

THE END OF ALL THINGS

BY B. G. ECHOLS

Having looked at the contrast between the manner of life of the Christian and the pagan, Peter now turns to deal with "the end." "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore of sound mind, and be sober unto prayer: above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:7, 8). "In this life all things come to an end. A mechanism wears out. A story is finished. An enterprise is accomplished. The very world wears down. A man's life is spent like a tale that is told." (J. M. E. Ross).

"At hand" means "to draw near." It is the same word used by John the Baptist (Mt. 3:2). What "end" was drawing near when Peter wrote? Many commentators say that Peter believed the end of the world was "at hand." If this were the case, we would have to accept the fact that the apostles taught that which was not true. This would make all the N.T. suspect. It seems best to interpret "the end" as referring to some system that was about to end or to the end of their lives.

The end of the Jewish system and the destruction of Jerusalem is one popular interpretation (Mt. 24:6-14). Another view, which is similar, is based on the word "all" which does not have to mean an entirety, but a large amount (Mt. 10:22). Thus their system was about to collapse. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you..." (1 Pet. 4:12). Some suggest that Peter is simply saying that we are living in the last age which began with Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension (1:20). Thus, if this is the last age, the end is at hand. "At hand," however, seems to suggest something closer in time.

Whatever Peter had in mind was a powerful motive for turning away from sin. It was now or never. We are reminded of the transitory nature of all worldly systems. Everything we see is temporary. One thing is for sure, the end of our life is certain and may be "at hand." Thus let us live as Peter admonishes. If you knew you were to die next week, would you do what Peter says?

"Be ye therefore of sound mind." This involves good judgment and temperance, both of which will be needed in the trials that are to come. We must be self-restrained, calm, and thoughtful. We must have an alertness of mind and be circumspect in conduct in view of the end. We must not get carried away in our emotions. Surely we must not forget our duties. Don't panic. God still rules.

"Be sober unto prayer." We must be collected in spirit and on guard in mind. We should calmly express our needs to Him. We must be in the proper state of mind to pray. Prayer is taking hold of the power of God. No one is strong enough to gain the victory without the help of God. Who can help us when facing difficulties but God? Who can lead us through the valley of the shadow of death? Who can save us in the midst of the wrecks of humanity around us? Who can alleviate our fears and calm our spirits in all times of difficulty? We must not be indifferent to prayer (1 Pet. 5:8).

"Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves." To be fervent is to be intense. The deepest, noblest, and most powerful love must be our guide in conduct toward each other. The end of things causes us to forget selfish ideas or boasting, and to spend days in loving service. Love is the badge of discipleship (Jn. 13:35). "Above all things" puts love before all other considerations in order of importance (Col. 3:14). In trying circumstances, love is put to its severest test. Let it be fervent.

Our mutual affection must not be cold, but fervent which will make it sincere, strong, and lasting. Christians are bound together by much more than a common interest. Where there is love, there is joy, peace, fellowship, sympathy, and helpfulness. How can we will ourselves to love? Love of brethren comes from love of God. Thus concentrate on God. Love is destroyed by worldly evils so avoid them and follow God's will. The actions of others discourage us so we must determine not to be turned off by these actions.

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"For love covereth a multitude of sins." The subject is brotherly love. The best commentary on the subject is the words of Jesus (Mt. 18:21-35). Living in His forgiveness, we ought to forgive others. Love buries sins out of sight. Love forgives. Knowing the end is at hand, how forgiving we can be of the weaknesses of others (Prov. 10:12). Love causes us not only to forgive, but to forget and not spread the sins of others abroad: How do you forget? Such is essential to our own forgiveness (Mt. 6:14). Love will cause us to work to save fallen brethren (Jas. 5:19, 20). Love is prepared to overlook, to forgive, to bear with, and so in a real sense, "cover" the sins of others (1 Cor. 13:5, 7). In times of persecution especially, we must not allow our brother's failure to come between us. It is no time for grudges and resentments. If we love our brother, we continue to love him in spite of his faults, his imperfections, and his weaknesses. Yet it does not mean we do nothing about his sins (Gal. 6:1; Mt. 18:15-17). Our love for others, when it is demonstrated, causes our sins to be covered. The brethren's love for us causes them to forgive us as well.

"Have You Heard This One?"

The twenty dollar bill and the one dollar bill struck up a conversation. The one dollar bill asked the twenty dollar bill where he had been. In answer the twenty dollar bill said, "Let's see, I've been to the new fancy restaurant that just opened; I have been to the Mall several times; I've been to the latest presentations at the civic center; I've been to the football game every Friday night since the season opened. I've been to lots of places lately; where have you been." The one dollar bill said, "Church, Church, Church!"

CONSIDER THIS:

Wearing The Uniform

by Bob Buchanon

The story is told of a soldier during the Civil War who decided to escape the dangers of the battle. He took two uniforms, one a federal uniform and one a rebel, and carefully sowed them together down the middle seam. He thought he could walk through the firing line with each side thinking he was their ally. The only problem was that he walked the wrong way and was shot by both sides.

This is the danger of attempting to be soldiers for two sides. The apostle Paul told Timothy, "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Tim. 2:3-4).

The person who voluntarily enlisted in the Lord's army should be prepared to wear the uniform proudly and with honor. Paul describes this uniform (or armor) in Ephesians 6 as consisting of truth, righteousness, gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and sword of the Spirit.

The Christian must wear his uniform in such a manner so as to be recognizable to both the enemy and the fellow-soldiers of the Lord's side.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:1-2)