"SERIOUS Living in these Last Days!"



I Peter 4:7-11

5-11-2022

INTRODUCTION

* Because the "end of all things is near"
We need to <u>get serious</u> about our lives!

I. Be Serious about your <u>PRAYER LIFE</u> (PRAYER) (v.7)

II. Be Serious about <u>LOVING OTHERS</u> (V.8-9)

A. LOVE FORGIVES (v.8b)

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A. SERVE WITH THE GIFT YOU HAVE (v.10a)

B. SPEAK WITH THE WORDS OF GOD (v.11a)
(God is the source of your <u>words</u>)

C. SERVE WITH THE POWER GOD PROVIDES (v.11b)
(God is the source of your <u>strength</u>)

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Psalm 90:12 So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

None of us know the time of our departure, but we are just a breath or heart beat from it! "The distance between glorified spirits in heaven and militant saints on earth seems great; but it is not so. We are not far from home—a moment will bring us there."

Why do some get serious at the 11th hour of their life?

1) There's a realization of FINALITY
(This is it! I will not pass this way again)
Hebrews 9:27
And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:
There is NO Video Game or PC Game Restart or "Respawn" button to life;
Once lived, no second chance; No reincarnation.

2) There's a sense of URGENCY
(Whatever I'm going to do, I'd better do it now!)
Pride & Procrastination are perhaps the two greatest deceivers

3) There's an awareness of PRIORITY
(What matters most, must get done first!)

Ask God to reveal to you what your Priorities should be and then live for what really matters. God/Family/Others

What would you do if you had one month left to live?

v.7) ***"The <u>end</u> of all things"*** For many of these believers the end of their <u>life</u> was right around the corner. (cp.4:12)

However the words *"all things"* point to the end of this present world system as we know it. (cp.v5 - God is ready to Judge)
I Jn. 2:17 "The world is passing away"

1 & 2 Peter are Eschatological books (The return of the Lord Jesus is in view here. Cp. 1 Peter 1:13.

Marks of the last days: One world economy, religion
Global anti-semitism on the rise. Also anti-christian. (2 Tim. 3:1-4).

For the believer your end is to be "receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls"(1:9).

Read Romans 13:11-12
For the unbeliever, God rhetorically asks: "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"(4:17)

Because the time is short, we need to be **extremely serious** about our lives!
This urgent appeal to seriousness is given to pastors:
I Tim. 3:2 "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober (serious)..."; To older men: Tit.2:2 "The aged men (are to) be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience"; To young men: Tit.2:6 "Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded"; and to older and younger women alike: "That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children".

* Because the "end of all things is near" **We need to get serious about our lives!**

I. Be Serious about your PRAYER LIFE (PRAYER) (v.7)

"be of sound judgment and sober spirit" = Be awake; "Clear headed", "on guard" I Pt.5:8 "Be sober (alert), be vigilant (awake) because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion..."

-The prayer life of many believers is dead & needs to be resurrected.
-The prayer life of most believers is sleeping & needs to be awakened ("stirred up")

When it comes to prayer we can't be asleep! (read Mt.26:36-43). Note: context of persecution. In panic situations, prayer can be forgotten. People (in trouble) loose the calmness that is necessary for real prayer. The tendency might be to pray in a hysterical manner. (w/a troubled mind). The tendency is to worry about problems & try to figure them out with out God. On the other extreme people (in ease & comfort without problems) seldom get serious with prayer. They figure: "Why pray?...I have no problems"

-When tired: stand up & pray.
-When someone leads in prayer don't drift off: Be conscious & pray along also.
-Pray continually: Have a time & times of prayer (Eph. 6:18
"pray always..." (at every opportunity)
-Look for needs you can pray for: Have a prayer list.

Jesus said: “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”

"WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DON'T PRAY?"

1. You don't have the blessing of God in your life

"...Ye have not because ye ask not" - Ja. 4:2

2. You are easily deceived and forfeit the discernment God provides

Josh. 9:14-15 - *"And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD. And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them."*

3. Your problems grow (increase) and eventually may lead to premature death

II Chron. 16:12 - *"and Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians."*

4. You manifest an independent spirit and an unbelieving heart

Job. 21:14-15 - *"Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?"*

5. Your ministry will not prosper, but fail

Jer. 10:21 - *"For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered."*

6. You fail to come to repentance and spiritual understanding

Dan. 9:13 - *"As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth."*

7. You jeopardize the lives of others who are dependent on your prayers

Jonah 1:6 - *"So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not."*

8. You miss out on the <u>good</u> <u>things</u> in life that God longs to give to you

Mt. 7:7-<u>11</u> - *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"*

9. You enter into <u>temptation</u> and succumb to its pressure

Mt. 26:41 - *"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

10. You don't see God accomplish what seems to be <u>impossible</u>

Mk. 9:29 - *"And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."*

What Happens When We Pray?

