

## XXXVIII. I Peter in Biblical Perspective

### *The Elect in the Exile*

“The End of All Things as the Beginning of Everything—Part 3”

I Peter 4:7–11

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This will be our third study in this paragraph of I Peter 4. This passage is just jammed packed and so I'm trying to draw things out appropriately without having too long studies. There will be one more study in this same passage but many have told me how this paragraph was used in their conversion, starting their Christian life and has contained some key life verses for them in life. I'm grateful for that because this passage is joyously overwhelming. I will be focusing on one element of this passage in this study.

I Peter 4:7–11 says [7] *The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled (sound) and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. [8] Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. [9] Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. [10] As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: [11] whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.* The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

When your parents go to be with the Lord there are some things you are glad you saved, things you wished you had asked and things you wished you had saved. Growing up when I got home from school, my sisters can all bear testimony to this, there would be some kind of note from my mom that said something like this; hope you had a good day at school, (meaning I hope you didn't embarrass me), you may make yourself a sandwich but do not make a mess, then do the following things. If you look up obsessive compulsive in the dictionary you'll probably see a picture of my mother next to it. That note would contain a list of several things she wanted me to do and at the bottom of the note it would say, 'I'll be home soon.' That note was not written so much for comfort as it was for accountability.

Another thing is that you knew everything was important on my mom's note but invariably one of those things would be underlined sometimes twice, with an exclamation and you knew when she got home that everything she listed needed to be done but if you didn't get the one underlined done there was a good possibility your life had just ended on planet earth, right then. We have arrived at a point in this book where Peter has borrowed from my mother.

Peter has called us elect exiles. We have been set free from the bondage of sin and we are exiles serving Christ on the way to the Promised Land of a new heavens and a new earth. It wasn't a Moses that set us free from slavery. It was a Savior who set us free from the bondage of our sin. Peter gives us 14 blessings that Christ has secured on the cross for us. The 14<sup>th</sup> blessing was 'the end is at hand' which is the way this I Peter 4:7–11 passage starts off. The next thing on the redemptive calendar is the coming of Christ. After all the elect have been saved and the Gospel has been preached to all the nations then Christ returns. He is coming soon. He is near and we'll be home soon.

After Peter gives us all that he reminds us that on the way home we are going to suffer. He takes from I Peter 3:13 all the way to I Peter 5:11 to tell us about suffering for Christ's sake. Every believer in some way, at some time, to some degree will suffer for Christ. This is not the suffering that comes in a broken world. This is directly the blessing that Christ says in Matthew 5:10–12, [10] *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

Then Peter gives us seven Gospel commands and the last two kind of run together. He said arm yourself with the mind of Christ which is how we can know how to suffer for Christ. Look at the way Christ suffered for you. Philippians 2:5–8 says [5] *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

Christ suffered that death to save us from our sins. We look at that humbling of Christ to see how it has been granted unto us to not only believe Him but to suffer for His sake. Paul says in II Timothy 3:12, [12] *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* Peter takes almost a third of his epistle to teach us about this. After he tells us to get the mind of Christ he gives us a seventh command in which he says there will be two things that will mark it, which will unleash a life of prayer – it is a sober mind and a sound (self-controlled) mind. When persecution comes there will be a tendency to think all kinds of novel stuff. With Christ coming soon there will be all kinds of people who will distort the second coming of Christ. Have your mind informed from God's Word. Be filled with the Spirit and be sober minded.

Now having given us these Gospel commands that we do, not to be saved, but because of the blessings our Savior has given us, he says something like my mom as if to underline and put an exclamation point. I Peter 4:8a says [8] *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly...* this is Peter's principled priority. As you know who you are as the elect in Christ, above all things love one another. When I got home from school I had that list to do but the one that was underlined was above all the other things on the list. Let's look at little closer at the text.

In this study we'll look at the redemptive love we're to have for one another and in another study we'll look closer at the serving love we're supposed to have for one another. As each one of you have received a spiritual gift employ it in serving one another and we'll look at that closer when we get to serving love. The redemptive love we're to have is a love that lays hold of sinners saved by grace and doesn't let go, as Christ's love lays hold of us. This is how we're to lay hold of each other. As we are under assault as the world marginalizes, mocks, maligns and even martyr, we're to hold tight to one another in love. Blessed be the tie that binds us in Christian love. Peter is going to be very specific about this so get into this.

