

HOW NOW SHALL WE LIVE?

1 Peter 4:7-11

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INTRODUCTION

- Chuck Colson served in the Richard Nixon presidential administration and for his part in the Watergate scandal he served time in prison. But God saved Colson and God greatly used this very bright man. Before his death in April 2012, he was the chairman of Prison Fellowship and a member of the FBC Naples, FL. He was a prolific Christian author but arguably his best book is entitled, *How Now Shall We Live?* The thesis of the 500 plus page book is only the Christian worldview is valid, tenable, and meaningful. He does an outstanding job of critiquing other worldviews and philosophies and showing how inferior they are to the biblical worldview. I strongly recommend you get it and read it even though it was written a few years ago.
- The Apostle Peter powerfully answers this same question of how a follower of Christ is to live his or her life. Peter writes to the church scattered abroad due to persecution and evangelism in AD 64. In our text today he provides practical, timely advice for believers in Jesus. What is so amazing is he wrote this 2,000 years ago and yet it is accurate and pertinent to us today! And the reason is this is no ordinary book, but the inspired Word of God!
- Peter gives us some very sagacious and wise counsel and I do pray that as you listen today that you will commit and determine in your heart that you will live to the best of your ability a life of prayer, love, and service. Interesting how simple the message is but we will spend an entire lifetime trying to obey these simple yet deeply profound truths.
- Read 1 Peter 4:7-11. ⁷ *But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.* ⁸ *And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."* ⁹ *Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.* ¹⁰ *As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.* ¹¹ *If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*
- Peter begins in verse 7 with these words, "But the end of all things is at hand." This is similar to James 5:8, "The coming of the Lord is at hand," or John's message in 1 John 2:18, "It is the last hour." Nearly 2,000 years have elapsed and the end has not come, so how do we interpret these verses? They wrote from heaven's perspective. After Jesus came and lived, died, arose, and ascended to heaven, life on earth has been in the

last days. The next great climactic event is when Jesus comes to get His children in the rapture of the church. One pastor descried what Peter said as Jesus' return was imminent but not immediate.

- "Therefore" we are to live in a certain way and Peter is about to tell us how now shall we live. In light of Jesus coming, ascending to heaven, and the Holy Spirit coming down to earth, how shall we live? Since Jesus is coming and He can come at any moment, how shall we live? He gives us a powerful answer and the three words I want you to focus on are pray, love, and serve.

I. PRAY (VS. 7)

- Vs. 7 Peter gives two imperative commands when telling us that we should pray. First, be serious. This word means sober, self-controlled, saneness, and well-being. And the other command is be watchful and means to be calm and collective and to be discreet. One writer said, "When a man's mind is unbalanced and his approach to life is frivolous and irresponsible, he cannot pray as he ought." (William Barclay, p. 252)
- As followers of Christ we must be serious and watchful as we pray. We should pray with expectancy always looking for the glorious return of our Lord. And we should be as informed and alert as we can as to what is going on in our world.
- One of the ways we can obey these biblical commands to be serious and watchful in our prayers is to read and apply the principles in Mark Batterson's fine book, *The Circle Maker*. It has impacted your staff. We will be discussing something and stop and draw a circle of prayer around the matter. He tells the true story of when he was 13-years-old and he and his family visited a local church. The church sent a prayer team to their home and asked if they needed prayer for anything. (See page 75-76.)
- We indeed need to be serious and watchful, for the days in which we live are difficult and dark days. Have you noticed the proliferation of movies and the fascination with apocalyptic matters like aliens and now zombies, yes zombies. When you remove God from matters of ultimate importance you will believe anything, I mean anything no matter how unscientific and ludicrous it may be.
- In Chuck Colson's book he describes how darkened some minds are when it comes to matters of great importance like how we got here on earth. Colson points out that some believe that sociobiology or human genes is the source of life. Human beings are simply machines that carry out the genes orders. "This is a worldview in which genes become the deity—the ultimate creators and controllers of life." (Colson, p. 257) Others believe that our origins are from aliens. Stephen Hawking believes that humans are not evolving fast enough to avoid extinction through pollution and war so we need to contact the aliens so they can teach us how to evolve to a higher plane. And Carl Sagan would agree if he were

alive today. He believed the world's redemption depends upon our communication with these aliens or extra terrestrials so they can guide us through our evolutionary adolescence.

