

Series: **Living Under Pressure** – week 15

CDOBC – beginning on 2/7/16

Today's Title: **"Helping One Another in Suffering"**

May 29, 2016 ~ 1 Peter 4:7-11

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OBJECTIVE: To encourage believers how urgent it is we love and serve each other.

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### *Opening Prayer*

Turn / tap to **1 Peter 4:7-11**

Thank you to all who expressed love and concern for Kim after I shared last Sunday of the devastating news from her doctor that she needs to cut sugar out of her diet.

The outpouring of love and concern was humbling...thank you.

However, if I come across a bit crabby and grouchy...or if I reply to you in an unkind manner today...please give me grace as my sugar intake has dropped suddenly!

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

**8** Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

**9** Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

**10** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

**11** 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."

I believe one of the reasons many Christians are passive about their faith - and one of the reasons the Christian faith is not appealing to some, is the lack of reasoned intensity and urgency in the church. (unreasoned = fanaticism)  
Let's face it...churches all across our land are filled on Sunday morning with people who are not very excited to be there!

We're excited to go see a sporting event...and we may even get there early to watch the teams warm up.

We're excited for the concert and we make sure we arrive a few minutes early because we don't want to miss anything.

But excited on Saturday night for Sunday morning...and getting there a few minutes early to hear the praise team get ready or to spend a few moments in quiet reflection and prayer so you are ready to worship? Who does that?

Believe or not...some people do. It's certainly a minority of Christians...but there are such creatures in churches across our land!

There are a few people in this place who arrive early each Sunday and prepare their hearts.

Peter understood this intensity and urgency.

**The intensity and urgency of Your faith** vs. 7

Peter lived with great intensity, and throughout this first letter (1 Peter) - he is trying to help us capture this wonderful intensity and urgency of the faith.

“The end of all things is at hand”

This bleeds intensity and urgency.

What does he mean by this?

Was he predicting Jesus would return in his lifetime?

No...he wasn't predicting Jesus' return in his lifetime.

He was helping us realize God has ordered the events of the 'world stage' in such a way that the return of Jesus could happen at any moment.

This is often referred to as the 'imminent' return of Christ.

In the Bible, we read this term “last days” quite often.

But those words were written 2,000 years ago!

True...but the “last days” or when Peter says “the end of all things is at hand”, it's not referring to chronological time, but to the 'readiness of time'.

In other words, the stage is set...the end purpose of history is coming into view...the goal of history has been achieved. When you read in the Bible we are “in the last days”, it means we are in the final stage of God's providential plan for history. We are in the final chapter of history. The writer of Hebrews begins with this idea:

**Hebrews 1:1-2**

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **2 but in these last days** He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.”

The life, death and resurrection of Jesus was the beginning of the end.

His life on earth was the first sentence in the last chapter of God’s book of history.

From our vantage point, this is a really long chapter!

But remember...God doesn’t view time as we view time.

In these last days, we are living in a time of God’s patience as His grace extends chronological time for the lost to put their faith in Christ.

This is why our life...our time...our mission has such intensity and urgency.

The Gospel has intensity and urgency in every fiber!

“...while we were still sinners Christ died for us.” **Romans 5:8**

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son...”

**John 3:16**

“There is...no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

**Rom. 8:1**

“...now is the day of salvation!” **2 Corinthians 6:2**

“Jesus is ready to judge the living and the dead.” **1 Peter 4:5**

“...it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment...” **Heb. 9:27**

But for so many, their faith...and attending church has lost any connection to the intensity and urgency of the Gospel, and church has turned into some self-improvement pep-talk or some gathering of people they feel comfortable with and they enjoy the songs and the sermon - the *'Sunday Morning Show'*.

Where are you this morning?

Just another hum-drum Sunday morning...or are you on the edge of your seat...not because what happens on the platform...but God's plan of salvation throughout history and knowing "the end of all things is at hand" has put you there!

"therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded"

Don't let the intensity and urgency drive you to panic!

Don't live in fear or become overwhelmed with the weight of eternity which can have a paralyzing effect.

