

The End is Near (1 Peter 4 7)

by Anton Bosch

This sermon from 1 Peter chapter 4:7-11 emphasizes the importance of being serious, watchful, and prayerful as the end of all things is at hand. It highlights the need for fervent love, hospitality, and stewardship within the body of Christ. The passage encourages speaking and ministering in alignment with God's will to bring glory to Jesus Christ amidst opposition in the world. The speaker addresses the challenges faced in today's world, urging believers to focus on the gospel, the Word of God, and finding refuge and unity within the church.

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:7, 1 Peter 4:8, 1 Peter 4:9, 1 Peter 4:10, 1 Peter 4:11, James 4:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 1 Corinthians 9:27

Topics: "End Times Readiness", "Fervent Love and Stewardship"

Description

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Transcript

1 Peter chapter 4, and we'll just read verses 7 through 11. 1 Peter chapter 4, reading verses 7 through 11. I was very blessed by the testimonies this evening, clearly God is working, and you'll find some confirmation for some of the prayers and some of the testimonies in this passage.

1 Peter chapter 4, from verse 7. But the end of all things is at hand, therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without grumbling, as each one has received a gift, ministered it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. And so he has spoken about suffering, he's going to come back to suffering again in the next section in verse 12, but in this section he is now dealing with our relationships within the context of the body of Christ.

How do we relate in the church, particularly in the light of the fact that we are going to, and that we do face opposition out there in the world. And I think that the timing for us to do Peter's epistles is very appropriate now, that while there may not be open persecution out there, the persecution is coming, but certainly we live in a world that is increasingly hard to live in, because of all the stuff that we've been dealing with this year, with the virus, and now the political upheaval, and all of that, and I'm not going to make any comments about any of that. But it has become a difficult world to live in, and it's never been easy, but it's getting more difficult, and there's no hope that it's going to get easier.

It's going to get more and more difficult, and the next thing will be the Christians and the church that will be targeted. And so we need to be prepared to deal with that, as we saw in the passage last week, that I need to be armed, I need to be braced, I need to be ready to be able to deal with whatever I'm going to deal with outside the doors here. But also we need to have the church in order, so that we are able to come to a place of safety, that we have some place of refuge, where we are not just safe, but that we are loved, and that we are protected, and that we are helped in an increasing hostile world, and in a world that is increasingly politicized, and all of those kinds of things.

And I know that there are people who may get frustrated, because I won't make a comment on the Black Lives Matter thing, and I've given it a lot of thought, and as you know, I have many opinions about many things. I'm not short on opinions. I'm not short on ideas and things to say.

But I'm making a conscious effort to not bring that into the body of Christ. You have to figure it out out there. I'm not going to get involved in that, because we need a break from all that stuff.

We need to get to the body of Christ, and be able to focus on the Lord Jesus Christ, and focus on the gospel, and focus on the Word of God, and to leave all of that out there. And whatever your position is, whatever way you see it out there, then deal with it out there. But let's find this as a place of refuge.

I've spoken about the news. The news is just, my clicker is going to wear out on my television very soon, because not only do I have to click away from the ads, because the ads irritate me, but I have to click away from probably 70% of the programming on the news now, because I'm sick and tired of hearing of the same stuff over and over and over, whichever side you are on on this thing. So the church needs to be a place where we are safe.

It needs to be a place where we can be at peace, and where we can leave that stuff outside, and that we can come apart, and be in the presence of the Lord, and be in fellowship with the saints. And so Peter is dealing with that in this passage. And so while their problems were different, and a lot more physical, our problems are maybe not as physical as theirs was, in terms of physical persecution, but we live as strangers and pilgrims.

Remember, this is the theme of the book. This is where the book began, that we are pilgrims, that we don't belong in this world. We don't fit in.

