

The Last Time

by Ralph Sexton

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being prepared for the last time, when God's presence will be withdrawn and darkness will prevail, and the need for a fresh anointing from God to escape the darkness.

Duration: 33:34

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 5:5, 1 Peter 1:1, 1 Peter 1:4, Jude 1:6

Topics: "Salvation", "Marriage"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a powerful story about a Russian mini-sub that got caught in a fishing net 620 feet under the ocean. The sailors struggled to free themselves but only became more entangled. They faced darkness, fear, and a lack of water and power. However, their friends on top managed to hook a rope to the sub and pull them up to safety. The preacher uses this story to emphasize the importance of not taking our loved ones for granted and to encourage listeners to step upon the serpent (representing the devil) through the power of God's holy words. He also highlights the fleeting nature of life and urges husbands to be loving and tender towards their wives. The sermon concludes with a call for people to take their relationship with God seriously and to seize the opportunity to come back to Him or serve Him wholeheartedly.

Transcript

I want you to take your Bible tonight and turn with me, if you would, to the book of Jude. Jude chapter number 1, verse number 6. Jude verse 6. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, notice those next two words, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. Now turn with me back in the New Testament to 1 Peter chapter number 1. 1 Peter chapter number 1. And in 1 Peter chapter 1, I'll begin reading in verse number 4, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for who? For you, who are kept, I like this phrase, by the power of God.

I've been working on some thoughts about the power of God, but I like the fact that He is a God of power. He's not a God that's out of business. He's not a God you're going to impeach.

And He's not a God that's going to resign. He's a God of power. And you have yet to see the power that He will demonstrate in the days that are to come.

But let me encourage you with this verse. Who are kept by the power of God, how? Through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed, notice this phrase, in the last time, wherein you great rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. The last few days, the Lord has been dealing with my heart about the thought that we just read there in 1 Peter, the last time, the last time.

I got in trouble with all these allergies and we'd been going for about 41 or 42 days straight and got all irritated and all the rain and the mold in the mountains. And then I got a sinus infection on top of that. And before I knew it, I was sick and with a fever and in the bed.

And I got to thinking, you know, all these weird germs going around and the antibiotics, you know, it didn't seem to respond. And we ended up the Jubilee and I was still battling this in the week after the Jubilee. And then I think, well, you know, it's going to clean up.

Tent meeting is getting ready to start and it's getting worse. And so I don't go to church on Sunday and I'm thinking, well, I'll just pray and rest and I'll be able to go down to the tent meeting and, and that Trinity crowd, they'll just be praying for me and they'll understand. And it's, it's worse and it's worse.

And in that room for those four or five days, I got to thinking about that phrase, the last time. Now in the context of 1 Peter, it's talking about that you and I are going to go through a period of time that are alive here. When Jesus comes back, that'll be known as the last days or the last time.

And that we've gone, uh, we're going to experience a trying of our faith. You're not going to serve God in the world today that we're in 2005 peaking into 2006. You're not going to serve God on your emotions or your feelings.

You better know that Bible. You better know what the Bible teaches. You better know what you believe, not what aunt Lucy told your uncle Bill told you.

You better know that you and God have a working relationship that, you know, he's alive and well, and he's in your heart and you believe that book. That's why the devil's after the authority of the word of God. That's why he wants to pollute the authority of the word of God.

That's why he wants to water down the authority of the word of God is because we are headed into that last time. And men's hearts are going to be failing them for fear. By the way, that's already happening.

You know, they were on the news today. They've had 200, uh, people die over the last decade or so with this weird amoeba and killed two little boys over the weekend. And about the longest you live with it is about three days.

And, uh, out of the 200 that have, uh, contracted this amoeba out of warm standing, stagnant water, only two people have lived. So there's not a high survival rate. And then they're talking about the avian flu, that if it continues to mutate, that we could be experiencing a pandemic, uh, episode around the world.

And then they're talking about war and rumors of war and terrorism. I'll just clue you in. They're already experiencing men's hearts, failing them for fear.

Mamas and daddies are afraid to go to the mall and take their own babies out. Afraid to go let your child play in the backyard because the predators have been turned loose in our society. We're already walking into that period of time, but the burden that's on my heart is no, not so much the time that we're walking into, but it's that all of us are presented with last time when I was in that room and I was thinking about how, uh, only a preacher can identify with this.

But if you're supposed to be somewhere to preach, only a preacher knows how you want to go preach. And then it got into that room, you know, well, you know, if God doesn't touch that old flesh, you've preached your last time. And I got to praying for this meeting and I got to asking God, I said, God, you know, my sanity always is in your sovereignty, but I'll have to confess God.

I can't figure out what you're doing or what you're trying to do. I love you. We've worked hard.

We pray Greg's down there. Greg used to be 382 pounds before this meeting started and look at it. He sweated everything off.

