

7 through 11. 1 Peter 4, verses 7 through 11. Well, in 1 Peter 4, verses 5 and 6, Peter had just talked about God's judgment. He informed us there at the end of 1 Peter 4, verses 5 and 6, that We who are trusting in Christ are free from God's condemnatory judgment. In other words, the Christian, the person who is trusting in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation, is free from God's wrath.

But why would Peter remind these persecuted Christians that they are free from God's condemnatory judgment? The reason Peter is reminding these persecuted Christians that they are free from God's condemnatory judgment is because he wants them to know throughout their persecution that they already have what matters most. While they are indeed suffering in this life, they have eternal life. in the life to come. And even right now, as they are being persecuted and they are suffering, they can know for certain that God's condemnatory judgment will not come upon them because they are in Christ.

He is saying, in essence, though you suffer, you ought not to lose heart because you have eternal life in Christ Jesus. And Peter will continue to elaborate on this theme of eternity this morning. He's going to urge the readers this morning, and he will urge you through the text this morning, to live in light of the reality that Christ could return at any moment. He says that the fact that Christ could return at any moment should impact how you live your life this very day. That is his argument here this morning. that the fact that Christ could return at any moment should impact how you live your life today.

With this in mind, let us pray and ask God to bless the reading and the preaching of his word. Dear Heavenly Father, we are reminded again that unless the Lord builds a house, those who labor, labor in vain, unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. We are reminded that it was you who opened the hearts of the two disciples on the Emmaus Road such that their hearts burned when they heard the scriptures expounded. We were reminded again of the example of young Samuel who said, speak, Lord, for your servant is listening. We pray, O Lord, for this sort of heart. We pray, O Lord, that as your scriptures are read and preached, our hearts would burn as we learn about the one living and true God as he has revealed himself to us and as he has told us how to live in your very own word. Bless now the reading and proclamation of your word. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

We come again to 1 Peter 4, verses 7 through 11. Hear now the word of God. Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh. Oh, I started in verse one, my apologies. Beginning in verse seven. 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.

This ends the reading of God's holy word. May he bless now the preaching of it to our lives. Well, you know, certain times of year encourage certain attitudes. The time surrounding Thanksgiving generally encourages a thankful attitude. The time surrounding Christmas generally encourages an attitude of generosity. Now these times of year don't automatically produce these attitudes, but we can say in a general way they encourage these sorts of attitudes. So certain times of year encourage certain types of attitudes.

Well, in our text today, Peter is saying that we live in a time in which Christ could return at any moment. You live in a time in which Christ might return at any moment. And knowing that you live in this time, Peter is saying that it ought to encourage a certain lifestyle. This time in which you and I live, knowing that Christ could return at any moment, is meant to foster a certain lifestyle. He says that knowing that you could live at knowing that you live at the time when Christ could return at any moment means that we should live differently. He captures this with these words in verse seven, the end of all things is at hand.

Peter is not saying that Christ is necessarily going to return today or tomorrow, but what he is saying is he could return at any moment. So let us consider this morning this, Christ's return helps you. Christ's return helps you. In what ways does Christ's return help you? Well, Christ's return, we will see, helps you in three ways. Christ's return helps you think clearly, helps you focus your prayers, and helps you love one another.

So first this morning, Christ's return helps you think Clearly, we see this in verse seven. We read there, the end of all things is at hand. Therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Notice that word, therefore, in verse seven. Peter, writing by divine inspiration, is saying that because Jesus Christ could return at any moment, you ought to live self-controlled and sober-minded lives. He is making a connection between when we live and how we ought to live because of when we live. He is saying you live in these particular times, therefore you ought to live in these particular ways.