- Wow, let us pray with earnestness, seriousness, and be watchful as we live in perilous times.
- These are difficult days. In our land one of two marriages end in divorce; many of our teens are hooked on drugs and nearly 85% do not attend church; fathers have checked out on their families and many are hooked on alcohol, gambling, and pornography. And some of our brightest are looking to contact aliens to help us navigate through life! What is a child of God to do? How shall we live in such crazy days? Peter says pray. When we pray we are encouraged and blessed. We are reminded that our hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ and not some heroic human who will deliver us from the clutches of aliens, Ets, or zombies!

II. LOVE (VS. 8-9)

- The hope for this world is the church of Jesus Christ being the church, showing Jesus to a confused and lost world. And in order for us to be effective we must love each other and get along and be on mission with God.
- Vs. 8 notice how Peter says, "And above all things." Now what he is about to say is of the utmost importance. We are to love each other.
- I highly recommend Bob Goff's book entitled *Love Does*; it is such an excellent read but let me give you a spoiler alert—this is my favorite part of the book as it gives a very practical and tangible example how to fervently love another person.. Bob tells the true story of how an elderly lady ran a stop sign and plowed right into him. (See pages, 120-121.)
- Peter commands the church to have not just love but fervent love for one another. The participle translated "have" is in the present tense. We are to keep on having fervent love for one another. This word fervent is *ektena* and means to stretch or strain. It is the word used to describe the taut muscles of the athlete in competition. When a wrestler is in a match with his opponent he strains all his muscles to the limit in order to pin him. When a runner races to the finish line he stretches out in order to win the race. And the Greek word for love is *agape*, the highest kind of love, the love that sacrifices for another. And why does Peter command the church to do this? We can at times be unloving or unkind. Colossians 1:4 says, "love for all the saints." We are to love all the church. "To dwell with saints above that will indeed be glory. To dwell with saints here below, well that's another story." That is true but it should not be. We should love each other and go out of our way to care for each other and get along in spite of our differences and personality conflicts.
- Vs. 8 Peter quotes Proverbs 10:12. *Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins.* This type of love is described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:4-5: *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love*

does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; The key to love in this verse is forgiveness. When you give love and forgiveness to one who has hurt you then you cover that sin and sin loses its deadly power. All of us will wrong and be wronged. In the comic strip Amos, Andy, and Kingfish, Kingfish was always bothering Andy so one day Andy told Amos I have had enough. I am planting dynamite on my chest so the next time Kingfish hits me in the chest it will blow off his hand! Unforgiveness is like that. It hurts the other person but destroys you. But love takes all that away and brings peace and harmony. Our churches need a huge dosage of forgiving love!

- Vs. 9 Peter gets very practical in how we can love one another with this *agape* kind of love. We are to be hospitable or generous to one another. In the New Testament era there were no Holiday Inn Express hotels so the church opened their homes to traveling missionaries, preachers, and others. And Peter told them they are to do this without grumbling, *goggusmos*.
- How now shall we live? We are to pray and we are to love; we are to have fervent love for each other, a love that gives and does not complain.
- Katie Hosking of Everett, WA (just north of Seattle, Washington) understands this concept of *agape* love. Katie and her fiancé were 12 days from getting married and they called off the wedding. No details were given but they called off the wedding. But Katie's family had paid \$8700 to use the local country club and the policy was if they canceled within 60 days they still had to pay the full amount. So they had this reservation and all this food reserved for 150 guests. So they decided to give a free meal to the homeless at the Interfaith Family Shelter. They threw a big party for the homeless of the community with a DJ and delicious food like beef, salmon, shrimp, fruit and not wedding cake but strawberry shortcake. The people loved it and Katie said we had a blast, and she still got to dance with her dad. Now that is what the Bible calls *agape* love-- genuine, gracious, undeserved, sacrificial love. This is the kind of love God has for us and the love He expects us to grant to others.

