

1 Peter 4
The End of All Things Is Near
J.D. Farag

Well, *1 Peter Chapter 4*; we're going to pick it up in *verse 7*. We left off last week in *verse 6*, and *7* comes after *6*. That's perhaps the most profound point I have in the entire sermon. So we're going to make our way, Lord willing, through to *verse 11*.

So I'll ask you if you're able to stand, you can follow along as I read. If not, where you're seated is fine.

The Apostle Peter, by the Holy Spirit, *verse 7* seven words: **"The end of all things is near.** Therefore, [*Yeah, we could have just closed right there, yeah?*]

"Therefore, be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, [*Verse 8*] love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

If anyone speaks, [*Verse 11*] he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."

Let's just close in prayer. That was it; that's so good. All right, let's pray. Father, thank You so much. Oh, Lord, please, Lord, we need You now to settle our hearts and our minds. They need to be cleared of any distraction. And we know that only You, by the Holy Spirit, can do that. We want to give You our undivided attention, but our minds are prone to wander and get distracted.

So Lord, would You please, as only You can and are always so faithful to just... You're the one that gets our attention. And then once You've got our attention, will You keep and hold our attention so that we can focus, focus on Your word and what it is that You have for us here today in Your word?

Lord, that's why we're here. We want to hear You speak in that still, small voice of the Holy Spirit into our lives. We're desperate for that, Lord. We hunger, we thirst for that which only You can satiate, Lord. We're a needy people. And we need You, Lord. We need You right now. So Lord, will You speak? Your servants are listening. We ask You for this in Jesus' name. Amen and amen.

You can be seated. Thank you very much.

So I stole the first seven words of *verse 7* for the title, just so you know, full disclosure here. But that's actually what I want to talk about today. More specifically, what it is that our posture should be as Christians in light of how the end of all things is near.

Now I have to bring back into focus the context in which the Apostle Peter writes this. I know you may be tired of me saying this, but it needs to be understood because if it's not understood, if you don't see it through this lens, then there's this propensity to misunderstand why it is that God inspires Peter to write these words to these Christians.

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They were in and I mean extreme persecution, extreme persecution, the likes of which we thankfully, at least heretofore have not experienced in our lives as Christians. But they were being persecuted in extreme ways and the extreme persecution led to this severe suffering. And they're very discouraged. They're very downcast. Their discouragement is giving way to hopelessness and the hopelessness giving way to despair.

And so God inspires Peter to write this, to encourage them. And right out of the chute, *verse 7* - I love *verse 7*. I love *verse 7*; did I tell you I love *verse 7*? And here's why. Key word: "the end."

I love how one said it. My favorite words in the Bible are "It came to pass," not it came to stay. No, "the end." The end.

There's an end?

Yes. This will end. I know you're going through it. I know you're struggling. I know you're hurting. I know you're being persecuted. I know you're losing everything, by the way. We'll talk about that more in a moment. But this, too, will end. And not only will this end, the end of this and all things is near. Take heart. Take heart. You're almost there.

You're almost across that finish line. Finish the race. Fight the good fight. By the way, interesting, the Apostle Paul at the end of his life, to Timothy, writes, "**I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race.**" Notice what he doesn't say. I have danced a pretty good dance. I've lived a pretty good life. No, this is a battlefield. It's a battleground, not a playground. Oh, would to God that we would take heed to the Word of God.

We're in a war. And this faith is a fight of faith. It's a good fight of faith. And it is a race to be run and a race to be finished. So he wants to encourage them. And in so doing, he provides us with no less than - you might find more - but I found four, I'll call them much-needed reminders again, chief of which is how that - and we need to be reminded of this, right?

That the end of all things is near. Now, this is what you need to do in light of that. This should be your response. I know you're hurting. I know you're struggling. But this is to be your response in light of how close we are to the end. And dare I say, we are so close to the end. And so this is a word for us today.

The first one is in *verse 7*, and it's to be seriously watchful in prayer. I'm choosing to word it that way for a reason. Here, Peter starts out by saying, by virtue of the fact that the end of all things is near, we should all be propelled into prayer. It should propel us into prayer.

I think about the Savior at the time of the very end. He's about to go to the cross, and He knows it. And He has His disciples there with Him in the garden before He's arrested. And what does He do? Well, He's going to go off and pray.

