

Remaining Faithful to the End (Part 1)

I Peter 4:7-11

INTRODUCTION:

If you would open your Bibles this morning, in a few moments we will be reading from I Peter Chapter 4 verses 7 - 11 and then looking more closely at verse 7-9.

Last week we noted that our lifetime is limited. We are living in a world that is bound by time and our life here is not eternal. We **WILL ALL** die!

ILLUSTRATION:

Your life is like a cold morning in winter when you walk outside and take a deep breath of the cold air and exhale. A little white cloud of vapor appears and almost immediately fades away.

We are all sinners and sin separates us from God and we can do nothing on our own to be sinless before God. The scriptures tell us that our only hope of restoring our relationship with God is through His Son, Jesus Christ. We must surrender our lives to God and seek purity in our lives. We must prepare ourselves to face God in judgment **and remain prepared** for the rest of our life, however long or short it may be, by continuously remaining faithful to Him.

WHY? Because tomorrow may never come for you. When you die, your window of opportunity is gone forever.

Prepare for eternity! Hold your fingers in I Peter Chapter 4 and turn with me to Luke chapter 12 where Jesus told a parable of the Rich Fool.

Luke 12:16b-21 (NASB)

¹⁶“The land of a rich man was very productive. ¹⁷ And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’ ¹⁸ Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry.” ²⁰ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and *now* who will own what you have prepared?’ ²¹ So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Jesus also told us in

Revelation 2:10b (NASB)

¹⁰ ...Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

We find ourselves eagerly willing to accept Christ as our Lord and Savior and cheerfully accepting the remission of sin that He has promised to us. But we often are **painfully slow** in truly **surrendering** ourselves over to Him and forsaking worldly things. How slow we are to finally realize that God's way IS the right way and begin to experience the JOY and HOPE that comes by being faithful to Him and doing His will.

All Stand and Read Scripture

1 Peter 4:7-11 (NASB)

⁷ The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer. ⁸ Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Be hospitable to one another without complaint. ¹⁰ As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹ Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

As we prepare to look more closely at verses 7-9 this morning, let's bow in a word of prayer.

Prayer

Peter lays out for us four general keys that can help each of us to remain faithful to the end.

1. Be Diligent in Prayer.
2. Be Fervent in Love.
3. Be Faithful in Service. (Part 2)
4. Have a Passion for God's Glory. (Part 2)

BODY:

I. Be Diligent in Prayer.

1 Peter 4:7 (NASB)

⁷ The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer.

A. Be Clear in Our Thinking When It Comes to Prayer.

If someone is NOT sober, then he is under the influence. He is being controlled by some other outside force. Something has clouded his thinking. He is not thinking clearly.

If we are going to be diligent in prayer and have an effective prayer life, we must be careful that our minds are not diluted by outside philosophies that are warping our minds. We must be clear in our thought.

Colossians 2:8 (NASB)

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

So when Peter says to be of sound judgment and sober spirit, he is warning that we be of clear thinking. That we no allow the world's idea of success or failure to creep into our prayers. We must be careful to not adapt the world's methods as the way to get things done. That we not look at this earthly plain instead of an eternal plain in our prayers. It is so easy to have these things begin to delude the way we pray. No, we must have a mind in our prayer that is going to not conform to this world but transformed.

Romans 12:2 (NASB)

² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Do you **truly** want to pray, " Lord, not my will, but Thine be done"?

The **only** way you can do that is **not** to have a mind that is conformed to this world, but transformed. When your mind is transformed, you will be able to discern that will and be able to pray in line with the will of God.

We need clear thinking in our prayer.

B. Be Alert in Our Prayer.

When someone is under the influence their senses become dull. They lose an alertness to what is going on around them. When we come to prayer, Peter is pleading with us to have a spiritual alertness. To be spiritually sharp so we understand what is going on in the world around us.

Peter, himself, is one of the most tragic examples of a failure to be alert in prayer.

