

An Exposition of the 1st Epistle of Peter

“THE LAST ONE OUT, TURN OFF THE LIGHTS”



1 Peter 4:7-11

Theme: In light of imminent judgment, faithfully fulfill your Christian duties.

I. The Prospect of Measurement – 4:7

A. Our Awareness of Impending Judgment

1. Peter has just finished a section telling us that God is ready to judge all men – even the ungodly.
2. In light of these things, Peter desires us to be aware that the “end” is near – *“The end of all things is near ...”* – Christ’s return is imminent!
 - a) *“The end”* [τέλος] refers to the consummation of the present course of history – the goal toward which the present age is moving – cp. **1 Corinthians 15:24-28**
 - b) *“... is near”* [ἤγγικεν] – is a perfect active indicative – and literally means “has drawn near” or “has approached.”
3. Peter’s thrust here is that the Lord could return at anytime to move things forward to the end of the age.
4. Our awareness is that when Christ returns for His saints at the Rapture of the church, His purposes with Israel will resume throughout the Tribulation.
5. The next step toward God’s purposes could happen at any time and believers are challenged to live lives that evidence their great expectation and hope – cp. **2 Peter 3:11**.

B. Our Anticipation of Judgment

1. Since this is the case, the Apostle calls us to readiness – to a life of prudent fidelity to God – *“... therefore be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.”*
2. He calls on us to clear our heads from the various confusions caused by the efforts of the world to intimidate us into conformity – and commune with God.
3. There are two characteristics that must be present if we are going to effectively commune with God:
 - a) *“sound judgment”* [σωφρονέω] – “sensible” or “sane”¹ – keeping

¹ This term is the antonym of having a right mind as opposed to being under the power of a demon.

one's mind filled with wisdom; seeking prudent solutions to situations on the basis of God's standards or holiness and the Scripture's instruction.

- b) *“sober spirit”* [νήφω] – as opposed to being “intoxicated” by excess passion, confusion, or any other influences
4. This is describing the person who “keeps his head clear” when facing the hostilities and circumstances involved in persecution and peril; who is able to turn to the Lord and possess confidence that the will of God is certain and therefore they are able to be effective in prayer – *“... for the purpose of prayer.”*

II. The Preservation of Our Motive – 4:8

A. Our Attentiveness to Love

1. In addition to these characteristics, God is interested that we not only live with some sense of “self-priority,” but that we remain “others-minded.”
2. Thus he says – *“Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another.”*
3. *“keep fervent”* [ἐκτενής] - the reference here is to the intensity of our love – that our love be not a casual thing but a priority; something from which we are not willing to waver – cp. **Luke 22:44**.
4. As such, this is not a casual commitment to loving one another – but carries the picture of muscles that are strained in order to accomplish a task – (eg. A galloping horse straining to cross the finish line first).
5. Our *“love for one another”* is a reflection on the intensity of our love for Christ Jesus – we love those who He loves as yet another way by which we are able to show Him the depth of our love for Him.

B. The Accommodation of Love

1. The reasoning is that love is necessary for a people under the pressure of persecution to exist.
2. There are times when believers have turned on one another when difficulty hits – when caring for others becomes too great a cost.
3. Others' flaws and short-comings often surface.
4. *“... for love covers a multitude of sins”* – refers to loving despite the presence of sin – not to the effort to sweep sin under the carpet.
5. This describes the solidarity that believers share when they love one another – instead of highlighting one another's sins, people who are concerned about the welfare of others consider themselves “fellow-strugglers” and not judges of one another.

III. The Performance of Our Ministry – 4:9-11a

A. The Attitude of Ministry – **vv. 9-10**

1. This love can be seen concretely through various ministries – beginning with hospitality – *“Be hospitable to one another without complaint.”*

2. This extends our love for the Body of Christ beyond our own assembly to include those from other assemblies that are traveling through and need assistance.
3. Immediately, Peter admonishes us to maintain a joy in service – even in that day – guests could overstay their welcome.
4. He calls us to view our ministries as privileged opportunities – gifts of which we are stewards, charged with using them to benefit one another – not ourselves – *“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”*
5. This provides a glimpse of the nature of spiritual giftedness – the *“special gift”* [χάρισμα] given to each believer.
6. These *“special gifts”* or “spiritual gifts” are not able to be earned, pursued, or self-generating, but are received from the distribution by the Holy Spirit – cp. **1 Corinthians 12:4, 7, 11, 18**
7. Spiritual gifts are never given for our own edification – but for the purpose of *“serving one another”* in the Body of Christ *“as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”*

B. The Avenues of Ministry – **v. 11a**

1. Peter divides our ministry opportunities into two groups:
 - a) Speaking ministries: *“Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God;”*
 - (1) Prophecy
 - (2) Teaching
 - (3) Exhortation, etc ...
 - b) Serving Ministries: *“... whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies.”*
 - (1) Mercy
 - (2) Service
 - (3) Giving
 - (4) Administration
2. These indicate the dependence the individual believer has on God for enablement in successful ministry.
 - a) The “SPEAKING MINISTRIES” must be constantly aware that they are not free to speak their own opinions, perspectives, and consciences; but, are required to rely upon the Holy Spirit to enable them to speak the *“utterances of God”* – that is, that which is consistent with the Word of God – cp. **1 Corinthians 2:1**
 - b) The “SERVING MINISTRIES” must be constantly aware that they are not to exercise “ownership” of a ministry as though they are “in control;” rather, they are to recognize that their ministries are only

sanctified when they are reliant upon that *“which God supplies.”*

IV. The Product of Our Ministry – 4:11b

A. The Accomplishment of Glory

1. Through our service, we are able to demonstrate our love for one another – preparing the way for our evaluation in the sight of God and men – *“... so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ ...”*
2. *“... all things ...”* – refers to everything that is done by the believer in the power of and love for *“Jesus Christ”* – cp. **1 Corinthians 10:31**
3. For a believer to promote oneself toward preeminence in the use of a spiritual gift is to idolize what belongs solely to God when Christ is magnified.
4. But it also describes the impact on others as they see the spiritual gifts operational through God’s power and not merely as human effort or skill – cp. **Matthew 5:16**; cp. **1 Corinthians 14:24-25**
5. Through these things, God is glorified as we demonstrate the same purpose as Christ – cp. 4:1
6. The glory of God is the ultimate end of all that Jesus Christ did – and is the ultimate end for everything that the followers of Christ do.

B. The Appropriateness of Glory

1. Seeking the glory of God is considered appropriate - *“... to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*
 - a) *“glory”* [δόξα] – lit. means “brightness,” “splendor,” or “radiance” and refers to the state of being magnificent or ultimately prestigious; “bright” or “shining brilliantly”
 - b) *“dominion”* [κράτος] – refers to possessing the ability to exhibit resident strength or power over any competitor; mightiness, or sovereignty.
2. All glory belongs to Him – it is fitting that He receive it, not just now but endlessly throughout successive ages upon ages – cp. **1 Corinthians 15:23-28**.
3. This section began with a reminder of the need for a proper perspective in light of the imminency of the return of the Lord and it concludes with a reference to the state of things once He does.
4. In the meantime, believer must be actively committed to serving the Lord according to the gifts that He has given to us to bring Him glory – despite what we face.