

TITLE: "Between a Hard Place and The Rock: Living in Light of Christ's Coming" (Part 3)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 4:8-9

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

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{{Read Passage}}

[i] Peter begins this section with the statement:

The end of all things has come near . . . {repeat}

I believe I have shared this with you once before: among the more interesting books that I have in my library are these:

Gorbachev: Has the real antichrist come (ref to M.G. former Soviet head of state, 1988-91) - as you may remember, he possessed a rather large birthmark on his forehead which some claimed morphed into a 666 if t/lighting was just right.

88 reasons why the rapture will be in 1988

[ii] What does Peter mean when he says {repeat}??

We addressed this back in part 1 - but to refresh your memories, allow me to quote from Tom Schreiner's commentary on 1 Peter (Schreiner is a top N.T. scholar who teaches at Southern Seminary in Louisville).

"We have a typical feature of N.T. eschatology here. Nowhere does the N.T. encourage the setting of dates or of any . . . kinds of charts."

I get real nervous when I see some preacher on TV and t/backdrop for his pulpit is a dispensational time line that rivals t/Great Wall of China!

Schreiner continues:

"Eschatology (fancy word for end times) is invariably used to encourage believers to live in a godly way . . . [not] to withdraw from the world because the end is near and to gaze at the skies, hoping the Lord will return soon. The immanence of the end should function as a stimulus us to action in this world. The knowledge that believers are sojourners and exiles, whose time is short, should galvanize them to make their lives count now." [Schreiner, 210-11]

The great reformer, Martin Luther was once asked what he would do if he knew that X was returning the next day. He retorted, "I'd plant a tree and pay my taxes."

What he meant was, he lived every day in light of the end and would continue each day's appointed tasks, as usual.

That's the message.

[iii] If you were to live your life like t/end of all things was right around the corner - you would be living well - with a holy sense of urgency

MAT 24:36-37 "But of **that** day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. 37 For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah."

MAT 24:42 "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming."

After the parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25 - a parable on being ready - what's the lesson?

MAT 25:13 "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour."

TAP ==>

1TH 5:2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

1TH 5:4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief;

Why?! - Because, like Luther we are to be about t/business of the KD. As believers in JC our "default setting" is to be ready. To be found doing nothing that would cause us shame should our Master suddenly return.

Why in the next verse, Paul writes -- 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;

6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.

Apostle Peter, in his second letter (2 Peter 3:10-11) ==>

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?

[iv] Think about it: What if the N.T. gave us a date for the end?

What if it said, "t/last chapter will be finished on April 23, 2017."

The CH t/o its history would have looked at that & said, "2017?? We cannot fathom how long into t/future that is.

I guess there's no hurry to evangelize or pray for revival. That's too far into t/future for us to even think about, much less be ready for."

Then those living near that date would suddenly clean up their act. "Hey, it's next year. We better get going."

You would have 1000s making false professions of faith to get their "fire insurance."

No - God in knowing our sinful estate expects each generation of Xns to be ready. That for our good & His glory. I'm thankful

Could even look at it this way: How would you like it if everyone, when they were born, also received t/exact date of their death?

Your born & along w/your B.C. you get your D.C.!!

Bring unhealthy despair for those who were to die young. Would bring an even worse apathy for those who die old. Most would skate along thru life thinking, "It's not a big deal. I've got time." Again, you would have free-will theism run amuck! "I'll put off being a Christian until t/day before I die." You think there are tares in t/CH now??!!

No - each of us no matter what time period God has called us unto is to live with expectancy.

[v] To bring our passage in 1 Peter back to the forefront - the message is this:

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

It starts by fusing our minds on t/fact that our Lord & Master could come suddenly. He will come unexpectedly. We are to be ready.

We are to be ready specifically in ==> persevering in prayer, practicing love, and pursuing God's glory. Persevere/prayer; Practice/love; Pursue/God's glory.

[vi] We've been traveling through this text by way of three basic questions (each beginning with the letter "M")

As those who live in perilous times, those living between the hard place and the Rock, what should be ==>

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

I. What is our Motivation? (7a)

A. To Live in Light of Christ's Coming

The end of all things has come near . . .

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

A. To be Serious about Prayer (7b)

1. Prayer is a barometer of spiritual health

That's true for individuals and for Chs. If it's not a priority for t/individ. it won't be for t/CH.

If you have a serious mind about living in light of X's return, you will be a man or woman of prayer. Peter reminds us that this 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.

I. What is our Motivation? (7a)

A. To Live in Light of Christ's Coming

The end of all things has come near . . .

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

First ==>

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 our mutual love in the body of X. You can see that in t/expression "one another" that's used sev. x ==>

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

"be hospitable to one another" (9)

"serve one another" (10)

This has led me to believe that t/central focus in this passage, in living in light of X's coming, is that we will love God and love one another.

So we're specifically referring to t/love that is to characterize our relationship w/each other as Christians.

There are 7 aspects of that love that carry us through t/heart of t/text. We covered t/First 4 last time & we'll finish 2 more today.

