

Living in View of the End 1 Peter 4:7-11

When time is short, we get focused.

- When a loved one is dying, you drop things to spend time with them.
- When a hurricane is coming, you make necessary preparations; you don't goof around.
- When you see an accident and you're the only one around to help, you drop your plans and help.
- In baseball, when you're down to your last strike you simplify things (shortened stride, choke up).
- In football, players hold up "Four" to say "Let's go. This is it." And there's a two minute warning: You better make this time count.
 - Sometimes you wonder, "How come they don't play like this the entire game?" (City league game in NOLA)

Peter tells us here that Christians are called to live their lives in view of the end — the coming of Jesus. It's the 4th quarter.

Having just spoken of judgment and eternal life (vv 5-6), he picks up that idea saying, "the end [**telos**] of all things is at hand." (v. 7).

- The end is near because the ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus have inaugurated the last days (**1 Cor 10:11**; 1 Jn 2:18).
- This theme of the imminence of Christ's return is stated often in the New Testament (**Rom 13:11-12**; Phil 4:5; Heb 10:23-25; **Jas 5:7-8**; Rev 1:3; 22:10).
- This "end" is not something dreadful but something hopeful.
- This gives our lives purpose.
- It makes us people of hope.
- "What one believes about the future shapes how one lives today. A belief that the future is full of hopelessness, despair and futility becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when people live today as if that future were true. On the other hand, hope in a future that is meaningful and assured produces confidence to live each day with that future in view" (Karen Jobes)

With this confidence and hope, we pursue a life of faithfulness.

And the "end" in view shouldn't make us *fanatical*, but *faithful* — **faithful in the basics**.

Unfortunately, through the years those who have been preoccupied with the study of last things have often responded in extreme ways.

- Nowhere does the NT encourage us to set dates, make a bunch of charts.
- Nowhere does it say "Stop working for a living, and just gaze up into the skies waiting for Jesus" (Paul rebuked the Thessalonians for this).
- Nor does it call us to escapism: living in a commune somewhere, wearing white shoes drinking cool-aide.
- Eschatology is always about instructing us to faithfulness. (2 Pet 3:11-13)

- Someone asked John Wesley one time, “If you knew Christ would return tomorrow what would you do?” Wesley pulled out his journal and showed him his plans for the following day. In other words, his day would be occupied with things that please God – they may not seem extraordinary but they were activities that please God.
- Similarly the question was posed to Luther and he said he would “plant a tree and pay his taxes.” He would do the things that are appointed for him to do on that day, things that would honor God – in this case, things related to God’s creation, and God’s establishment of the government.
- Peter highlights some basic things that Christians should do for one another in view of the return of Christ – four basic acts of discipleship.

four essential services:

(1) focused prayer, (2) earnest love, (3) gracious hospitality, and (4) faithful stewardship. He says these are the things we should give our lives to, while we live as sojourners and exiles on earth.

There are in great contrast to the pagan way of life in verses 1-6.

- I preached from this passage the second week of our gatherings at IDC (I think it was week 2)... I think I picked it because it says so much about the heart of biblical community, praying people, loving people, hospitality, being committed to teaching the oracles of God, and having every member serve...

#1: Focused Prayer (4:7)

“clear minded and self-controlled” are to be taken together.

- They’re closely related to one another.
- In contrast to the previous description of the pagan lifestyle, believers are to remain under control, alert and focused for the sake of prayer.
- We’re not to lose our minds in this life, nor act irrationally in light of the coming of Christ.
- We should think sensibly, contemplating the brevity of life; contemplating our mission in life; thinking about how to make the most of our days.
- This means we take prayer seriously. “Watch and pray”
- We need to be in the right frame of mind and have our hearts in the right place so we can pray.
 - Clear communication - Greyhound Movie, us navy commander trying to lead a convoy across the Atlantic during ww2, with German u boats all around. So much of the film is about communication – the necessity of clear thinking and communicating
 - We’re in a war and we need to communicate to the commander for help; that we may be faithful...

