

1 Peter Chapter 4B

If you recall from last week, the first paragraph of 1 Peter Ch. 4 concluded with a reference to the coming of Christ “**who is ready to judge the living and the dead.**”

- The words that Peter used, in verse 5 portray an image of Christ standing at the door, with his hand on the knob ready to step into the kingdoms of man in his final judgment. As awesome and fearful as that is:

You may also remember that Peter ended verse 6 with inspiring words of hope, saying: no matter how much we suffer in this present life, we can take courage knowing, there is a life to come, a glorious life where we will **live in the spirit the way that God does.**

Oh how our hearts long for that glorious day when sorrow and sighing will flee away, when God will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, or crying, or pain anymore, because the former things will have passed away." (Rev. 21:4)

- Throughout the N.T. The promise of Christ's soon return is a great comfort to every believer who finds himself in the midst of suffering.
- Consider the Patriarch Job: at the height of his suffering, after having lost all of his children, all of his flocks and herds, when his barns had burned to the ground and his flesh was filled with painful boils. After his loving wife told him to curse God and die.
- In the heat of great affliction Job's eyes were lifted to the Day of the Lord and he said:

Job 19: 25 **For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.** 26 **And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God,** 27 **whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!**

- The revelation of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer sustains us in time of suffering.

As we move on in 1 Peter we see this theme of Christ's second coming carried from vs 5 to vs 6 and then on to vs 7 where Peter says: “**The end of all things is at hand**”

The End – the consummation, the fulfillment, the finale of God's redemptive plan is “**At Hand.**” Everything is ready, and the return of Christ is immanent.

- When we speak of the imminence of Christ's return, we mean that He could come back at any moment. There is no additional prophecy to be fulfilled, no mandatory event that must take place before His return.
- With that in mind, the N.T. continually reminds us to be patient and to be prepared.

Luke 12: 40 (Jesus told his disciples) **You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."**

- James instructed the church with words that are very similar to those of Peter:

James 5: 7 **Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord.....**

8 **You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.**

9 **..... behold, the Judge is standing at the door.**

Listen once again to the words of the Apostle Peter:

1 Peter 4:7 **The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.**

- The word "Therefore" introduces the "ethical implications" of Christ's appearing. In other words, the expectation of Christ's Second Coming should affect the way that we live our lives. (ethically, morally, spiritually)

When Jesus came first time, (AS A Babe in the Manger) he took on human flesh and dwelt among us as God's Suffering Servant. **"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief."**

- In His first Advent He came to bear the sin of many.

But in his Second Advent Jesus will come as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

As Peter said, he will come **"to judge the living and the dead."**

- In the final days that Jesus spent with his Disciples he spoke often of his Second coming and they passed His Words on to us in the Gospels.
- Matthew records this warning from the lips of the Lord Jesus

Matthew 24: 44 **Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. 45 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time?**

46 **Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 47 Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. 48 But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' 49 and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards,**

50 **the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know 51 and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**

- Because no one knows the day or the hour of the Lord's coming the disciples of Christ must live every day in faithful service, waiting and watching.

Most of you know, before entering into fulltime ministry, I managed a distribution center for a local chain of grocery stores. Well, two time every year the warehouse that I managed was inspected by the state.

- Because I never knew the day or the hour when the inspector was going to arrive, every morning I walked the facility with a member of my staff to make sure that we were prepared for the judgment that we would undergo on that appointed day.
- Dealing with the rigors of state inspection for 20 years in the Grocery Business I learned the importance of preparation for the day of judgment.
- Literally MY Reward depended on it! (salary, bonus check)

In the same way that those pending inspections motivated me to action on a daily basis, so it is that the imminent return of Christ should stimulate all of us, as believers to live a life of devotion and faithful service to the Lord in this present life.

Moving on to verses 7-11, Peter focuses on 3 areas of preparedness that are essential for all believers in light of the coming of the Lord.

- Holy Prayer
- Hospitable Love
- Honorable Service

1. Holy Prayer

1 Peter 4: 7 **The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.**

A careful reading of the Epistles reveals where false ideas and improper thinking with regard to the Coming of the Lord resulted in foolish practices.

- For example, some people in the church at Thessalonica viewed the coming of the Lord as an excuse to stop working. They might say:
 - I didn't want to go to work anyway, since Jesus is coming back soon I'm not going to waste my time loading trucks.
- It seem that some people just put their jammies on and sat on the rooftop waiting for the sky to split and Jesus to come through the clouds.
- In the mean time, they expected the church to take care of them, bring them meals, pay their rent.
- In his letter to the church, Paul corrected their foolish thinking.

2 Thess 3: 6 **Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us.**

- Back in 1 Peter:

In light of the coming of the Lord, Peter exhorts believers to be Self-Controlled and Sober Minded. These terms are very similar and should be viewed together as describing the clear, uncluttered and sound mind that is essential for effective prayer.

- Self-controlled speaks of a person who is in his right mind, alert and under control, not carried away by undue emotion or uncontrolled passions.