Peter says keep your emotions under control - don't let them control you. He says *'don't be controlled by your passions'*, but instead, be controlled by your thoughts...by the truth - make sure your passions are in-line with the truth!

The Christian life is lived with a fully intact mind.

We are never to stop thinking - never to disengage the mind.

We must think clearly - have sound judgment - be aware of spiritual things - and keep alert and watchful for spiritual opportunities and dangers.

We must realize how important the truth is - how important our knowledge of the truth is - and we must live each day with a full awareness of the truth of God.

“for the sake of your prayers”

Prayer is talking with God - sharing your heart and mind with God. Mindless prayer is a waste - unproductive muttering which is nothing more than spiritual sounding words which lack any power or relationship with the truth. God is a God of truth - a God of wisdom, intelligence and reason. This means our relationship with Him, expressed most intimately through our prayers, must be grounded and based in self-control and sober-thinking.

Praying to God for things which make no sense - for things which are contrary to His truth or the mission He has given us - will profit nothing and nobody.

Our prayers should reflect the intensity and urgency of the Gospel - the intensity and urgency we should have as we obey the mission God has given His Church.

**Love is strenuous work** vs. 8

Love is not easy...it's difficult.

Love is a cheap word in our culture.

- We love potato chips.
- We love a song.
- We love the weekends.
- We love our car or home.
- We love our pets.
- We love lots of things which give us joy and pleasure.

But do you love those who don't love in return?

Do you love those who can't repay your love?

Christian love is the virtue which should overshadow and infect all the other virtues.

Christian love is not about feelings or emotions.

Christian love is not erotic or sexual.

Christian love is focused on others.

Christian love looks to serve others and looks to help others. It looks to improve the life of the other person.

Sometimes, other Christians in the church do or say something which hurts you. Maybe it was intentional, maybe it was unintentional - regardless...it hurts.

- They didn't notice what you did for them.
- They didn't like what you did for them!
- They treated what you did for them as something they deserved...something they were obligated to have.
- They said something which was untrue.
- They didn't give you credit for something you did.

When this happens, our human nature wants to pull back...to withdraw.

- We may even lash out against them...
- Return a cruel word with a cruel word...

But we're called to follow the example of Christ - not to follow our human nature.

We're called to love others not for how they love us, but simply to love them with the same love Christ has for us.

"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins."

The Greek word translated "earnestly" ("deeply" NIV) is used to describe a person running at full speed as their muscles exert maximum effort - it's used to describe a horse stretching out in full stride as it runs at a full gallop.

This is the kind of intensity our love should have.

Christian love is strenuous work. Loving others in the church will require you to exert yourself - to stretch and strain as you sacrifice and serve them.

This is where the church should stand in stark contrast to the world.

The world loves their own. Our culture is divided into so many groups - groups where the members are similar and it's easy to love the people in your group because they're a lot like you.



The church should be different.

The church should be a place where love is expressed to each person. Whether they 'fit' or 'look the part' - it doesn't matter. We cannot be selective in who we love - or stingy with our love. Rather, we should look for opportunities to love. Keep watch for those who need to the love of Christ. Check out this example of strenuous love - by our missionary partners in Nepal - Stan and Rhonda Unruh. (Missionary Aviation Fellowship - MAF- Earthquake in Nepal - 2015)

### *Unruh video*

Our love should be tangible - something real and practical - something which makes a difference in the other person's life.

The Christian who has walked with Christ for decades should love the best!

But often, the longer someone is a Christian the more reserved and careful they are with their love. They will love those who are walking with Christ - but those who are on the edge - those who are struggling to walk with Christ - sometimes they're more judgmental and stingy with their love when someone is less 'loveable'.

But this is not what we're called to.

Peter says, "love covers a multitude of sins" - which means our love for one another should be the soil of grace.

When you love a fellow believer, your love for them

will not be withdrawn if they are struggling with sin. Just the opposite...when a fellow believer is struggling with sin, it's time to flex the muscles of your love. It's your love for them which may help them turn away from their sin.

Christian love in the church is a great motivation for holy living.

As God has forgiven us in Christ, so we forgive each other - and we help each other get up again after we have stumbled and fallen.

