

**I Peter 4:8-11**  
**July 2, 2017**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Last week we ended our lesson on v.7, in which Peter wrote “the end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.” As you correctly interpreted, Christians in the early church expected Jesus to return in their lifetime (Rom. 13:12; 1 John 2:18). The important point that Peter made was that we must all live with an attitude of expectancy, but the key is prayer.

**Transition:** There is no place in the Christian life for lazy, listless routine praying. We must have an alert attitude and be on guard, just like the workers in Nehemiah’s day (Neh. 4:9). An expectant attitude toward Christ’s return involves a serious, balanced mind and an alert, awake prayer life. The test of our commitment to the doctrine of Christ’s return is not our ability to draw charts or discern signs, but our thinking and praying. If our thinking and praying are right, our living should be right.

On the one hand, this attitude of expectancy must not lead us to complacency, but on the other hand, Peter is not suggesting we become zealous fanatics either. Instead, Peter teaches his readers how to stay in balance as far as the Lord’s return was concerned. By the end of today’s lesson, it is my hope that all of us CAN successfully live with expectancy BY following the INSTRUCTIONS Peter gave the Christians in Northern Asia Minor. Let’s begin.

**BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read I Peter 4:8-11]**

V.8:

- Above all, love (agape) each other deeply (Stretched or strained), because love covers over a multitude of sins.

V.9:

- Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

V.10:

- Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.

V.11:

- If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

**Process Observations/Questions:**

Q V.8: What is the next instruction Peter gives us? [Love each other deeply b/c love covers a multitude of sins]

Q: What does “loving deeply” look like? [It speaks of eagerness and intensity. Christian love is something we have to work at, just the way an athlete works on his skills. It’s not a matter of emotional feeling, though that is included, but of dedicated will. Christian love means that we

treat others the way God treats us, obeying His commandments in the Word. A Christian's unselfish love and concern for others should be exercised to the point of sacrificially giving for others' welfare.]

Q: When Peter says, "love covers a multitude of sin," does he mean that you overlook sin? [Christian love is **forgiving**; X-Ref Prov 10:12; James 5:20; I Cor 13:4, 7; Love does not *condone* sin]

Q: So if Peter is not saying we should *condone* sin, then what does he mean when he says "love covers sin?" [Peter is saying that love motivates us to strenuously maintain love for others and accept the faults of others.]

Q V.9: What is the next instruction? [Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling]

Q: Help me out. When would you offer hospitality to someone while "grumbling?!" [Let people chime in]

Q: So why do you think Peter included hospitality? [Our Christian love should be practical. We should share our homes with others in generous (without complaint) hospitality.]

**Observation:** In their day, people traveled more. So hospitality is important. Peter was suggesting that they extend free food and lodging to those who travel. During times of persecution, hospitality was especially welcomed by Christians who were forced to journey to new areas. In NT times hospitality was an important thing, because there were few inns and poor Christians could not afford to stay at them anyway. Persecuted saints in particular would need places to stay where they could be assisted and encouraged.

Q V.10: What is the next instruction? [Use whatever gift we have rec'd from God to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.]

Q: Why did God give each of us at least one spiritual gift? [God wants us to use to glorify Him and the building up of the church. He sees us as stewards. God has entrusted these gifts to us that we might use them for the good of His church.]

Q: How do we encourage people to move from the sidelines and get on the field with their gifts? Can you imagine how much we could change the world if every Christian used their gift to build His church?

Q: For those who don't feel they know their spiritual gift, how can we help?

Q V.11: What is the first instruction in this verse? [When you speak, speak the very words of God.]

Q: What do you think he means by that? [Speak God's Word lovingly to others.]

Q: What is the second instruction in this verse? [If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. It goes along with the idea that “whatever you do, work as unto the Lord rather than man.”]

Q: In the end, who should always get the praise? [Christ – He deserves all glory and honor]

**LOOK:**

If you want to make the best use of “the rest of your time,” live in the light of the return of Jesus Christ. All Christians may not agree on the details of the event, but we can agree on the demands of the experience. We shall stand before the Lord! Read Romans 14:10–23 and 2 Corinthians 5:1–21 for the practical meaning of this.

**Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 422–423). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

### **A Fervent Attitude toward the Saints (1 Peter 4:8–11)**

If we really look for the return of Christ, then we shall think of others and properly relate to them. Love for the saints is important, “above [before] all things.” Love is the badge of a believer in this world (John 13:34–35). Especially in times of testing and persecution, Christians need to love one another and be united in heart.

This love should be “fervent.” The word pictures an athlete straining to reach the goal. It speaks of eagerness and intensity. Christian love is something we have to work at, just the way an athlete works on his skills. It is not a matter of emotional feeling, though that is included, but of dedicated will. Christian love means that we treat others the way God treats us, obeying His commandments in the Word. It is even possible to love people that we do not like!

Christian love is forgiving. Peter quoted from Proverbs 10:12—“Hatred stirreth up strifes; but love covereth all sins.” This verse is alluded to in James 5:20 and 1 Corinthians 13:4 and 7. Love does not *condone* sin; for, if we love somebody, we will be grieved to see him sin and hurt himself and others. Rather, love *covers* sin in that love motivates us to hide the sin from others and not spread it abroad. Where there is hatred, there is malice; and malice causes a person to want to tear down the reputation of his enemy. This leads to gossip and slander (Prov. 11:13; 17:9; see 1 Peter 2:1). Sometimes we try to make our gossip sound “spiritual” by telling people things “so they might pray more intelligently.”

No one can hide his sins from God, but believers ought to try, in love, to cover each other's sins at least from the eyes of the unsaved. After all, if the unsaved crowd finds ammunition for persecuting us because of our *good* words and works (1 Peter 2:19–20; 3:14), what would they do if they knew the *bad* things that Christians say and do!

