

We have learned many things from our study in 1st Peter. I hope it has been as profitable for you as it has for me. I was hoping to finish the book before Advent – that was my plan – but the Scriptures had other ideas. I did not want to rush through the book and miss very important truths that God wants us to know.

I am reminded of the great Donald Grey Barnhouse, a Pastor at the famed 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, who spent 13 years going through the book of Romans, and died before he got to the end! We won't be spending 13 years, but I really don't know when we will end. And then perhaps, and I haven't decided yet, I might take some time during Advent and the Christmas season to address more topical issues. But, I'm not up to that yet.

So today we continue our study in 1 Peter 4:7-11. Turn with me there. (READ). Again, as is usually with the Scriptures we see that doctrinal teaching – that is, teachings about the person and work of Jesus Christ and of God has it's result in practical living – doing certain things and not doing certain things.

Peter begins in verse 7 *“But the end of all things is at hand;...”* Now, I must immediately point out that he is not talking about the fact that the Phillies finally won a World Series – and no, hell will not freeze over because they did. Nor is he talking about the election on Tuesday if a certain someone is elected President. It might seem that way, but it is not, I assure you.

Remember, that we have seen that our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ is now at the right hand of God. We also know that someday he will come again in glory and judgement. It is something that we confess each week in our Creeds.

We know that the return of Christ is imminent – it can happen at any time. And it has been that way since the ascension of Jesus Christ. At his ascension, recorded for us in Acts 1, we read these words: Acts 1:10-11: *“And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”*

Someday our Savior will return – and we do not know when, but the point is that he will return.

In our passage I believe that two things are in view here. First, which would have been important to Peter's original readers is that when he says *“But the end of all things is at hand;...”* he is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Peter was writing this letter some time in the mid to late 60's AD.

Our Savior had predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and said: *“Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.”* As I have said on other occasions, these words were spoken about 30 AD and a biblical generation is 40 years, so that would make the destruction of Jerusalem right on time.

And Peter, through the Holy Spirit, knew that it was coming. In fact, we are told that in the few years preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, that many of the Christians fled – these could be some of the Pilgrims of the dispersion that Peter is writing to.

The other thing that could also be in view here is that which I referred to earlier, and that is the return ... the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ in glory and judgment. In my opinion, both are in view here.

It is as a result of this that Peter then gives a series of exhortations – and again, remember that what he says to his original readers also applies to us. The first of which is the 2nd half of verse 7: *“therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.”*

Again, remember the context as those 1st century readers would understand Peter to be talking about the destruction of Jerusalem ... *“therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.”* They say that there are not atheists in foxholes. Perhaps that is what is in view here ... that due to the seriousness of the situation at hand, people should be serious and watchful in their prayers.

Peter is saying that the believers should pray for the supporting hand of God in these difficult times. And don't we do that. We pray during crises ... we pray when the going gets tough ... we pray when things are difficult. And there is nothing wrong with that.

But on a everyday basis, we don't really want to bother God. We generally only come to him in times of crisis and need.

The Ladies, in their study on Monday and throughout this year are studying the subject of prayer – how important it is, and how to do it and what is involved in it.

One of things involved in it is that we are to do it. The scriptures says “pray without ceasing”. Philippians 4:6 says: *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;”*

The point is, that we are to pray. I have encouraged you to pray “The Lord's Prayer” twice a day. It is the least that we can do. And remember those important words *“thy will be done...”* That's the hard one ... praying for God's will to be done, AND then accepting it. Think Tuesday.

Now, Peter doesn't end there. 1 Peter 4:8: *“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.”* Again, another hard one.

The word used here is *agape*, the word meaning unconditional love. It is the love that Christ had for us. We should be reminded of this type of love from 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: *“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”* As we see it is a love that is, that does certain things and does not do certain things.

This love is to be evident in our lives. Consider what John says in 1 John 3:11 & 18: *“For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, ... My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”* And 1 John 4:7-11: *“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to*

be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

We love because God first loved us, and if we love, we will overlook a multitude of sins. People are always going to sin against us, and we are going to sin against others. We cannot expect the non-Christian to overlook sins – and that is why there is so much evil in our society, but the Christian is to be different – to love one another truly, because it will cover a multitude of sins.

Peter does not end here. He then says: 1 Peter 4:9 *“Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.”* One of the side effects of persecution is that people would be in need – remember that they had to flee their homes because of their faith in Christ as Savior. Peter is calling upon the Christian community to band together ... and to help one another... to help those in need.

People criticize Christians today ... but it was the Christians that started hospitals and orphanages ... it was Christian organizations that was on the spot when the hurricanes hit this year ... it is Christian organizations that are in China today ministering to the orphans of the earthquake of last spring. My wife was born in a hospital in China that was started by Christians for those with leprosy – only the Christians would minister to them. I could go on and on. This is how we are hospitable to one another.

The same is true today. If we see or know of someone in need, that we have a responsibility AND a privilege to help them. Some of you might remember the single mother that we helped last year. Again, as I have for at least ten-fifteen years, I have heard from her. She is making progress. She got her GED and is now enrolled at BCC in the nursing program. But she still needs help. We are a small congregation, but we can show the love of Christ to this one family. So, with Vestry approval, I am going to ask you to help for Thanksgiving and Christmas AND I know that you will.

And then the last thing that Peter tells his readers, and us, to do – based on the fact that the end is at hand, is to use the gifts that God has given us for others. Here in verses 10 & 11 we see the *“minister”* used twice. The word in the original is *diakonoi*, from which we get our word *“deacon”* which means to serve.

And look at how Peter tells us that we are to serve. 1 Peter 4:10 *“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”* Every Christian has a gift from God and they are to use it. Our purpose here is not to look at the different gifts, but know this, that every Christian has a gift for us in the kingdom of God.

We read these words in Romans 12:3-7: *“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”*

Peter then gets more specific in the closing verses of this section: 1 Peter 4:11 *“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies,”*

Speaking the oracles of God, simply means to tell the truth that God has revealed in His Word. We are NOT getting new revelation today. And to minister to one another – we do what we can with the resources that God has given us.

And he concludes with the purpose of all this: *“that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*

This is the purpose of all that we do and all that we are and that is to bring glory to God.. It is not to draw attention to ourselves and say “look at me” – no, it is bring glory to God. As we live serving God we must remember that others are a witness to what we do. And so perhaps, through the grace of God, others may come to know Him and again, more would bring glory to His name.

Let us strive to serve God, and to live according to His revealed Word.