

THE END IN SIGHT

1 Peter 4:7-9

INTRODUCTION

- Throughout human history there have been people from various backgrounds, philosophies and religions, predicting the end of the world
- Throughout the last 2000 years many in “Christendom” both Catholics, Protestants and cults have set dates for the end of the world, to their eventual embarrassment and loss of credibility
- In modern times, a new form of apocalypticism has emerged, based on humanism, earth-worship and political expediency – climate catastrophism
- Just like their medieval predecessors, they predict the end of the world within a certain period of time, and call people to adopt their beliefs and obey their counsel to avoid the coming doom.
- This message “the end is nigh” has become a caricature of a person standing on a street corner, wearing a sandwich board sign with those words, and calling people to heed his warnings
- The fact is that the end truly *is* nigh, not because of the Mayan calendar or climate change, but because Jesus Christ is coming
- The world mocks and ridicules this message of the Second Coming of Christ (2 Peter 3:3-7), just as they mocked Noah’s message of coming judgment
- The *Parousia* (Second Coming) is a major doctrine of the Scriptures, with one out of every twenty-five verses in the New Testament mentioning it
- Yet it is sadly a doctrine that is neglected in many pulpits today, where the preoccupation is with this present life in this present world, seeking material prosperity here rather than eternal rewards hereafter
- But the saints throughout history have always considered this world as a foreign, hostile place, beset with much tribulation (Acts 14:22), where we have no continuing city, but rather seek one to come (Hebrews 13:14)

- In this chapter, Peter has been exhorting the saints to a sanctified life, having been regenerated and transformed, the old life of carnal lusts is over and done with
- The world will think it strange that we do not run with them in their sinful ways, but what of it?
- Let them scorn, ridicule, abuse, persecute, threaten, ostracise, torture and kill – the day is coming when they “shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead” (v.5)
- This thought of future judgment is retained in verse 7, as the apostle seeks to answer the question: If the coming of Christ and the end of this age is imminent, how then should a Christian live?
- The world’s philosophy is: “let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (Isaiah 22:13; 1 Corinthians 15:32)
- People have “bucket lists” – things they want to do before they die – and usually involve things like travel to exotic destinations, participating in an adventurous activity, learning to play an instrument or to speak another language
- The believer, knowing that the end may come at any moment, lives according to much higher code – a heavenly code – and his list is altogether different from the world’s, focussed upon spiritual duties as a child of God
 - ✓ Sobriety and watchful prayer (v.7)
 - ✓ Fervent and forgiving love for the brethren (v.8)
 - ✓ Gracious hospitality (v.9)
 - ✓ Faithful exercising of spiritual gifts (vv.10-11)
- And all this is done not for the pleasure of self, but to the glory of God (v.11)

The end of all things is at hand, therefore:

I. PRAY WATCHFULLY (7)

A. Be sober

1. This the first of two imperatives (commands) in this verse

2. The word (*sophroneo*) means to be of sound mind, serious, sensible
 - a. The demoniac of Gadara, after legion was cast out of him, was “sitting, and clothed, and in his *right mind*” (Mark 5:15)
 - b. There are repeated calls to sobriety in this epistle (1:13; 5:8)
3. This is the opposite of an anxious, fretful, distracted, careless or foolish mind
4. It is to have a proper, moderate view of one’s self, the ability to reason with clarity, and to act in accordance with such godly reasoning
5. In our unregenerate state our minds are incapable of being sober, but are darkened, evil, wicked, proud, carnal and corrupt
6. God gives some people over to a reprobate (rejected, abandoned, disapproved) mind (Romans 1:28)
7. But to those who come to Christ, God gives a “sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7), and transforms and renews their minds (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23)
8. This is a mind that is stayed on God (Isaiah 26:3)
9. This is a mind filled with God’s word (Psalm 1) and wholly given to love of God (Mark 12:30)
10. This is a mind guarded against any thing that would draw it away from Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5)

B. Be watchful

1. This is the second command in the verse
2. “Watch” (*nepho*) is to be sober, moderate, restrained, self-controlled
3. The watchful Christian is one who is level-headed, focussed on his Lord and the task before him, on guard against his enemies, not easily turned aside into sin or error

C. Unto prayer

1. This is a watchful prayer in readiness for the coming of the Lord (Matthew 24:42)
2. Peter learned this discipline from the Lord Jesus, who faced his final hours before his death in agonising prayer (Matthew 26:36-44), and admonished the three disciples for not doing the same
3. Prayer is one of the most necessary duties in the Christian life, yet it is also the most neglected, hence the many exhortations in Scripture to pray (1 Timothy 2:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Hebrews 4:15-16)
4. The word translated “prayer” (*proseuchas*) is plural, indicated all kinds of prayers (such as adoration, thanksgiving, lament, confession, supplication, intercession, etc), in all situations (private, public, audible, silent, etc)
5. The world says, “Life is short, play hard”, the Holy Spirit says, “Life is short, pray hard”

