

# Because the Time is Short

*Our Identity in Christ*

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**Bible Text:** 1 Peter 4:7-11  
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1 Peter chapter 4. Our text this morning is 1 Peter 4:7-11, these five verses. We're going to, I'm planning to today look at the entire passage and the main thrust of the passage and then the next three Sundays the plan is to work through constituent parts in more detail. The title of the message is "Because the Time is Short." Because the time is short. We're going to see that Peter, in a sense, makes a startling declaration at the beginning of our passage in verse 7, and essentially saying the time is short and because the time is short he has instructions on how we should live.

Let's begin reading 1 Peter 4:7,

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.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, we thank You again for the privilege of being part of Your family and being able to gather together with our brothers and sisters and friends around the word of God. We pray that Your Holy Spirit might work through Your word in each heart and that You might grant that we might worship You as You desire in spirit and in truth that we might be more faithful followers of Jesus, that we might shine brightly in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom we are placed as lights in the universe. We ask all of this for the glory of our Savior and we ask it in His name. Amen.*

So because the time is short. Because the time is short. There's a sense in which Peter sounds the alarm, in fact, I almost named the message "Sounding the Alarm," because he

actually, the force of what he says at the beginning of the passage is that dramatic when he says the end of all things is near. That's a forceful declaration. It's a statement of fact. It's in the indicative mood. It is Peter making known to us the reality with which we must deal and, remember, he's saying this in 63 AD and what he's saying is accurate and true then and it is accurate and true now. The time is short and based on that he's then going to give some imperatives and some instructions to the people of God. Because the time is short, since time is short, do this. It's kind of like an alarm and I almost named it "Sounding the Alarm." The image that I thought about as I thought about this message this week is to imagine yourself as a soldier, a sailor, on a boat in the Navy and you're asleep in the night and the alarm sounds, and the alarm sounds and the horn begins to blow, and you know when you hear the horn, that means you're supposed to man your battle stations, but as you're trying to wake up, you're trying to get your bearings. "Where am I?" You know, when you're asleep you don't know exactly who you are. Sometimes it's funny how you have dreams and you're back in college or you're back in high school or whatever and you're like, "How did that happen?" How many dreams I've had through the years where I've forgotten that I have a final exam and I'm on the way to try to take this final exam, and that's been a long time ago. Well, so you're asleep, you're out of it, you've got to wake up, you've got to be alert, and so you hear the horn, and then the commanding officers or the noncommissioned officers are making their way around, and they're yelling, barking orders. They're saying, "Wake up! Be alert! Get on the move!" And then as you come to alertness, you have certain things and tasks that you know you're supposed to do.

That's the force and flow of this passage. He sounds an alarm in verse 7. He issues commands which essentially are, "Wake up, be alert," and then he talks about the duty to which we are called. That's the basic structure of these verses here, these five verses, 1 Peter 4:7 to 11. And so the alarm is sounded and the alarm basically is, in the first point this morning, we've got three points we're going to consider as we look at the broad structure of this passage and the essential message and theme of the passage. The first point is a stunning announcement. Point number one, a stunning announcement. I mean, we've been reading this letter, Peter is dealing with life. He's been addressing these believers who are living in a trying time, first century, Greco-Roman world, followers of Jesus in a culture that is hostile. They have implications socially, financially, even politically, persecution is an imminent reality. And so it's tough for them to live for the Lord, and so this letter's written to help them to suffer well, and we've seen that, a key theme and here in the midst of this time, as he's talking about suffering, as we come back to suffering in verse 12, he sandwiches in the middle these five verses. The larger point from chapter 3 verse 8 through chapter 4 verse 19 is how to suffer and how to suffer well. Be ready for persecution and suffer for doing righteousness.

He's thinking about the pressures from outside that are coming on you, live this way, and in the middle of it, he interposes these five verses and it's quite instructive to think about that. There's a sense in which that the flow and feel of this portion of 1 Peter is that things are going to get worse, be faithful. Things are going to get worse. They're going to proceed from bad to worse like Paul says in 2 Timothy chapter 3. Things will proceed from bad to worse. This is the flow that you have in this letter and it's on what's

happening out there coming into the church, and so here though, he reminds them that in the face of all of this opposition, in the face of growing persecution, you need to know, you need to hear this announcement, and the announcement is, "The end is near. The end is at hand. The end of all things is at hand." Not the end of your suffering, the end of all things is at hand and as you understand that and you feel the force of it, it's going to bring clarity to what your duty is in the moment.