What does He ask them to do?

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Pray. Pray. Keep watch and pray. And when He comes back, it's encouraging in a way because it makes me feel better about myself anyway. He comes back to find - this is the same Peter, by the way.

What's Peter doing? Is he praying?

No, he's sleeping. And never imagine that Jesus is harsh in His tone, but it's kind of like you guys couldn't like stay awake, even just for an hour to pray? It's not the first time I'm convinced, and this is just my own thoughts on this. I think Peter had a sleeping disorder because, you know, there were many times that he's just sleeping.

And isn't it interesting that God would inspire him to write about being watchful in prayer? Being fervent in prayer. Being serious in prayer. Remain watchful.

And the wording, and hang on to this word "fervent;" we're going to talk about that next. But the prayer is to be fervent, sober minded, and serious as we remain watchful.

Why?

Because we're at the end. The end of all things is near. And if there was ever a time for us to be men and women of prayer, that time is now like never before. Prayer for those that need Jesus. I'm getting very convicted about this.

All it takes; I mean, this is - it's been said the guilt is the gift that keeps on giving. And pastors are really good at this. We can guilt people like there's no tomorrow, no pun intended, when it comes to the matter of prayer. And I include myself in this. I don't think there's such a thing as ever being "prayed up," as some would say. Perhaps you've heard that said. It's a continual prayer.

It's continually always in an attitude of prayer. We're all day, every day, all night, every night. You have this constant conscious communion with God, communion, communication. And it's not a monologue. It's a dialog. That's what prayer is. We talk to God, and He answers.

In fact, yeah, if I'm not mistaken, that's this Thursday, **"Call upon Me and I will answer."** Just call upon Me. Call Me. Why are you calling them? I'm available; you won't get voicemail either.

No. For real. Here we are, calling them, her, him. Here's the Lord going (waving arm).

By the way, they're not going to help you. I mean, they might have good intentions. They want to help you, but they can't help you. In fact, if anything, they're going to make it worse. And you'll wish you never called them.

Just would you - can we talk? That's all prayer is. We so complicated it. I mean, I could just - the rest of the time together today. I could just... And we have.... But we've so complicated prayer to our own peril, I might add.

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Prayer is just simply talking to God. One of the things I did; I think I shared this a while back. and it really - it was a game-changer in my prayer life. I just - it was hard at first, but I just started calling my Father in heaven “Baba,” which is the Arabic for Papa, Abba, Father, Daddy, Daddy, Baba. And it changed the whole complexion of my prayer life. And I never went back, you know, to the formal pastoral prayers. “Our Father... “ Nothing wrong with that. But what is it with us when we start praying in King James? Do we think that God, hears King James only?

You know, the best prayers are liquid prayers, not even words. We just cry out to the Lord. And He hearkens unto the voice of your cry. And prayer is never a got-to; it's a get-to.

Can you imagine as a parent what it would be like if one of your children or even grandchildren came up to you and was kind of like, I GOT TO talk with you Let's just get this over with. You're like, it's okay. No need, if that's how it's going to be.

No, I want you to want to. I want to be your first response, not the last resort. Reminds me of that couple. The wife says to the husband, Honey, we need to pray. To which the husband responds: Is it that bad? Oh, that's sad. You mean it has to get that bad before you pray? Prayer: What a privilege. I love the hymn of old, ♪ What a Friend We Have In Jesus ♪

♪ What a privilege it is to carry everything to Him in prayer ♪

♪ Oh, what peace we often forfeit ♪

We forfeit it when we don't. We carry these burdens, these cares and affairs of life. And here the Lord is just waiting. Oh, would you just come to Me and bring it to Me and talk to Me? I want to answer, and I have the answer. I am the answer. If you'll just come.

Well, let's move on, *verse 8*. Our second one: Have a fervent love for others. Now, what Peter exhorts us to do here is perhaps among the most important, if not the most important of all. And it's evidenced by how Peter will preface it with two words “**above all.**”

In other words, everything that I'm writing to you, above all, at the top of this list is love. Love fervently. Love each other deeply.

Why?