I find it awkward in a sermon to jump right to where we left off, so for t/sake of cohesion, t/first aspect of Our Mission Unto Selfless Love==>

1. The Priority of Our Love: It is First (8a)

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

Above all . . .

a. Our First priority in the body is love

As important as doctrine / worship / evangelism / prayer / preaching are, they are emasculated if they are not fueled by love.

Certainly, that begins w/our love for God. Out of that love for God that comes from a regenerate heart flows love for other Xns.

2. The Nature of Our Love: It is Innate (8a)

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

It is a "one another" kind of love that is an innate, or natural result of our being new creations in JC.

It's not learned behavior. Now we can always learn to excel and love one another more, but this love will be evident if there has been new birth.

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.**

How much more clear could it be?

Why I wonder about those who have no desire to be w/other Xns. You hear about those who are supposed to be B.A. & they're not part of a local CH. They don't have Christian friends. In fact, most of t/time they're hanging out & having fun w/unbelievers.

Doesn't that say something?

Cannot be a new creature in X and not love those who are your spiritual brothers and sisters.

1JO 2:9 The one who says he is in the light and {yet} hates his brother is in the darkness until now.

1JO 2:11 But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness . . .

1JO 3:15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

1JO 4:20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar . . . !!!

I witnessed this transformation in my father's life. He was unloved his own dad & grew up quite dysfunctionally. As a result he was unable to express love to others. It was like it had been erased from his programming.

What do you think happened when he came to saving faith in JC? That which was gone was written in by t/finger of God. To this day, some 30 years later, my dad cannot talk about what happened to him without breaking down and crying.

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;

He has written it into your programming w/the finger of His grace.

3. The Depth of Our Love: It is Fervent (8b)

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

a. Again, this is the same thing we saw in 1:22

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

(1) Both words translated "fervent" come from the same Greek root (τελλω): "to stretch"

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

4. The Effect of Our Love: It is Forgiving (8c)

... for love covers a multitude of sins.

This 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).

a. Some think that Peter is drawing from Prov. 10:12

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

Peter's words here are nowhere close to the wording of t/Hebrew or LXX text of Prov. 10:12.

There is a very close parallel to the apocryphal book, The Testament of Joseph.

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

That source was likely known by Peter & he is perhaps alluding to it here.

love one another and conceal one another's shortcomings.

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 & we forget.

That brings us to the rest of the passage . . .

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

A. To be Serious about Prayer (7b)

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

1. The Priority of Our Love: It is First (8a)

2. The Nature of Our Love: It is Innate (8a)

3. The Depth of Our Love: It is Fervent (8b)

4. The Effect of Our Love: It is Forgiving (8c)

Fifth ==>

5. The Practice of Our Love: It is Hospitable (9a)

Be hospitable to one another . . .

a. Here is the second of the "one another" statements in this passage

First "be fervent in your love for one another." Here ==>

Be hospitable to one another . . .

b. This is the first practical way that love is demonstrated

All t/other characteristics are attitudes. They are attitudes that require action, but they are attitudes nonetheless.

IOW - I could say, "I love you fervently and this is my first priority and I will overlook your quirks and the things that may irritate me about you. And I will forgive you when you sin."

But, how do I show you that my attitudes are real?

Hospitality puts feet to the claim of love. It is love in motion.

c. The word "hospitality" literally means, "love of strangers"

Compound word from ξενος which means "foreigner or stranger" & φιλος "love or friendship" added as a prefix. φιλόξενος

(1) Loving strangers, particularly other Christians, was a foremost concern in the first few centuries

There is a doc. of antiquity known as "The Didache" ("the doctrine or teaching"). Early CH instruction manual dates to 1st or 2d c.

1 But let every one that comes in the name of the Lord be received; and then when you have tested him you shall know him, for you shall have understanding on the right hand and on the left. 2 If the comer is a traveler, assist him, so far as you are able; but he shall not stay with you more than two or three days, if it be necessary. 3 But if he wishes to settle with you, being a craftsman, let him work for and eat his bread.

4 But if he has no craft, according to your wisdom provide how he shall live as a Christian among you, but not in idleness. 5 If he will not do this, he is trafficking upon Christ. Beware of such men. [Didache 12:1-5]

This shows the concern t/CH had for taking care of strangers.

The early CH was only following what they knew from t/canonical Scriptures.

Texts such as t/startling admonition found in Hebrews 13 ==>
HEB 13:2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Never know who you may be helping! OT example of that is Abraham & Lot, who showed hospitality to 3 men who turned out to be God & two holy angels (Gen. 18-19).

Remember Jesus' words in Matt. 25, speaking of t/great judgement. The peoples will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

“Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 ‘For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; 36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ 37 “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? 38 ‘And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 ‘And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’

40 “And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’

Hospitality & mercy are to charact. t/regenerate even as apathy & neglect charact. t/unbelieving. That’s Luke 10 (Par. of G.S.).

(a) Hospitality was especially pertinent in the 1st century

You didn’t have a Motel 6 in every town. Inns that did exist were usually brothels. They were dirty & expensive.

Plato speaks of the innkeeper being like a pirate, who holds his guests for ransom.