And it's really surprising your duty in the moment as the world is going from bad to worse, look at verses 7 to 11. He's basically saying the alarm is sounded and he's going to make two imperative commands. In verse 7, "be of sound judgment, be sober." Those are the two commands that dominate the passage. Wake up. Be alert. And then he's going to say, "If you're awake and alert, be about your duties," and look where your duties are all about. Love one another. Be hospitable to one another. Serve one another. He's saying, look, it's going from bad to worse out there. The alarm is sounded, and man your battle stations, and your battle stations are build the church. Get to work building one another. Time is short. Think about that. Time is short. The end is coming. What do I need to do? What am I supposed to do? Get to work building one another. Love one another fervently because love covers a multitude of sins. Serve one another faithfully. Use your gifts to build up the body. He's talking about serve one another. He's not talking about out there, yes of course we do that, but he's saying serve one another. Love one another. Build the church. Be about building and pouring into other believers because time is short. You only have so much time to do the one thing that God is about in the world. The one thing that God is about in the world is the building up of the body of Christ. That's all he cares about, relatively speaking. I mean, he cares about everything, but his passion is the church. The only reason everything else exists is the church and he's saying, if you know time is short, do what matters most.

If you knew you only had 24 hours to live, how would that affect you? What would you do with the next 24 hours? Time is that precious, what would you do? Peter's saying if you're thinking biblically, you'd keep pouring out your life in other believers. Use every moment that you have to pour into other Christians. Yes, witness to unbelievers too but don't forget your brothers and sisters. That's the force of this, and it's surprising that it comes in the midst of all of this discussion of persecution from the outside, suffering from the outside. He says, listen, what you've got to do, if we're going to stand and be faithful in the midst of a world that is decaying and is becoming more opposed to us, we must lock arms and stand together. We've got to gather together. We've got to pursue closeness. We've got to be men and women of prayer. We have to be men and women who are committed to love one another fervently and to serve one another faithfully.

But the stunning announcement, the end of all things is at hand. Literally, It's interesting, it's a perfect tense verb. You might think it's gonna be a future, the end of all things is about to come, right? Future tense. Or the end of all things is here, present tense. It's present. This is actually the Greek perfect tense. The perfect tense is completed action in past time, completed action in past time with ongoing continuing implications. Something happens at a point in time. Think about it. This is actually, I think, kind of helpful if you think about tenses, verb tenses in Greek, you have the aorist tense, and I'll

mention a lot of times it's punctilious action. The next two verbs are aorist. We're going to talk about that in a minute. Punctilious, that is a period. Think about action in terms of a point in time. That's aorist, general meaning of aorist tense. The present tense is ongoing action. It's like a line, you know, it's continuing on. Keep on doing it. The perfect tense is like a ray, geometry review, a ray, a point, starts at a point, and then it continues on. But it actually happens in the point here, the perfect tense. It all happens here, but it continues to have implications. What he's saying is the end has come already right next to us. It's drawn near. It's not happened yet, but it's drawn near. It's come right beside us, and it remains right beside us. What he's saying is this is actually sound New Testament theology, this is why they expected the return of Christ to come at any moment, because they believed what Jesus had taught and what Peter and the apostles taught, and that is that the end is at hand.

Now, we know, looking back over 2,000 years, that the end didn't come right away for them so how is this accurate? Tempted to think, well, they were wrong. They expected Jesus to come back any time. They had no idea it was gonna be 2,000 plus years, or almost 2,000 years, or really not quite 2,000 plus, because around 30, 33 AD is when Jesus was resurrected and ascended. Almost 2,000 years. Well, let's talk about that. What he's saying, the phrase, "The end is at hand, or the end has drawn near," I think that's the best translation of it I can give. The end has drawn near, the verb is to be near, to come beside, and the idea is the end has come near to you and it already has done that, and it will remain near to you. Right there. It's a verb that's used a number of times in the gospels by Jesus and particularly John the Baptist when they say, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Same verb, same tense. The kingdom of heaven has come right beside you. It's here.