- Sober minded – speaks of one who limits his or her personal liberties so as to be free from the distractions and the hindrances of this present evil age.

Reading Peter's Words multiple times throughout the week I began to wonder, "what is the connection between the coming of the Lord and prayer."

- Are they connected?
- Then I remembered the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, when Jesus taught his disciples:

Matthew 6: 9 **Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.**

10 **Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

- Jesus actually taught his disciples to pray FOR the full and final establishing of His Kingdom.
- Friends, this glorious consummation is what everything in heaven and earth is moving toward, and Jesus instructs his disciples to Pray for it. Pray for it! Ask God to hallow his name. Ask him to bring in his kingdom. Ask that His will would be done here on the earth as it is in heaven.
- Later in Matt. Jesus described for us what would happen in the final days

In Matthew 24:14 **Jesus said, "this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**

In other words, the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ will be proclaimed to all of the nations. My friends, this is God's invincible purpose and the inevitable prelude to His final glorious victory.

- And what is His plan for accomplishing this?

People in every corner of the world will hear the life changing Gospel of Jesus Christ. This Gospel is the passionate proclamation of faithful Pastors throughout the land as well as dedicated missionaries and evangelists around the globe.

- The proclamation of the Gospel to the ends of the earth should be found, at least within the top ten on all of our prayer lists.

Matthew records a time when Jesus lifted up his eyes and saw the immense crowd coming toward him and he looked on them with compassion, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. And He said to His disciples:

Matthew 9: 37 **"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; 38 therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."**

God has ordained that His divine purpose to reach every nation would eventually come to pass and (Guess What) He invites us to participate in His plan of redemption through PRAYER.

SO clear your minds, open your hearts and cast off everything that hinders your ability to faithfully present your prayers, your intercession, your adoration and your thanksgiving before the Lord because the coming of the Lord is closer now than when we First Believed.

- In light of the imminent return of Christ Peter moves on to address our relationships with one another. That brings us to our Second point:

2. Hospitable Love

1 Peter 4:8 **Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.**

- The words “**Above All**” reflect the supreme importance, the divine priority of love within the community of God’s people, that is within the Church.
- We see that same priority reiterated throughout the N.T.

In Colossians 3:14 Paul uses the same words “**Above All**” **put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.**

- And then of course there is everyone’s favorite Wedding Day scripture.

1Corinthians 13:13 **So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.** So valuable, so important is this characteristic of love that Paul tells the Corinthians to “**Pursue Love**”

The description that Peter uses here to emphasize this quality of Love is brought to a higher level by adding the word “Earnestly.” **Above all, keep loving one another earnestly.**

- When we think of earnestness, we think of someone who is serious or sincere. (*And those are good qualities*) BUT the word that Peter uses is A much more powerful much more descriptive word.
- The Greek word (EKTENES) denotes a stretching or straining, it pictures a runner who is straining for the finish line. Every muscle is taut as the runner exerts the maximum effort to cross the finish line.

This is a love that does not easily give up. It’s a love that suffers for long time and yet remains kind, this is a love that believes all things hopes all things endures all things, this is a love that never fails. My Friends, this is God’s Love.

Consider the love of God as He patiently endured the foolishness of His people Israel throughout their wilderness wanderings; all of their complaining, all of THE foolish accusations that they raised against him and yet in covenant love HE faithfully brought them into the Promised Land. (*Let me ask you this*)

- Has God been any less patient with you? Have you been any less foolish?

My Friends, this is the quality of love that abides in the hearts of those who have been Born of God, those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Peter tells us: this **love covers a multitude of sins**.

- That doesn't mean that this love sweeps the sins of others under the carpet, it's not a love that merely looks the other way.
- No this is a nitty gritty love that gets down in the trenches where real life is lived and offers the only true forgiveness that is available to man, through the Gospel.

It should be obvious from this description that Peter is not promoting some form of ecumenical sentimentalism, He is not pushing some sort of surfacey, Kum By Ya happy feeling that we should all have toward one another.

- This is a love that is strained and stretched beyond fleshly boundaries.
- This is a love that confronts sin and overcomes it by the blood of Jesus Christ.
- It is a love that puts the needs of others ahead of our own personal comfort.
- This is a Love that endures the difficult people that God sovereignly brings into our lives to shape and mold us into His image.
- This is that active form of Love that John describes in:

1 John 3: 18 **Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.**

- This is what it means for believers to truly love one another!
- This is a love that opens its doors to visiting missionaries who arrive on a Friday night and need a place to stay for the weekend.
- This is the love that strains its muscles when a brother and sister need help moving.
- This is a love that is welcoming and hospitable without complaining.

1 Peter 4: 9 **Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.**

- As if it wasn't hard enough, Peter adds the phrase "Without grumbling" that is without murmuring, without secretly wishing that I didn't invite these people to my house.
- You know how that works, You invite people from the church to visit you two weeks from Thursday. That's far enough in advance that you don't really have to think about it, until two weeks from Wednesday when you turn to your spouse and say, I wish I hadn't invited them over tonight.

