

## 1 Peter 4:7-11

“An End Times Attitude”

As our time came to a close last week we ended emphasizing the fact that we've spent enough of our past lifetime living for the lusts of men. There was a time in our lives prior to Christ that we just did what we wanted, when we wanted and our sole aim was really nothing more than to somehow satisfy or in some way gratify the flesh. That who you *used to be*, it's not who you are *presently*, now you're in Christ; you were dead in your sins, now you've been made alive in Christ Jesus and the appropriate response of the believer toward temptation is what? Vs 2, “no longer” I've been crucified with Christ it's no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me and the life that I now live I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.

I'm not to revel in the things that placed Christ on the cross, but rather I'm to resolve to utilize the rest of my time here on this earth (brief though it may be) for the will of God. It's no longer about what I want, but what God wants to do in me and through me for His glory.

There's to be a sincerity, there's to be an urgency with which I approach the reality of eternity, not only as it pertains to my life personally but as it pertains to others around me generally. Because time is short and judgment is coming. As the book of Revelation comes to a close we're left with a sense of urgency and expectancy as we read, “*He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' (to which John responds) Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*” Rev 22:20 There is an eminent reality imposed upon us throughout the scriptures that the day is coming when world history *winds down* and God *wraps up* His dealings with sinful humanity. Knowing that should stir you, should stir me with a sense of *urgency*, and should sober me concerning the need to lead a life that's *holy*, set apart *to* the Lord and ready to stand *before* the Lord at His appearing. You and I should be struck (and really stuck) with an end times attitude, it should be ingrained with in us and resonating throughout us. What that means is that it should make a difference in my practical approach to life. That's the general gist that Peter begins to underscore as we approach Vs 7. In keeping with the context he basically says, “Hey, we're too close to the return of Christ to be worried *about* or occupied *with* the feeding of the flesh...we don't need to be worried about *partying*, we need to be worried about praying.” Check it out...

Vs7

You say, “Man it sounds like some sorta ‘dooms day’ fatalistic kind of perspective that Peter is subscribing to here.” It kinda reads that way doesn’t it? “The end is at hand!!” 2 Things with that #1 Peter isn’t being a fatalist he’s simply stating the facts, #2 he’s not really saying, “the end is *now*” more literally we might understand this to say, “The end is drawing near.”

Again, throughout the scriptures we’re struck with a sense of urgency that comes from the awareness of the fact that time is limited, that things aren’t going to just go on and on forever but that there is a definite moment in time when world history will culminate/crescendo and God will deal with mankind in a “face to face” kind of a way.

Today we live in what bible scholars would call the last “dispensation.”

Biblically, prophetically there’s nothing left that needs to take place before Christ can take His church out of this world and set the final chain of events into motion that will culminate in His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. We live (prophetically) in the last rodeo round up. That doesn’t mean that Christ will come back in your lifetime, but it does mean that He *could* come back today! Here’s the point; time is short, are you leading your life with eternity in mind?

Jesus taught us that we should live our lives with a sense of expectancy, that He *could* return at any moment and that He *would* return when we least expect it. Do me a favor, leave 1 Peter Ch 4 and make your way quickly to Matt’s gospel Ch 24 (Matthew 24) (Vs 36-51)

You see Jesus says all that to say this, “I expect you to lead your life with a certain anticipation, with a realization that I could return literally at any moment.” Now that knowledge, that insight ought to make an impact on your life. How so? Well, in a # of ways actually, of primary importance is prayer, if you really believe that time is short, that should cultivate in you an attitude of prayer. Notice (Vs 7), “therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.” The 1<sup>st</sup> element of our “end-times” attitude? Prayer.

Now when he talks here about being serious don’t think that he’s saying, “You better not be light-hearted about anything and there’s no room for a sense of humor in the kingdom of God!” Some people seem to believe that don’t they, that holiness doesn’t smile, however that’s not true at all, a sense of humor is a wonderful thing. More literally what Peter said here is that we’re to be “sober-minded” he’s speaking of exercising self control, being really just the opposite of a “dooms day fatalist” running around screaming that the sky is falling. But rather keep cool, stay calm taking what you know and allowing that to serve as a catalyst of sorts in making you a person of prayer.

