

**TITLE: "Between a Hard Place and The Rock: Living in Light of Christ's Coming" (Part 2)**

**PASSAGE: 1 Peter 4:7b-8**

**THEME: *A mind fused on Christ's coming is focused on persevering in prayer, practicing love, and pursuing God's glory.***

**NUMBER: 11081Pe4.7b-8(90)**

**DATE: November 23, 2008**

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**{{Read Passage}}**

**[i] Everywhere around us there are evidences that we live in perilous times**

Our nation is in moral free-fall. We elect leaders that approximate t/moral tepidity of t/populace.

There is a secular agenda that is promoted w/the zeal of WWII Nazi propaganda - an agenda that seeks to erase t/source of opposition to their goal of a society w/o external restraint: t/One true God of t/Bible.

As a young nation (only 232 years old) we have become hostile toward that which played so rich a role in our founding - t/Gospel of JC.

If they hate the message, know that they will hate the messengers - we who have been born again by His grace.

**[ii] So much of the message of 1 Peter is becoming increasingly relevant to us today**

A people distressed by various trials (1:6)

Those who are having t/reality of their faith tested (1:7)

Slandered as evil doers (2:12)

Like our Master, reviled and threatened (2:23)

Insulted and intimidated (2:9,14)

Slandered (2:16)

Suffering (2:17)

Hated for our love of holiness (4:4)

This is where we live today!

[iii] As we come to 4:7-11 ==>

The message is live your lives as if t/return of JC to consummate all things were right around the corner.

Live your lives with a sense of urgency!

How different would our focus be if we knew that this week might be our last -

Our last to excel in prayer

Our last to pray for and plead w/God for the lost

Our last to forsake those besetting sins

Our last to learn more good theological truth

Our last to prepare our hearts to give an account to t/Judge of t/Univ.

We live in tough times - but t/other side - the light at t/end of t/tunnel if you will, is The Rock, JC.

Yes, we are "**Between a Hard Place and The Rock:**

So we must be about **Living in Light of Christ's Coming**"

To bring t/text B4 us to bear, the message is ==>

A mind fused on Christ's coming is focused on persevering in prayer, practicing love, and pursuing God's glory.

Sums up what Peter is teaching us in these 5 vv. {restate}

[iv] As far as our outline is concerned - we put this in the form of three questions (each begin with the letter "M")

As those who live between the hard place and the Rock, what is:

- 1) Our Motivation?
- 2) Our Mission?
- 3) Our Mandate?

As far as our motivation . . .

## I. What is our Motivation? (7a)

### A. To Live in Light of Christ's Coming

**The end of all things has come near . . .**

#### a. That's a literal translation

Perfect Tense ==>

**The end of all things has come near . . .**

#### (1) For some that's been a problem . . .

After all, Peter wrote this almost 2k years ago. But as we saw last week, he wasn't predicting anything // setting any dates. He wasn't even declaring from his perspective that JC could come at any instant.

Peter writes about 6 years before a major cataclysmic event was to happen, one that Jesus predicted would happen - the fall of Jerusalem.

#### a. Jerusalem fell in 70 AD

This was a huge event. As we noted last week, the fall of Jerusalem & specifically t/destruction of t/Temple was predicted by Jesus in Matt. 24.

There were a number of military men in Jerusalem who were rejecting Roman occupation. They were known as "Zealots."

They provoked Rome and were attacked from March to Sept. of AD 70.

The Roman army was led by t/Roman General Titus. They besieged and conquered the city of Jerusalem, which had been occupied by its Jewish defenders in 66. The city and its famous Temple were completely destroyed.

The destruction of the Temple is still mourned annually as the Jewish fast Tisha B'Av.

Famous Jewish historian of the 1st c., Josephus, actually served as a mediator for the Romans. When all negotiations failed, he recorded, as an eye-witness, t/siege and aftermath.

"Now as soon as the army had no more people to slay or to plunder, because there remained none to be the objects of their fury (for they would not have spared any, had there remained any other work to be done), [Titus] Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and Temple, but should leave as many of the towers standing as they were of the greatest eminence. . . . [The] wall [that] enclosed the city on the west side . . . was spared . . . as were the towers [the three forts] . . . in order to demonstrate to posterity what kind of city it was, and how well fortified. . . [But] for all the rest of the wall [surrounding Jerusalem], it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it [Jerusalem] had ever been inhabited. This was the end which Jerusalem came to by the madness of those that were for innovations; a city otherwise of great magnificence, and of mighty fame among all mankind.[2] And truly, the very view itself was a

melancholy thing; for those places which were adorned with trees and pleasant gardens, were now become desolate country every way, and its trees were all cut down. Nor could any foreigner that had formerly seen Judaea and the most beautiful suburbs of the city, and now saw it as a desert, but lament and mourn sadly at so great a change. For the war had laid all signs of beauty quite waste. Nor had anyone who had known the place before, had come on a sudden to it now, would he have known it again. But though he [a foreigner] were at the city itself, yet would he have inquired for it.[3]

The siege was affected by starving out the city. Close it off so that no foods or supplies could be brought in.