When we pray.....

1. God responds with incredible, astonishing might
   (Jer. 33:3; cp. Acts 12:5-16)

   "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." (Jer. 33:3)

2. Satan's forces are withdrawn from us and held in check
   (Mt. 6:13; Eph. 6:10,12,18)
   "...lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from (the) evil (one)." (Mt. 6:13)

3. God's man has power & boldness in preaching the Word
   (II Th. 3:1; cp. Eph. 6:19-20)
   "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you." (II Thes. 3:1)

4. Fellow believers gain strength both Spiritually (Psalm 138:3) and Physically (Psalm 30:2,3) (Cp.Eph.3:14-19)

5. Our witness gains a Holy Spirit empowered boldness
   (Acts 4:31)

   "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." (Acts 4:31)

6. God brings deliverance in times of trouble
   (Psalm 34:6; 107:6; Jonah 2:1-2; Cp Acts 16:25-26)

   "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." (Psalm 34:6)

   "Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses." (Psalm 107:6)

   "Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly, And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice."

7. Fear and worry flee from tormenting our minds
(Psalm 34:4; Phil.4:6)

"I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." (Psalm 34:4)
"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Phil. 4:6)

8. Our faith in God & our love for God grows as we see Him answer prayer.
(Psalm 116:1)
"I love the LORD, because He hath heard my voice, and my supplications." (Psalm 116:1)

9. God gives us needed wisdom & understanding
(cp.I Kings 3:9-12)

10. The Lord sends out Gospel laborers into the "harvest fields"
(Luke 10:2)
"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

11. The Lord applies a healing balm over a sick society
(II Chronicles 7:14)
"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (II Chron. 7:14)

12. God's people gain peace and freedom from tyrannical, oppressive governmental leaders (Ezra 6:22; Prov.21:1; cp. I Tim 2:1-2)

"And (Israel) kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel." (Ezra 6:22)

"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." (Prov. 21:1)

13. The blind eyes of unsaved men are opened to the knowledge of the Truth
(cp. I Timothy 2:3-4)

II. Be Serious about LOVING OTHERS (V.8-9)

"Above all"- shows priority; importance.

"keep" (pres.tense)- continual; uninterrupted.

"love" (agape) When we think of "charity" we think of giving. This love gives even when the recipient is unworthy.
(It is sacrificial in attitude & actions; it centers on meeting the needs of others. It is unconditional.

"fervent" (ektene) lit. stretched out. (used of the muscles of a race horse being stretched to the limits as it crosses the finish line) (It is a love that is strained, strenuous, earnest, intense.)
"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves...lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God"(II Tim.3:1,4)

"The love of many shall wax cold"

A love that reaches out (despite difficulty - note: context of suffering) It goes the extra mile, it goes out of its way.

"for one another" - impartial, unprejudiced.

"Love" fulfills the whole law (it is the whole law boiled down to one command)
(A person who really loves God and his neighbor doesn't need a command not to steal..murder..commit adultery..covet..dishonor parents.

A. LOVE FORGIVES (v.8b)

"because" = results

"cover" - hides, or veils. (ill. of Noah's 2 sons (Shem & Japheth Gen. 9:23)
Love creates an environment that prevents sin. (It covers your sins & their sins)

How does love cover a multitude of sins?

By: Restoring an erring brother

Love seeks RESTORATION.
(Your sin is dealt with - Mt.5:23 "...gift to the altar & rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee..."
(His sin is dealt with - Mt. 18 "If thy brother shall trespass against thee...go..."

"Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins."
(Prov.10:12)
(love doesn't gossip, or keep a record of wrongs; It does not rejoice in iniquity. I Cor.13)

Love is like a balm (medicine) that **heals** hurts, wounds.
"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." (Ja.5:19,20)

Love covers a multitude of sins by
Overlooking petty faults (inconsiderations)

"sins" – times when people miss the mark (or the standard) of what is expected.

Can you imagine the revival that would break out if Christians were stumbling over each other to ask forgiveness?
Love is the distinguishing mark of believers.
"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples..."(Jn. 13:35)

B. **LOVE GIVES** (HOSPITALITY)(v.9)

"be hospitable" from (phileo)=affection, caring, concerned, friendly.+ (xenos)=stranger, outsider, foreigner, alien.

We are living in an unfriendly, don't bother me, mind your own business society. The tide must be different in our midst.

"Hospitality" is one qualification to pastors (I Tim.3:2,Tit.1:8)

In the N.T. failure to take care of a stranger was to exclude Jesus himself (Mt. 25:31-46)
When Jesus sent out his disciples, if they were not received with hospitality, Jesus said: shake the very dust off your feet (Mt.10:11-ff; Lk.10:5)

We are to be "Distributing to the necessity (needs) of saints; given to hospitality."(Rom.12:13).
We are to "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain stranger: for thereby some have entertained angel unawares."(Heb.13:1.2).