The New American Standard says it like this, “*The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.*”<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Wuest translates this Vs, “But of all things the end has come near. Be of sound mind therefore, and be calm and collected in spirit with a view to (your giving yourselves to) prayer;”<sup>2</sup> I don’t know how else to say it the bible calls you and me personally to be a people of prayer. You see what’s happening in the world around you, you see the need for Christ in people with in your immediate sphere of influence, what are you doing about that? Are you taking those things before the Lord, praying *for* them, standing in the gap on behalf of them?

Jesus exhorted us to take this awareness of the day and age in which we live and let it make of us a people of prayer. He said, “*Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming — in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning — lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!*” Mark 13:33-37 That is, be alert, be aware, don’t be apathetic or allow yourself to be lulled to sleep spiritually, be vigilant and diligent about being a person of prayer.

No doubt this word had special meaning to Peter because Jesus had told *him* to watch and pray yet he’d failed. In these last days in which we live we’re to give ourselves increasingly to prayer.

Vs8

Check it out, it’s Peter’s “priority punch list.” He says # 1 approach life *prayerfully*, #2 interact and work with one another *lovingly*. As it pertains to priorities we’re to make sure that our relationship with God is right 1<sup>st</sup>, having secured that we need to prioritize our relationships with one another, once things are where they need to be vertically (that is between me and God) I need to ensure that things are right horizontally (that is between you and me). “Above all” Peter says “have fervent love for one another.”

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<sup>1</sup>New American Standard Bible : 1995 update. 1995 (1 Pe 4:7). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

<sup>2</sup>Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English reader* (1 Pe 4:11). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

What's the 2<sup>nd</sup> element of our "end times" attitude? Love, that is the agape (all giving, non self seeking, others oriented, self sacrificing) love of God. We're not called to love one another in a "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" kind of way. That's a worldly kind of love, it's give and take. God's love is strictly "give," and it's a verb, it's not an emotional overflow of warm fuzzies, but a demonstration through self sacrifice and service regardless of how I *feel* about it. For God so *loved* the word that He *gave* His only begotten Son, it doesn't say that He had the warm fuzzies about us. But that He demonstrated His love in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us, (Christ gave Himself for us out of self sacrifice and service) we know He loved us because of His service and sacrifice for us.

"Above all things" what that means is that love is of paramount importance as it pertains to both *what we do* and *why we do it*, it's the essential ingredient in every act that the believer engages in. Why is that? Because love is the element that makes all the other virtues what they should be. Generosity with out love is condescending and harsh, courtesy apart from love is a cold and regimented work. Paul said it like this, "*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.*" 1 Cor 13:1-3 You see, love is the qualifying "credential" in every *aspect* of Christian *speech* and every *act* of Christian *service*. Apart from the love of God coursing *through* you and spilling out *from* you, your service and your speech will count for nothing as it pertains to eternity. As a matter of fact Jesus said that love would be the badge that identified you to the world as belonging to Him. He said, "*By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*" John 13:35

But check it out, Peter calls us to kick it up to the next notch, he takes for granted that you perhaps love is a given in the Christian equation. But here he goes out of his way to make sure that we understand that we're not to love one another perhaps *nonchalantly*, but rather that we love one another *fervently*, there's to be an *intensity* there. Literally the word "fervently" means to "stretch out" it's that picture of a track and field guy stretching forward toward the tape with all that's with in him to reach the finish line. Here's the idea, Christian love will continue to stretch and strain to reach the goal, it won't reach a breaking point whereby I'm through with you. Does it require work? You bet; is it a discipline? Sure it is, but you can't exhaust it, it continues to stretch to meet the need.

So you may be "stretched" in your love for someone, that happens, but God's love won't break, it won't give in and it won't give up. It'll continue to sacrifice and serve, sacrifice and serve.

“Above all have fervent love for one another” and then he quotes Prov 10:12, “for love will cover a multitude of sins.” Now don’t be confused, it doesn’t say that love “condones” a multitude of sin, but rather that love will *cover* a multitude of sin. What does that mean? It means that love won’t draw unnecessary attention to struggles, shortcomings and sin in a brother or sisters life. Love realizes that Satan gets enough glory in this world I’m not going to contribute to it be broadcasting my brothers/sisters sin, but rather I’m going to forgive him for it and move past it. Now again, we’re not saying that we don’t deal with repeat patterns of sin or all out blatant rebellion according to the biblical mandate. However we’re not into broadcasting the sin of someone else’s life. That’s called backbiting, it’s called sowing discord, being contentious and spreading slander. That’s what love *is not*, that’s the polar opposite of love. One commentator said this, “Where love abounds in a fellowship of Christians, many small offences, and even some large ones, are readily overlooked and forgotten. But where love is lacking, every word is viewed with suspicion, every action is liable to misunderstanding, and conflicts abound - to Satan’s perverse delight.” (Grudem) So we’re not saying that love is blind, it’s very aware, however love readily forgives, thinks no evil but offers the benefit of the doubt, it covers a multitude of sin...

