

A Gospel Living Community

1 Peter 4:7-11

Introduction

Illustration

The lesson of an art teacher about painting...

⁷The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. ⁸Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies--in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Prayer

Main Thought

The Gospel instructs us to become a God-glorifying community in view of the Lord's coming.

v.7 **"the end of all things is at hand"**

What and why the old apostle wanted to communicate to them by saying that?

Explanation

Certainly Peter could not mean that earthly history came to an end. Most of the scholars believe he spoke in terms of the redemptive history. Bible never speaks to us about end times in order to encourage us to speculate about the exact date of Lord's coming. 'Nobody knows the day or the hour but the Father'. So the main purpose of the Bible speaking of end times is to inspire believers for holy living.

Peter didn't mean as many speculate that Christ would return during his lifetime, he had heard and remembered the dramatic prediction of his own death in John 21:18,19. But he also remembered the day of ascension of his Lord with the encouraging words of Him coming back.

So what did he mean?

Grudem explains it this way:

"All major events in God's plan have occurred, and now all things are ready for Christ's return and rule".

- Christ Messiah came to this world and accomplished His mission.
- He died on the Cross for all who believed – He saved them for their sins.
- He ascended to heaven and poured the Holy Spirit on His disciples to establish His church.
- Everything is ready for His return. It can happen anytime.

Illustration

The stage is set up for the last act of the drama. The main Hero can come any time to interrupt our busy lives with the end of all things.

So how are we to live in view of His return?

Illustration

Martin Luther once was asked, 'What would you do, if Christ would return tomorrow?' He answered, 'I'll plant a tree and pay my taxes'. We know what he meant by that. As he was saying, 'I'm saved and justified through the Cross of Christ, so I'm not afraid of His return.'

Friends, if we believe that Christ died for our sins on the Cross, we should not be afraid of His coming. For He will come not to condemn us, because He himself was condemned on our behalf and paid the price... The Judge will be our Savior Himself.

Does it mean that we have to go and plant trees or should we wait passively doing nothing at all? It's far from that. We must actively wait for His return. And we don't need to run in panic trying to find on our own how we should live for God in view of His coming. This is exactly the purpose of the text that we read.

We must actively and faithfully expect His return.

Peter leaves us with the three main instructions:

- I. The Gospel calls us to glorify God by trusting and depending on Him for everything in this world.
- II. The Gospel calls us to glorify God through Christ by earnestly loving our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- III. The Gospel calls us to glorify God through Christ by doing everything for the right reason.

I. **The Gospel calls us to glorify God by trusting and depending on Him for everything in this world.**

Glorify God by trusting and depending on God through prayer...

v. 7b ...therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers...

Why Peter starts talking to us about such things as a prayer? Prayer shows our dependence on God. When we pray, we admit our insufficiency and position ourselves before God as needy. We need His grace for everything.

Proud people do not pray. Prayer shows our vertical relationships with God. If we don't have access to the source we won't be able to give anything to anybody, we would not be able to love our brothers and sisters. That's why God starts with prayer...

v. 7b 'Therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers'.

Self-controlled means that you are able to judge the situation correctly and maturely, not from a human perspective, but from God's point of view, deriving the knowledge of God and the will of God from His world.

Sober-minded – being alert for Christ's soon return and not being intoxicated by the worldliness. If we are not sober-minded if we tolerate worldliness, we are endangered to go back to the life style that is disgraceful to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Quote of JC Ryle:

'A holy man will follow after spirit-mindedness. He will endeavor to set his affections entirely on things above, and to hold things on earth with a very loose hand, he will not neglect the business of life that now is; but the first place in his mind and thoughts will be given to the life to come. He will aim to live like one whose treasure is in heaven and to pass through this world like a stranger and pilgrim traveling to his home'.

Another way to put it is 'to live this Day in view of that Day'.

Why should we have God's perspective and point of view? Why should we be alert for the sake of our prayers? **The idea is not simply about prayer, but that life for God is only possible if we walk with Him depending on His grace.**

Saturate yourself with the Gospel, study the character and the work of Christ in His Word and you will know how to pray.

