

Chico Alliance Church

November 22, 2015

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“Prepare for Persecution”

1 Peter 4:7-11

Review

Live godly in and ungodly world or live differently because you are different.

- I. Realize your new heritage as specially chosen children of God 1:3-12
- II. Live out your heritage as God’s specially chosen children 1:13-5:11
 - A. Live holy as Your Heavenly Father is holy 1:13-21
 - B. Love fervently as Christ loved us. 1:22-25
 - C. Long intently to grow by interaction with the word of God. 2:1-3
 - D. Come continually to Jesus for placement as stones in His temple 2:4-10
 - E. Abstain completely from the destructive passions of the flesh 2:11
 - F. Practice godly behavior in an ungodly world 2:12
 - G. Practice godly behavior under persecution for doing right 3:13-18
 - H. Saved by Baptism 3:19-22
 - I. Live godly against the enticement of the flesh 4:1-6

Since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin... 4:1

J. Prepare for Persecution 4:7-11

Peter provided anchors for thinking and instruction concerning behavior for a people isolated and scattered among a majority of people who thought differently and lived differently than what God intended for humans to live. His words were intended to encourage them to persevere even when their different thinking and living provoked persecution, suffering and even death. He also encouraged them by posing the possibility of their countercultural action impacting their persecutors to consider inquiring why they maintained hope in a hopeless world. Our current situation becomes more and more like theirs every day.

Peter encouraged them to...

Prepare our minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix our hope completely on the grace being brought to you in the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1:13

In this context, Peter turns his attention and thus ours to some crucial practice within the believing community as we face suffering and persecution.

The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever 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. 1 Peter 4:7-11

This passage easily breaks down into four basic instructions. Peter calls on the followers of Jesus to practice these things in a difficult environment; and I am not talking about “climate change”. The more difficult the situation, the greater will be the need for the body of Christ to practice these things. I will list the four instructions and then go back and comment on each of them. Really, they appear over and over again in the New Testament and warrant individual messages but let this passage serve as a reminder to practice them.

- **Pray thoughtfully**
- **Love fervently**
- **Care eagerly**
- **Serve effectively**

1. Pray thoughtfully

The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. 4:7

The catalyst for thoughtful prayers is the anticipation of the end. Scripture often appeals to end time event to motivate present day behavior.

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 2 Pet 3:11-12

One thing is certain, the more we think about the end, the more we will think seriously about our life. That is true whether the end is our impending death or Christ's imminent coming. The more we perceive the end, the more we will pray. This verse encourages serious thinking for serious praying. Peter urges them to get their brains in gear. Get serious about your prayer life. If we were certain Jesus planned to return tomorrow I would be certain it would change how and how often we talked to God in prayer. Peter and the other apostles actually expected the imminent return of Christ. After the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the next event was the return of Jesus. Peter used a perfect tense verb meaning "to

draw near". The end has drawn near and it is getting closer every day. If that was true then, how much more today.

Peter used two similar words both related to our cognitive function.

"self-controlled" --- "sober-minded"

The first conveyed the ideas of "keeping one's head". The second is similar to our understanding of the term "sober"; i.e. not drunk. The two verbs together denote complete control of one's self, resulting in calmness, sobriety, self-control, sensibleness, steadiness.

Be calm and clear headed.

Why? For the purpose of prayers. Peter employs the common term translated prayer.

It expressed the idea of petition or conversation with deity. As in many cases, this is in the plural form which could either reference to being calm and clear headed for their corporate prayers together or for all different kinds of prayer to God.

The early church devoted themselves to prayer.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42

"Devote" means to continue earnestly, adhere closely, be earnest towards.

The closer the end, the more we pray. Unfortunately our minds become cluttered with so many things (which will come to an end) that we neglect meaningful conversation with God both personally and publically. Like I said earlier, this could not only take a whole message but could occupy a whole series of messages. I encourage you to take an honest look at your prayer life. Most surveys indicate that a majority of Christians pray. My concern is the consistency, content and seriousness of our prayer.