And if you haven't figured that out by now, you'll find that out very, very quickly. Anyone at the beginning of this year who felt that they were at home in this world, I'm sure that most of those who felt at home in this world by this time, and we're halfway through the year, are saying, no, we don't belong in this world anymore. We are strangers and pilgrims.

We're passing through. Our home is in heaven. And so he begins there in verse 7, but the end of all things is at hand.

The end of all things is at hand. Now, I know that the shallow reading of this text says, well, the Lord is coming soon, that the end of the world is about to come. Now, remember, Peter is writing 2,000 years ago.

So did Peter make a mistake in saying that, or did we misunderstand him? And I think that we misunderstand him, because this is the Word of God. There is no error in the Word of God. And so when he speaks about the end of all things, he is speaking about the end of God's salvation plan, God's plan of redemption for mankind.

Remember, it was Peter who stood up on the day of Pentecost, and he said that this is what Joel spoke about. In the last days, I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. So Peter was saying on the day of Pentecost, these are the last days.

So the last 2,000 years have been the last days. The last 2,000 years is the final phase of God's dealings with mankind. Remember, he dealt with Israel before.

He dealt with the nations, in a sense, before that. And then he dealt with Israel, dealt with various individuals in the Old Testament, initially men like Enoch and Noah, and so on. And then he begins to deal with Israel.

Now he's been dealing with a church, and this is the last phase in God's plan to save man. And so he's saying that the end of God's plan is at hand. We're in it.

But then at the same time, we must, and we've said this before, that while the end of God's plan has been progressing for 2,000 years, we are at the end of the end now. We're in the last of the last days. And so not only for Peter, the end of the world was a long way off.

But for us, the end of the world is here. And there are many clear signs that the end of the world... Now we want to be careful. I've given warnings before, but let me give those warnings again, that we don't want to be over involved in the signs of the times.

There are many ministries that make a lot of money and get a lot of followers doing prophecy updates week after week after week. And they read the newspaper more than they seem to read the word of God. And so they're tying every little thing that's happening in the world back to some prophecy in some scripture.

Now there is a danger in that, and I want to bring a balance on this. But there is a danger in that, because you get to a place where eventually you're reading stuff into stuff that doesn't mean anything. So the governor made a statement today, or issued a decree or whatever, that you have to wear face masks.

Now I'm not sure how you tie that back to the scriptures, but these guys will find some way of tying that back to scriptures. And saying, well you see, here's a sign. Folks, we've got to be careful of that kind of reading the signs.

I've grown up, remember, I've grown up in the faith. I've grown up hearing preachers. I can remember as a little boy preachers preaching and saying, well, you know, it's the end of the world because this has happened or that has happened.

So there is a danger, and in that there's a danger of crying wolf. And so saying, well, you know, here's all the signs. He's going to come, he's going to come.

And then eventually people say, well, you know, I've heard that one time too many. He's not coming. So there's a very real danger in that.

But at the same time, there is no question that the world is changing. That the world is changing very dramatically and very powerfully in many, many ways. That certain things are happening that a year ago we did not anticipate would happen.

That certain things have happened within the context of politics in America, which I'm not going to speak about tonight, but which are to me a clear sign that the Lord is coming. Very real things are happening in the context of churches. Someone prayed about the division in the body of Christ, and obviously that's not division in the local assembly.

We praise God that we're at peace here. But there are real divisions and wars going on outside of this church between Christians. And there are entire ministries that are making it their job to take down other ministries.

If you want to watch the conference, for example, you may have seen that you have to register. The reason we have to do that is because there are people who are going to do their damndest to take down that conference. People who are my enemies and the enemies of my hosts in England.

Now, I can't understand this. I don't understand what goes on in the minds of so-called Christians who make it their job to destroy other ministries and to interfere in the technology in every way they possibly can in order to take down a ministry. Well, I understand where that comes from.

It doesn't come from the Lord Jesus Christ. But this is unprecedented. There never was anything like this until these last few years.

So things are changing in the church. Things are changing in America. Things are changing in society.