“for the sake of your prayers” (plural - repeated acts of prayer) - Note 3:7.

There’s a connection to your life and your prayers in Peter.

- Self-control keeps us from being drawn into the vices of our age – also necessary for cultivating a praying life.

- If you're absorbed with the vices of our ages, then you can only think of the pleasures of the world, rather than the pleasure of being in God's presence.
- So keep your mind alert to what matters; keep your heart right for prayer.
- Prayer is an essential aspect of discipleship and in this context, it involves **asking God to move in the remaining time that we have.**
- We depend on God now, knowing the time is short, and we need his grace to be faithful.
- **We need him to give us strength to do the following things!**

#2: Earnest Love (4:8)

A. The **Priority** of Love – “Above all”

- The importance of love has already been highlighted by Peter (cf. 1:22; 4:8)
- And it's importance is stated in numerous passages (1 Cor 13; Matt 22:34-40; Jn 13:34-35).
 - We may have great gifts, but without love, **we're a clanging symbol!**
 - Colossians 3:12. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
- The end is near – so love one another.

B. The **Persistency** of Love – “keep loving”

- So he knows they're doing it; he encourages them to stay at it.
- Church in **Ephesus** – “you lost your love”
- **Don't let love grow cold.**
- **Moffat: [This passage] is a warning against loving others with fits and starts. It is a plea for steady affection, persisting through the irritations of life.”**

C. The **Intensity** of love – “earnestly”

- It's a term that means “strained.”
- It describes athletes stretching to clear the bar or finish the race.
- Love stretches. Love takes work.
- **Christians: we need to stay close in these divisive days.**
- **The end is near: Don't waste time gossiping, slandering**
- **Spend your days building up your brothers and sisters.**
- **Love earnestly, fervently.**
 - **If you distance yourself and neglect time together, then you're not loving earnestly.**
- **We grow in depth by staying connected — now in a strange season... but we do it as well as we can.**

D. The **Reason** for Love – “it covers a multitude of sins”

- It covers the offenses that can destroy community.
 - **Peter asked Jesus how many times he must forgive his brother. Jesus told him not seven times (Peter's generous suggestion he thought) but 70 times 7.**

- In other words, don't keep score. "Love keeps no record of wrongs"
- Grant forgiveness to every brother or sister.
- This proverbial saying is an echo of Proverbs 10:12 and also appears in James 5:20.
- When believers show love to one another, the offenses of others are overlooked and covered.
- "Hatred stirs up conflicts, but love covers all offenses" (**Prov 10:12**).
 - Love enables you to cover over the wrongs of others, but hate-filled person responds to the sins of others as a springboard to attack, alienate and divide.
- "Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense" (**Prov 19:11**).
 - To overlook an offense is active, not passive, because it requires you to not talk about it, dwell on it, or allow it to grow into bitterness.
- **Major offenses require the process of restoration (Peter is not saying that we sweep sin under the rug, or that we ignore discipline); but minor offenses within the body need to be overlooked/covered with love.**
 - And if a process needs to take place, when it's completed rightly, we cover it; bury it, and move on.
- Few things make our witness more compelling than loving unity; nothing harms it like disunity and a lack of love.
 - So many things in culture creating conflict.
- Love one another earnestly in these days
 - Our faith is not a doctrine-only faith, but one that has healthy relationships as a central aspect, as well.
- The goal in these relationships is not just the absence of strife but the presence of harmony and unity.
 - You have to cover a multitude of offenses to do this.
- Our motivation: Our God has covered our offenses (**Ps 103**)
- We are like our God when we forgive (**Eph 4:32**)
 - Peter experienced this forgiving love!
- **Without a Christ-exalting heart, we won't cover offenses, and pursue peace.**
- **It really is a heart issue.**
 - **Alfred Poirier: "Unresolved conflicts between Christians have less to do with people being skillful than with them being sinful.**
 - Skills are important, but we must deal with our hearts if we are to experience peace.
- **"I have never met a person who didn't have reason to blame someone else. Everyone of us can blame somebody for something that has happened in our lives. But don't waste your time. What we need most is a stream of love flowing among us. Love that quickly forgives and willingly overlooks and refuses to take offense." (Chuck Swindoll)**

The end is near, love one another earnestly...

