

HOW TO LIVE IN LIGHT OF THE END

I Peter 4:7-9
January 9, 2011

INTRODUCTION: If you want to make the best use of *“the rest of your life”* (4:2), live in the light of the expectant return of Christ. All believers will not agree on the **details** of the return of Jesus, but most can agree on the **demands** of the experience. The Bible teaches that we shall stand before God one day. **Romans 14:10-23** and **II Cor 5:1-21** both give the practical meaning of this.

As Peter pens this letter, remember he was a follower of Christ at His death, saw Him after His resurrection, visited with Him during His 40 days, saw Him ascend from the Mount of Olives, heard angels announce the promise of His return, etc. The whole N.T. emphasizes the expectation of our Lord’s return:

Romans 13:12 - “the day is at hand”
Phil. 4:5 - “the Lord is at hand”
James 5:8 - “the coming of the Lord is at hand”
I John 2:18 – “it is the last hour”
Rev. 1:3 - “the time is near”
Rev. 22:20 - “I am coming quickly”

From the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry to the present, the question concerning the end of time has been on the lips of men/women. When is the end near? In the early church, Christians expected the return of Christ in their lifetime. During the Reformation, believers thought that the consummation was at hand. And today, because of current international stress and declining moral standards, people frequently raise the question, “*When will the end come?*”

In the days of **I Peter’s** writings, the church was living in difficult times, much like much of the world outside the U.S.; severe persecution. However, God was using this time to ***humble the Christians***, to ***harmonize the church***, and most of all to ***honor our Christ***.

One of the main motivating factors in the life of the early believers was that they expected Jesus to return in their lifetime.

I. WE SHOULD LIVE EXPECTANTLY. 7

A. DOCTRINAL TRUTH. 7a

“But the end of all things is at hand” – is near, means to approach, to draw near, is in the perfect tense and represents the end as having drawn near and is now in a position to break in. The idea is that the end is impending or imminent. Peter’s words echo a conviction that was universal in the early church.

Romans 13:11-12, “And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.”

These words serve as a caution to be always expectant and ready.

In its context, this promise was intended to give encouragement to God’s people in their trials and troubles and to serve as a strong incentive to live faithfully for God while there is time.

Hebrews 10:25, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Again, **“at hand”** indicates a consummated process with a resulting nearness, the event, Christ’s return, could occur at any moment.

Paul and Peter wrote and taught of the Rapture of the church, Paul wrote the Corinthians concerning the split-second suddenness of the Rapture of the church.

1 Corinthians 15:51-53, “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

Within the fraction of a second it takes light to refract off an eye’s pupil.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

“we” – indicates the Apostle believed Christ’s return could happen in his lifetime.

If we knew the specific date of the Lord’s return was far off, believers could lose motivation and become complacent, or if they knew it was near, engage in frenzied, panicked activity as the day approached. We need biblically balanced expectancy.

1 John 3:1-3, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

Peter writes 30 years after Christ's ascension to say that no other major intervening events are planned by God.

NOTE: No other redemptive event is planned (telos – end), a form of **“it is finished.”**

The sequence of divine history is this: incarnation of the eternal Son of God, atonement, resurrection, ascension, Pentecost, the return of Christ, and the everlasting kingdom. The coming of Christ for His church is next!

B. PRACTICAL TRUTH. 7b

Peter will draw out lessons for living based on that statement. Doctrine calls for duty. This is a practical appeal on the basis of that truth.

II. WE SHOULD LIVE PRAYERFULLY. 7b

“therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers”

Three key expressions here: **“be clear-minded,” “self-controlled,”** and **“pray.”** The first two words are aorist imperatives, the tense giving to each of the verbs a connotation of urgency and decisiveness. The last word is a noun that deals with the disciplined and well-ordered life.

First word is being sensible and serious, of keeping one's head, mental and moral balance, sound judgment.

Second word speaks of sobriety of judgment that enables one to see things in proper perspective; sober spirit.

The first two words are essential for unhindered prayer. Prayer demands our full attention

Peter calls for:

- 1. God Thinking**
- 2. Spiritual Alertness**
- 3. Spiritual Resource**

Prayer is the access to all spiritual resources but believers cannot pray properly if their minds are unstable due to worldly pursuits, ignorance of divine truth, or indifference to divine purposes.

III. WE SHOULD LIVE LOVINGLY. 8

“and above all things” – supreme importance. What is taught in **v.7b** is very important but Peter says that **“above all things...”** Love is the badge of a believer in this world (**John 13:34-35**). Especially in times of testing and persecution, we need to love one another and be united in heart.

Remember, love is not a matter of emotional feelings, though that is included, but of dedicated will; a choice; an action verb.

A. CHRISTIAN LOVE IS FERVENT. 8a **DEFINED**

“have fervent love for one another” – **fervent** has root idea of **stretched** or **strained**. Used of athlete straining his muscles in effort, or of a horse running at a full gallop. Word suggests intensity of effort, or exerting of one’s powers to the fullest extent.

1 John 4:7-11, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

Exerting maximum effort, speaks of **intensity**. Such love is sacrificial, not sentimental, and requires at times to love in spite of insult, injury, and misunderstanding from others. Means to love **deeply**, for love eases tension and breaks hostility. This word defines not only an attitude but also a volitional act. How? Its nature is selfless, extended regardless of the worthiness of its object. To love with determination. Means unflinching and earnestly and constant. Our love, kindled by God’s love, is stretched by exercise.

B. CHRISTIAN LOVE IS FORGIVING. 8b **DEMONSTRATED**

“for love will cover a multitude of sins” – when love is fervent, it will be forgiving. Love covers sin in that love motivates us to hide the sin from others and not spread it abroad.

Proverbs 10:12

“Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins.”

“strife” – dissension

“all sins” – all wrongs

It is the **“love of God”** that covers our sins, but our love, modeled on Christ’s love, can also cover sins in His name. Our love cannot, of course, pay the price of sin. Jesus did that. But our love can imitate the mercy of God; our love can forgive.

Love does not deny the fact of offenses, but it does cover them over rather than reveal them for judgment. Love covers not in the sense of atonement, but in the sense of hiding from harsh judgment.

God forgives the sinner who comes to Him in repentance and faith. He demands that the forgiven sinner show the same forgiving spirit toward his fellow man.

Ephesians 4:32, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

1. **The Christian who is demonstrating true love will be willing to forgive a fellow brother in Christ over and over again. After all, that is how God treats us.**

Peter asked Jesus, “How many times shall I forgive?” 7 times, no 70 x 7

2. **Peter does not mean that sins in our own lives are forgiven because we love our brothers, but that our love for other Christians enables us to overlook their sins.**
3. **The sins covered are those of the one loved, not the one loving.**
4. **True love accepts the person just as he/she is, faults and all.**
5. **This does not imply that the local church should not deal with gross sins, but that the Christian should never hold past sins against a brother who has turned his back on those sins**

IV. WE SHOULD LIVE HOSPITABLY. 9

1 Peter 4:9, “Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.”

Love should be manifested in hospitality towards one another. This is concrete demonstration of love to him/her.

“without grumbling” – continual complaining by the hosts spoiled the hospitality they extended. Hospitality is an opportunity to show love for others.

Hebrews 13:2, “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.”

We must show it with kindness willingly and cheerfully; loving strangers. Offer ungrudgingly to one another without resenting the time and expense which may be involved. Such **grumbling** is ultimately a complaint against God and His ordering of our circumstances, and its result is to drive out faith, thanksgiving, and joy.

Love always goes further; it moves us to serve others. Jesus washed the disciples' feet.

John Calvin referred to **"hospitable"** as *"one of the duties of love."*