To make it worse, Titus allowed pilgrims to enter the city but not to leave. That was a ploy to put further hardships on the city - more people there meant more mouths to feed.

It was so bad that people ate their infant children.

Josephus claims that 1,100,000 people were killed; 97,000 were captured and many others fled to areas around the Mediterranean.

Titus reportedly refused to accept a wreath of victory, as there is "no merit in vanquishing people forsaken by their own God".[5]

What did Jesus say in His Olivet Discourse?

Not one stone left upon another . . . Wars . . . famines . . . tribulation . . . death . . . the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place (the Temple)

This was one of the most horrendous (some would argue the most horrendous) time in recorded history.

I'm willing to say that Peter may have had this on his mind, but not at the forefront.

When he says,

**The end of all things has come near . . .**

he's not focusing on the events in Jerusalem that would occur in another 6 years.

For one thing, he's not writing to those who live in Jerusalem. He's not writing to Jews exclusively.

His readers are those scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. These were in 4 Roman Provinces - all areas S. of the Black Sea in Asia Minor roughly in/around modern day Turkey.

Peter is thinking more in terms of the ultimate consummation of all things.

Compare what he writes in 2 Peter 3:10-12

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. 11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!

This is what Peter is referring to when he says ==>

**The end of all things has come near . . .**

IOW - from Peter's perspective, he could see the events lining up as Jesus predicted. Believers were hated. There were false X's. Growing political tension in and around Jerusalem.

Gospel was spreading and who knows how long after the destruction of Jerusalem time would go on?

How long would be the fulness of the Gentiles? The full number of those who had been chosen for salvation.

Peter didn't know; he wasn't setting dates. He is saying "Be ready."

Remember I said all eschatology begins at the cross. With Jesus' life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension comes an extended period of time known as "the last days." When Jesus left he said, "*be ready. I'll return in the same way. It will not come when expect it.*"

But 1000 years is as a day to our God who stands apart from time. Message is the same for us as it was for them. We need to be ready.

In Noah's day they forgot, and the flood came. Judgement.

In Lot's day sinners were destroyed in an instant. Judgement.

Jesus said that, as it was in the days of Noah and of Lot, it will be again.

Luke 21:34-36 34 "Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap; 35 for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. 36 "But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

As TAP declares in 1 Thess. 5 - **When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes.**

Again, let me ask you?

## **I. What is our Motivation? (7a)**

### **A. To Live in Light of Christ's Coming**

**The end of all things has come near . . .**

Second ==>

## **II. What is our Mission? (7b-11a)**

### **A. To be Serious about Prayer (7b)**

#### **1. Prayer is a barometer of spiritual health**

If you have a serious mind about living in light of X's return, you will be a man or woman of prayer. For the believer, it starts in t/mind.

**. . . therefore, be of sound and sober mind for the purpose of prayer.**

#### **a. "Therefore" ==>**

Because t/end of all things has come near & since your motivation is to live w/expectancy & readiness for t/coming of your Lord, be of sound and sober mind that you might pray.

**(1) Sound and Sober mind translates two verbs - both are imperatives**



(a) The first verb - σωφρονεω - to be serious, sensible, sound

### i. Translated "to be in the right mind" in Mark 5:15

Remember Mark 5 - The Gerasene Demoniac - t/demon-possessed man who lived in t/tombs? He possessed super human strength & no one was able to subdue him - even w/chains. He comes to Jesus crying out, "What do I have to do w/you, Jesus, Son of t/Most High God. I implore you by God do not torment me!"

Jesus asks t/demons, "What is your name" and they reply "Legion" for there were many of them & Jesus casts them out of the man into a herd of swine who then run berserk in a wild stampede & fall of a cliff & are drowned.

The herdsman see it & run off to the town to tell t/people what had happened (after all, it's not every day that you see demon possessed pigs). A crowd comes, they recognize t/man whom they had been unable to subdue & Mark says they find him, "In his right mind."

