

1 Peter 4:7-11 | “End Times Living”  
*Preached on July 11, 2021 by Pastor Matt Brown*

Good morning, today we will be in 1 Peter 4, verses 7 through 11, so you can turn there in your Bibles.

We are in a series in 1 Peter, and we are getting close to the end.

Peter has been talking about suffering, and as he concluded the passage that we saw last week, he talked about the coming judgment.

This topic leads Peter to move on from talking about suffering to talk about “the end of all things.”

Let’s READ THE PASSAGE. *[pauseeeee]*

“The End is Near”.

What thoughts and feelings arise in you when you hear that sentence?

Some people immediately think of that street preacher with the sign that reads, “The End is Near!”

And in response, maybe they get an uncomfortable feeling or think that that guy is just a crazy nut. *[pause]*

There are actually many ways that people respond to the truth that the end is near...

One is *denial*.

They simply do not believe it.

They think, “It’s not the end. It won’t come.”

They say, “Look at how many years have passed, and Christ hasn’t come back yet. It’s just not going to happen.”

And they end up living their lives as though nothing will ever happen. *[pause]*

I’d say that some Christians may not be outright denialists, but by how they live their lives, they are practical denialists.

They build their own little kingdoms and live for themselves with no thought of Christ’s coming, ignoring the truth that Christ *is* coming soon, so they need to be alert and ready! *[pauseeeee]*

Another response by people is *apathy* or *indifference*.

They think, “If it’s the end, then why do anything?”

“Why not sit around and look at the sky, waiting for Christ’s return?”

“Why not just live for myself, if the time that’s left is short?”

“Why do anything if it's so soon?” *[pauseeeee]*

A third response to ‘the end’ is *fear*.

They think, “Oh no, it’s the end!”

They may want to hunker down in their bunker like a doomsday prepper.

*But even if some don’t go so far as to get their bunker ready, they show their fear in other ways.*

They are scared and nervous whenever some sort of perceived sign of the end comes.

Something happens in Jerusalem, and they get all scared and fearful, thinking, ‘Look! It’s happening! We need to do this or that.’

They live in perpetual fear and anxiety about all the signs around them, not realizing that God never desires for us to respond to His truth with fear. *[pause]*

This fear leads some into a *frenzy*.

They create huge charts of the end times, and there’s nothing wrong with knowing what the Bible says about the details of the end times.

*But they become consumed with the end times so much that they don’t do the simple Christian day-to-day directives of Scripture.*

The end times don’t lead them to be encouraged and serving, but anxious and consumed with it to the detriment of other areas of their lives. *[pauseeee]*

*We must not be in denial about the end because Peter says...*

**The end is near!**

He says specifically, “The end of all things is at hand.”

*We must believe this truth, and not deny it. [pause]*

Pastor Davon Huss gives the story of William Miller in the mid-19th century...He says...

“It was a time when, much the same as today, there was a keen interest in the prophecies of the Bible, especially concerning the return of Christ.

Right after his conversion, Miller immersed himself in the book of Daniel, and after 14 years of study, he announced Jesus Christ would return to earth sometime in 1843 or 1844.

He eventually nailed down the date to October 22, 1844.

On the morning of October 22, thousands of people gathered on mountaintops and in churches.

Others were in graveyards, planning to ascend in reunion with their departed loved ones.

When the day passed uneventfully, many Christians grew disillusioned.

The unsaved became cynical, and the event became known as “The Great Disappointment.”<sup>1</sup>  
[pause]

Though William Miller and those who listened to him were wrong about the timing of Christ’s return, it doesn’t change the fact that Christ *will* come.

Peter is absolutely certain and confident about this truth: the end is near. [pause]

Christ’s first coming ratcheted up things so that it has propelled us into the last days.

All that Christ needed to do in his first coming has been accomplished, now it’s time for his second coming. [pause]

The purposes of God have been working toward this end, the climax of history, where God will definitely and clearly intervene in the world.

Christ will come again, the old order will pass away, judgment will come, salvation will come for his people, and a new creation will arrive.

That is “the end of all things”.

It will be this cosmic and colossal time that God will bring an end to this world and its current order, and create a new heavens and a new earth where we will live with God forever.

Talk about a big deal! [pause]

This is why Peter’s declaration is so powerful.

The end of all things is the biggest event in history, in fact, it is *the* event of history that He has been working towards.

