



The First Letter of Peter  
**Bible Study Session 17**  
**1 Peter 4:7-11**  
**“The End is Near”**



*Study By*  
*Lorin L Cranford*

A copy of this lesson is posted in Adobe pdf format at <http://cranfordville.com> under [Bible Studies](#) in the Bible Study Aids section. A note about the [blue, underlined](#) material: These are hyperlinks that allow you to click them on and bring up the specified scripture passage automatically while working inside the pdf file connected to the internet. Just use your web browser’s back arrow or the taskbar to return to the lesson material. All rights reserved © by C&L Publications Inc.

**Greek NT**

7 Πάντων δὲ τὸ τέλος ἤγγικεν. σωφρονήσατε οὖν καὶ νήψατε εἰς προσευχάς· 8 πρὸ πάντων τὴν εἰς ἑαυτοὺς ἀγάπην ἐκτενή ἔχοντες, ὅτι ἀγάπη καλύπτει πλῆθος ἁμαρτιῶν· 9 φιλόξενοι εἰς ἀλλήλους ἄνευ γογγυσμοῦ· 10 ἕκαστος καθὼς ἔλαβεν χάρισμα, εἰς ἑαυτοὺς αὐτὸ διακονοῦντες ὡς καλοὶ οἰκονόμοι ποικίλης χάριτος θεοῦ· 11 εἴ τις λαλεῖ, ὡς λόγια θεοῦ· εἴ τις διακονεῖ, ὡς ἐξ ἰσχύος ἧς χορηγεῖ ὁ θεός· ἵνα ἐν πᾶσιν δοξάζεται ὁ θεὸς διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ᾧ ἔστιν ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων· ἀμήν.

**La Biblia**

**de las Américas**

7 Mas el fin de todas las cosas se acerca; sed pues prudentes y de espíritu sobrio para la oración. 8 Sobre todo, sed fervientes en vuestro amor los unos por los otros, pues el amor cubre multitud de pecados. 9 Sed hospitalarios los unos para con los otros, sin murmuraciones. 10 Según cada uno ha recibido un don especial, úselo sirviéndoos los unos a los otros como buenos administradores de la multiforme gracia de Dios. 11 El que habla, que hable conforme a las palabras de Dios; el que sirve, que lo haga por la fortaleza que Dios da, para que en todo Dios sea glorificado mediante Jesucristo, a quien pertenecen la gloria y el dominio por los siglos de los siglos. Amén.

**NRSV**

7 The end of all things is near; therefore be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers. 8 Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaining. 10 Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. 11 Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

**NLT**

7 The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers. 8 Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay. 10 God has given gifts to each of you from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Manage them well so that God’s generosity can flow through you. 11 Are you called to be a speaker? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Are you called to help others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then God will be given glory in everything through Jesus Christ. All glory and power belong to him forever and ever. Amen.

**Quick Links to the Study**

- I. [Context](#)
  - a. [Historical](#)
  - b. [Literary](#)
- II. [Message](#)
  - a. [The end is near, v. 7a](#)
  - b. [What that implies, vv. 7b-11](#)

\*\*\*\*\*

**Introduction to Study**

“The end of the world is coming!” We are accustomed in western society to seeing cartoons with a strange looking fellow making this announcement. We read it and laugh. And perhaps remember the excitement created by a few preachers over the years who have predicted a date for the end of the world; something that has not happened. Such phoney predictions have made huge fortunes for most of these supposed preachers, and have made Christianity a laughing stock in the eyes of most non-believers.



But when someone like the Apostle Peter announces the end is near, we need to take a serious look at what he is saying. Through divine inspiration he has insights that we don't have. So there's much to profit from examining his words to understand the idea of the end of the world.

## I. Context and Background<sup>1</sup>

Background issues do play an important role in interpreting these verses, both the historical and the literary.

### a. Historical

**External History.** In the UBS 4th rev. edition of the Greek New Testament no text variant readings are listed. This indicates that in the minds of the editorial committee of this printed Greek text none of the variations of readings were considered important enough to impact the translation of these verses. In the Nestle-Aland 27th rev. edition of the Greek text eight variations of readings are listed, reflecting mostly stylistic changes to make the text more contemporary and easier to understand.

These include the following. *In verse seven* εἰς προσευχάς ('for prayers') is changed to εἰς τὰς προσευχάς ('for prayers'), but this doesn't change the meaning. *In verse eight*, πρὸ πάντων ('above all') is changed to πρὸ δὲ πάντων ('but above all'). Also εἰς ἑαυτοὺς ('for one another') is changed to εἰς αὐτοὺς ('for them'). Additionally, καλύπτει ('covers') is switched to καλύψει ('will cover'). *In verse nine*, γογγυσμοῦ ('complaining') is changed to γογγυσμῶν ('complaints'). *In verse eleven*, ἧς χορηγεῖ ὁ θεός ('which God supplies') is re-written ὡς χορηγεῖ ὁ θεός ('as God supplies'). Also δοξάζεται ὁ θεός ('God may be praised') becomes ὁ θεός δοξάζεται, without changing the meaning. Finally, ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος ('glory and power') is re-written by dropping one or the other nouns. As is clear from the above these are minor changes that do not alter the meaning of the text, and these changes were made several centuries after the original writing of the text.

Thus we can interpret the text in the confidence that it reflects the original writing by Silas from Peter's dictation.

**Internal History.** The paraenetical nature of these verses does not stress directly any spatial / time issue. Indirectly the opening declaration that "the end of everything is near" raises a temporal issue and possibly a spatial issue. But the primary thrust of this statement is more theological than purely temporal or spatial. So we will treat it in detail under the exegesis section below.

### b. Literary

**Literary Form (Genre).** The literary genre of vv. 7-11 is multi-layered. The text begins with a theological declaration (v. 7a) and then uses a series of admonitions (vv. 7b-11) to draw implications from the declaration (οὖν).<sup>2</sup> Thus the dominant pattern is *paraenesis* as found in vv. 7b-11, but the form here doesn't develop into any recognizable sub-genre form. The ideas expressed are common to ancient Christian exhortation, but Peter has shaped these into his

<sup>1</sup>Serious study of the Bible requires careful analysis of the background and setting of the scripture passage. Failure to do this leads to interpretive garbage and possibly to heresy. Detailed study of the background doesn't always answer all the questions, but it certainly gets us further along toward correct understanding of both the historical and contemporary meanings of a text. This serious examination of both the historical and literary background of every passage will be presented in summary form with each of the studies.

<sup>2</sup>"The form (a series of staccato-like injunctions) and content of these verses suggest reliance on a broad stream of early Christian hortatory tradition (Goppelt 1993, 293-94), which, however, is structured and theologically grounded in a fashion unique to 1 Peter. The connection and unity of these injunctions are created by means of an internal series of link-words (*pantōn/pantōn* [vv 7a/b]; *agapē/philoxenoi* [vv 8/9]; *eis autous/eis allēlous/eis autous* [vv 8/9/10]; *diakonountes/diakonei* [vv 10/11]; *theou/theou/theos/theos* [vv 10c/11a/11b/11c]; *doxazetai/doxa* [vv 11b/c]) as well as by the symmetry of vv 11a and 11b. A comprehensive stress on "all" (vv 7, 8, 11) frames the unit as a whole, and a final doxology marks a minor conclusion to this part of the letter." [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 743-44.]

### Outline of Contents in First Peter:

#### Praescriptio: 1:1-2

- *Superscriptio, 1:1a*
- *Adscriptio, 1:1b-2a*
- *Salutatio, 1:2b*

#### Proem: 1:3-12

- *Core, 1:3a*
- *Expansion, 1:3b-12*

#### Body: 1:13-5:11

- *Holy living 1:13-2:10*
  - *Ideals 1:13-25*
  - *Privileges 2:1-10*
- *Obligations 2:11-3:12*
  - *Civic 2:11-17*
  - *Haustafeln 2:18-3:7*
  - *Social 3:8-12*
- *Persecution 3:13-5:11*

#### ● *Encouragement 3:13-4:11*

#### ● *Explanation 4:12-19*

#### ● *Proper Conduct 5:1-11*

#### Conclusio: 5:12-14

- *Sender Verification, 5:12*
- *Greetings, 5:13-14a*
- *Benedictio, 5:14b*

own distinct pattern of expression.

**Literary Context.** The literary setting of vv. 7-11, as charted on the previous page, reflects Peter's continuing words of encouragement to his readers begun in 3:13 (cf. 3:13-4:11). But whereas 3:13-4:6 mainly focus on believers responsibilities to 'outsiders', our text in vv. 7-11 stresses internal relationships inside the community of faith. The brief doxological expression in verse 11b (**ὡς ἔστιν ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων· ἀμήν.**) brings the text, and this part of the letter body, to a climax. At first this would seem to signal the end of the letter, but such is not the case. The end of the letter will wait for the second doxological expression in 5:11, **αὐτῷ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων· ἀμήν.**

The ability of believers to successfully endure unjust suffering depends on relationships. In 3:13-4:6, the emphasis was upon positive relationships with non-believers who are not a part of the community of believers. But in 4:7-11, the stress is upon positive relationships with fellow believers in the community of faith. This 'internal' focus will dominate the remainder of the letter body down to 5:11. But Peter will alternate between admonitions -- 4:7-11 and 5:1-11 -- and affirmations of spiritual reality (4:12-19). This alternating pattern, however, has been typical of the entirety of the letter body.

**Literary Structure.**

The block diagram below highlights the arrangement of ideas in the text, based on the original Greek text of the passage:

4.7           And  
                  of all things  
53   **the end is near.**

                  Therefore  
54   **be serious**  
                  and  
55   **be sober**  
          for prayers,  
4.8           most importantly  
          having fervent love for one another  
          because love covers a multitude of sins;  
4.9   being hospitable  
          to one another  
          without complaining;  
4.10   each one  
          just as he has received a gift,  
          to one another  
          serving it  
          as good stewards  
                                  of the many faceted grace of God;  
4.11           if one speaks,  
56   **(let him speak)**  
          as the oracles of God;  
          if one serves  
57   **(let him serve)**  
          as from the strength  
                                  which God supplies;  
                                  in everything  
          so that...God may be praised  
                                  through Jesus Christ,  
          to whom is glory and power  
          forever and ever;  
          amen.

The structure of the ideas revolves around two core ideas: **1)** the declaration of the nearness of the end (# 53), and **2)** the implications of that for Christian living (#s 54-57). Statements 54 and 55 are a tandem unit of one idea expressed two ways. The serious posture for praying is further qualified by a series of secondary

qualifiers reflected in the three participles, “having fervent love,” “being hospitable,” and “serving.” The last one becomes the point of a twofold designation of serving in statements 56 and 57.