#3: Gracious Hospitality (4:9)

Again, it's basic discipleship in view of the end.

- **The end is near, “bake cookies!” Sound strange?**
- **Hospitality is a big deal in the Bible.**
- **It’s one of the ways we love each other and the world**
- **Not entertaining, but hospitality – serving others, not trying to impress others.**

Hospitality is a trait of God himself.

- In the **Garden**, (Gen. 1:26-2:25).
- **Israelites in their wanderings**, feeding them daily with manna (Ex. 16).
- the **land flowing with milk and honey** (Exodus 3:8; Joshua 5:6)

In the OT, God welcomes, establishes, feeds, protects, nourishes, and instructs his people with gracious hospitality.

- **Lev 19:33–34, God says it is his hospitality that is the basis for our display of hospitality to others**
- **God’s welcoming character is well described in Isaiah 55:1-3.**

Jesus shows us a picture of gracious hospitality in numerous ways.

- He **eats with sinners** (Mark 2:13-17; Luke 15:1-2).
- He **receives children** (Mark 9:37).
- He **teaches us to invite the lowly to parties** (Luke 14:12-14) and to welcome strangers (Matt. 25:35).
- He prepares a **breakfast for his disciples** (John 21), and eats with the **Emmaus disciples after his resurrection** (Luke 24:13-34).
- He tells us that he is going to “**prepare a place for [us] ...**” (John 14:3).
- Jesus also institutes the **Lord’s Supper** as a foretaste of the meal to come.
- **Revelation.** the great supper (Rev. 19:7).

Hospitality is a common trait of the righteous throughout the Bible.

- **Gen. 18, Abraham entertains three guests, one of whom is the Lord.**
- **Joseph** welcomes & cares for his brothers, & others in a famine (**Gen. 47**).
- Righteous **Job** says that one of the acts he practiced was hospitality. He said, “(the sojourner has not lodged in the street; I have opened my doors to the traveler)” (**31:32**).
- Rahab demonstrates hospitality, as she offers protection and lodging to Israelite spies in Joshua 2, demonstrating her loyalty to the God of Israel (**also James 2:25**).
- In the book of Ruth, we see a “little redeemer” in Boaz, who feeds the hungry at his table (**Ruth 2:14**).
- Abigail also provides hospitality to David and his men in **1 Samuel 25**.
- The widow of Zerephath provides for Elijah in **1 Kings 17**, prompting God to provide for her.
- **Nehemiah** provides for **150 men at his table**, eating nice food prepared at his own expense.

NT: Hospitality was a very attractive trait of the early church (**Rom 12:13; 1 Tim 3:2; Ti 1:8; Heb 13:2**).

“Contribute to the needs of the saints; seek to show hospitality” (Rom 12:13)

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” (Heb 13:2)

Two specific reasons for its importance in the early church:

1. The advancement of the mission depended upon it, as lodging was often unavailable or unsavory.

- Believers provided for one another (Mat 10:11, 40; Acts 16:15; 3 Jn 7-11)

2. Churches met in homes. (Rom 16:3-5, 23; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phlm 2)

- A big thank you to those of you who host
- Weekly there are some 800 people in homes around RDU!

“Without grumbling”

- Open up your home and your life and don't grumble over the hassle.
- “the Greek word” “gongysmou” (sounds like grumbling)
- Don't say, “Here's a Bible and a biscuit, now go sit down and shut up”
- “I don't want to open up my home, but I will.”
- We do it gladly, happily.
- It's easy to begrudge service, but we need to cultivate a grateful and gracious heart.
 - Hospitality takes time
 - It may cost money
 - It interrupts privacy
 - It takes work to prepare and clean up
- “True love is a splendid host” (John Henry Jowett)
- Make your home (or backyard!) a haven for people.
 - Covid Hospitality: Rosaria story, vase full of flowers, phone call, walking
- Be a means of refreshment to people.
- Be a good guest!
 - Don't grumble about spending time with others.
 - But don't wear them out either! (Warning in Didache)
 - John Piper taking his crockpot
 - The end is near, bring your crockpot

#4: Faithful Stewardship (4:10-11)

The idea of ministering to one another continues, but now the emphasis shifts to the use of God's gifts.