So we do not live in denial, but in confident trust as we await that Day. [pause]

But we must also not become apathetic or indifferent in light of this end, for the Bible’s call to us is never, “Just take it easy. Don’t do anything, but just sit around and wait.”

Rather, it’s always, “Be alert. Be ready. Be vigilant. Watch and pray.”

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<sup>1</sup> Illustration given by Pastor Davon Huss on *SermonCentral.com*.  
<https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/the-end-is-near-davon-huss-sermon-on-christian-disciplines-111076>.

Jesus tells us that we are not to be asleep and inactive when He comes, but ready and serving.

That's the very reason why Peter calls us in this passage to live in light of the end of all things.

He is emphasizing that we need to make the best use of the time remaining, since it is short.

*[pauseeee]*

A student doesn't do their homework or study for a test if they know that it won't be until the end of the year.

But if they know that it is near and can happen at any time, then a good student is ready and at work, studying for it.

So the nearness of Christ's coming should lead us to live for Christ. *[pauseeeee]*

Peter's focus in this passage is on "end times living".

And so Peter has made the declaration, and it is certain: "the end of all things is at hand."

But how should we live in light of that undeniable reality? What's needed in our lives in the end times?

*Peter will show us what's needed...First...*

### **I. Fit thinking to pray properly (7b)**

Peter says, "therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers."

The first word that the ESV translates as "self-controlled" really points more to being sound-minded.

It's to think about situations and things correctly and sanely. *[pause]*

The second word used, which is translated as "sober-minded", is a similar word with this one.

It's to be clear headed and thinking straight.

There should be no fuzziness in your thinking, just like a sober person has no fuzziness in their thinking, as compared with a drunk person, who can't think straight. *[pause]*

This sober-mindedness helps you think about things rightly and act accordingly.

It helps you view things the way they are and not as distortions. *[pause]*

So you could say Peter is calling us to sound, clear thinking.

We aren't driven by emotions, but by truth.

We aren't allowing the things of this world to influence our minds, but we are allowing truth to influence our minds. *[pause]*

This fit thinking is more and more needed since the end is near.

As persecution ramps up, will you think straight or be driven by emotions?

As crazy things happen in our world, will you think clearly about them or become irrational?  
*[pause]*

The end times should lead us to think more soundly, not more hysterically.

Our minds shouldn't be ramped up into a frenzy, but more focused and clear. *[pauseeeee]*

We need this clear thinking as we encounter more unusual and hard situations in our lives.  
*[pause]*

So could this thinking characterize Christians right now?

Could this thinking characterize *your* life right now?

When you hear someone talk about something bad that could happen with chips in your skin, cashless societies, and things of that nature, where's your mind at?

When you hear of the antagonism of the world against Christians, are you stirred up to anxious fear, agitation, and distress?

These emotions will drive your thinking to be unstable and unfit for what's needed right now.

Instead, you need to rest in Christ, God's promises, and His Word.

Those things will help your mind to be sober and sound. *[pause]*

Christians should be the most sound and sober-minded people in the world, for we know the God of the universe, we know the truth from Him, we know what He has told us about the future...

...And we are to be walking by faith in Him. *[pauseeee]*

Someone confidently trusting in God in chaotic times is going to think more clearly than someone uncertain about the future and trusting in themselves. *[pauseeeee]*

But why does Peter primarily tell us to think soundly and soberly? "For the sake of your prayers".

So what's the connection between right thinking and prayer?

It's this - right thinking helps you to pray more correctly, appropriately, and intellectually.

It helps you to pray according to knowledge. *[pause]*

Clear, sound thinking helps your prayers be more effective and proper in relation to the situation that you are in.

By understanding and evaluating situations rightly, you are able to pray rightly.

You are able to ask for the right things in prayer. *[pause]*

If I am fuzzy about a situation, how can I know what to pray for specifically?

If I am unsound in my thinking about a situation, is my prayer going to be pinpointed correctly to what I need to pray for?

So Peter is showing us that the end of all things should cause us to be more alert, sound, and clear in our thinking so that our prayers are more effective. *[pause]*

Peter is basically saying, ‘The end is near, so use your brains!’ *[pauseeee]*

As the end gets closer and closer, thinking and praying become even more critical.

Times will get hard, persecution will ramp up, the lure of the world will be strong, and the temptation to give up will bear down on you.