II. LOVE FERVENTLY (8)

A. Above all things

1. This emphasises the priority of love in the Christian’s life
 - a. “And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness” (Colossians 3:14)
 - b. Peter has previously called the saints to “love one another with a pure heart fervently” (1:22; 2:17)
2. There are many graces that are required in us, but love is the chief, for it is love that animates every other grace, and if it is absent, leaves a dead, lifeless form of religion (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)
3. Charity (agape) or love is not mere emotion or sentiment, but a divinely bestowed virtue, a fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is sacrificial, unconditional and abiding (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

4. Equipped with this love, the believer can love the unlovable, even those who have done him wrong (Matthew 5:46)

B. Fervent charity

1. God bestows love in his saints, but this love is to be nurtured and increased (1 Thessalonians 3:12)
2. Fervent (*ektene*) denotes earnestness, intensity
3. A fervent love is a constant love, not the fickle love of this world

C. This love covers the multitude of sins

1. This does not mean that by our love we can expiate or atone for another's sins before God
2. It means that the loving believer is gracious towards the faults and imperfections in his brother
3. Charity thinketh no evil – it looks for the best in others, not the worst; it gives others the benefit of the doubt
4. Charity beareth all things – it puts up with the faults in others
5. Love does not *contemplate* the sins of others, it does not *circulate* the sins of others, and it does not *celebrate* the sins of others
6. "Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins" (Proverbs 10:12)
7. To cover sins in others does not mean to ignore their sins, but to lovingly deal with them, genuinely seeking their spiritual welfare
 - a. It is patient, allowing others to grow in faith and holiness (1 Thessalonians 5:14)
 - b. It is forgiving of offenses committed against us (Matthew 18:21-22; Ephesians 4:32)
 - c. It confronts sin with loving rebuke (Proverbs 27:5-6)

- d. It restores the backslider using the means Christ gave to the church (Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1; 1 Corinthians 5)
8. Love is so powerful that it does not merely cover a few sins, or even many sins, but a whole *multitude* of them!

III. SHARE CHEERFULLY (9)

A. Use hospitality

1. Hospitality (*philoxenoi*) combines the word for “friend” (*philos*) and “stranger” (*xenos*) – “friendly to strangers” (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)
2. This is the natural product of a soul filled with fervent charity
3. Hospitality goes beyond liberality, which is greatness in giving – hospitality not only gives, but has with it a genuine personal concern for the welfare of the recipient
4. Hospitality is contrary to our natural, covetous, greedy and selfish heart, summed up with the word: MINE
 - a. The people of this world are concerned with MINE
 - b. But when Christ enters in, there is a change – all those things are no longer MINE, they are HIS!
 - c. We have a new Lord, and as Lord he is Owner
5. Christ calls some to forsake their houses, family, lands, etc, for his name’s sake (Matthew 19:29)
6. But then there are others who are not called to leave all their earthly possessions
7. So while some are called to actually forsake their possessions, and others not, *every* believer has relinquished ownership of all he has – everything that he once counted as his own possession now belongs to God, including his very body (1 Corinthians 6:20)
8. God has just allowed me to be a steward over these material things for a time in this world, to use them not for my own selfish pleasures, but for his glory and for the welfare of the church

9. We should have a loose grip of material things, because when we have a firm grip on material things, they will get a firm grip upon us
 - a. Such things “choke” (Mark 4:19) and “entangle” (2 Timothy 2:4) and “drown” (1 Timothy 6:9) us
10. There are some wonderful examples of hospitality in the Scriptures that we would do well to study and imitate
 - a. Abraham (Genesis 18:3-8; cf. Hebrews 13:2)
 - b. Lot (Genesis 19:2-3)
 - c. Jethro (Exodus 2:20)
 - d. The Shunamite (2 Kings 4:8-10)
 - e. Job (Job 31:32)
 - f. Lydia (Acts 16:15)
 - g. Mnason (Acts 21:16)
11. In days when inns were rare and poor, and when Christians were unwelcome, it was the hospitality of the saints that facilitated movement of missionaries, the spread of the gospel and the establishment of churches across the world (3 John 5-7)

B. Without grudging

1. Grudging (*goggusmos*) means “grumbling, complaining, murmuring, discontent”
2. It recognises that hospitality requires sacrifices, it can be costly, burdensome, even irritating, and during times of persecution might put the host at risk
3. But the love of Christ and love of the brethren surmounts these difficulties and sees hospitality for what it truly is: a privilege in which we actually minister to Christ, build up the church, and lay up treasures in glory that will endure forever

IV. MINISTER FAITHFULLY (10-11)

CONCLUSION

1. The climate fanatics in their delusion believe the end of the world is imminent and demonstrate their belief by their outrageous protests
2. Yet most Christians who correctly believe the end of the world is nigh do very little in their actions to prove it
3. Is your life characterised by a soberness and watchfulness, or is it more carelessness and frivolousness
4. Does your prayer life have the earnestness and urgency it should have if Christ could come at any moment?
5. Do you love the brethren as Christ commanded, and is it *fervent*?
6. When it comes to faults in others, do you focus on them or forgive them?
7. And are you cheerfully using the resources God has made you steward over to bless others?
8. As we see the day approaching, may we lay aside all worldly distractions and be found devoting what few hours remain to the devotion and service of Jesus Christ