When our vertical relationship are established, when we rely on God's grace through prayer, we are supplied and equipped to love others.

It brings us to our second point...

II. The Gospel calls us to glorify God through Christ by earnestly loving our brothers and sisters in Christ.

'Above all keep loving one another earnestly...'

Peter is not only giving us a command to love, he is not only providing us with the characteristics of love that glorifies God, but is also teaching us the practical way of how this love has to be expressed.

It must be earnest love that expresses itself through forgiveness, biblical hospitality, serving one another and expressing spiritual gifts for the benefits of one another. Shortly, such love requires from us to be good stewards of God's grace.

Earnest love means love that stretches our hearts to the limit, both in depth and endurance. There is no superficiality in such love. Love that is capable to forgive an insult, love that is ready to sacrifice time, energy, emotions, possessions and money for the sake of others...

Illustration

Since the essence of the Gospel is Christ's character and His work, Christ is the ultimate example of such love. He left Heaven, He became a man. He was spending his emotions, possessions without reservation. He lived and died for God's glory and our good. When we begin to manifest such love for one another we too begin to bring glory to God.

Example -The muddy field of the world... We are called not to watch, but to play...

Practically, there are three ways of how we can express earnest love that gospel provides us with in this passage:

1. Through forgiving one another.
2. Through Biblical hospitality.
3. Through the stewardship of the gifts and services God provides us with.

1. Love expresses itself through forgiving one another.

'Since love covers a multitude of sins' – How such love covers multitude of sins?

Where such love is present in Christian fellowship many offences, small and big, are overlooked and forgotten, sins are forgiven and not reminded about. But where love is lacking, bitterness, grudges and unforgiveness are flourishing... Everyone and everything is viewed with suspicion.

Are you a suspicious person?

If we don't forgive one another, there will not be a vacuum for long, hatred will cripple in... Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offences.

Illustration:

Bear in mind who is writing this message... It is Peter who asked His Lord how many times he should forgive his brother who sins against him. He even proposed an answer – seven times, but the Lord's answer was – 'seventy seven times', which means always...

Secondly, if before we became Christians we were opening our homes for orgies and worldly parties, now we are called to open our homes for the purpose of hospitality.

2. True love expresses itself through extending hospitality to one another.

v. 9 '**Show hospitality to one another without grumbling**'.

Have you noticed that hospitable people are often loving people?

Biblically, hospitality is not an option but a Christian duty. Nobody can say, 'I just don't have a gift of hospitality, that's why I'm not friendly and that's why I don't help others.'

Hospitality is not mere friendliness – hospitality is costly. But it also doesn't mean that it always has to be spectacular as a banquet.

Friends, **the main purpose of hospitality is to create an atmosphere for biblical fellowship and not to impress others with cleanliness of our home or variety of delicacies.** So don't be intimidated by this word.

Also, sometimes we make a mistake limiting hospitality by thinking that it can be expressed only if we invite people to our house. We should practice it more, but there can be a situation when it's not easy to practice hospitality in this particular way.

Friends, if you are in a situation when you can't practice hospitality to the degree you'd like to by opening your home, remember the Jesus didn't have a place to lay His head, but nobody could say that He was not hospitable.

There are many situations when we can practice hospitality in church by being involved in different ministries. In our church we've started such a ministry to extend hospitality primarily to our visitors. But we all understand that such a ministry will never be a substitute the need for us all to be welcoming and hospitable to each other...

Before, when we lived without God, our desire was to manipulate and exploit others. Now, when we became Christians, Gospel teaches us to glorify God by stewarding everything that God entrusted us.

3. Love expresses itself through being good stewards of God's multicolorful grace.

v. 10-11a

¹⁰As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies...

In this text we see that first of all we are to be stewards of God's gifts. What does that mean?

A. To steward God's gifts means not to hide, but to employ these gifts for the sake of others. There are no Christians without gifts (each has received...).

If you are a Christian and by the grace of God you experienced salvation, of course, God gave you gifts.

