

1Peter 4:7-10

Abundant Living When the End is Near

One summer we were on vacation, camping in the Okanogan valley near Kelowna. We were about half way through our vacation, still planning for another week of leisurely fun in the sun.

We had lots of time and many plans of things to do, when we saw huge clouds of smoke coming over the mountain behind us.

We realized that there was a forest fire nearby and the RCMP came by to warn us that we needed to be prepared to evacuate on short notice. We were told that we would only have 30 minutes notice and our campsite would have to be empty—we would not be allowed back in for any reason.

Now, realizing that the call to evacuate could come at any time, changed our plans, and completely rearranged our priorities.

We didn't want to be caught out on the lake, or back in the woods on a hike when the call came. We didn't want the kids off riding their bikes, or playing down by the creek, we kept everyone together and we spent the rest of the day in readiness.

We see ominous clouds coming over our land, indicating that there are some serious problems.

We have been warned by Bible prophecy that when we see these kinds of problems in the world that we should be ready to evacuate. How should this change our priorities and the way we live?

Some of you have had the experience of being told by your doctor that there are some serious problems in your body and you may not have much time left to live.

How does that information change the way you live your life? Priorities change from pursuit of leisure, to self-preservation and putting things in order.

1Peter 4:7, "But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers."

It is not only wild-eyed fanatics who declare that, "the end is near," Look at what Peter says in verse 7. "*The end of all things is at hand [or is near].*" That is a biblical perspective.

But what does it mean? The Holy Spirit inspired Peter to write these words nearly two thousand years ago. How could He say that the end of all things was near when there was still two thousand years of history to unfold first?

The expression, "the end of all things" refers to what was mentioned in verse 5, that the judge is ready to bring judgment upon this rebellious world.

The **end** of all things refers to the end of this kingdom of darkness that is under the tyranny of Satan. It refers to the end of Satan's kingdom.

The end of all things refers to the return of Christ to claim His bride and to crush and destroy this kingdom of darkness before setting up His Kingdom.

The end of all things is not the end of Christ's Kingdom, for His Kingdom will never end.

At the time Peter was writing this letter the Lord had been gone for about thirty years and the gospel was rapidly spreading through most of the Roman Empire and there was great expectation that the return of Jesus Christ could happen at any time.

This was the expectancy of Jesus' followers, especially in those early years, they believed that Jesus could return at any time and bring to an end the Roman Empire and set up the Kingdom of God.

It was close to this same time that the Apostle Paul expressed his expectation of the imminent return of Christ, when he signed off his letter to the Corinthians with the expression, "Maranatha"—meaning, "Oh Lord, come quickly" (1Corinthians 16:22).

This is the way that our Lord Jesus wants His church to be living, always expecting Him to return at any time.

Luke 12:40, *"...Be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*

The wrong view of the end is to set dates, or to predict seasons, to say, no, we still have a few more years before He comes.

1Peter 4:7, *"But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious [sober] and watchful [alert and vigilant] in your prayers."*

The end of this kingdom of darkness and the coming of Christ will culminate in a period of great trouble and wickedness in the world and persecution for God's pilgrims who are on mission in this hostile land.

Therefore, Peter gives us four practical characteristics that are vital to protect and enable the family of God to thrive and be successful in our mission.

1. We are to pray for one another, (verse 7).
2. We are to have fervent love for one another (verse 8).
3. We are to be hospitable to one another (verse 9).
4. We are to use our gifts to serve one another (verse 10).

Doing these things is called, "practicing the one another's" which are given as essential keys for the church to survive and thrive in perilous times.

If any of these are missing the church will be greatly weakened and disabled. But if all of these characteristics are in place and active, the church will thrive and be fruitful in even the most perilous of environment.

So let's look at the first "one another". We are told to, "***be serious and watchful in your prayers.***" Prayer is at the top of the list.

Peter doesn't use the words, "one another" here but, being included in this string of others, the implication is that we are to be praying for one another.

James 5:16 says, "*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another...*"

When 1Peter 4:7, says to be serious, it literally means to be sober, clear minded, thinking straight. We are discovering that in challenging times of deception, we really need mental clarity, we need to be able to think well—we need to depend upon the mind of God, so that we know what we should be praying about.

And to be watchful, means to be alert and vigilant, understanding what is going on in the world around you, and understanding what God's word has to say about those things so that we can pray according to the will of God.

These are not prayers of wishful thinking, "God please take away the problems and just make everything sunny and wonderful again;"

Nor are they prayers of panicked desperation, "O Lord, everything is falling apart, and the enemy is destroying us, what are we going to do?"

But when we are thinking biblically and alert to what is going on, we can lift up for one another prayers that recognize what God is doing in the midst of the crisis, and are focused, and we can help pray one another through the storms of life.

As opposition and challenges increase, so does the need for us to pray for one another.

I thank the Lord that during this past year of 2020, with all of its challenges, the Lord has impressed upon the hearts of many of you in our church to pray together for one another.

God has moved more of you to meet more often and more consistently for prayer in 2020-21, than ever before in the history of our church.

We are just reading about the importance of this today, but God knew all along and He has already been moving you to increased prayer for one another.

1Peter 4:8, "***And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."***

In ***Matthew 24:12***, Jesus warned that in the last days, "*because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.*"

And in **Luke 21:16-17**, Jesus said, *“You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends...And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake.”*

But in the midst of all this increasing lawlessness, distrust and hatred, the Christian community of pilgrims should stand out like a bright light in the darkness because of our agape (love) for one another.

In **John 13:35**, Jesus said, *“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

The word, love, in this verse, is the Greek word, *agape*, which means God’s love being expressed through people.

