

The End of All Things

The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:7-11

To what end does Peter refer—the end of the world, the end of evil, perhaps the end of suffering? Nearly two thousand years have passed since he penned these words, and all of these remain. Seeing that none of these endings have occurred, we must conclude that Peter refers to some other terminal point. God has been moving history to Jesus hanging on the cross. To God's way of thinking the end is not about time but Christ living in us. God has moved across space-time to restore life stolen by a human decision to become like God. Satan's lie so captivated humanity's heart, and we have been living all of our lives trying to be our own god—and not doing a very good job at it, I might add. God could not allow such twisted living (if it even can be called “living”) to continue, nor could he stand idly by while humanity wastes away into oblivion so he chose to reconcile the un-reconcilable.

To live eternally with God, we must become like God. Only Christ's sacrifice purifies us so we can live with a pure and utterly holy God. When we chose to be our own little gods, God chose for us to be pure, holy and altogether good. *“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy”* (1 Peter 2:9-10). This is how God chooses to end our story—with Paradise restored and our fellowship with God intact. So in the midst of our suffering and trials, Peter cries out, “Hold on! The end is near, and God will make it all better.” All we need to do is to be true to what God has made of us through Jesus Christ. We cannot allow the distractions and hurts of this world to deter us from making all the way to the happy ending God is preparing for us all.

Yet in having said that the ending is happy, it has never been about reward (though the reward is beyond imagination); it has been about the kind of people we are. Heaven cannot be enjoyed by hell-bent and hell-bound people. Everlasting life is about the type of people we are. Do we keep on loving when others reward our love with hatred? Do we remain under control when everyone else is losing it? Do we seek to cover our neighbors' sins, or do we scoop out as much dirt as we can? Do we guard, nurture and grow God's grace in our lives as well as cultivate it in others? Does my speech reflect God's message? Do I live by the strength God supplies? Is Christ glorified in all aspects of my life? Does he reign supremely?

Everything that matters to God is whether we acknowledge his true place in our lives. It is not about coercion; but about recognizing that as God, he knows more than us and loves us more than we love ourselves. Living as God calls us to live is true living—every other philosophy or religion is merely a cheap imitation that offers no lasting happiness. Of all the voices vying for our attention, the only one worth listening to is the one that came from heaven and returned to heaven (cf. John 1:18; 3:13). Christ bids us to follow him—all the way to heaven. Along the way we will have to take up a cross, learn as he learned from his suffering so we will be fit for heaven.

Steve Davis