Illustration

Luke 19:11-27 - Parable of the Talents

Talents must be deployed for the master's benefits. So God gave us gifts to express them for His glory. Two of them were praised and entrusted with more at the return of the master. The other one was not only rebuked, but was called

unworthy servant. Don't we all want to hear the words, 'Well done, good and faithful servant' instead.

I remember **Jeff Purswell's words**,

"Never say you don't have a gift, because the Bible is teaching the opposite. And if it is so, it is not humble than to say, "I don't have a gift'. It is possible though to be ignorant and not know what gift you have."

There are many gifts that are listed in the Bible in the book of Corinthians, Ephesians, Romans. The list is not exhaustive.

In this particular message Peter mentions vocative gifts .It cannot mean that words that we speak are God's own words because it is only true of Scripture. And we evaluate every speech of men by the written Word of God.

What does it mean then to speak an oracle?

Grudem explains,

'We must speak with the seriousness of purpose, which one would use if one was speaking God's word'.

So when you speak don't just throw words. Make sure your word reflects Biblical truth and substance. Let your speech bring glory to God.

It's a good thing to remember that when we speak, people do not need our own wisdom. We must speak to be faithful to the Gospel for people to be encouraged, edified and built up.

Application

Let me ask you a few questions that challenged me while I was in Pastors College.

1. What is your spiritual gift?

Remember, not to know your gift doesn't mean that you are humble. What it means you are ignorant of your gift yet, but you have at least one...

How can we identify our gifts? Serving is the best way to do it... Find the most urgent area of service in your church, plug in and soon you and the other will see what you are gifted in.

Let us remember that our goal is not just to identify our gift, but use it for the glory of God and for the benefit of others.

2. Are you serving regardless of knowing or not knowing your gift?

Explanation

Unfortunately, many in the Body of Christ make this mistake. 'I won't serve because I don't know the area of my giftedness. What if my gift would not match the duties of

the ministry?' This is an unbiblical thought. Love cannot be withheld. The duty of a steward of God's grace cannot be put aside till the gift is recognized.

3. What about vocative gifts?

- a. Read the Word. Soon you will know what, when and how to speak...
- b. Fight the fear of man.

Remember you are speaking not in a hostile environment, but in the church to your care group or on Sunday service. We are your family. We are not looking for perfection.

B. Stewards of the services

Similarly, the gifts of service include a broad category of help and ministries for the benefits of the others in the church. Similarly, those who serve must rely on God's strength provided through grace.

Here in Crossway Community Church we don't lack examples of Christian service in different ministries.

Application

1. What obvious talents and abilities do you have?

Do you use them or hide them from others? If you don't use them, why?

Remember that according to this text serving is given to God's people in order to glorify Him. If you don't serve, you do not fulfill your purpose. It is that serious.

2. If you are already serving, is your focus others or yourself? Are you serving or looking to be served?

The Gospel delivers us from a self-serving life style.

III. The Gospel calls us to glorify God through Christ by doing everything for the right reason.

v.11b - in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Why Peter is so jealous for us to do everything for one reason "God's glory"?

And only God was capable to save us, and He is changing us even now. So to Him belong all glory and not to us. And anything we achieve is only because He made it possible through us.

Application

There are a few things I believe will help us to make sure that all we do in this present world we do for the right reason - the Glory of God.

How can we be sure that we do it for this very reason?

Search your heart with these questions:

What do you have that you didn't receive?

What is my focus when I serve:

- Result or faithfulness?
- Recognition or God's pleasure?
- Personal fulfillment or self sacrifice?
- Personal preferences or answering specific needs of others?

It all boils down to one fundamental question:

Do you live for God or self-gratification?

Exhortation:

God provided you and me with the canvas of life, colors, and tools. He give grace in everything and for everything.

If we live our lives relying on God's given strength and grace, we avoid the trap of legalism.

Illustration – Pharisees boasted in themselves. They believed that the picture of their life is a masterpiece. God found their lives to be a counterfeit and not genuine.

Paint the canvas of your life for the glory of God. For this is the meaning and purpose of your existence.

To Him belongs glory and dominion forever and ever!

Prayer