



1 Peter

Part 13 – Living in Light of the End

1 Peter 4:7-11

In this passage the Apostle Peter is further seeking to shape the way his readers understand themselves. This time he directs their attention to the coming judgement and “the end of all things.” This eternal perspective which has as its focus on life in the age to come is essential for Christians, who

because of their status as strangers and aliens, are never quite at home in this sinful world.

The four exhortations in this passage are predicated upon the knowledge that the risen Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead (vs. 5) and then inaugurate his everlasting kingdom in the new creation (vs. 7). The biblical teaching on the end times (eschatology) is never given so that God’s people can busy themselves making charts and predicting dates. Repeatedly, eschatology is used as a means to encourage believers to live in a way that honors Christ, serves the family of believers, and advances the gospel.

As one New Testament scholar has stated, “What one believes about the future shapes how one lives today” (Jobes, 274). Belief in a future which is essentially full of loss and despair will produce a particular kind of living. On the other hand, the Christian confidence in eternal life in the blessed presence of God in the new creation should produce an alternate society which is noticeably distinct from the surrounding world. The Apostle Peter uses this passage to describe the pattern of life which characterizes that alternate society, the church.

Main Idea: Christians are to live in a way that is consistent with the sure return of the risen Christ and his inauguration of the new creation.

“The end of all things is at hand...” – Vs. 7

- It was common for first generation Christians to believe that Jesus would return in their lifetime. At various times the apostles seek to encourage these Christians to be patient and endure suffering because the Lord’s return is a secret that belongs to God and his timing is confined to human expectations.
- The reason that the apostle can speak of the end being near is because Jesus’ redemptive work was completed in his dying and rising. With his ascension to the right hand of the Father, the last days were inaugurated. The last days are not to be understood as some period of seven years just prior to a secret rapture of the church. Rather, the church has always existed in the last days; that period of time between the ascension of Jesus and his second advent when we will return to judge the living and the dead.
- Knowledge that the Lord is returning ought not drive Christians to isolation. Rather the immanence of “the end of all things” ought to encourage positive, God honoring action.
- The Apostle Peter offers four imperatives for Christians living faithfully in light of the return of Christ and the inauguration of the new creation. Notice that there is not spectacular about these imperatives. Indeed, what Peter is suggesting is that what is required in the last days is ordinary Christian living enjoined upon believers throughout the Scriptures.

1. Be self-controlled and clear-minded so you can pray.

Vs. 7

- Believers should be sober as they contemplate the brevity of life and the judgement to come. This self-controlled and clear-mindedness should be leveraged for prayer. Certainly Christians should pray for two things especially in these last days:
 - a) Pray for faithful endurance.
 - b) Pray for the salvation of the lost.

2. Love one another in such a way that covers sin.

Vs. 8

- Love is the chief virtue of the Christian life. Certainly love must not be reduced to sentimentality or niceness. Love is multi-dimensional. As Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 13 love is characterized by such virtues as patience and kindness and long-suffering. Love avoids cynicism and mortifies hatred.
- We may understand love covering over sin in two ways:
 - a) Because love is patient and humble it is able to overlook certain sins.
 - b) When love confronts sin it does so in order to “cover” or minimize the damage it does both to the sinner and to the church.

3. Be graciously hospitable toward one another.

Vs. 9

- Hospitality has always been a necessary practice of the church (Acts 2:42ff). It is also a requirement for elders. Hospitality was both an act of service to the household of faith as well as a means by which the gospel was advanced. Because hospitality often requires focused efforts Christians must be careful to offer it without grumbling.
- “In a hostile world, the church is to be a place of safety and well-being for its members, a place where common beliefs unite more than differences divide. The Christian community is a colony of the holy nation of God among the nations of the world” (Jobes, 281).

4. Serve one another with the gifts God has given you.

Vv. 10-11

- Vs. 10 – “...use it to serve one another...”
- God has given his church “varied graces” for the building up of the church. These gifts do not belong to the individual but are given “in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.”
- Vs. 11d – “To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Peter concludes this section with a doxology. God’s glory is distinctively Christian. It comes from people who bear the name of Christ and serve the church.