So you need prayer more than ever, but you need clear-thinking for the sake of those prayers. *[pauseeee]*

How’s your prayer life? *[pauseeee]*

When I was in high school, I was on the basketball team, and for a couple years I had this coach who was big into making us run, A LOT.

He made us run and run, so much so, that there would be some kids who threw up.

Why did our coach make us run so much?

He wanted us to be fit physically, so that we could play properly.

Well God wants us to be fit mentally, so that we can pray properly.

In order to be effective in prayer, you need to be fit in your thinking. *[pause]*

So where has your thinking been lately?

Could it be marked by soundness and soberness or fear and fuzziness?

It’s the truth of God’s Word that helps us to think clearly, so keep going to it, and evaluating every situation through the lens of the Word.

And keep going to God on your knees, as we need to “watch and pray” as the end draws closer each day. *[pauseeee]*

*For end-times living, we need fit thinking to pray properly, but secondly, we need...*

## **II. Fervent love for others (8-9)**

Living in the end times means having a clear communication line with God in prayer in our relationship with God, but it also involves our relationships with others.

*As we live with the end being at hand, the church needs love for each other even more, or else the church will flounder.*

As things ramp up, love for others will be harder to do, but more important than ever.

*The church can't function as it should, being a beacon of light in this community, unless it has fervent love for one another. [pauseeee]*

End-times living should draw us closer together in love, not further apart in division.

*We need the church body as the end draws nearer, and that's why Peter emphasizes these community-enhancing commands. [pause]*

He says, "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins."

*The most important thing that we do is to love one another.*

We are to continue and persist in loving others. [pause]

*Do we 'keep' loving one another earnestly?*

Do we love one another briefly, but then stop, or do we do it continually?

*Do we love one another at all? [pause]*

That word, "earnestly," is pointing to unfailing intensity, essentially it's fervent love.

*So this isn't superficial or shallow love, but intense, deep, and passionate love for others.*

This isn't fake love, but real love.

*This is sincere and genuine love for others, and I'll admit this, it will take time and effort.*

It won't be easy, but look at the outcome that Peter states: "since love covers a multitude of sins." [pause]

*Peter is using an Old Testament verse from Proverbs 10:12, which says, "Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses." [pause]*

'To cover sin' means to forgive.

Psalm 32:1 makes this clear as it says, “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” *[pause]*

If there isn't love but hatred, then it stirs up strife, as Proverbs says.

But love has the power to bring peace and reconciliation in relationships because love readily forgives. *[pauseeeee]*

Love is a huge difference maker in a church body!

When we love others, instead of retaliation, there's forgiveness.

Instead of bitterness, there's love.

Instead of animosity, there's peace. *[pause]*

A good quote about this comes from commentator Wayne Grudem, who says,

“Where love abounds in a fellowship of Christians, many small offences, and even some large ones, are readily overlooked and forgotten.

But where love is lacking, every word is viewed with suspicion, every action is liable to misunderstanding, and conflicts abound—to Satan's perverse delight.”<sup>2</sup> *[pause]*

This kind of sin-covering love is what Jesus has called us to.

He has called us to forgive others, and Paul shows us this point in 1 Corinthians 13 by saying that love “keeps no record of wrongs.”<sup>3</sup> *[pause]*

This love that covers a multitude of sins doesn't mean that we take sin lightly.

It doesn't mean that we are blind to the sin that others commit, but it means that we readily forgive and do not hold the sins of others against them. *[pause]*

Forgiveness does not excuse or make light of sin, but chooses to not be bitter or resentful about it.

It acknowledges the sin, yet in love forgives the sin. *[pauseeeee]*

Imagine the unity and peace that this kind of love would produce in a church body!

A place where there was always forgiving love freely given. *[pause]*

Let's say that you keep sinning against someone, yet they keep forgiving.

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<sup>2</sup> Grudem, W. A. (1988). 1 Peter: an introduction and commentary (Vol. 17, p. 181). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:5 (NIV, see also the CSB and NASB versions).



Their love is covering your sin.

It's not excusing it, it's not making light of it, it's not blind to it, but it's readily forgiving your multitude of sins.

What grace! What kindness! What a sweet display of our Savior's character in the life of a Christ-follower!

That kind of love creates a lasting, deep, and intimate relationship that thrives in the end times. *[pause]*

No one wants to be in a relationship where your past faults are constantly being used as a bat to beat you over the head.

