

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **A Christian's Duty in a Hostile World 1 Peter 4:7-11 Part Three**

We all share one thing in common this evening/morning. We have chosen to come to church and attend the services at Valley Bible, and if you have in fact aligned yourself with this fellowship and consider Valley Bible your church home there are two different conditions that might threaten your ability to be a blessing or to be blessed in this particular fellowship. We will be touching on both of those this morning/evening.

Let us again read **1 Pet. 4:7-11**. We have been asking the question what do we learn about duty from this passage of Scripture?

The first thing that we observed was the INCENTIVE. Notice how **V. 7** starts, **“The end of all things is at hand ....”** The word **“end”** is the Greek word TELOS. Rather than annihilation or destruction it means, “fulfillment or consummation.” Knowing that Peter is addressing the church in this epistle all we have to ask is, “When will God’s program for the church be “fulfilled” or “consummated?” **1 Thess. 4:13-17** describes the event that consummates God’s program for the church in this world. Theologians have called this event the “rapture.” It is the day when the living as well as the dead who are in Christ are gathered together with Him and given their glorified bodies.

Peter tells us that the rapture or the end of all things is at hand. This word communicates “immanency” or in other words that there are no other events that we need to look for before the “end of all things.” It is therefore tantamount that we live our lives in expectancy. Striving to be pleasing to the Lord in all that we are doing because we realize that He could return at any time. Are you doing this? Are we doing this?

Having looked at the incentive for performing our Christian duty Peter begins to give his readers certain basic instructions.

#### INSTRUCTIONS

The first instruction that we encounter involves our duty TO THE ONE ABOVE. And what is that duty? PRAYER! Let us look once more at **V. 7**, **“The end of all things is at hand; therefore be of sound judgment (Clear thinking ) and sober spirit (Free of intoxication) for the purpose of prayer.”** Doesn’t it make sense if we are seeking to be pleasing to Him in all our ways that we would therefore be actively involved in prayer. **Heb. 4:16** tells us, **“Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.”** I cannot hope to think that I could live pleasing to the Lord without having an active prayer life. It is through prayer that grace is ministered to me. And hopefully because we have been successful at not becoming intoxicated with the world, and hopefully because we have been able to be clear thinking and maintain our focus on the imminent return of Christ we will experience very dynamic prayer lives that produces the fruit of righteousness.

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The second instruction given refers to our DUTY TO ONE ANOTHER. Look at **V. 8**, “**Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another.....**” In light of all the duties that we are to perform toward one another there is no greater duty than to “**keep fervent**” in our love for one another. Remember that the word “**fervent**” is the anatomical word for “stretch or strain.”

We are to strain at loving one another. We therefore should not be placing ourselves in a place of safety, but rather for the Lord’s sake, the church’s sake, and our sake we need to be in close proximity to one another. Rather than being controlled by the fear of being hurt by our brothers and sisters in Christ. Rather than being controlled by the fear that we may feel pressured in doing this or doing that and going to places that we don’t want to go. Let us rather be controlled by love.

As we continue to consider this particular duty to “**keep fervent in your love for one another.**” Peter gives several different examples as to how this love might express itself.

1) “**... because love covers a multitude of sins.**” What does this mean? Does this mean that if we love our brothers that we would ignore their sin? And the answer would have to be, of course not! The scriptures are very clear about what we are to do when we see our brother sins. **Matt. 18:15-17** and also **Tit. 3:10,11** make it very clear that sin cannot be ignored, but if we are not to ignore sin then what does the phrase, “**because love covers a multitude of sins**” mean? We actually get some help in understanding this phrase when we understand that Peter in effect borrowed it from **Prov. 10:12** which states, “**Hatred stirs up strife but love covers all transgressions.**” The covering of transgressions is effectively done when hatred, anger, and malice is driven out by the grace of forgiveness.

If we would keep fervent in our love for one another and as a result exercise a forgiving spirit toward one another, love truly in fact has covered sins. This is why Paul is able to say what he says in **Col. 3:14**, “**and beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.**”

The peace and harmony of the church of Jesus Christ depends upon us covering one another’s sins through the grace of forgiveness, which is the outflow of love. If you are reflecting on the exhortation to “keep fervent in your love for one another,” and you are moving forward, it is very likely at some point along that journey you will be hurt, or you will be disappointed. But in order for that hurt or disappointment not to rob you of the blessing of being a part of this family or the ability to be a blessing to this family then we must be able to forgive your brother or sister as God ministers grace.

To forgive does not mean as if we bury our head in the sand and pretend nothing has happened. Let us say that an individual in this fellowship repeatedly borrows tools and does not return them, and you are having to continually go over his house to retrieve what you have loaned. As we are driving across town are we to be filled with rage? No, we are to forgive, for love covers a multitude of sin. But let us say this continues to happen. You continually are forgiving, but eventually you would I am sure be exhorting him as a matter of righteousness to return the tools, but let us say he continues to do this. Do we then get filled with rage?

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No, we continue to forgive, for love covers a multitude of sins. But now we may tell him he may use the tools but he cannot leave our property. Not because we are angry with him but because we love him and he needs to see that there are consequences for unrighteous actions.

A second example that Peter shares with us on how our love might express itself to one another is through the practice of hospitality.