In one of Aristophanes’s plays, Heracles asks his companion where they will lodge for the night; and the answer was: ‘Where the fleas are fewest.’

i. For some there was what was called, ‘Guest Friendships’

Mutual arrangements were made between families living in various regions whereby they would extend a safe place to stay during travel.

Sometimes t/extended members of t/families invl. in these "G.F." didn't know each other, so they came up w/a system of I.D. -- “tessera hospitalis” or "tallies." These "tallies" were some sort of an object that was broken in 2 & only matched t/other half (kind of like a key in a lock).

So if you came into a town, and needed accommodation. You sought out your "G.F." & produced your tally. When t/host had t/other half he knew that he had indeed found a pre-arranged guest. [cf. Barclay, DSB: 1 Timothy, 82]

(2) Our contemporary western culture has little understanding for how essential hospitality was for those living in the ancient near east

This helps explain why Lot, in Genesis 19, would offer his 2 daughters to t/wicked men of Sodom rather than his 2 guests – "do nothing to these men for they come under the shelter of my roof."

d. While all of this is important & while the word "hospitality" literally means, "love of strangers" -- note what it says in verse 9 ==>

Be hospitable (to whom?) to one another . . .

(1) This is an expression of love, not just to strangers, but to fellow believers, to those you know

Keep in mind, much like today, t/CH was an island of light in a sea of darkness. Xns kept together. They needed each other. It was rough out there in t/world (we've seen that t/o 1 Peter - Xns were despised, slandered, mocked).

There were no formal CH buildings - those would come a century or two later.

So each local CH met in a member's home. Hospitality was essential.

(2) Yet - I fear we still have a hard time wrapping our minds around that word

We think of "hospitality" & t/first thing that comes to our mind is the hors de vours. Pass t/olives.

What does it look like for we as Xns - specifically CCC to be about practicing hospitality.

Turn to Romans 12

Romans 12:3-16 addresses much of what we see in 1 Peter 4 only in reverse. WIMBT - Paul talks about spiritual gifts and serving one another in t/CH in t/first part of the passage while Peter does t/same thing, only he saves spiritual gifts for last. Paul talks about love in the body and hospitality in vv. 9-16. That's what Peter addresses first.

They address much the same thing, but in reverse order.

{read 3-8}

This is what we will see next time in 1 Peter (vv. 10-11) ==>

10 As each one has received a spiritual gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 If anyone speaks, [let him speak] as the utterances of God; if anyone serves, [let him serve] out of the strength supplied by God; so that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

{read 9-16}

Right in t/middle of that passage we find "practicing hospitality" (v. 13). But what does that mean? Several clues in t/text.

Front half of v. 13 "contributing to the needs of the saints."

Whenever you help meet t/need of another brother or sister, you are practicing hospitality. That could be a physical need, or a spiritual one.

Hospitality is mercy in action. Mercy on a mission.

- * It is fueled by sincere love and hatred of evil (v. 9)
- * It is devoted to seek the good of my brother or sister rather than my own (v. 10)
- * It is fervent in spirit, it is service to JC above all things (v. 11) - Remember that's what we saw earlier in Matt. 25 - "when you have practiced hospitality and mercy to one of these brothers of mine, even to the least of them, you did it to me."

That's James 2:15-17 *If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself*

That's 1 John 3:17-18 *But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.*

Back to 1 Peter 4

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)

1. The Priority of Our Love: It is First (8a)

2. The Nature of Our Love: It is Innate (8a)

3. The Depth of Our Love: It is Fervent (8b)

4. *The Effect of Our Love: It is Forgiving (8c)*

5. *The Practice of Our Love: It is Hospitable (9a)*

6. *The Attitude of Our Love: It is Cheerful (9b)*

Be hospitable (to whom?) to one another (how?) without complaint.

1. Word γογγυσμος - murmuring, grumbling

A word that's used of Israel in the LXX to describe their continued grumbling.

We see that in Exodus chapters 15-17 and Numbers chapters 14 & 16. TAP looking back on these instances writes in 1 Cor. 10:10 - "don't grumble as they did and were destroyed."

Bottom line is that complaining about one's circumstances is ultimately a complaint against Whom? The Lord of all circumstances.

As such it is an expression of ingratitude. Our attitude in our love is not to be grumbling or complaining, but cheerfulness and joy knowing that God has ordained all that is for our good and His glory.

"God has granted to each of us the special graces needed for the upbuilding of his church, so that we will do what he has indicated should be done, not only without complaint, but with joy." [Augustine]

Lastly ==>

7. The Fruit of Our Love: It is Serving (10-11a)

But we're out of time, so we will save this for next time.

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

"Between a Hard Place and The Rock: Living in Light of Christ's Coming"

J.C. Ryle's observations on holy living apply to all believers living in a world hostile to Christianity:

"A holy man will follow after spiritual mindedness. He will endeavor to set his affections entirely on things above, and to hold things on earth with a very loose hand. He will not neglect the business of the life that now is; but the first place in his mind and thoughts will be given to the life to come. He will aim to live like the one whose treasure is in heaven, and to pass through this world like a stranger and pilgrim traveling to his home." [Holiness, reprint edition, 1987, 37]