

“The End of All Things Is at Hand”
1 Peter 4:7

Introduction: There is in the book of 1 Peter a number of themes which he continually repeats. Obviously, whenever you repeat something, it is because you want to lay emphasis on it. You want to highlight it. It is something that you want your hearers to remember. From what Peter writes, it is clear that he is trying to impress at least three main ideas on the minds of his hearers, and the Spirit of God is seeking to impress them on our minds as well. The first is to emphasize that it is through the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ that they shall ultimately be brought to God, and not through their own works. Second, that if they are Christ's, they will suffer persecution in this world for living the way that He lived. And third, that since this is the case they should not worry when they must undergo sufferings for the Lord, for the day of the Lord is fast approaching when God will destroy their adversaries with everlasting destruction and fully and finally vindicate them. On the basis of these three truths, Peter also gives to us a variety of applications as to how we ought to live if we are to serve and honor God in this wicked generation.

This morning, Peter is again returning to the third theme that I mentioned: the coming of the day of the Lord. Last week, we saw that we were to die to ourselves, to sin and to the world. We are to do so because Christ suffered and died for us -- one of the reasons, by the way, that we are celebrating the sacrament of the Lord's Supper this morning. As we prepare to come to the Table, we are to remember that Christ died for us, in order that we might die to ourselves and live for Him. Peter reminds us that we have wasted enough precious time in the unfruitful deeds of darkness. It is time, because of the mercies of God, to devote all of our life to the Lord, for His purposes, in His service -- something else, by the way, that the Lord's Supper represents to us. It reminds us that we are members of His body. We do not belong to ourselves, but to Him. And Peter encouraged us that, though we may suffer from the slander and abuse of the world for our stand for Christ, those who persecute us will have to stand before God shortly and give an answer to Him for each and every one of their words and harsh actions.

In light of these truths, how then are we to live? Since the world, and all things in it, will shortly be coming to an end, what should we be doing? How should we be spending the time which the Lord gives us? Peter, in verses 7-11, gives us a series of exhortations. This morning, I would like us to consider one of them, namely,

Because the end is near, we should devote ourselves to prayer.

I. Realize, First of All, that the End of All Things Has Come Near.

A. Peter, as I've Said, Has Made Many References to This in His Letter.

1. He first told us in 1:5 that if we have truly laid hold of Christ, then God's power is pledged to protect us all the way to the end, "Who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."
2. He told us that even now the trials we are undergoing are only to prove whether or not we have true saving faith, and if we do, it will "be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:7).

3. “Therefore,” he says, “Gird 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” (1:13).
4. Christ, being foreloved by the Father from all eternity, “has appeared in these last times for the sake of you, who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God” (1:20-21).
5. Therefore, you are to “keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation” (2:12).
6. And, he said, don’t worry about them, for “they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (4:5).

B. But Just What Does Peter Mean When He Says the “End of all things”? And How Close Is It?

1. The end of all things is an absolute end to things as we know them.
 - a. We must not forget that there was a purpose for which God created all that He did.
 - b. When we look at the world around us, at all the suffering, the hunger, the nakedness, disease, and death, we can easily see that God did not create this world for man’s welfare and well-being.
 - c. He has a greater purpose than that, a purpose which is God-centered, rather than man-centered. Many today have reshaped Christianity into something which focuses on man. They have injected humanism into the divine religion. But they do not get this from the Bible.
 - d. God created all that He did in order that He might reveal Himself and His glory.
 - e. The way He chose to do so was through the work of the redemption of fallen man.
 - f. If man had never fallen, then we would know nothing of God’s justice, His wrath, His mercy, or His grace. We would know God as the benevolent Creator and sustainer of life, but we would not know Him as Judge and Redeemer.
 - g. God created the world and everything in it for the purpose of glorifying His holy name. And the way that He has chosen to do it is through the redemption of fallen man.
 - h. Man does benefit in God’s plan, but only as the result of God’s mercy, as the result of His making some men trophies of His grace, whom He might display before all the principalities and powers, forever and ever.
 - i. When this plan of redemption is completed, and God has gathered in all of His elect, all those whom He has appointed to everlasting life, then there will be an end to all things.
 - j. God will cleanse the world of all of the wickedness of men, and sweep them away into everlasting perdition, just as He did in the days of Noah, when He swept them all away in the Flood, and just as He did in the days of the Conquest of Canaan, when he sent the Israelites in to utterly destroy the inhabitants of the land. God will cleanse His Creation of its wicked inhabitants, in order that His people might inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5).

2. And how close is this time? Peter says that it is near.
 - a. This end has drawn near, the time is almost upon us. With this the whole Bible agrees.
 - b. Paul writes, “The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light” (Rom. 13:12), “Let your forbearing *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near” (Phil. 4:5).
 - c. James wrote, “Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5:7-8).
 - d. The author to the Hebrews writes, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near” (Heb. 10:23-25).
 - e. And John, the apostle, is bold enough to say, “Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18).
 - f. We have been living in the last days, since the first coming of Christ. His coming was the culmination of everything which had taken place before it. Throughout all of history, since the Fall of man, God has been giving prophecies, promises, and pictures of the person and work of His Son. Christ’s coming was the signal for the final phase of redemptive history, called the last days.
 - g. Peter writes, “For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you” (1 Peter 1:20). And the author to the Hebrews writes, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in *His* Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world” (Heb. 1:1-2).
 - h. But this raises a question. If those were the last days, and according to John it was the last hour, then why haven’t those days ended yet? Peter tells us in his second letter, 3:9-11, that God is giving all men a space of time to repent. He writes, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God?” God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, rather that the wicked man would repent and not die.
 - i. God has not called an end to the world for there are those whom He has yet to call out of the world. If it was close then, imagine how much closer it is now! But when the last of His elect are gathered, then will come about Christ’s coming and the resurrection of all the dead to stand before Him and be judged according to their deeds.