Now the question comes up, does it cover the sin of the offender, or in forgiving the offender does God forgive *my* sin. I think you can find application both ways, Jesus told us that with the measure we use it’ll be measured back to us, He said blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy. Do you want mercy from God? Than show mercy to others; of course the beautiful thing about what God has done for us is that He’s gone beyond *covering* our sin, in Christ He’s completely *cleansed us* of sin. But if Christ has so loved us (and He’s given us an example that we should do as He’s done) how then ought we to love one another.

Now listen to me, we’ve made this application toward the body of Christ *generally* (and appropriately so) however I think it would do us well to consider this: if I’m to love you fervently as one who belongs to the body, with what kind of fervency ought I to love (listen) my own family? That is my wife, and my children specifically? How many families are fractured today, how many marriages have failed altogether in the body of Christ simply because in too many cases people willing to treat people that they don’t even know (in reality) better than they treat their own family? It ought not be... Those whom we ought to love so desperately and treat so tenderly are often treated with less dignity than total strangers.

Wife, how do you treat your husband? How do you demonstrate your love for him? Do you respect him, do you seek to submit your life to him as the head of your home as your worship service to the Lord? Do you seek to adorn yourself with a gentle and quiet spirit which is very precious in the sight of the Lord? Or all you all the time nagging him, 2<sup>nd</sup> guessing him, tearing into him and draining him of his confidence as your husband?

Husband, how do you treat your wife? Do you listen to her? Are you tender toward her, affectionate with her, does she know that under God you value her more than anything else on this planet? Are you taking care *of* her, being a spiritual leader *for* her encouraging godly direction in your home?

Or are you all the time short with her, don't take the time to communicate with her, cutting her down and feeding her insecurities? Love one another *fervently*, with an earnest sincerity.

Vs9

Back to Peters "priority punch list." #1 Approach life *prayerfully*, #2 Fellowship with one another *lovingly*, and #3 Vs 9-11 we'll categorize as, "Serve one another *actively*."

Be hospitable, the word literally speaks of showing kindness to strangers. Granting the same courtesy, the same kindness and civility to someone in the body who is a total stranger to you as you would your best buddy. Odds are there are people in this congregation that you don't even know their names much less their story. How often visitors come to a church and they don't feel the love, don't feel connected or like they're part of the crowd. Here's the challenge, be hospitable, find someone (today before you leave) that you've never met and treat them, engage them like a friend. It's not the ushers job, or the greeters job exclusively to ensure that people feel and know that they're welcome here, that's *your job*. You're to be hospitable, you've got friends that go to church here, you can talk to them anytime, find someone you *don't* know and engage them in conversation, you might be pleasantly surprised that you walk away built up and edified. I'm not saying don't enjoy conversation with your friends, but I am saying be hospitable; and before you take issue with me take to heart the next part of the exhortation... "with out grumbling." ☺

I have discovered that God just doesn't like it when we gripe. How much trouble did the children of Israel find themselves in throughout their 40 yrs in the wilderness due to murmuring and complaining? Whether it's giving financially, or serving benevolently, or showing hospitality God just doesn't like it when we gripe about it. We read in 2 Corinthians 9:7 "*So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*" To the Philippians Paul said, "*Do all things without complaining and disputing,*" Philippians 2:14 It's like God knows the heart of man... "Be hospitable" "Ok... hmph, grrrr, murmur, murmur..." "*with out grumbling...*"

Vs10-11

You see, approach life prayerfully, engage one another lovingly and serve one another actively, and all the more so as we see that Day approaching.

The bible teaches that when you give your heart to Christ that God (by the means of His Spirit) imparts certain “gifts” to you enabling you to bless and build up the body of Christ. Peter breaks them down into 2 basic categories #1 Speaking gifts, and #2 Serving gifts. That’s not to say that we’re not all called to service and that God will speak through each of us. But categorically speaking, with regard to a particular anointing God will call you primarily to build up and bless the body through speech (i.e. teaching/preaching/evangelical gifts etc) or you will be called to build up and bless the body through serving gifts (i.e. helps/administrations/leadership etc).

