

## 1 Peter 4:7-11

**1Pe 4:7 (NKJV) But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. <sup>8</sup> And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." <sup>9</sup> Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. <sup>10</sup> As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. <sup>11</sup> If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

This morning we want to begin by looking at this listing of encouragements to the believer beginning in v9. It says that we are to “**be hospitable**”, that we are not to grumble, that we are to minister the grace of God to people, that we are to speak to others as God would speak to them, and finally that we are to minister to others in the power that God provides. All of these means of relating to other people is how God is glorified through your individual life. Just think of what all of these exhortations actually mean when understood and implemented. These are powerful, very powerful means by which God uses people. These are those things that when we both accept and adopt them into our lives, they allow God to work through us for the benefit and blessing of others, as well as glorifying Him both in and through our lives. Stated another way, this should be the way that we actually live – hospitable, never grumbling, ministering God’s grace to others, speaking words of encouragement into their lives, and ministering to others with spiritual power..

Now, we cannot forget that this passage appears at first to be somewhat of a parenthesis in the overall chapter. Peter goes from talking about suffering in v1-6, then to living for God’s glory in v7-11, then back to suffering for God’s glory in v12-19. In some ways, v7-11 are like the meat in the middle of the sandwich, and it is not there by accident. It is not like Peter just became a little distracted, lost his train of thought, then got back on track again – not at all. What Peter is clearly saying in a very practical way is that whenever any believer that we know is going through very difficult trials and through suffering of any kind, that at that time in their life God wants to use us to be an amazing encouragement to them.

I want you to think of all of this in a particular way. What Peter is doing is instructing us on how to give hope to other believers who are losing hope in a world that can often times seem incredibly cruel. One of our primary purposes in this life is to give people hope. People who lack hope have nothing for which to live, and in that scenario they can become incredibly discouraged and disillusioned. They find themselves living in a dark deep hole from which they seem to have no way out. They become disheartened, depressed, dejected, gloomy, moody. They feel let down and left behind. I am of the strong persuasion that everyone needs someone else in their life that is spiritually stronger than they are. Children need parents. Students need teachers. Every one of us need that kind of person in our life, that person who is not despondent, not dejected, not depressed, but someone who knows God and understands the trials and struggles that every believer will ultimately face at some point in their life. No one is exempt from trouble, from heartache, and from trials. So, having someone there that you know can help pull you out of your discouragement is actually very critical to living the Christian life successfully. You need that friend, that mentor, that encourager, that helper that will stick to you closer than a brother.

Peter understood all of this, and that is probably one reason why he has given such a strong encouragement in this five verses. He understood the need for encouragement. I have said it often, but I believe that the gift of exhortation and encouragement may be the most needed spiritual gift in any local church. Why? It is because people constantly become discouraged. They get discouraged with their marriage, with their finances, with their job, with other Christians, with their church, with their children, with their illnesses, with their schedule, and with many other things. It is at those moments that they need someone who can help them in that struggle. For these Christians in Peter's day, they were experiencing various forms of suffering for their faith and were going to experience even more. Even though they did not have the Internet, newspapers, or television, I think it is reasonable to assume that they could see the handwriting on the wall as far as their future was concerned – and many were easily discouraged.

I have been studying recently about apocalyptic literature, and one of the things that I have learned is that apocalyptic literature was always designed to give people hope to help them hold on to their faith during times of persecution. In some ways, that is exactly what Peter is doing here. The point is actually very simple – we all need hope, we all need encouragement, we all need support in different areas of our life. I am not exempt, you are not exempt. As tough as you may think that you are and as independent as you may want to be, there will be times in your life where you will need both help and hope. Just let one of your children get some debilitating and even fatal disease. Just find out that your marriage partner is going to leave you. Just let your company fire you from your job. Just let some doctor tell you that you have pancreatic cancer. It can happen to anyone, anywhere, anytime – and it is during those moments that we all will need someone to help support us. My good friend Bob Craven's niece just had her 41 year old husband have a massive stroke, and he is on life support with no brain activity. She needs someone there to help her through this awful decision making process. It can happen suddenly to anyone. I have a great friend that I get my infusions with each month. He had a major heart attack when he was about 40 years old, another one at 50 or so, and now he is approaching 60. His wife has Meniere's disease or constant vertigo and dizziness, chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, IBS with terrible stomach issues, and is in intense pain everyday with virtually no relief. He constantly needs my support and encouragement.