Because when you're going through trials, love is the one thing above all that can overshadow and overcome everything, even a multitude of sins. And oh, by the way, this is the litmus test, isn't it, the gauge by which we're measured and known as being disciples of Jesus is by our love, one for another?

When you're going through a hard time and someone just loves on you, how invaluable is that? How encouraging is that? At the time that you need it the most, you need someone to just love on you, man. It's just like, okay, I'm good now.

Let's talk about this word “fervent.” It's one of those words translated in the English that doesn't quite get you to its deep meaning. In the original it - I'll use the runner again,

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running the race. But you know how you'll watch these runners as they get to the finish line? Because the end of all things is near. I mean, they with all that they have in them, everything that's left, they press themselves into that finish line. Whatever ounce of strength they have left, they pour it all in. That's what fervent means.

Now, let's take that and put it in the context of loving. I want to be loved like that where it's authentic. And by the way, make no mistake about it, people can see right through it if you're faking it. You know how that is, that smile? Oh, come on, what are you, an emoji? I mean, your face in the parking lot didn't look like that when you were yelling at the kids, you know. Something about when you walked through that front door, everything changes. Praise the Lord.

[Laughter]

Come on. You know, it's like fruit, which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. We're going to talk about gifts, not fruit. The fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, fruit.

Okay, so you walk into someone's home, and you see this basket of fruit. You're probably, oh, from about the pulpit to the front row. And you look at it, well, that looks really good. And the closer you get, the more you realize it's plastic! You feel so duped and violated and, you know, deceived. And it's kind of like, oh, from here that looked real. And you get up to it and you realize it's plastic.

Where are you going with this, Pastor?

I'm going somewhere; just give me a moment. I'll tell you where I'm going with it. I think there's too many plastic Christians. There, I said it. We're so fake. Not fervent. Instead of my, how they love one another, it's my, how they slander one another and back bite.

Well, this third one kind of ties in along those lines in *verse 9*. Be hospitable without complaining. I don't like the word "complaining" any more than you do. In fact, as pastors, we don't use that word. It's not in our vocabulary.

So what pastors replace the word "complaining" with is "lamenting." It just sounds so much more spiritual, you know? Oh, I'm just lamenting.

Oh, wow.

No, you're complaining. You're complaining.

Well, what were they complaining about?

Well, stay with me. These Christians were losing everything. They were losing their jobs, their businesses, their homes, their livelihood, their families. They had lost everything. Where is the body of Christ? At a time like, that I need a brother and sister in Christ to come up to me and say, Hey, we got a room. We got some fruit to eat. It's not plastic. It's right here. It's the real deal. We give him food to eat, water to drink.

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Instead of, like James says, very convicting. Don't just say to him, hey, be warmed, be well fed. We'll do a lunch someday.

I need lunch today. I need help today.

Well, apparently there were a constituency of them that were showing that hospitality, but they weren't doing it with a right heart. That's called doing the right thing with the wrong heart, the right thing in the wrong way. Oh they're opening up their home, but their complaining, going, are they ever going to leave? Why do I have to open up my house? Why can't you open up your house down the street? What's the matter with you?

Well, then, don't bother. Just – hey, you're helping me out. I've fallen on hard times. They denied my exemption. I've lost my job. Anyway, that's all I'm going to say on that. What am I going to do?

Well, come on, I'll help you out.

And then you're complaining about it? How would you feel if you knew that the one that was showing you that hospitality was grumbling and complaining and murmuring the whole way through? You wouldn't want it.

I'd be out of there so fast. I'd rather go – well, I better be careful what I say here. I'd just rather – anyway, be on the rooftop eating a crumb of bread. I probably shouldn't have even used that one. But it's better than being in here with you eating steak, if you're going to be like that. Like dat, like dat. (Trying to speak local) Yeah, it still didn't work.

Well, I'm deliberately saving the remainder of our time together for this one in *verses 10 and 11*. I think you'll see why here in a moment.

I don't know if it's possible to overstate the paramount importance of what Peter writes here concerning the putting to use [*key*] putting to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit [*gifts*]. So you've been given these gifts and they're just sitting there on the shelf collecting dust. You need to use them. That's why I gave you those gifts. Use them for the body of Christ.