## II. Message

The above twofold layout of the passage thus serves as the organizing structure for the exegesis.

### a. The end is near, v. 7a

7a The end of all things is near;

7a Πάντων δὲ τὸ τέλος ἤγγικεν.

#### Notes:

This very brief declaration opens up a Pandora’s box of confusion and conflicting views. To get at Peter’s idea clearly, we need to take a look at the similar statements found in the New Testament as a backdrop to Peter’s word here. This way we can tell whether Peter was simply echoing what others had said, or whether he had a distinct perspective on the topic.<sup>3</sup>

#### Similar statements from Jesus:

**Matthew 10:22.** (NRSV), 22 and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures **to the end** will be saved

22 καὶ ἔσεσθε μισούμενοι ὑπὸ πάντων διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου· ὁ δὲ ὑπομείνας **εἰς τέλος** οὗτος σωθήσεται.

**Mark 13:13.** (NRSV), 3 and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures **to the end** will be saved.

13 καὶ ἔσεσθε μισούμενοι ὑπὸ πάντων διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου· ὁ δὲ ὑπομείνας **εἰς τέλος** οὗτος σωθήσεται.

**Matthew 24:13-14.** (NRSV), 13 But the one who endures **to the end** will be saved. 14 And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then **the end** will come.

13 ὁ δὲ ὑπομείνας **εἰς τέλος** οὗτος σωθήσεται. 14 καὶ κηρυχθήσεται τοῦτο τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ εἰς μαρτύριον πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, καὶ τότε ἔξει **τὸ τέλος**.

#### Similar statements from Paul:

**1 Cor. 10:11.** (NRSV), 11 These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom **the ends of the ages** have come.

11 ταῦτα δὲ τυπικῶς συνέβαινεν ἐκείνοις, ἐγράφη δὲ πρὸς νουθεσίαν ἡμῶν, εἰς οὓς **τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων** κατήντηκεν.

**1 Cor. 15:24.** (NRSV), 24 Then comes **the end**, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power.

24 εἶτα **τὸ τέλος**, ὅταν παραδιδῶ τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ, ὅταν καταργήσῃ πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ δύναμιν.

#### Similar statements from John:

**Rev. 2:26-28.** (NRSV), 26 To everyone who conquers and continues to do my works **to the end**, I will give authority over the nations; 27 to rule them with an iron rod, as when clay pots are shattered — 28 even as I also received authority from my Father.

26 Καὶ ὁ νικῶν καὶ ὁ τηρῶν **ἄχρι τέλους** τὰ ἔργα μου, δώσω αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν 27 καὶ ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ ὡς τὰ σκεύη τὰ κεραμικὰ συντρίβεται, 28 ὡς κάγω εἴληφα παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου, καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ τὸν ἀστέρα τὸν πρωϊνόν.

Peter clearly implies by ‘the end’ what he alluded to in 4:5, οἱ ἀποδώσουσιν λόγον τῷ ἐτοίμῳ ἔχοντι κρίναι

<sup>3</sup>“Talking about the final judgment and their vindication at it is far from wishful thinking for Peter, for ‘the end of all things is near.’ The phrase itself is unique, but its sense is clear. Jesus in the Gospels says that ‘the one enduring to the end will be saved’ (Matt. 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13) and that before this end certain events must happen (Mark 13:7; Luke 21:9). Similar terminology for the close of the age is echoed by Paul (1 Cor. 10:11; 15:24) and John (Rev. 2:26). The phrase used here points to this linear concept of history in the NT and therefore the end of this historical age with all that is associated with it (therefore, ‘the end of all things’).<sup>23</sup> This end is ‘near,’ that is, about to happen (cf. Matt. 26:45–46; Mark 14:42, where the term is used for an event that happened within a few minutes or hours). This sense of the impending eschaton (with all the suffering and deliverance associated with it) is well known in the NT, whether the end is expressed in terms of the kingdom (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Mark 1:45; Luke 10:9, 11) or in other terms (Luke 21:28; Rom. 13:12; Phil. 4:5; Heb. 10:25; Jas. 5:8; Rev. 1:3; 22:10). This expectation of the imminent inbreaking of God’s full and final rule conditions all NT teaching, and without grasping it one can hardly understand the radical ethical stance taken within any of the NT literature.<sup>24</sup>” [Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 155-56.]



ζώντας και νεκρούς, “they will have to give an accounting to him who stands ready to judge the living and the dead.” Also, this phrase implies the conclusion to “the rest of your earthly life” (τὸν ἐπίλοιπον ἐν σαρκὶ βιώσαι χρόνον) in 4:2. In First Peter, the eschatological references about ‘the end’ center on two themes: the completion of salvation for believers, and divine judgment of everyone including both believers and non-believers.<sup>4</sup> Peter describes this in terms of a last time (1:5, 5:6), the last of the ages (1:20), a day of visitation (2:12), divine judgment (2:12, 23; 4:5), the appearance of Christ (5:4), the disclosure of the divine presence (4:13, 5:1), salvation (1:5, 4:18, 5:4), and the end (4:7, 5:6).<sup>5</sup>

Peter’s use of the term ‘the end’ seems to be consistent with the rest of the New Testament.<sup>6</sup> Peter does

#### <sup>4</sup>Other eschatological references in First Peter:

**1 Peter 1:5**, a salvation ready to be revealed *in the last time*, εἰς σωτηρίαν ἐτοιμὴν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι ἐν καιρῷ ἐσχάτῳ.

**1 Peter 1:20**, He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed *at the end of the ages* for your sake, προεγνωσμένον μὲν πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου, φανερωθέντος δὲ ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν χρόνων δι’ ὑμᾶς.

**1 Peter 2:12**, they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God *when he comes to judge*, ἐκ τῶν καλῶν ἔργων ἐποπτεύοντες δοξάσωσι τὸν θεὸν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπισκοπῆς.

**1 Peter 2:23**, but he entrusted himself *to the one who judges justly*, παρεδίδου δὲ τῷ κρίνοντι δικαίως·

**1 Peter 4:13b**, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy *when his glory is revealed*, ἵνα καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ χαρῆτε ἀγαλλιώμενοι.

**1 Peter 4:17-19**, 17 For the time has come *for judgment to begin* with the household of God; if it begins with us, *what will be the end* for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And “If it is hard for the righteous *to be saved*, what *will become of the ungodly and the sinners*?” 19 Therefore, let those suffering in accordance with God’s will *entrust themselves to a faithful Creator*, while continuing to do good.

17 ὅτι ὁ καιρὸς τοῦ ἄρξασθαι τὸ κρίμα ἀπὸ τοῦ οἴκου τοῦ θεοῦ· εἰ δὲ πρῶτον ἀφ’ ἡμῶν, τί τὸ τέλος τῶν ἀπειθούντων τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ εὐαγγελίῳ; 18 καὶ εἰ ὁ δίκαιος μόλις σώζεται, ὁ ἀσεβὴς καὶ ἁμαρτωλὸς ποῦ φανεῖται; 19 ὥστε καὶ οἱ πάσχοντες κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ πιστῷ κτίστῃ παρατιθέσθωσαν τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν ἐν ἀγαθοποιίᾳ.

**1 Peter 5:1**, one who shares in *the glory to be revealed*, ὁ καὶ τῆς μελλούσης ἀποκαλύπτεσθαι δόξης κοινωνός.

**1 Peter 5:4**, And *when the chief shepherd appears, you will win* the crown of glory that never fades away, καὶ φανερωθέντος τοῦ ἀρχιερέως κομιεῖσθε τὸν ἀμαράντινον τῆς δόξης στέφανον.

**1 Peter 5:6**, Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you *in due time*, Ταπεινώθητε οὖν ὑπὸ τὴν κραταιὰν χεῖρα τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα ὑμᾶς ὑψώσῃ ἐν καιρῷ.

#### <sup>5</sup>The eschatological terminology of Second Peter includes:

**2 Peter 2:11**, *entry into the eternal kingdom* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, ἡ εἴσοδος εἰς τὴν αἰώνιον βασιλείαν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

**2 Peter 2:4**, For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of deepest darkness *to be kept until the judgment*; Εἰ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἀγγέλων ἁμαρτησάντων οὐκ ἐφείσατο, ἀλλὰ σειραῖς ζόφου ταρταρώσας παρέδωκεν εἰς κρίσιν τηρουμένους,

**2 Peter 2:9**, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous *under punishment until the day of judgment*, οἷδεν κύριος εὐσεβεῖς ἐκ πειρασμοῦ ῥύεσθαι, ἀδίκους δὲ εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως κολαζομένους τηρεῖν,

**2 Peter 3:7**, But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept *until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless*, οἱ δὲ νῦν οὐρανοὶ καὶ ἡ γῆ τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ τεθησαυρισμένοι εἰσὶν πυρὶ τηρούμενοι εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως καὶ ἀπολείας τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων.

**2 Peter 3:10**, But *the day of the Lord* will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

ἦξει δὲ ἡμέρα κυρίου ὡς κλέπτῃς, ἐν ἣ ὁ οὐρανοὶ ροιζήδον παρελεύσονται, στοιχεῖα δὲ καυσούμενα λυθήσεται, καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται.

**2 Peter 3:12**, waiting for and hastening *the coming of the day of God*, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire?

προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας, δι’ ἣν οὐρανοὶ πυρούμενοι λυθήσονται καὶ στοιχεῖα καυσούμενα τήκεται·

Second Peter stresses also the two central themes of salvation and judgment connected to the end-time, while using some of the same terminology as First Peter and also expanding the vocabulary to include more traditional terms such as the Day of the Lord and the Day of God, among others. Much more descriptive detail is given in Second Peter than in First Peter.

“In the NT, *to telos*, meaning ‘the end,’ can have various senses depending on the context: ‘termination’ or ‘cessation’; ‘consummation’ or ‘fulfillment’; ‘close’ or ‘conclusion’; ‘maturity,’ ‘goal,’ or ‘intended outcome’ (BAGD 811). The semantic range in other Greek literature includes such meanings as ‘achievement,’ ‘power,’ ‘perfection,’ ‘obligation,’ ‘offering’ (for the gods), ‘tax,’ ‘tribute,’ ‘toll,’ and ‘detachment’ or ‘group’ (Delling 1972b). Elsewhere in 1 Peter, *telos* denotes ‘goal’ (of faith, 1:9) or ‘end result’ of disobedience (4:17) or ‘finally,’ in an adverbial sense (3:8). Here, however, in conjunction with the verb *eggizō*, it is used in an eschatological sense and refers to the end of the ages that is now viewed as being at hand.