From the same word we have here.

### ii. The Mark passage has led some to translate the verb "sane" ("having a sane mind")

I suppose if you press t/analogy, to not take these things seriously - to dabble in sin & live your life as if t/Master's coming isn't relevant to your life, is to be spiritually insane.

As one commentator observes ==>

"The great characteristic of sanity is that it sees things in their proper proportions; it sees what things are important and what are not . . .

It is only when we see the affairs of earth in light of eternity that we see them in their proper proportions; it is when God is in his proper place that everything takes its proper place." [Barclay, 251]

IOW - t/spiritual sanity of your mind will tell in what you prioritize in life.

### iii. What's more important in light of eternity?

Joining w/the brethren in prayer here on Sunday nights or catching t/late football game? Or getting that 12 point buck? Or doing whatever it is that takes priority over your private and public prayer life?

And I might suggest that Peter has both public & private prayer in mind as he uses the plural word "Prayers" - an indication that he's referring to personal devotion, family prayer, and corporate church prayer gatherings.

### iv. Interesting - you go to Acts chapter 1 and what do you find?

We have t/record of Jesus' ascension, t/promise of t/coming of t/HS. After Jesus ascends into heaven b4 their very eyes, they head back to Jerusalem & what do they do? Continually pray.

In Acts chapter 4 you have t/beginnings of persecution, Peter & John are arrested. What does t/CH do? They pray. Verse 31 says that ==> . . . when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

**. . . be of sound and sober mind for the purpose of prayer.**

A sound/sane & a sober (literally a non-inebriated) mind. Why?

As William Tyndale translated it, "that you may be apt to prayers."

Certainly, when we look at things with sober-mindedness we will be "apt to pray." We will cry out to God.

**b. And not only will we pray, we will pray sound & sober-minded prayers!**

**(1) Away with trivial prayer!**

Our prayers are so often trivial. We pray for someone who has t/sniffles & for another who wants to win a ball-game & for someone else to have a fun day out with the kids (& good weather).

We don't pray as we ought!

We scuttle through our requests skipping merrily along from Aunt Rita's sciatica to cousin Mike's new girlfriend to request for new drapes in t/living room. All t/while we forget to worship & give thanks to Him w/whom we live and move and have our being // forget to plead for t/souls of t/lost // forget to cry out for those who are destitute & suffering.

Like those to whom James writes, we ==>

. . . ask and do not receive, because [we] ask with wrong motives, so that [we] may spend it on [our] pleasures. . . adulteresses! do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?

God wants us to pray radically and urgently

Our prayers would be transformed in intensity and content if we were living in light of Christ's coming. "*Christ may return soon; my husband is lost. Oh, how I want him to know the truth and be saved!*"

The end of all things might be right around t/corner. *"We need to reach the lost with the gospel! We need more time to love one another // to glorify our God // mend that friendship // forsake that sin."*

This is where we need to weep with those who weep. We look at a lost, sin-cursed world and grieve for the lost. We look at those who are hurting and our hearts break for them.

We learn that life is no game.

Some of that only comes with age. I feel that turning the page to middle-agedness was one of the best things that ever happened to me as far as ministry is concerned.

Jonathan Edwards talked about viewing life through the pleasures of heaven and the horrors of hell.

Mark 13:32-37 32 "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. 33 "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time is. 34 "It is like a man, away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. 35 "Therefore, be on the alert—for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, at cockcrow, or in the morning— 36 lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. 37 "And what I say to you I say to all, 'Be on the alert!'"

Being on t/alert includes being ==>

**... of sound and sober mind for the purpose of prayer.**

"Those who pray much will grow rich in grace. The people who thrive and increase most are those who are busiest in this." [Leighton, 197]

## ***I. What is our Motivation? (7a)***

### ***A. To Live in Light of Christ's Coming***

## ***II. What is our Mission? (7b-11a)***

### ***A. To be Serious about Prayer (7b)***

Secondly ==>

### ***B. To be Selfless in our Love (8-11a)***

Serious about prayer . . . Selfless in our love . . .

Verses 8, 9, 10, & 11 are all about love, specifically love for one another.

Note how this is expressed in that phrase, "one another" -

"keep fervent in your love for one another" (8)

"be hospitable to one another" (9)

"serve one another" (10)

We are specifically referring to t/love that is to characterize our relationship with each other as Christians. The love that's found among t/brethren.

What I've found are 7 aspects of that love: It's Priority, Nature, Depth, Effect, Practice, Attitude, and Fruit.

7 aspects that take us up to the first part of v. 11 . . .

