

## PRAYING AND LOVING - March 28, 2021

The Bible is filled with instructions as to how we are to live our lives as Christians, of how we are to live in a godly, holy and righteous way. We are going through 1 Peter and one of the main themes in this epistle is that we are to suffer for the Lord. But if we are suffering, how are we to live? What do we need to know and what are we to do?

1 Peter 4:7. This word end doesn't mean cessation or termination. It doesn't mean the complete end of this world, that this world is going to be completely destroyed. In this context, it means fulfillment, a purpose attained, or a goal achieved. And it's at the end of this age, and specifically, the end of this church age that we are going to see many of God's purposes fulfilled, especially as it relates to the church and the Jews. We read about the end of all things, and this means that everything is going to change, and it'll change in that Christ will be ruler of the world instead of the devil. All things will be dramatically affected, for Christ will rule this world in a perfect and righteous way.

And the end "*is near.*" Now this phrase "*is near*" is better translated as "*has drawn near.*" And this verb is in the perfect tense and therefore we translate this as a process that will come to an end, that will be finished, that will come to a conclusion. And so we are now living in this church age where Christ is building the church, and Satan is ruling this world, and this is a continuing process that is coming to an end. And this end is near, not in terms of time, like we think, but in terms of it's a process that has a conclusion, and we're drawing closer and closer to this conclusion, this end. Heb. 10:25, 2 Tim. 3:1, Acts 2:17-21 - last days.

And once the church is completed, is built in just the way God wants, then Christ will come back, rapture the church, judge the world, and begin His reign over this world.

All things will be wonderfully, dramatically, and gloriously different. Eph. 2:20.

And God wants us to be anticipating, expecting, looking forward to this happening, and praying for it to happen. Matt. 6:9-10

- Luke 21:27-31. Now that the Jews are back in their land, we know we're in the end-times, and that the end is still drawing near, but now we know the end of the age is not long from now, is very close, and it won't be very many years before Christ comes back to this earth.

1 Peter 4:7. In view of the fact that the end of all things is near, then what should be our mind-set, what should be our thinking? Well, we should be of sound judgment and sober spirit. And this means we are to be clear thinking, we are not to be ones whose hearts and minds are thinking about worldly and fleshly things.

- Eph. 5:18, Rom. 13:11-14, 1 Thess. 5:4-8. And so we are to be holy – we are not to be living for ourselves or the world, but for the Lord. 1 Pet. 1:13-16

And in view of the fact that the end of all things is near, then what should we do? How should we live? Listed here are four specific things we're to do. We're to pray, love the saved, love strangers, and be using our spiritual gift to serve the Lord.

Let's go over these things:

- First we are to pray. And this means we have this personal relationship with God whereby we are talking to Him, communicating to Him, and asking Him for things.
- In the OT, we read about Elijah praying to God to cause it not to rain, and later to rain.
- There was Hannah praying to God for a son, and God gave her the son Samuel.
- There was Nehemiah praying to God for wisdom to know what to say to the king.
- There was Daniel kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying to God.
- There was David who sought the Lord on many, many occasions. Ps. 63:1

In the NT, there's Anna and it is said that "*she never left the temple, serving night and day with fasting and prayers.*" Luke 2:37

- There's Peter calling out to Jesus to save him as he was going down into the water.
- There's Paul praying night and day for the church and his disciples.
- There's Epaphras praying and laboring earnestly for the Colossian church.
- Then there's the example of Jesus - Luke 5:16 – "*Jesus would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.*" Mark 1:35

And so, as Christians living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, now it's our time, now it's our turn to pray.

- 1 Thess. 5:17. We're commanded to pray and that's because God knows we need to pray, and that it's good for our lives and others. And we're to always have the communication lines open to the Father – we're to be in prayer mode all day long. Rom. 12:12
- John 14:13-14. We should pray in Jesus' name, meaning we are to pray according to His purposes, according to His power, and why? So that the Father is glorified.
- Psalm 66:18-20. We should pray with a holy heart, a heart free from sin. 1 Tim. 2:8
- Hebrews 11:6. We are to pray by faith, which means we are to believe in God, and that He is alive, and that He hears us. The one who is praying believes that God wants to bless his life, to give him what is good, to reward him.
- Matt. 7:7. We're to persevere in prayer – we're to keep asking, seeking, and knocking.
- Acts 12:5. We should pray in times of trouble. David – Ps. 31:2, 15, 22; Eph. 6:18

And who should you pray for? For yourself, for your own life, and for others, particularly those you are close to, those who are family members and friends.

