

## **The Christian in a Hostile World**

### **How Christians can help each other deal with the world's hostility**

**Intro:** Have you ever thought about what it would be like if you were the only Christian in the world? Think of how hard it would be to face all of life's challenges, temptations and trials without a single person to talk to, without a single person to pray with, without a single person to give you encouragement. One of the great blessings of being a Christian is having people around you who care, who are pulling for you, who lift you up when you are down, who share life with you.

**As Peter instructed the Christians on how to deal with a hostile world, he gives practical advice on how to deal with the world's hostility.**

He urges them to remember who they are.

He urges them to live with excellence.

He urges them to respond properly to their persecutors.

These are things that we all must do for ourselves.

**But he also shows them how they can help one another in such times, how they can build a wall of protection around their spiritual family. He does that by giving a series of practical exhortations about their relationship with one another. Let's hear what he had to say:**

*“The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaint. As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (1 Peter 4:7–11)*

**As we hear Peter's words our ears keep hearing the one anothers. It enables to see very quickly that Peter's emphasis is upon what each of us can do to help each other meet the challenge of the world's hostility.**

***Be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.***

***Peter prefaces his exhortation with a statement: "The end of all things is at hand." It builds upon the former reference to the final day of judgment in v. 6.***

As Christians the promised final coming of the Lord always looms nearby, since the exact time of that final day of judgment remains unrevealed.

Perhaps Peter also is thinking of that "end of all things," Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24 concerning the end of the Jewish state and the huge ramifications it had for believers.

Either way--there is an end that hastens; and we must get ready for it.  
***Develop a serious spiritual outlook The Christian life calls for mental preparation--to be clear-headed and attentive with prayer as the object.***

Perhaps Peter is remembering his own lack of preparation before Jesus' trial--his frivolous boasting and his neglect to heed the Lord's command: "*Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation; the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.*"

***This is the only exhortation of this section that does not use the word "one another;" yet this exhortation is also given with one another in view. One of the best things we can do for one another is to live with that mental preparation that takes faith seriously and acts upon it conscientiously.***

Nothing demoralizes a Christian quicker than to see other Christians lose their interest, compromise principles of right, and getting caught up in the world.

But if we see other Christians who are sober and watchful, then we are encouraged to stay on our guard as well.

***Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.***

***"Above all things" means it ought to be a priority for us. It is most important.***

***Fervent conveys effort and intensity. Peter uses the adverb form in chapter one "fervently love one another from the heart."***

***Love covers a multitude of sins:***

The word "cover" is used in the word of God as a substitute for "forgiveness".

A multitude is many.

A genuine love for other people will enable us to forgive them when they fail and encourage them to do better rather than gloat in their failures and spread them around to others.

***It is regrettable that God's people through the years have experienced more hostility at times from their brethren than they have from the unbelievers around them.***

The more evil and hostile the world becomes. the more we need the love and friendship of our spiritual family.

It enfolds us and comforts us in the face of the world's hostility.

***Be hospitable to one another without complaint***

***Hospitality is "love of strangers." It conveyed the idea of receiving into one's home or making provision for one who traveled from place to place.***

***That was especially important as Christians moved from place to place.***

***Nothing makes Christians more vulnerable to the world than the isolation of coming into a new city or situation without a welcoming family. And Peter says do it without "complaint," i.e. freely and with generosity.***

***There are some good ways to show hospitality to the brethren today:***

Get to know the names of those who attend with us.

Greet each person with courtesy and kindness.  
Invite someone into your home for a meal or invite a group to join you at a restaurant after a service.  
Offer your help to newcomers.

*As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

*Maybe Peter was thinking of the "spiritual gifts" that Christians of the first-century received after being baptized. Or he may be thinking of the innate abilities activated to godly purposes by the grace of God. Either way the message is the same: Use your "gifts" to serve others.*

*We are stewards of these gifts. All that we have belongs to God. We have received it as a result of his many-sided grace. We need to use it to His glory! Peter makes a couple of applications of the principle:*

*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.*

It was this verse that gave rise to an important slogan in our spiritual heritage: "We speak where the Bible speaks, we are silent where the Bible is silent."

Peter was not so much trying to give a principle of authority for religious practice as to tell us how we can help each other to the glory of God. If God is to be gloried in what I say to others, then it must be the word of God which I speak.

*If any man serve, let him serve by the strength God supplies.*

In whatever we are doing for the Lord we need to be dependent upon him for power to accomplish our task.

We need to pray often and fervently about our work toward others for his help.

*As we use our gifts the emphasis then is not on ourselves but upon God who gives the word and provides the power for fruitful work. God then gets the glory for what we say and do. And that will bring strength to all of our spiritual family.*

**Conclusion:** There is enough work in this paragraph to last a lifetime. As Christians we are committed to a lifetime of loving service to our fellow-Christians. To build a wall of love around them that will protect them. That wall is built one brick at a time. All of us need to start with ourselves. We need to ask ourselves, "How can I implement these things in my life so that I can protect the brethren around me?"