First ==>

### ***1. The Priority of our love (8a)***

**Above all, remain fervent in your love for one another . . .**

**Above all . . .**

**a. The number one priority in the body is love**

Isn't doctrine important? Yes

Isn't worship important? Yes

Isn't evangelism important? Yes

Isn't prayer important? Yes

Isn't preaching important? Yes

Isn't helping others important? Yes

But genuine love encompasses these things. In fact, none of these things are of much value unless they are fueled by love.

1 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 cymbal.

2 And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

**b. The Greek word translated "above" is the preposition**

**πρῶ**

It's a genitive of rank. πρῶ can mean first in order (chronology - this is 1,2,3,4, etc.) or first in rank (sense of priority - make this your first priority). That 2d sense is what's in mind here.

Love for one another is our priority.

We see that t/o the N.T.

JOH 13:35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

1JO 2:10 The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

1JO 3:10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

1JO 3:23 And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

1JO 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

ROM 13:8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled {the} law.

JAM 2:8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, "\You shall love your neighbor as yourself,\" you are doing well.

COL 3:14 And beyond all these things {put on} love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

Hebrews 13:1 Let love of the brethren continue.

1CO 13:8 Love never fails . . .

### *1. The Priority of our love (8a)*

### *2. The Nature of our love (8a)*

**Above all, remain fervent in your love for one another . . .**

**a. The nature of our love is that it is a for one another kind of love**

WIMBT is that there is a uniqueness to it. A uniqueness and a selflessness.

It is unique in that it is t/kind of love special to Christians.

In fact, one of the evidences of saving faith is love of the brethren.

1 John 3:14 **We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.**

1TH 4:9 **Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for {anyone} to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;**

That was one thing I discovered as a new believer. That I had a profound love for other Christians. There is an affection that transcends anything I have ever experienced in my life.

You run across someone who went to the same H.S. - that's pretty cool. Or someone from your old hometown. But there's nothing like t/love shared among believers.

### **(1) There is a cause and effect relationship here**

The cause is our salvation; the effect is our love. Message of 1 John is that if there is no effect, then there is no cause. IOW - if your life doesn't reflect the effect of love, then there was no cause of justification.

One effect of our love for God is our love for one another.

### **(a) We saw this back in chapter 1 (turn to 1:22)**

God saved you that you would love one another.

**Having purified your souls by obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love each other from a pure heart.**



Our salvation is the fuel for the fire of brotherly love.

That kind of love is a selfless love. It seeks to serve others rather than self. It's focused on others rather than on self.

Here is the great enemy of true love for God and others: Love of self. This is the core of all our failures and sin. Self-love.

### 3. The Depth of our love (8b)

a. The depth of our love is that it is fervent ==>

... remain fervent in your love for one another ...

(1) Same thing we saw in 1:22

... fervently love each other from a pure heart.

(2) Both words translated "fervent" come from the same root: "to stretch"

(a) Used in the realm of athletics

Word that pictures sprinters in a dead heat at the finish line stretching forward to reach t/tape first.

It's to be stretched to the limit.

Can we as a CH be stretched to the limit with our love?

IOW - can we be about straining every spiritual muscle in our effort to love one another?

This means loving one another when we are not so lovely. That's t/true test of love. Don't just tell me, show me. With humility & sacrifice.

#### 4. The Effect of Our Love (8c)

... for love covers a multitude of sins.

a. What love? That fervent love that is maintained

b. What does this mean that "love covers a multitude of sins?"

It doesn't mean, as some have suggested, that it covers t/sins of t/one loving. IOW - there's nothing atoning for my love for you or your love for me. That would be salv. by works.

It doesn't mean that we love others to the extent that we overlook sin and don't address it. IOW - if you are involved in a sinful practice, those w/i t/CH have a responsibility to address that (CH discipline).

This isn't some sort of theological statement as such.

#### (1) Some think that Peter is drawing from Prov. 10:12

Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all transgressions.

While he may be alluding to that passage, it's not a quote. Peter's words here are nowhere close to the wording of either the Hebrew or the LXX.

Close parallel to the apocryphal book, The Testament of Joseph. That book was likely known by Peter & we know he didn't shy away from citing outside sources.

"love one another and in patient endurance conceal one another's shortcomings." (17:2; OPTG 1.823) - [cited in Evans, 309]

## (2) What it means is this:

We all sin. We are at once righteous and sinful. Our righteousness is outside of us in t/merits of JC.