III. SERVE (VS. 10-11)

- Vs. 10 Peter instructs us in the church how we should live. We are to serve. Everyone in the church has received a spiritual gift that we are to use for the Lord's work. The word for gift is *charismata*, with the root word being *charis*, or grace.
- If you do not know what your spiritual gift is then go to the Scriptures and read Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and our text, 1 Peter 4, and pray, asking God to reveal to you what His gift is to you.
- Once you discover what your gift is then you are to minister it or *diakonos* it to one another. It is a present participle; we are to keep on constantly ministering or serving one another with our spiritual gift. As we do we are

- good stewards of the manifold, *poikilos*, (multicolored, various, rich in variety) grace of God. Interesting to me that this word translated “various” in 1 Peter 1:6 when describing trials is the same word here modifying grace. For every trial God gives grace to cover that trial! The gifts God has granted to us are to be used not hoarded or kept to ourselves. This cuts away at the serious problem of entitlement that is so prominent in churches today. If you are serving God with your gift and praying and loving, as you should you will not have the spiritual immaturity to demand your way or complain or *goggusmos* about what you do not have.
- When we are so busy serving God and using our gifts for His church, we simply do not have the time or energy to complain or be unloving.
 - Vs. 11 there are two types of gifts listed—speaking and ministry gifts. If you have speaking gifts then you need to speak as the utterances or oracles of God. You should minister with confidence and boldness knowing that the Lord has empowered you and entrusted you to speak for Him. And as a word of encouragement and caution, God will never impress you to speak something or do something that is contrary to His Word.
 - The other type of gift is a ministry gift. The word is *diakoneo*, to serve, wait upon, where we get the English word, deacon. Interesting to note that all the verbs in this verse are present tense verbs in the Greek, we are to keep on doing these things. We are to speak and serve continually in the church. If this is your gift then you need to be doing it. And note that it is God who supplies the ability to do so. These are spiritual gifts from God. The word translated “supplies” is the Greek word *choragei* from *choregeo* from which we get English words like choreography and chorus.
 - **When we as the church join our gifts with the rest of the body of Christ, the result is a beautifully choreographed demonstration or a lovely chorus of voices that serves others and glorifies God.**
 - Note the last part of verse 11; this is so important. We do all this so that God is glorified (present tense) through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. And note the doxology of praise Peter gives, as the Holy Spirit inspires him, to Jesus—“to whom be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

CONCLUSION

- How now shall we live in this world? We as the church of Jesus Christ are to be serious and watchful in our prayers; love fervently with hospitality, without complaining. And we are to serve, use the gifts that God has supplied us to use for His glory and edification of His church, and not our own advancement or glory.
- A few years ago when I served as pastor of Liberty Baptist Church in Hampton, VA, there was an article in the *Daily Press* newspaper about a couple in the city that had been arrested for, if I recall correctly, running a prostitution business in their home. One of the men in our church, a

faithful and active member, asked me if I had read the article and I told him I had. He then told me that he had gone over to the couples' home and visited them, and he and his wife had them over for dinner and they are praying for their salvation! I thought now that is awesome. Here you have some followers of Christ not being harsh and judgmental but reaching out in prayer, love, and serving, showing hospitality to those who desperately needed it. Think if we were to treat one another that way; what great good we could do and how we would glorify God.

INVITATION

- Today I invite you to give your life to Christ. Some need to surrender their lives to Jesus and be saved.
- Others know the Lord and you need to be a part of GHBC and join with us. There are so many in our country who were raised in church, but are no longer praying, loving, and serving as they should, and deep down they know something very vital is missing in their lives. Is that you?
- Others here are followers of Christ and perhaps God has spoken to you about how you are to be living in this world. How now shall you live? You and I as followers of Christ are to pray, love, and serve. You may want to come to the altar and pray and ask God to help you love with this *agape* kind of love, and ask the Lord also to show you the spiritual gift He has given to you to serve others and glorify Him.