

The Beginning of the End (1 Peter 4:7-11)

- A. Traditionally, we think of a New Year as the end of one thing and the start of something new, but maybe we should consider that..
1. In January we consider the possibilities we hope to achieve, and the improvements we plan to make, in the coming year.
 - a. And that's certainly a good thing; this lesson (to some extent) will encourage that kind of thinking.
 2. But Peter told the Christians of his day to anticipate "the end of all things".
 - a. Now we don't know whether Peter wrote those words in January or June, but it didn't matter, they were true in Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall.
 3. They were going through severe trials, and Peter reminded them that they were *aliens* (foreigners) and *strangers* (pilgrims) in this world (1 Pet 2:11).

1 Peter 2:11

11 Beloved, ***I urge you as aliens and strangers*** to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

4. Yes, the early Christians were taught to anticipate something alright, — but IT WASN'T the fulfillment of their dreams (possibilities, improvements) — IT WAS "the end" of those things.
5. According the apostle, we are all living in a foreign country, waiting for our King to come for us and lead us into a country where we can finally be at ease, a place where we feel a sense of belonging, a true homeland.
 - a. You've heard of the government agency called "Homeland Security".

I'm sure they do a pretty good job keeping our nation "somewhat safe" (but that would be due mainly to God's intervention).

Psalms 127:1 (Solomon)

1 Unless the Lord builds the house,
They labor in vain who build it;

***Unless the Lord guards the city,
The watchman keeps awake in vain.***

But the fact remains, there cannot be true Homeland Security in this world.

If you are not "in Christ" you can never be completely secure.

And if you **are** His disciple, then what security you enjoy in this world stems from Him - and when He finally withdraws His protective hand from you, then He's ready for you to come home.

Because the nature of this world is to consume those who live in it, and if it were not for God none of us would be safe here (no matter how powerful our military, and no matter how wise our security officials or well-funded our police departments).

[So rather than it being "bad news" (a disappointing message) Peter was giving them good news when he wrote, "The end of all things is near" (1 Pet 4:7).

"ALL we've been waiting for and EVERYTHING we've longed for is almost here."]

I. HIS IS COMING, REMINDER

A. Reminders.

1 Peter 1:13

13 Therefore [because "salvation has been brought down", vss. 3-12], prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, ***fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.***

1 Peter 4:13

13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, ***keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation His glory you may rejoice with exultation.***

1. The coming of the Lord was the last thing Peter wrote about (2 Pet 3).
 - a. Peter was a fisherman apostle; he wasn't a scholar like Paul, and so what the Holy Spirit gave Peter to write was written in simple and understandable terms.
 2. Peter's work gives us a unique perspective of this world, with two main points:
 - a. The end is near! And life is brief!
 - And that's just as true on January 1st as it is on Labor Day (Sept).
- B. That's why Peter said we should behave in a very specific way (text: 1 Pet 4:7-11).
1. If we believe the end is near, we will live as people often do "at the end" of their lives.

- a. Most “sane” people don’t approach the day of their death troubling themselves over a five or ten-year plan, they are concerning themselves with immediate needs and responsibilities.

Romans 13:11-14

11 Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; **for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.** 12 **The night is almost gone, and the day is near.** [Night: The time when evil prevails. Day: The time when evil will vanish and righteousness prevails.] Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

James 5:7-8

7 Therefore **be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.** The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. 8 You too **be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.** (Cf. Heb 13:4)

- C. Jesus often spoke of His coming as when a man turns over his possessions to his servants, only later to return and evaluate their service: Talents (Matt 25:14); Wicked vinedressers (Matt 21:33); Unjust steward (Luke 16:1); Minas (Luke 19:12; see also Mk 13:33-37).

- 1. What were the Lord’s last words? “Yes, I am coming quickly” (Rev 22:20)!
- 2. Now in the context of 1 Peter, like that of Revelation, Jesus “came” in judgment against Jerusalem and then Rome.

- D. So what is the meaning for us when Peter wrote that “the end is near”?

- 1. Not a single one of us is ever but a few years away from eternity.
 - a. And on that score let me say that the passage of time is a freakish thing, because the moment you think you’re on the top of your world is just about the time you realize that you don’t really want to stay here or can’t.
- 2. So why did Peter tell us that the end is near?
 - a. It’s not that he wants us to panic.
 - b. It’s because of the way God wants us to live every day.
 - c. He knows that we tend to put off doing what is most important – thinking there is plenty of time to do it, but there isn’t!

3. When you know the end of something is near, you give attention and effort to what is most important.

[The early saints greeted each other saying “*Maranatha*” meaning “*Come quickly, Lord Jesus*” (the second to the last verse in Scripture).

The last verse: “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen” (Rev 22:21).

In 2016, we need to live with *the return of the Lord* and *the grace of the Lord* on our minds always.]

II. HE IS COMING, RESPONSE

A. Be In Your Right Mind To Pray.

1 Peter 4:7

7 The end of all things is near; therefore, ***be of sound judgment*** [sane, mental clarity] ***and sober spirit*** [abstain from wine and show self-restraint] ***for the purpose of prayer*** [worship].

1. Isn't that a different response from how most people would deal with the end of time? (see vs. 2-5)

1 Peter 4:1-5

1 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live

the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for ***the lusts of men***, but for the will of God. 3 For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued ***a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries***. 4 In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same ***excesses of dissipation***, and they malign you; 5 but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. (Luke 23:30, some will panic; Phil 4:6-7, some will worry)

[Peter is saying, “Keep a clear mind so you can be fully devoted in your prayers (and your worship) to God, because the end is near; the Lord is coming.]

B. Be Fervent In Your Love For One Another.

1 Peter 4:8-9

8 Above all, ***keep fervent in your love for one another***, because love covers a multitude of sins. 9 ***Be hospitable to one another*** without complaint.

1. “Fervent” here means “stretched out” – like a sprinter stretching toward the finish line.
 - a. There must be something vital about this command since it's the 2nd time Peter commanded it.

1 Peter 1:22-23

22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, ***fervently love one another from the heart***, 23 for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

- b. This has to be the absolute hardest command for Christians to obey; to have a fervent love, one must be hospitable and uncomplaining.

[Peter is saying, “Build a bond of trust and love with your fellow Christians, you’re going to need it, because the end is near; the Lord is coming.”]

C. Be A True Steward Of Your Gift.

1 Peter 4:10-11

10 ***As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*** 11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is ***speaking the utterances of God***; whoever serves is to do so as one who is ***servng 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. Notice that God provides the words to speak (scripture) and the strength to serve.

- a. Along with the gift He has given to each one – comes the ability to use it.

- 2. So as we face the end of all things, rather than planning for retirement, we ought to be giving our attention to duty.

- a. **Illustration:** A long rope (eternity), and three inches painted red (time).

- 3. What is YOUR gift? Whatever it is – it is a stewardship of God’s grace; He’s entrusted something to you that He expects you to use (4:10).

- a. We will give an account to the Lord of our stewardship (Luke 16:1-2).

[Be a true steward of your gift, because the end is near; the Lord is coming.]

CLOSING

- A. We don’t have long to pray, to show our love and to put our gifts to work.
- B. When Jesus returns the earth will be gone and our works will be judged (2 Cor 5:10).
- C. For Christians “the end of all things” is just a door to an eternal beginning (1 Pet 1:3-5).