In Matthew 26 we come to the night in which Christ would be betrayed. His death is impending. Peter has just found out that Judas is going to betray Jesus. He has just found out that Jesus is going to die. He has just learned that he is going to deny Christ. And then we find in verse 36...

Matthew 26:36-45 (NASB)

³⁶ Then Jesus *came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and *said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." ³⁷ And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. ³⁸ Then He *said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me."

³⁹ And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." ⁴⁰ And He *came to the disciples and *found them sleeping, and *said to Peter, "So, you *men* could not keep watch with Me for one hour? ⁴¹ Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

⁴² He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done." ⁴³ Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. ⁴⁵ Then He *came to the disciples and *said to them,

“Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Peter had been warned! He had been warned of all that going to happen. Here is Jesus, about to be crucified, He is in agony. Literally sweating tears of sweat that is tinged with red from the stress in his body. And Peter did not understand how much Jesus needed his prayers. Jesus was now going to be betrayed in front of them by Judas and were about to see Jesus crucified and they needed someone to desperately pray for them. All of this was going on and Peter failed to see the urgency to pray.

In our prayer lives, we need to be alert to the spiritual conflict going on around us. We need to be alert of our own spiritual condition and the dangers that we face. And alert to the spiritual conditions of the ones that we love and the dangers they are facing in our prayer life.

Too often people ask others to pray for their daughter that she will make good grades in college or will be successful in their sport or that her surgery will be successful, but we neglect to ask that she would quit dating the unbeliever and that she would start attending church again and get her heart back with God.

Unless our hearts are transformed, we will be tempted to focus our prayers on things of the world that have no eternal values instead of heavenly things. We seem to be oblivious to the fact that we pray for secondary issues instead of the thing that really matters: **their spiritual health.**

We must be alert to the real spiritual issues and be pleading and praying.

In order to **"be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer"** we must be diligent and alert, but we must also...

C. Be Earnest in Our Prayer.

When people are under the influence of something, they often become silly or goofy. Everything is a joke. We are warned to not be that way in our prayer life. If we are clear thinking and we understand what is at stake and we are alert to the real spiritual struggles and battles and dangers out there, we will be earnest and serious in our prayers. Prayer is not a flippant thing. We have a desperate need and we need to be pleading out to the God who can answer and heal.

In the times in which we live and the spiritual conflicts that we encounter, as Christ's time of return nears, we need to get serious and busy about prayer.

We need to be clear thinking, alert, and earnest in our prayer. That is the first key that Peter gives us so that we can remain faithful until Christ's return.

There is a second key to faithfulness and that is FERVENT LOVE.

II. BE FERVANT IN LOVE.

1 Peter 4:8-9 (NASB)

⁸ Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

Peter reminds us of the central place of love in the Christian life with that little introduction "Above all". Not only prayer, but even above that, we need "fervent love for one another".

Colossians 3:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ Beyond all these things *put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.*

Notice that Peter does not simply say, "we ought to love each other". He says we should have "fervent love for one another".

The definition of fervent is to be extremely devoted to or to have an intense affection for.

ILLUSTRATION:

An example of fervent is a child's security blanket. Did you or one of your kids or grandkids drag around a security blanket? They will take it with them everywhere they go and sleep with it every night. It does not matter how ragged, or dirty, or faded it gets, it is the source of their entire devotion.

Peter tells us that we must have that kind of love for each other. We will all see faults and weaknesses in each other, but we should look past those weaknesses and look for the good in each other.

Those of us who have been Christians for a long time, understand the emphasis that the scriptures put on love between brothers and sisters in Christ. And most of us have come to understand that love is more than a feeling. It includes an action on behalf of others. But if you are like me, you often wonder what action this love requires.

We are to love. Love is to be more than a feeling. Love requires action. We find ourselves scratching our head. How do we take this abstract feeling of love and properly put it in action?

Luckily for us, Peter does not leave it abstract. He gives us examples on how to take an abstract love and put it into action. He tells us three things...

A. We love fervently by being forgiving.

1 Peter 4:8 (NASB)

⁸ Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

When we think about the phrase "love covers a multitude of sins", let me point out two things Peter IS NOT saying.