- You should pray for the church, for this church, and the leaders in this church. 1 Th. 5:25
- You should pray for the lost to get saved. Rom. 10:1
- You should pray for those in authority, husbands, parents, kings and employers. 1 Tim. 2:2
- You should pray for all the nations. Mark 11:17
- You should pray for those who persecute you. Matt. 5:44, Luke 23:34

What should you pray for?

- 3 John 2. It is good to pray for the physical health of a person. Now we often tend to focus on physical needs, but we should focus on the spiritual needs of a person.
- For faith – this is what Jesus prayed for Peter. Luke 22:32
- For love – that we love people in a godly way, like it says in 1 Cor. 13.
- For holiness – that we are a holy and righteous people.
- For wisdom – James 1:5-6 – *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God.”*
- For protection – John 17:15 – *“I ask you to keep them from the evil one”*
- And we should pray for Christ’s kingdom to be established on earth. Matt. 6:9-10

What a wonderful gift that God has given us, that we can talk to Him, and pray to Him, and can ask Him for things, and He hears us, and wants to answer our prayers, and bless our lives, and all because we pray to Him. (Luke 11:1-13). I encourage you to go to God and pray to Him every day and throughout the day, and God will hear you and bless you, and He will be glorified.

1 Peter 4:8. What an important verse, and it’s all about love. And notice how this vs. starts with that phrase, *“above all.”* Now this is literally translated as before all things, which means that loving people is your first priority, is of supreme importance, is the most important thing you can do for them. In your relationships with people what’s most important is that you love them. You know what 1 Cor 13 says - if *“I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging symbol”* and it goes on to say that if you don’t have love, then you are nothing. You can have all these great abilities, and can do all these amazing things, but if you don’t love people, then you’re nothing.

As Christians then we’re to love one another. John 15:12 - *“This I command you, that you love one another.”* 1 John 4:7 - *“Beloved, let us love one another.”* 1 Pet. 1:22 says the same thing we read in 1 Pet. 4:8 - *“fervently love one another from the heart.”* And many other vss. say that we are to love one another. And love is the single most important mark of a Christian. This word love is from the Greek agape, and is a godly love, a spiritual love. The only way a person can love this way is if they’re a Christian, and have believed and known and experienced the love God has for them. 1 Jn. 4:16, 19 - Not only that, but God through the Spirit enables us to love in this way, for it is a supernatural love. And this kind of love is a fruit of the Spirit. Gal. 5:22

If a person does not love in this godly way, then he or she is not a Christian. If a person does not show any bit of love or forgiveness or kindness, then he or she is not saved. Now it says we’re to fervently love. The NIV says *“deeply”* and the ESV says *“earnestly.”* In the Greek this word literally means to strain or to stretch, to give maximum effort. And it was used to speak of a horse that was running at full speed. And so when you love others, you are to give it all you’ve got, you are to excitedly and energetically and wholeheartedly love that person.

2 Cor. 12:15. This love we're talking about is not a sentimental, feel good type of love, it means being sacrificial. If people don't love you, if people hurt you or slander you, this means you're to still love them, still forgive them, still be kind to them. It says you are to have love "*for one another*", but this is literally translated as among yourselves, which means this kind of love is to be seen in our entire church. That is, if someone walks in our church door and spends time with us, then they will sense and experience this kind of love. And God wants this and all churches to be known for this type of love. And if you go to some church and this kind of agape love is not being seen or experienced, then there's something wrong with the church.

Then it says that this love covers a multitude of sins. Now it doesn't say if it is their sins or your sins, but it can be true either way. If you have sinned against a person in different ways, but then still show godly love to them, then that love can smooth out things, is like spiritual medicine or salve for the relationship. Or if they have sinned against you, then you just keep loving them, this love being like a blanket love that covers all their offenses. When a person sins against you in different ways, then you might be tempted to keep thinking about what they have done or said to you, which could result in you getting mad at them, but God wants you to love them regardless of all their sins, and this is the kind of love God has for us.

We need to also know that love is a general word, a broad word, that there are many different aspects of this love. It's like a beautiful diamond that has all these facets, these different faces. When you go to 1 Cor. 13, Col. 3:12-13, 1 Pet. 3:8-9, you'll see all these aspects of love – like patience, kindness, humility, forgiveness, forbearance, gentleness, compassion, kindness, sympathetic, harmony, etc. And the point I want to make is that you want to be thinking about how you can be specifically loving the people that God has put in your life.

But remember, when it comes to loving people, it's not a choice you have of whether you want to love them or not, but it is what God wants you to do. Sometimes God ordains your relationships so you learn to love them in the way God wants, or else you will have problems. That is, God wants to use your relationships to teach you how to love in these ways, in humility, forgiveness, compassion, etc. And so be thinking of your relationships, and be thinking specifically how you can love them. And know that if you love them, then you'll be an encouraged person, and you will be loved in one way or another.