V9 actually says to “**Be hospitable to one another without grumbling**”. Now there are three things that we need to notice about this verse. The first thing is that it does not say that we are to be hospitable to anyone who may show up at our front door, but is a specific reference to helping “**one another**”. The AMP Bible actually says that it is to be to “**those of the household of faith**” – which is exactly what Peter is saying. Based on the specific context of [1 Peter](#), this verse is speaking specifically about helping another believer who has a legitimate need not of his own making. I am not saying that to be a discouragement to helping someone who may not be a Christian, but simply to identify that this is not a verse dealing with providing social welfare to anyone who may have a need – not at all. Jesus Himself did not meet every need that people may have had.

We did this recently as a church and helped the family that wound up on our church doorstep one Sunday with three kids and no place to live and no food to eat. Their clothes had holes in them and they were destitute. We helped them. Many of you helped them with food and clothing. The church bought them food, clothes, furniture, got them a place to live, paid their past electric bill, and got the husband a job.

In the end, he wound up committing armed robbery and kidnapping and is now in jail. We erred on the side of mercy – and I am perfectly okay with what we tried to do. So, there may be times when that is perfectly legitimate and even necessary, but it does **not** come from this verse. This particular encouragement is specifically directed to our helping other believers who have legitimate needs that have been born out of their faith in Christ, or from circumstances beyond their control. This church, as long as we have the physical means to do so, will never leave one of our members hanging on for dear life. We will provide food, shelter, pay bills, and do whatever we need to do to help them during their time of need – even if we have to do it sacrificially. We will follow biblical guidelines in that effort.

The second thing it says is that we are to “**be hospitable**”. When Peter encourages believers to “**be hospitable**” the meaning should just be intuitive to us. It means what we think it means. It means that we are going to be caring enough to other believers in our midst to serve them when they have legitimate needs in their life. It actually comes from the Greek root word “*philo*” which refers to having brotherly love and affection for someone, and in this context specifically for other believers. The meaning is more than just having someone over for supper one night. In our culture, I think that is what most of us think this word means, and it can have that meaning, but that certainly is not Peter’s focus at all. We probably should call that just having “**fellowship**” rather than “**hospitality**”. The problem that the church in Peter’s day had was that when people travelled and they arrived somewhere, they generally had no place to stay or feed their animals, so they were very dependent on other people opening up to help them. In the world in which Peter lived there was no Marriot Hotel or Holiday Inn Express. In fact, the few inns that were available were incredibly filthy, very expensive, and had a very bad reputation. There are some motels on the way to Augusta in the Clearwater area at which none of us would even considering staying. Inns were worse than that in the ancient world and many were eat up with fleas and insects. Only the very reckless and lowly stayed in these inns.<sup>1</sup> I stayed in an inn in Romania on my first trip over where dogs were walking around in the lobby and in the dining room. At night at about 11pm there was no electricity. There were no curtains in the rooms. There was no water to flush the strangest commode I have ever seen in my life. The lodge that Tim, Tony Merritt, and myself stayed at in Zimbabwe had ants and mosquitos everywhere.

The picture is that Christians would be travelling and when they arrived somewhere, there simply was no place to stay. So, the ministry of “**hospitality**” was a very needed gift in that day and was considered to be one of the greatest of all Christian virtues. Several years ago we opened up our home to a family whose father had been falsely accused and arrested in New Orleans as a policeman protecting the city from looting and vandalism after Hurricane Katrian. We got a call from a mutual friend and opened up our home to this family of a mother and four children who were complete strangers to us initially. They would come and stay with us every several weeks so they could visit their dad who was falsely imprisoned in Edgefield. That could be considered as “**hospitality**” to strangers.

