



## Live Like This in Light of the End

*Series: Pursuing Christ in a Pagan World*

1 Peter 4:7-11

January 3, 2010

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**1) A Solemn Reminder (7a, 11a)** -- I want you to see how Peter bookends this text that we are looking at this morning. In essence he is saying: The end of all things is at hand so live so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. Peter wants us to understand that there is urgency and earnestness to what he is going to tell us.

**The end of all things is at hand** -- the word that is translated as end is a word that means the consummation, the goal of all things is at hand. The realization of the purpose of all things is at hand. In other words, God's great plan of the ages is coming to fruition. All of the major events in God's plan of redemption have occurred and now all things are ready for Christ to return and rule. Peter does not think of history in terms of earthly kings and kingdoms, but rather in terms of redemptive, covenantal history. From that perspective, from that proper perspective, all of the previous acts in God's drama of redemption have been completed -- creation, fall, the flood, the calling of Abraham, the exodus from Egypt, the kingdom of Israel, the exile in Babylon and the return, the incarnation of Christ, His perfect life, His atoning death, His justifying resurrection, His glorious ascension to Heaven, and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit to establish the church -- all of the major acts of God's redemptive plan have been completed and now we await the revealing of Jesus Christ from heaven and the end of the age. We await with great hope the vindication of God and His glory in the return of the Son and the day when Christ will be marveled at in His saints when **at the name of Jesus every knee (shall) bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Php 2:10-11)**

Peter means to bring to the forefront of our thoughts the truth that God's great plan of the ages is soon to be consummated **in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1Pe 4:11)** The truth that has to grip us, the truth that overarches everything else is the truth that we exist for God's glory, the church exists for God's glory -- to show forth His excellencies, to magnify His inherent majesty and matchless worth. To glorify God is to esteem Him as most excellent, to worship Him as most worthy, to love Him as our most delightful treasure, and to obey Him as our Creator, Redeemer, King, and Friend. Chiefly here, Peter is saying, "Look, the end of all things is at hand

so the church should glorify God now through prayer, love, and service and our goal in this is that as we properly glorify God, people would exclaim “How great God is!” As John Calvin said, “We never truly glory in him unless we have utterly put off our

**2) Because the end of all things is at hand, pray effectively (v. 7)** In light of the consummation that is at hand, Peter calls us to pray effectively and the key to effective prayer is found in being self-controlled and sober-minded. The word that is translated here as “self-controlled” is a word that literally means to have a saved mind. It is a word that points to a man that is level-headed not impulsive, and overly emotional but able to reason and think properly, assessing things accurately and wisely according to the Word of God. Similarly, the idea of the word “sober” is to take things seriously, being aware of their real importance and to be watchful and aware of their consequences now and implications for eternity. This life is not a game, it is not an exercise in meaninglessness; it is a serious matter that must be pursued understanding the great stakes at hand. For that reason we must be sober minded, not intoxicated by **the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions (1 Jn 2:16)** The point is not that we cannot enjoy life or have a sense of humor. The point is to be able to recognize the times and live accordingly. In particular, Peter is concerned that we pray effectively. An expectant attitude toward Christ’s return involves a serious, balanced mind and an alert, clear-headed prayer life.

This flies in the face of the way that the world and some “Christian” ministries view prayer. Oftentimes we will see prayer portrayed as the last resort or as accompanied by wild and feverish emotions but Peter is telling us, prayer is not a last resort nor does it require feverish emotion to be effective. It is a powerful weapon to be employed intensely and persistently, strategically and tactically, with wisdom and with clear mindedness and discipline, knowing the power of prayer. **(2Co 10:4)**

Rightly discern the age, rightly discern the times, rightly discern your heart and pray. Pray for a deepening love for Jesus Christ. Pray for a heart longing to be shaped by the Word of God, willingly surrendered to the will of God that longs for the glory of God. Pray for the mind of Christ. Pray for holiness. Pray incessantly that you may be enabled to stand firm in Christ. Pray that you may not enter into temptation. Pray that the lure of this world may not overcome you and take your eyes off Christ. Pray that you will persevere in the faith until Christ Jesus comes. Pray that your homes abound your marriages and your children would resound for the gospel of Jesus Christ and that you would adorn the gospel. Pray that this church would stand fast and faithful on the Word, seeking the approval of Christ and not the world.

Pray for the lost, that God may grant them faith. Pray that they may be persuaded by your words and actions to turn from their sins and follow Christ. Pray for the gospel to sweep through this country again. Pray for the repentance of weak and

ineffectual and unfaithful preachers and churches that are dens of iniquity and of robbers.