“In Israel’s history, anticipation of an eventual moment in time when justice and God’s rule would once again be established accompanied the gradual corruption and decay of the monarchy. Following the collapses of both the Northern and Southern

not go into much detail about the nature and actions associated with this event, since that would have taken him beyond his intent in referencing it. But the rich expressions that are present in his letter provide considerable insight into his understanding of the end of human history.<sup>7</sup> For Peter, when the end comes two things will be critical. All humanity will face divine judgment. Non-believers will then face eternal separation from God and punishment for their sinful lives. Believers will experience the climax of the divine deliverance from sin begun in their conversion. But their faithfulness to live by God's principles as believers will also be scrutinized thoroughly in divine judgment with punishment of an unspecified nature being imposed for lack of faithfulness. At the center of this experience of end time will be the disclosing of the Divine Presence of God that will be overpowering to all creation. Absolutely no one will be able to resist this overwhelming presence of God that will subject all creation to the complete authority of God.

Peter's term here Πάντων τὸ τέλος, 'the end of all things,' stresses the termination of human history. Life, as it has existed since creation on earth, will come to an end and exist no longer. Peter's term here is backward looking. No where in First Peter does he indicate what will happen after that, apart from divine judgment and the completion of salvation for believers. To be sure, Second Peter does engage in some broad declarations of what will happen after the end comes.<sup>8</sup> But this is not found in First Peter.

monarchies in 722 and 587 BCE, respectively, attention began to focus increasingly on a future, final epoch of history as the time of the divine punishment of evil, reestablishment of justice, and the salvation of the just.<sup>495</sup> This expectation was nurtured defiantly in the face of Judah's ongoing control by foreign powers and comprised a cluster of events associated with this final age referred to variously as the 'latter days,'<sup>496</sup> or the 'day' of the Lord,<sup>497</sup> or the 'end' (*synteleia*).<sup>498</sup>

"Early Christianity, in its perception of God, of time, of Jesus as the messianic agent of the end time, and of its own role in history's final phase, was fundamentally inspired and shaped by this eschatological perspective (Bowman 1962; Schüssler Fiorenza 1976b; Nickelsburg 1992). And as the content of 1 Peter illustrates, this is true of our author as well. Thus *to telos* has the same eschatological sense that it bears elsewhere in the early Church.<sup>499</sup> The verb accompanying *to telos*, namely *eggiken*, is likewise a stock term in early Christian eschatological thought,<sup>500</sup> expressing the imminence or nearness of the end."

[John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 744-45.]

<sup>7</sup>"On the whole, however, our author refers to no portents or cosmic signals of the end time and indulges in no apocalyptic calculation concerning its occurrence.<sup>506</sup> His sense of the imminence of the end of the ages is rooted Christologically in the conviction of the Messiah's first appearance (1:12, 20), inaugurating the end time, and of the imminence of his final manifestation (5:4; cf. also 1:7, 13; 4:13; 5:1), bringing this age to a close. The interval between these first and final appearances is accompanied by the tribulations and sufferings of the just (1:6; 2:19-20; 3:14, 17; 4:1, 6, 12-19; 5:10), otherwise known as the "messianic woes," and the divine judgment of humankind now in process (4:17-18, cf. 1:17; 4:5) as a prelude to the final manifestation of Christ (1:7; 5:1), salvation (1:5b, 9; cf. 2:2), and the glorious vindication of the faithful (1:8; 5:1, 4, 10). His view of the end appears to involve not an eradication of the world but a termination of the current order of life and a transition to a new and glorious future. This intense eschatological consciousness, which our author shares with primitive Christianity in general,<sup>507</sup> serves here as elsewhere as a compelling motivation for behavior that is consonant with the conduct of Christ, the inaugurator of salvation, and the will of God, the judge." [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 746-47.]

<sup>8</sup>The eschatological terminology of Second Peter stresses divine judgment and the destruction of the existing heavens and earth:

**2 Peter 2:11**, *entry into the eternal kingdom* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,  
*ἡ εἴσοδος εἰς τὴν αἰώνιον βασιλείαν* τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

**2 Peter 2:4**, For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of deepest darkness *to be kept until the judgment*;

Εἰ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἀγγέλων ἀμαρτησάντων οὐκ ἐφείσατο, ἀλλὰ σειραῖς ζόφου ταρταρώσας παρέδωκεν *εἰς κρίσιν τηρουμένους*,

**2 Peter 2: 9**, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous *under punishment until the day of judgment*,

οἶδεν κύριος εὐσεβεῖς ἐκ πειρασμοῦ ῥύεσθαι, ἀδίκους δὲ *εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως κολαζομένους τηρεῖν*,

**2 Peter 3:7**, But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept *until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless*,

οἱ δὲ νῦν οὐρανοὶ καὶ ἡ γῆ τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ τεθησαυρισμένοι εἰσὶν πυρὶ τηρούμενοι *εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως καὶ ἀπολείας τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων*.

**2 Peter 3:10**, But *the day of the Lord* will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

ἥξει δὲ *ἡμέρα κυρίου* ὡς κλέπτῃς, ἐν ἣ ὁ οὐρανὸς ῥοιζήδον παρελεύσεται, στοιχεῖα δὲ καυσούμενα λυθήσεται, καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται.

**2 Peter 3:12**, waiting for and hastening *the coming of the day of God*, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire?

One of the seemingly problematic aspects of Peter's declaration in 4:7 centers in the verb ἤγγικεν, "is near." The most natural reading of it suggests that in Peter's mind the end of all things was very close by when this letter was penned.<sup>9</sup> The verb ἐγγίζω defines something being either close by spatially or temporally; that is, a person is close to something or someone, or an event is just about to happen.<sup>10</sup> With Πάντων τὸ τέλος as the subject of the verb, clearly Peter has the end of human history in mind. Without serious debate, Peter reflects here a common expectation in apostolic Christianity that the return of Christ to this world was going to happen in their life time, as is also reflected in James 5:8, μακροθυμήσατε καὶ ὑμεῖς, στηρίξατε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν, ὅτι ἡ παρουσία τοῦ κυρίου ἤγγικεν ("You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for *the coming of the Lord is near*"). It is this return of Christ that will bring human history to a close.

Was Peter wrong? Actually, yes, he was. Christ did not return to the earth before the end of the first Chris-

---

προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας, δι' ἣν οὐρανοὶ πυρούμενοι λυθήσονται καὶ στοιχεῖα καυσούμενα τήκεται·

<sup>9</sup>“Peter's immediate intent is neither to console nor to threaten his readers but simply to state a reality. The present order of things will soon come to an end, and they must be ready for whatever comes. Whether the end is viewed as salvation or as retributive judgment it is always the same event, the object of both hope and warning. The announcement, or rather the reminder, that this event is 'near' (ἤγγικεν, lit., 'has come near') echoes the proclamation of John the Baptist (Matt 3:2) and Jesus (Mark 1:15; Matt 4:17; Luke 10:9, 11) that 'the Kingdom of God is near' (also consistently ἤγγικεν). Peter's adoption of this terminology from the Gospel tradition corresponds to that of James, except that James's reminder that 'the coming of the Lord is near' (James 5:8) is more a word of comfort to the oppressed than a call to alertness or action. Although some have urged that Jesus' proclamation be understood to mean 'the Kingdom of God has come' (see, e.g., C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* [1961] 29–30), this is hardly an option either in James or 1 Peter (for other NT examples of 'nearness' terminology in relation to the coming of Christ or the end of the age, cf. Rom 13:11–12; Phil 4:5; Rev 1:3; 22:10). Peter's meaning is neither that the present age has reached its end nor that the end lies somewhere in the indefinite future. His meaning is that the end will be very soon, although he has no interest in setting dates. There is time for action, but no time to waste. Peter sees a continuity between the present situation and the last decisive intervention of God through Jesus Christ (cf. vv 12, 17). In a sense the end-time events are under way; the 'end of all things,' although still in the future, is very close at hand.” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 245.]

<sup>10</sup>ἐγγίζω (fr. ἐγγύς) Att. fut. ἐγγιῶ; 1 aor. ἤγγισα; Att. reduplication ἐνήγγισα and ἠνήγγισα GJs (deStrycker 242 and 299f); pf. 3 pl. ἤγγικασιν Dt 31:14. In our lit. only intr. *approach, come near* (so in Aristot., Polyb., Diod S, Epict. et al., pap, LXX, En; OdeSol 11:6; TestSol, TestAbr B, TestJob, Test12Patr, JosAs 3:2; GrBar 12:6; MartIs, ApcMos, Philo, Joseph.; Tat. 37, 1; s. Nägeli 36; Anz 344f; KClark, JBL 59, '40, 367–74)

**1. to move in space and so draw closer to a reference point, draw near, come near, approach** of humans and transcendent beings.

a) abs. of someone approaching (Gen 18:23; 27:27) **Ac 23:15**; ἤγγικεν ὁ παραδιδούς με *my betrayer is near* **Mt 26:46**; **Mk 14:42**; thief **Lk 12:33**; the tribune **Ac 21:33**; blind man **Lk 18:40**; Jesus **19:41**; **24:15**.

b) modified

α. without prep.: W. gen. of thing (Gen. 33:3; Jdth 13:7; En 14:9) ἐγγίσαντες αὐτοῦ *when they came near it* (the grave) **AcPl Ha 11, 19**. W. dat. of pers. (Gen 27:21; TestAbr B 2, p. 106, 4 [Stone p. 60]) or thing (Polyb. 18, 4, 1; Ex 32:19; Jos., Bell. 5, 408 τ. πόλει) τῷ παιδί B 6:1 (Is 50:8); τῆ πύλῃ τῆς πόλεως the city gate **Lk 7:12**; the house **15:25**; Damascus **Ac 9:3**; **22:6**; cp. **10:9**; the grave **GpT 9:36**.—Jesus **Lk 15:1**; **22:47**. τῷ θεῷ *draw near to God* (Philo, Leg. All. 2, 57, Deus Imm. 161; Theodor. Prodr. 7, 475 H. θεοῖς ἐγγ.) of priestly service (Ex 19:22; 34:30; Lev 10:3 al.), fig. of the spiritual service of Christians **Hb 7:19**; **Js 4:8**; **Mt 15:8** v.l. (cp. Jdth 8:27; Ps 148:14; Is 29:13 al.).

β. w. prep.: W. eis, only with indications of place (Tob 11:1; En 14:10): Jerusalem **Mt 21:1**; **Mk 11:1**.—**Lk 18:35**; **19:29**. eis τὴν κώμην to the village **24:28**; εἰς συναγωγὴν Hm 11:13.—W. πρὸς and dat. to show place (Pr 5:8; OdeSol 11:6 πρὸς τὰ χεῖλη μου) **Lk 19:37**. W. ἐπί, τινα **Lk 10:9** (cp. Ps 26:2; 68:4 v.l.; ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν **AcPl Ha 3, 30**; ἐπὶ μίλιον τρίτον for three miles GJs 17:2).