"The end of all things is near." What he's saying is, in the plan of God, in the only timeline of history that really matters, God's redemptive historical timeline, the timeline of redemptive history, because all of creation, all of history is about what God is doing in history, right? It is truly his story and he created the world. Here is the timeline. I'm gonna give you kind of a sketch of the redemptive historical timeline. We think in terms of, I mean, think about how we think about history. We think in monumental moments of history, you know, big moments of history, the fall of Rome, you know, the conquest of William the Conqueror, the Norman invasion of England, the Enlightenment, well, actually the Renaissance, then the Enlightenment, World War I, World War II, things like that, right? We think of big things like that, and we think those are the big movements of history. Well, those are significant movements of history, but they're not the big movements of history. They're secondary movements of history. The big movements of history are the movements that God defines as the big movements of history and what Peter is saying is all of the big movements of history that need to happen before Jesus comes back have happened at the time he writes. The end of all things is at hand. It has come right next to us. It could happen any moment because everything that needed to happen has happened.

Let's think about the moments of history, redemptive history. Creation, obviously, God's creation in six days of all things. The fall in Genesis 3, man's rebellion and fall into sin.

Judgment of the flood and judgment of the tower of Babel. You see the evil of man, his rebellion, how ugly sin is. Look what sin has done. Then you have, so you have the hopelessness of man in his fallen condition revealed and then you have the beginning of the covenant of grace, particularly a dramatic movement in it is the call of Abraham, the call of Abram. Even before he's named Abraham, he's Abram. God calls him in Genesis 12. So it's creation, fall, you know, flood, judgment, the call of Abraham. God says that, "You can't come up to Me," as the Tower of Babel they wanted to reach the heavens. "No, I must come down to you." And he comes down and he calls a man who's not looking for him. Abram's not interested in God, but God is interested in Abram. God goes to Abram and calls him and says, "You go to the land I will show you and I will make you a great nation." And Abraham has his son Isaac and Jacob, the patriarchs. And Jacob has 12 sons. And God says, "This is where My Savior is going to come through this line." Jacob has the name Israel and his 12 tribes, 12 sons become the 12 tribes of Israel. All of all of the rest of creation, all the big movements, I mean, the rise and fall of Egypt and ancient Babylon and Persia and all of that are secondary, secondary stories. The main story is what God is doing to redeem for himself a people for all eternity. And so you see the Lord continued to reveal himself to us. He calls his people out of Egypt, delivers them from darkness through the blood of the Passover lamb, anticipating how salvation's going to happen. He takes them and he plants them in the land of Canaan, the conquest in Joshua. They conquer the land, and here's a type of heaven and a type of salvation. And then you have the kingdom and what we could call the united monarchy under Saul and then David and then Solomon. And Solomon builds the temple, makes permanent the place of God. This is one of the massive moments in history when God makes his dwelling place permanent among his people. And then God continues to deal with his people, but there's the rupturing of the kingdom into this northern kingdom and the southern kingdom because of Solomon's disobedience and the northern kingdom is called Israel, 10 tribes, and the southern kingdom, Judah, two tribes. The northern kingdom falls in 722 BC, routed by the Assyrians, demolished, carried off by the Assyrians. The southern kingdom, 135 years later, falls to Babylon in 586 BC. They're carried off into Babylonian captivity for 70 years. Then they come back to the land. Finally, they rebuild the temple in 516 BC. The temple is again reestablished. But now the people of God are not a free nation. They're living in subjection to world-dominating powers. As they had been captivated by Babylon, they're liberated to go back, but they're under Persian hegemony, Persian domination, followed by Greek domination, followed by a brief period of independence, very brief, followed by Roman domination. And in the midst of this time, under this time of Roman domination, God sends forth his Messiah, his Son into the world. God was preparing them saying, "Listen, it's not about an earthly kingdom. That's why you're under hegemony from all these different people. I'm sending My Son who's going to deliver you not from the tyranny of earthly rule, but from the tyranny of sin." And so he sends Jesus to be the king, the messianic king, who's also the prophet and the priest. He's God's final word. He's God's true prophet. He's the one who shows us who God truly is. "To see Me is to see the Father," Jesus said. No man has seen God at any time, but the only begotten who's in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him. Jesus, God's final word. Jesus, God's final priest, the priest who offers not a sacrifice that needs to be repeated, but a once-for-all sacrifice of his blood in bringing sinners back to God. He takes our punishment. He bears the wrath of God for us in our place. And in a

decisive way, he finishes with the wrath of God and that's why he says, "It is finished," before he died on the cross. So he is God's priest and he is God's king. After he's resurrected, even what Peter has reminded us in 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 22, he has gone to the right hand of God, having gone into heaven after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to him. Jesus is now the reigning king over all according to 1 Peter 3:22. He has done everything necessary to usher in God's final, full kingdom. It only awaits the announcement of the actual realization. It's just waiting for the word go.