The words self-controlled and sober-minded both have to do with your thinking or your mind. And these are both commands. He is saying you are to think this sort of way. The word self-controlled in our text also, just like sober mind, it has to do with the thinking. This word self-controlled, for example, is used in Mark chapter five. to describe the demoniac after the unclean spirits were sent out of him by the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you remember that story in Mark 5? There's a man, a demoniac full of unclean spirits. The Lord casts out those unclean spirits. And do you remember what we read in Mark 5? He was sitting and in his right mind. That word in his right mind from Mark 5 is our same word translated, self-controlled. It has to do with being clear-minded. That is what Peter is stressing here in verse 7, that living in light of God's Christ's inevitable and imminent return should make us clear thinkers, clear-minded people.

But doesn't this beg a question? How? Why? What is it that Peter is getting at? What is the connection, in other words, between living, knowing that Christ could return at any moment? How is that fact connected with thinking clearly? How does it help you to think clearly in your daily life to know that Christ could return at any moment.

Well, shortly after his conversion, Jonathan Edwards famously wrote his 70 resolutions. And if you've ever read them, you may remember that one of the resolutions reads as follows. resolved never to do anything which I should be afraid to do if I expected it would not be above an hour before I should hear the last trumpet." He didn't want to be found doing anything that he would be afraid to be doing if he knew Christ might return within the next hour.

What Edward's resolution there describes for us is a man who was thinking clearly about life because he knew Christ could return at any moment. He is essentially saying to himself, I dare not give in to the pleasures of the flesh to sin because I know that Christ could be returning this very hour. That was his mindset. It helped him to think clearly. It helps you, in other words, to put life into perspective. Knowing that Christ could return at any moment reminds you every day that you should not simply live for this life, but that you should live for the life which

is to come. It constantly reminds you not to store up treasures on this earth, which moth and rust can destroy, but to treasure up for yourself the Lord Jesus Christ, whom moth and rust cannot destroy. Treasure up for yourself things that are of eternal value.

Imagine, if this life is all that there is, then the truth is you might as well live for the pleasures of your flesh. You really ought to live for the pleasures of your flesh. Why wouldn't you simply live for the pleasures of your flesh if this world is all that there is? But this world is not all that there is. The Lord Jesus Christ is coming again. And this fact ought to put all of your decisions into perspective. It ought to help you think clearly about how you should live your life.

Is sin, brothers and sisters, is sin really worth pursuing when you know that Christ is returning? Is drunkenness really worth pursuing when you know that Christ is returning? Are lustful desires really worth pursuing when you know that Christ is returning? Is worldliness really worth pursuing when you know that Christ is returning? So you can see how living in the light of Christ's return helps you to think clearly. It puts life in perspective. Sin is not worth pursuing when you remember that Christ is returning.

But secondly, not only does Christ's return help you to think clearly, we see secondly that Christ's return helps you focus your prayers. Again at verse seven. The end of all things is at hand, therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers." There is so much for which to pray. You have doctor's appointments, you have surgeries, you have sicknesses, you have financial burdens, you have exams, you have work, you have children and grandchildren, you have parents, there's so much for which to pray. The list is endless.

However, verse 7 is telling you that knowing that Christ is going to return at any moment can help you to focus your prayers. It can help you focus your prayers because what it does for you is gives you a fuller view of that for which you ought to be praying. It encourages you not to just pray for the temporal, but to also be praying for the eternal. Not to only pray for physical health, but to also pray for eternal health. Not to only pray for your body, but to be praying for your soul.

Why does it encourage that? How does it encourage that? Because Christ is returning. And so, shouldn't you be concerned about things that will last forever? Shouldn't you be concerned about sin and salvation? Shouldn't you be concerned about souls? Shouldn't you be concerned about that which is going to last forever? Christ indeed is returning. Now in saying this, Peter would surely not say we ought not to pray for physical and material things. We should pray for physical and material things. Didn't Jesus say to pray for your daily bread? And yet at the same time, we know when we look throughout scripture that we need to be praying for far more than just physical and material things. And knowing that Christ is going to return at any moment should stir up in us a desire to pray for those things which are going to last forever when he comes again for the souls, not only the bodies, for sin and for salvation, for eternity. And notice Peter is going to move in verse seven from talking about prayer to talking about how we ought to love one another. He moves from prayer in verse seven to how we ought to love and serve one another in verses eight through 11. And this ordering in the text is important. He is saying that if you're going to love one another well, you need to be praying to the Lord. He moves from praying to the Lord to loving and serving one another. How often in your life do you try to love your spouse, try to love your co-workers, try to love your friends, try to love your parents without praying? What he is saying here in the text is that if you want to love people well, you need to pray before you get to work. That's the principle that he is showing you. What did Jesus do before he called the 12? He prayed. What did Jesus do before he instituted the Lord's Supper? He prayed. What did Jesus do before

