

The End of All Things

Introduction. You get the sense that Peter was a changed man when you get to the book of Acts. Instead of a rash, impetuous man you see a determined, devoted man who preached the gospel to Jews and Gentiles.

The evidence of his change is apparent in his letters. When Peter wrote his two epistles, his time was short. If you knew that, what would you tell people?

His first letter is addressed to churches in Asia Minor experiencing persecution. Peter reminded them of their heavenly hope and eternal inheritance so that they would be strengthened to persevere in the midst of suffering.

He emphasized that Christians are called to holiness and a life of love. Christians are called to glorify God in their daily lives and to imitate Christ who suffered on the cross for the sake of His people. Peter sketched what it means to live as a Christian, how Christians relate to governing authorities, to cruel masters, and unbelieving husbands. He warned believers that suffering may be intense, but Christians should rely on God's grace, knowing there's a heavenly reward.

Because "the end of all things is at hand," there are six exhortations Peter gave to his readers. You'll notice that Peter calls on Christians to put others first. There's an overtone of selflessness that's present in each of his instructions. In the face of the "end of all things" Christians would need to fight their desire to help themselves and put their brethren first.

I. What Is the "End"?

- A. There's two real possibilities: Peter could refer to the end of time, or he could mean the end of Jerusalem which occurred in A.D. 70. Which one did he mean, or did he mean both of them?
 - 1. The end of Jerusalem and the increase of persecution by the Caesars would be true of his immediate office. Jerusalem would fall in roughly five years from the writing of the book.
 - 2. However, the destruction of Jerusalem is our past, more than 2,000 years ago. But, the end of the world and the judgment day is yet to occur. We can look at these instructions in light of that end.
- B. What is the "end" of this text? Does it matter, in the end, or is there a greater lesson being taught?
 - 1. When everything is considered, it's my belief that Peter's referring to the end of the world, but I acknowledge that there are problems with both views.
 - 2. Peter may be telling us, as he stressed throughout his two letters, that it's important how you live now, so that you're prepared for the "end" (either of Jerusalem or time).
 - 3. The specific "end" isn't nearly as important as what we're supposed to do in preparation for it.
 - a) During the lead up to Rome's destruction of Jerusalem and afterward Christians would suffer lots of persecution. It would be important that they behave faithfully.

- b) However, as you and I look to the end of time and the judgment, we too need to be faithful and display the qualities Peter taught. We then take them to heart and live every day as if the judgment day were tomorrow (2 Peter 3:9-11).

II. Exhortations Pertaining to the “End”

- A. “Therefore be serious” (v. 7).
 - 1. The word “serious” (NJKV), “sound” (NASB), and “sane” (NIV) means having a healthy mind, thinking about and evaluating situations maturely and correctly (cp. Luke 8:35; Romans 12:3; 2 Timothy 1:7; Titus 1:8).
 - 2. Peter knew how easily Christians can lose their spiritual concentration because of the influence of the world (cp. Mark 4:19; Colossians 3:2-3; 1 John 2:15-17), and then fall prey to Satan (1 Peter 5:8).
- B. “And watchful in your prayers” (v. 7).
 - 1. Prayerfulness is appropriate at all times (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Paul also told the Colossians that Christians should “continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving” (4:2).
 - 2. What aids a Christian in hard times more than prayer? In prayer we give thanks for all of our blessings, which focuses our minds on something other than our problems. In prayer we ask for God’s protection and care (Proverbs 3:5-6).
 - 3. But Peter also said to be “watchful” in prayer, and this word is usually translated as “sober” in the New Testament.
 - a) In a physical sense, the term forbids not only the physical intoxication from drinking, but also letting the mind wander into any other kind of mental intoxication or addiction which inhibits spiritual alertness, or any laziness of mind which lulls Christians into sin through carelessness.
 - b) So it’s extremely interesting that Peter is not only encouraging them to pray, but is telling them (and us) to be careful how we pray.
 - c) Christians should be alert to events and evaluate them correctly in order to be able to pray more intelligently. Peter’s words also imply that prayer based on knowledge and mature evaluation of a situation is more effective prayer because it goes deeper than our rote prayers.
- C. “And above all these things have fervent love for one another” (v. 8).
 - 1. The early disciples were warned about the hard times to come so that they would band more closely together.
 - a) Have you ever noticed that when tragedy strikes, communities come together to face the troubles together? Neighbors help neighbors and forget about petty differences.
 - b) Peter wanted the disciples to respond this way to the trials that they were soon to face (Philippians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 John 2:10).
 - c) In the time period before the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus warned that “the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12). This problem can occur any time disciples are under duress. What can combat this? Maintain a deep, warm, earnest, and constant love for one another.