And notice that Peter delineates between the speaking gifts and the serving gifts. I'll talk more about that in a moment. We've all been uniquely gifted. Well, you're saying, I'm not, I don't have any. Yes, you do. We've all been given at least one. If you don't believe that, you might want to spend some time in the Gospels. We've all got at least one talent.

Yeah, some got more. Whatever. You know, Brother so-and-so got 5, and then Sister so-and-so got 10. What's up with that?

Well, they were given according to their stewardship and faithfulness. So maybe the fact that you just got one, you should be grateful for that. And that might be telling you something right there. Was that too much? I'm very convicted on that one, too because when the Master returns, you're going to give an account for what He gave you, what He gifted you.

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What did you do with it?

Well, you know, I was afraid.

Oh, really? So what you do with the talent that I gave you?

Well, I kind of buried it.

You buried it? I mean, that's not like the Lord. That's what I would have said. What? Why did you do that?

Well, you know, I wasn't sure.

Well, that's why you only got one in the first place.

And what does He do? The Master takes the 1 and gives it to the guy that He gave 10 to. I won't take it any further than that. You can read the Gospels. It's even worse than that. So we've all been given at least one. What are you doing with it?

Do you even know what gift you have been given? And that presupposes that you understand the sound doctrine of the gifts of the Holy Spirit being for today.

I think it is, (Sighing) it is so sad. I can't say it stronger; I probably could, but for lack of a better way of saying it, it is so sad to see Christians in a day when we need the Holy Spirit more than we ever have in our lives being deceived and having believed that the gifts ceased. It's the false doctrine of cessationism, that all the gifts were just for the early church in that day. No, they're not. They're for today, they're for you, they're for me. the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Really?

Yeah.

I'll never forget when, as a young believer, relatively young, I was always told that tongues is of the devil. So I'm like, whoa, I don't want that. And then one morning I'm on my face before the Lord. Lord, I'm praying, and then all of a sudden just, I could not express with words. And then God gave me this prayer language. And my Christian life was never the same again.

There was one thing that happened to me, though, I have to confess. I'm not proud of it. But, you know, being the loving, kind, gentle, soft-spoken guy that I am, you know, I got angry. You mean to tell me that this gift was available to me all of these years and I didn't avail myself of it? I didn't ask for it. I was told, no, that's not for today, so don't ask. And you have not because you ask not.

I think about Jesus. Oh, I would have loved to have been there. Maybe not. But He's teaching about the Holy Spirit, and He zeroes in on parents: mom, dad, fathers, earthly fathers. Come on, you guys. You're earthly fathers. And you know how to give good gifts to your children when they ask you. I mean, if your kid comes to you and asks you for a fish,

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you're not going to give him a snake, are you? If you are, we need to talk with you afterwards and lay hands on you in Jesus' name. But if they ask you for bread, you're not going to give them a stone. I mean, if you, as earthly fathers, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more your Heavenly Father will give you the gift of the Holy Spirit, if you'll but ask?

So on this particular day I asked, and I received. Oh, did I ever. Man, there was – I mean it was, Oh, Lord! I couldn't stop. I just thought about all those years, and here, this gift is mine, and it's sitting on the shelf of my Christian life collecting dust. And finally on – all those years I could have had that gift. I could have put that gift to use. And not just for my edification, but for the edification of the body of Christ.

Hey, you know how, especially coming up this time of year, if we're still here, hope not, but if we are, we like to, you know, get gifts for people. And what's the challenge before us every year at this time? We want to get a gift that they can use. You know, not a gift that they regift because everybody regifts now. It's kind of like a gift receipt. Here, I know what you're going to do with it anyway.

You know, my biggest fear is you're going to regift the gift that you received to the person who gave it to you. It's kind of like, ahh!

[Laughter]

Or you regift and then you forgot to take the little tag off it that said, Oh, bless you, Pastor J.D. and Kelly. It's kind of like, Hey, he – no way. And then you just tell them, Well, the bag, I just reused the bag.

No, you didn't. You regifted. That's all right.

Okay. I feel better now; I've confessed that. (Chuckle) But you want to give them a gift that they can really use. How much more our Heavenly Father wants to give us gifts that can be used for the body of Christ, again, at a time when we need it the most.