**2. to draw near in a temporal sense, draw near, come near, approach** (POxy 1202, 8; w. dat., Epict. 3, 10, 14; Tat. 37:1). W. indications of time (KClark, JBL 59, '40, 367–83) the hour **Mt 26:45**; the day (Ezk 7:4; 12:23) **Ro 13:12**; **Hb 10:25**; the (feast) day GJs 1:2; 2:2; ὁ καιρὸς (La 4:18; 1 Macc 9:10) **Lk 21:8**; cp. **Mt 21:34**; ὁ χρόνος **Ac 7:17**; the Passover **Lk 22:1**; the end **1 Pt 4:7**; the final stumbling-block B 4:3; cp. ending of Mk in the Freer ms. 8; the judgment **GpT 7:25**; destruction of the temple **Lk 21:20**; redemption vs. **28**. μέχρι θανάτου ἔ. come close to dying **Phil 2:30** (cp. Job 33:22; Sir 51:6 ἤγγισεν ἕως θανάτου). PKatz, TZ 5, '49, 7; ADebrunner, Mus. Helv. 11, '54, 58f.—Esp. of the approaching Reign of God: ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (or τοῦ θεοῦ) **Mt 3:2**; **4:17**; **10:7**; **Mk 1:15**; **Lk 10:9, 11** (WHutton, ET 64, '52/53, 89–91: *has come* for the Lk passages); **AcPl Ha 8, 31=BMM verso 2f**. Of the Lord's return **Js 5:8**.—On 'realized eschatology' s. CDodd, Parables of the KgdM.3 '36, 44–51, ET 48, '36/37, 138–42; JCampbell, ET 48, '36/37, 91–94; RFuller, The Mission and Achievement of Jesus '54, 20–25; RBerkey, JBL 82, '63, 177–87; MBlack, An Aramaic Approach3, '67, 208–11.—DELG s.v. ἐγγύς. M-M. TW. Sv.”

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 270.]

tian century, and in fact, twenty centuries later He still has not returned to the earth. Efforts to explain away this are unconvincing and fly straight in the face of the plain meaning of Peter's words, along with several other similar statements elsewhere in the New Testament. Does this then mean that Peter didn't know what he was talking about? Hardly.

The expectancy of the immanent return of Christ was a powerfully motivating factor for early Christians. They lived in the belief that Christ could return at any moment. Thus, believers should always live prepared for that moment. Jesus Himself had urged such a stance, as is reflected in Matthew 24:1 - 25:46. The key concept in Jesus' teaching is ὑμεῖς γίνεσθε ἔτοιμοι, "you must be ready" (24:44), because the suddenness of this event will not allow anyone to get ready when Jesus makes His appearance. Only those who live in continual preparedness will be ready for that moment. The early church understood this and thus sought to live in such readiness. This is the background for declarations such as Peter's in 4:7.

This is how Peter uses the expectation of an immanent return of Christ. This theological declaration in 4:7a will become a call to action to live fully prepared. That preparation will include what he stresses in 4:7b-11.

Here is where Peter's word becomes vitally relevant to believers in the modern world. The delay of Christ's second coming leads some to put the idea on a 'back burner' and not seriously consider it, just as some evidently did in the first century, as 2 Peter 3:1-13 reflects. The essence of preparedness for the return of Christ has absolutely nothing to do with speculative setting of dates, nor a correct reading of 'the signs of the times.' Rather, as in the teaching of Jesus as well as the apostles, readiness for the coming of Christ centers in obedient living moment by moment to the will of God. This also will avoid being duped by scoffers (cf. 2 Pet. 3:3-4) and false prophets predicting the time of His coming (cf. Mt. 24:4-5, 23-26).

#### **b. What that implies, vv. 7b-11**

7b therefore be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers. 8 Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaining. 10 Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. 11 Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

7b σωφρονήσατε οὖν καὶ νήψατε εἰς προσευχάς· 8 πρὸ πάντων τὴν εἰς ἑαυτοὺς ἀγάπην ἐκτενῆ ἔχοντες, ὅτι ἀγάπη καλύπτει πλῆθος ἁμαρτιῶν· 9 φιλόξενοι εἰς ἀλλήλους ἄνευ γογγυσμοῦ· 10 ἕκαστος καθὼς ἔλαβεν χάρισμα, εἰς ἑαυτοὺς αὐτὸ διακονοῦντες ὡς καλοὶ οἰκονόμοι ποικίλης χάριτος θεοῦ· 11 εἴ τις λαλεῖ, ὡς λόγια θεοῦ· εἴ τις διακονεῖ, ὡς ἐξ ἰσχύος ἧς χορηγεῖ ὁ θεός· ἵνα ἐν πᾶσιν δοξάζηται ὁ θεὸς διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ᾧ ἔστιν ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων· ἀμήν.

#### **Notes:**

As is reflected in the Block Diagram above, the arrangement of this series of admonitions is unique and distinct to First Peter. First, these exhortations are linked to the theological affirmation in verse 7a by οὖν, an inferential coordinate conjunction making explicit something understood as implicit in a previous statement. The responsibilities put on the table in verses 7b-11 are understood as inherent to the spiritual reality of the approaching end of all things.

The linking of moral behavior to the expected return of Christ is rather common in the New Testament.<sup>11</sup> Jesus' emphasis on 'watchfulness' in Matthew 24-25 as preparation for the coming of the Son of Man set the standard. Most of the apostolic writers of the New Testament develop this link of eschatology and morality as a motivation for believers to live in obedience as they anticipate the return of Christ and the ensuing judgment of believers connected to it.

While the paraenetical emphasis typically may often be general in nature by defining obedience to Christ

---

<sup>11</sup>“Reference to the impending end is often used, as it is here, as the basis for paranesis,<sup>24</sup> since knowledge that there is an end of time and a judgment gives to the present its seriousness and its meaning.<sup>25</sup> Although the phrase πάντων δὲ τὸ τέλος ἤγγικεν is unique to 1 Peter, therefore, the point belongs to common Christian tradition.” [Paul J. Achtemeier and Eldon Jay Epp, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia--a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996), 294.]

*Footnote 24 above:* “Closest is Mark 1:15, where the perfect ἤγγικεν is used with a double imperative; see also Rom 13:11–14; Phil 4:4–6; Heb 10:23–25; Jas 5:7–11; for such paraenetic use but without the stem ἐγγ-, see Matt 24:45–25:13; Mark 13:33–37; 1 Thess 5:1–5; 1 John 2:18–19; Rev 22:12; Barn. 4.9; 21.3; 2 Clem. 12.1; 16.3; Ignatius Eph. 11.1. On this point cf., e.g., Goppelt, 281; Kelly, 177.”



inclusively,<sup>12</sup> Peter's emphasis here is more specific and centers on internal relationships inside the community of believers.<sup>13</sup> For his readers that were suffering unjustly simply because of their faith the pressures to compromise loomed rather large. Tension always accompanies persecution, and that tension can turn outward into retribution, which Peter ruled out in the previous section of 3:13-4:6. And / or, it can turn inward with unloading on fellow church members, especially when they are perceived to not be as faithful as you consider yourself to be. Now Peter addresses this temptation with a series of demands for healthy relationships with fellow believers.

He begins with the vertical emphasis σωφρονήσατε καὶ νήψατε εἰς προσευχάς, “**be serious and discipline yourselves for the sake of your prayers.**” Two Aorist imperative verbs issue the admonition, and both verbs are linked to prayer. The use of the Aorist tense for commands intensifies the urgency of the admonitions. The verb σωφρονέω stresses self control and sound thinking.<sup>14</sup> This verb is a part of a set of related words<sup>15</sup> used in the New Testament to emphasis that believers are to be people ‘who use their minds well with rigid self-disciplined behavior.’ The second verb νήφω is very close in meaning with emphasis upon self-control through being clear headed;<sup>16</sup> see 1:13<sup>17</sup> and 5:8<sup>18</sup> for the two other uses of this verb in First Peter.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>12</sup>“This sense of the impending eschaton (with all the suffering and deliverance associated with it) is well known in the NT, whether the end is expressed in terms of the kingdom (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Mark 1:45; Luke 10:9, 11) or in other terms (Luke 21:28; Rom. 13:12; Phil. 4:5; Heb. 10:25; Jas. 5:8; Rev. 1:3; 22:10). This expectation of the imminent inbreaking of God's full and final rule conditions all NT teaching, and without grasping it one can hardly understand the radical ethical stance taken within any of the NT literature. <sup>24</sup>” [Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 156.]

<sup>13</sup>“The Christian traditions reflected in these verses also point to their emphasis on the inner life of the community. The reference to mutual hospitality (φιλόξενοι εἰς ἀλλήλους) is echoed in the NT, both in relation to the community itself (Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2) and to its leaders (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7), as is the centrality of love and the call to love one another (ἀγαπ-, 4:8; see John 13:34; 15:12; Rom 12:9; 13:8; 1 Cor 13:13; 1 John 2:10; 2 John 5), and the reference to various spiritual gifts (χαρισμ-, 4:10; see 1 Cor 12:4–6, 11) to be used for the common good (4:10; see 1 Cor 12:7).<sup>14</sup> Other common themes include the call to be of sound thought (σωφρον-, 4:7; see Rom 12:3; 1 Tim 3:2; 2 Tim 1:7, 8; Titus 2:2, 5, 6, 12), to be sober (νήφ-, 4:7; see 1 Thess 5:6, 8, mentioned in the context of 5:1–3 and the impending end; 1 Tim 3:2, 11; 2 Tim 4:5; Titus 2:2), and the importance of ministering (or serving: διακον-, 4:11; see Mark 10:45; Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:5; cf. 1 Cor 16:15; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:1). There are also some linguistic parallels with James (the use of ἡγγικεν in eschatological context, 1 Pet 4:7a; Jas 5:8b; the phrase καλύπτει/καλύψει πλῆθος ἁμαρτιῶν; 1 Pet 4:8b; Jas 5:20b) that probably also reflect common dependence on earlier Christian tradition.<sup>15</sup> On the whole, while common Christian traditions are in evidence, it is all but impossible to locate direct literary, or even traditional, dependence.<sup>16</sup> Our author swims in the mainstream of Christian tradition, a situation that he shares with the other, especially the later, authors of NT letters.” [Paul J. Achtemeier and Eldon Jay Epp, *1 Peter : A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia--a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996), 293.]

<sup>14</sup>σωφρονέω (σώφρων, via σῶς + φρήν) 1 aor. ἐσωφρόνησα (Trag., X., Pla. et al.; pap) the thematic semantic note in this and cognate terms is the Hellenic ideal of μηδὲν ἄγαν (‘nothing to excess’).

