

The Expectant Church – Part 2

1 Peter 4:7-11 - NCBC, September 16, 2018

Main Point: **Expecting Christ's return should motivate us towards God-glorifying ministry**

- For sound thinking (7a)
- For prayer (7b)
- For love (8)
- For hospitality (9)
- For spiritual ministry (10-11)

Application: **Reject the spectator mindset, and use God's grace for His glory in your church.**

Opening Announcements:

- Septic Project Funding Status– \$33,151 received of \$50K total cost. Now able to move forward, but every additional dollar given keeps us from having to use funds previously set aside for other projects. Thanks Lord!! One final push before construction begins.

<<Not in Me>>



The Lord is our Salvation – He alone can give us rest. We hold up our empty cups, and He fills them with Himself. He is everything to us, and therefore we live to worship Him in obedient submission to His Sovereign Lordship.

Please continue your worship now by opening your Bible to **1 Peter chapter 4**.



If you don't have a Bible today, simply raise your hand and we'd be delighted to give you one. **1 Peter chapter 4** is on page 1206 in the giveaway Bibles today.

While you're preparing to read **1 Peter 4** I just want to thank you for your prayers this week as God gave me a very productive time recruiting for our new Associate Pastor of Music and Worship at the SING! Conference in Nashville. I gave away 27 recruiting packets in 2 days, and was able to have a number of very strategic conversations with key centers of influence, and spend quality time with a current applicant. Please keep praying for God's favor on our search, as this trip as already produced two new applicants!



Now this morning we focus again on **1 Peter 4:7-11**, where we are continuing our study of how *The Expectant Church* lives in mutual relationship with one another. How does an eager expectation of Christ's second coming – how does living expectantly of kingdom glory – affect our interaction with one another in the local church? I'm so excited to preach this Scripture this morning, so I'd invite you to stand in honor of the public reading of God's Word, as I read **1 Peter 4, verses 7-11**. I am reading from the **English Standard Translation**.

⁷ The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. ⁸ Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

This is the word of our Lord. You may be seated.

Let's Pray.

One of my favorite parts of participating in our recruiting efforts for a new Associate Pastor of Music and Worship is getting to tell others about all of you! I love our church family. It's such a joy to be able to share with others what God is doing in, and through, and among all of you – even in spite of us, for His greater eternal praise.

When I share how this church is led by biblical elders and deacons who are joyful united in love, and I share how all of you are so teachable to learn God's Word on Sundays, and in Life Groups, and in Bible Studies, and how you love teaching God's gospel to children, and how you are growing in your competency in practically using the Word of God to counsel one another...When I start to just honestly share about how amazing God has been to our church family with others – I watch as eyes begin to glaze over – either in suspicion that I'm exaggerating, or in a Spirit-controlled restraint of jealousy.

It's interesting to ponder the good questions I get asked about all of you from potential candidates: Does the congregation trust its leaders? Yes, by God's mercy New Castle Bible Church is joyfully united right now.

What's the makeup of the church? Well we're a multi-generational assembly with rich and poor, tall and short, skinny and ... well... you get the idea. We've talked about some of our cultural blind spots, and we hate all kinds of prejudice and self-righteous discrimination. We desire to become a body that looks and acts more and more like heaven with each passing year!

What expectations does the church have for pastor's wives? Well, our experience has been that this church is very loving, very thankful, and very prayerful for one another.

Does your church ever pray together? Yes, in fact I'm very excited about how God continues to grow us in the humble dependence of prayer.

Does your church care for missionaries and practice outreach? Honestly we want to grow more in this area, but I can share that the people of NCBC want to grow in evangelism and global outreach.

Church – for reasons that none of us can take credit for – God has been so very kind to us! And I'm repeatedly reminded of this truth every time I have a conversation with others about you all. Now of course we're not perfect, because the final fulfillment of the kingdom of heaven is still future for us! But by God's grace, He is receiving glory and praise here among us.

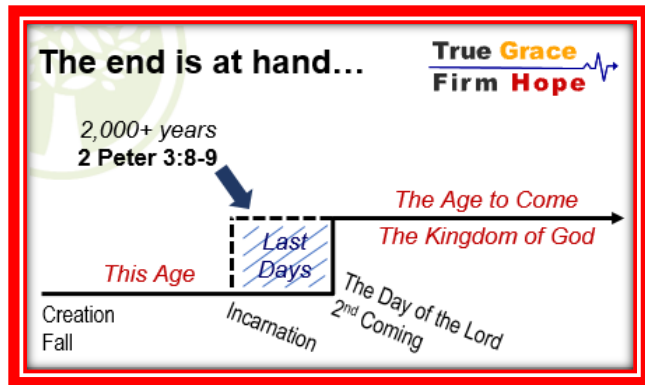
And I believe that's what Peter is aiming for in **verses 7-11 of chapter 4**. Peter is exhorting Christians – yes even suffering Christians – to be motivated by the soon-coming return of Christ so as to better love and serve one another earnestly.