If there was ever a time that we as Christians needed to put to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit, that time is now because the end of all things is near. Let's put them to use. Let's get them into circulation. Get them off the shelf. Blow the dust off of them.

I could use that right now. I could use that word of knowledge. I could use that word of wisdom. I could use that gift of encouragement. I could use that gift of giving.

I'm actually – we're going to – just hang on. These are gifts. Everything I just mentioned and more, they're gifts. I could use the gift of hospitality. I just lost everything. Well, this is *Romans 12*, beginning in *verse 6*.

You know it's bad when PowerPoint wants you to finish your sermon faster. I'm not going to take that too personal. Stop laughing. That was – yeah.

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Verse 6, “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage.”

You know what the key word in all of this is? **“Let.”**

Real quick. Bear with me. There is a grave danger in grieving and, God forbid, quenching the Holy Spirit by not letting the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Holy Spirit serve the body of Christ. **“If it is encouraging, let him encourage. If it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously. If it is leadership, let him govern diligently. If it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”** That mercy is a gift, the gift of mercy.

Man I – would to God there were more people with the gift of mercy in the body of Christ. Well, I want to just take a moment, if you don't mind, and by way of an example, explain how putting the gifts to use works and what it will look like. And I'm going to use my daughter Sabia as an example. I got her permission prior, so it's okay.

Let's say that my daughter Sabia notices I need a glass of water, and proceeds – I don't need one. Don't bring me one. I'll end up having to go to the bathroom, so I'm good. But she notices that I need a glass of water, so she brings one to me at the pulpit. But because her shoes had become untied, she trips and falls just as she's about to give it to me. Okay, now, watch this.

Upon seeing this, seven people rush to the front and they start using their gifts. The one with the gift of prophecy will say something like this: Sabia, in the future be prudent and foresee the danger of not having your shoes tied. The one with the gift of serving; they don't say anything. They just go grab the towels and they get busy cleaning up the mess. Oh, I love the servants who have the gift of serving.

And by the way, this is as good of a time as any to say, you guys are like that. This is a serving church. This is a loving church. I love you so much. You make the pastorate a joy and a privilege. And it's sad because not many pastors, especially in this day and age can say that and mean it. And I mean it, and the Lord knows it. You guys are such servants.

So anyway, it's not just 7, it's about 300 will come forward in this church and start cleaning up the mess. And some of you really appreciate these guys because they don't say anything. You know, some people wish that people they loved had the gift of not saying anything, just doing everything, getting busy cleaning up the mess.

Now the one with the gift of teaching will say something like: Sabia, perhaps it would be wiser for you to purchase shoes that don't have shoe laces. That's the gift of teaching. (Chuckling) The one with the gift of encouragement, they'll say something like: Sabia, don't be discouraged. We all stumble and fall. You be encouraged, girl.

Hey, real quick. Somebody with the gift of encouragement, I'm good for about a month with one pat on the back from someone with the gift of encouragement. Just come alongside and say, I love you, man. You just be encouraged.

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Oh, yeah! I'm good now. Just one – you're going to be tackling me afterwards. Be encouraged, Pastor. Okay, I'm encouraged now for a month. That's all, not 31 days, just one month, 30 days.

So then you've got the one with the gift of giving. Oh! What do they do? Oh, they come up to Sabia and say, Sabia, here's \$50. Go buy yourself some new Velcro shoes this time.

The one with the gift of leading is the one who everyone looks to take the lead. You know, someone's a leader when there are people following. They're following their leadership example, their example of leadership.

They don't have to say anything, you know. Hey, I'm the leader here!

Well, act like it then. You want to be the leader? Give me something to follow. I'll follow your lead.

No, leaders, you'll know their leaders when people follow their lead. Well, the leader, the one with the gift of leading, they'll come up to Sabia and say, Sabia, just bring up a bottle of water, you know, with a lid on it instead.

And then the one with the gift of mercy, lastly, oh, they come up and give Sabia a big hug and say something like, It's okay, I know how you feel. Don't be embarrassed. Nobody's mad at you. I'm here for you. And they just hug, Velcro hug because we're doing Velcro now. That's the gift of mercy.

I want to close *with Hebrews, Chapter 10:24-25*. Actually, just this morning, in my time of prepping and praying, I sensed that the Lord would have me to talk about this because I think it is so apropos for where the church of Jesus Christ is today, especially with everything that we've been through the last two-plus years.