It's that imminent. That's what Peter's saying. "The end of all things is at hand. The end of all things has drawn near. He could come at any moment." I know there are other passages of Scripture that talk about the gospel being preached to all nations. There are other things that come in. But even then, it was right as a first century believer to believe it could happen any moment because the whole point of the book of Acts, if you look at the way Acts is outlined, it's to basically make the point that the gospel, as Jesus said, would be preached first in Jerusalem, then in Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. The outline of Acts is this: the gospel in Jerusalem, the gospel in Judea and Samaria, and the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth with Paul ending preaching in Rome. The gospel has gone all over the earth. Jesus can come back at any moment. That's what Peter's saying. It could happen any moment and you're to live that way, and all Christians are supposed to live that way in anticipation of the return of Christ. We're to say, as John ends his glorious book, the Revelation of Jesus Christ, "Even so come Lord Jesus." We're to do as Paul says in Philippians chapter 3, verse 21, we're to remember that our citizenship is in heaven from which we eagerly await for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for him to come back and when he comes back, he will, this is Philippians 3:20 and 21, "For our citizenship is in heaven from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble estate into conformity with the body of His glory by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." He has that power to subject all things to himself now. At any moment, he could do it and we're to wait and long for that.

That's the stunning announcement. Peter says, "Listen, the time that you have is short. You are to live as if time is very short." The second thing is not just the stunning announcement, but an urgent command. An urgent command. It's actually two commands in this passage. This is one of those cases where you can't really see in the English exactly what the structure is, but there's really just two imperatives in the original language, and they're both in verse 7. Be of sound judgment, be sober. When you see, like, keep fervent in your love, looks like it's an imperative, it's really not. It has imperatival force because it's a participle that borrows its imperatival force from the previous imperatives. The same thing with be hospitable to one another. There's not even a verb there. It's borrowing from the previous imperatives in verse 7. But what are the two imperatives? They're the two main verbs in the passage. They are "be of sound judgment and be sober." And I'm calling it one command because these two, these are two main verbs, two commands that say essentially the same thing. He does it for force and emphasis.

The first word to "be of sound judgment," literally, it's a word that wasn't used a lot outside of Scripture. It was a word that was used outside of Scripture, but not very much, and so when the writers of Scripture bring it in, I think they load it with some meaning that's much richer and fuller than what it had outside because literally, this word comes from two Greek words, one which means saved and the second which means mind. To be of sound judgment means to be of a saved mind. In fact, the word for mind here is the one that we've been looking at a lot if you've been with us on Wednesday nights in Philippians when Paul says, "have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus." It's a key word in the book of Philippians, it's the same word that this word here comes from, the root word, phrenos or phren, which is one of the words for mind. It's a word which connotes, it's the intellect, but it's also the intellect as it relates to the will. It emphasizes the will. It emphasizes a sense of a settled, determined decision or purpose. That's why I said sound judgment. It's the judging factor, the judging element of the mind.

So he's saying be of sound judgment. Get your mind right. And the second one is "be sober," literally meaning be free from the influence of alcohol or any kind of substance. I think here he's implying also be free from any of the alluring, deadening effects of worldliness, which he was talking about in the previous verses, back in verse 3 when he spoke of all those various sins, sensuality, lust, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties, abominable idolatries. Don't let any of the worldliness keep you from being fully alert.

So the force of these two commands, be of sound judgment, be sober, is liven up, look alive, be alert, because time is short, be alert. These two verbs are actually aorist tense verbs, I mentioned earlier, punctiliar action. They're not saying go on being alert and I think it's because if you think about the illustration I used earlier, if you're asleep and the alarm sounds, you only have to wake up once for the day, right? You're awake then. You're aware, okay, I'm on a ship. I remember now I am a soldier in the Navy. I know where I am now. Okay, I'm alert. I'm aware. I've slapped myself. I'm alert. But the force of these verbs is that and I think what he's saying is, you're gonna need to repeatedly do it, of course, because you're gonna tend to fall asleep again, and when you do, then in that moment, you have to, in a moment again, a moment in time, wake up. So the aorist tense still applies.

