

What Matters Most in the End

1st Peter 4:7-11

Introduction

When the end of life comes it brings clarity. The end of life makes the trivial things fade and the truly valuable things are most important. I would really like to have another chance to talk with my sister and hear her sing “Ten Thousand Angels”. I would love to sit down at my grandma Claudia’s table and eat a piece of her Lemon Cheese cake and talk to her a while. Things that I took for granted I now miss dearly.

Peter puts in perspective the things that matter most. He teaches the persecuted believers to whom He is writing how to behave in the end. Let’s discover what Peter says matters most in the end.

Prayer

Prayer, according to the apostle Peter, is one of the things that matters most in the end. He puts forth a challenge to be serious and disciplined about prayer. “Serious” prayer is sound minded prayer. “Serious” prayer is temperate prayer. “Disciplined” prayer is sober-minded prayer. The word literally means to “abstain from wine”. Peter is describing a prayer life that is thoughtful, controlled, and not dictated by emotions.

Do you have a systematic approach to your prayer life? I am not talking about a dead academic approach to prayer. I am talking about a plan for prayer; a prayer list, a consistent effort to pray for people and issues that are important to you. When the Spirit moves your heart to pray you should respond in obedience and pray. However, most often you must move yourself to pray and the best way to move yourself to pray is if you have a planned approach to prayer.

Love

The word that is translated “love” in this text is the Greek word “agape”. This type of love is a love of sacrificial action and goodwill toward others. It is the same word that is used to describe God’s love demonstrated toward us through Christ.

The love that matters most in the end is sincere and stretched. Sincere love is easy to understand. Sincere love is genuine, heartfelt and earnest. Stretched love is a love of intense effort. It is easy to identify sincere love because the person who loves you sincerely will stretch out intensely to show you their love for you.

The love that matters most in the end is love for others. What is so important about love for others? Notice verse 8, “...love covers a multitude of sins.” Love is greater than failures. Love is greater than personal flaws. Love is greater than sins. Love covers over all of these things.

The love that matters most in the end is demonstrated by hospitality. The specific idea of hospitality that is communicated here loves strangers. Strangers are people that you don’t know, people that aren’t like you, people that were raised different, live different, and believe different. About this demonstration of love Peter instructs us to love strangers without complaining. It is difficult to be hospitable to strangers and we have a tendency to complain and grumble about it. We complain about those people that only come to big events and don’t come regularly on Sunday. We grumble about those kids whose parents don’t come and they run around the church like wild animals. Peter says be hospitable to such people without complaining.

The love that matters most in the end is demonstrated through service. Every believer has been entrusted with a spiritual gift. I don’t know what your spiritual gift is; that is another sermon for another day. But, whatever it is, it is for others. God gave you your gift for my benefit! Your gift is a stewardship. Peter challenges us to be “good managers” of your gift. A manager is a steward. You are responsible for using the gift you have been given. Your gift is your way to glorify God. My sweet spot is when I am using my spiritual gifts to build up others. When I am using my spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ I believe that God is glorified! My gift is my way of glorifying God.

Conclusion

When the end comes, the only thing that matters is God's glory. All the glory and power belong to Him forever. You live because you were created for God's glory. You were saved for God's glory. You were gifted for God's glory. You may suffer; if you do it's for God's glory. You are blessed, and it is for God's glory!