Let me read it and then I'll expound on it. This is the writer of Hebrews writing, saying, **“And let us consider one another to provoke [Watch it] unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling [Hang on to that word] the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching.”** Because the end of all things is near.

This is the worst time to stop assembling yourselves together, as some have, by the way. Because when you do, you rob yourself of the body of Christ, the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Let's talk about this word “assembling.”

I use this illustration; I stole it from somebody else. It's great, and it's the best illustration I've ever heard. So this is a Timex. It's actually a Timex. Amazon \$39.95, by the way, if you want. So (Licking his watch) yeah, takes a licking and keeps on ticking. Only the older people know that one. So you young people, you just never mind. No, it's literally a Timex. And I'm going to put right here on my Bible on the pulpit, okay?

Now, let's just say for purposes of illustration that I have all of the parts to this watch, and they're just kind of gathered but not assembled. I've got the band, the dial, and all those

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intricate springs, and all of those parts, very small, some of them, and I have all of the parts. They're there. They're just gathered together, but they're not assembled. Now, what good is that to me?

How about let's assemble them together? Okay, now we're talking. Now I've got something that's functional. I've got something that's working. It serves me. It helps me.

It's not helping me – it doesn't help me on Sunday mornings. It always stops on Sunday mornings, you know, when at a certain time. That's my story and I'm sticking with it. So don't look at me like that.

It's assembled, that's why. That's what we are as the body of Christ. This is a functional, not dysfunctional. Oh we like that word. Oh, I came from a dysfunctional family. Everybody came from a dysfunctional family. They have a word for it; I know this is going to be a shocker. It's called sin. I mean, did you come from a perfect family? Don't raise your hand. I wouldn't do that if I were you. We all came from a dysfunctional family. We didn't function correctly.

But when we come together as the body of Christ and we have the gifts and the power of the Holy Spirit, and we're assembled together, then everything functions and works. So here's one more illustration, just real quick. Bear with me.

Okay, so you're hammering a nail into wood. Which I should not do. It should be criminal for me to have any kind of tools because I'll do a lot of damage and destruction. So I'm hammering this nail into the wood and then, lo and behold, you've had it happen, right? You bash your thumb. Ooh, it hurts so bad!

What happens? Oh, you're like, (Kissing sounds) oh, you're loving on it. Oh it's okay. You're talking to it; you talk to your thumb. It's okay; we're going to make it through. I know that hurt. I know you're hurting. It's okay. You rub it, comfort it, encourage it, show mercy to it.

That's how a healthy body should function, right? When one part of the body is hurting, the whole body feels it. It's kind of like I get a, you know, headache and my toes are like, hey, what's up with the headache? What? You're all the way down there. No, we feel it because we're assembled together, right? We mourn with those who mourn. We rejoice with those who rejoice.

So could you imagine? I know this is absurd, but I think you'll get the point. Could you imagine, you bash your thumb with a hammer and the mouth starts going off on the thumb. What is your problem? What is the matter with you? Can't you get your act together? It's like, Whoa, where's the love? And then the other hand joins in and starts (Slapping his thumb).

I know it's absurd, but you get the point, right? That is not a healthy body. When cells in a body attack other cells in a body, they actually have a word for that, too. You know what it is? Cancer. When it starts attacking and eating and biting and devouring.

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This is why the Apostle Paul writing to the Galatians, said, You better be careful. You keep back biting and fighting with one another like this, you're going to devour and destroy each other. It's like a spiritual cancer on the body, and it spreads. It'll destroy a body of believers. Talk about dysfunctional.

No, when we're assembled together, and we have and are using the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And God is so faithful. He has that right person at the right time with that right word, fitly spoken. And you know it was for you.

I love the ministry that takes place in this place, not from pulpit to pew, but between you and you. So you come to church and you're carrying this thing, and the Lord knows. And you're really hurting. And here comes this sister in Christ to come up and encourage you as her sister in Christ. She has no idea, but the Holy Spirit puts it on her heart. And she comes up to you and she says, I don't know why, but I just kind of had this sense that I just needed to come to you and give you a hug and pray for you.

