

Thoughts From Other Minds:

9. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

Hospitality. In the ancient world ... inns were unsafe and uncomfortable. Therefore, travellers avoided inns and sought accommodations with private parties. Scripture stresses the virtue of offering hospitality to the wayfarer. ... (Rom 12:13; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8; 1 Tim. 5:10).

Peter knows human nature, for he realizes that at times overnight guests take advantage of a host when they prolong their stay or fail to reimburse him. The apostle encourages the hosts to open their homes to overnight guests and adds, "Do it without grumbling." The writer of Hebrews reminds his readers that by welcoming strangers into their homes, "some people have entertained angels without knowing it" (13:2). Therefore, we must show kindness willingly and cheerfully.

10. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

Gifts. In Romans, Paul discusses the gifts which the members of the church receive. ... Peter also speaks about these gifts. He informs his readers that each member of the Christian community has received gifts (capabilities) from God. ... these gifts belong to God and must be used ... to serve others." Gifts, then, must be used for each other's benefit within the community and in harmony with God's purpose and design.

In the second part of the verse, Peter tells the readers that they must be engaged in "faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." Here is a literal translation of verse 10b: "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (NKJV). The word good actually means "excellent" (compare 2:12). And the term steward refers to a manager who is in charge of his master's possessions (e.g., Luke 12:42; 16: 1; Gal. 4:2).

In this verse Peter reminds each person who belongs to the body of believers that the gift he has received is "God's grace in its various forms." The gift itself is primarily the gospel of Jesus Christ that is entrusted to the stewards of God. The gift, however, is not restricted to the gospel as such; it also appears in the form of various capabilities and skills. During the first century, the apostles were "entrusted with the secret things of God" (1 Cor.4:1). A contemporary example is the person ... is the pastor. He has received a number of talents either in preaching, teaching, counselling, evangelising, or administering. However... Each person in the church has received gifts to equip him for building up of the body of Christ (see Eph. 4:12).

Within the church "no one is to be content with one thing and with his own gifts, but every one has need of the help and aid of his brother." Everyone ought to strive to be a good steward of the talents God has given him. ... the church is a veritable storehouse of gifts and talents – never locked but always open for service'

Simon J. Kistemaker, *Peter and Jude*, pp. 168-69.

Camperdown Noorat Terang Presbyterian Charge

25 September 2016

Sermon: "Life in the body # 6 – living in the light of The End"

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:1-19

Sermon Notes

Introduction: We come to the sixth and last of our 'one another' studies. These flowed out of Jesus words, 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you', and the apostle Paul's teaching that saving faith in the Lord Jesus unites us to him and to each other as members of his body (Rom 12:5).

Living in love in 'the body' means humility under God and towards each other, for pride is against love and God; 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble' (1 Pet 5:5-7) - and humility means through love serving one another, as Christ humbled himself to serve us by dying for us on the cross.

Living in love also means exhorting one another, lest we follow the example of the Israelites who were unable to enter the promised land because of unbelief. The land was a type of heaven, of the eternal rest that God promises in the gospel—so we must persevere in the faith until we enter heaven's eternal rest (Heb 3:12-14).

The promise of rest in the land came to them as good news, but it did them no good because they didn't believe God; the good news of rest in heaven comes to us in the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus who died for sinners on the cross; but to do us good we must receive it with faith and continue in it (Heb 4:1, 11).

1. Right perspective

We come to a related theme—that of living in the light of The End (1 Pet 4:7-11). Often 'the end is nigh' is associated with strange people carrying sandwich boards in public places—but the New Testament's perspective is that since Jesus died and rose again and sent the Holy Spirit the end of all things is at hand.

The apostle Peter views things in terms of 'redemptive history'; from this perspective all the previous acts in the drama of redemption have been completed, from creation through to the ascension of Christ and his sending the Holy Spirit, and now we are living in the last days—the end of all things is indeed at hand.