Few things to recognize out of Vs 10, #1 the gifts of the Spirit are just that, they’re gifts, something that we simply/freely receive as the result of God’s grace. They cannot be earned, and they cannot be learned, they can be exercised and improved through use once you’ve discovered them, but you can’t develop a spiritual gift through trying to make it happen, you can’t “whip up” a spiritual gift, God has either graced you with it or He has not. Often times God gives you a number of gifts that work in conjunction with one another.

For instance a gifted evangelist may also have the gift of exhortation and word of knowledge all kind of mixing and mingling together to make him effective in preaching the word, presenting the gospel and causing people to want to respond to the message in a practical way.

Something else we should note in Vs 10 is that the gifts of God aren’t for our personal gain or benefit, but for the benefit of the body in general, if we receive it we’re to *minister it* to one another as (notice) *good stewards* of the manifold grace of God. What does that mean? It means that gracious gifting of God’s Spirit comes in all shapes and sizes and it’s poured out to varying degrees in different people’s lives. For instance the way God has gifted you to teach will probably be different than the way He’s gifted me to teach, God’s grace is manifold, it’s multifaceted, that’s one reason that we err when we compare ourselves amongst ourselves. However and to the degree God has gifted you, bless the body of Christ, don’t focus on how He’s gifted someone else...minister (Vs 11) with the ability that God supplies *to you*...

But here’s what I want you to see, God considers you to be a *steward* of the gift/s that He’s imparted/entrusted to you. What’s steward? A steward was a house manager; he had no wealth of his own, but was responsible to distribute his master’s wealth according to his master’s will and direction. Paul told the Corinthians that it was *required* is stewards that one be found *faithful* (1 Cor 4:2). What does that mean? It means that if you know Christ for at least (we’ll say a year) you should be employing the gifts that God has given you to bless and build up the body of Christ. You see a *bad steward* of the grace/gifts of God’s Spirit would be one who receives God’s gifts, but then does nothing with them, it comes *to* you but doesn’t move *through* you.

Most churches are like football games, about 22 guys on the field and 22,000 in the stands cheering them on. Let me make it even more personal, if you've known the Lord even for a year, and have been in this church for even 6 months you should be serving somewhere in some capacity...because if you're not you're robbing the body and other people are pulling extra weight because you're not manning your spot on the wall. Now I don't say that to tear you down, it's my intent to spur you on, that you might get out of the bleachers and into the game to the glory of God. If you don't know where to serve or what to do come see us and we'll help you out, if you're not gifted in that area that's ok we'll work with you, and see what God has for you.

Vs11

Again speaking or serving, speaking might be children's ministry, youth ministry, doesn't mean pastor/teacher specifically (though it might). But if anyone speaks...as the oracles of God, be careful to speak, say and share the heart of God for the people of God. My word doesn't matter, God's word will change your life, don't use the platform of speaking on God's behalf to promote your personal agenda. Be careful to do your utmost to share God's heart with the person or people that God has assembled before you.

If you're serving, do it not in the efforts of your own flesh, but with the ability that God supplies...that in all things God might be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

### Prayer Points:

Lord help us to adopt an end times attitude. That as the day approaches ever closer when we'll stand before You and give an account *to* You, that we'll see You face to face, help us to approach life prayerfully, to love one another fervently and to serve one another actively. We're so thankful for Your grace toward our lives, strengthen us in the resolve to be faithful stewards of the gifts You've entrusted to us investing them in such a way as to buildup and bless the body of Christ, our church home and beyond these walls wherever you may lead. That when we see You on that Day we might hear You say, "Well, done good and faithful servant." God may the body be edified and may You be glorified through the work You've done and will continue to do in our lives.

Maybe you're at a point where far from letting God *use* your life, you've not even *given* Him your life. And it's resonating in you "time is short" "what is life" "how does my life make a difference in light of eternity?" Listen, God has so loved you that He's given His only begotten Son for you, Christ has laid down His life, He's shed His blood and has risen from the dead, His body has been broken so that you can be made whole. He's bore the penalty of your sin so that you might know God's forgiveness and be made righteous in His sight. Why not open your heart to Christ right now? If you're willing to turn from your sin, and surrender your life to Christ, He'll forgive you and make you brand new right here, right now...