2) **“Be hospitable to one another without complaint.”** Just as familiarity may lead to hurt and disappointment which must be ministered to by forgiveness, unfamiliarity may lead to indifference that must be ministered to by hospitality if we are going to enjoy the blessing of this fellowship and be the blessing the Lord would have you to be to this family.

What does “hospitable” mean? It literally means “love of strangers.” Within this context knowing that this epistle is addressed to the church. The thrust of hospitality would be expressing love to Christian brothers and sisters who you really do not know very well or not at all.

In the early church this stranger love was most dramatically expressed through the offering of food and shelter. Without the willingness of the believers to open their homes to other believers who were traveling through their towns and villages the early missionary work of the church would have been greatly retarded. When travelers or delegates from other churches arrived, their hospitable reception was regarded as a matter of course (Acts 10:5,6,23; 16:15; 21:15-17). Hence, hospitality was a necessary qualification for a local church leader (1 Tim. 3:2; Philemon 22). Whenever Christians were on journeys, they realized the value of such hospitality. It was undesirable to lodge in public inns, which were often the scene of drunkenness and impurity; the Christian’s faith had cut him off from the pagan practices that generally prevailed within those inns. It was highly preferable to find lodging in Christian homes, resulting in mutual fellowship and strengthening of Christian ties.

We do not have the opportunity nearly as much now as the church did then to express hospitality in this way. There are not many evangelists that are traveling from town to town attempting to spread the gospel without any means of support and no formal invitation from a local church but it does happen.

Approximately 15 years ago or maybe even more. A member of our congregation had somehow come across a Korean named, “Kim.” He was a professing believer. He spoke broken English and he had told our church member that he had come from Korea to minister to Korean war brides, and was on his way to Edwards Air Force base to share the gospel, and he had no place to stay, and he did not have enough money to rent a motel. This was a page right out of the early New Testament Church. Brother Kim stayed with us that night. He visited with us that night and stayed the next day and went to services with us. In the evening service he wanted to say something to the congregation of his “MISSION.” At the end of his sharing he led us in singing the hymn “Amazing Grace.” This man, this stranger, touched my life.

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This specific type of opportunity only comes to us rarely, and hopefully when these opportunities come we will seize the moment and determine to work out obedience in regard to this matter of hospitality without complaint as the verse instructs us.

Does this mean that we need to open our homes to anyone who professes to be a Christian and who has need for food and shelter? I do not believe so. Doesn't the exhortation demand this of us? And again I would say that the answer is no! The word "hospitality" literally means "love of strangers." Yes, Lynn and I did in fact open our home to a perfect stranger when we opened our home to Kim, but there were a number of reasons why we chose to do that. He bore clear witness to his faith in Christ, he bore clear testimony to his desire to serve Christ and to do his mission. His appearance and his behavior bore witness to the sincerity of his profession, but others have come to us whose profession of faith was at best very dubious and their appearance as well as behavior raised questions in our minds as to true motives in seeking help. With many of these we have driven to a motel and paid for their lodging and provided them food.

Does this mean that the "love of strangers" requires that we always offer assistance to those who are seeking our help either through opening our homes or providing other lodging for them. And the answer is still no! There have been numerous times when I truly believe in my spirit that the one who is seeking help from me is not living a responsible lifestyle and when I believe this to be true, Biblically, I do not feel I have any responsibility to subsidize their rebellion. Paul in giving instructions to the Thessalonians made it very clear we do not have any biblical responsibility to feed even our brothers and sisters in Christ if they are living an unruly lifestyle. In **2 Thess. 3:10** makes the following statement, **"if anyone will not work, neither let him eat."**

As I mentioned in the early church the "love of strangers" or hospitality was most dramatically expressed through the offering of food and shelter. However because of the diminished travels of itinerant evangelists and the affluence of the American church in particular this opportunity has diminished dramatically.

But though this is true you and I have tremendous opportunity to respond to this exhortation in respect to even those in this fellowship. Look around you this morning. Look at the people in front and behind you. Look at the people beside you. Do you know them? If your answer is, I do not know them. Guess what? They are strangers to you! Professing brothers and sisters in Christ that you are being exhorted to express love toward. They may not be homeless. They may not even be emaciated, but you can still seek to love them.

What would be a good start? Hopefully not having been intoxicated with the things of this world, and recognizing that the return of Christ is imminent that you would pray to the Lord that you might by his grace begin to fervently love the brethren even those who are unfamiliar to you. A good start would be to start to actually walk up to them before or after our worship services and introduce yourself. Before we can intelligently pray for the brethren or minister effectively within their lives we will need to know them.

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### CONCLUSION

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR ABOUT CHRISTIAN DUTY?

#### 1) THE INCENTIVE

“The end of all things is at hand.....” The return of Christ is imminent we therefore must begin to clean house.

#### 2) THE INSTRUCTIONS

DUTY TO THE ONE ABOVE ..... PRAYER

Hopefully not having been intoxicated with the things of this world and knowing that the end of all things is at hand we will purpose ourselves to pray. We must commit ourselves to performing our duty in light of the one above.

DUTY TO ONE ANOTHER ..... FERVENTLY LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

As we seek to do this we would understand the danger that lurks for us as we become more and more close to those in this fellowship. The danger of being hurt and disappointed. As we move forward in this way we must be prepared in our spirit to forgive one another. Knowing that love covers a multitude of sins.

As we seek to do this we would also understand that our responsibilities to one another is not just to those we know, but to those we do not know. We therefore must be prepared in our spirit to practice hospitality