The main point of this paragraph is that **Expecting Christ's return should motivate us towards God-glorifying ministry.**

The 2nd coming of Christ should compel us towards sound thinking, praying, and a persistence in fervent love towards one another that is quick to forgive and show hospitality towards one another without grumbling.

Last week we considered how,



We're living in these last days – *the end of all things is at hand* – meaning that the glory of the Kingdom of God could appear at any moment! When Jesus the King of Glory returns, He will gather His church together and take us to be with Him forever – in the fullness of heavenly joy.¹ Jesus could return before the end of this sermon, dear friends. And when suffering pilgrims believe this, it motivates them,

Review

- For **sound thinking** (7a)

True Grace
Firm Hope

For sound thinking (7a)

There is a way of thinking, a sober mindset that realizes the urgency of these last days. The light of God's kingdom is about to shine upon us in the fullness of judgment for the wicked and joy for the redeemed. And such sound thinking motivates God's people,

Review

- For **sound thinking** (7a)
- For **prayer** (7b)

True Grace
Firm Hope

For prayer (7b)

The last days are a time of great spiritual warfare. Our enemy seeks to distract us with greed, or destroy us with impurity, or discourage us with apathy. We are not ignorant of Satan's strategies...and so we urge one another to watch and pray.— seeking to align our will to God's and rely on His all-sufficient power and strength.

The humble dependence of faith will always be expressed through prayer. And as the church prays together, they also grow in love for one another. For last-day living also motivates the church,

¹ Psalm 16:11
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Review

True Grace
Firm Hope

- For **sound thinking** (7a)
- For **prayer** (7b)
- For **love** (8)

For love (8)

*Above all, **verse 8** says, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.*

Whatever you do, as the end draws near, don't stop loving your brothers and sisters! Exert maximum effort – like the straining muscles of a race horse stretched to their maximum potential... spend yourself sacrificially for the eternal good of your brothers and sisters. These last days will bring casualties. Expect some to sin, and some to sin against you. But love doesn't keep a record of wrongs done. Love forgives, because God has so mercifully forgiven you!²

Church – when your sound thinking fully fixes your mind on the future hope of Christ's return, you will pray. And when you pray with your church family, you will keep loving your sinful brothers and sisters with grace, forgiveness, and mercy.

² Matthew 18:33; Ephesians 4:32
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Are you eagerly awaiting Christ's return? Then redeem the hours you still have³ and spend all your energies at loving other Christians really well – especially,

Review

True Grace
Firm Hope

- For **sound thinking** (7a)
- For **prayer** (7b)
- For **love** (8)
- For **hospitality** (9)

For hospitality (9)

Verse 9 urges us to open up our hearts and our homes sacrificially to better love one another in the church – all without grumbling. In other words, Peter understands that God always blesses His people for the sake of His praise among *all* people. This has been God's design for His people ever since the very beginning of time. God blesses you – so that others would praise God. God didn't give you a home for your own safety and shelter. God gave you a home so that you'd use it for the sake of His praise among others. Every aspect of God's mercy and grace that He has given to you, is so that you would use it to excite and produce greater praise for God from the hearts of others!

And that's exactly what Peter teaches us now from **verses 10-11**. Expecting Christ's return will motivate us to live for God's greater glory through,

³ Ephesians 5:16



spiritual ministry (10-11)

Verse 10 reads, *As each has received a gift, use it ...*

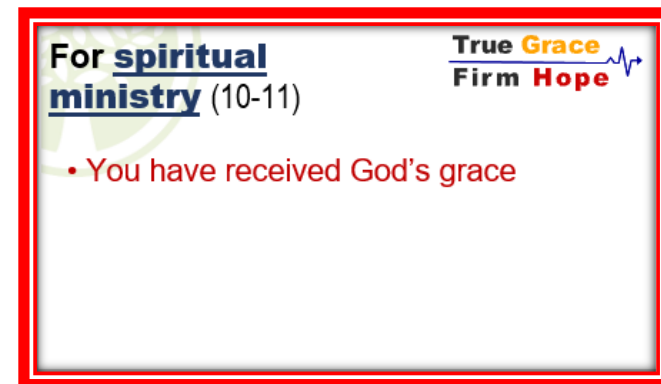
Now who has received God's gift in this verse? *Each* one of the believers, right? No one is excluded. Christian, don't miss the joy of this. You have received a gift of God's grace for spiritual ministry!