The other things that he's gonna say, every verb after this, there's 11 verbs between verse 8 and verse 11. Three of them, the first three, one perfect, two aorist, the last eight are Greek present tense, ongoing continuous action. So he basically says, listen, perfect tense, the end of all things has drawn near. Perfect. It's happened, it's ongoing effects. Therefore, be of sound judgment, be sober. That is wake up, aorist tense. Now, keep on being fervent in your love. Keep on being hospitable to one another. Keep on serving one another. When you're speaking, do your speaking as the utterances of God. When you're serving, do your serving by the strength which God supplies. So ongoing action now, your duty, which is continuous, is driven by the clarity of mind that you gain by understanding the announcement. You've wakened up, time is short, you're aware of it.

The force of this is to call you to duty and readiness. So the stunning announcement followed by this urgent command leads to number three, a clear plan of action or you could say a clear call to duty. He's saying, "Since I've got your attention now, you understand the reality of the shortness of time, man your battle stations, get to work." And here there's essentially three three main duties that I want to look at generally today and then, Lord willing, I'd like to take some time and dig into these much more carefully and thoughtfully because there's a lot, especially in the last two, there's a lot of information there. The first one's pretty straightforward, but I still want to, I think we need to look at it a little more, but the last two, the text gives a lot of information to you that it's going to take time to unpack thoroughly.

But the three duties, a clear call to duty or clear plan of action, the three things, essentially this is 3A, B, and C: pray, love, serve. That's it. That's the duty. Pray, love, serve. Because time is short, because time is precious, because the need of the moment is urgent, be awake, be alert. Don't be drunk with the cares of the world. Don't be consumed with all that's happening around you. Don't be consumed with what's happening. The focus of that is don't be so much about American history that you're missing redemptive history. Should you care about American history? Yeah, you should pray for the peace of the land you're in. They were told to do that when they went to Babylon. They were going to the ungodly place and they said pray for the peace of that land. That's Jeremiah's instructions to the people. And you should do what you can to make things better. We're told in 1 Timothy 2 to pray for leaders and those who have authority over us. We're to do that but we're not to get so wrapped up in what's happening here. I mean, think about that. If you were so wrapped up in, say, for instance, you lived in the late fourth century, 380s, 390s, and you were a part of the Roman Empire, and maybe you had studied a lot about Rome and its legal system and all this, and you were proud of your heritage, and you were proud of the fact that, "Hey, we're the civilized people. It's those other folks that don't have any culture out there, the barbarians. And we're sure God's gonna take care of us because we're the civilized and we have Christianity as part of our culture." And you're banking all of your hopes in that, well you're gonna be disappointed because the barbarians came and sacked Rome because it wasn't about Rome. That's not God's story. And you could repeat that again and again and again throughout history. And so don't set your hope and affection ultimately on anything in this world, he's saying. Sober up. Wake up. All that matters is what God is doing in history. Make your life about the gospel because the gospel is the proclamation of the kingdom. It's what brings people out of darkness into God's marvelous light to be a part of the people who will dwell with him forever and ever in his presence and that is all that really matters. Everything else is passing away. Everything else will be burned up. Someone has said there's only two things that you and I experience on a daily basis that will last: the souls of men and the word of God. That's it. Everything else is passing away. That's being sober. It's remembering that.

And so if you remember that, you're awake, you're alert. What's the call of duty? According to this text, it's three simple things that we need to be about. "The end of all things is near; therefore be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer." Literally unto prayer. Have a sound a sound saved mind and a sober mind unto prayer,



resulting in prayer. He's saying that the more that you and I sober up and remember that the only thing that matters is the word of God and the souls of men, we will pray. It's going to result in more and more and more prayer because all that matters is what God is doing. And when you get yourself aligned on his plan, it makes you pray. One of the things we've gotta remember that it's an unbiblical mindset that comes sometimes into folks that are in our camp of theologically, you know, folks that are Reformed, that is, have a high view of the sovereignty of God. We believe what the Bible says about God's sovereignty. It says he's sovereign over everything. He's sovereign over the sins of men, he's sovereign over it. As one Puritan said, the devil is God's devil. Even though he's evil, God is good, the devil is still God's devil. He's that sovereign over everything. That's why in the first book of the Bible, Joseph at the end of Genesis says, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. You were trying to do evil to me, but you only did what God allowed to be done to carry out His purpose," because that's the way everything happens. That's the doctrine of divine providence. He's sovereign over everything.