In these last days God has spoken to us by his Son (Heb 1:2); on the day of Pentecost Peter explained what was happening by Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:16-21) that in the last days God would pour out his Spirit on all flesh and every one who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Christ has died, paying the price of sin and opening the way of forgiveness and reconciliation with God for those who will believe in him; this gospel is now being proclaimed to the ends of earth, and after God's people are all gathered in the next event is the coming of Jesus in glory to judge the living and the dead.

‘The end of all things is at hand’ is a reminder that this judgment is near—‘the Judge is standing at the door’ (James 5:3-9). This is the New Testament perspective on life in this world since the coming of Christ; the end of all things is at hand; the Judge is at the door, and any moment he may enter and usher in The End.

We cannot know when he will come (Matt 24:36-39). Our Lord plainly teaches that his coming will be sudden and unexpected, that life will be continuing as it always has; so scoffers will scoff—but they forget that the world was once deluged with water and perished; the next judgment will be by fire (2 Pet 3:3-7).

2. Right living

Knowing that at any moment we could stand in the presence of Christ the Judge should incline us to behave in the right way (1 Pet 4:7-10). The end of all things is at hand — ‘therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded’. This is the opposite of the life-style Peter describes (4:1-7), a call to cease from sin, to live for the will of God.

We may or may not have lived as ‘the Gentiles want to do’ - sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry—but in either case these things are to belong to our past. Unbelievers may abuse us when we don’t join them—but they will give an account to the Judge of the living and the dead (v. 5).

This is why (v. 6) the gospel was preached to the living and the dead; death is not an escape from the consequences of wickedness, but a call to appear before the Judge; death is an escape from the judgment of human judges, but every one who does evil will give account to the Judge—and so will we, if we are among them.

So we are to be self-controlled and sober minded ‘for the sake of our prayers.’ Prayer is vital, essential to Christian life; without prayer we cannot live for the will of God (cf. our Lord’s prayer in Gethsemane, and Peter’s failure to pray and its consequences); sin hinders prayer (1 Pet 3:6) - and so we are to avoid sin to pray.

Living in the light of the end means that it is vital that we be self-controlled and sober minded, to live no longer for human passions but for the will of God; yet there is more, for being self-controlled and sober minded can lead to self-righteousness and pride and criticism and division and dissention—and so we must also love (v. 9).

Love covers a multitude of sins—but how? Love naturally covers sins rather than reveals them: it is ‘not irritable and does not count up wrongdoing’ (1 Cor 13:5). Love supposes that the other meant well; love does not think the worst of others; love is forgiving, as God in love has forgiven us; love does not gossip (Prov 17:9).

Love also expresses itself in actions: in love we are to ‘show hospitality without grumbling’ (v. 9); it is one thing to do what is right—it is another to do it gladly, without grumbling. The many commands against grumbling testify to our sin in this direction (James 5:9); it is a form of judging others, an intrusion into God’s prerogatives, unwise in the light of The End. Love serves—and the focus is on The End, for stewards are accountable; we will give account for our stewardship at The End.

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My Notes:

Questions for Reflection:

1. Given that 2000 years have passed since the apostle Peter declared that ‘the end of all things is at hand’, and The End hasn’t happened yet, was he mistaken—and if not, why not?
2. How does ‘the end of all things is at hand’ properly understood give us the right perspective on life today in this world of ours? (cf. James 5:1-11)
3. What does Jesus teach about his coming in Matthew 24:36-39, and how does this connect with the apostle Peter’s teaching in 2 Peter 3:3-7?
4. Read and reflect upon Peter’s teaching in 1 Peter 4:1-7; how do these verses lead into his teaching that ‘the end of all things is at hand’?
5. What is the connection between being ‘self-controlled and sober minded and prayer? (cf. Matt 26:30-42; 1 Pet 3:6).
6. Why does the apostle say ‘above all, keep on loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins’? What does he mean by ‘above all’?
7. What practical expressions of love does he mention, and why? What is particularly significant about ‘grumbling’ and ‘serving’ in the light of The End?