

Text: 1 Pt 4.7

Tonight, we will move on to a new paragraph. This one is clearer, I think, no difficult sections.

We are still related to the overall theme.

One reason we know that is a little untranslated word that begins the verse. It is just two letters in Greek, δὲ (de). When translators opt to translate, it usually is “and” or “but,” but it is the “softer” of the two words for “but” in Greek.

One commentator offered this translation: “moreover.”¹

What that means is this next little section (vv. 7-11) is “in addition to” the other arguments for staying faithful despite the possibility of persecution.

That theme begins with 1 Pt 3.14:

1 Pt 3.14 But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED,

“even if you *should* suffer...” means it is a possibility not a probability

Of course, as Peter is writing, Nero is either in or just about to be in the “bad Nero” period of his reign, so for Peter’s readers, the **probability** of the **possibility** increased slightly.

First, we had instructions on how to act if possibility turned into reality:
3.14-16

Then Peter begins giving us reasons for acting this way:

1. It is better to suffer for right than for wrong (3.17)
2. Our Lord Jesus already won and declared the victory over such suffering (3.18-22)
3. You need to arm yourself with Christ’s purpose and live for right regardless (4.1-6)

So that brings us to **1 Pt 4.7-11**, which we will now **read**.

Here, the passage starts with the proposition:

“The end of all things is near...”

¹ Selwyn, *1 Peter*, 216.

Three consequences of this unfold in these verses:

1. Therefore pray (7)
2. Therefore love (8-9)
3. Therefore serve (10-11)

We will look at just the first consequence tonight.

Proposition: We live on the edge of the second coming, therefore be sure you can pray.

I. Our constant mindset

A. The proposition of the passage should form the Christian mindset

1. Mindset = “a mental attitude or inclination”²
2. It is a way of thinking, a way of looking at life
3. We could also call it a “worldview,” although it is more unconscious than conscious

Slogan: “Live with eternity in view.”

B. When we say end, we mean end of this, but the beginning of something else

1. The end of all things is the end of present things, the present order
2. There is a new order coming, so the end of all things is the beginning of the new things
3. The word “end” is “telos” – perfection, maturity (verb form used on the cross, “It is finished”)

C. We could call this “last days” thinking

1. All the apostles wrote as if the Lord’s return was imminent, just around the corner
2. The church (generally) has had this point of view through history
3. It’s been about 2000 years, can we reasonably keep this same point of view?

² Merriam-Webster.com

Found a quote from John Henry Newman in a commentary that addresses this very well.

J. H. Newman was an Anglican who unfortunately converted to Catholicism and became a Roman Cardinal. The quote is from his "Anglican period"

"It was different during the ages before Christ came. The Saviour was to come. He was to bring perfection, and religion was to grow *towards* that perfection. There was a system of successive revelations going on, first one and then another; each prophet in his turn adding to the store of Divine truth, and gradually tending towards the full Gospel. Time was measured out for believing minds before Christ came, by the word of prophecy; so that He never could be expected in any age before the 'fulness of time' in which He came. The chosen people were not bidden to expect Him at once; but after a sojourning in Canaan, and a captivity in Egypt, and a wandering in the wilderness, and judges, and kings, and prophets, at length seventy long weeks were determined to introduce Him into the world. Thus His delay was, as I may say, *recognized* then; and, *during* His delay, other doctrines, other rules, were given to fill the interval.

But when once the Christ had come, as the Son over His own house, and with His perfect Gospel, nothing remained but to gather in His saints. No higher Priest could come, — no truer doctrine. The Light and Life of men had appeared, and had suffered, and had risen again; and nothing more was left to do. Earth had had its most solemn event, and seen its most august sight; and therefore it was the last time. And hence, though time intervene between Christ's first and second coming, it is not *recognized* (as I may say) in the Gospel scheme, but is, as it were, an accident.

For so it was, that up to Christ's coming in the flesh, the course of things ran straight towards that end, nearing it by every step; but now, under the Gospel, that course has (if I may so speak) altered its direction, as regards His second coming, and runs, not towards the end, but along it, and on the brink of it; and is at all times equally near that great event, which, did it run towards, it

would at once run into. Christ, then, is ever at our doors; as near eighteen hundred years ago as now, and not nearer now than then; and not nearer when He comes than now. When He says that He will come soon, ‘soon’ is not a word of time, but of natural order. This present state of things, ‘the present distress’ as St. Paul calls it, is ever *close upon* the next world, and resolves itself into it. As when a man is given over, he may die any moment, yet lingers; as an implement of war may any moment explode, and must at some time; as we listen for a clock to strike, and at length it surprises us; as a crumbling arch hangs, we know not how, and is not safe to pass under; so creeps on this feeble weary world, and one day, before we know where we are, it will end.”³

What he means, and I think he is right, is the Lord’s return is *right at the door, just over the threshold*.

We should live with this *mindset*.

II. Our simple lifestyle

Peter gives us two imperatives to fulfill a purpose in light of our mindset

A. Be of sound judgement

1. Constable: “clear-headed”⁴

2. Other synonyms

a. Reasonable

b. Sensible

c. Prudent

3. Selwyn: “*keep your heads*”

“*keep your heads*. [sound judgement] connotes the cool head and balanced mind which is the opposite of all *μανία*

³ “Waiting for Christ” in John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. 6 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907), 240–41, <https://www.newmanreader.org/works/index.html#anglican-period>.

⁴ Constable, *Expository Notes*, 1 Pt 4.7.

[mania] or undue excitement, whether this be inspired by a divine spirit (Plato, *Phaedr.* 244 a) or by evil spirits (Mk. 5:15, Lk. 8:35), or by love (Plato, *loc. cit.*), or by pride (Rom. 12:3, cf. Aesch. *Pers.* 829, *P.V.* 982) or success (Thuc. viii. 24)."⁵

- a. In Gk thinking the gods “divine spirit” or “evil spirits” could cloud the mind
- b. Love can cloud the mind (the “being in love” phenomenon)
- c. Pride can cloud the mind
- d. Success as well

B. Be of sober spirit

1. Specifically focused on alcohol
2. “denotes sobriety as the opposite of intoxication”⁶

“It is a call to remain alert and self-controlled, in full possession of their faculties and feelings.”⁷

The point of all this: since “the end is near,” keep your head clear at all times.

Why?

III. Our first duty

A. “for the purpose of prayer”

1. Prayer is a normal part of Christian life
2. Many things distract — “cloud the mind”
 - a. Worry
 - b. Cares of this life
 - c. External troubles
 - d. Fleshly indulgences (remember “sober”)

⁵ Selwyn, *1 Peter*, 216.

⁶ Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 270.

⁷ Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 270.

3. Beyond “a normal part,” Peter makes this a purpose:

“Be of sound judgement and be sober ... unto prayer.”

B. A clouded mind distracts from your Christian purpose *and will hinder your ability to deal with the pressures of persecution*

Hiebert again: “It is a call to remain alert and self-controlled, in full possession of their faculties and feelings.”⁸

C. Parallel passages

1 Cor 6.12 ¶ All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.

Lk 21.34 ¶ “Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap;

Conclusion:

Proposition: We live on the edge of the second coming, therefore be sure you can pray.

⁸ Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 270.