The thing we have to watch out for is when you have a high view of the sovereignty of God, there's a temptation to then apply human reason to that. If God is...a professor of mine, one of my favorite professors wrote a book, "If God already knows, why pray?" If God already knows what's gonna happen, why pray? If God already knows what you're thinking, why pray? If God already knows what your needs are, why pray? That's a good question. It's a good human, man-centered question, isn't it? I mean, it's reasonable from man's viewpoint. I think it's entirely reasonable to me. I wonder, "Yeah, why do You need me to tell You, Lord?" He doesn't need me to tell him, but he wants me, he commands me to tell him. If God already knows why I pray, because God commands that we pray. 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 says pray without ceasing. He's saying that's pray and pray and keep on praying some more. Then when you started getting tired of praying, keep on praying. And when you start to stop praying, keep on praying. Pray without stopping. Live a life of prayer.

That should be our goal, that we cultivate a communion with God, that there's a running dialogue going in the day, a silent from the heart dialogue of praising him and thanking him and submitting to him and asking his blessing continually throughout the day. That's what he calls us to. Jesus was trying to teach us to pray. He taught that parable about the woman who wants justice, and she goes to the judge who won't give her justice, and she keeps going back to him, and he won't give her justice. He's an unjust man. He's the judge, but he's crooked. But because she keeps going to him day after day, he finally wearies of having to deal with her and gives her justice. And Jesus says, pray like that. You say, "Why would I have to pray like that? You're not an unjust judge. You know my needs before I even know them myself. In fact, You know needs I don't even understand." But he says pray like that. In fact, he introduces that parable with this statement, Luke says he taught this parable so that men would know we ought always to pray and not to faint, not to lose heart. So when you're about to lose heart, what are you to do? Pray. God wants you to pray because prayer is seeking his face. We have a whole book of the Bible of prayers. David gave us half of them in Psalms; roughly half of the Psalter written by King David because he was in a lot of desperate circumstances and he

was driven to prayer and he recorded those prayers and God gives us these prayers to help us learn how to pray.

So he's saying even though God knows what's going to happen, even though God's purposes cannot be deterred, even though whatever God has said will happen, you must pray. I love the example of this in Daniel chapter 9. Daniel's a wonderful example of this. Daniel chapter 9, we read, now remember I mentioned the southern kingdom of Judah was taken captive by Babylon in 586. Actually, the first attack on Jerusalem was around 606 BC. 20 years later, they finally, the third incursion of Babylon into Jerusalem, they destroyed the temple. But the first was in 606, and they carried off a lot of the promising young people of Jerusalem and Israel to serve in the king's court. This was one of the things the Babylonians would do. They would take the best and brightest from every culture they conquered. And so Daniel and his three friends were among that group who were taken as teenagers to Babylon in 606, 605 BC. And they're put in the king's court in the king's theological seminary, which I don't really, it's not even worth calling it that, but it was an occult seminary basically. They had to learn the arts of the Babylonians, learn their history, their language, their beliefs. Daniel and his three friends stay true to God, faithful to the Lord. Daniel lives there his whole life. And he's reading his Bible in 539 BC. It's 67 or so years after he was taken captive. This is about the time that the lions' den happens, by the way. Daniel in the lions' den, he is not a little boy. He is an old man when he goes to the lions' den.

So anyway, I digress. He's reading his Bible in 539 BC. He's reading the book of Jeremiah just finished 30 years before this. But he's got a copy of it in Babylon, I mean in Persia, he's in Persia now. And he's reading it and he reads something from Jeremiah chapter 25 and verse 29, he reads that the captivity of Jerusalem will last 70 years. And Daniel calculates to himself it's been about 68 years. You know what I would have done if I was Daniel? This is how I would have thought. I would have, "Hey guys, I gotta tell you what I read." And he may have done this, but this wasn't the first thing he did. The first thing I would have done was called an announcement. I would have sent out an email to the church, "I just figured this out. Hey, we only got two more years." You know what Daniel did? He set his heart to pray and to fast and to ask God to do what God had already said he would do. When God lets you know what's going on, when God reveals to you what's happening, when God gives you the wake-up call, and you see it's all about his kingdom, he wants to set his people to pray. When God is gonna do something great, someone has said, when God is going to move mightily, the first thing he does is sets his people to praying. That's what he's saying here, that the Lord wants to wake us up so that we pray, we see things as they are and we pray.