Pray for one another and *with* one another. Pray that your brothers and sisters would not grow weary in well-doing, that God would sustain them, that they may grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to them and to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, that together you would see the hope of you calling, that you would know his power. Pray that their love and your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that together you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. Pray that they and you may be strengthened with power through God's Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith--that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to together the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Pray that the fullness of God in us would overflow into blessing for the nations – that the gospel would go forth from us and the Spirit of God would go before the proclamation of the Word and that Christ would have the reward of His sufferings. Oh beloved, if you need to instruct your soul in the way to pray, then examine the prayers of Paul and let them serve as instruction for your own prayers.

**3) Because the end of all things is at hand, love fervently (v.8)** When Peter starts this sentence by saying “above all” he is emphasizing the vital and central nature of love in the body of Christ – wherever that body of Christ is reflected – the church, individual relationships, or at home, we must be obvious in our love. Jesus said that love for one another is His new commandment, the evidence by which the world will know that we are His followers (John 13:34-35) and loving one another is tangible evidence that we love God (1 John 4:20).

So Peter tells us to keep loving one another earnestly. Keep pursuing one another's good, keep pouring yourself out for the sake of others. It is the idea of stretching ourselves out to love, straining, making every effort. Peter is making sure that we understand that loving one another takes effort, it takes God-given strength and power to love as we must in light of Christ's love to us. Christian love is not an easy, sentimental kind of response to generally nice person. It demands dependence upon God for the mental and spiritual and emotional energy necessary to love, not only the lovely, but the unlovely as well. It demands being loving in spite of insult and injury. It means loving when love is not returned. It is a love that never fails because God never fails. And it is a love that requires humility.

We see that because of what Peter says next: **Love covers a multitude of sins.** What does that mean? The idea is this. Love extends grace and does not seek retribution

for every perceived slight. It covers a multitude of sins by not dwelling upon them, nor seeking offense, nor taking every opportunity to criticize or extract a pound of flesh when someone fails. Where love abounds in a church or in a home or in a relationship, many smaller offenses and even some larger ones are readily overlooked and forgotten. But where love is lacking, every word is viewed with suspicion, every action or attitude liable to misunderstanding, every opportunity for offense is quickly taken to Satan's wicked delight. Now please don't misunderstand what I am saying. That love covers sin does not mean that love condones sin. Scripture is clear that love often confronts sin. Church discipline, which is sometimes necessary as an expression of love, exposes rather than covers sin. So how do we know whether to cover someone's sin or to confront it?

There is no easy formula to figure that out, but let me give you some considerations that can help you discern wisely. First, is this person a rebellious Christian who knows better or just an immature one? Paul wrote: **And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. (1Th 5:14)** The idle ("out of ranks, out of step with everyone else") need to be admonished, but the fainthearted and weak need encouragement. Cover their sin.

Second, cover whatever offenses you can, but if an offense is of a nature that it hinders your relationship, you need to confront it. Many offenses are too inconsequential and insignificant to confront; cover them. But if it is causing a barrier to a relationship, then it needs to get cleared up. Do it in a humble way that will bring healing, not a deeper rift. Don't discount the fact that it may be your own immaturity that is the issue.

Third, ask yourself, do I have a relationship that can address the offense? In other words, am I involved in that person's life? All people more readily accept correction when they know that the person speaking to them really loves them.

Fourth ask: Is this an inconsequential flaw that just bothers me, or is it a character defect or sin that ruins this person's growth in Christ?

Last, ask: Is the gospel at stake? Again love's motive and goal is to glorify God and that is the idea here. **Real love covers what it can and confronts what it must.**

Fervent, earnest love enables fellowship in spite of sin. When I love you, I do not have to say to you each time that you sin toward me, "That was sin and you need to seek my forgiveness," and then expect you to grovel and require you to be punished, and apologize and repay your offense to my expectations. Real love deals in grace. It is a deep joy for an earnest lover to forgive. They long to forgive. They want to forgive and not as a testimony to the bigness of their character so that they receive praise but as a testimony to the greatness of God's grace. That is why Paul writes: **(Col 3:12-14)** People who think that by pointing out the even the minutest sin they are

somehow acting in love, Peter along with Paul would say, are ignorant of real love. Imagine if Jesus would have corrected the disciples for every single sin they committed. The gospels would be one long rebuke. The sad truth is that there are lots of people who praise love and speak in flowery terms about spirituality who never cover anyone's sins. Real love covers what it can and confronts what it must.

