

Five Church Imperatives In View of Christ's Near Return 1 Peter 4:7-11

1. Review of 1 Peter up to 4:7

In view of the coming judgment of God, Peter gives a set of 5 imperatives to his readers. These imperatives are for the strengthening of their churches. They speak to how Christians must live with each other to make sure the community of faith is healthy and unified.

2. Imminence Calls for Action, verse 7a.

"Imminence" means that in God's prophetic program, nothing remains to happen before Christ returns to remove the Church out of the world. Jesus taught it (Matthew 24:42-44), Paul expected it (1 Corinthians 10:11, Philippians 4:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3),; as did James (5:8).

Then will come the seven years of unrestrained chaos and tyrannical domination by Satan-inspired leaders as prophesied by Daniel, Paul, and John—known as the "Tribulation".

Peter wanted the Christians to keep their perspective focused on what is eternal lest they be distracted by what is temporary.

But, was it misleading for Peter to declare that this end was near?" No "To draw near" can speak of *readiness* for action as much as nearness in time. Note also the perspective of God Peter recognized in his second letter: in God's eternal realm of operation, a thousand years of human lifetime would compare to one day in God's time table (2 Peter 3:8).

3. We must fortify our Church with 5 key practices, verses 7b-11.

Practice #1 Stay self-controlled and sober-minded (v. 7b)

Keep your focus under control and think clearly about the times so you can pray effectively. Illustration: the delivered demoniac of Gadara (Mark 5:15).

Self-control = maintaining a careful check on anxieties that could assault your heart because of social pressures and state threats against

Under the discipline of self-control the other necessity of sobriety would be included. A mind-set in sharp contrast to the habit of drunkenness that Peter called typical of the non-Christian's behavior in ancient Asia and common today.

Practice #2 Pray (v. 7c)

Effective prayer was Peter's concern. Effective prayer must be grounded in knowledge of God's Word and in a careful reflection on how it applies in life.

Note: "Prayers" is plural. It implies the practice of prayer on many occasions and for many things. In personal prayer, groups, and congregational worship.

Effective prayer depends on calm, God-focused perspective.

Practice #3 earnest mutual love (v. 8)

Self-sacrificial love is the essential glue of a healthy congregation.

It is not feeling that is commanded here, it is action.

Feeling cannot be commanded. It is the extension of Christian love to fellow believers. It is a love that often requires exertion of effort.

Where Christians are exerting effort to extend love, there is much less likelihood that they will at the same time be joyless--holding grudges and examining people's actions with criticism or suspicion.

Practice #4 mutual hospitality (v. 9)

Hospitality—Christians opening their homes to Christian travelers and actively sharing resources with fellow church members in need.

The reference to "one another" puts the focus of this action primarily on hospitality *within* the fellowship of a local congregation.

Are you open to hospitality or does the thought of it unnerve you? The latter must be a matter for prayer lest you refuse it and sin.

Practice #5 Mutual ministry (vss. 10-11)

Spiritual gifts are diverse capacities for ministry to your local church. From Paul's letters to the Corinthians and Romans, we have thorough teaching about spiritual gifts. The serving gifts of Romans 12 are service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, and mercy. They are sufficient for all the necessary ministries of a congregation.

Sign gifts like prophecy were suspended at the end of the apostolic era. There is no Biblical justification for understanding prophecy, miracles, healing, or tongues as different from how they were manifested in the ministries of Jesus and the Apostles.

Every Christian receives a spiritual gift at salvation.

Have you recognized your gift? Are you using it to bless the church?

Conclusion: The purpose of a healthy, unified, and Christ-honoring church is so that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

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