Secondly, not just pray though, love, and we're gonna look more at prayer, Lord willing, next week. I think we need to spend some time on that. But secondly, love. "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaint." I think those two are really packaged together. There's not actually a verb in verse 9, be hospitable. I think it's kind of flowing out of love. He's saying, keep fervent in your love for one another because love covers a multitude of sins, being hospitable to one another, is the idea. You keep on loving each

other and that means being hospitable to one another. He said, listen, if time is short, I mean, the end is coming, what are you supposed to do? Work hard at loving your brothers and sisters. He says, I want the church to be a place, I want the people of God to be a place where love is so, so fully there that it emanates everything and love covers over a multitude of sins. When God's love is present, when God's love is present, people are not easily offended. Love covers over offenses. When God's love is present, in fact that's what he says in 1 Corinthians 13, love is not easily provoked and love hardly keeps a record of wrongs.

This is what he's saying, love covers over a multitude of sins and he says, "This is what I want, as time is short, I want you to set on display the love of God that has been poured out in your hearts. Set it on display. Keep on keeping on at working on loving one another. You've got to be clinging to Christ and then living in His love for you and then giving it to one another." Doesn't that mean you don't speak the truth. Of course you speak the truth. Love reproves. It's really instructive to think about this. There are two great commandments, right? Jesus said there's two great commandments, the first is love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. That's found in Deuteronomy 6 verse 5. Jesus says the second commandment is like unto it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. You know where that's found? Leviticus chapter 19 and verse 16. What's amazing is that comes right before, I mean, I'm sorry, 19 verse 18, love your neighbor as yourself. What comes right before that, this is what's amazing, is you shall not hate your neighbor in your heart, you shall surely reprove him. To hate your neighbor in your heart is to not reprove him, apparently. If you don't hate him, you will reprove him, then he says, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

So love does reprove but reproof doesn't happen out of animosity or out of any kind of sinful attitude. It happens out of a heart of service, of overflowing compassion and love and this then leads you to be hospitable. The word means a friend of strangers, one who welcomes, and the idea of hospitality is welcoming others. It doesn't just mean, I mean, certainly physical hospitality is a part of it and in that time, it was really important that you would have to let people stay in your home, there weren't hotels or inns, and God wants us to be generous that way. But it doesn't just mean with the physical things. It means that you have an open heart that invites people into your life and into your heart. So above all, above everything else, he says, keep fervent in your love, because love covers a multitude of sins, and then show that hostility and do that hostility, that hospitality. Freudian slip. Actually, I was getting to the next verse, without complaint, without hostility. Be hospitable without grumbling. Literally, the word means grumbling. complaining, murmuring, under your breath. "I can't believe this, I gotta deal with this. I can't believe that." None of that.

Welcome people, serve them with joy and then he says, it's not just pray and love, then it's serve, verses 10 and 11. Time is short. The night is coming. The end is right at the threshold. What do we do? He says, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." He basically says serve faithfully. You could say, love fervently, serve faithfully, serve as a good steward, of the manifold grace of God. I mentioned the tense is present in these Greek present in

these verbs. Keep on loving one another. Keep on serving one another, employing your gift in serving one another. Keep on using your gift in serving one another. Now, first of all, he's saying you gotta find your gift and you gotta use your gift. We need to spend some time talking about that. Spiritual gifts. But he's saying, listen, if time is short and you're gonna man your battle stations, the end is coming. What you're to be about is praying, loving, and serving. Get to work and get to work in here. Not just in this building, in the spiritual building of the church. Get to work, spending time with one another, having coffee, building one another up in the faith. Get to work, having people over, going and seeing people. Get to work, get to work, get to work. That's what he's saying. You have gifts, use them. Time is short.

He says there are basically two major categories of gifts, gifts there are the speaking gifts and the serving gifts. "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 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 serving or speaking, two big categories of gifts. You can look at 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, Romans 12:6 to 8 see lists of gifts. I preached a series on this or taught a series on this last spring on Wednesday evenings, or is it a year ago, maybe a year and a half ago. Just look up spiritual gifts and there's a series out there. I did it like six weeks of that. James Rouse helped me with that. And so that's available online. We're gonna talk about that, Lord willing, in a couple of weeks.