2. Fervent love “cover(s) a multitude of sins.” What does this statement mean?
 - a) Does it mean that when brethren love one another they overlook one another’s sins? No, brethren who love one another rebuke their brethren in order to save them (Galatians 6:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:14).
 - b) However, when we fervently love our brethren, we’re able to look past personal slights, disputes, and even transgressions against us in order to do good for our brethren.
 - c) In tough times there’s no time for personal animosity and the seeking of redress for harm that we believe others have done toward us. Where love abounds, offenses are forgiven, overlooked, and quickly forgotten.
- D. “Be hospitable to one another without grumbling” (v. 9).
 1. Hospitality is one of those words which means something different in our modern usage than how it was used in the Bible.
 2. When people today think of hospitality, they think of dinner parties or similar activities. A person is deemed “hospitable” if he or she regularly invites people into his home to entertain them.
 3. While hospitality might include such activities (cp. Hebrews 13:2, “entertained angels”), it isn’t limited to social gatherings such as parties.
 - a) Hospitality in the Bible also included providing assistance and relief to those who need it. Paul equated hospitality to “distributing to the needs of the saints” (Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 5:9-10).
 - b) Pure and undefiled religion is to visit the fatherless and widows in their trouble (James 1:27). We “visit” with aid and assistance, not just with entertainment.
 4. Helping people can seem, to some, like a chore. This is the wrong attitude! A basic principle of giving is that we do it without grudging necessity, because God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7; cp. Philippians 2:14).
- E. “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another” (v. 10).
 1. What “gift” does Peter mean? Is it spiritual gifts or some other gift?
 - a) Spiritual gifts would fit the context, because the Holy Spirit gave them as He saw fit for the aid of the first century church (1 Corinthians 12:7).
 - b) However, He has just told us what gifts most directly help in difficult times: Fervent love and hospitality.
 2. In the first century, the church struggled through some bad times. When these times came, the church banded together and shared their possessions as any had need (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35; 11:27-30). Let’s learn from them.
 3. Through the instruction of the Word, the Holy Spirit can take “natural” talents and abilities and redirect them for service in Christ. This was dramatically shown in Paul’s work of service.
 - a) Christians should not only view themselves as “gifted,” but also as “serving” others and as “stewards” of the grace of God when we render loving aid and encouragement to each other. This should be repeated lovingly and often in our trek to eternity.
 - b) One of the long-standing misconceptions in church practice is the idea that only one person is to “minister” in the local church. The biblical principle is that all can and should minister in various ways.

- F. “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” (v. 11).
1. During difficult times brethren can become desperate for any encouraging word.
 - a) It’s in this environment that evil men can appear as apparent saviors. Desperate people will cling with hope to the promises of false teachers, no matter how wrong they may be.
 - b) However, Christians turn to the truth of God’s Word (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 3:15).
 2. Finally, we can add that v. 11 proclaims that our ministering is to be done at the direction of God and therefore by the power of God (Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27). God doesn’t zap me with strength on the couch to get up, but He infuses my heart with purpose, motivating my love and service for my brethren and all men.

Conclusion. The ultimate result of these six exhortations is that “in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” As the end approaches, remember that we’re a part of the body of Christ to glorify Christ and exalt Him among men.

I am deeply indebted to David Weak's for the use of his material.