Practically, one of the real ways that we can demonstrate love toward one another is through hospitality. Peter writes: **Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. (1Pe 4:9)** We open our homes to one another. We open our lives to one another. Romans 12:13b says: **seek to show hospitality. (Rom 12:13)** So here's the idea – we are to pursue, to look for every opportunity, to take every chance, to press hard after every occasion to express hospitality and kindness to our brothers and sisters in Christ with in this body and outside of this body and to strangers as well. We are to look for every opportunity to express kindness, and love, and blessing by opening our homes to one another and to other brothers and sisters and strangers in need. So privacy gets thrown out the window here. Pursuing hospitality demands that we open our homes for the care of others, that we share our table with others, that we house and care for and clothe others as they need it. **Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. (1Pe 4:8-9)** That is, without complaining of the hardship of doing it; of the time, and expense, and trouble required in doing it. It is the idea of doing it willingly, opening your home and your table and your closet, not unwillingly, or complaining about the cost, or considering it burdensome, or expecting something in kind in return, without bemoaning that they stay too long or eat too much, or talk too much, etc. Instead we are to do it without murmuring or complaining. I don't think there is anything more uncomfortable than trying to receive hospitality from someone who is inhospitable.

Beloved see what Peter is calling us to. Peter is saying that love covers sins and that kind of love leads to hospitality, to true fellowship that magnifies the grace and the glory of God. Think of how hospitality magnifies God. We talked about this a little bit before when we were in Romans. Hospitality provides a context for discipleship. Hospitality adorns the gospel in flesh – manifests a transformed heart. Hospitality demonstrates understanding of God's ownership of all things and our role as steward. Hospitality does war on selfish individualism and promotes community and investment in the people of God. Hospitality encourages a right understanding of our homes not as a museum, a fortress, or a treasure, but as a tool for the promotion of Christ. Hospitality teaches our children a servant's heart. Hospitality practiced provides for the care of the hurting and needful in the body of Christ. Real love, practiced with faithfulness gives glory to God even as we see the end approaching. So pray effectively, love fervently, and

**4) Because the end of all things is at hand, serve faithfully (v. 10-11)** Peter is saying that Spiritual gifts are not for the few but for all and every believer has gifts which the Holy Spirit has given for the edifying of others, for the edifying of the church, for

the strengthening of their walk in Christ, for the strengthening of their faith. They are not to draw recognition to ourselves but to magnify Christ as worthy.

Peter has in view two categories of gifts here – speaking and serving gifts. His desire is not to speak about each of the gifts individually but to give an overarching picture of faithful use of those gifts. They are to be used for the benefit of other brothers and sisters in Christ as good stewards of God's varied grace. We are merely conduits for the grace of God. In essence, spiritual gifts cause us to speak as God would speak, and to act as God would act.

Specifically he says: **whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God.** What does this mean for the preacher or teacher? There is seriousness and weightiness to preaching and teaching the Word of God. Preaching is bringing people face to face with God's authoritative truth. Preachers are to preach the Word of God faithfully depending on divine unction and trusting in divine revelation, not diluting or compromising God's truth, not seeking to please men but to please God by his faithfulness. The preacher must be careful to both bring forth the true meaning of Scripture and to appropriately apply it to his hearers. Moreover they are to do it in a manner that communicates God's authority. There is no place for flippancy or lack of respect and honor for the office and calling of preaching. There is a weightiness that must accompany preaching the Word of God. There must be a reverence that is missing in so many churches and on so many church platforms. The one who preaches in the body ought to preach as though Christ were teaching. The congregation ought to listen actively and alertly, recognizing the worth of the words being spoken understanding the weight of the words and what is at stake in listening to them.

It's true that the preacher should preach faithfully but even more what Peter is saying is this: All speech should be taken seriously, especially in service to God. The Sunday School teacher, the extended session worker, the visitor to the sick, the worship singer, the greeter at the door handing out bulletins – each is speaking on behalf of God to minister his grace-- be faithful to speak the words of God.

Moreover he says: **whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies.** In the power and in the ability, perform your work in strength and in the Spirit of God. The serving gifts that Peter is speaking of can range from singing to making coffee, from charitable deeds to acts of mercy, from exhortation to administration, service to helping – whatever it is we are to do it in the power that God provides. We must do it in the power that God supplies by His Spirit for the sake of His church so that we do not grow weary in well doing.

And listen, don't wrack your brain trying to figure out what gift you have so that you can label it and call it your own. The purpose of spiritual gifts is to help other believers and to strengthen them in their faith. So pray to God, look for needs and

meet those you can meet in the strength of the Lord and you have discovered your gift.

Questions to think about: In whose power and for whose glory are you doing what you do? Who does your teaching or your serving draw attention to? To yourself or to God? Does it give those around you a proper picture of God? Does it bring Him glory, because that is the purpose of all our praying, loving, and serving.

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