However in our passage, “**hospitality**” is specifically seen in the overall context of suffering. It is specifically referring to helping another believer with their physical needs such as shelter, food, and clothing. Because of their faith in Christ, many of these believers had lost their jobs and were struggling just to help take care of their family. Some were desperate and some had literally lost everything they

<sup>1</sup> Precept, *1 Peter 4:9*, ep.

had – and it was because of their faith in Christ. Some had suffered physical persecution. In those days, there was no hospital, no Prompt Care center, no Revco or CVS pharmacy where they could get some medicine. They did not have orthopedic surgeons or gynecologists. That simply did not exist. So, to not have anyone to help during those kinds of moments would have been devastating to someone. That is what this word to “**be hospitable**” is driving towards – being willing to help another believer who has a legitimate need in their life that they simply cannot meet on their own.

The third aspect of what Peter says is that we are to do this without “**grumbling**” and complaining about it. Maybe I am wrong on this, but I think that some people actually enjoy grumbling and complaining about everything. It almost seems to be a part of their DNA. Two of the other three times that this word is used in the New Testament it is translated as “**murmuring**”. [Philippians 2:14](#) uses the same Greek word and translates it as “**complaining**”.

Php 2:14 (NKJV) **Do all things without complaining and disputing,**

The idea of this word in [1 Peter 4:9](#) is that God does not want us to be complaining, grumbling, and/or murmuring about helping a genuine believer in our midst who has a very legitimate need that he or she simply cannot meet. In my mind, God will in fact allow that to happen just so we can be tested in this area of our church and individual life. It really serves as a great measuring stick as to whether or not we really do care for people and love them as God wants us to help them. The word refers to an actual audible expression of our being completely dissatisfied with someone infringing on our personal space.

Let us assume that you reluctantly get involved in helping someone, but just find yourself constantly complaining and murmuring about it. In that case, it would probably be better for you to just bow out of actually helping. In my understanding there is no spiritual reward for helping someone when you really do not want to help them. That is actually the sin of hypocrisy. It is being two-faced and insincere. The idea in this verse hinges squarely on the word “**without**” - “**Be hospitable to one another without grumbling**”. It was really interesting to me to find out that this Greek preposition for “**without**” is only used three times in the New Testament and two of those uses are here in [1 Peter](#). I think it would be legitimate to actually translate this verse similar to this – “**Be hospitable to one another, but ONLY if you can do it without complaining**”. I.e., God does not actually need or even desire the need of a grumbler and a complainer.

The excuses that will prompt our complaining will most likely be centered around the idea of something becoming an inconvenience to our very busy schedule. We are so engaged in our own personal lives and activities that often times the idea of helping someone else seems so inconvenient, so inopportune, so problematic, and so annoying to us because it completely interrupts what we want to do. If you do not have the time and do not want to make the time and simply are not willing to help someone with a legitimate need, my encouragement to you would simply be to not even consider helping them. When you get there you will be wishing you were not there and looking for opportunities to leave as quickly as possible. I use to always be amazed at how difficult in some churches it was to get someone to help on a workday at the church or to volunteer to even cut the grass once a month. It seemed like this enormous mountain that someone had to climb since Saturday was their “*only day off*” and they had other plans. Once again, my encouragement is that if you do not want to help, then do not help. This

verse tells us that God does not want us to help if all that we are going to do is to complain and grumble and murmur about having to do so.

So, what do we take away from this verse? Well, it should tell us something about where we are spiritually. Right now, you probably already know whether or not you are even inclined to help someone when they have a need. For many people, this whole idea of helping others is just an infringement on their time, on their schedule, and on anything else that may interfere with their life. We all have a tendency to want to be wonderful Christian people who enjoy living in complete isolation when possible. There are some people who you can stay with and you feel right at home, and then there are other people who make you wish that you were actually at home. We can all recognize when we are wanted or not wanted. Benjamin Franklin once said that “*Fish and visitors smell in three days*”. Not much to his idea of hospitality. In my mind, this idea of not complaining when we have to provide hospitality is probably one of the litmus tests of the Christian faith. Let me close by reading [Philippians 2:14-15](#) which seems to adequately sum up all about which we have been talking.

**Php 2:14 (NKJV) Do all things without complaining and disputing,<sup>15</sup> that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,**

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

*Precept Austin*. n.d. <http://www.preceptaustin.org>.