**Do your part in the church** vs. 9-11a

“Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies...”

**Vs. 9 - Hospitality - Hospitality without grumbling.**

“grumbling” = *goggusmos* (gong-goos-mos)

Don't complain or grumble about having people over...and don't complain or grumble about other people when you have people over.

Offering hospitality was much more crucial for reasons of safety and sin in the first century as there were few hotels and the hotels which existed had reputations for all kinds of sinful activity.

But in modern culture, hospitality is still a crucial activity for it binds people together and expresses love to those invited over.

“Hospitality is not something we do overly pragmatically. We do not practice hospitality *‘to get conversions’*. We practice hospitality because it is right. We practice hospitality because we are God’s people. We share God’s goodness through our home because God has shown His goodness to us.”

(Preaching the Word, Sharing Christ’s Sufferings, 1 & 2 Peter and Jude, by David R. Helm, p. 142)

Notice this instruction is not limited to those with the gift of hospitality, but to everyone in the church.

One last note before moving on to vs. 10 - in modern culture we must understand the important role hospitality plays for a church on Sunday morning. Each Sunday we have a standing invitation to the population of OV and NW Tucson to come and join us - and if we aren’t hospitable to them - if we don’t greet them warmly and sincerely - if we don’t bother to notice them or to help them - we are not exercising hospitality.

**So...join the Welcome Ministry -**

**Vs. 10-11a** - If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit has given you at least one spiritual gift.

“use it”

I love giving gifts - Christmas, birthdays, anniversaries, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day & Father's Day - it's a joy to see someone open a gift. But I don't like when the gift I've given is not used. Sometimes I bought a stupid gift and the lack of use is because I didn't get them something they needed or would like.

But the Holy Spirit doesn't mess up gift-giving like I do. His gift to you is perfectly matched not only to God's plan...but to your personality and talents, and He expects His gift to be used.

How many of you know your spiritual gift?

How many of you are using your spiritual gift?

When God gives a gift to us, He expects us to "steward" or manage the gift well. This means we must "use it", but we must "use it" for His glory, not for our own interest.

The gifts are "varied" - meaning there is variety in the gifts. Those with the gift of preaching will not all preach alike. They should all preach God's Word - but their style will be unique. Those with the gift of administration will exercise that gift according to their own strengths, abilities and personality.

Peter mentions two categories of gifts: speaking and serving gifts.

If the Spirit has given you a speaking gift - preaching and teaching - you are to speak the words of God - not your own words - not your own thoughts or ideas - but thoughts and ideas which are rooted in God's Word.

If you have a serving gift, then serve in God's strength. None of this, *"I can't do that"* or *"I've never done that before"* or *"I'm not smart enough"* or *"I don't have enough experience"*.

It's not about your ability or strength or experience...it's about relying on God's strength. Put your confidence in Him - not in yourself.

### **Our love and ministry glorify God** vs. 11b

"...in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

All of these things... ("everything")

- The intensity and urgency of the Gospel and each day of our life...
- Our mental and emotional sobriety for the sake of our prayers and trust in God...
- The exercise of our love for one another as it leads to experiencing God's grace...
- The exercise of our gifts according to God's Word and His strength...

All of these things not only help us live and minister together as the local Body of Christ - as a local church - but they give glory to God.

If we have some mistaken notion that we exist and work at these things for our own reputation or the reputation of this church - we are off-base.

We exist and work at love and serve in ministry to glorify God.

We exist and work to elevate the name and work of Jesus.

We exist and work to bring honor and praise to Him.

### **Apply it...**

Put your faith in Christ

Urgency! If not now...when?

**A**dmit your sins

**B**elieve in Jesus as your Savior

**C**ommit each day to Christ

Embrace the labor of love

Be willing to exert yourself as you love one another. (Bitter-Beer face / Bitter Christian face)

Serve - you have a gift, so “use it”!

Be faithful to God’s Word - rely on His strength and His promise to work in and through you.

Spiritual Gift test on website

Glorify God - not yourself

Everything you do throughout the week and  
everything you do here at church - do it for God's  
glory.

Close in prayer