“**1. to be able to think in a sound or sane manner, be of sound mind. of mental health** (in contrast to μαίνεσθαι; Pla., Phdr. 22, 244a, Rep. 331c; Ps.-Apollod. 3, 5, 1; 6; Philo, Cher. 69) to be in one's right mind, of a demoniac who was healed **Mk 5:15; Lk 8:35**. Sim., 2 Cor 5:13 (opp. ἐκστῆναι; s. ἐξίστημι 2a).

“**2. to be prudent, with focus on self-control, be reasonable, sensible, serious, keep one's head** (X., Cyr. 3, 2, 4; TestSol 8:8; Philo, Det. Pot. Ins. 114; Jos., Ant. 2, 296; Just., Tat.; Ath. 32, 2; Orig., C. Cels. 2, 8, 16) **Tit 2:6**. W. νήφειν **1 Pt 4:7**. Esp. of women *be chaste, virtuous* (Musonius p. 14, 12ff H.; Arrian, Anab. 4, 20, 2; Alciphron, 4, 17, 3; Jos., Ant. 18, 66.—σωφροσύνη 2) 1 Cl 1:3; Pol 4:3.—In contrast to ὑπερφρονεῖν and in a play on words w. it and w. φρονεῖν twice **Ro 12:3** (cp. Plut., Mor. 776d φρονεῖν κ. σωφ.; Socrat., Ep. 36 σωφρονέω ... συσσωφρονέω; Iren. 1, 16, 3 [Harv. I, 164, 3])—DELG s.v. σῶς. M-M. TW. Spicq.” [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 986.]

<sup>15</sup>σωφρονέω (to be prudent), σωφρονίζω (to instruct in prudence), σωφρονισμός (the teaching of prudence), σωφρόνως (prudently), σωφροσύνη (prudence), σώφρων, ον (prudent).

<sup>16</sup>“The verb from which the second imperative is formed (νήφω) means literally the opposite of drunkenness, but is probably used here, as elsewhere in the NT, in the metaphorical sense of remaining alert and in full possession of one's ‘sound mind,’ particularly in light of the imminent eschatological events.” [Paul J. Achtemeier and Eldon Jay Epp, *1 Peter : A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia--a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996), 294.]

<sup>17</sup>NRSV: “13 Therefore prepare your minds for action; **discipline yourselves** [νήφοντες τελείως]; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed.”

<sup>18</sup>NRSV: “8 **Discipline yourselves** [νήψατε], keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour.”

<sup>19</sup>νήφω 1 aor. ἐνήψα (Soph., Pla., X. et al.; ins, pap) prim. ‘be sober’; in the NT only fig. = be free fr. every form of mental and spiritual ‘drunkenness’, fr. excess, passion, rashness, confusion, etc. *be well-balanced, self-controlled* (Aristot. et al.; Epicurus

The primary implication (οὖν) of eschatological expectation of the second coming of Christ is clear headedness!<sup>20</sup> This runs counter to the wild speculative thinking that often surrounds the doctrine of the coming of Christ in today's world. Such ideas represent the very opposite of what Peter demanded of his readers. Predictions of the end of all things in the modern world usually prompt individuals to do absolutely dumb things and to engage in some of the weirdest thinking imaginable. But Peter demands just the opposite response. Believers must clear their heads of dumb, fuzzy thinking. Through clear, sound thinking they are then to exercise self-control and restraint over their behavior.<sup>21</sup> The community emphasis in this passage impacts the meaning in the direction of thinking and behavior by individual. This leads to a stable well functioning community of believers.

The purpose for this sound reasoning? εἰς προσευχάς, “for prayers.” Clear headedness with disciplined behavior in the community of faith is closely related to how believers are to pray.<sup>22</sup> Already in 3:7 we have seen how interaction with one's wife can impact prayer. Now in the community of faith, clear headedness is critically important for effective praying. As Michaels notes,

Alertness or wakefulness in prayer is a common NT theme, above all in the accounts of Jesus and his disciples in Gethsemane (cf. Mark 14:38//Matt 26:41). Although Polycarp in the early second century integrates a command similar to Peter's and possibly derived from it (νήφοντες πρὸς τὰς εὐχάς, “giving attention to the prayers”) with the terminology of traditions about Jesus in Gethsemane (Pol. Phil. 7.2b), there is no evidence that Peter himself is directly influenced by such traditions. Such passages as Luke 21:36; Col 4:2; and Eph 6:18, however, do suggest a rather broadly based NT interest in prayer (especially alert, clear-headed prayer) as an essential ingredient in spiritual warfare and in meeting the things associated with the end of the age (cf. νήψατε, γρηγορήσατε, “Pay at-

---

in Diog. L. 10, 132 νήφων λογισμός=sober reasonableness; Περὶ ὕπνου 16, 4; Lucian, Hermot. 47 νήφε; Herodian 2, 15, 1; Achilles Tat. 1, 13 v. ἐκ τοῦ κακοῦ; Herm. Wr. 7, 1; BGU 1011 III, 9 [II B.C.]; POxy 1062, 13 ἵνα αὐτὴν [sc. τ. ἐπιστολὴν] ἀναγνοῖς νήφων κ. σαυτοῦ καταγνοῖς; EpArist 209; Philo; Jos., Bell. 2, 225; 4, 42; SibOr 1, 154) **1 Th 5:8; 1 Pt 1:13.** [Ἰερώνυμος ἡδ] ἡ νήψας νυκτὸς | ἐν ὁδῷ[ις] *Hieronymus, in pain* (because of an injury to his ear during a violent storm) *now came to his senses* (concerning his animosity toward Paul) during the night AcPl Ha 5, 29f. v. ἐν πᾶσιν *be self-possessed under all circumstances* (M. Ant. 1, 16, 15) **Ti 4:5.** W. γρηγορεῖν (cp. Plut., Mor. 800b ἀγρυπνῶν κ. νήφων κ. πεφροντικῶς) **1 Th 5:6; 1 Pt 5:8.** W. σωφρονεῖν (Lucian, Nigrin. 5f): v. εἰς προσευχάς *exercise self-restraint, to help you pray* **1 Pt 4:7;** Pol 7:2 has v. πρὸς τὰς εὐχάς. v. ἐπὶ τὸ ἀγαθόν *exercise self-control for* (your own) *good* 2 Cl 13:1. W. allusion to the self-control practiced by athletes: νήφε ὡς θεοῦ ἀθλητῆς IPol 2:3.—HLevy, *Sobria ebrietas* 1929.—DELG. M-M. TW.” [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 672.]

<sup>20</sup>“*exercise sound judgment (sōphronēsate).* The imminence of the end is no cause for eschatological fever but requires clear-mindedness, sound judgment, and vigilance. Here the verb *sōphroneō* means not so much ‘keep sane’ (as an alternative to being deranged [Mark 5:15/Luke 8:35; 2 Cor 5:13]) as ‘exercise sound, balanced judgment and self-discipline’ (see Plato, Gorg. 491d). The related noun *sōphrosynē* likewise denoted self-control governed by moderation and a sense of balance and proportion. This self-control was made possible by self-knowledge and was reckoned by the Greeks as one of the four cardinal virtues (along with prudence, justice, and courage) characterizing the honorable person (cf. Danker 1982, 361–62). Self-control and avoidance of excess were regarded as essential for social harmony and group concord (Dio Chrys., Orat. 77–78; Thraede 1994). While in the Classical period *sōphrosynē* denoted the middle way in politics as a means for balancing conflicts, especially between commoners and elites, in the Hellenistic period it came to mean an individual's self-mastery, especially in regard to desire (for food, drink, sex), and was stressed by moralists as the antithesis to love of luxury, greed, and sexual immorality. In Israelite literature, the *Testament of Joseph*, as its assigned title (*peri sōphrosynēs*) indicates, was considered a treatment of this theme and Joseph its exemplar (*sōphrosynēs*, T. Jos. 4:1, 2; 6:7 9:2, 3; 10:2, 3; sōphrōn, T. Jos. 4:2; cf. also T. Benj. 4:4; and for *sōphronōs*, T. Jud. 16:3).” [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 748.]

<sup>21</sup>“Early Christianity likewise stressed the necessity of sound judgment and mastery of appetites and desires (1 Tim 2:9; 3:2; 2 Tim 1:7, 15; Titus 1:8; 2:2, 4, 5, 6) as an expression of personal holiness. But *sōphrosynē* was also used in the older Classical sense as an antithesis to *hybris*, the breach of social limits and of one's assigned status that was so detrimental to the unity of the community (Rom 12:3; cf. Dio Chrys., Orat. 3.80). Since the addressees have already abandoned the excesses of the Gentiles (4:3–4), it is more likely that here the author is urging sound judgment rather than moderation. As in the occurrence of the verb in Rom 12:3, the focus is on the Christian community rather than the individual, its harmony and well-being, and *sōphronein* in both instances involves a behavior contributing to communal solidarity.” [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 748.]

<sup>22</sup>“The word for ‘prayer’ (προσευχή) is, along with its verbal form (προσεύχομαι), common in the NT, and is here used in its basic meaning of calling upon God.<sup>32</sup> The same concern for mutuality as a condition for effective prayer, described in relation to husband and wife in 3:7, is reflected here in the emphasis on mutuality found in the succeeding verses.” [Paul J. Achtemeier and Eldon Jay Epp, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia—a critical and historical commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996), 294.]

tention! Wake up!" in 5:8).<sup>23</sup>

Biblical based praying is not connected to non-thinking, nonsensical thought! Just the opposite is true.<sup>24</sup> When we pray to God, we are to engage our minds in clear thinking. And the motivation of the nearness of the return of Christ should prompt such clear headed praying! We can learn much from Peter.

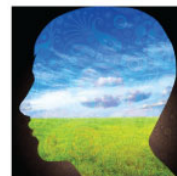
The next several aspects enlarge and expand this twin admonition, as the block diagram illustrates:<sup>25</sup>

54 **be serious**  
and  
55 **be sober**  
for prayers,  
4.8 most importantly  
having fervent love for one another  
because love covers a multitude of sins;  
4.9 being hospitable  
to one another  
without complaining;  
4.10 each one  
just as he has received a gift,  
to one another  
serving it  
as good stewards

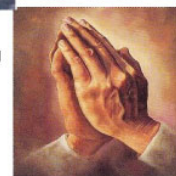
of the many faceted grace of God

### 1 Peter 4:7

Important links between three aspects of Christian community



Interaction of  
1. Second Coming  
2. Clear Headedness  
3. Praying



Coming out of clear headedness are some obligations to the community of believers that are touched upon in verses 8-11: brotherly love, hospitality, and gifted service. The list of duties is not long, and is representative rather than exhaustive.

