

THE END OF ALL THINGS IS NEAR

1 Peter 4:7-19

"But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "LOVE WILL COVER A MULTITUDE OF SINS." Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now "IF THE RIGHTEOUS ONE IS SCARCELY SAVED, WHERE WILL THE UNGODLY AND THE SINNER APPEAR?" Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator."

In looking at the eschaton, or the last of days we can look to the books of Daniel and Revelation, and passages of the Words of Jesus in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, and then also in Paul's letters to the Thessalonians as well as other passages of Scripture throughout the Bible. There has been countless discussions and there are and were endless debates on the interpretations on how the last of days will play out, and yes, technically we are in the last of days, just as our passage of Scripture for today points out. Yet, just as the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2 was representative of future ruling kingdoms, to which now we can look back on the dream that God gave the interpretation to Daniel, and we can pretty certainly guess who those kingdoms represented (although there is still some room for debate even in that) and then also look at the dream that Daniel had, that is recorded in Daniel 7, and have a pretty good understanding of who the kingdoms were that were represented in the animals he saw (although there is always room for some debate in that), but the bottom line is, the real point of those dreams, those apocalyptic (or revelatory) messages in Daniel and

Revelation and the others that I mentioned is this: **1.** God is in control of all things, all kingdoms that come and go, nothing surprises God, He is on the throne and is ruling over all things, just as Jesus said in **Revelation 1:8-9**, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, [a]the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." **2.** God does and will allow evil kingdoms to come and go as part of His plans of bringing judgment upon mankind, just as we read through the Old Testament seeing the time of the Egyptian empire, the Assyrian Empire, the Babylonian empire, The Medes and the Persians, the Greeks, and then Romans, and also the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Then **3.** God's people need not fear, for He has great plans for His people, His children, for all who will put their trust in Him, who will honor Him as their God. Kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall but the kingdom of God WILL last forever just as the vision of Nebuchadnezzar's image of kingdoms showed, the last kingdom is the Rock, that is Jesus, who crushes all the other kingdoms. As Jesus said, "And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." We want to fall on Jesus, Amen? We don't want Jesus to fall on us.

Yes, it may be interesting to discuss or pontificate on the deep mysteries of God-by the way pontificate means "to speak or express opinions in a pompous or dogmatic way", there isn't much fruit that we can bear in all of those discussions; especially when we are pontificating. There isn't much edifying or uplifting of our brothers and sisters in Christ in those discussions either. Sure we may all wonder who will be the 2nd beast, or elsewhere called the false prophet, or also the antichrist, but really does it change anything for us in our daily lives? We're supposed to be ready at all times even as Jesus' disciples were told to do. Jesus told them, "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

God not only says to us in so many words, "don't worry my children, I got this", but He's also warning us to keep our focus in the right direction. Evil kingdoms will come and go. Evil people will come and go in our lives, that's a guarantee. Our passage of Scripture today starts out, ""But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers." One of my favorite passages of Scripture is in **Philippians 4:4-7**, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. [how can that be, you might ask?] **The Lord is at hand [the Lord is near].** Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things

are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things." There's much that could even be said of that passage of Scripture, and no doubt there has been thousands of sermons on it, but there is three things I want to point out in it. **1.** We can rejoice for God is near, **2.** God IS in control, nothing escapes His notice. We can't control the circumstances around us or the people that cross our path but God sees it all, and will deal with all things according to His perfect Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Justice. The day that I wrote this message I had earlier given a ride to a friend to pick up his truck that was in the shop. Coming home I got behind a large flatbed truck full of building materials and it just chugging along. Once it got up to speed I was like, "oh cool then, no problem." Then we ended up behind an ambulance with its lights on and right ahead of it was a schoolbus picking up children every other block. The schoolbus stopped and let the ambulance go past but then we stopped again and again and again. Oh well, what can I do? Same thing really when different people come into your daily life, some good, some not so good, and then some who are just bent on evil. While there may not be anything that you would take to the Lord in prayer about having to drive slow behind a schoolbus (although really I could have been praying for them too), there is certainly something you can pray about with the people you encounter throughout your day. Right? **3.** anything that may concern us we should take to the Lord in prayer. The other night Susie and I were in the living room talking and I confessed to her that I really didn't have it in my patience or heart to listen to her or to sympathize with her. Brutally honest, wouldn't you say? Yet our living room has been, above all things, a place of prayer for us. As we start talking, we start talking to the Lord, as that IS what prayer is, just talking to God, with reverence and humility though (as best as is in me), and as I told Susie that, she said that she had been struggling with those same feeling the day before. So, we took it to the Lord in prayer. "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." You know what happened next? Susie said that she felt the weight lifted from her and I said, yeah, it lifted from me too." What did that mean? That was the peace of God! I think it means also that we were under a demonic attack. We took it to the Lord in prayer, with thanksgiving, and God then followed through on His promise to guard our hearts and minds. Praise the Lord! Those examples aren't to say, "hey look at me" but I am saying we all have weeks, or days or moments where everything is not how we think it should be. But God...He says, "I've got the crazy things in this world, trust me." Just as the Apostle Paul told the Philippians in his letter to them, he said about being well-fed or hungry or living in plenty or in want, "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength!" (**Philippians 4:13**)

