

## Loving service to the glory of God: A Study in 1 Peter, 4:7-11

Preached at Harambee by Caleb Mayberry on June 14th, 2009

### Introduction

In this passage Peter sets the context by calling out that the end of all things is at hand and because of this he exhorts us to be self-controlled and clear-headed for the sake of our prayers. Above all, he calls us to love one another deeply using our God-given gifts to serve each other. Done with the right motives, our loving service should and does glorify God through Jesus Christ.

### Be alert for prayer

#### 1. Context: End of all things is at hand

Read verse 7 “The end of all things is at hand...” This statement serves its purpose in focusing the mind of the hearer. It sets the context of the times that we are in. Specifically the context is that the central event of God’s redemptive plan has already occurred. God’s victory over evil has been secured and through his Son he has secured the foundation of his Kingdom. Because of this, the only thing left is adding people to the kingdom of God and the return of Jesus Christ to earth for judgment and to usher in the new heavens and new earth. Given this context, now is the time to finish strong, lest we be unprepared to face the king.

#### 2. Self-control and sober-mindedness because of context

Read verse 7 “Therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded” Preparation involves self-control and a sober mind. As Peter calls attention to the end of all things, he exhorts us to be self-controlled and sober minded. We are to be calm and composed, clear-headed. There is a temptation for us to be otherwise. From substance abuse to sexual addiction to gluttony to loose-spending, we often find ourselves out-of-control. Some of us are out-of-control and not thinking clearly because we’re mastered by another God. (Pleasure, Lust, Appetite, Greed). One of the best things for sobering up is a sense of **urgency**. It’s urgent because Christ’s return is imminent. It’s urgent because of the work still left to do. And that leads us to prayer...

#### 3. Prayer from a calm and clear mind

Read verse 7 “For the sake of your prayers” Self-control and a sober mind aids in prayer. Have you ever tried to pray when you know you’re not thinking straight? For instance if you’re dog tired, you generally have trouble praying anything that makes any sense. Some say, “well God knows my heart”. Well maybe God is saying you should get some sleep and pray when you have your wits about you. Just as our prayer makes no sense when we’re sleepy, it can also be ineffective when something other than God’s will is the object of our heart’s affection. The more our heart is capture by some other idol, the more that prayer will be in alignment with honoring that idol rather than honoring God.

### Love one another earnestly

Read verse 8 “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers up a multitude of sins.” (see also Proverbs 10:12) Peter assumes that there will be offenses. We are still sinners and we still sin, against God and against each other. Therefore it is all the more important that we be able to love one another in an effort to demonstrate the grace and mercy that God has bestowed upon us. When people sin against each other and there is no love, then sin breeds anger, hate, and more sin in retaliation and perverted justice. But with love, it is easier to forgive, because you know that the one that sin against you, ultimately wishes for your well being.

Some ways that we can better love each other:

1. Show hospitality - Read verse 9 “Show hospitality to one another without grumbling”

Why does Peter say without grumbling? I think he says this because we often don't have a desire to be hospitable. We might not want people to invade on our personal time. We might not feel like going through the effort to prepare our homes for visitors or to do the necessary planning. Bottom line is we're often too selfish to be genuinely hospitable so that even when we are hospitable out of guilt we do it with grumbling. Rather, out of a deep love, we are called to receive each other warmly and with a cheerful heart. If it helps, think about how you would like to be treated as a guest, and treat others that way.

2. Serve with the gifts that God has given us - Read verse 10 "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." - God has given all of his children a gift, the purpose of which is to serve one another. Peter generally splits the gifts into two categories: Speaking and serving.
  - a) Speaking the oracles of God - Read verse 11 "Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God, whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies" - If you have a speaking gift, what we say should be laced with the grace and truth of God's Word, and thus there is a certainness and a forthrightness in what and how we say things. There is also a kind of reverent fear of God, knowing that God has chosen to use our vile lips as the mouthpiece for his holy Words of exhortation. Words are very powerful as they can build up or they can tear down. When we recognize this, there will be a caution in the choice of our words and a desire to think and seek God's will before we speak.
  - b) Serving with the strength that God provides - If you have a serving gift, how we serve is indicative of the motives of why we serve. If when we serve we mope around and grumble all the while, this says to everyone that we have no real interest in serving and that we care more about our own comfort than we do about the people we serve. Or if when we serve we are constantly seeking recognition and approval for serving then we say to everyone that we are really more concerned with self-glorification than with the good of whom we're serving. Rather instead, we are to serve by the strength that God supplies, because firstly, that is reality. Outside of God enabling us to serve, we would have no power to serve. And secondly, when we serve in a way that depends on and acknowledges God's strength, not only do we have the power to serve despite how uncomfortable it may be, but we also show off the glory of God, in that people will see that we value God and others more than our own inconvenience.

### **Glorify God in everything**

Read verse 11b "in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." - The purpose of preparation and the purpose of loving service is that God would be the one glorified and not us. The fundamental danger to our spiritual lives is self-glorification. The reason why we're out-of-control, unfocused, ineffective in prayer, fruitless, and bitter or indifferent towards others, is because we have loved ourselves far too much, to the exclusion of God and others. We have placed our own pleasure, comfort, and recognition above the glory of God, and this is the essence of evil, because it is a perversion of the truth of who God is. The truth is that we are created beings made in the image of one who is far greater than us. He is the one that deserves all the glory for he is the source of all that is glorious. And his glory is made no clearer than in the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ. For in his death, God demonstrated his both his righteousness and love to the fullest degree possible. In this we rejoice because God is good and will not tolerate evil and in his love he has made a way for us to be with him forever.