

# Exegesis of I Peter 4:7-11

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## Translation

*Verse 7* Now the end of all things has come near. Therefore be sober-minded and vigilant for prayer.

*Verse 8* Before everything else having love for your own selves fully extended (exerted), because love covers over a multitude of sins.

*Verse 9* Hospitable to one another without murmuring.

*Verse 10* According as each one received a charisma, ministering it for your own selves as good stewards of God's manifold grace.

*Verse 11* If one speaks, as God's sayings; If one serves, as out of strength which God supplies; so that in every way God through Jesus Christ may be glorified, to Whom belongs the glory and. the power for the eons of the eons. Amen.

## Introduction

In this section of the 4th chapter, Peter is reminding the reader of the nearness of the end, and what the Christian should be doing and how he should be living as he stands in the eventide of history. The conclusion that we should draw is obvious. If the end was at hand already 1900 years ago, how much closer at hand must it be now!

These five verse bring to the reader 3 admonitions in regard to their lives at this time and all times. The admonitions are listed as follows: I. Prayer II. Love III. Fidelity.

Verse 7 deals with prayer and how the Christian ought to pray as the last day approaches. Verses 8 and 9 call for the exercise and the fruits of Christian love. Verses 10 and 11 call for fidelity in the lives of the Christians.

## Variants

There are five variant readings in this section. We need not concern ourselves with them because they lack textual authority and bear no theological significance.

## Verse 7

ἤγγικεν - 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. sing. perf. ind., of ἐγγίζω from the Adverb ἔγγυς - come near (near). The perfect of ἐγγίζω, as in this case may be translated "is near".

τὸ τέλος - This word is never used to denote simply a temporal end, but it retains the idea of goal or conclusion. With the "all things", this phrase is interpreted to mean that all things shall reach their final goal...conclusion.

σωφρονήσατε - 2 pers. pl. aor. imperative, from σεφρονέω - sober minded...keep one's head, of a balanced mind.

νήψατε - 2 pers pl. aor. imperative, of νήφω, vigilant in regard to spiritual matters. (Spiritual sobriety) cf. Titus 2:1-6.

Peter here speaks about the nearness of the end of time. Lenski states in his commentary: "Since Christ's first coming there is nothing more to expect than His second coming in judgment, and this may now occur at any time. The Apostles had no revelation as to the date. They were in the same position in which we are at this date. They spoke as we must now speak."

In view of this nearness of the end, the writer calls for a balanced disposition, never flighty or carried away by our own notions or those of others, nor by persecutions of men. Vigilant or sober for prayer implies a soundness of mind in connection with worship. Lenski comments: "They who pray aright to God, who worship as they should, will gladly do all that is here asked and will be aided and enabled in every way."

The fact of the nearness of the end is a strong motive for the Christian to be diligent in using the time allotted them in a proper way. Spiritual drowsiness has no place in the Christian's heart. He is to be diligent in his communion with the Father, lest the dangers and tribulations of the latter days overcome him.

### Verse 8

ἀγάπη - This is the love of intelligence and true understanding ....a result of our love for Christ.

ἐκτενή - acc. sing. of ἐκτενής, stretch out, put to the full strain, extend, exert.

καλύπτει - 3rd pres. sing. pres. act. ind. of καλύπτω, to cover, remove from sight.

πλῆθος - "a multitude", here it refers to the multitude or mass of daily sins of weakness which come to the attention of Christians because of their constant contact and association. We bear with each other knowing our own many failings.

"Before everything" of course does not mean before even your prayers and worship, but when your worship is over and after your faith in Christ has been strengthened, then exercise in full measure love toward each other. How important this fact becomes when one recognizes the selfishness of these last days, so that the idea of unselfish love has practically been lost. It is this kind of love which forgives a multitude of sins and in forgiving also to forget them. This love preserves brotherly harmony and unity (cf. I Cor 12:12).

There will be sins on the part of the brethren which may tend to slacken our love for them; such sins make it hard to show them love. Although the strain may be great, love is to stand it. Lenski comments: "The reason for having this love is the fact that it "hides a multitude of sins." Love hides them from its own sight, not from God's sight. Hate does the opposite; it pries about to discover some sin, or some semblance of sin in a brother and then broadcasts it, even exaggerates it, gloats over it. It is unjust to the apostle to say that he wants Christians to

hush up and hide criminality or vice that have occurred in their midst ...It has been well said that we all pray daily for their forgiveness when we offer the Lord's prayer. Only when Christians become mean and ugly do they favor the devil by dragging each other's failings out into public and smiting each other in the face".

### Verse 9

φιλόξενοι - nom. masc. pl. from φιλόξενος, it means kind to strangers, hospitable.

γογγύσμου - the word means murmuring, and expresses the feeling of secret and sullen discontent.