Friends, Hospitality is costly, it usually involves some form of sacrifice and our flesh generally doesn't like to sacrifice. That is where the grumbling comes in.

Some of you ladies came to my house for breakfast on Saturday morning. My wife is a wonderful hostess and I am thankful that we could open our home to you.

- BUT I want you to know that once the bathroom was cleaned on Monday, I was forbidden to shave or shower in that bathroom the rest of the week.
- BUT I did not grumble. (we have another bathroom)

Now, before we move on let's remember the context: In view of the Lord's imminent return and the judgment that will take place when he arrives.

- We want to keep our minds clear and focused so that we can pray effectively.
- Above all we must be diligent to love one another, forgive one another and work together to meet the practical needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Finally, motivated by that same sacrificial love, in light of the Lord's imminent return Peter encourages us to use our God-given gifts to serve one another.
- And this is our honorable Service. Peter writes:

1 Peter 4: 10 **As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:**

- If you have been Born of God, you have also been indwelt by the Holy Spirit and God has endowed you with spiritual gifts.
- The Holy Spirit apportions to every believer the capacity for spiritual ministry. These Gifts are special endowments of grace that enable us to minister effectively to one another.

In the same way that our physical bodies are made up of many parts magnificently functioning together in perfect harmony to bring glory to our creator,

- So also the Body of Christ is made up of many parts which function together in beautiful harmony for the glory of God. Paul writes to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 12:12 **For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit. 14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many.**

- No individual part of the body functions independently. All of the parts are mutually dependent on one another and then all of those parts dwell together in submission to one single head. (who is Christ)
- That is one of the reasons why I believe that you cannot live an effective, productive Christian life separated from the church.

These spiritual gifts, the endowments of grace, freely given by God are meant to be exercised in humble service to one another for the good of the whole body.

- For example: My sleepy eyes carefully scan the dark hallway at night as I make my way to the bathroom. Without glasses it doesn't always go well.
- My mouth immediately expresses frustration and my hand is quick to grasp my foot when I stub my toe on that same trip to the bathroom.

- Every member has a function, every member provides necessary service to the whole body.

Here, Peter focuses his attention on two specific areas of spiritual gifting: They are: Speaking and Serving.

1 Peter 4: 11 **whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies**

SPEAKING – Those who speak should endeavor to speak the very words, the “**oracles of God.**”

- Throughout the Bible this Phrase (**oracles of God**) refers to the revelation that God has provided in the Scripture. (Acts 7:38, Romans 3:2, Hebrews 5:12)
- The Words that are spoken by those who exercise this gift comes from the “**Oracles of God.**” NOT from human wisdom, human philosophy or psychology.
 - Does that mean that we should walk around quoting Scriptures to one another all day long? Actually I am a little leery of people who do that.
 - Paul writes to the Colossians saying:

Col 4:6 **Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.**

- When your life is saturated by the Word of God and you sing Psalms of praise throughout the day your speech will be governed by the Oracles of God.
- The Wisdom of God will be planted in your heart and mind and your communication will be filled with the wisdom of the word that you have stored up in your heart.

IN the same way those who minister through gifts of service are to do so **by the strength that God supplies**

- God is not seeking to promote the strength of a man; Scripture tells us that **His power is made perfect in weakness.**
- Like David the teenage boy who slew Goliath the mighty man of war.
- Like Paul who endured great suffering and tremendous pain, and never ceased his bold proclamation of the Gospel.
- The testimony of His power is found in 2 Corinthians 12:

2Corinthians 12:9b **Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

As our time together comes to a close, I want to share a brief illustration, that was used by Allister Begg in his sermon from 1 Peter 4 entitled, “Vital Signs.”

When you go to the Doctor the first thing that they do when you finally get into the examination room is check your vital signs.

- They check your pulse, your blood pressure, your temperature, respiration, maybe blood oxygen level.
- These vital signs, provide the doctor with a fairly accurate evaluation regarding the state of your health.
- In my experience, the closer I get to the time of Christ's appearing, (that day when he will call me to himself) the more my doctors and my children want to evaluate my vital signs.

Well here in 1 Peter 4:7-11 the Apostle gives us a few of the vital signs of a healthy church.

- Holy Prayer – Prayer is essential to the life and health of the church. In the same way that a doctor places his fingers on your wrist in search of a pulse so the Holy Spirit searches the body of Christ looking for the pulse of prayer.
- Hospitable Love – When the doctor smacks your knee, hits your elbow he is checking for healthy reflexes. When a member of the body suffers a serious hit does the rest of the body respond in love?
- Honorable Service – Is the tongue connected to the head so that the words that are spoken are the Oracles of God. Are the hands and feet free to move, quick to respond when the body is threatened.

If you are a believer, if you have been born of God, YOU are a vital member of the Body of Christ. So I must ask, How are your vital signs? Prayer, Love, Service?

Finally we should remember that the ultimate goal of the Spiritual Gifts that God gives to his people is that He would be glorified.

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