What is Peter not saying when he says 'above all'? He is not saying instead or in place of all these other commandments, love, nor is love the sum of or to be isolated from all those things. It is a love that is above as a canopy of all the things that Christ has given us to do. This love is to be intentional, intense and inviting. Why is it that Peter has laid hold of this notion of underlining loving one another as above all things? It could be because of the love that Christ intentional brought into Peter's life even when he denied Him three times and he knows the value of it. Likely, it is the echo of Peter's heart inspired by the Holy Spirit of what he heard in

the Upper Room when Jesus said in John 13:34–35, [34] *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.* [35] *By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*

Are we commanded to love one another in the Old Testament? Absolutely. So what does He mean when He says a ‘new’ commandment? It is because of the vista, the dynamics and vitality of this love and as an example of how Christ has loved us. The love of Christ was prophesied in the Old Testament but it is documents in His life and in the New Testament. What do we find out about this intentional love? It is an active love and not just a passive emotion. It is passionate and emotive but it is volitional – act of the will.

One of my favorite passages is Romans 5:8 which says [8] *but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* While we were enemies and helpless Christ died for us. John 3:16 says [16] *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.* He gave! It is an intentional, active love with passion and it is relentless. It is not earned. When it is ignored or taken for granted or not returned it doesn’t stop. It doesn’t take into account wrong suffered. It is patient, forbearing, and not irritable. It is continual and aimed at those who need it when they need it and how they need it, not that they are seeking it, deserve it or earn it but that they need it. I want you to have that kind of love.

Jesus doesn’t stop there for in that John 13 verse He also says that that the world will know that you are His disciples when you love this way. This kind of love will unleash evangelism. The world will see Christ when the depth of redeeming love where sinners lay hold of one another with the truth of the Gospel with patience, perseverance and consistency is displayed. Here He has called us into this vital, vertical relationship as we arm ourselves with the mind of Christ and we move to the horizontal as we have all these commandments but above all we’re to keep on loving one another, for by this they will know we are His disciples. As Christ is coming and the end is drawing near, we don’t wait for those living in sin to get better for we are to love them so he calls us to this intentionality to love one another.

Then Peter gives us intensity, I believe, three ways. One is he calls us to a brotherly love. In the original language we can translate this as ‘keep loving’ or ‘keep on loving’ earnestly. He accentuates the intensity because he is talking about family love, brotherly love. The Greek language has six words for love. The word for family love is *storge*. The Greek word for brotherly love is *phileo*. He is calling us to continue in family love and brotherly love but he doesn’t use either of those words but he uses that virtue word of love which is *agape*. This is a sacrificial love which is based upon the love of Christ who gave Himself for us. This is the kind of love we’re to have for the family and our brothers and sisters.

Secondly, he brings us to an awareness of the intensity of this by telling us in the text what this love actually does – it covers a multitude of sins. What does he mean by this? He is not saying that our love can make an atonement for someone else’s sins. Clearly the Bible tells us that Christ is the only One who can do this. He is also not talking about ignoring sins because the Bible tells us in a number of places if our brother sins we are to go to him and it tells us how we’re to deal with it. He is telling us that God’s people know what it means to put a blanket over multitudes of sin – not all of them, but there is a sense of covering the multitude of sins.

It is my conviction that Peter has beating in his mind two passages of Scripture that he is communicating to us. Let’s look at the book of Proverbs. Proverbs 10:12 says [12] *Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.* If you hate people you take their offenses and their sins and magnify and expose them. When you love someone, you don’t ignore the sins, but you don’t

unnecessarily expose them nor do you use their sin as a cause to separate them from others who are trying to reach them. Hatred stirs up and love covers.

Yesterday I did a wedding and it was a great blessing for multiple reasons. I love it when the bride comes in the groom just melts, it's a glorious moment. I love when they're standing in front of me because I know what's in their mind – 'this is so wonderful, we're married, this is going to be great.' There is a good possibility I'll get a call three weeks from now saying 'Pastor could we get come counseling?' It's amazing in an intimate relationship how you really get to know each other and you get to see things that nobody else sees for the more intimate the relationship the more you see and you don't have to question indwelling sin. I love to tell married couples that you don't know what you have until you have what you want, for then you find out that we do sin in thought, word and deed.