It is what happens when believers let the Spirit of God fill their lives, and have control their lives—their lives then display the evidence of God’s presence in the form of His love being displayed through their actions.

We are exhorted to have **fervent** love for one another. The word *fervent* does not mean emotional intensity, but rather it means an intentional commitment to one another that is steadfastly pursued and persisted in regardless of any challenges and difficulties. (*Jobes, p. 278*)

It is a love that never fails, even when the other person is acting in a way that makes them very difficult to love. It is the love of God expressed through us toward one another that says, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

When we are fervent in our love for one another, it is extremely difficult for the enemy to divide us, or to isolate us, because we tenaciously persist in pursuing and protecting our relationships with each other, refusing to quit or to give up on each other.

Built into this concept of fervent love (agape) is a strong motivation to be together and united. It is very difficult to practice fervent love for one another remotely via Zoom or livestream. It is a relational concept.

This has a military parallel in the commitment of a squad of soldiers to one another, who will risk their own lives in order to never leave a fellow soldier behind.

This is God’s design for keeping the church together even in the midst of the fiercest of enemy attacks against us.

The enemy seeks to divide and separate us, but the church is to have a fervent love for one another that refuses to give up on a brother or sister, or to ever leave them behind.

Verse 8 ends with this line from Proverbs 10:12, ***“love will cover a multitude of sins.”***

The meaning of this is not that you ignore the sin, we are to confront sin, but in a way that you forgive them and continue to love them as though there had never been the offense.

As we read in **1Peter 3:9**, “not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing [praying for the well-being of the offender] ...”

Love covering a multitude of sins is what Jesus taught Peter in **Matthew 18:21-22**, “Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”

It is extremely difficult for the enemy to divide and conquer a church that is tenaciously fervent in their love for one another like this.

And a church that loves like this is very attractive to an outside world that is starving for love.

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

Jesus taught hospitality as one of the foundational basics that characterize being His disciple.

Matthew 25:34-35, 40 “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in... ⁴⁰ “And the King will ...say to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”

Hospitality is often thought of in terms of opening our homes to strangers, but in this context, Peter is emphasizing the importance of believers opening their homes to one another in the church family.

This would include opening their homes for believers to gather for worship and fellowship and places of celebration and of shelter from a hostile world.

Hospitality is one of the vital practices of a church living in the last days. And hospitality cannot be done virtually. You must be together to practice hospitality.

I believe that hospitality is one of those non-negotiables in which we must obey God rather than man when man’s law conflicts with fundamental

An important part of church family life is the opening up of our homes to those without families.

The six long days of the week between Sundays can be unbearably long for a believer who has no Christian family.

And we are to be hospitable without grumbling. It shouldn’t be done out of obligation, but joyfully recognizing that my home and everything in it belongs to the Lord, and I am His steward, to manage His home and to serve His guests that He asks me to invite in.

Hospitality is not cheap, but God owns the house and He is not broke. He promises to provide, if we will only obey.

Hospitality becomes increasingly important in a context of persecution where, new believers especially, may be rejected by their own families and friends. God has designed hospitality so that those who are feeling isolated can find a warm welcome, and a place to feel at home in the houses, and around the tables of other members of the church family.

In a hostile world, the homes of members of the church are meant by God to be open and welcoming places of refuge, safety, and acceptance for members in need.

1Peter 4:10, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

A healthy church is not a group of spectators, but it is a living organism—described in the Bible as a body—the body of Christ, in which each member has an important function to perform for the benefit of the others.

Verse ten tells us that each one of us has received at least one gift, which we are to use to minister to the others in the church.

For example, ***Romans 12:6-8***, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; ⁷ or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another [that means, use your gift to serve one another], as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

A good steward uses their gift to serve the rest of the body of Christ.

1Corinthians 14:26, “How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.”

Our gifts are only discovered as we give ourselves to serving others. You will rarely discover your gift through introspection, or through some self-analysis questionnaire.

The best way to discover your gift is through getting involved in serving others in any way you can. It is as you become involved in ministering to others that your true gifts will begin to show.

Again, as with the other three essentials listed in verses 7-10, the exercising of your gift in ministry to the church family throughout the week is not optional, it is an essential service. Covid restrictions are no excuse for not fulfilling our ministry.

Many times, people complain that their church is not meeting their needs. This concern is often valid, but the first question that you need to ask yourself is, am I using my gifts to meet the needs of the others in the church?

One of the Biblical principles that determine the richness of our spiritual lives is the principle of **Luke 6:38**, “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”

So, if your needs aren't being met in the church there is a very good chance that it is because you are not using your gifts to meet the needs of others in the church.

It has been my observation over the years that the healthiest members of a church are those who are very involved in ministering into the lives of others—not just Sundays, but throughout the week.

God's word has given us four practical characteristics that are important to ensure are in place and active in the church to protect and enable the to thrive and be successful in our mission during perilous times.

1. We are to pray for one another. (Can be done when apart, but hard to know the needs of one another unless we gather.)
2. We are to have fervent love for one another. (This is very difficult to do remotely.)
3. We are to be hospitable to one another. (This demands togetherness.)
4. We are to use our gifts to serve one another. (Again, very difficult to do when isolated.)

Doing these things is called, “practicing the one another's” and they are essential keys for the church to survive and thrive in perilous times.

And most of these can be done only when believers are gathered together.

If any of these are missing the church will be greatly weakened and disabled. But if all of these characteristics are in place and active, the church will thrive and be fruitful in even the most perilous of environment.

Copyright © 2021 by Parkdale Grace Fellowship Permission: You are permitted to reproduce and distribute this material in any format, provided that you do not alter the wording in any way and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. Unless otherwise noted, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. Copyright 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved

