

# An In-Depth Study of the First Letter of Apostle Peter

## [Part 7]

**1 Peter 4:7** [NIV] *“The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.”*

This statement is valid for every human being in every generation, because the end of our present life and world will end for us on our personal physical death.

**Ecclesiastes 9:5-6** [NIV] *“For the living know that they will die, but **the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten.** Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun.”*

Life will **only** start again through a resurrection after the return of Jesus Christ as world ruler and judge.

**Psalms 146:3-4** [NIV] *“Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. **When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing.**”*

Once the human spirit leaves our physical body we have **no** awareness of existence.

**Psalms 6:4-5** [NIV] *“Turn, O LORD, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love. **No-one remembers you when he is dead. Who praises you from his grave?**”*

Once we die physically we **cannot** pray to God or praise Him.

**Psalms 104:29** [NIV] *“When you hide your face, they are terrified; **when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.**”*

The Hebrew word translated “breath” is “rûwach” which is the life essence in every living thing. [Read **Genesis 2:7**]

Once this breath leaves the body it reverts to the elements [dust] out of which God originally created it.

**Ecclesiastes 3:18-21** [NIV] *“I also thought, “As for men, God tests them so that they may see that they are like the animals. Man’s fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless. **All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return.** Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?”*

The human spirit [Hebrews “rûwach”] returns to the Creator God. [**Ecclesiastes 12:7**]

With this knowledge “therefore” we need to be clear minded, that is as the Greek word used “sôdhrôëō” means, sober minded, our thoughts **not** clouded or temperate, that is self-controlled.

**What Peter has stated must be taken seriously, if we are to receive any help from the Creator God in response to our prayers.**

**1 Peter 4:8** [NIV] *“Above all, love each other deeply, because **love covers over a multitude of sins.**”*

Throughout the New Testament the most important part of life is an expression of love. Love towards God our Creator and Saviour and towards other human beings.

The Greek word translated “love” is “*agapé*,” which expresses a spontaneous loving affection, that is irrespective of the rights or response of the person receiving this love. It is a sacrificial love where the selfish desires are sacrificed in order to show this love to others.

Possessions, status and human power and authority will mean **nothing** in God’s created kingdom, for we will be spending eternity with other resurrected human beings.

So we should now in this short lifetime invest our time and talents where they will make an eternal difference in the lives of other human beings.

**How does “love cover a multitude of sins”?**

A loving disposition leads us to overlook the faults of others, forgiving offences against ourselves. [Read **Matthew 18:21-35; Matthew 5:38-48**]

**This does not mean that our love for other people will cover our sins, only repentance on our part and accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ will cover our sins.**

**1 Peter 4:9-11** [NIV] *“Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”*

Some people are well aware of their abilities and believe they have the right to use them as they wish for their own pleasure and advantage.

Other people feel that they have **no** special talents at all.

Peter addresses both groups in these verses.

**Peter mentions speaking and serving, but the apostle Paul expands on this list which will encompass every human being.**

**Romans 12:6-8** [NIV] *“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”*

This is part of our response to “offer our bodies as living sacrifices” in verse one, of the same chapter.

**1 Corinthians 12:4-11** [NIV] *“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”*

“Prophecy” is **not** about predicting the future but refers to preaching the Word of God, the Christian Bible, with clarity and power.

No matter what gift we have, remember it has been given to us by God through the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

### **The Holy Spirit decides what gifts we are to have.**

We are responsible to use and sharpen our gifts but we can never take personal credit for what God has freely given us.

**Ephesians 4:11-13** [NIV] *“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ.”*

Some gifts from God are in the realm of leadership, but such people must always remember that they are “bond slaves” of Jesus Christ, which is the meaning of the word “minister.”

Such people should also be well aware of what God tells them in **James 3:1-12**.

**Matthew 5:13-16** [NIV] *“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

This is how we are to use our gifts that in the end it will bring people and to where they begin to know the true God, worship Him and eventually love Him.

Hospitality is mentioned as one of the gifts that we receive from God.

**Romans 12:13-21** [NIV] *“Share with God’s people who are in need. **Practise hospitality.** Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*

Hospitality extends to **all** our relationships with other human beings, even those who hate us and persecute us because of our Christian way of life.