Things are changing in the world. And we're coming, I believe with all my heart, close to the end. And that Jesus is coming very soon.

And so because the end of all things is at hand, because we're in the last phase, if you will, therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. So because we live in the last days, what is our response? Our response needs to be praying, that we need to be praying even more. The problem is that some people are so enamored with the signs and watching the signs and they talk about the signs and it's all about the signs, but they're not praying.

They're not fixing their lives. They're not getting ready for the Lord's return. Because it's an intellectual fascination.

It's not a call to being ready because He is coming at a time you do not expect. And remember that that's why we believe that He can come at any time and will come at a time that we don't expect. Not because of the signs, but because He said He's coming at a time that we don't expect.

He comes as a thief in the night. There are, I don't remember anymore, but there are about 30 or 40 scriptures in the New Testament. Every one of the writers in the New Testament, the Gospels, the book of

Acts, the Paul's epistles, the book of Hebrews, John's epistles, Peter's epistles, the book of Revelation, all have warnings that Jesus is coming at a time we don't expect.

And so we expect His soon return, whether there are signs or not signs. And in the light of His soon return, therefore, there's that very important word. And I switched translations here now.

So this is the New King James, at the end of all things, therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. Now you can get the truth out of that, but the old NIV, the 1984 NIV is the most accurate in my understanding of this passage. So it's not the modern NIV, but the old NIV.

So the end of all things is near, it's the same. Therefore, it's the same. But here's the two different things.

Be clear-minded, be clear-minded, and in fact they swapped these words around, and self-controlled. So let's go back. Be serious and watchful, serious and watchful, clear-minded and self-controlled.

You can see that there are differences, and as I said, this is my understanding of the Greek, is that this is the better translation. So there are two things we need to do, and you'll see that the purpose of those things is so that we can pray, so that we can pray. So these two things must result in us praying, or praying correctly.

So is it possible to pray incorrectly? Yes. James says that you ask and you don't receive because you ask amiss. You ask for the wrong things, he says, because you ask to consume in your own lust.

In other words, you ask for selfish stuff, and he says you're not going to get those things. So we can be praying and be praying for the wrong reasons, and God isn't interested in hearing those prayers. And so to have the right frame of mind to pray, he says what we need to do is first of all be clear-minded.

The word sober, and in fact in many translations it is translated sober, this particular word. Sober, clear-minded. Remember we said sober is not the opposite of being drunk in the sense of not being, not having alcohol or drugs in your system, but sober means to be clear-headed, and you can understand that how that relates to intoxicants.

If you don't have intoxicants, hopefully you're clear-headed, but that's no guarantee. We can still not be clear-headed and be thinking clearly even if we are sober in the sense of not being intoxicated. So clear-minded, think clearly, think clearly.

Here's the first problem we have. Many Christians are not thinking clearly. The world is certainly not thinking clearly.

I saw a little joke and it said that in spite of COVID, I'm actually losing weight. And I'm losing weight, well not me, but I'm losing weight because I'm shaking my head so much because of the nonsense that people are talking, the stuff that's going on. People are just not thinking clearly.

And so it's important for Christians to think clearly. And how do we think clearly? When we think according to the scriptures, when we have the mind of Christ, let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. When we have His mind, when we think the way God thinks, then we think clearly.

If you're going to think the way the world thinks, you're not going to think clearly. You're going to get confused, you're going to be muddled, you're going to get things upside down. And it just blows my mind when I watch people on the news how that they just put one and one together and they get 25.

How they do it because they're not thinking clearly. As Christians, we must think clearly. When we come to prayer, we must think clearly.

We must think, come to prayer with a clear mind. Understanding, and here's really where a clear mind is about, understanding what the will of God is. What is it that God wants me to do? Because that's the only prayer that He's really going to hear.

Remember that you can't change God's mind in prayer. My will be done in heaven as it is done here on earth. That's how most people pray.