Consider how Paul exults in the same truth in **1 Corinthians chapter 12**,⁴



*Now there are varieties of gifts... but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. And then in **verse 11**, All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as He wills.*

Dear child of God, the Scriptures are very clear.



You have received God's grace

You see, so often when we think of spiritual gifts, we think of the lists of gifts that are mentioned in **Romans 12**, or **1 Corinthians 12**, or **Ephesians 4**. But those lists are illustrative and descriptive, not prescriptive or restrictive. The reason every one of the spiritual gifts' lists are so different from one another is that they are just describing various ways that God gives His grace to Christians for spiritual ministry to others.

Let's be very clear in our definition of spiritual gifts:

⁴ C.f. Ephesians 4:7 and Romans 12:3

For spiritual ministry (10-11)

True **Grace**
Firm **Hope**

- You have received God's grace
- A spiritual gift (lit. "a gift of grace") is:
- a Divine enablement for ministry
 - a personally unique capacity for stewarding God's grace to others

The word translated *gift* or *spiritual gift* in the New Testament literally means "a gift of grace." So whenever the Bible speaks of spiritual gifts, it's referring to how God graciously provides a Divine enablement for ministry to each of His children. A spiritual gift is "a personally unique capacity for stewarding God's grace to others."⁵

Scripture never teaches that spiritual gifts are permanently bestowed to someone. God's grace may enable you to minister in one manner in one season of your life, and then grant you the needed grace to serve the church in a completely different manner during another season. So I find this really helpful when thinking about spiritual gifts – they are undeserved supernatural capacities or abilities which enable you to channel God's grace to others.

So it's probably helpful to move away from going to a checklist or spiritual gifts test when thinking about our spiritual gifts. God's gifting is not a box to check on a list – rather it's God's enablement to take and share His grace with others in our own unique spiritual ministry.

Just like Paul teaches in several Scriptures,

Having gifts that differ **according to the grace given to us**, let us use them:
(Romans 12:6)

...so that **you are not lacking in any gift**, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,
(1 Corinthians 1:7)

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them. Your spiritual gift is how God has personally empowered you to share His grace to others.

And as we saw earlier from **1 Corinthians 12**, every one of the redeemed has been given a Divine enablement for ministry. *You are not lacking in any gift* as you live out your days waiting for the second coming of Jesus. God has provided all you need. There's no good reason for you not to be actively involved in spiritual ministry towards others – even if you're suffering. For you have received God's grace – and He blessed you this way so that others would receive more of His grace and thereby praise and glorify Him!!

⁵ John Piper, Look at the Book, 1 Peter 4:10

⁷ Of this gospel I was made a minister **according to the gift of God's grace**, which was given me **by the working of his power**. ⁸ To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, **this grace was given**, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,
(Ephesians 3:7-8)

In **Ephesians 3**, Paul illustrates our understanding of spiritual gifts well when he writes, *Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of His power. To me, ... this grace was given... to preach...*

So Paul received God's grace as God made him a minister – so that through this spiritual gift of preaching which God had graciously given to Him, others could receive the grace of knowing the unsearchable riches of Christ.

So Peter's argument is clear – since each believer has received a Divine enablement for ministry, or a personally unique capacity for stewarding God's grace to others – then we should use this grace-gift to serve one another!

So would you like to know your spiritual gift? Don't run to a checklist. Instead, realize that God has shown grace to you for the benefit of others around you. And take His grace and share it with others – and over time, you'll discover where you find greatest joy and fruitfulness in

your spiritual ministry of God's grace to others. And that's where He's gifted you for now.