Here we have yet another proof, this Christ-like love. The Christians were to be hospitable toward one another without complaint. Much may be said about this ancient hospitality of the Christian, which provided lodging for a traveler and gave shelter to those fleeing from their homes in other cities because of persecution. The Apostles were offered such hospitality, as we are told in Acts 16:15 and Philemon 22.

Kretzmann writes in summary: "Christians will be ready to show true hospitality, to receive their brethren and sisters with open arms whenever there is need of it. They will do this, moreover, not with unwilling murmuring, but with a cordiality flowing out of true love".

### Verse 10

καθώς - According as

χάρισμα - These are the special gifts bestowed by God on individuals, such as various talents and ability. Not all *χάρισμα* were miraculous abilities like some of those mentioned in I Cor. 12.

ἔλαβεν - 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. sing. aor. ind. act. of λαμβάνω

διακονοῦντες - Nom. pl. pres. part. of διακονέω, to serve

οἰκανόμοι - This word means stewards or trustees. Arndt and Gingrich translate the phrases "administrators of God's varied grace". The word here means stewards of divine things.

ποικίλης - Manifold, diverse

In this third admonition (fidelity) we are encouraged that each person in a congregation who has received a gift of grace should serve one another with it as good stewards of the various graces of God. The objective genitive "of God's manifold grace" brings out two points: 1. Every charisma, whatever its nature, is a gift of God's pure undeserved favor (*χάρις*), which we should use accordingly. 2. This grace is manifold, diverse, that is: while it is the same grace for all, it gives all manner of charismata, not only to employ each one of us, but also that we may serve for

the whole body of Christians, so that as a body it may lack nothing. What one cannot do, another will be able to do.

Every Christian has received some gift of grace, some talent which he should use in the service of the congregation. Whether this gift is one of preaching, teaching, praying, exhorting, organizing, it should be exercised by the Christian. These gifts are not to be used in the ways we might choose, or for the advancement of selfish schemes. Having received these gifts from God we become responsible to Him as His stewards.

### Verse 11

- λόγια - acc. pl. of λόγιον; This word is used here, because λόγος θεοῦ, Word of God, is a concept which cannot be pluralized without misunderstanding, he uses the allied term λόγια which is naturally a plural. (Lenski)
- ἰσχύος - Strength...ability
- χορηγεῖ - 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. sing., pres. ind. of χορηγέω. Original meaning was to provide a grand donation for the expense of putting on a Greek chorus - understood here: to provide or supply in abundance.
- δοξάζηται - 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. sing., pres. subj. passive of δοξάζω
- ἵνα - A purpose clause is introduced
- ἐστι - Used with the dative, it is a common idiom for "belongs to Hom," with God as the antecedent.
- αἰώνας - The phrase is translated: "eons of the eons, or eons multiplied by eons". Here the plural with the genitive plural denotes a superlative in the highest degree... our forever and ever, a timeless concept beyond human comprehension.

If anyone holds an office in which he is to preach the Word of God, He should adhere strictly and completely to the revelations of God as they are contained in His inspired Word. To preach one's own speculations or only that which he considers to be truth in the Bible, is an insult to the Lord. Kretzmann writes, "All frivolous handling of the Word also, as when a Christian teacher forgets the dignity of the subject which he is laying before the congregation, cannot be excused on any grounds."

This precept also applies to those serving in the Church in varied and numerous capacities. All that one does in the Lord's service as His steward is in reality the WORK OF THE LORD. Again we quote Kretzmann "They will, then, certainly not depend upon their own strength nor seek to further any private schemes in their work, nor will they permit their hands to be idle while there is so much work to do. That gift, that power which God has granted them, and which He wants to continue to supply, they are to use energetically, consistently. It is, in other words, the faithful, conscientious employment of the gifts which God has given to a Christian

which He desires from everyone of them. And the final aim and purpose will always be that God's name may be glorified among men more and more. For it is from Him, as the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we have received faith and the fruits of faith, and thus also the power to praise and magnify His holy name through the works which we perform in the building and maintaining of His kingdom. The power of God becomes operative through Jesus Christ, to Whom we give all praise and power in all eternity". (cf. I Cor. 10:31)

This section is closed with the "*ἀμήν*". Why is it used here? Lenski states: "It is not an expression of intellectual conviction, but an exalted, God praising conviction of faith. Placed at the end and meaning "truth", "verity", this *ἀμήν* is solemn, confessional, in the nature of a seal".

### **Conclusion**

With the last days upon us, we ought to pay close attention to the Christ-wrought admonitions here presented. It should be our fervent prayer that God would keep us ever watchful in our prayers, filled with Christ-like love and the exercise of the same, and faithful in our various callings. These three qualities should describe our lives as we care for the treasured Gospel which God by His grace has placed in our hearts, and which we are privileged to proclaim with our lips.