

XXXVII. I Peter in Biblical Perspective

The Elect in the Exile

“The End of All Things as the Beginning of Everything—Part 2”

I Peter 4:7–11

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This will be our second time in this paragraph of I Peter 4. I Peter 4:7–11 says [7] *The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled (sound) 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.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

In a dining room of a hotel and the PA system crackles. A voice says ‘Has anyone lost a fountain pen? Come to the desk to claim it...’ Then there is a clarifying remark ‘...if you can identify it.’ In other words you have to show that it is your pen in order to claim it. This was easy for me because I had a way to identify all of my pens. It wasn't that they were so expensive that I marked them but it was that they were cheap and no one else would own one.

People have asked me if I've tried other kinds of pens and I have. Ball points are just so sterile to me and sharpies are next to blasphemy for me so I'm not there. I have made the journey from a quill to a fountain pen and I will rest there until I go home, but I'm also Celtic in background with frugality, therefore my joy is not only to collect fountain pens but I make sure they are very inexpensive. I know of three websites where you can get fountain pens for less than \$25 and one of them will even send ink with it. They may not necessarily write but they're not expensive at all.

So the clarifying remark is to identify it so I'd like to go from that to tell you that your identity is Christ and that's why you can never be lost. Christ owns you, you own Christ. Christ is in you, and you are in Christ. Christ has identified you as His elect exiles in I Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, using the Old Testament picture of God saving His covenant people from the bondage of slavery and then bringing them through the wilderness to the Promised Land. We have been saved from the slavery of sin and we are on the journey having been redeemed by the Lord to a new heavens and a new earth. We have been given a mission to make disciples. to the glory of God. We have been given a message of the Gospel of saving grace in Christ and we've been given the Spirit of God to guide us all the way to glory in God's redeeming grace.

Elect is who you are in Christ by what He has done at the cross for you and you are exiles for you no longer belong to this world where you are in the world but not of the world. Now you are serving Christ always ready, as Peter says, to give an account of the hope that is within you. To further flesh this out Peter has put more markers on us to show that we are His. From I Peter 1:1 to I Peter 4:6, he has revealed 13 Gospel blessings that mark out His people. My fountain pen that I own maybe cheap but you are not cheap for you have been bought with the blood of Christ. You have been born again by the Seed of the Word of God. These 13 blessings of who

you are in Christ have been progressively unfolded and then he gives us what we are to do and how we are to live as His exiles with our citizenship in the Kingdom of God but living in this world.

Peter gives us six Gospel commands to show us how to live for Christ but those 13 markers, Gospel blessings, come from Christ and His work on the cross and not what we do or how we obey. You are called to obedience out of love to Christ but He doesn't tell you this until he tells you who you are in Christ with those 13 Gospel commands. We have already gone through these 13 Gospel blessings and six Gospel commands which are on our Briarwood website and now we have come to I Peter 4:7. Before we get into this paragraph Peter has reminded us after giving us these Gospel blessings and commands that in this world you will suffer.

There are two types of suffering that the Christian will suffer. One is the suffering that everybody endures for we're in a broken world, things like death, sicknesses, loss of job, friends forsaking you and all kinds of brokenness. That why Jesus says John 16:33, *[33] I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.* Jesus also tells us there is another kind of suffering for the Christian and that is the suffering that is directly related to having a relationship with Jesus Christ. We are told numerous times in the New Testament that it is absolutely inevitable that every true Christian in some way, to some degree, at some time for Christ.

There are four m's related to suffering from Peter – sometimes you be mocked, maligned, marginalized (the attack upon your livelihood) or even martyred. This is so crucial for us to understand. Paul said in II Timothy 3:12, *[12] Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* Jesus said in Matthew 5:11–12 *[11] Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.* Paul affirms again in Philippians 1:29, *[29] For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.*

Peter gives his emphasis on Christian suffering for Christ's sake by using over one third of his epistle to cover it. He starts in I Peter 3:13 and goes all the way to I Peter 5:11. We are currently right in the middle of it. Now in light of the Gospel blessings, Gospel commands to obey God and in expectation of suffering when you obey God, how are we to be ready to respond to this and how are we to do it? Peter then gives us another Gospel blessing and command in this paragraph of I Peter 4:7–11.