And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "LOVE WILL COVER A MULTITUDE OF SINS." There are many facets to love covering a multitude of sins but I'll just mention a couple. The first one is in prayer. It's amazing how your heart can change towards a person that you are praying for and it just may be the prayer that helps them through what they're going through. It may seem at times that some persons are just never going to get it. Then the Lord reminds me of where I came from. I'm sure there were people that have thought I'd never get it. I know I am far removed from that place of perfection that God is working in me, but I'm closer than when I first believed! Who then are we to determine who is saved, who are we to condemn someone? "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:16-17) The same grace of God that is patient with you and with me should be the same grace of God that we can expect to be for others. That's a tough one to accept sometimes, especially when that someone is downright annoying or irritating. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." (Romans 5:8-9) Love does indeed cover a multitude of sins. Thank You Jesus! God loved us enough to be spit on, slapped, punched, jeered, have a crown of thorns put on His head, be beaten and scourged, and then to die on a cross for our sins all the while being mocked and ridiculed. For us! The least we can do is to do our best to love one another. There are two primary focal points that Satan, the devil, and his demons, and then the world too is trying to attack and if it were possible to destroy. That is God, and His people. Jesus was asked what is the greatest commandment of God and He said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:37-30) Fellowship with God and fellowship with God's people. That is what God wants for us. But we can't have fellowship with God if we continue practicing sin. Hence the warning, "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter." Praise the Lord, we will one day be rewarded for our suffering and works on this earth. Jesus also gave a warning in Luke 21:34-36, "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

The counter to the carousing, drunkenness, and the cares of this life are as Jesus said in **Matthew 6:33**, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." Jesus was talking about the basic needs of this life. Don't get caught up in the cares of this world and trying to get something out of this world. The glitter and glamor of the world is all going to burn up one day but the treasures that we store up in heaven, they will last forever. The kingdom of God and His Righteousness we find in...Christ Jesus! "But of God [Him] you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us **wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—**31 that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." Therefore we find the righteousness of God when we abide in Christ, we allow Him to work in us "to will and to do according to His good pleasure." (**Philippians 2:13**) Abiding in Him through prayer, "casting all of our cares upon Him for He cares for you" (**1 Peter 5:7**)

"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now "IF THE RIGHTEOUS ONE IS SCARCELY SAVED, WHERE WILL THE UNGODLY AND THE SINNER APPEAR?" Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator." We are being prepared even now for being in Christ in His eternal kingdom, being in His Righteousness, and being in His Glory for all of eternity to where we will be joint-heirs with Jesus, inheriting all of God's kingdom (yet remember we have to share it with a bunch of other of God's people. Then also He alone will always be, as He has always been God Almighty, the King of kings and Lord of Lords), and we will reign with Christ for all of eternity. We'll find out what that all means in time but nevertheless, God is determining who wants to live eternally with Him in His Righteousness, His Glory, and His Justice. Sadly when you read through the last bit of Revelation where God is pouring out His wrath on the world, on the people still on this earth, there will be some people who will never repent and will still curse God. Hailstones the size of large watermelons will be raining down on them and they will still be cursing God. And just the same, there are some people today, hopefully none who are here, that will not and do not want anything to do with God except possibly to get the blessings of God. As Jesus pointed out, there are some who only honor God with their lips but their heart is far from Him. God will sort it all out in the end to where he'll separate the sheep from the goats. The sheep are the ones who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life and the goats, well they just wanted to do it their way. As Jesus said, "there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Why is it so against our nature to serve God and obey God? Well first of all we have been born into sin, having a sin nature. When Adam and Eve sinned against God in the garden of Eden a curse came upon mankind and this earth. Satan was then allowed to have authority on this earth for a time because of that sin. Then, when we are born into this world, not only are we born with a sinful nature but we are born into a sin filled world that begins programming us to follow the ways of the world as opposed to the ways of God. Just look around you or turn on the news on tv and it is in full demonstration. That is why we will never overcome the world on our own. That is why Jesus said we must be born again, that is, born of the Spirit. When we confess to God that we are a sinner and believe on Jesus for dying for our sins we are led by the Holy Spirit to repent of our sins, which means having a change of mind to not choose to keep sinning against God and begin living for Him to where He then gives us His Holy Spirit that begins working in us His Righteousness, His Wisdom, His Sanctification (setting us apart from the ways of the world for His Holiness), and then His Redemption. It IS God who does all the work in us but we have to choose to obey Him and what He intends to work in us to where He is making us into, as I said before, the image of Christ. It is in the working of the Holy Spirit that begins changing our hearts and renewing our minds, making us into what is an image of Christ. And as the Apostle John said, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2)

We may not be able to control the things around us or the people around us but when we allow the Holy Spirit to work in us to where we start bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control", we will most certainly influence the world around us and be covering a multitude of sins. And we can partake of Christ's sufferings. Just imagine what God has to endure watching all of the evil that is going on day in and day out, day after day, year after year, generation after generation. Just imagine the sufferings that Christ endured to pay the price for our sins, taking our sins upon Himself so that we can be right with God and have fellowship with God. Judgment does begin in the house of the Lord but really that is a good thing for God's children. God is polishing us up, chipping off the rough edges to be His precious jewel that is being fitted in to be part of His glorious temple in Christ Jesus. Yes, God sees us as His precious jewels but He's still working on each of us. We're symbolically "marching to Zion", God's glorious new city, and we will all be part of His glorious temple. It may not all make sense now, but it will truly all be worth it. Meanwhile, **Hebrews 12:1-2** says, "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the

joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Listen to what Jesus tells the church of Laodicea in **Revelation 3:21-22**, "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Amen.