Peter begins with *πρὸ πάντων* which lays particular importance on brotherly love in the community of believers.<sup>26</sup> Although *πρὸ πάντων* is capable of several nuances of meaning,<sup>27</sup> the sense of the prepositional

<sup>23</sup>J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 246.

<sup>24</sup>"This will lead to prayer<sup>27</sup>—not the prayer based on daydreams and unreality, nor the prayer based on surprised desperation, but the prayer that calls upon and submits to God in the light of reality seen from God's perspective and thus obtains power and guidance in the situation, however evil the time may be. This is what Jesus meant when he said, 'Watch and pray' (Matt. 24:41–42; Mark 13:35, 38; cf. Acts 20:31; 1 Cor. 16:13; Col. 4:2), for proper prayer is not an 'opiate' or escape, but rather a function of clear vision and a seeking of even clearer vision from God. It is only through clear communication with headquarters that a soldier can effectively stand guard." [Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 156-57.]

<sup>25</sup>The lack of a finite verb in verses 8 through 10 in a core clause leads to much confusion in most commentaries about the syntax of the Greek. Amazingly, commentators without knowing what to make of the syntax create 'phantasy' grammar terms in order to give credibility to their interpretive conclusions. A similar tendency was earlier observed in 2:13-3:7 where Peter used a standard pattern in ancient Greek with a core verb (2:13) and participles subsequently (2:18, 3:1, 7) to signal structural connection. On a smaller scale Peter does a similar thing in vv. 7-11 with the core verbs *σωφρονήσατε* and *νήψατε* in verse 7, followed by a series of participles etc., *ἔχοντες* (v. 8), *φιλόξενοι* with *ὄντες* implied (v. 9), and *διακονοῦντες* (v. 10). In verse 11, the 1st conditional sentences only contain a verb -- *λαλεῖ* and *διακονεῖ* in the dependent protasis clause. The main clause verbs *λαλεῖτω* and *διακονεῖτω* are implied from these stated verbs. Because modern western languages are not well equipped to do these sorts of things, many commentators stumble over themselves in trying to make sense from the Greek text. But in the original language everything is inner connected to the core admonitions in verse seven.

<sup>26</sup>"The love that is so important is that for fellow-Christians. As in the whole NT (Mark 12:30–33; John 13:34–35; 15:12–17; 1 Cor. 13:1–13; Gal. 5:13–14, 22; Col. 3:14; Jas. 2:8; 1 John), unity with and practical care for other Christians is not seen as an optional extra, but as a central part of the faith. Communal unity (the product of love in the Johannine literature) is the topic of whole epistles (especially Philippians and James). Thus it is no wonder that Peter first underlines this virtue with 'above all' and then adds 'earnestly maintain,' a term he also used to describe love in 1:22. The root idea of this term is to be stretched or in tension. Thus when applied in situations such as this it means not to slack off on love, to keep it going at full force, to be earnest about it. Unlike the Ephesians who did slack off (Rev. 2:4–5), these Christians are to maintain their devotion to one another." [Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 157.]

<sup>27</sup>"Above all," NRSV, RSV, HCSB, ESV, LEB, NASB, NIV, TNIV, Wey; "above all things," KJV, ASV, NKJV; "Above everything," TEV; "Most important of all," NLT; "Most importantly," NCV; "most of all," BBE, NIRV, Message; "before all things," D-R; "Sobre todo," BdlA, BR-V; "Vor allem," GNB; "Vor allen Dingen," Luther Bibel 1912, Elberfelder 1905; "Avant tout,"

phrase is not to elevate brotherly love to a higher level than the other traits. More likely, the sense here is that brotherly love is foundational to the other traits.<sup>28</sup> Believers should begin with brotherly love since it undergirds and supports the other obligations.

The responsibility of loving fellow believers is expressed in terms of τὴν εἰς ἑαυτοὺς ἀγάπην ἐκτενῆ ἔχοντες, “maintain constant love for one another.” Already Peter has put this topic on the table in 1:22: “Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth **so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart.**”<sup>29</sup> Brotherly love is linked closely to obeying the true Gospel; it is to flow out of one’s conversion commitment to Christ. Again in 2:17 the admonition “Love the family of believers” (τὴν ἀδελφότητα ἀγαπᾶτε) is repeated as a part of the responsibilities for presenting a positive witness to the outside world.<sup>30</sup> Peter is very much in the center of early Christian tradition with this emphasis.<sup>31</sup> A distinctive angle here is that believers are to ἔχοντες this love. That is, love for one another is to be ‘possessed’ and integrated into their everyday life experiences. It is not something just to talk about, not something to express on just Sunday, not idealistic theory. Rather, it is to saturate our thinking and living continually. This single usage of the adjective ἐκτενῆς, ἔς stresses constant quality.<sup>32</sup> In the first century world, such an ongoing display of devotion and commitment to the welfare to others inside a community of faith made up of widely diverse ethnic and racial members would have been highly unusual.

A basis for this obligation to brotherly love is provided in a paraphrase of Proverbs 10:12, taken more directly from the Hebrew text than from the Greek LXX, unlike the other OT references in First Peter. Peter says, “for love covers a multitude of sins” (ὅτι ἀγάπη καλύπτει πλῆθος ἁμαρτιῶν). What is meant here? The Proverbs passage “Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses” simply affirms that love will overlook wrongs done against the individual and keep strife from continuing.<sup>33</sup> This is the point of Paul’s use in 1 Cor. 13:7 as well. But the use of Prov. 10:12 in James 5:20 is clearly with a different meaning: “you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner’s soul from death and **will cover a multitude of sins.**”<sup>34</sup> Important to note here is that, while the repentance of the wayward sinner covers his sins in James 5:20,

---

Second 1910; “Surtout ayez,” Ostervald; “ante omnia,” Vlg.

<sup>28</sup>πρὸ πάντων shows up in James 5:12, 1 Peter 4:8; Colossians 1:17. Compare Πρὸ δὲ τούτων πάντων, (‘before all these things’) Luke 21:17. The preposition πρὸ meaning ‘before’ can refer to time, degree, place among other designations. The problem with translation into any of the modern western languages is the mutually exclusive nature of the three categories of time, place, and degree. Most translators opt for ‘degree’ as the category for 4:8, but such may impose unintended limitations on the Greek expression.

<sup>29</sup>GNT: Τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν ἡγνικότες ἐν τῇ ὑπακοῇ τῆς ἀληθείας εἰς φιλαδελφίαν ἀνυπόκριτον, ἐκ [καθαρᾶς] καρδίας ἀλλήλους ἀγαπήσατε ἐκτενῶς

<sup>30</sup>“The obligation of mutual love among Christian believers was stated already in 1:22, where the adverb ἐκτενῶς, “unremittingly,” corresponds in meaning to the adjective ἐκτενῆ, ‘constant,’ used here (cf. as well 2:17, ‘love the brotherhood’). The phrase εἰς ἑαυτοὺς, ‘for each other’ (lit., ‘for yourselves’), both here and in v 10, denotes mutuality (cf. BGD, 212.3), no less than the εἰς ἀλλήλους, ‘to one another,’ of v 9, (cf. 1:22; 5:5). Peter’s emphasis on constancy in the fulfillment of this obligation is traceable to his assumption that his readers’ love is being tested by the thais they are facing and will face (1:6; 4:12; cf. the prediction attributed to Jesus in Matt 24:12 in connection with coming trials that ‘the love of many will grow cold’). They must be as constant and enduring in their love as the message they have received, the word of God that lasts forever (cf. 1:23–25).” [J. Ramsey Michaels, vol. 49, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 246.]

<sup>31</sup>“Love lay at the heart of Jesus’ teaching;<sup>516</sup> Paul reckoned love as “the more excellent way” (1 Cor 12:29; 13:1–13); and its indispensability is stressed continually in the NT.<sup>517</sup>” [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 750.]

<sup>32</sup>ἐκτενῆς, ἔς (Aeschyl.; Polyb. 22, 5, 4; ins [s. on ἐκτένεια]; PTebt 24, 45; 3 Macc 3:10; 5:29; Philo; Just., D. 107, 2 ἐκτενοῦς ὀλολογμοῦ) **pert. to being persevering, with implication that one does not waver in one’s display of interest or devotion, eager, earnest**, comp. ἐκτενεστερος (IGR IV, 293 II, 38) **Ac 12:5** v.l. ἐκτενῆ τὴν δέησιν ποιῆσθαι make earnest supplication 1 Cl 59:2 (UPZ 110, 46 [164 B.C.] τὴν ἐκτενεστάτην ποιήσασθαι πρόνοιαν). ἐκτενῆ ὑπὸ πάντων προσευχὴν γενέσθαι AcPl Ha 6, 6f. τὴν ἀγάπην ἐκτενῆ ἔχειν **keep affection constant 1 Pt 4:8** μετ’ ἐκτενοῦς ἐπιεικείας w. constant gentleness 1 Cl 58:2; 62:2.—DELG s.v. τανυ- etc. E p. 1092. M-M. TW. Spicq.” [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 310.]

<sup>33</sup>“In the OT it means that love will pass over wrongs done to a person rather than continue a dispute: ‘Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.’ Paul teaches similarly in 1 Cor. 13:7 (cf. 1 Cor. 6:7 and the use of Prov. 10:12 in 1 Clem. 49:5).” [Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 158.]

<sup>34</sup>GNT: γινώσκέτω ὅτι ὁ ἐπιστρέψας ἁμαρτωλὸν ἐκ πλάνης ὁδοῦ αὐτοῦ σώσει ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἐκ θανάτου καὶ **καλύψει πλῆθος ἁμαρτιῶν.**

brotherly love is what covers sins in First Peter. Most likely, however, Peter is using the generalized proverb in Prov. 10:12 more in the sense of its OT meaning; brotherly love is the best preventative medicine to keep down strife and discord inside a community of believers. To cover (καλύπτει) is essentially to overlook and not take note of; brotherly love lays a covering blanket over the offenses of fellow believers so that grudges and revenge seeking don't take over.

Out of brotherly love naturally flows hospitality: φιλόξενοι εἰς ἀλλήλους ἄνευ γογγυσμοῦ, “Be hospitable to one another without complaining.”<sup>35</sup> When believers from other congregations came through a city they needed a place to stay, and local inns were usually brothels. Thus, providing a place to lodge along with food became very important in early Christianity. This was particularly true for the traveling missionaries such as Paul and Silas who largely depended in local support for their basics so they could evangelize and minister. Since most believers lived on the lower economic scale, providing food and lodging would mean considerable sacrifice, and could lead to complaining very easily.<sup>36</sup> When brotherly love has taken deep roots in the hearts of believers, such sacrifices will be a source of joy rather than griping. And it represents one aspect of sharing considered by Luke as characteristic of the first community of believers in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 4:32-37).

