to do? Thank you, Jane. Can we have another contribution, another action? Let us take the lady in front. We'll come to

you second.

This is Pastor Annie Mollet from the RDC. Annie Mollet, Pastor. As an action, as soon as I return from my country, from the RDC, I will organize the restitution of this conference in my local church to testify my love for the Christians.

When I will be back, I will bring all the summary of these conferences to bring and to show the love of the Christians. Because the urgency of the hour is just concerned those who are staying in the RDC. When I will be back, I will retribute what I have heard during this conference because of the love of the Gospel.

Can we ask your name too, please? Annie Mollet, Pastor Annie Mollet. I am Srita Subrayan. See, the love of God is abroad in our hearts.

Without the Lord, we can do nothing. So, with that love, we reach out to others, the untouched. We do not see color or creed.

We want to reach out. We want to offer our hospitality to them. Suppose the orphans or the people that are living nearby that are perishing without God.

We offer our hospitality by offering them food, clothing, whatever help we can do. We have to do it in our hometown first, those who are living around us. Then we can reach out to the others too.

God will make a way for us. God has given us a gift to serve others. And each one of us has that gift to do something in a little way, whatever God has placed in our hand.

With that little, we can. When we start this with this little, God will provide. Our first step we take, and God will take 10 steps towards this.

Thank you, Srita. Now, let us do the very same with the second strategy. In a way, Srita, you have already introduced us to the hospitality, offer hospitality.

But now I ask you, let us again, two minutes, speak about and try to make it very concrete. You remember the two big areas of hospitality. The one is literal, to give space in your own house.

But the other one, which is more difficult, I think, is to, in a figurative sense, bring people into your circle of friends. Thank you. Two minutes.

Brothers and sisters, we have received good advice from one of the Baba. Maybe we can, in the contributions we will receive now, we have five minutes. And we open it up on both of the strategies.

The first one is quite easy, to be hospitable in your house. To reach out to strangers is more difficult. But we have learned something from Baba Fundisi, which we would like to share to you.

We were on holiday at the beach, and all those in the flat had a braai, a barbecue together. And then two people from the street came to the braai place to sell something to us. And my first reaction was, please, this is private, we have a barbecue.

Thank you. But Uncle Erlu invited them to join us for the braai place, and Tante K was still alive, they gave them a chair to sit, and she offered them food in this way. That food for us illustrates to accommodate other people.

Thank you very much, Dr. Van Rensburg. In the first place, we must be careful whenever we see people and say sometimes, this one is stranded, or is what, what, and then you must be very, very careful. Sometimes you might invite people who are going to slaughter you in the night.

What to do if you find quite strange people paying you a visit? Try to call one of the brethren or your neighbor. Be clear with the people that you are communicating with. You'll save your life.

There is one lady that nearly hanged herself six months ago. She was pregnant. She cried, she phoned me, I don't know her, never met her before.

That is the offer of hospitality. I asked if she had a mom. Immediately, the cell phone she was using was sent over to her mom.

Then I invited them to come to my house and directed them how they should drive with the transport that was coming on. Then I had to collect them to a point where I know I will find them. Brought them back to my house.

She was crying. Asked her mom then to leave her. Here is my wife, she was with me here.

I asked her that really we take this poor girl in. We are going to pray for her and we are going to counsel her. On our way as we were coming, she phoned and said mom, I have given birth to a girl.

She wanted to do the abortion because I am totally against abortion. Another strategy we have been commissioning with the moms here. Let us allow those sometimes if one has killed your son or your daughter or anyone if he has been imprisoned.

It is our duty to go to the different families to communicate them together. We have so many youngsters who have repented right in jail. I even want to say that we have one here with us now.

He was a druggist alcoholic. It is not just two weeks that I have been with him. He was just telling me yesterday, I so wish to stay at this place.

If I had to work here, because this is what we call the rehabilitation of heaven. That is why we have a problem in our country. We have so many cripples.

I am offering my car. Every Sunday she is doing the cooking for some. Some are using because some ministers, they reject those who have walking stick.

We are paralyzed with small children. We collect clothing. We do everything to help them.

This is what I have learned since I have been attending here. This is now my 7th year coming to Ubaba. No, 8th year.

I have learned a lot. I am happy to be with all the happy pastors and happy mothers. Because what I know in life, people used to say this is black, this is white.

But here to me it is like heaven. I have men who have joined me now. I have men who have joined by coming here.

Thank you very much. It is more than I can say. Last one.

First strategy, action. We as scholars, blacks and Indians should go to the Africans, go to the whites and share love and the gospel. Thank you.

We should have had an hour or more time. But Peter is a very strong manager. And while we are not really in heaven, we have to keep an eye on the watch.

The urgency of this whole matter is so clear. The end of all things is near. I trust each of you can say I have learned.

I long for the end but I will not wish the time to pass quickly because I know I have work to do. I won't be like a leaf just ending up somewhere. I will be like a hawk with a clear target in my eye and I will be heading there.

And while I wait for the end of all things, I am not afraid because I have security. I feel safe in God's grace. Just turn one page back in 1 Peter 1.5 And there we read this wonderful reassurance.

Through faith you are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. If I can paint a picture in your mind, here you are this hawk diving down on the target and you are enclosed by the grace of God. No arrow, no bullet, no knife can get at you.

I know I am shielded. And even if my judgment fails me and it happens that I invite a slaughterer into my house who will kill me, then I know this bad person can only kill my body. I will live forever.

God's plan of action just to wrap it up. The objective to which we strive is be clear-minded and self-controlled. The first strategy, love each other.

The second strategy, offer hospitality. The third strategy, use your gift to serve. And I will go back, even maybe tonight before I fall asleep and I will work out action plans.

I will make a list for each of the strategies. And when I am back with my congregation, maybe I will organize a mini-conference and I will get this presentation from Kwasi Zabantu and I will help the people in my congregation to work out God's plan of action for each individual and for my congregation. In this way, I want to reach the goal.

And I quote, in this way you must praise God in all things through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

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