**1 Peter 4:12-14** [NIV] *“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”*

Once more trials and suffering are linked to our Christian faith and way of living.

Jesus did not hide this fact from us.

**Matthew 5:11-12** [NIV] *“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

Jesus said “when” not “if.” [Also read **Matthew 5:44; Matthew 10:21-23; Luke 21:10-17; John 15:20**]

“*Spirit of glory and God*” – the Greek word translated “*glory*” is “*dōxa*” – which has a wide application including “*praise*” and “*honour*” indicating that we are bringing praise and honour to God by the way we respond to this injustice because of loyalty to our Saviour Jesus Christ.

**Romans 3:23** [NIV] “*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*”

We will **not** be falling short of the glory of God, for we have been justified by God’s grace and used by Him as a witness to all who know us.

**1 Peter 4:15-16** [NIV] “*If you suffer, it should **not** be as a **murderer** or **thief** or any other kind of **criminal**, or even as a **meddler**. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.*”

The Greek word translated “*meddler*” is “*allotriēpiskōpōs*” made up of two words meaning to overseeing other people’s affairs. Note this is listed alongside criminal activities!

To be persecuted as a Christian is something that we should **not** be ashamed of but thank God for having called us to be used by Him in this way.

**Acts 5:40-42** [NIV] “*His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. **The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.** Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.*”

The beating that Peter and John endured they looked on as a blessing as they had been allowed by God to witness in that way.

**1 Peter 4:17-19** [NIV] “*For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, “If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” **So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.***”

This is **not** referring to the final judgement of Jesus Christ after His return.

God often allows believers to experience the consequences of their sins, for several reasons.

- a) To show us the potential we still have for sinning.
- b) To encourage us to turn away from sin.
- c) To prepare us to face even stronger temptations in the future.
- d) To help us to remain faithful to our Saviour.
- e) To show that if believers need this earthly discipline from God, how much more will those who reject Jesus Christ as their Saviour need physical discipline from God.

**Prophecy shows that this hard discipline will come to all unbelievers just before Christ’s return.**

Always remember that God does **not** punish human beings but only disciplines them to help them repent.

Punishment will **only** come to those who refuse to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour, even after being offered love, patience and compassion from their Creator.

Note we must **not** allow persecution to stop us from doing the good work that brought it on us, as was the example of Peter and John which we have just read.

**1 Peter 5:1-4** [NIV] *“To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow-elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers, not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.”*

Elders were church officers providing supervision, spiritual protection, discipline, instruction and personal example to the rest of the congregation.

Elder simply means “older”.

Both Greeks and Jews gave positions of honour to wise older men and the Christian Church continues in this pattern of leadership.

Note Peter identified himself as a fellow elder **not** as superior to them, inspite of his personal time with Jesus Christ before He returned to heaven.

Peter called them to be shepherds to the congregation, this is exactly what Jesus Christ had personally told him.

**John 21:15-17** [NIV] *“When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.” The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”*

This feeding the lambs and sheep was a direct command to show love by feeding them with the words of Jesus Christ, as recorded for us in the Christian Bible.

**John 10:11-17** [NIV] *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life, only to take it up again.”*

A true shepherd [this includes all elders in the Church] must lay down his life for the sheep, the congregation over which he presides.

**Note the elder in the Christian Church has responsibility towards those outside of his own fellowship, to hear the Words of Jesus Christ.**

Note also the close relationship that an elder is to have with all of his congregation, and those outside his fellowship in the local community.

**Jesus Christ’s aim is that through elders eventually all humanity will be part of His flock of sheep.**

As we all mature in our Christian life, we all become “elders”, wise older people, if not by appointment to the office.

Therefore all Christians should seek to feed God's sheep inside and outside of our Christian fellowship.

Note that the qualifications of an elder were –

- a) To be willing to serve in this office.
- b) Know that it is what God wants, within His will.
- c) **Not** to enter the office because it is well paid.
- d) To be eager to live as a bond slave serving the congregation.
- e) To **not** use the office as a “*power base*” to control the lives of the congregation.
- f) To be good examples for the congregation to follow.