I mean, it's been unbelievable. And then you wonder, well, what's going to happen? Why are you doing what you're doing? And as I, uh, prayed and prayed for you and I prayed for the area pastors and I prayed for the board members and these churches that are working hard. I got to thinking about that phrase over and over Monday, Tuesday, every day, last time, last days, one day be the last day.

And then I got to thinking and, and you think with me, have you ever considered the thought that one day you will eat your last breakfast. One day you'll have your last breakfast for all. You know, you had your last breakfast today.

One day you'll have your last lunch. I don't know when you don't know when, but one day you'll have your last lunch. You'll have your last supper.

One day you'll go to work for the last time and you'll be on the job. You'll drive your car for the last time. I remember as my dad was sick and we left the neurosurgeon and the doctor had just told my dad that you are terminal and, uh, looked him in the eye and say, there's no way you can live.

This brain tumor will kill you. And on the way home, he said, you know what, son, I, I guess I've preached for the last time I've driven my car for the last time. And I got to thinking about it.

All it takes is one little old medical report, one phone call, one scan. That's all it takes. Just takes one intersection with a drunk driver.

That's all. It doesn't take a lot for that last. All it takes, you know, uh, the other day there was a family at Lake Lanier and they started to roll up some big old thunderclouds.

And they, they started, uh, they were having a family reunion there outside of Atlanta. And, uh, it started to thunder off on the horizon and they started grabbing up the stuff and said, let's go get in the shelter. And one of the teenage girls, uh, uh, about 18, 19 years old, she picked up her little niece, 17 months old.

And as they were scurrying to get in the shelter, a lightning bolt hit and kill that teenage girl and that 17 month old baby, a lightning bolt. You begin to think about one of these days, the last time I will ever be inside a church. I'll be in the last time I will attend church.

But you see what God's dealing with. All of us is the fact of the last time, the last time. Can you imagine with me for just a moment that one of these days, uh, God, the Holy ghost is going to deal with arts Dale for the last time.

Have you ever thought about that? The last time the Holy spirit of God will go up and down the streets of high point and say, I'm going to come through here one more time. And if anybody wants to go to heaven, I'll be coming through one more time. I'll be troubling the water.

I'll be stirring the leaves one more time. I'm going to walk through Greensboro. I'm going to come through Charlotte one day.

God, the Holy ghost will make his last trip through every neighborhood. It'll be the last time. Could it be the last time? Could this be the last meeting that God gives us the opportunity as a community? I don't know if you understand how unusual you are.

I don't know if you understand what it, what a rarity you are in today's world to have an old dinosaur, like a gospel TNF having a community meeting churches and pastors working together, people getting off work and driving to a gospel tent. Do you understand how rare you are? Do you understand how unusual this is? Could it be the last place? It couldn't be the last intersection before the lamb of God comes back, that God's going to trouble the land one more time and visit with his divine presence at an outpouring. Could it be that God's allowed us to be a part of that last visit? You see, it's a sobering thing to me.

The last time God will ever deal with my family. When's the last time God dealt with your family? When's the last time God talked to your son or your daughter? When's the last time God woke up your grandson or your granddaughter? When's the last time God got ahold of your best friend? When's the last time you pushed away from the dinner table and said, I don't believe I'll eat today, but I believe I'll go back there in the back or I'll go over in the break room and I'll get on my place and I'm going to intercede with the Holy God that God at you, within mercy, said revival one more time. And that our little town, our street, our neighborhood, our local church, one more time before King Jesus come could have the visitation of an almighty God.

The last time, you see, before we get out of this tent, the trumpet of God could sound. We're that close to the coming of the Lord. Later in the week, maybe Wednesday night, I want to tell you about a new alliance that was just announced about three 30 in the morning over in the Middle East.

You won't believe how close we are to the imminent return of the King. Yet the devil has the church of the living God in America intoxicated on the wild pleasures of this world, trying to see how close we can walk with the world and play with the world and look like the world and be like the world make sinners comfortable in the house of the Holy God, the King of Israel, the Lord God Almighty, while the blood of lost men, women, boys, and girls are running down the gutters in front of our street and the church finds itself with no power or no authority. Oh, we need a revival.

We need God to shake the church, to shake God's men, shake God's women, shake the teenagers in the church, shake the families. God stir us one more time. Don't let this be the last time you'll deal with our hearts or our lives.

Don't let this be the last day you'll walk by my house. Don't let it be the last hour I'll ever feel your presence. Oh God in wrath.

Remember mercy. God touches one more time. If God pulls off of us and he leaves us, who's going to intervene for the heart of America? Are we going to be cast away in a land of prosperity? We've never had better cars, never had finer homes, never worn better clothes.