After all, God didn't give you a spiritual gift for your own benefit. By definition – you didn't earn it or merit it.⁶ So never boast or brag about your spiritual gift. God gave it to you,

**For spiritual
ministry** (10-11)

True Grace
Firm Hope

- You have received God's grace
- For the benefit of your brothers/sisters

For the benefit of your brothers/sisters

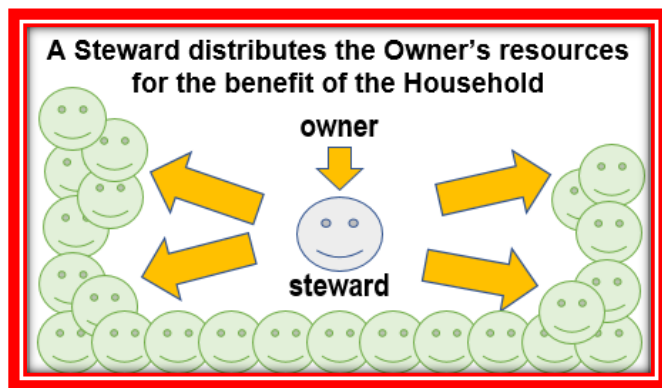
1 Peter 4:10 is clear, *use the grace-gift you've received to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace...*

Now this is rich. God has given *you* a measure of His grace for *my* eternal good. And God has given *me* His grace to use for *your* eternal good.

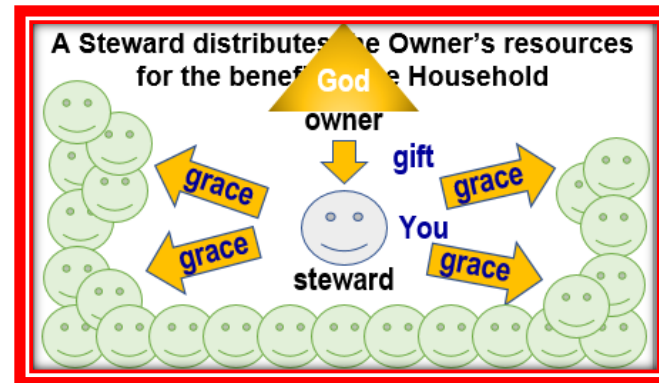
Think carefully about the word-picture Peter uses here. He commands suffering Christians to use or employ the grace-gift God has entrusted to them for the benefit of each other – like excellent stewards. Like good household managers of God's grace.

⁶ 1 Corinthians 4:7

So we're not owners. God's the owner. But every believer is called a steward here – or a manager of God's house. So ... don't miss this church ... God is not just talking to pastors and elders here. This truth blew the lid off the Catholic teaching of the priesthood during the Protestant Reformation...God is saying every believer is a steward of grace for the benefit of other believers.



Just like a steward manages or distributes the Owner's resources for the benefit of the household... the stewards takes what the owner gives him, and makes sure the owner's family is cared for while he is away...



In this same way, Peter is teaching us here that God is the owner of His church – but each of us are stewards. And God has given each of us stewards a spiritual gift, so that we are able to give others in God's church whatever they need from the storehouse of His grace.

What a beautiful and profound picture of God's design for His people – every member in the church has been given a unique capacity to channel God's grace to one another. You are here to give me what I need of God's grace...and I am here to give you what you need of God's grace. So be good stewards – don't hoard God's grace! Don't be just a spectator ... or an Eeyore who believes, "I'm not good enough... This church has no need for me... I'm not the hand...or the eye..."⁷

⁷ C.f. 1 Corinthians 12:15-25

**For spiritual
ministry** (10-11)

True Grace
Firm Hope

- You have received God's grace
- For the benefit of your brothers/sisters

You have received God's grace for the benefit of your brothers and sisters here in this church with you!⁸

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good – 1 Corinthians 12:7.

So then, God has clearly designed the spiritual ministry of the church to be from lay people to lay people. Pastors and church staff are not the hired ministry guns. **Ephesians 4:12** is crystal clear on this point: the church hires pastors to equip the saints for the work of the ministry – not to do the work of the ministry themselves. I've often reminded our staff here, that if the membership is not more joyfully involved in spiritual ministry because of our employment ...then we are not doing our job.

Any time any member of any local church depreciates or neglects his/her spiritual gift, the church is weakened and deprived of God's grace that He intends for us to have.

⁸ And Romans 12:3 teaches that God has given you the faith to exercise this gift as well!

⁹ It's interesting to note that these two broad categories of spiritual gifts

So then how does God's grace get communicated through your spiritual gift to others? Well **1 Peter 4:11** teaches that you communicate God's grace to others,

**For spiritual
ministry** (10-11)

True Grace
Firm Hope

- You have received God's grace
- For the benefit of your brothers/sisters
- Through your speaking and serving

Through your speaking and serving.