Verse 10

“as each has received a gift” -- Like Paul, Peter affirms that every believer has a spiritual gift.

- These gifts are evidences of God's grace.

“use it” – And like Paul, he exhorts believers to “use their gifts.” (Rom 12:6)

- Admin: You like to count!
- Encourager: You dot your eyes with hearts!
- Hospitality: you like food network, eight types of silverware!
- Teaching: you like footnotes!

Whatever it is, use it!

“to serve one another” – the gifts are for the good of the body (also consistent teaching)

- So you need the church, and the church needs you.
- The gift is not for your own glory or so you can congratulate yourself.
- The word serve is used in a variety of contexts – providing meals, visiting prisoners, providing financial support – and here is stated in a general sense.

“as good stewards of God’s varied grace”

- God is the giver of various kinds of gifts.
- We’re stewards – God has entrusted to us certain gifts to be used to build up his body.
- As stewards, we have responsibility to use these gifts.
- **Restaurants on the Edge: Different skills to bring revitalization**

Verse 11

Peter divides the gifts into two general categories (you could probably put all gifts under these two): speaking and serving.

Speak: those who speak are to speak the **“oracles of God”**

- This phrase is rooted in the Old Testament (Ps 106:11; Ps 11:7; 17:31).
- Speaking gifts doesn’t mean show off your eloquence and give your opinions.
- But use that gift to teach God’s Word to people (2 Tim 4:1-5)
 - **“Letting texts talk”**
 - **Saying what God has said in his word, declaring what God has done in his son**
 - **Re-revelation**
- This has special reference to shepherds (1 Pet 5:2; Acts 20)
- **“Good stuff” and “God stuff”**
- God builds his church by his word.
- **Begg: Parish Beadle**

Serving: Those who serve, do so by **“the strength that God supplies”** (the same goes for those speaking of course)

- We rely on God’s power as we serve and speak so that we “don’t grow weary in well doing”

God gives the gifts and God provides the strength, therefore God gets the glory – in order that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

- We come into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and we receive the Spirit who enables us to use God’s gifts for with God’s power for God’s glory.

Doxology: “To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

- To Jesus Christ belongs the glory and dominion.
- He reigns!
- Nero doesn’t reign – the Lord reigns.
- And he will reign forever.

o Sweet Caroline

And this King, is coming back, so how should we live? What should we do?

- Focused prayer.
- Earnest Love.
- Gracious hospitality.
- Faithful stewardship.

Jesus Christ embodies these perfectly, doesn't he?

- **Always sober-minded and alert in prayer** (even though his disciples were dozing off instead of praying)
- **He covered a multitude of sins in a unique way, through this atoning death on the cross.** "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness" (2:24); he rose for our justification.
 - o Jesus loves forgiving our sins; he doesn't save us and forgive us reluctantly.
 - o We go to Jesus and he will never cast one away who comes to him...
- **What about hospitality?** He told his disciples, "I will go and prepare a place for you" – he welcomes us not with a grumbling attitude, but with a welcoming attitude.
 - o "Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you." (Rom 15:7)
 - o Jesus the friend of sinners invites us to his kingdom.
 - o We were outsiders, and he has made us insiders.
- **Faithful stewardship?**
 - o He taught with authority, not as the Scribes, teaching the oracles of God.
 - o He served faithfully: "I didn't come to be served, but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many."

Jesus Christ has brought us into a relationship with God, giving us the ability to live out this kind of life, and he has also exemplified what it looks like. Let's be the body.

Let's be about these things as we live in view of his return.

And when we see him, we will not regret having done so.