

September 18 Meeker Christian Church

As a follow-up to the Purpose Driven Life Series Jean suggested 1 Peter 4:7 ff. I selected the International Children's Bible version to read because it is so straight forward.

1 Peter 4:7-19 *The time is near when all things will end. So keep your minds clear, and control yourselves. Then you will be able to pray. 8 Most importantly, love each other deeply. Love has a way of not looking at others' sins. 9 Open your homes to each other, without complaining. 10 Each of you received a spiritual gift. God has shown you his grace in giving you different gifts. And you are like servants who are responsible for using God's gifts. So be good servants and use your gifts to serve each other. 11 Anyone who speaks should speak words from God. The person who serves should serve with the strength that God gives. You should do these things so that in everything God will be praised through Jesus Christ. Power and glory belong to him forever and ever. Amen. 12 My friends, do not be surprised at the painful things you are now suffering. These things are testing your faith. So do not think that something strange is happening to you. 13 But you should be happy that you are sharing in Christ's sufferings. You will be happy and full of joy when Christ comes again in glory. 14 When people insult you because you follow Christ, then you are blessed. You are blessed because the glorious Spirit, the Spirit of God, is with you. 15 Do not suffer for murder, theft, or any other crime, nor because you trouble other people. 16 But if you suffer because you are a Christian, then do not be ashamed. You should praise God because you wear that name. 17 It is time for judgment to begin, and it will begin with God's family. If that judging begins with us, what will happen to those people who do not obey the Good News of God? 18 "It is very hard for a good person to be saved. Then the wicked person and the sinner will surely be lost!" 19 So then those who suffer as God wants them to should trust their souls to him. God is the One who made them, and they can trust him. So they should continue to do what is right.*

Hold on to that passage as we go verse by verse using the NIV 1 Peter 4:7 *The end of all things is near*. At first glance, as well as the children's Bible translation this verse seems to be in reference to the end of the Christian Dispensation and the coming of our Lord followed by the 7 years of tribulation. That may be so, but in context there is another meaning as well. It seems Peter is saying to his listeners and to we readers that our lives on this earth are rapidly drawing to a close and Peter is teaching believers his understanding of a purpose driven, faith growing, life of service and fulfillment.

1 Peter 4:7 ~~*The end of all things is near*~~. *Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray*. The word "therefore" is an adverb which means for that reason or consequently:

Consequently, because prayer is our communication tool that cements our ever developing relationship with our Creator and affirms our spiritual gifts through inspiration of ideas and witnessing opportunities. Therefore anything and everything we do to enhance that relationship is constructive for a righteously motivated and fulfilled life.

Peter continues in verse 8 *Above all, love each other deeply*. That love is the Greek word agape which you know is the unique one of a kind love that is the very essence of God Himself. If we love God then we understand and are enabled to relate to each other in that way. First thing in life for a productive Christian - is courageous, unrestrained, and passionate lifestyle of Christlike love!

And here is Peter's reasoning why that love is so critical in developing and growing our earthly living relationships: 4:8 *because love covers over a multitude of sins*.

Why does God want, expect, instruct and demand we love each other - *because love covers over a multitude of sins*.- There is so much sin in the world and everyone of us are so stained by sin that the only way to live the life God created us for is to love which overwhelms and defeats sin. It stops satan and his demons in their tracks! The most effective defensive tool and greatest offensive weapon we have at our disposal as

Christians is love *because love covers over a multitude of sins.* ///The devil wants us to see and believe the worst about each other – God wants us to see the best in each other. Satan wants us to carry grudges, shun and ignore anyone who is different than we want them to be./// God wants us to take people where they are and pay attention to and acknowledge them. Our assignment is to love, God takes care of the judging.

Peter does not leave us hanging but goes on to explain some practical applications of the manifestation of that love in our lives starting in verse **9** *Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.* **10** *Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.* **11** *If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so 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.*/// Everything Peter recommends were the basis of the #4 purpose developed in the Purpose Driven Life series. YOU WERE SHAPED FOR SERVING GOD/// Let me let you in on a secret that the devil does not want you to know: //being righteous with a focus on God and submission to the leading of the Holy Spirit results in a satisfied fulfilled life. Satan's motivation for a selfish unrighteous life results in confusion, doubt and the perversions of demons to destroy hope and the eternal destination, and rarely if ever being satisfied.

/// But hold the phone, take your foot off the gas pedal, quit peddling for just a moment and learn the reality lesson of choosing Jesus as Lord and being persistent in the pursuit of righteousness during your lives: 1 Peter 4:**12** *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.*

Peter is saying that being a Christian is fantastic in every way BUT there is a price to pay! Being a Christian assures you of a rather odd definition of rejoicing as we understand rejoicing starting in verse 13 *But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the*

sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. i.e. flee from all levels of sin. Every sin has the same result- separating one further and further from the saving relationship and reception of mercy and grace of the Lord.

Wait you may be saying, I thought being a Christian was an earthly protection while waiting for an eternal inheritance. /// That is a teaching different than the Bible reveals! **The earthly armor of Christianity protects us through the suffering, not from the suffering.**

In reality, the practical definition and recognition of sin are those things that culture and society is promoting as fashionable and desirable for satisfaction and success. And that is so because satan is the prince of the earth and right now his evil influence is predominant in our prevailing world wide societies! Sin and temptation is more available through technology that ever before in history and suffering for the dedicated believer is inevitable! And as a result we have Luke 18:8b *However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?*

Peter summarizes the inevitability of suffering for believers in 1 Peter 4: **16-18** *However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"*

The practical application of Peter's writing is that becoming a Christian is easy. But living a Christian life can be very hard and traumatic! Life as our culture perceives it is the well-being of the physical earth suit that may house our soul and spirit up to a

century or so. What Peter is teaching and what I am proclaiming today is that a century of life on earth is only preparation time for the eternal life which we can only envision by the extent of our faith. And as tough as this life may get for any individual Christian, be well assured even if satan protects and provides unbelievers on earth, their eternal destiny will be infinitely worse than anything the righteous may suffer on earth.!!

Peter's concludes this passage by issuing a clarion call to his first century listeners and the Holy Spirit records it for the duration of all righteous believers on earth. That means the message is also for us! The practical application for their lives and our lives is that since you have a limited time of preparation on earth: *19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.* If you would like more on this, I suggest you look at Romans 7 which is a cross reference study from the perspective of the Apostle Paul.

So again Peter's summary and words of wisdom and consolation to each believer 1 Peter 4:19 *So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.* And that is the very thing our Sunday School lessons are helping instruct us as a congregation as well as individuals.

Perhaps the Holy Spirit is prompting you to publicly confess commitment to be a Christian or that you want to transfer your membership to this congregation, if so, then as we stand to sing our invitation Hymn today please come and speak to me.

Oran & Amy Rundberg, Eli, Dylan, Ellie,

Frank Sampson

Wade, Amber, Shults, Addisen, Deklan