(N.T. examples of hospitality: Cornelius received Peter, and Publius took in Paul and his companions (Acts 10:23; 28:7); Paul requested Philemon to have a guest room ready for him (Philm.v.22)

Americans generally are "tight fisted" ("whats mine is mine")

In the O.T. every Godly man had a welcome sign on his tent. They would prepare a feast (offer the guest the best they had) & would protect their guest (even with their own lives). Eating a common meal together represented unity & fellowship (oneness).

Hospitality was important in Bible times because the "inns" (hotels) were really skuzzy places and were to be avoided. Hospitality was a God designed way to show the world what real Christianity was all about.

III. Be Serious about your SERVICE FOR CHRIST (v.10-11)

A. SERVE WITH THE GIFT YOU HAVE (v.10a)

"each one" - You have a gift whether you know it or not. (don't seek other's gifts)

"received" - given to you in the past

"gift" - a result of grace. No matter what gift you have been given, serve one another with it.

"One another" = Fellow believers in a local church. Whether it be a gift of singing, mechanical, artistic, technical, musical, or teaching skill or an ability to comfort, help, finance, encourage etc. use it to the glory of God.

"Good stewards" - A good manager, put in trust. (ex Joseph in Potiphor's house). (ex. parable of the talents)

-Stewardship involves responsibility. We must do the best with what we are entrusted with. To not use your gifts in the assembly is to sin against God.
-Stewardship involves accountability. We will answer to the Master one day. "To whom much is given, much shall be required".

"manifold" - many kinds, various kinds, different, diversified. Your gifts are different than mine.

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the some Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the some Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the some God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."(I Cor.12:4-7)
Don't be selfish with your gifts. "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."(Acts 2:44-45)

B. **SPEAK WITH THE WORDS OF GOD** (v.11a)
(God is the source of your words)
Ill. Of child mimicking the words of parents. Your words are to reflect your heavenly father.

You are a mouth piece of God. A representative. An ambassador.
Ask yourself: "What would God say in this situation?"

In your teaching, preaching, witnessing, counselling, encouraging have: A **seriousness** in your conversation.

Pure speech-God's thoughts & words; not vain worthless talk. "Every idle word...shall give account.." (Mt.12:36)

Authoritative speech- Not your own personal feelings or suggestions on issues the Bible clearly speaks. "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."
(Act.4:13)

Confident speech- Without fear of man. "For we cannot but speak the things we have seen & heard"(Acts 4:20).

Ill. of Moses' reluctance to speak for God - God's reply: "Who made man's mouth?...I will be with thy mouth" (Ex.4:10-12)

Unhesitant speech- "Be ready always to give an answer..."(I Pet.3:15) "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." (Ps.107:2)

This speaking would exclude: lying, gossip, untruth, slander etc.

C. SERVE WITH THE POWER GOD PROVIDES (v.11b)
(God is the source of your strength)

"serves" - Serve (same word as "deacon")

"strength" - Physical & intellectual strength, might, power. (Ex. We are commanded to love God with all our strength. Mk.12:30)

"supplies" - To supply, furnish, provide.
(Ill. Of a Doctor working for a hospital. The hospital supplies the necessary instruments and equipment.
(Ill. Of a Soldier going to war. The National army supplies him with arms. He doesn't go out & buy his own tank, ammunition etc.) **God supplies His soldiers** with the necessary power to fight the spiritual warfare.

"by the strength which God supplies":

1) We can't take pride in it. (I Cor. 4:10; 10:27) God uses the weak (I Cor.1:25-ff), and empowers them. (ill. Paul's thorn in the flesh (II Cor. 12:7)
We need to rely of God's power because in man there is no power sufficient for the task.
"I can do all things through Christ which strengheneth me." (Phil.4:13)

2) We can't do it in the flesh. Spiritual work accomplished by decaying flesh stinks!
Why do we do work for the Lord in the flesh? Confidence of self-strength, or desire for self-glory.
(Ex. of Hymn: "Brethren we have met to worship" says: "All is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down".

Why should we have a strengthened service? "that (for the purpose and result that) God alone will receive the credit, and praise. ("Glory" N.T.- ( ): radiance, that light or brightness which shines out from God. Honor, fame, repute.

The Godhead (Father, Son, and Spirit) are the **power house** (power source)
Jesus Christ is the **power line** (channel of power) "through"
God's Servants need to be **plugged** in to God's power! (Usage of power).

"in all things" - in every sphere of life.
Why should Jesus Christ receive Glory? Because He is Glory; (the light of world) and He is the power & might (dominion). (All power is given unto me)
"All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father..."(Jn. 5:23)
When you minister by God's power (people know it isn't you who is doing it) but it is God through you. And consequently all the praise goes back to God (who really deserves it)