- j. Notice that Peter gives us the same kind of exhortation in his second letter that he does here in his first. “Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God?”
- k. Let us turn now look and see.

II. Peter Says that Because The End Is Upon Us, We Are First to Devote Ourselves to Prayer. “Therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.”

A. Peter Calls Us to Be of Sound Judgment.

1. He means that we are to be serious, sensible, in a position to think clearly.
2. One of the biggest problems in the church today is that she is beset with a variety of opinions, which come from a lack of careful study, and a careless attitude toward the things of God. We are so disjoined and disunited that it is amazing that the Lord is able to accomplish anything through us at all.
3. But how can we overcome this? We must study the Scriptures that we might know what it is that our Lord wants us to do.
4. And we are to take the things which He commands very seriously.
 - a. I think that most people today who join with the church believe that since Christ has merited salvation through His work, that they really do not need to do anything at all.
 - b. They believe that their whole duty is merely to come to church on Sunday, and they forget that Sunday worship is mainly the means by which the Lord equips them to serve Him the whole week.
 - c. Or perhaps they know these things, but do not take them seriously.
5. But God tells us again and again that the one who is truly His child will see the reality of the things of eternity and strive with all his might and with all seriousness to do all that the Lord has commanded, while He at the same time warns us that those who do not take Him seriously now, will be very sorry in the end.
 - a. Jesus said, “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and *yet* it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock” (Matt. 7:24-25).
 - b. “And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall” (Matt. 7:26-27).
 - c. If we do what the Lord commands, we will be brought safely through His judgment. But if we do not, we will be destroyed in it.
6. And so we must daily check ourselves to see if we are living in the light of things as the really are. I fear that our eyes may only truly be opened for perhaps a few minutes on the Lord’s Day, or at times when we read something very powerful which is able to pull back the veil of this world from our eyes for a few moments that

we may see clearly and take a serious and sober look at what God says is coming.

7. If we believe that the things which God reveals in His Word are true, why then don't they impact us more powerfully than they do? It is because we are not treating them seriously enough.

B. Second, Peter Calls Us to Have a Sober Spirit.

1. Not only does a lack of seriousness hinder us, but also a lack of self-restraint.
2. All of us will admit that we often do those things which take us away from the truth of Scripture.
 - a. I think that as we get a glimpse of the truth, it is so shocking that we tend to recoil and try to do something to escape its reality.
 - b. We see that the Bible calls us to forsake all sin and to put on all good works. We see that it calls us to absolute abandonment of self and strict living. We see that there are many perishing in this world and that it is our responsibility to bring the Gospel message to them or else they will end up in the place of everlasting torment.
 - c. These things can be overwhelming to us. Our tendency is to try and escape them somehow. So we excuse ourselves through the doctrine of God's election: if they are elect, they will be saved, and I don't need to worry about it. Or we say that we are not called to this work, and leave the responsibility on someone else's shoulders.
 - d. What must be going on in our hearts and minds that would allow us to watch hours of television, play hours of sports, read books for hours about things that aren't even real, while thousands are dying daily all around us and going to hell, without our even praying for them, or speaking to them to warn them?
 - e. When we live this way, we are neither serious nor sober-minded about the things of the Lord. We are irresponsible and intoxicated with the world.
 - f. But the Lord is calling us through Peter to put away our foolishness and get serious about our calling as Christians.
 - g. We must separate ourselves from the things which continually draw us away from Christ. And we must devote ourselves to the service of Christ, lest in the end we find that we ourselves are castaway from God.

C. And So What Must We Do? We Must Devote Ourselves to Prayer.

1. This is what Peter has in mind when he calls us to seriousness and sobriety.
2. How, after all, are we going to gain the strength that we need to do all that the Lord calls us to except through prayer?
3. How can we expect to affect the world at all around us in our weakened condition, unless the Spirit of God shows Himself to be mighty on our behalf?
4. We must devote ourselves to prayer.
 - a. This too is something in which we are greatly lacking.
 - b. Our Wednesday night prayer meeting is made up of just a handful of people who are carrying the burden of the whole work of the church.
 - c. Our Sunday evening prayer time is only graced with a few voices.
 - d. God calls us to pray. We must pray. We must get serious about the work which Christ has called us to and stop passing the responsibility to someone else.

- d. This is the only way that we will be prepared when the Lord returns again. Prayer is often in Scripture likened to keeping watch and being on the alert.
- e. Jesus said in Matthew 24:42, "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming," and in 25:13, "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour."
- f. He says in Mark 13:33-26, "Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the *appointed* time is. *It is* like a man, away on a journey, *who* upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, *assigning* to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. Therefore, be on the alert--for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, at cockcrowing, or in the morning--lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all, 'Be on the alert!'"
- g. Paul writes, in light of the Lord's imminent return, "So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of *the* day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation" (1 Thes. 5:6-8).
- h. He writes in Ephesians 6:18, "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints."
- i. And to the Colossians, he writes, "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*" (4:2).
- j. Is prayer important? Yes it is. It is a mark of the Spirit's work in your soul, and it is the means by which you can gather strength to do the Lord's work, as well as be prepared for the Lord when He returns.
- k. People of God, the end of all things has drawn near. The Lord is at the door. What then are you to do? First of all, "be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer." In this way you will bring greater honor to your Lord. In this way you will be as the wise virgins who were ready for their Lord's return. May the Lord bless His word to our understanding this morning and affect our hearts with it, that we might do it.
- l. And may He also grant to us His grace and blessing through His sacrament that we might be equipped to fulfill His Word. Amen.