The 14th Gospel blessings found in the opening of verse 7 is that the end of all things is near, is now, is at hand or the time is now. We have to understand this in order to understand the Gospel command that is going to follow this. When Peter says 'the end is near' he doesn't mean the cessation of something. He means the consummation is before you. I like to illustrate it this way. My mother used to say 'son, you have me at the end of my rope.' I knew when that rope ran out I was in trouble. This means you have come to something of which there is nothing after it. It's gone and that's is not what Peter means here.

This is God giving us another insight when He is talking about end, it is more like the end of a journey, a scientific experiment, a project, where the end has brought you to the consummation. It has brought you to the victory of it. Peter is telling us that God's redemptive calendar has now come to its final step and that is the end of all things and the return of the Son of God, Christ, for His people. The phrase 'at hand' is like divine vocabulary that runs through

the Bible. At the right time Christ died for us or Christ says 'It's not My time.' The time is now. He is saying that the next event in God's redemptive calendar as the Redeemer is His return.

One might be thinking 'how can this be when Peter wrote this in about 63 A.D.?' Now we're in 2019 and Jesus hasn't come back, so did Peter make a mistake? No, because he is not speaking chronologically, he is speaking categorically. In other words, all that Jesus needs to do to redeem His people was done at the cross, affirmed by the resurrection and brought to its implementation in His ascension. The next thing is He will bring it all to consummation. So why has it been over 2,000 years? Let's stop and think about this.

Where is the first promise that God is going to send a Seed, His Son, to redeem us from our sins? This promise is in Genesis and it's somewhere between 4,000 to 8,000 years before Jesus came. God is working on these things categorically step by step. He is telling us that prophecies are over and fulfillment has been secured in Christ. Christ has done His work on the cross, the tomb is empty, He has ascended, the Holy Spirit has been poured out and the next thing on God's calendar is that Jesus is coming and the Bible gives us two reasons why Jesus has not come yet.

One is that He says the end will not come until the Gospel has been preached to all the nations. Secondly, Jesus is not slow about His promise to return for as soon as all of the elect, His beloved, has been brought to faith and repentance in Christ. Then that final event of His return, as the trumpet blows and the angels shout, will happen and here comes Jesus in all of His glory. The consummation is assured at the imminent return of Christ and that is the Gospel blessing in the end is near. So according to Peter 14 Gospel blessings are mine because of His victorious work on the cross and until His return I am to be on mission, on message and in ministry.

So what is it that I need to hear next, in light of a promised second coming to bring all things to consummation and the fact that I will suffer for Christ's sake? It is what Peter tells us next and that is Gospel command number seven. The command is a single command with two sides to it and it written in the imperative in the original language. I Peter 4:7b says [7b] *therefore be self-controlled (one side) and sober-minded (other side) for the sake of your prayers.* I like how the New American Standard says be sound-minded and sober. The sixth Gospel command was to arm yourself with the mind of Christ and the mind of Christ has two marks on it – to be sober and sound – and we are to do that for the sake of something he assumes is in our lives and that is prayers. So let's try and understand these two things.

What does it mean to be self-controlled or sound-minded? I want to show you the positive and the negative to how this is to be understood. II Corinthians 5:11–14a says [11] *Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. [12] We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. [13] For if we are beside ourselves (out of our mind), it is for God; if we are in our right (sound) mind, it is for you. [14a] For the love of Christ controls us.*

Here he is telling us that he is not attempting to control God for he is willing to lose all personal control to turn himself over to His control. So if he is out of his mind then it's for God which means that God is going to call us that is not going to make sense. Let's take the tithe. We are to bring a tenth of the best we have to worship. Why would we do that? We are going to pray that God will use our children on a mission field. We might never see them again. Why

would we do that? The world sees us following Christ as being out of our mind. We gladly turn ourselves over to the mind of the Lord. We find out that God's ways are beyond our ways.