So also, a healthy church doesn't come when past faults go unforgiven, and bitterness infests the people.

But a healthy church comes when the people keep loving one another earnestly and fervently, choosing to forgive, and thereby, covering a multitude of sins. *[pause]*

I don't know about you, but I always want to be a part of something like that.

I want to be a part of a community that has love as its controlling factor so that there's peace and unity.

A community where your sin isn't let go, but forgiven.

A community where your sin isn't held over your head and brought up time and time again, but forgiven.

That kind of church makes a difference in the world. *[pause]*

People will know that we don't ignore their sin, and they will be confronted with their sin, for we love them.

But they will also know that we forgive them because we love them.

That's when we are truly acting like Christ. *[pauseeee]*

Do you keep loving others earnestly?

How have you been doing?

Has that love shown itself in forgiveness towards other people's sin?

Has that love shown itself in hands-on ways? *[pause]*

One such practical way of loving others is hospitality, which Peter talks about next.

He tells us to, “Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.” *[pause]*

Hospitality is friendliness and generousness to guests and strangers.

It is typically when you provide food and/or lodging to someone. *[pause]*

Now we have to admit that in the earliest days of the church, hospitality was much more needed.

They didn’t have church buildings like we do.

They didn’t have the prevalence of hotels and restaurants like we do.

But though hospitality was more needed back then, that doesn’t mean that we don’t have to show it at all.

We should still be doing grumble-free hospitality.

We should invite those in the church over for meals.

We should provide a place for a traveling Christian to stay.

We should willingly and without grumbling, show hospitality to one another. *[pause]*

The reason why Peter exhorts us to not grumble is because hospitality, especially lots of hospitality, can make you want to grumble.

It can be costly, burdensome, and irritating at times.

It takes sacrifice of your money, your time, your resources, your comforts, and your energy.

You need to clean up the house, get things together, buy food, do laundry, make beds, and spend time with people.

Or it may make you want to grumble because the person you have over isn’t the most pleasant.

You see, it’s not always easy to be hospitable.

Some people may even overstay their welcome, but love drives grumble-free hospitality.

It sacrifices for others in love.

It shows care and concern for them, and is generous. *[pause]*

This is a great way for you to demonstrate love to other people.

It will stretch you at times, but will you do it more often?

Start out small by inviting a couple over for a meal.

Then as you do it more, you can expand to more people.

Offer to provide a place to stay for one of our guest speakers or missionaries that come in.

Look for ways to be hospitable to one another, and do it without grumbling or complaining, but with a heart full of love. *[pauseee]*

*So Peter tells us that we need fervent love for end times living, but thirdly, we need...*

### **III. Faithful service to others (10-11)**

As the end draws nearer, it's not time to sit back, but to step up.

Hebrews makes this clear when it says...

“Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”<sup>4</sup>

We need each other more than ever in the end times.

We need to be making the best use of the time, serving others with our spiritual gifts. *[pause]*

Peter says, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.” *[pause]*

There’s so much packed just in that one verse, and a whole sermon could be given on this topic, but very briefly, it shows us that every Christian has at least one gift.

There is no Christian who can say that God hasn’t gifted them with a spiritual gift, for God has graciously given us each a gift or gifts.

This means that we should know and be using our gifts.

But also, these gifts aren’t to promote ourselves, but are to be used to serve others. *[pause]*

Spiritual gifts aren’t self-promoting flair, but service-purposed gifts.

**They are there to serve others!**

So we don’t use our gifts to make our name great, but to serve and build up the church.

This means that if we aren’t using our gifts, we aren’t serving others the way we should. *[pauseeee]*

We are to also be good stewards of these gifts.

God has given us gifts, not to sit dormant, but to be used as a good steward does. *[pause]*

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<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 10:24-25.

The publication called, *Bits and Pieces*, gave this illustration...

“The great violinist, Nicolo Paganini, willed his marvelous violin to the city of his birth -- but only on condition that the instrument never be played upon.

It was an unfortunate condition, for it is made of a certain wood that as long as it is used and handled, it shows little wear.

As soon as it is discarded, it begins to decay.

The exquisite, mellow-toned violin has become worm-eaten in its beautiful case, valueless except as a relic.

The moldering instrument is a reminder that a life withdrawn from all service to others loses its meaning.”<sup>5</sup> [pause]

God doesn’t want us to waste our gifts, but to be stewards of His grace! [pause]

That is what these gifts are: grace.