And in fact, entire ministries are built around this idea of getting God to do what I need Him to do, what I want Him to do. No, God is sovereign. You can't make God do anything.

The purpose of prayer is not for me to get God to do what I want Him to do. The purpose of prayer is to get my mind in line with God's mind that I might do what He wants me to do. That's the purpose of prayer.

Obviously, we understand we can come to Him with our requests and we can say, well, Lord, you know, I really want a new Bentley. But that can't be the essence of my prayer. The purpose of prayer is to get my mind in line with the mind of God, to get tuned in, if you will.

And if my mind is befuddled with selfish ideas, with selfish desires, clouded by the thinking of the world, in fact, Christians are getting more and more confused by what's going on in the world. And if you want to get really confused, then watch CNN for an hour and then watch Fox News for another hour, and you'll be totally messed up. There's no truth out there.

And then we bring that mess in our minds to prayer, and we don't even know what's up and down anymore. We don't even know what's black and white anymore. And if you can figure it out, you've got more brains than I have.

I can't figure it out. I can't figure out what's going on out there anymore. It's all irrational.

It's all illogical. I need to clear my mind of those things. I need to get my mind clear so that I can focus on the Word of God, so that I can focus in prayer, so that when I come to him, I'm coming with a mind that doesn't have preconceived notions, ideas of what I want him to do, but a mind of saying, Lord, speak to me, your servant.

is listening. You remember the prayer that Eli taught Samuel, when the Lord calls you again, then say, speak, Lord, your servant is listening. And so I can't be listening if my mind is already full to the brim with all the stuff that's out there, all the stuff on television, all the stuff that's in on the media, and that's on fake book and all of those things.

And then I say, Lord, I want you to speak, but I can't hear because the stuff's just spinning around and I don't know what's right and wrong. I don't know what's up and what's down. No, let me clear my mind of those things.

Let me come to him with a clear mind and say, God, you write your Word, your Spirit on my heart. I think we all understand that if you have a sheet of paper, and I understand that kids don't understand what a sheet of paper is much anymore, but if you have a sheet of paper and you have it written full of all sorts of stuff, well, there's a point where the piece of paper is full. So, where do you write now? Well, if you're Jeff,

then you write down the margin.

Right, Jeff? But once you've written in all the margins, then where do you go now? There's nothing, no more else to write because the thing is full. And it's the same with our minds. When we have filled our minds with all of what's going on in this world, there's nowhere for God to be writing anymore.

There's nowhere for God to be speaking anymore. And so, I need a clear mind. I'm not saying that we need to build a compound out in the desert.

It would be nice, but we're in the world, remember, but we're not of the world. And we need to find, and I think that this is something that Christians are going to have to learn increasingly, that I'm beginning to try and learn, and that some of my friends are beginning to learn, and that is to divorce ourselves of what's going on out there, to look at it in a impersonal, dispassionate, objective way, in a sense, not allowing it to get under our skin, not allowing it to fill our minds and our thoughts, and to be able to put it away from us, particularly when we come to the Word of God, when we come to church, when we come to prayer, to have a mind that is clear so that we can think straight. And then, he says, we need to be self-controlled.

And I like this translation here, because it says, so that you can pray. You can't pray if your mind is not clear, and you can't pray if you're not self-controlled. Those are two totally different things, obviously.

So, I need to have my mind clear, but I need to bring my body under control, or my mind also, because that's the biggest difficulty in prayer, is that it's hard for us to pray. It's hard for everyone to pray, because my body just doesn't want to stay awake. My mind just doesn't want to focus.

My mind wants to think about this and that, and tomorrow, and stuff I have to do, and whatever, all the worries and the stuff. We need to be self-controlled, so that we can bring our minds to the business of prayer, so that we can bring our bodies to the business of prayer. And that takes self-control.

It doesn't just happen. I've heard testimonies of people who speak about how easy it is for them to pray. Well, I wouldn't call them liars, but it's never happened to me.