Secondly, as I live out my life with the mind of Christ, being that which guides me, then that leads to a sound mind. You don't impress people about Christ by living a distorted, deranged life in the name of faith. I want to be in my right mind and that is informed by God's Word whereby I embrace the supra logical, supra rational truth of who God is and what God promises. Now I order my life as a sound life in Christ with the sound truth of His Word and the mind of Christ. So the world would lead us out of our minds in terms of away from God's Word but when we come to the mind of Christ surrendering our mind to Him we then develop a Biblically framed, Christ-centered world and life view that leads us to a right mind, an ordered mind whereby we live our lives according to the precepts of God's Word. This is a sound mind.

What would be the opposite of a sound mind? In Acts 25 and 26 after Paul was converted it was said that he would be appointed to go and proclaim the name of Jesus to governors, kings and those in authority. We see in Acts that he appears before governors like Festus and Felix. He appears before King Agrippa and will do an appeal before Caesar. I've been to this place where he gives his glorious testimony of his conversion, what He is doing and how he is living for Christ and we see in Acts 26:24, [24] *And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind."*

The world looks at us living in obedience to God's Word as being out of our mind, but in reality, it's living apart from God's Word that puts you out of your mind. Paul, you're doing this without getting paid for this? Gamaliel didn't teach you that. You're going to get thrown over walls, pelted with rocks, endure all kinds of hardships and thrown in prison. Paul, you're out of your mind. Paul says 'I have a sound mind. God said it therefore I believe it. If I believe it I'm supposed to follow it. I'm living my life ordered by the truth of God's Word. Yes, it causes me to suffer but that's not crazy, it's being obedient to the Lord for every time I suffer it tells me that God has just given me another platform, a megaphone, an opportunity to witness that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.'

Here is another example from Scripture. When Jesus went to Galilee by the Sea and crossed over He was met by two demoniacs. We see this in Mark 5 and as Jesus approached him he was crying out, cutting himself, living in a cemetery, naked, unclean and with chains that can't hold him. In that day and time a rabbi said there were five marks of a demon-possessed man. There was sexual immorality – no clothes, necromancy – communion with the dead, supernatural strength – chains that couldn't hold him, uncleanliness, and bizarre behavior. Apart from Christ, eventually, unless God's common grace restrains, it always leads to derangement. We see this in King Nebuchadnezzar who says he is god and ends up living like an animal for seven years (Daniel 4). Derangement, being out of your mind, in fact a result of rebellion against God.

The demoniac in Mark 5 was in darkness, depression, disintegration, disconnection and derangement, but when he was converted he asked to go with Jesus and then it describes him. Mark 5:14–15 says [14] *The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. [15] And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his **right mind**, and they were afraid.* We need a sound mind.

In light of the fact that you will suffer, you need a sound mind and how to interpret that. Jesus and the Apostles have all told us that right before the second coming there will be false

teachers who will say they are the Christ and distort the end of all things by coming up with these charts, dates, novels and all but don't listen to them. Be of sound mind. Where God has spoken believe it and where God has not spoken don't believe those who try to fill in the blanks for God. Be of sound mind to understand suffering and the second coming as that which comforts and encourages you, not something that adds to derangement.

I have seen it and my dad made money off of this. There was this group of people in Charlotte, North Carolina who had given the date the Lord would return and it was about the fifth time they had done this. My dad had left baseball and he went to this man who was selling an auto-parts store who was selling his business for a lot less than it was worth. My dad said 'Are you sure you want to sell it for this?' He said 'Yeah, I'm not sure why I'm even asking for this.' My dad said 'Why?' He said 'Jesus is coming' and he gave my dad the date. My dad said 'I think you're selling this thing cheap.' He said 'You're the idiot paying me anything for it.' My dad said 'I think the Bible says that no man knows the date.' That didn't stop this man. It's amazing how people take the second coming and bring as much derangement as sin does. People are going to teach crazy stuff.