While we may not be practicing some sort of scandalous sin, we are going to sin nonetheless. We will let each other down from time to time. We may say something t/wrong way. Others may do something that we don't like. But we remain fervent in our commitment to love one another & we don't let those things cause division & bitterness. We forgive one another & we forget.

I shared w/some of you a quote I read from Spurgeon: "When you cease to pray for me, let me know for I will cease to preach."

I ID so much w/that statement. But I also could say, "When you cease to love me and each other, let me know, for I will cease to be your shepherd."

There's no mark of spiritual success like love. The greatest encouragement I can get is that my leadership here at CCC has helped to motivate the body toward greater love.

It was told of the Puritan Pastor, Richard Baxter, that the members of his congregation in response to his often confrontive preaching, would say, "We take all things well from one who always and wholly loves us."

{{Cf. situation w/Reid at ECF (makes me wonder....)}}

### (3) A church is like a family

Rather than physical, we are spiritual relations. We are a diverse living organism made up of people from different backgrounds. While we have new life in X in common, we don't all see eye to eye. We don't agree on everything. We have various personalities. Some of us are quirky. We all have our quirks.

I remember before I ever got married, an older friend upon marrying remarked, "One thing you learn when you're married is that little things that you never thought of will just irritate the daylights out of you."

Fair to say that if we spend enough time w/each other and really get involved there will be times when we get on each other's nerves.

I suppose we could all just walk into CH right at the opening prayer. Run out w/the closing prayer. Never interact w/others. Play it safe.

But even then there would be opportunities to grow bitter. *"Did you hear what the preacher said today?" "Yeah, and what about the new paint? Who chose that color?" "Oh man, I can't stand that music." "I know, I hate it hear. Let's find another church!"*

I know of a man who claims to be a Christian and never went to church because he's so dysfunctional personality-wise. He and his wife finally found a church they thought they liked. They were going there for a few months. Even got to know people there. One day, someone said someone asked the man for some help setting some things up, and because t/tone or words weren't just right, he got his feelings hurt and left the church. That was about 15 years ago. So for the past 15 years he has chosen to stay at home.

That's a waste of opportunity to grow, serve, and worship.

It can be a good thing when things don't go our way or when someone irritates us. It's an opportunity to grow more like Jesus // to demonstrate whether we really know what it means to love.

After all, it's easy to love the lovely. That's why I'm so easy to love! Challenge is to love the unlovely. Or even the lovely when they are acting not so lovely.

English preacher of the turn of the last c., J.H. Jowett ==>

"There is love whose measure is that of an umbrella. There is love whose inclusiveness is that of a great marquee. And there is love whose comprehension is that of the immeasurable sky. The aim of the New Testament is the conversion of the umbrella into a tent and the merging of the tent into the glorious canopy of the all-enfolding heavens. . . . Push back the walls of family love until they include the neighbor; again push back the walls until they include the stranger; again push back the walls until they comprehend the foe." [cited in Swindoll, 189-90]

It's not enough to simply ignore it or grin and bear it. *"That really angers me, but I'll put up with it."*

Here again is the recurring N.T. theme that evil is not overcome simply by refraining from it. Evil is overcome by good (cf. 3:11).

As one writer puts it ==>

"It is not enough to break a bad habit; it is essential to love Jesus more, to want eternal things more. It is not enough not to retaliate against an enemy; it is essential to love one's enemy. So too here in 1 Pet. 4:8: it is not enough to try to be faithful ourselves, to put up with abuse from outsiders, and if necessary assume a defensive posture with fellow believers. That will merely fester into hatred. Because we belong to Christ, we are to overcome evil with good." [Beale, 1040]

There's much here to be plumbed. There is no law against love.

"love and do as you please" (Augustine).

Even our sin needs to be replaced with love. If I lust, I must love God more and love my wife more. If I feel embittered toward a brother, I must not simply "put up with him," I must love him more.

Persecution will draw us together . . . . won't be so worried about our little petty doctrinal differences.

Gandhi, the Indian nationalist, once said, "I like your Christ, but I don't like your Christians. . . . They are so unlike your Christ." [cited in Swindoll, 188]

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A mind fused on Christ's coming is focused on persevering in prayer, practicing love, and pursuing God's glory.

### *I. What is our Motivation? (7a)*

#### *A. To Live in Light of Christ's Coming*

### *II. What is our Mission? (7b-11a)*

#### *A. To be Serious about Prayer (7b)*

#### *B. To be Selfless in our Love (8-11a)*

Priority, Nature, Depth, Effect,

Practice, Attitude, and Fruit.