We do sin and not all sin is equal. All sin rightly calls for the judgment of God because sin is rebellion against God. I hear people say a lot 'sin is sin' but no sin is not sin yet they will come back and say 'if you hate someone isn't that the same as murder?' Yes but I haven't stabbed them yet therefore someone still has a mom or dad or sibling or friend or employer. Sin has varying degrees of heinousness in its consequences. We learn this in a family for if your child talks back to you or spills something at the table there is proportionality and when God's people are living together they don't magnify something beyond what it is for their own self-righteousness. They learn how to deal with each other and be patient with each other. They are not ignoring the sin but they are dealing with the sin and don't unnecessarily expose one another. They certainly don't use it to divide one another up.

In fact, let's look at Proverbs 17:9 which says [9] *Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.* There those who will not only magnify something but will use it to stir up strife and divide people. The Bible calls those schematics. They will do so in the name of truth and in the name of dealing with sin but they're not really dealing with sin in the way the Bible tells us to deal with sin. I have had the great privilege to serve this congregation for 20 years and the elders of this church take serious the matter of church discipline. When it does it to the elders I have been gloriously blessed by their utmost efforts to maintain confidentiality in such cases. We don't unnecessarily expose one another. We love one another where we are dealing appropriately and proportionately the sins that are before us.

Then Peter gives us another reason to love intensely by the kind of adverb he uses – earnestly, fervently. This word is used only one other time in the book of Luke and it refers to how Jesus prayed in the Garden. When He prayed in the Garden His capillaries burst with blood for that's the intensity He had when He prayed. How we see Jesus in prayer is what we're supposed to be in love. This word Peter uses for love means to stretch. It's a word that refers to something in a race where they're stretching to the finish line.

I had the opportunity to watch my daughters run in high school and college. This one was for the State Championship. She had already won the races she needed to in order to compete in this one and had done well in them. She decided she wanted to take on the 800 meter race for this one. When my daughters ran I always put myself to what they call the third quarter area where they come to what is known as the stretch. This is where you are stretching out to the end which is where you are to be the fastest in the race. You are giving it your all and strain out. Sure enough her competitor who was an unbelievably fine young lady passed her as they went into the stretch. I yelled out as loud as I could 'Go! Go! Go! Don't quit, keep running!' but I couldn't see what was happening at the finish line. At the end I looked at the stands to see who

was cheering and saw her high school cheering loudly. She had won but I didn't know how. Later, I had the chance to look at the official tape from the race and she won by .003 of a second. She stretched so far at the end that she went down to the ground as she crossed the finish line but won the race in that stretch, giving it all she had. That's the way we are to love each other. Stretch it out all the way. We are to give ourselves completely.

I think Peter not only saw this with His Savior, sees the need of this with the coming of Christ in the persecution of the world but he also had experienced it and watched it as a pastor. I want to look at Acts 2 to show you what Peter experienced in the first church where he began as the pastor/evangelist. 3,000 come to Christ and this is how they are living for Christ.

Acts 2:42–47 says [42] *And they (the believers) devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. [43] And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. [44] And all who believed **were together** and had all things in common. [45] And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. [46] And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, [47] praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

When Stephen gets stoned they don't abandon him they surround him. When people are in need they help. They open up their homes to each other. Peter remembers this and not only talks about an intentional and intense love that is stretching with all they have to accomplishing what needs to be done in each other's lives but then says it's an inviting love. Here is what I think is the grammatical, faithful exposition of how Peter says I Peter 4:8 – keep on loving people fervently, stretching out, using hospitality without murmuring. Instead of exposing the one in sin, open the door and share your table. If they don't acknowledge it don't complain, just keep opening your heart, your home and your table. My mentor Dr. Martin says it's the open door and the shared table and that's what opening your heart is all about.

What is the difference between lust and love? Lust is a passion to take possession and have. Ladies remember this; any man who has a passion to take what is not yet his to have it is not a man that can love you. Love is not a passion to take and have. Love is a passion to give and bless. Stretch out and open up your home. Perhaps they didn't write a thank you note or bring a house gift, invite them back and keep on doing it.

