

doom of the disobedient? **Verse 5** reminded us, "The Judge is ready." **Verse 7** warned, "The end is near." And here we're told that if "the saved are barely ready, the unsaved are anything but ready!"

Judgment is almost upon them. Consequently, we better be prepared to be solid Christian witnesses during our fiery ordeals *so that we can take as many people with us as we possibly can.*

Time is ticking. It's an urgent call: Allow your life in fiery suffering to be a light burning brightly in a dark world. Be prepared as a witness. You will be blessed, some will be _____ from the imminent impending judgment, and God will be glorified.

Do you believe?

Verse 19: I never want to be "surprised at the fiery ordeals that come upon me for my testing." Instead I want all my sufferings to be "according to God's will" because *I don't believe* in chance. So in every case of suffering, I will "_____ my soul to a faithful Creator while doing good" ... because *I believe* in sovereignty. *I believe* in God's will. So I'm suffering according to the will of God. How about you?

In Peter's **call to urgent living**, trust God and do what is right:

- Toward your own person, be free from your past.
- Toward the church, be serious about your service.
- Toward the world, be prepared as a witness.

A Call to Urgent Living

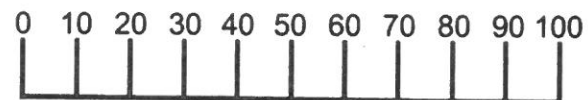
1 Peter 4

Life is short...

James was right, of course, when he wrote, "You are but a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away" (4:14). Life on earth is so short that the NT Scriptures compares our present life with the next and waves this one off as barely existing, not in quality but in quantity, not in importance but in _____.

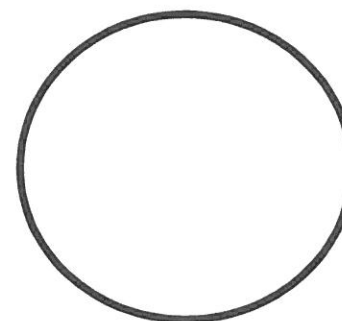
An accurate way to diagram the length of life is by using a time line...

A TIME LINE



Now contrast that with the circle diagram that represents life in heaven. Life in heaven is not a flat line that has a definite beginning and a definite ending, but is best represented by a never-ending circle. Once you enter into that circle you cannot cease to live.

AN ETERNAL CIRCLE



This message from God's Word to us today is a **biblical call to urgent living**. Since our lives here on earth are short, and since our eternity is forever, what are we going to give our lives to? Are we going to invest heavily in this realm or are we going to invest heavily in the eternal one? I pray that you will allow me to **call us all today to urgent living**.

A call to urgent living:

1. Be _____ from your past sinful life (1-6).

Verse 1: The theme of this inspired letter is *how to live in the power of grace as aliens in a hostile world where we encounter much suffering and pain on our way home*. And here the apostle states that since Christ has suffered, arm yourself also, preparing yourself for spiritual conflict and suffering. The reason: We Jesus-followers should know by now that the results of suffering for the faithful Christian is a break from sin, **because he who has effectively suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin**. It is a general law of a godly life, that suffering effectively _____ us away from the natural, sinful flesh (i.e., sin nature). Where suffering is accepted as vital to following in the footsteps of Christ and endured with a spiritual mindset, it results in a perfecting of character.

Verse 2: That is such a great word from God today. *From now on I will not be driven by my human passions but for the will of God*. Human passions are out; the ruling principle is the will of God.

Verse 3: Sins stated in this verse are not meant to be a comprehensive list, just a list that reminds you and me to be free from of *any* pursued sin that interferes with the will of God, *anything* that wastes time, *anything* that distracts from **the urgent higher call of God on your life**.

Verses 4-6: The Judge is _____! And everyone will give an account to Him—none will escape. The only hope for the spiritually dead is the gospel—only the gospel of Jesus Christ can deliver from spiritual death to spiritual life. And that's what this life is all about, *living in the Spirit according to the will of God*. So know today that life is too short and too eternally valuable to waste on worldly living.

2. Be _____ about your service to the church (7-11).

- _____ **for each other (7)**. Too many Christians are distracted by sin, fear, selfishness, worry, and on-coming life—too distracted to pray, to give time to prayer, to attend prayer meeting to pray.
- _____ **one another (8)**. “Above all” reminds us of the primacy of love. our divine love for one another is to be “earnest,” literally, *strained*, as a runner strains for the tape at the finish line, *strain in your love*, give it your all, stretch every fiber of your being.

- **Practice _____ to one another (9)**. In our day, in our culture, hospitality takes the form of opening our hearts and homes to Christians in need—those who are hurting, lonely, needy.
- **Use your _____ in serving one another (10-11)**. Did you know that each and every Christian has a gift that he/she has received from God to be used for God in God's family? And “good stewards” do not exist for themselves, but for their Master, becoming good stewards because their Master can _____ them. Peter puts these gifts of grace in two general categories: *speaking gifts* and *serving gifts*.

Do you have a speaking gift? Then “speak the oracles of God!”

Is your gift primarily a serving gift? Then “[serve] as one who serves by the strength that God supplies...”

So whether speaking or serving, speak and serve “in **order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ**.” In the end that's what it's really all about. It's all about Him.

People who are prayed up, loved up, served up, and filled up through open hearts and spiritual service are people who are prepared to powerfully _____ God to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

3. Be _____ as a witness to the world (12-18).

Verse 12: We're being tested. The enemy is testing us to see what we're made of—can we take it? And God is testing us to see if we are _____—are we the real deal? For a time is coming when only the real deals will be left standing for Christ and for the cause of Christ. When the smoke clears from the fiery ordeals, will we be standing? Will we be living testimonies of how Christians are to handle serious suffering when it comes, as surely it will?

Verses 13-15: Make sure you suffer as a Christian Saint, not as a Christian Sinner. If you do, you will be blessed.

Verses 16-18: If the preliminary judgment is on God's family, which is not for sin but for purification... And if it is difficult for us to be saved... what will become of those who reject the gospel? What will be the final