he went to the cross? He prayed. Well, this leads us right into our third point. Christ's return helps you love one another. Christ's return helps you love one another, verses 8 through 11. Living in light of Christ's return, knowing that he could return at any moment helps you love one another because it reminds you again that life is not about yourself. Imagine living in a world where you had no belief that Christ will ever return. Imagine living in a world where you had no belief that there's a judgment day coming. Who do you think you would want to live your life for? You already want to live your life for the same person, knowing these truths, as do I and my flesh. We would want to live our lives simply for ourselves, right? Because, well, this is all there is, so I'm gonna live for myself. But because you know Christ is returning, and you know indeed that he could return at any moment, this encourages you to live not for yourself, but to actually love one another and to serve one another. And this is his basic argument in verses eight through 11. He uses the words one another, or these words, he uses one another three times. He uses one another in verse nine, one another in verse eight as well, and one another in verse 10. It begins in verse eight by saying, above all. Now you can imagine, he's writing this to a bunch of suffering, persecuted Christians, and imagine he said to them, finish the sentence, above all, this is what you need to do, above all. And you could imagine they might say, above all, Allow me to get out of these circumstances in which I'm being persecuted. Above all, change my circumstances so that I don't have to suffer so much. But what does he say above all they are to desire, above all they should be doing in verse eight? Above all, he says, keep loving one another earnestly. The word earnestly carries with it the idea of stretching, being stretched. And your love will specifically be stretched. Since love, verse eight, covers a multitude of sins. When you are in the habit of covering other people's sins with your love, your love will be stretched. And as a Christian, you should never delight in finding faults in your brothers and sisters in Christ. You should never find delight in finding faults in your brothers and sisters in Christ. Some Christians are what you might call fault finder Christians. These are the sort of Christians, maybe they are really even Christians, but they certainly have this trait that is not good. These fault finder people are always looking to see sin in the people around them. They're always seeing the log in their brother's eye or their sister's eye. They're fault finders. And these fault finders can be so committed to finding faults in other people that they will even invent faults that aren't real. Let me give you an example. Here's an example of the fault finder Christian and the way they can even invent fake sins in the lives of other people. The fault finder Christian says to himself, I know that that other church member hates me because they didn't shake my hand at church this Sunday. Not knowing that perhaps that other church member is sick or just really tired or distracted. They meant nothing negative by their lack of shaking this fault finder's hand. But this fault finder is sure that it came from a motive of hatred and wickedness. This sort of fault finder Christian always is assuming the worst. In his brother or sister in Christ. And this verse says to you, do not be a fault finder, be a sin coverer. That's what it says. And you know this perhaps, but love either confronts or covers. That's what love does. It either confronts or it covers. And most often, it covers. According to the text, love covers a multitude of sins. Now how is this possible? How can you see a multitude of sins in the life of a brother or sister? Sins that are not rising up to a heinous degree, sins that are certainly qualified as coverable, how can you see them and not just want to rip that person up? What is going to help you not have that attitude towards that brother or sister in Christ? It's going to remember that you have had a multitude of sins forgiven, that Christ has forgiven you a multitude of sins, therefore you ought to extend the forgiveness of a multitude of sins to your brothers and sisters. You will see many sins in your brothers and sisters, but you need to make much more effort to exalt their graces than to expose their sins. That needs to be the desire, the disposition of your heart ought to be as a Christian to exalt the graces you see in one another far more often than you see or make much of their sins. He goes on in verses 9 through 11 to describe that this loving one another manifests itself in serving one another in verses 9 through 11. And this simply makes sense because how did Christ love you? Christ, according to Mark 10:45, did not come to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for many. Christ came and served even to the point of death, even death on a cross. If this is how your Savior has loved you, you ought to love in this same way. It is love that manifests itself in serving according to verses 8 through 11. In verse 9, he specifically mentions hospitality as a way that love manifests itself. Now, no two Christians have the same exact gift of hospitality. We are not all at the same age or stage of life. But the principle of hospitality ought to be in all of our hearts as Christians. And what is that principle? The principle of hospitality is that you would welcome one another the way that Christ has welcomed you. And how has Christ welcomed you? He has welcomed you in