We've never eaten more calories and yet we have less power with God than any generation of Christians that have ever lived. When God pulls away from us, will we experience the last light? Will we experience the last love of God? The last touch of God? Will we experience what we need in this generation? Will we see the hand of God pulling off of us? I wonder how will we experience that pulling away period? If we bowed our heads and we closed our eyes and if we started seeing nothing but darkness, what would we experience tonight? Would it be a warning of where the darkness is beginning in this day, in this generation? The darkness of the heart, the darkness of the family, the darkness of the church, the darkness of the community, the darkness that's hitting America. What are we going to experience? What are we going to face as the people of God? I begin to think how we've been snared in sin.

I begin to think how we've been caught up in the things of this world. We got caught in the devil's trap. The coils of sin sickness have wrapped around our heart and around our life.

How can we tonight face tomorrow's rising sun knowing that we played church and we played religion? How can we go through another day or another night without the power of God and that thirst to get our soul, oh God, touch me one more time. God, break my heart one more time. I really believe tonight we need the presence of God more than we need air in our lungs, more than we need blood in our veins.

We need the power of God back upon our hearts and lives. Have you noticed our society has been caught up into a gothic society? We're fascinated with darkness. We're fascinated with the things of this world.

We're caught up with the dark side of life. We're feasting on the bad. We're feasting on the death, the dying.

The most popular movies for our kids are the pain, the suffering, the horror, the torture, the slice and dice. The heart has already been given over to the darkness of this old world. I wonder tonight, has that darkness began? Has it already begun to invade even the house of the Lord because we've lost our tears and our tenderness towards the holy God? When I begin to think about 2 Peter 2, 4, notice what the word of God says in 2 Peter 2, 4. It says, For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.

Ladies and gentlemen, when you begin to think about what darkness has done to America, what darkness is doing to families, what darkness is doing to churches, we've got people that are sitting on our church pews, but yet they're wrapped in chains of darkness, sitting in the house of God. We've got people walking with us to the workplace and they're caught up with chains of darkness. We've got people that live next door to us and they're caught up in chains of darkness.

The only hope that we have is that God's presence would come back on the individual, on the church, on the house of God, on the family of God, and His light would break those chains of darkness. People aren't going to listen to me. They're not going to listen to you.

They're not going to listen to Baptist. They're not going to listen to Presbyterian. They're not going to listen to preacher.

They're not going to listen to Sunday school teacher. They're not going to listen to daddy. They're not going to listen to grandmother.

But if the power of God comes on the land and the Holy Ghost of God begins to breathe, then men will melt at the voice and the power of this Holy God. We've got to have His presence. We've got to have His power.

The only way we can escape the darkness is the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, the chains of darkness. Jude 6 says, I don't know if you caught the phrasing of that in Jude 6, but the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains. Then notice the next part of that phrase, under darkness, under darkness.

There's no way for you to get out from under the darkness unless the Lord God Almighty gets you out. You can't turn over enough new leaves to get out. And God's warning you here tonight.

He's saying, well, one more time, maybe the last time, you need to lay down that sin crowd. A lot of you said, I'll do good. You come to revival and you say, I want to do better.

And you'll come to tent meeting last year, years ago, I'll do better. But you're not willing to turn loose of that old crowd. And until you get some new friends, you're not going to be walking in life.

You've got to have the power of God to break those chains of darkness. You can't go to the same old places, run around with the same old crew and expect to bear the fruit of being a child of God. We've got to have a new walk, a new talk.

We've got to have a new attitude. We got to have a new fellowship. That's the only way.

And those of us that are saved, we got to beg God to give us a fresh anointing and God give us a new touch. Make my soul thirsty for your presence and your power. God, I don't want to walk in last year's walk.

I don't want to read in last year's book, but God, I want a fresh anointing upon your word and upon my life and upon this day and hour that I'm in. We've got to have it. What's going to set us free? If not, the church is going to meet Jesus at the second coming under darkness.

We're going to be bound up by the things of this old world and bondage. And you know what's killing a lot of our pulpits is that we've gotten caught up in a man fearing spirit. We're wondering what some other preacher will think or some other church will think instead of being obedient and tender to the holy things of God.

Last time. Christian, is this the last time God's going to deal with you? You say I'm saved. You just call me Christian.

To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is what? Sin. First Corinthians 5.5. If I refuse to walk in the light after salvation and I know to do right and I don't do right, he said, First Corinthians 5.5, I'll turn you over to Satan for the destruction of your flesh. He didn't say you lose your salvation or your soul.

He said, I'll take your tabernacle out. I don't want any more other weak Christians stumbling over your half-hearted, inconsistent ways. See, that's the Christians.

And then what did he say to the lost? He said to the lost that you shouldn't harden your neck. He that be an author and prove hardened his neck shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy, without a cure. He said today is the day of salvation.