**Mark 10:42-45** [NIV] “*Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*”

**Christian leadership is where authority is based on service not power.**

Elders should always remember –

They are caring for God's flock **not** their own.

They lead out of eagerness to care and serve **not** out of obligation.

They are concerned about what they can give to the congregation, **not** what they receive in money for their position as an elder.

They always lead by example **not** by force.

**The above applies to every Christian in their relationship with other people, inside and outside of their Christian fellowship.**

**1 Peter 5:5** [NIV] “*Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*”

Both young and older Christians can benefit from Peter's instruction.

**Banishment and denial of self must be the mark of every Christian.**

Pride keeps older Christians from understanding those who are young in their faith.

Pride keeps younger Christians from listening to those who have experienced Christian living for many years.

**Every Christian should be humble enough to realise they can learn from other Christians.**

Peter quoted from Old Testament wisdom that is found in **Proverbs 3:34**.

**1 Peter 5:6-7** [NIV] “*Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*”

The only safe place to be in the physical life is under the powerful protection of our Creator God.

To carry our worries and daily struggles by ourselves, only shows that we do **not** trust our Saviour fully in our day-to-day life.

**Colossians 2:6-7** [NIV] *“So then, **just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.**”*

Allow Jesus Christ to live in us, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, on a day-to-day basis.

Always overflow with thanks for all God’s blessings both physical and spiritual.

**Colossians 4:2-6** [NIV] *“**Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.** And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”*

We are to be constantly dedicated to prayer **not** just setting aside certain times.

**Prayer and humble thanksgiving must be a way of life for every Christian.**

**1 Peter 5:8-9** [NIV] *“**Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.** Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”*

Lions attack animals who are sick, young and who are alone or **not** alert.

Lions also mostly attack in the dark.

Satan will attack Christians who are in the above category but also who are under persecution for their faith.

We should **not** submit to circumstances as Christians but submit to the Creator God who controls circumstances.

**Ephesians 6:10-18** [NIV] *“**Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the **belt of truth** buckled round your waist, with the **breastplate of righteousness** in place, and with your **feet fitted with** the readiness that comes from the **gospel of peace.** In addition to all this, take up the **shield of faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the **helmet of salvation** and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”*

We resist the evil work of Satan in our lives and the lives of other Christians by standing firm fully clothed in God’s spiritual armour.

[For a full explanation of this spiritual armour see our article under the main heading of ‘Satan’ title ‘Armour of God’ ref: HFL 207]

**The conflict we have with Satan takes place in our minds and human spirit at the speed of thought.**

Because of this we must be constantly alert to Satan's attacks at any moment of our lives.

If we are constantly walking in the light [**1 John 1:5-7**] we are protected from the attacks of Satan who is symbolic of everything that is in the darkness of deception.

**James 4:7-10** [NIV] *“Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”*

When we submit our lives totally to our Saviour, and resist Satan's attacks, he will free from us to attack other weaker humans or even Christians who are **not** wearing the spiritual armour of God.

**1 Peter 5:10-11** [NIV] *“And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.”*

**The preparations for us to become acceptable to receive the gift of eternal life takes time.**

Character, the “likeness” that God desires we attain [**Genesis 1:26**] takes living in step with the Holy Spirit and is often perfected through suffering.

**Hebrews 5:7-10** [NIV] *“During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.”*

**Here we see the example of the human Son of Man, Jesus Christ.**

Suffering was a large part of Jesus Christ's accomplishing the task that God the Father had set Him.

Remember that the Greek word translated “perfect” is “*tēlēiōs*” means completing the goal set before us.

Once Jesus Christ completed His work on earth He continued the same task but with a different office, that of our High Priest, interceding on our behalf before God the Father.

**1 Peter 5:12-13** [NIV] *“With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.”*

These last verses, similar to all the letters written by the apostles, shows the wonderful interaction and companionship between the churches in different towns and cities.

*“Stand fast in God's grace,”* Peter tells all Christians.

Christians who were about to face the evil world of Satan's human instrument, Emperor Nero.

Peter himself lived these words, because he was martyred for his faith in his Saviour Jesus Christ.

**We today must stand firm in our faith with patience, endurance and courage as did the apostle Peter and the Christians of his generation.**

With God's supernatural strength working in us we can all do just that.