Prayer is hard work for me, and it's hard work for probably 99% of Christians. And we need to have a clear mind, and we need to be self-controlled. We can't allow our minds to run away with us when we should be praying, and we can't allow our bodies to be... It's amazing when you have to pray, how that you want to fall asleep, or you now have to go to the restroom, or you're thirsty, or you're hungry.

All of a thousand things except do what we're supposed to be doing. Self-control. Self-control.

And I'm not going to lay more guilt on you by speaking about watching movies, but I know that we can watch movies for two, three hours at a stretch and not have a problem. And yet when it comes to praying for five minutes, it becomes difficult. The Lord needs to help us, but we need to be self-controlled.

Now, let me just say, and I thought I would get further than this. I'm just going to finish on this verse this evening. We need to be careful of those who are preaching against self-control.

And what I mean by that is that people are saying, well, you know, if you have to discipline yourself, if you have to force yourself to be in prayer, well, then there's something wrong. It should just come naturally. That's nonsense.

And I'm sure most of you know what I'm talking about. It doesn't come naturally to any of us, most of us. It's hard.

And there must be self-control. And then people say, well, you know, it works. It just works.

It's not the Spirit. No. One of the gifts of the Spirit is self-control.

I can't just allow myself to do whatever I want to do. That's the Spirit of this age. People want to do whatever they want to do.

They don't want law. They don't want any controls. They don't want any checks.

They just want to do what they want to do. That's the Spirit of the world. But Paul says, I bring my body under control, lest having preached to others, I myself become cast away.

And so Paul speaks about a discipline that he imposes upon himself, controlling himself, not allowing his body to just do whatever it wants to do. And obviously we can apply that in two senses. We can apply that in just running off to sin and just doing sin and saying, well, you know, I just had to have that drink.

I just had to do this or do that. But that's not what we're talking about tonight. There's the other side, where my body just doesn't want to be sitting still and praying or reading the Scriptures or thinking and meditating on spiritual things.

I need to bring my body under control. I can't allow it to do whatever it wants to do. And at the same time, I need to bring it to a place where it does what it needs to do.

Now obviously we can take this to an extreme and we can end up in some of these Eastern mystic religions where it's all about, you know, forcing yourself into some kind of altered state of consciousness and that kind of nonsense. We're not talking about that. But clearly what Peter is talking about here is the same thing that Paul is speaking about, and that is being self-controlled so that you can pray.

Obviously it's not the clear mind and the self-control that allows me, that gives me access to God in prayer. I have access to God through what Jesus did at the cross of Calvary. The throne of grace is there and is open at any time for us to come.

But the problem is we don't come because we are not disciplined. We are not self-controlled and when we do come, we're often not clear-minded to hear what God is saying. Father, we thank you for your word.

We thank you, Lord, for the privilege of prayer, that we're able to come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in a time of need. So Lord, we thank you for the privilege of being able to boldly approach your throne and to come with our needs, but also above all to come and to spend time in your presence and to hear your word and your voice speak to us, Lord, that we might be doers of your word, not hearers. So Lord, we pray that you would help us to deal with the stuff that is infringing on our peace of mind in this world today.

Lord, help us to bring our minds and to get our minds clear, to get our minds in line with you and with your word. Lord, help us to bring the rest of our bodies and our minds into a place where we can pray. I pray that you'd help us, Lord, that there's... Lord, I'm pretty sure there's very few, if any, amongst us who find it easy to pray.

Lord, that you'd help us that we may be faithful in prayer because we live in evil and wicked times. The end is near and we need to be men and women of prayer. Lord, we're reminded of Enoch who walked with God and he was not because God took him.

Lord, we want to be those who walk with you and we pray that you'd help us, even though we are walking in the world, that we may be walking with you. In Jesus' name, I pray. I pray that you'd go with us, keep us, protect us, bring us together again safely on Sunday, I pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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