Genesis 9:18–27 gives us a beautiful illustration of this principle. Noah got drunk and shamefully uncovered himself. His son Ham saw his father's shame and told the matter to the family. In loving concern, Ham's two brothers covered their father and his shame. It should not be too difficult for us to cover the sins of others; after all, Jesus Christ died that *our* sins might be washed away.

Our Christian love should not only be fervent and forgiving, but it should also be practical. We should share our homes with others in generous (and uncomplaining) hospitality, and we should use our spiritual gifts in ministry to one another. In New Testament times hospitality was an important thing, because there were few inns and poor Christians could not afford to stay at them anyway. Persecuted saints in particular would need places to stay where they could be assisted and encouraged.

Hospitality is a virtue that is commanded and commended throughout the Scriptures. Moses included it in the Law (Ex. 22:21; Deut. 14:28–29). Jesus enjoyed hospitality when He was on earth, and so did the Apostles in their ministry (Acts 28:7; Phile. 22). Human hospitality is a reflection of God's hospitality to us (Luke 14:16ff). Christian leaders in particular should be “given to hospitality” (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8).

Abraham was hospitable to three strangers, and discovered that he had entertained the Lord and two angels (Gen. 18; Heb. 13:2). We help to promote the truth when we open our homes to God's servants (3 John 5–8). In fact, when we share with others, we share with Christ (Matt.

25:35, 43). We should not open our homes to others just so that others will invite us over (Luke 14:12–14). We should do it to glorify the Lord.

In my own itinerant ministry, I have often had the joy of staying in Christian homes. I have appreciated the kindness and (in some cases) sacrifice of dear saints who loved Christ and wanted to share with others. My wife and I have made new friends in many countries, and our children have been blessed, because we have both enjoyed and practiced Christian hospitality.

Finally, Christian love must result in service. Each Christian has at least one spiritual gift that he must use to the glory of God and the building up of the church (see Rom. 12:1–13; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:1–16). We are stewards. God has entrusted these gifts to us that we might use them for the good of His church. He even gives us the spiritual ability to develop our gifts and be faithful servants of the church.

There are speaking gifts and there are serving gifts, and both are important to the church. Not everybody is a teacher or preacher, though all can be witnesses for Christ. There are those “behind-the-scenes” ministries that help to make the public ministries possible. God gives us the gifts, the abilities, and the opportunities to use the gifts, and He alone must get the glory.

The phrase “oracles of God” in 1 Peter 4:11 does not suggest that everything a preacher or teacher says today is God’s truth, because human speakers are fallible. In the early church, there were prophets who had the special gift of uttering God’s Word, but we do not have this gift today since the Word of God has been completed. Whoever shares God’s Word must be careful about what he says and how he says it, and all must conform to the written Word of God.

While on our way home from the African trip I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, we were delayed in London by a typical English fog. London is one of my favorite places, so I was not disturbed a bit! But the delay gave my wife and me the opportunity to show London to a couple who were traveling with us. Imagine trying to see that marvelous city in one day!

We had to make the most of the time—and we did! Our friends saw many exciting sites in the city.

How long is “the rest of your time”? Only God knows.

Don’t waste it! Invest it by doing the will of God.

**Raymer, R. M. (1985). 1 Peter. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 853-854). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

## 2. CHRISTLIKE SERVICE (4:8–11)

4:8–9. **Love** (*agapēn ... echontes*) **each other deeply**. “Deeply” (*ektenē*, “stretched” or “strained”) was used to describe the taut muscles of an athlete who strains to win a race (cf. *ektenōs* in 1:22). A Christian’s unselfish love and concern for others should be exercised to the point of sacrificially giving for others’ welfare. **Love covers over** (*kalyptei*, lit., “hides”) **a multitude of sins**. This kind of strenuously maintained love is not blind but sees and accepts the faults of others (cf. Prov. 10:12; 1 Cor. 13:4–7). Christian love may be displayed through extending free food and lodging, offering **hospitality** (*philoxenoi*, lit., “being friendly to strangers”) **without grumbling** to those who are traveling. During times of persecution, hospitality was especially welcomed by Christians who were forced to journey to new areas.

4:10. Believers should be diligent in using their spiritual gifts. Each **gift** (*charisma*) is to be used **to serve** (*diakonountes*; cf. *diakonos*, “deacon”) or “minister to” **others**. The phrase **faithfully administering** (*hōs kaloi oikonomoi*) could also be translated “as good stewards.” A

“steward” was one who served as a house manager; he had no wealth of his own, but distributed his master’s wealth according to his master’s will and direction. The “gift” (*charisma*) stems from **God’s grace** (*charitos*). His grace is manifested to His church as believers exercise their spiritual gifts in service to each other. His grace is evident **in its various forms**, that is, it is “manifold”), variegated, rich in variety (*poikilēs*; cf. 1:6, where Peter said trials are *poikilois*, or varied).

4:11. Peter divided Christian service into two general categories: the one who **speaks** (*lalei*) and the one who **serves** (*diakonei*; cf. v. 10). This division relates to the distinction God’s leaders made between ministry roles (Acts 6:2–4). These two general ministry functions often overlap. Both groups function through dependence on God’s gracious provision. The reason for relying on God’s words (cf. Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2; Heb. 5:12) and **strength** (*ischyos*, “power”) is that **God** will receive the praise **through Jesus Christ**. At the mention of Christ’s name Peter offered an appropriate word of praise as a benediction: **To Him be the glory and the power** (*kratos*, “might”) **forever and ever. Amen.** (Cf. the similar benediction in 1 Peter 5:11.) The praise and credit for Christian ministry should always be given to Christ.