They are undeserved gifts from God, not deserved entitlements. [pause]

And notice how it says that we are stewards of God’s *varied* grace.

His gifts are diverse, manifold, and various.

The word literally means, “many-colored”.

There isn’t just one gift, but God in his infinite wisdom has given the church gifts of many colors, like Joseph’s coat of many colors.

And you know what, it just makes it all the more beautiful.

We aren’t all the same, but God has given us different gifts that complement each other. [pauseeee]

As Peter continues, he shows us *how* we can stewards these marvelous gifts.

He gives two general categories: gifts of speaking and gifts of serving.

Or you could also say the categories are between those that use words and those that do works. [pause]

He says that if you have the gift of speaking, you should use it “as one who speaks the oracles of God.”

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<sup>5</sup> Illustration found at [sermonillustrations.com/a-z/s/spiritual\\_gifts.htm](http://sermonillustrations.com/a-z/s/spiritual_gifts.htm). It was slightly edited by me for smoothness. Original from *Bits & Pieces*, June 25, 1992.

This is most likely referring to those who are gifted to teach and preach.

They should use their gifts as someone who is speaking the teachings of God.

They need to use their gift, remembering the seriousness of their task, for they are sharing God's Word.

They need to use their gift by responsibly and accurately handling the word of truth. *[pause]*

This is important for someone like me, who teaches and preaches, for when I use this gift, I shouldn't act like this is my enlightened opinion, but God's divine truth.

Even the truths that I'm sharing today aren't from me, but they are from God, when I am accurately expounding His Word from the Scriptures. *[pause]*

The idea is that for someone who has the gift of speaking, they should speak relying on God's Words, not their own.

They are stewards of God's Word, speaking it to others, and therefore, their resource is the very Word of God for what they are tasked with doing. *[pause]*

This is great news because it means that those who have the gift of speaking don't have to rely upon their own ingenuity, but simply on what God has declared. *[pause]*

The serving gifts are like unto this.

Those who serve should do so by the strength that God supplies.

Their resource for using their gift in ministry comes from God's strength.

So if you are mowing someone's lawn, taking care of them physically, encouraging them, praying, whatever your gift is...

...If you are using your gift, you need to use it, relying upon the strength that God gives. *[pause]*

Both of these ways of using gifts go back to God, for he gives us the words to speak or the strength to serve.

The gifts we have are from God, and the resources and power to use those gifts are from God.

This is why Peter can say, "in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ."

Because it was all of him!

He gets the credit, he gets the glory and praise because he has given us the gifts and the ability to use those gifts well!

He gives us what we need to serve others!

The praise and credit for your faithful service belongs to God alone, and rightly so.

To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. *[pauseeee]*

So are you using your gifts to serve others in the church?

As we learned, there are varied gifts among us, but are you using *yours*?

And when you do use yours, don't use it through your own power or words, but use it as one whose words and strength come from God who supplies them.

And do it not for self-promotion, but for service to others.

Not for self-promotion, but for God's honor and glory. *[pauseeee]*

*What this passage shows us is that...*

**The end is near, so let's pray, love, and serve for God's glory!**

This is "end times living".

And if you think about it, these things aren't rare or unusual, they are rather ordinary.

God calls us, who are living in the end times, to basic, day-to-day Christian living, but to do it with a heightened focus and fervor. *[pause]*

We don't just pray, but we have sound, sober thinking which helps our prayers become laser-focused and more effective.

We don't just love, but we keep loving others fervently, forgiving others readily and showing complaint-free hospitality to them.

And we don't just serve, but we serve as good stewards, using the words and strength that the Lord supplies. *[pause]*

All of this is for His glory.

We don't build our own kingdoms, but His.

We don't take the credit, but give it back to Him.

We don't live for ourselves, but we live in service to others, which is ultimately for God alone and His praise. *[pauseeee]*

The end times shouldn't lead us to more irrational fear, but to more focused, truth-aligning prayer.

The end times shouldn't lead us to inactivity, but to love and service for God's glory. *[pauseeee]*

So will you determine to live this way?

We can only pray this way because Christ renews our mind and is our hope and trust.

We can only love others this way because we were loved by Christ, whose sacrifice on our behalf covered our multitude of sins once and for all.

And we can only serve this way because Christ served us by taking on flesh and dying and rising again to redeem us.

“To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”