So the last time God will come by your chair, the last time God will come by your house, the last time God will deal with your family, last time God will talk to your husband, your wife, last time God will talk to your son, your daughter. Is this the last time, is this the last meeting where God's going to give you an opportunity to get your lost family in? A lot of you would even invite your friend or neighbors to come, but you're embarrassed to even invite them to an old-fashioned tent meeting. They'll think I'm a holy roller.

I almost said something to my boss about inviting him to the tent meeting, and before I could get anything out, he said, have you heard her down there with that snake-handling fella down there at the archdale? Well, he handles snakes, but he's called Slewfoot. Well, we need to understand the devil's a serpent. And God's people ought to step upon the serpent in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ through the power of God's holy word.

Is this the last time God's going to deal with your house, your family? I interviewed that mother on the radio today, a little nine-year-old boy out in Oklahoma just went swimming, and that amoeba got into his brain just a matter of hours, and that child's gone. I thought, the last time they talked, I'm driving down the road, the last time they laughed, the last time they hugged, the last time they kissed. Husband, you might ought to be sweet to your wife.

You might ought to be tender. You might ought to tell her you love her. You might ought to tell her you care about her.

You don't know if you're going to wake up in the morning. I got a precious lady in my Sunday school class two years ago. She went to bed, her and her husband, they kissed, laid down, went to sleep.

Woke up the next morning, she slipped out not to wake him up, went in, made the coffee, started frying some eggs and bacon, went in to wake him up. He was gone home to be at the Lord, died in his sleep. One year later, almost to the month, her 36-year-old son came over to check on her, spent the night with her.

He died in his sleep. She said, Brother Ralph, I'll never forget what you told me about don't go to sleep without saying you love me, care about each other. The last time, a few hours ago last Thursday, a Russian mini-sub got caught in a fishing net 620 feet under the ocean.

They struggled and tried to get loose, forward thrust, back thrust, they tried to blow the ballast, they tried to use every part of that mini-sub to break it out. And the more they struggled and the more they maneuvered, the more entangled they got. Their batteries and power began to fall apart.

The lights went out. They had no way to process water. All of a sudden, they're rationing, there's no water.

Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, they can only have a swallow or two of water per sailor. They said it was cold, 40 degrees in that mini-sub. Their friends on top got a rope on them with a hook and snared, and they had the cheers and excitement as it pulled them up and started moving with them about 300 feet, and it became even more entangled.

And the rope broke, and they settled back down to the bottom, hopeless, without water, without lights, in that darkness and just the fear they'd seen the sun for the last time. They'd had their last warm cup of coffee. They'd had their last warm home-cooked meal.

They'd seen their wife and children's faces for the last time. There's no way to get out of this tangle. But a higher power over in Moscow got on the phone and said, could the Brits or the Japanese or the Americans, do you happen to have an undersea rescue vessel that could go and help these seven men that are in a hopeless, trapped, snared condition? And ships and planes began to respond.

And early Sunday morning, a Scorpion undersea rescue device went down, piloted by our robotics and video cameras, began to go in and cut that one-inch cable, began to cut that netting, and went to go down and take the tangles off. And those men that thought they'd seen the sun for the last time, thought they'd never be warm again, thought they'd never see their family again, they were set free, they were cut out of that tangle, and they came to the surface and are alive today because someone came to them. But if you'll think for just a minute, that's sort of the way you were.

You were out there on the sea of life, bobbing around with the toys and trinkets of this world. All of a sudden you got snared in the sea-end's big net, and you began to say, I don't want to be like this, I don't want to be on alcohol, I don't want to be on drugs, I don't want to be caught on the lust of the flesh. And you tried to come up on your own, you tried to turn over a new leaf, and you would do good for a few days, and then you'd settle back down to the bottom in despair, because your flesh had failed you again.

And your family and your friends said, you can make it, we'll get you in this program, and we'll get you with this group. And they drug you for about 300 feet, and you did good for a few hours, and then once again that old flesh took over, and you settled back down, and the coil of sin wrapped around your soul, and there you were in that darkness and hopelessness, and you were freezing outside of the love of God. But one day, up in another world, out of sight, there was a word came from the commander-in-chief for a rescue vessel to come down out of glory, and God's amazing grace began to pierce into the darkness of your sin, and grace and mercy began to cut away the coils of sin, and the snares of sin, and begin to liberate you.

And the blood of Jesus Christ burned you out of the coil of sin, and liberated you, and when nothing else could help, love lifted you. And God brought you to newness of life, and you had that opportunity to serve Him with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind. And God's given us an opportunity here tonight, one more time, maybe the last time, for God's people to get serious.

Maybe a last time for a prodigal son or daughter to come home. Maybe the last time the call will go out for a sinner, whosoever will, may come. The welcome mat of God's grace is out.

Porchlight of mercy is burning bright, looking for the wayfaring pilgrim, when nothing else could help, love lifted me. Let's bow our heads tonight.

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