Two things will happen on the second coming. One people are going to be embarrassed about the doctrine and neglect to teach it or people are going to distort the doctrine and teach what God hasn't said. You need a sound mind and you need a sober mind. Now let's look at I Thessalonians 5:1–5 which says [1] *Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. [2] For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. [3] While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. [4] But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. [5] For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.*

We don't know the date but we'll be expecting it and anticipating it. In Revelation John repeats this prayer 'Behold, come quickly, Lord Jesus' because he is anticipating His return. One of my favorite passages is II Timothy 4:8 which says [8] *Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but **also to all who have loved his appearing**.* Do you long for Christ to come? Are you lovingly longing for Christ to come right now or are you thinking you'd love for Him to come but there are some other things you'd like to do before He does? We are to long for His promised appearing, which is our sound mind, our sound approach and then we are to be sober.

Let's look further in I Thessalonians 5:6–8 which says [6] *So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be **sober**.* [7] *For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. [8] But since we belong to the day, let us be **sober**, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.* Sobriety is the opposite of drunkenness and drunkenness is when you have lost control of everything. He tells us not to give food or drink control in our life for our life isn't our drink, food, or job. Don't get drunk on power, influence or possessions and don't make these good gifts idols where that becomes your life because then you lose total control.

We want a sound mind and a sober mind that is temperate. It's not that you can't enjoy the good things of life like your marriage, family, children, job, food, drink for all are good gifts from God to be used by God and for God to the glory of God but they are not to become your God. When they do derangement and dissipation will come. Say 'no' to that and say God, give

me a sober life, a temperate life. My life is not March Madness though I love the phrase because people lose control during March Madness. I have a relative that is on his knees until Georgia gets out of the bowl games, barking at a T.V. 'Go dawgs!' This doesn't mean we can't enjoy things and place them in their place but they don't take God's place, because if they do then you've lost soundness and sobriety.

We can see why this is important because the Word of God orders the sound mind and the Spirit of God controls the sound mind. So why is it sound? It is because it's the truth of God's Word. Why is it sober? It is because the Holy Spirit is within you and the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. It is not self controlling but God controlling self. We are to have a sound and sober mind for the purpose of our prayers.

Isn't it interesting that Peter doesn't command us to pray. He commands you to be sober and sound minded but doesn't command you to pray because in this text he assumes you are praying. For me this heightens it all the more. Peter tells husbands in I Peter 3:7, *[7] Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.* Peter is assuming a Christian husband is going to be praying and if you don't treat their wife right their prayers will be hindered and that is an exhortation to treat your wife right. Not only does she deserve to be treated the way God has called me to treat her but his prayers will be hindered if he doesn't.

When I am sober and sound minded then I know how to pray, like John, 'Come quickly, Lord Jesus.' Like Paul, help me finish strong to the end and to be poured out as a drink offering. It's assumed that you are going to pray but I want to know how to pray. An effective prayer life is not an exotic novel, distorted prayer life. It is a sober minded, sound minded prayer life and then your prayers will be saturated with the truth of God's Word and you will be led in prayer by the Spirit of God.

Here is the takeaway for this study. In light of the inevitable suffering for Christ in this world and the imminent return of Christ, pursue and cultivate a sound and sober mind marked by a life filled with prayer. You want to have a sound life for Christ. A sound life is a life that is built on sound doctrine. Sound doctrine comes from sound words that are given to you and preached to you. Listen to sound Biblical preaching and engage in sound Biblical study and devotional lifestyle. This will feed your prayer life.

Concerning the second coming, people are going to neglect it and distort it, but we need to be on target with it. I am now decades removed from the first time I heard about the second coming and I still think the same thing – Jesus is coming, I don't know when, but I know it's soon and I know it can be before I go to meet Him. Therefore when I make a decision of where I'm going, what I'm doing, and what I'm saying I ask myself 'Is this what I want to be doing or saying or where I want to be going if He comes right now?' There is one thing I surely want to be doing and that is praying and praising with a sound mind and a sober mind. It's not all that I would be doing but it would be at the core of what I'm doing.