Verse 11 simplifies all spiritual gifts into two broad categories – speaking gifts, and serving gifts.⁹ And I love the last three words at the end of **verse 10**,

God's varied grace

This expresses the multi-colored, or multi-faceted, or grand diversity of expressions of God's grace that He bestows upon His children. It's actually the same word that is used in **1 Peter 1:6** when Peter describes how we are grieved by various trials.

In other words, just as much as your trials in life are unique and multi-colored – so likewise God has bestowed unique and multi-colored grace to His children

align well with the two spiritual leadership offices in God's church: elders who must be "apt to teach" 1 Timothy 3:2, and deacons who serve as the elders' agents as servant-leaders over the church's ministries.

– so that ...we always have everything we need through the spiritual ministry of His grace to one another! Christian - there's no need that you have that God's grace isn't perfectly suited to meet. And God's grace stands ready to connect with you through the speaking and serving of your grace-gifted brothers and sisters in your church.

Of course it's not just any kind of speaking and serving, but,

Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles [or words] of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies...

Of course speaking and serving aren't mutually exclusive, since they often go together. But they provide two broad categories for all kinds of gifts that God mercifully grants to His children so that they can better channel His grace to others.

Remember – spiritual gifts aren't limited to a list found in **Romans 12** or **1 Corinthians 12**. They are any Divine enablement or capacity that God entrusts to you for the stewarding purpose of getting His grace to others. You can't determine the gift God gives you – only whether or not you use it, and develop it, and seek to serve others with God's grace through it.

So let's get practical.

If you are going to exercise your gift for spiritual ministry with words and works...how do you make sure you are actually sharing God's grace with others?

¹⁰ Philippians 4:13
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Well, when you speak – make sure you are communicating God's Words – not your words. And when you serve, make sure you are serving by the strength that God supplies – and not ministering in your own strength.

Remember, the overarching command of **verse 8** was that God's people should earnestly love one another above all. And fervent love invites people to live real, authentic lives together – where we are sharing our hearts and our homes with one another ... cheerfully. Not complaining, but opening our homes to one another in the strength of God's Spirit.¹⁰ Counseling one another with the very words of God Himself – not human wisdom.

For whenever God's life-giving words are shared between weak and suffering Christians, and God's Spirit empowers spiritual ministry through weak and suffering Christians, all the spiritual ministry is,

**For spiritual
ministry** (10-11)

True **Grace**
Firm **Hope**

- You have received God's grace
- For the benefit of your brothers/sisters
- Through your speaking and serving
- For God's greater glory

For God's greater glory

The One who authored life-giving words gets the glory.
The One who supplies the necessary strength for

continuing to serve in love gets all the glory. The One who is the source of all grace, and the One who gives the unique and personal abilities and capacities for stewarding and sharing that grace He is the One who receives all the praise in the church!

Peter's heart erupts in a doxology of praise as he considers this result of expecting Christ's return! When stewards know that the Master will soon be home, they make sure they will be found faithful. And Peter gets so excited thinking how every member in Christ's church has received a spiritual gift – a spiritual stewardship of God's grace to be used for ministry in the body of Christ. For whenever God's grace is employed in countless ways of speaking God's truth and serving in humble dependence upon God's power... it results that *in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen!*

Church – when God's gifts are properly employed, the church is built up, and God's power and Word are shown.

It's all about God here – it's God's gifts, it's God's grace, it's God's words, it's God's strength – all because it's God's kingdom – and He's the King. He legitimately owns all glory and dominion. There is no higher good than God Himself. For Him to delight in anything other than Himself would be incomprehensible.

And so as God's redeemed – who eagerly expect the revelation of His glory – we find our greatest joy in living for His glory. For to glorify God means we share His grace with one another through His words and His

works...believing that there is no greater privilege than to be spent in worship of Him.

Of course such miraculous love is only possible through our faith union in Jesus Christ. *God is glorified through Jesus Christ* it says in **verse 11**.

So again I pause to ask you, do you love Christ? Do you delight in knowing God through Jesus Christ our Lord? You must repent of all faith in religion or irreligion. There can be no spiritual ministry in the church apart from humble dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ. Without faith it is impossible to please God.¹¹

So will you believe on Jesus Christ today? For the forgiveness of your sins, and for your new-found identity as one of God's own possessions? Will your faith in Christ empower your pursuit of ministry – understanding that He has given you a spiritual gift – which is more of responsibility for the good of others in the church than it is a privilege for your own edification. You see,

Main Point



**Expecting Christ's return
should motivate us towards
God-glorifying ministry.**

Expecting Christ's return should motivate us towards

¹¹ Hebrews 11:6
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God-glorifying ministry – the ministry of using God's Words in the power of God's Spirit to bring God's grace to help each other increase our eternal joy in Christ.

