

Perhaps Today

I Peter 4:7-19

- *The end of all things is at hand. 7a*

- Cf. 1:5, 1 John 3:18, James 5:8, Revelation (“soon” 8x)
- Which means life is about to radically change. The church age is about to come to an end. It will be followed by the rapture, the tribulation, the millennium and eternity.
- Which means the rapture will occur at any moment. The time to witness will be over.
- Which means judgment for believers is about to take place. Vs. 5, 17. Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 12:11-12, 14:10. An account of our deeds, not a judgment of salvation. A review of how lived our life as believers.
- “We’re as spiritually mature as we chose to be.” — Rick Warren

So let us...

- *Therefore*

- There are practical implications about the impending spiritual inspection we’re about to experience. Here are five words that characterize how we’re to live our lives in these, the end of the last days, with impending judgment.

1. Pray.

- Healthy relationships are characterized by active ongoing communication. An active and ongoing prayer life is vital to a healthy relationship with God. But it’s all the more essential as this age draws to a close.

a. With an eternal focus.

- *be self-controlled*
 - Issue; distractions. The chaos and noise from a loud, confused world must be offset with affirming and calming conversations with our heavenly Father. The world is desperately trying to get us to only think about the here and now. Colossians 3:2

b. With a spiritual focus.

- *and sober-minded*
 - Issue; discernment. Closely related to the first term. The first relates to looking at things eternally, the second to looking at things spiritually. The first related to distractions, the second to

discernment.

2. Love.

- Love is not just a feeling it's an action. Here's a great definition of love. "Love takes the initiative, acts sacrificially, to meet needs." — Grant Howard. The reason it's so good is because it sits on John 3:16. Love takes the initiative (God so loved the world), take the initiative (that he gave his only Son), to meet needs (that whoever believes will not perish but have eternal life.

a. As a priority.

- *Above all,*
 - If we do one before the others, this is the one we do first. We should start out each week asking ourselves, "Who in the Body of Christ can I love?" We should constantly be on the lookout for chances to demonstrate John 3:16 love to other brothers and sisters. Colossians 3:14

b. Unconditionally.

- *keep loving one another earnestly,*
 - *Earnestly* is used to describe an athlete stretching to finish a race.
 - "A Christian's unselfish love and concern for others should be exercised to the point of sacrificially giving for others' welfare." — Walvoord and Zuck

c. Because it steamrolls mistakes.

- *Since love covers a multitude of sins*
 - The love spoken of here is the highest type of love. It's agape love. Unconditional love. It's not timid, conditional or weak. It's strong and unstoppable.
 - This love does not overlook sins, it sees them but keeps moving forwards. Whereas sin burns the planks in the relationship bridge, unconditional love keep replacing them so the relationship continues and deepens. Proverbs 10:12.
 - It's how God treats our sin as believers. God's love is so great, our own sin can't stop it. That is how we're to love each other. John 3:16

3. Host.

- *Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.*

a. By doing so gladly.

- Because there is an extra blessing when the one hosting you indicates it's actually a blessing to do so. There is something especially welcoming when the person hosting you is actually happy to do so. It's amazing to sense you are blessing someone by using or staying in their home.

b. By using our home.

- This has special application to those in the Body of Christ displaced by persecution or suffering. Today it means using our personal resources to minister to those in the body of Christ.
- Because the home is a powerful place to demonstrate the gospel. There is something strong and healing that takes place when a home is lovingly offered as a place for groups to meet, a place for personal counsel, or as shelter for a person or family in need.
- Hospitality needs to be tempered with discernment in today's world. We're to be as gentle as doves but as wise as serpents. This is not an open admonition to house the homeless.

4. Serve.

a. By using your spiritual gift.

- *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, ^(U)as good stewards of God's varied grace:*

i. Speak scripture if your gift is to counsel or advise.

- *whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God*
- *Jeremiah 23:16, 14:13-18, 27:9-18, Ezekiel 13:4-23*

ii. Rely on the power of God if your gift is helping others.

- *whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies*

b. So God is noticed, not the gifted person.

- *—in order that in everything ^(X)God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. ^(Y)To him belong glory and ^(Z)dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

- Like a baseball umpire, the better the job they do the less they are noticed.

5. Suffer.

- We'll be evaluated on how well we endure hardship. How we suffer is also a powerful witness to a watching world.

a. Expectantly.

- *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.*
 - Because the world hates Christ and it therefore hates his followers. John 15:8, 20.
 - Because the more you live out your faith with a visual and verbal witness the more you will trigger a hostile response. There will be pushback for those who live like Jesus. 2 Timothy 3:12
 - Because Satan and his demons influence unbelievers to oppose the efforts of Christians to establish godliness in the public arena (especially the educational and political spheres because of their strategic and authoritative nature) Ephesians 2:2

b. Gladly.

- *But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings,*
 - i. *Because it causes us to long for the return of Jesus Christ.*
 - *that you may also rejoice and be glad ^(AC)when his glory is revealed.*
 - The harder life gets here, the more you long for life there.
 - ii. *Because it causes us to be refreshed by the Holy Spirit.*
 - *If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.*

c. Innocently.

- ¹⁵ *But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.*
 - Sinful behavior does not entitle the Christian to the refreshment of the Holy Spirit. The proper response here is to confess sin. 1 John 1:8-9.

d. In a godly fashion.

- ¹⁶ *Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.*

- Sometimes following Jesus Christ (helping fulfill his mission) invites insults, activates rejection. It can stimulate emotional or even physical abuse. When this occurs it is imperative to remember to do your best to display the attributes of our heavenly Father in the situation. Ask Him for guidance on how to respond, read the word for an answer and allow the Holy Spirit to empower you to God honor.

e. **Seriously.**

- *17 For it is time for judgment ^(AK)to begin at the household of God; and ^(AL)if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who ^(AM)do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And ^(AN)“If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”^[c]*
 - Because the time for our spiritual evaluation is imminent. This should prompt solemn reflection and holy action. It’s not a time for flippancy or fatalism. Hebrews 11:5.
 - Because the time for unbeliever’s eternal judgment is immediate. The wrath of God is about to be brought to bear upon everyone who lives in a state of unbelief. John 3:18.

f. **Faithfully.**

- *19 Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will ^(AO)entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*
 - The idea behind the term “entrust” is to continually surrender the situation to God. It’s not stated as if it’s a one-time act, but a continuous action. The concept is to repeatedly place the circumstance before God. Some situations only require a single prayer to endure, some require ongoing conversations with God on a daily basis or more.

In conclusion

(Here is where you summarize the two or three things you want your listeners to walk away remembering. Choose different wording and economize you words). For instance...

1. Live with an expectation of an approaching life review.

2. Get busy with the basic disciplines of the Christian life.
3. Ask God to help you endure hardship well.