1. He is not saying that an act of love on our part will in any way cover up or atone for sins.

It is not as if we did some sinful things and then we can do some good things and somehow cancel out the bad. There is nothing that I can ever do to cancel out the sins that I have committed. The ONLY thing that will atone for my sins is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

John 14:6 (NASB)

⁶ Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

2. Secondly, Peter is NOT saying that through love we are to accept or ignore sin.

The world would like us to believe that that is what LOVE is. The world would say that if you love someone, you should accept someone the way they are (sins and all). The world would say that we should not tell them that sin is wrong. We should not expect them to stop the sin they love if you love them.

Peter is quoting here from

Proverbs 10:12 (NASB)

**¹² Hatred stirs up strife,
But love covers all transgressions.**

What the proverb is telling us is that when there is hatred and animosity between people and an offense is committed, it is used as an opportunity to stir up trouble. If I have an animosity with someone and they do something to offend me, it something that we want to latch onto to help justify the animosity that exists between us. We want to make a big deal out of it and blow it up out of proportion to cause trouble and bring it against them.

But when we love somebody and they have done something to offend us, instead of jumping up to stir up strife, we cover over it. WE FORGIVE!

a. Love covers over offenses because it assumes the best in others.

For example, when the service is over this morning and you are standing in the foyer, someone may walk right past you and not even acknowledge that you are there. You could have two reactions.

1. You may think "How rude! They think they are too good to talk to me. They obviously do not like me, this is so selfish!"

2. Or you could see this person as he hurries by and think, "They look really stressed. They must be very busy this morning. I should pray that God helps them. Maybe I should ask them if there is anything I could do to help them".

See the difference in your attitude? Love assumes the best, NOT the worst!

There is a second way that...

b. Love covers over offenses because it simply does not keep a record.

I imagine that there are some people that I could walk up to today and ask "Do you have any problems with me?"

You could say, " Well in 2013 you did this. And the spring of 2014, you did that. And when my friend was sick last January, you never visited him in the hospital or ever ask me how he was doing." Etc. Etc.

And I am probably guilty of all of those things. The point is LOVE does not keep a record like that so we can draw it back out and build upon it.

c. Love covers over offenses because it simply overlooks those little wrongs.

Sometimes people do or fail to do things by accident. Or sometimes it is by sinful selfishness. But often people do things that are rude and inconsiderate. They forget about us. They neglect us. They take advantage of us. AND LOVE OVERLOOKS!

d. Love covers over offenses because it accepts apologies.

It REALLY accepts them. Apology accepted! No record is kept. Forgiveness is granted. Here is a fact! Everyone of us here is a wretched sinner. When you get a collection of wretched sinners together, we are going to sin against one another. We are going to wrong one another. We are going to be rude and disrespectful to one another.

Why? Because we are sinners! It is not going to change.

What we need is a fervent love for one another that covers over those wrongs by **forgiving** one another.

B. We love fervently by being hospitable to one another. (Part II)

C. We love fervently with gladness. (Part II)

III. BE FAITHFUL IN SERVICE (Part II).

IV. HAVE A PASSION FOR GOD'S GLORY (PART II)

CONCLUSION:

We are not guaranteed a tomorrow. When you die, your window of opportunity is gone forever.

I plead with you, use this short vapor of time to find God and believe in His Son who died on the cross to take away your sins so you can be found sinless before God.

Romans 12:2 (NASB)

² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

But remember, accepting Christ's sacrificial death on the cross for our sins is only the **FIRST** step in our life in Christ. WE MUST REMAIN FAITHFUL TO THE END!!!

If you are not living your life for Christ; if you cannot see a difference between the way you live the rest of the week from the way you lived before you accepted Christ into your life; then your eternity is in jeopardy.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may know what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

If you have not accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, do it today. Don't wait until you have cleaned up your life. **You don't clean yourself up to come to the Christ; you surrender yourself to Christ, to let Him clean you up!**

He is Lord.