grace, in mercy, and in love. He has shown you forgiveness of sins. That is the way that we ought to show hospitality to one another. And we should do this not begrudgingly, Not, but to do it, it says, according to the text, without grumbling. Then in verses 10 and 11, the various gifts that the Christians have are elaborated upon. He begins to talk a bit more in verses 10 and 11 about the types of gifts that God has given to his people by his grace. Now, the exact gifts that Peter has in view here are hard to determine. Generally, though, you could see in verse 11 that they're broken up into what we might call preaching or teaching gifts and diaconal gifts, gifts of service. So look at verse 11. We read there, as he's talking about gifts that people have received by God's grace, he says, whoever speaks as one who speaks oracles of God, whoever serves as one who serves by the strength that God supplies. So while the specific ideas behind each of these giftings is not spoken about in the text, the point is very clear. Whatever gifts God has given you, you have received those gifts by his grace. As a result, you should use them to serve one another. Whatever gifts you have in the church, roll up your sleeves, get to work and use those gifts. It can be praying, it could be in a million different ways, but the point he is making is use your gifts to serve one another. You know, oftentimes one of the things that can hinder a person from using the gifts God has given them is that they're caught up being jealous that God hasn't given them someone else's gifts. So you've been given a particular gift from God, It's very evident, perhaps to others, maybe even you are willing to acknowledge it yourself, that God has given you X gift. But you're busy thinking about how you wish he had given you Y gift. But what this text is saying, don't be worried about whatever gifts he's given your neighbor. Be worried about the gifts he's given you. And use those gifts, whatever they are, they are the gifts that God, in his wisdom, gave you, individually, and you should use those to serve him. Whatever gifts he's given you, you use them to serve him and to serve others, and you do it without taking any glory to yourself. You see this in the text. Look what he goes on to say in verse 11. In order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. So at Second Presbyterian Church, God gets the glory for the preaching and teaching ministry of this church. For the deacons of this church, God must get the glory for your work in this church. For each individual member of this church who has been given special, specific gifts from God, God is to get the glory for whatever gifts you have been given. The gifts are given to you by God's grace, according to verse 10, varied grace. They're given by God's grace for God's glory. Well, today we have seen that Christ's return helps you think clearly, God's return helps you pray with focus, and God's return helps you love one another. Let us pray. Beloved Heavenly Father, we do thank you for the imminent return, the impending return of Christ, that he could indeed return at any moment. We look forward to that day when we will hear the Trump sound, and we who are alive will be raised up with him in the clouds, and those who are dead will be raised up from their graves. Oh, God, we look forward to that day. Oh, Father, we pray that the Lord Jesus would come quickly and come soon.

But as we wait, we pray that we would live in light of this reality, that knowing he is going to return would help us here this morning. to think clearly, to make good decisions, to want to live in a way that is ready for his return. We pray that knowing that he is going to return would help us have in our prayer life concerns that are of eternal significance, as well as concerns that are temporal in nature.

And Lord, we do pray also that knowing that Christ is going to return would help us to love one another and serve one another, for we are here for but a little while, and then we will go and be with the Lord forever and ever. Therefore, why would we live for ourselves?

Forgive us for our sins, strengthen us by thy grace, in Christ's name, amen.