Additionally, service to others flows out of brotherly love: ἕκαστος καθὼς ἔλαβεν χάρισμα, εἰς ἑαυτοὺς αὐτὸ διακονοῦντες ὡς καλοὶ οἰκονόμοι ποικίλης χάριτος θεοῦ, “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.” This basic obligation in v. 10 is then amplified in verse 11 with some detail: εἴ τις λαλεῖ, ὡς λόγια θεοῦ· εἴ τις διακονεῖ, ὡς ἐξ ἰσχύος ἧς χορηγεῖ ὁ θεός· ἵνα ἐν πᾶσιν δοξάζηται ὁ θεὸς διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, “Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ.”

The broad obligation is put forth in verse ten and built around the core idea of ἕκαστος...εἰς ἑαυτοὺς αὐτὸ διακονοῦντες, “each one...serving it for one another.” Again the doing of ministry is an expression of clear headed thinking, since the participle διακονοῦντες is an expansion element of the two verbs σωφρονήσατε and νήψατε in verse 7b. Additionally it flows out of the emphasis on brotherly love in verse eight.

What is it that believers are to do? The verb διακονέω, with its 37 uses in the New Testament, has a wide

<sup>35</sup>“Another important form of love in the early church was love for traveling Christians, not members of the local body, but part of the wider family of Christ. Thus Peter writes, ‘Offer hospitality to one another ungrudgingly.’ Hospitality is mentioned explicitly five times in the NT (Rom. 12:13; 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9) and implied in a number of other passages (e.g., Matt. 10:11–14; 25:35, 38, 43–44; 1 Tim. 5:10; Jas. 2:21, 25; 2 John 10; 3 John 5).<sup>33</sup> One notes that giving hospitality was a qualification for eldership or being enrolled as a widow in the Pastorals. Matthew uses it as a criterion for rejection or acceptance at the final judgment. And it continued important in the postapostolic period (e.g., Did. 11:1–6; 12:1–5). What it consisted of was offering to traveling Christians (including traveling teachers, prophets, and apostles) free room and board while they were legitimately in an area. We learn that by A.D. 100 in Asia the expectation had been codified due to abuses; that is, food and housing would be provided for a maximum of three days (or four if one included the food that was given for the first day’s journey onward), after which the person was expected to move on or to get a job and be self-supporting. The provision of hospitality was important because of both the limited means of many Christians and the questionable character of such public places as there were to stay in; it was valuable in that it tied the churches together through this mutual service and provided a means of communication among them. But even with all its value, the practice was often a costly act of love for Christians who themselves often lived on a hand-to-mouth basis. Thus Peter does not simply call for hospitality (a virtue that they knew about and that would be even more in demand as persecution forced believers to flee their native villages), but for it to be offered ‘ungrudgingly.’ This term, which means ‘grumbling’ or ‘complaining’ (Acts 6:1; Phil. 2:14; cf. Matt. 20:11; John 6:41, 43; 1 Cor. 10:10), aptly captures the quiet ‘I don’t know why we get all the travelers’ or ‘I wish Paul would move on’ whispered in a corner to a spouse when a family was on short rations or its housing was cramped due to a visitor. Peter urges the Christians to a level of love that would transcend such negative attitudes; he knows there will be sacrifice, but wants it made with a willing and cheerful heart (cf. 2 Cor. 8–9).” [Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 158-59.]

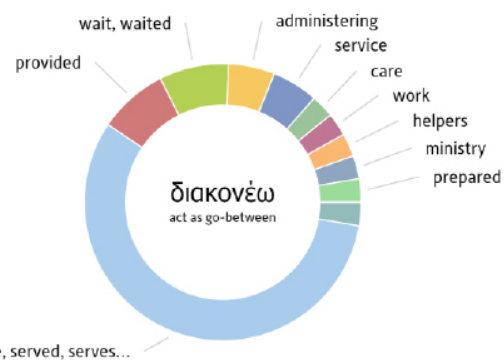
<sup>36</sup>“**γογγυσμός, οὗ, ὅ** (s. γογγύζω; γογγυσμός since Anaxandrides Com. [IV B.C.] Fgm. 31; M. Ant. 9, 37, 1; Cat. Cod. Astr. VII 139, 11; PRossGeorg III, 2, 11 [III A.D.]; PCairMasp 159, 27 [VI A.D.]; LXX; TestJob 14:5; GrBar) **utterance made in a low tone of voice** (the context indicates whether the utterance is one of discontent or satisfaction), **behind-the-scenes talk**.—Negative aspect: *complaint, displeasure*, expressed in murmuring: ἐγένετο γ. τιнос πρὸς τινα complaints arose fr. someone against someone **Ac 6:1** (cp. PRossGeorg above: μή τις γογγυσμός καθ’ ἡμῶν γένηται). χωρὶς γογγυσμῶν (ἄνευ γ. PsSol 5:13) without complaining **Phil 2:14**; cp. **1 Pt 4:9** (on the topic of ungrudging hospitality s. Athen. 8, 364). ῥῆμα γογγυσμοῦ grumbling speech B 3:5 (Is 58:9).—In ref. to both discontent and satisfaction: secret talk, whispering γ. περὶ αὐτοῦ ἦν πολὺς there was much secret discussion about him **J 7:12** (some say Jesus is ἀγαθός; others, πλανᾷ τὸν ὄχλον).—Field, Notes 92. M-M. New Docs 4, 143f. TW.” [William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 204.]

range of meanings essentially built off the core idea of serving or helping someone.<sup>37</sup> A common secular meaning of the term was to designate a household slave who had the responsibility of preparing and serving food to the family. The sense here is that of delivering up something that has been received from God, the αὐτὸ, “it.” This personal pronoun refers back to χάρισμα, “gift,” which each member has received from God, ἕκαστος καθὼς ἔλαβεν. This gift is subsequently defined as the ποικίλης χάριτος θεοῦ, “varied grace of God.” Thus each believer has been ‘gifted’ by God with an expression of His grace. And this grace gift is to be a channel of ministry εἰς ἑαυτοὺς, “for one another,” inside the community of faith. The manner of giving such service is comparable to ὡς καλοὶ οἰκονόμοι, “as good stewards,”<sup>38</sup> an image of a household slave charged with the administrative responsibilities of the estate for the owner.<sup>39</sup> Through the graphic image of family as a picture of the community of faith, Peter portrays the responsibility of each member to carry out their divinely given tasks to the rest of the community in faithful service.

In this text, Peter utilizes the idea of gifted service to the believing community somewhat in the same way that Paul set forth in 1 Cor. 12 - 14, Eph. 4:11-16, Rom. 12:3-8 etc. But Peter does not develop a detailed presentation of ‘gifts.’ And he will illustrate what he means in verse eleven with only two examples: τις λαλεῖ and τις διακονεῖ, the second of which repeats the general concept of διακονοῦντες in verse ten.<sup>40</sup> Both of these ‘individual gifts’ are general and broad in scope rather than specific in the manner that Paul lays out the individual gifts in his writings.<sup>41</sup>

What can we conclude from Peter’s teachings about gifts?

**First, gifts** are not talent or inherited abilities. Instead they



<sup>37</sup>διακονέω is part of a group of words built off the same root stem: διακονία (service, ministry), διάκονος, ου, ὁ, ἡ (servant, male & female).

<sup>38</sup>“An *oikonomos* was a domestic steward (usually a reliable slave [*oiketēs, doulos, diakonos*], Plut., Lib. ed. 7; Mor. 4B; Xen., Oec. 1.2; cf. Matt 24:45–51) who managed a household (*oikos*) with authority delegated by the householder (*oikodespotēs*; cf. Luke 12:42; 16:1, 3, 8; Gal 4:2). In a transferred sense the term could also designate a public official, such as a city treasurer (e.g., Erastus as *oikonomos* in Corinth, Rom 16:23), steward of the grain supply or, within the Mystery cults, a person in charge of household management and food distribution (Reumann 1958, 342–49).<sup>55</sup> Jesus used the example of a household steward to encourage in his listeners the virtues of both reliability (Luke 12:42–43, in conversation with Peter, 12:41) and shrewdness (Luke 16:1–8) at the present eschatological hour (cf. also Matt 24:45–51). Paul described himself, Apollos, and Cephas figuratively as ‘servants (*hyperētas*) of Christ and household stewards (*oikonomos*) of the mysteries of God’ (1 Cor 4:1–2), who as such were obliged to be trustworthy. In Titus 1:5–10, community leaders (elders, overseers, vv 5, 6) were urged to serve as ‘stewards in God’s household,’ possessing the qualities that would ensure sound household management: blameless character, respect for order, integrity, humility, patience, hospitality, not given to greed, and so on.<sup>56</sup> The term was not reserved for leaders alone, as Ignatius illustrates. In his letter to Polycarp of Smyrna, he applies the term to all of the Symrneans: ‘Labor with one another, struggle together, run together, suffer together, rest together, rise up together as God’s household stewards and assessors and servants’ (Ign. Pol. 6:1).” [John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 756.]

<sup>39</sup>“Christians, then, cannot control how God has gifted them (although according to Paul one can pray for gifts, 1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1, 13), but can and do control if and how the gift is used. Spiritual gifts are not autonomous entities outside a person’s control, but abilities that the Spirit gives and that a person must grow in and use, putting them into service.<sup>36</sup> Thus the Christian is a ‘steward’ of a gift. The steward was the person in a household (often a slave) who was responsible for managing the householder’s business and property, including providing what was needed for the family members, slaves, and hired laborers.<sup>37</sup> Jesus used the image in Luke 12:42 and 16:1–8, and Paul took the term as a description of proper service in the church (1 Cor. 4:1–2; Gal. 4:2; cf. Tit. 1:7). Thus the Christian in Peter’s view is simply a household slave who has control over a certain part of God’s property, a gift. The shape of this gift will not be like that of another Christian, for it comes from ‘God’s varied grace’ (cf. 1:6 where the Greek term for ‘varied’ occurs in another context).<sup>38</sup> But all alike are simply administrators of that which belongs to God; it is not theirs, but they are responsible for how it is used. They ought to be ‘good stewards.’” [Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 160-61.]

<sup>40</sup>Peter only uses διακονέω three times in this letter: twice in 4:11-12 and once in 1:12 (οὐχ ἑαυτοῖς ὑμῖν δὲ διηκόνουν αὐτά, ἃ νῦν ἀνηγγέλη ὑμῖν διὰ τῶν εὐαγγελισαμένων ὑμᾶς [ἐν] πνεύματι ἀγίῳ ἀποσταλέντι ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ, “they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things that have now been announced to you through those who brought you good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.” Here the OT prophets were doing the serving.