Here is the take away. As the coming of Christ draws nearer and suffering for Christ greater, a sober and sound mind of Christ calls us to love one another intentionally, intensely and invitingly. You are in this world for Christ. Plant your feet. Stand firm for Christ. Keep your eyes to the Lord for He's coming. And open your heart, your table and your home to one another. Lay hold of one another with the love that reflects Christ's love for you. It is a relentless, unstoppable, and unmerited but a redemptive love for one another in this life for Christ. The end is near. The assault is going to intensify. Put the eye of faith upon heaven for your Savior is coming. Show the love of Christ that was for you as we love one another in Christ for Him.

You can't do this without Christ. You don't want to do this without Christ. My home is a castle for I have the mote around it. I may let the bridge down every once in a while – open heart, open home, open table – shared with the brethren. This is for those that need you. Without Christ you can't do this and without Him you don't want to do it, but if you have Christ this is resonating and with and for Christ you can do it. You can keep growing in it and take joy in it. Oh the glory of that privilege to love one another with a tie that binds us together in Christ,

covering multitudes of sin, not exposing each other but dealing with sin by loving each other, even opening up our resources to care and love one another well,

When I'm preaching God's Word there is a great challenge for me. One is that preach expository so I don't want to handle it without the context. Secondly, I want the text to be understood. Thirdly, I want the text to be applied and whenever you apply a text there are three things a preacher does. One he affirms God's people in their obedience. Two he exhorts them to new and greater obedience and thirdly he admonishes them to leave disobedience. I know there are individual exceptions but in this congregation I have no admonishment today. In fact, I have been awed, inspired and instructed by your love and hospitality, in mission conferences, to missionaries, people that are sick and dying, day in and day out. I tell people that Briarwood is not a big church, it's just a small town. I love it, benefit from it and it overwhelms me.

I would say press on. Excel still more in the love of the brethren so that a world that is polarized and disintegrating will marvel and how we love one another and from that how we can love them in and for the Lord. He's coming. That glorious triad of faith, hope and love for your faith will be diffused as the eyes of faith are replaced by the eyes of sight when you see your Savior. Your hope will disappear because it is no longer a hope for you will be with your Savior but love will abide forever. Let's do it well now anticipating what it will be like then and may others join us when they want to know who gave you the ability to love like this. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Let the Holy Spirit speak to your heart. Perhaps you want to love like this and you know you can't love like this without Christ so you want to give your life to Christ today. I can't tell you how the angels will rejoice and we will rejoice for you to do that today. Please call us here at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 and we'd love to pray with you about this decision. Perhaps you know Christ but you want to excel and grow in this love but want to pray with someone about that, then you call us as well for we'd love to pray with you about this. I want to pray for you and for me right now in these moments. O God, thank You for the love of Christ and thank You for its relentless pursuit of us because of the relentless love that Christ has for us. Thank You for the Holy Spirit who keeps on pursuing us to draw us. Thank You for the way You have dealt patiently with us and not exposing our thoughts, words or deeds but You have convicted us and Jesus has paid for them. Now You have given us a body of believers and a family of God. Lord, please deliver us from this drive-by church stuff where we may come back next Sunday but help us be a community of believers, a family and help us reflect the marriage of Christ His bride. When we do this we are going to see some things in each other that we wouldn't see without that intimacy and commitment, then may the love of Christ excel at such moments as we redemptively cover sins to help one another walk away from sin. As we open our homes and hearts, stretching ourselves out in fervency and earnestness, help us to love each other well in Christ and for Christ for I pray this in Jesus' Name, praise God, Amen.

Power Point

GOSPEL COMMAND #7

Pursue and cultivate a sound and sober mind marked by a life filled with prayer.

PETER'S PREMIER PRIORITY FOR ALL ELECT EXILES

Above all things love one another.

REDEMPTIVE LOVE – SERVING LOVE

- I. Intentional
- II. Intensity
- III. Inviting

#### LIFE TAKEAWAY

As the coming of Christ draws nearer and suffering for Christ greater, a sober and sound mind of Christ calls us to love one another intentionally, intensely, and invitingly.

Feet planted–Eyes looking–Heart open