

Getting to our destination 1 Peter 5:1-11

How many of you remember the days when you could get to your destination without using **Google maps**?

In the dark and distant past I'm told there were these things called **physical maps** that you could consult and there were things called **physical people** that you could stop and ask if you got lost.

And then came the **innovations**. I still remember the joy of being able to go on a website and get an itemised list of directions to my destination. I thought this was wonderful until I actually tried to use them and experienced what happened when you got one of directions wrong and deviated from the chosen path.

However, all this changed with the introduction of live directions on **Sat Navs** and then on our **phones**. I think this is wonderful. This is because it means I am much less likely to get lost on the way and much more likely to arrive at my destination.

Now call me **an old fashioned traditionalist** but I love to arrive where I want to go. Don't get me wrong, I do enjoy journeys but to arrive at my planned end point is a critical part of the experience.

There are many things that can stop us getting to our **earthly destinations**.

- We can get lost
- We can run out of petrol
- We can get a flat tyre
- We can become ill

And the list goes on and on.

What can stop us getting to our heavenly destination?

Is it inevitable that once we start out on the Christian journey that we will reach our heavenly home? Or can we be stopped in our tracks before we reach the end?

Today as we gaze at **1 Peter chapter 5**, I want to show us **four dangers** that we face on our journey to heaven and **four** ways to **combat** them.

As I show you these **real dangers** let me stress the **tone** of this sermon.

This is **not** to be really scared that you might miss out on heaven because of these dangerous obstacles.

No, this is a **be alert to the real dangers** but **be assured** that if we take hold of God's provisions, we will get to the place our hearts are wired to experience.

What are the real threats facing us as we journey to heaven?

- Solo Christianity (Vs 1-4)
- Pride (Vs 5-6)
- Anxiety (Vs 7)
- The devil (Vs 8-9)

First, solo Christianity (Vs 1-4)

Look at verse 1. **Read verses 1 to 4.**

These verses don't suddenly appear out of the blue.

It's not that Peter has some extra parchment left over and he is looking for something to write.

No what he writes at the beginning of **chapter 5** follows on from what he has said at the end of **chapter 4**.

He has been speaking about the reality of suffering in the Christian life. When you walk against the flow you get hurt.

Then in **chapter 5** he speaks about the necessity of sacrificial church leaders.

Why? Because of God's ways of getting us home to heaven in the midst of suffering is godly leadership.

Which means that solo Christianity is dangerous.

Solo Christianity is when we think the only important thing is me and Jesus.

The truth is that normal Christianity includes me, Jesus and the church, and it includes me, Jesus, the church and church leaders.

Or to put it another way, the plan of Jesus is to use good leadership to help his people keep on track for their home destination.

Peter has a particular word of instruction to those who serve as pastors in local churches but what he says can apply to any of us in leadership positions, whether this is as a Life Group leader, or a leader in the Women's Bible Study or in our Treehouse Team or our new Youth Ministry.

Verse 2, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them."

I love what is said about the Lord Jesus earlier in 1 Peter.

1 Peter 2:25, "For you were like sheep going astray but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

Jesus is the **Good Shepherd** and the **Chief Shepherd**.

However, in his wisdom he has chosen to look after the souls of his sheep through **under shepherds**.

Shepherds do **three** things for the sheep:

- **Feed**
- **Find** them
- **Fight** for them. *Not* fight them.

Solo Christianity denies this provision of God. It says I can do it on my own without the help of godly leadership. Jesus says, no you can't.

We need godly leadership to make it home.

The task of leadership is hard, tiring and potentially discouragement so if you are in any sort of Christian leadership let me remind you of the three things Peter says to those in this position.

- Be **willing**
- Be **eager**
- Be **gentle**

Second, pride (Vs 5-6)

Look at verse 5. **Read verses 5 and 6.**

Pride is so dangerous because it stops us listening to **God's word** and to **God's people**.

It's an attitude that assumes we know better and so prevents us actively seeking counsel from other places.

This can impact many areas of our existence

- Our knowledge of the Bible
- Our keenness to listen to Bible teaching
- Our wisdom about what to do next
- Our attitude towards those speaking into our situation

My experience is that pride easily kills spiritual growth and can sometimes lead to a person walking away from the faith.

Wonderfully, **God provides the antidote.**

- He says clothe yourself with humility.
- Humble yourself under God's mighty hand

Humility doesn't mean thinking we are worthless and useless.

It's not about having no sense of personal worth. No. it's about having the right sense of personal worth.

It's about recognising that we are creatures and not the Creator.

That we are children yes but **fragile** and **limited** children who need the help of others.

So let me encourage you to practice humility.

- It will accelerate your growth
- It will help you get to heaven

Third, anxiety (Vs 7)

Look at verse 7. **Read verse 7.**

I think there is a link between humility and anxiety.

Once we are honest about our own fragility there is even more temptation to be anxious.

There is the dawning realisation that we can't fix ourselves and those we love.

The big reason why anxiety is a major threat to us arriving in our spiritual home because it leads us away from the Lord Jesus in a vain attempt to sort out our own problems.

This is not the theme tune at the start of our spiritual backsliding. There are often notes of, "Don't worry about me, I'll be back. I just need to sort out a few things first."

But so often this is the beginnings of a journey away from the paths of Christ. The first step of self-help is can be a disaster for our eternal security.

Please don't misunderstand me. **Anxiety can be crippling!**

But the answer is **not self-help** and **self-sufficiency**.

No, the answer is to **cast** all our anxieties on God because he **cares** for us.

Or put another way, our choice is whether to **carry our anxiety** or **cast our anxiety**.

We do this as we remember his **precious promises** in his **precious word**.

Let me say that the presence of anxiety is not a sign that you aren't a Christian. It is the sign that you are **alive** and are **alert** to your fragility in a **big, bad** and **broken** world.

The question is, what will we do with it? Don't carry it but cast it to the God who cares for you.

When we cast it, let's not go and fetch it. Let's leave it at the throne of grace.

Fourth, the devil (Vs 8-9)

Look at verse 8. **Read verses 8 and 9.**

There is an unseen spiritual enemy who wants to devour us before we enter in the heavenly realm.

He doesn't care how he does it. He just wants to disqualify us for the prize.

- He loves to make us **doubt** God's word
- He loves to make us **disobey** God's word
- He loves to **discourage** us in God's world

I love God's answer to this clear and present danger. **Verse 9**, "Resist him, standing firm in the faith."

Don't go looking for a fight but when he comes, stand firm in the faith once and for all revealed to the followers of Jesus. God is good, his word can be trusted and eternity is real.

In Conclusion

How eager are you to make it to heaven?

As you make up your mind, listen to verses 10 and 11. **Read verses 10 and 11.**

After you have suffered a little while there will be eternal glory.

99.9% of our Christian blessings are in the life to come.

Yes there is hope for this life but there is more hope for life beyond the grave.

We need both.

I love the picture of what will happen when I meet Christ face to face.

- He will restore me. This is the word used in **Mark 1:19** of the disciples mending their nets.
- He will make me strong
- He will make me firm and steadfast

Not a Christian, please join us and follow Jesus.

A Christian, how much does the prospect of eternal glory drive us in our daily choices? Let it motivate us to take hold of God's means of grace so we can fight the dangers of solo Christianity, pride, anxiety and the devil. As we do, we will be assured that one day we will cross to the other side and begin a life that is beyond our wildest dreams. **Let's pray.**