So let me urge us one more time to,



Reject the spectator mindset, and use God's grace for His glory in your church.

Get off the proverbial couch of selfishness. Push away from the proverbial table of consumerism. Repent from being a grace-hoarder.

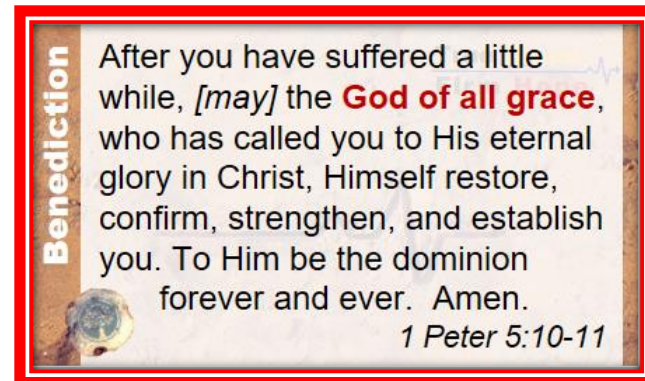
God has given you a unique capacity and ability to bless others in this church with His grace – as you use His Words in His power. Will you be an excellent steward? Will the reality of these last days awaken you to sound thinking which fixates upon the hope of God's coming kingdom with urgent prayer, fervent love, and cheerful hospitality – all so that you can share the grace God has entrusted to you with others?

May we continue to steward God's grace together with great expectancy of His glory!



<<All To Us>>

Let's pray our benediction together as we dismiss.



And after you have suffered a little while, [may] the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 5:10-11

Recommended Resources on *The Expectant Church*:

- Nehemiah 4:9
- Matthew 13:36-43
- Mark 13:33; 14:37-40
- Luke 14:13-14
- Romans 12:1-13; 14:10-23
- 1 Corinthians 12-14
- 2 Corinthians 5:1-21
- Ephesians 4:1-16; 6:18
- Philippians 2:14-15
- Colossians 3:12-13; 4:2
- 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8
- Hebrews 13:2
- James 5:19-20
- 2 Peter 3:3-8

- <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/are-we-living-in-the-last-days>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/think-hard-on-your-way-to-heaven>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/only-love-can-cover-sin>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/how-to-be-more-hospitable>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/your-gifts-are-meant-for-others>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/serve-in-gods-strength-not-yours>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/labs/do-your-gifts-glorify-you-or-god>

- *A Praying Life*, Paul Miller
- *Life in the Father's House*, Wayne Mack
- *The Hospitality Commands*, Alexander Strauch
- *Spiritual Gifts*, Thomas Schreiner

- "Hospitality – Love in Action" Sermon on Selected Scriptures at NCBC on January 7, 2018, Pastor Kevin Sauder
- "Supernatural Church" Sermon on 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 at Bethany Baptist Church on July 31, 2011
<http://bethanycentral.org/resources/supernatural-church/>

Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. Read 1 Peter 4:7. Discuss together what comes to mind when you hear, "The end of all things is at hand." What is Peter thinking of here? And what difference should our beliefs about "last things" or "eschatology" make in how you live through the rest of your earthly life and ministry?
2. Read 1 Peter 4:8. Could you honestly say you are persevering in fervent love towards your Christian brothers and sisters? Why or why not?
3. Read 1 Peter 4:8-9. What is one practical way you desire to obey these commands this fall in view of Christ's second coming? What does our grumbling or unforgiveness reveal about our view of Christ and His return?
4. Read 1 Peter 4:10 and 1 Corinthians 12:7. What is God's purpose for His bestowal of an unique manifestation of grace upon every believer? Do you think of God's spiritual gifts as a privilege or a responsibility, and how come?
5. Read 1 Peter 4:11. What is the end result of God's people living with expectancy of His return? Do you remember the 4 necessary means to the glory of God, as previously taught at NCBC? Review them together, and see where you notice Peter's emphasis upon all four of these values throughout this letter → Head: doctrinal soundness (truth); Heart: humble dependence (faith); Home: relational wholeness (love); Hands: missional faithfulness (witness).
6. Do you believe you are as involved in the ministry of your local church as God would have you to be at this season of your life? Share together and explain your answers. Pray God will help you all make whatever adjustments are necessary in order for you all to be able to joyfully answer "yes" to this question.