And then what happens? You start bawling. How'd you know?

I didn't.

Did someone call you?

No.

I love it when somebody says, That was for me. Did someone call? How'd you know. Did someone call you? I'm like, no, the Holy Spirit knows everything. Now you've outed yourself, so you might – You just outed yourself. No, the Holy Spirit knows exactly. The Lord sees the heart.

We only see the outward appearance. And again, remember, our outward appearance is plastic to begin with, right?

But the Lord sees right through it, right to the heart. And the Lord loves you so much, by the way, that He's going to have this brother or sister in Christ come to you with a word for you, to encourage you, to love on you.

It might even look like this: You've run out of money way before you've run out of month. Reminds me of that proverb that says, **“Don't feast your eyes on riches, for certainly they will sprout wings and fly away to the heaven.”** Bye bye. Like your paycheck every month, right? And you're just financially having a really difficult time.

And here comes this brother or sister in Christ and they're like, you know, I just sense that the Lord would have me give this to you, and they'll give you the exact amount of that bill that you were just praying, God, I don't have the money to pay for it. Now you do. That's the gift of giving in operation, being put to use.

And you want to rob yourself of that? You don't want to assemble yourselves together? You want to forsake the assembling yourselves together? You don't want to use the gifts, or how

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about this? You don't want to be the recipients of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that somebody else may want to bless you with.

Because we're so private, right? And there's nothing wrong with being safe and prudent. I mean, we do have to be as shrewd as serpents and harmless as doves because, man, people are so mean. And you don't dare let so-and-so know. Because if you let so-and-so know, you might as well just post it on social media I mean it's going to spread. So you got to be careful and prudent and wise and cautious. But there is somebody that you can go to and confide in.

And it could be a thing, too, of just saying, hey, you know, I'm really struggling. Would you just pray for me? I've never had anybody turn me down. I mean, what are they going to say? No, I'm not going to pray for you! They go to other churches, not this one, right? How mean would that be? That's beating the thumb up after it just got bashed and it's hurting.

The end of all things is near. This is the time now more than ever as a church, as the body of Christ, as brothers and sisters in Christ. Man, I mean, think about it; we're getting hit from all sides: The world, the flesh, the devil like never before. I think you would agree with that, wouldn't you? I mean, just the spiritual warfare alone in this last hour is off the charts. Because the devil knows he has but a short time.

Marriages, families, finances, all of the above, I mean, it's hard enough: The world, the flesh, the devil, and my brother and sister in Christ is also against me? Listen, I need you. And we need each other as brothers and sisters in Christ like we've never needed each other before. And here's God waiting at the ready to give us, better said, gift to us all that we need.

And He knows the need even before we need it. He's already provided, and He's just waiting at the ready. I want to give that to you. This is the vehicle that I have chosen, the vessel, the means by which I have ordained to meet that need. It's the body of Christ coming together, loving one another deeply, fervently [fervently] with everything we've got, not complaining.

Boy, that's a sermon unto itself. I think next week, by the way, you have to come now that I'm saying this, I'm pretty sure next week. Grumbling: I think it depends on the translation. Gossiping. Mhm, that's an ugly word, isn't it? It's in the same verse with murder and sexual immorality. It's almost kind of like wait, that doesn't belong there. Yes, it does. That rises to the level of being in the same list as murder and sexual immorality? You better believe it. Anyway, so like I said, you got it. So if you don't come next week, we'll know, we'll know.

Thank you for your grace to me. Why don't you stand; Kaponon, come on up. We'll close in prayer. Loving heavenly Father, thank You for this, Your church. Thank You for the privilege that is mine in these last days, this last hour to be the pastor of such an amazing, loving [loving] praying, serving church.

Oh, Lord, for any who might be hurting and struggling, would You, Lord, do what we just saw here in the text before us today: The gifts of the Holy Spirit, the power of the Holy Spirit, the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

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Lord, You know every need, and whatever we have need of Your loving hand will always provide. So Lord, thank You, thank You for choosing and using this, a body of believers in which to do that, and especially at a time like this.

Lord, we need it like never before. The end is very near, Lord, and things are getting really, really scary. But You, oh Lord, are faithful, and You are good, and You are love. So Lord, thank You for that, in Jesus' name, amen.