I'm not saying I need to be handing out tracks because I maybe cutting my grass and subduing the creation is right before the Lord. Now I don't really want to be cutting my grass but it may be. In other words, if it is right before the Lord as a man, a husband, a father, a pastor, and I'm doing things out of the joy of the Lord and not idolatry, then that's what I want to be doing, but if it's not that then it's not what I want to be doing, if He comes. I want the light lit and I'm ready. Peter heard Jesus of those who were not ready when the Groom came. He is

telling us to be sober minded, sound minded and ready when He comes, longing His coming, loving His coming and this is the blessed hope that is purifying what and how you are doing it, and what and how you are saying it even at that very moment.

You cannot have a revival without preaching the cross of Christ, but to preach the cross of Christ we have got to quit neglecting the Biblical doctrine of creation because the cross doesn't make sense without it and we've got to preach the second coming, the judgment seat and the realities of the new heavens, the new earth and a hell to lose to gain Christ. We're silent on it. I think we're preaching some amazing messages about the cross without the context of creation, the second coming, the judgment seat and eternity. When you preach the second coming you are automatically engaging three of those. He's coming – judgment – heaven or hell? That's why Peter nails it with the end is near. He tells us not to use that to get exotic but to be sober minded, sound minded as you live out your life as it is seen in your prayer filled life.

A religious terrorist kills Christians and destroys churches but he gets converted then goes to a street and Ananias is called to go meet him in the book of Acts. Ananias says to God 'You want me to go talk to Saul, the terrorist who kills Christians?' Yes! How does God assure Ananias that it's okay to go up to the religious terrorist as a Christian and not be fearful? God said to Ananias in Acts 9:11, *[11] And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying."*

Can you be a Christian without Christ? No. Can you be a Christian without grace? No. Can you be a Christian without the Holy Spirit? No. Can you be a Christian without the Word of God? No. Can you be a Christian without prayer? No. Peter is assuming your prayer life, but will there be seasons of difficulty? Yes. Will there be shallow times? Yes. Now I will quote my mentor; you are never at home in a prayerless life any more than you would be at home with a Christless, graceless, Wordless, Spiritless life. How do I fill up my prayer life? It is done with a sound mind, a sober mind because the end is near. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Let the Holy Spirit speak to your heart. If you would like to talk with someone about building on your walk with Christ or to have a relationship with Christ please contact us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 for we would love to talk and pray with you. Perhaps you have heard the end is coming which is not a cessation but a consummation. It's really not an end that's coming but an end of the redemptive calendar for the beginning of forever and I want to be there with Him. O God, we bring to You our heart, our desire. Please fill us with a sound mind from sound doctrine of sound words from the Word of God and Spirit of God give us a sober mind so that nothing controls us but Jesus by the power of His Spirit and may our prayer life reflect that. Jesus we will give You the glory for all of it and I pray this in Your Name, Amen.

Power Point

GOSPEL BLESSING #14

The Consummation of all things is assured and the imminent Return of Christ.

End-Near

GOSPEL COMMAND #7

• Self-Controlled (Sound)

- Sober
- Prayers

LIFE TAKEAWAY

In light of our inevitable suffering for Christ in this world and the imminent return of Christ...Pursue and cultivate a sound and sober mind marked by a life filled with prayer.

ELECT EXILES – GOSPEL BLESSINGS

1. You have an imperishable inheritance kept for you.
2. You are kept for your inheritance through trials.
3. You are Justified by the imperishable blood of Christ.
4. You are Regenerated by imperishable seed God's Word preached.
5. You are Living Stones made into a Temple for God's dwelling presence.
6. You are a Royal Priesthood.
7. You are a Chosen Race.
8. You are a Called People.
9. You are a People of God's own Possession.
10. You are a Holy Nation.
11. You are a People of Divine Mercy.
12. You are a People Redeemed from Sin's Shame and Blessed with Divine Honor.
13. You are a Purposed People – proclaiming the Christ's excellency as living sacrifices.
14. You are almost home—"the end is near."

ELECT EXILES – GOSPEL COMMANDS

1. Personal pursuit of a pervasive holiness in life.
2. Sincere and heart-felt love for one another.
3. Cultivation of an appetite for God's Word.
4. A lifestyle of obedience stimulating praise to God.
5. Subjection to every human institution silencing the ignorance of foolishness.
6. Arm yourself with the mind of Christ to suffer for Christ.