But he's saying, listen, you're looking at what's happening out there and you're tempted to get caught up in that and because when we think about the end being near, we think about things that we see, you know, we read things. If you're one who follows the news with thoughtfulness and care, you probably see things where people are saying things like, "Hey, you need to buy a generator because they're coming after our power grid." Some of you know what I'm talking about. You've read stuff like that. You need to have an emergency food supply because they're trying to destroy the food supply. You need to have a way to drink water, drinking water, all that kind of stuff. All those things are valid things that you can think about, but that's... and you need to, you need to be involved in the electoral process and you need to try to help out with... Yeah, all those things are good in their place. They have their place, but their place is secondary. It's really of much less importance because God's gonna provide for his people. In fact, when we learn to pray better, what do we pray? "Lord, give me this day, give us this day our daily bread." Really what we put our hope in if we see all these things happening is drawing near to God, loving God, getting about his gospel, getting about his story because whether America or any other country Europe or China or Asia, whatever falls, the kingdom of God is not going to fall. He said, "I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." And so you and I are to get on board with what God is doing. He's building his church and when you make that your goal, when you make the gospel the center of your life, it liberates you, sets you free. The cares that can bog you down as you look at the darkness of the world, fade away because of the light of the glory of God.

This is why I've been preaching out of Philippians. I mentioned some verses that have come up this morning. Philippians is called the letter of joy. I've titled that message "Surprised by Joy" because Paul wrote the letter of joy from a prison cell. He was imprisoned in Rome. He was chained 24 hours a day to a Roman soldier. That's the kind of prison I would really not like. I mean, can you imagine that? A different soldier on eight hour shifts, maybe, I don't know, 10 hour shifts, I don't know what they did in Rome. But here's this guy, and now he's the next guy. I mean, can you imagine what it's like, everywhere you go, I'm chained. Paul writes the letter of joy from prison, and one of the things he tells as you read in Philippians, he says, "Listen, I want you guys to know the whole Praetorian Guard knows why I'm in prison for the gospel." He's talking about all those guys that have been chained to him, he's been witnessing to. I mean, he's chained to them, they're chained to him, and the one thing that is not chained is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And so people are getting saved. In the end of that letter, he says amazing words. He's talking to the folks in Philippi, that's in Macedonia. He's in Rome. He says, "Those who are in Caesar's household greet you." The gospel has entered into the very household of Caesar himself and Paul is filled with joy. He's like, "Listen, these circumstances, my circumstances have turned out for the advancement of the gospel. You think, because I mean, I thought too," I'm sure he didn't say this, but I would imagine he might have thought, "if I'm imprisoned, how am I going to go preaching? I want to go to Spain." But he says, "My circumstances have resulted in the greater advancement of the gospel. God has done more through putting me in prison than I could have ever imagined." Here's the message. If you make it all about the gospel, you cannot but be happy. Yeah, you're gonna have moments of sorrow. Of course, this world is filled with sorrow. You're gonna have moments of broken-heartedness. Yes, you will, but there will be an underlying joy because you know that God, even in the sorrow, is advancing the gospel, his kingdom. And if you tie your hopes to that, you will be on duty faithfully serving him when he comes. And that's what this text is calling us to. Because the end is near, time is short, wake up, see what matters and get to work and watch God work. And the more we do that, the more love we feel from him, the more joy we have in him, the more attractive we are to unbelievers. They wanna know the reason for the hope that's within you.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, how grateful we are for Your word, the preciousness of it. Lord, we thank You that You have done everything necessary to redeem this world from the evil one. Jesus is at the right hand of God having gone into heaven, angels and authorities and powers have been subjected to Him. Our King reigns. Lord, we see a world that's still a mess, but we know it's not gonna be for much longer, that the end of all things is at hand. Help us to wake up, Lord. We confess, we get so easily distracted and even intoxicated with the things that are going on down here. Sometimes good causes intoxicate us, but they keep us from the best. Wake us up, Lord. Help us keep waking each other up. Help us have a saved mind. And Lord, we pray that You will pour out Your love in our hearts and through us to one another and You will help us to pursue that kind of love. We pray that You'll make us prayer warriors, that we will be people who continually, more and*

*more individual lives, live a life of continual prayer, but that we will be people who set aside more and more regular time, personally, family, and as a church to pray. And we pray that You'll make us diligent and faithful in our service. Help us get busy using our gifts to serve one another. And we pray this, Lord, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*