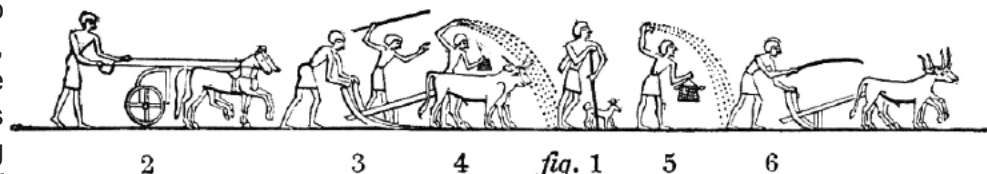
<sup>41</sup>Perhaps Peter knew of the more detailed thinking of Paul since First Corinthians was written before First Peter. But this is not certain, and also it’s not certain whether Peter understood the idea of ‘gifts’ in the same detailed way of Paul. But to speculate from 1 Pet. 4:10-11 a rejection of the teaching of Paul on gifts has no real basis, and thus is to be rejected. To the contrary, the broad contours of gifted service in First Peter are consistent with the teaching of Paul in his writings.

are a χάρισμα which Peter then defines as an individual expression of the ποικίλης χάριτος θεοῦ. These are ministry assignments given to believers in conversion, and possibly afterwards as well. Paul's conversion experience stands as the primary example of this, as per his own testimony in Gal. 1:15-16.<sup>42</sup>

**Second**, gifts are not for personal accomplishment or elevation. They are εἰς ἑαυτοὺς, "for one another." The use of these gifts is defined as διακονοῦντες, 'ministering,' which characterizes the use of gifts to help and to serve other members of the community of faith. The image of the humble servant in Matt. 20:25-28 lies in the background.<sup>43</sup>

**Third**, gifts as an ποικίλης χάριτος θεοῦ must be discovered in the midst of ministry involvement. They come as divine empowerment for service to others and will be actualized only in service. In following the leadership of God's Spirit, we will discover ways of contributing to the welfare of the community of believers.

**Fourth**, believers are to serve as καλοὶ οἰκονόμοι, "as good stewards." The background imagery of slaves functioning in a family setting is significant. Not the least of which is the accountability



Steward overlooking the tillage of the lands. Thebes

The household master held the steward strictly accountable for proper management of what had been entrusted to him. Jesus underscored this in some of his parables, such as "the unjust steward" in Luke 16:1-8.

**Fifth**, gifted service comes in two broad areas, that of speaking (εἶ τις λαλεῖ) and serving (εἶ τις διακονεῖ). In contrast to Paul's material in 1 Cor. 12-14 and Romans 12 where a large number of χαρίσματα are discussed,<sup>44</sup> Peter only alludes to two types, both of which are labeled χαρίσματα and both are implemented as διακονοῦντες.<sup>45</sup> Peter did not see the need of any further detailing of gifts, evidently because the churches addressed in the letter had no issues with specific gifts, as was true at Corinth and possibly also at Rome which Paul addressed.

What did concern Peter was *the use of the gifts* given by God: "Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies," εἶ τις λαλεῖ, ὡς λόγια θεοῦ· εἶ τις διακονεῖ, ὡς ἐξ ἰσχύος ἧς χορηγεῖ ὁ θεός. When a believer seeks to speak religious truth, he or she must be absolutely certain that they are speaking what God has revealed and not what they have dreamed up themselves.<sup>46</sup> Also when a believer serves, it must be empowered by the strength of God, and not by his

<sup>42</sup>NRSV, "15 But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased 16 to reveal his Son to me, *so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles,*"

<sup>43</sup>NRSV, "25 But Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. 26 It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; 28 just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'"

<sup>44</sup>1 Cor. 12:4-11, NRSV: "4 Now there are varieties of gifts [Διαιρέσεις χαρισμάτων], but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services [διαιρέσεις διακονιῶν], but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities [διαιρέσεις ἐνεργημάτων], but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit *the utterance of wisdom* [λόγος σοφίας], and to another *the utterance of knowledge* [λόγος γνώσεως] according to the same Spirit, 9 to another *faith* [πίστις] by the same Spirit, to another *gifts of healing* [χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων] by the one Spirit, 10 to another *the working of miracles* [ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων], to another *prophecy* [προφητεία], to another *the discernment of spirits* [διακρίσεις πνευμάτων], to another *various kinds of tongues* [γένη γλωσσῶν], to another *the interpretation of tongues* [ἐρμηνεῖα γλωσσῶν]. 11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses."

**Rom. 12:6-8**, NRSV: "6 We have *gifts that differ* according to the grace given to us [χαρίσματα κατὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν *διάφορα*.]: prophecy [προφητεῖαν], in proportion to faith; 7 *ministry* [διακονίαν], in ministering; *the teacher* [ὁ διδάσκων], in teaching; 8 *the exhorter* [ὁ παρακαλῶν], in exhortation; *the giver* [ὁ μεταδιδούς], in generosity; *the leader* [ὁ προϊστάμενος], in diligence; *the compassionate* [ὁ ἐλεῶν], in cheerfulness."

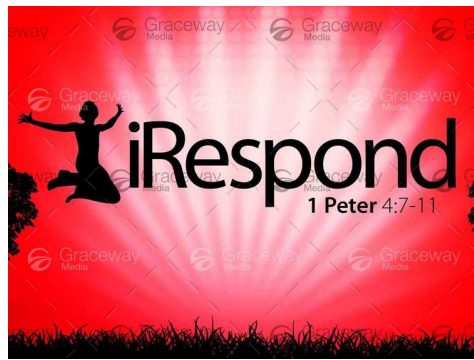
<sup>45</sup>Paul, on the other hand, laid out in 1 Cor. 12:4-6 three grouping of 'gifts' to the Corinthians: varieties of gifts [Διαιρέσεις χαρισμάτων], varieties of services [διαιρέσεις διακονιῶν], and varieties of activities [διαιρέσεις ἐνεργημάτων].

<sup>46</sup>"First, 'if someone speaks' covers the whole range of speaking gifts, that is, *glossolalia* (the second half of which comes from the verb Peter is using), prophecy, teaching, and evangelism (or preaching). It is not referring to casual talk among Christians, nor is it referring only to the actions of elders or other church officials (to whom it will be restricted in the Apostolic Fathers), but

/ her own strength.<sup>47</sup> The focus is simple and clear: ministry must come from God and just flow through the believer. The challenge to the believer is to not get in God's way or to clog up the divine pipeline in producing ministry by human effort.

Wow! No wonder then that this kind of ministry can reflect the very presence of God in the midst of a congregation, and create keen interest by outsiders to know why these Christians are so different than the rest of the world. Everything in gifted ministry originates in God, not in human effort.

And its sole purpose and goal is ἵνα ἐν πᾶσιν δοξάζεται ὁ θεὸς διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, "so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ." To the Jewish synagogue communities located near these churches, there would be recognition that the God of Abraham was dynamically alive and active in the Christian churches. To the pagan neighbors of these believers, there would be curiosity and fascination that this God of the Christians was alive and was doing things in the churches that no Roman, Greek, or local deity had ever been known to do.



Peter concludes then with a doxological praise of God: ὃ ἐστὶν ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ἀμήν, "To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen."<sup>48</sup> The praise goes to God the Father whose actions of grace have produced such a unique and different community of people, who belong to Him and who seek to praise only Him.



to each Christian who may exercise one of these verbal gifts. Such speech is not to be simply his or her own good ideas, nor even good exegesis, but 'as ... the very words of God.' This phrase refers to the words God speaks (cf. Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2; Heb. 5:12).<sup>39</sup> Paul was very conscious of his own words being those of God (1 Cor. 7:40; 2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2, 13; 10:3-6; 11:17), and our author is telling his readers to be sure that they also are speaking 'in the Spirit' (as in 1:12). While the 'as' allows a slight distancing between their speaking and God's words (does any spiritual gift ever operate in a 100 percent pure form without contamination from fallen humanity?), that is no excuse for substituting mere intellect or rhetorical skill for God's inspiration: neither the counterfeit nor the diluted is good stewardship of God's grace." [Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 161.]

<sup>47c</sup>The other broad class of gifts referred to is 'if someone serves.' While the verb is the same as that in 4:10, a narrower meaning is taken up here, much like the distinction between 'the word of God' and 'serving tables' in Acts 6:2 or Paul's sense in Rom. 12:7. It probably covers all those deeds one Christian does to or for another: administration, care for the poor and sick (including contributing funds, distributing funds, and physical care), healing, and similar acts that express God's love and mercy in concrete form.<sup>40</sup> These are to be done from 'the strength that God supplies.' The word 'supplies' appears only here and in 2 Cor. 9:10 in the NT. It originally meant 'to pay the expense for training a chorus' for a Greek theater or 'to defray the expenses for something.'<sup>41</sup> In 2 Corinthians it indicates a God who 'will supply and multiply your resources' (RSV). Here the Christian sees a service that God wants done. One can try to do it out of one's own zeal and strength (which might appear effective in some ministries, but not in others, e.g., healing), a recipe for ultimate ineffectiveness and burnout, or one can depend on that strength which God provides; God has ordered the job done; God will pay the expenses, be they material, physical, or emotional. He 'backs up the act' of the Christian who is being a good steward of his gifts in dependence on him." [Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 161-62.]

<sup>48c</sup>Mentioning the glory of God leads our author into a doxology that closes the section, 'To him belong glory and power forever and ever. Amen.' To whom do these belong? Both comparison with other doxologies (e.g., Luke 2:14; Rom. 11:36; Eph. 3:20-21; Phil. 4:20; Heb. 13:20-21; Jude 24-25; 1 Clem. 20:12; 50:7) and the earlier reference in this verse to God's being glorified point to the 'him' being God, not Christ. God is to be glorified, for glory belongs to him. This is not a wish (thus the RSV and NIV translations are misleading), but a statement of fact (Greek indicative) as in all NT doxologies (e.g., Rom. 1:25; 2 Cor. 11:31, where, as here, the verb is explicitly present): God possesses glory by right. To glory this doxology, along with 1 Tim. 6:16, Jude 24-25, and Rev. 1:6 and 5:13, adds 'power,' which fits well in our wider context in which it underlines God's ability to put down evil and bring justice in the end (cf. 4:5, 7). Power in the NT is ascribed solely to God or Christ with but one exception (Heb. 2:14, yet there the devil who has the power of death is said to be destroyed by Christ). God is indeed the 'Almighty' (2 Cor. 6:18; Rev. 1:8; 4:8; plus seven more times in Revelation). And this glory and power is his 'unto the ages of ages' (a more woodenly literal translation of Peter's words) or, more simply, 'forever.' This brings on the proper liturgical response to such a confession: 'Amen,' the Aramaic (or Hebrew) word meaning 'sure,' a fitting answer to such an exalted ascription (Rom. 1:25; Gal. 1:5; and frequently in doxologies such as those noted above)." [Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 162-63.]