2. Love fervently

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8

"Continually having fervent love among yourselves"

This of course is the top priority of Christianity. Jesus told the disciples that people will identify them as His followers by their love for one another. This is a love imbedded at the core of our being by the God of love. (Rom 5) It is a love based on the character of the one loving rather than the "loveliness" of the one being loved. It is a voluntary act of the will rather than an involuntary response of the heart. The acid test of our love is found in 1 Corinthians 13.

Peter highlighted this absolute priority earlier.

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again... 1 Peter 1:22

The motivation here has to do with having been given a pure heart at conversion. Jesus distilled the priority of our life is to love God absolutely and people fervently. The motivation in this passage has to do with a desire to protect one another. We should fervently love one another since or because love covers a multitude of sins.

Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses. Proverbs 10:12

Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends. Proverbs 17:9

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 1 Corinthians 13:7

We tend to delight more in exposing someone's faults than cover them. This is not to say that we are to ignore sin. The issue is ALWAYS restoration from a heart of love.

My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. James 5:19-20

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:1-2

Paul had to warn the Galatians to be careful lest they bite and devour one another. At time when the world continually jumps on every slight infraction a Christian makes we need to have one another's back. We need to heal our wounded rather than shoot them or shun them.

That's what fervent love does. If Satan can get us to would each other, he will most certainly win the battle.

3. Care eagerly

Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 1 Peter 4:9

The term translated "hospitable" comes from two Greek terms – love stranger

"A lover of strangers"

In a context of severe persecution there were many who were being driven from their homes with nowhere to go. Peter encourages them eagerly care for these followers of Jesus even though they had never met before. There was a great need in the early church for those willing to care in this way. This was listed in both Timothy and Titus as a characteristic of elders.

Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Romans 12:12-13

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Hebrews 13:2

There may come a day when we are called upon to care for our fellow believers.

But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. Hebrews 10:32-35

Perhaps a principle of inviting people into our homes or demonstrating love to someone we don't really know could be drawn from here. Peter includes a qualification for this practice.

"without grumbling"

This is to murmur or grumble or complain. That is why I attached the word eagerly to this practice. That is the opposite of grudgingly or with a bad attitude. Paul told the Philippians to do "ALL THINGS without murmuring or disputing." 2:14

4. Serve effectively

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 4:10

This verse asserts that the Holy Spirit has given EVERY Christian a specific gift.

But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 1 Corinthians 12:7,11

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

Peter calls these specific aptitudes as channels of the grace of God for serving one another. God gifts EVERY Christian with certain aptitudes for ministry and service. Peter urges them to employ their gifts in the service of the church. In doing so we will be good stewards of what God has given to us. We understand the need to be good stewards of God's money. Not so much about being good stewards of God's multifaceted grace. Such willingness to serve others through the capacities that God gives us, results in effective service. Again, this topic could occupy a whole series of messages but in summary, Scripture talks about specific capacities embedded by the Holy Spirit in four places; Rom 12; 1 Cor 12; Eph 4 and here in 1 Peter 4.

Some go to great lengths to discover their specific gift. The truth is, because it is a capacity granted by the Holy Spirit, we will exercise it whether we know it or not.

The key is involvement in ministering to others. If we fail to engage in some kind of people ministry, it most certainly will not be employed as a good steward of the manifold grace of God.

Again, in time of persecution and suffering we need the employment of the specific gifting of the Holy Spirit to succeed. Peter breaks these particular aptitudes or capacities into two broad categories; speaking gifts and serving gifts.

Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies;

Those with the Spirit-given capacities to verbally communicate are to realize that they represent God and must depend on Him to speak through them.

Those with the Spirit-given capacities to accomplish tasks are to realize that they serve God and must depend on Him to strengthen them.

In time of suffering and tribulation and persecution we need to hear words through His specially gifted people and we need practical help from God's specially gifted people.

God grants these gifts to serve one another with the ultimate goal of pointing people to God.

so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:11