

"BE YE, THEREFORE, SOBER."

"The end of all things is at hand: be ye, therefore, sober, and watch unto prayer." – 1 Pet. 4:7.

Remembering that eighteen centuries have passed since Peter gave this counsel to the church, he might be considered as somewhat premature in regard to the proximity of the time of the end; but considering the great week which commenced with the creation of man and ends with his full restitution to the image and favor of God, each of whose days is a thousand years (2 Pet. 3:8), and that Peter was living in the fifth day of this great week, we see that from this standpoint his words were true. The end of the old order of things – the end of the dominion of evil, is to be in the close of the sixth day (the sixth thousand years), and thus was indeed at hand, as was also the second coming of the Lord and the setting up of his kingdom.

While this and all similar expressions, referring to their time as the last days, were thus true then, the apostle himself probably did not so understand it; for the significance of the time-prophecies was in all probability wisely hidden from their view, as it was from the prophets, since the length of a single one of these days would have seemed very long and consequently a cause of discouragement to them. But the spirit which inspired the words of the apostles and prophets could see that while from God's standpoint the end of all things was *at hand* in the fifth day of the week, and these words were, therefore, true in this sense when declared to the early church, would also be true from the human standpoint when fully understood by the church in the end of the age. How true it is, therefore, in our day, when we are made to see clearly that the year 1914 will be the full end of the Times of the Gentiles, and that the next twenty-four years, therefore, must bring about the full consummation.

In view of these things, how apt the Apostle's counsel to watchfulness and sobriety; for what a lamentable calamity it would be to any of the saints, who had thus far run well for the prize of their high calling, to become discouraged and falter and fail when so near the realization of their glorious hope. Let us, therefore, be sober; let us guard against the worldly spirit and its stupefying and intoxicating influence upon our spiritual life. Refuse the first draught of the wine of worldly-mindedness and you will not be tempted to take the second. If you take the first, it may revive the old appetite and thus quickly and suddenly precipitate your fall.

Therefore, watch unto prayer: pray for divine assistance, to resist even the slightest encroachment of the enemy, and bear in mind that to the watchful and prayerful is promised grace sufficient to overcome the world.

With this timely counsel the Apostle then proceeds to show us how to cultivate the spirit of Christ, saying: "Above all things have fervent charity (love) among yourselves; for charity (love) shall cover the multitude of sins. Love is one of the first essentials of the Christian character, and while Christians must love all men as God loves them – not always for what they are, but for what they shall be when character shall have been developed and made perfect – yet they can love each other in a much higher sense, as those in whom the God-likeness is already developing and perfecting. If such cannot love each other whom they see, how can they love God whom they see not? Love **[R1188 : page 6]** to God may be rightly judged an empty profession, if it find no expression toward those possessing his spirit and likeness. Among these love should have glowing, fervent and constant expression. Love so fervent, considering the imperfections of the earthen vessel and yet the strivings of the spirit to overcome, can cover a multitude of sins – of short-comings and failures to measure up to our highest ideas of moral excellence. And while thus regarded of one another we are so regarded of God who also looketh upon the heart, and noting

there the warm impulses of love toward him and his, excuses all our unwilful sins through the merit of our Redeemer. "Love," said the Apostle, "is the fulfilling of the law;" consequently, if we have pure and fervent love, and if we walk not after the flesh but after the spirit, the law is reckoned as fulfilled in us. (Rom. 13:10; 8:1.) Therefore, above all things have fervent love among yourselves; and let it be manifested in the use of "hospitality one toward another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift [the favors of life], even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

There is probably nothing better calculated to cement and knit together the body of Christ than Christian hospitality – the fellowshiping of members of the body of Christ and ministering to one another the temporal and spiritual favors. However humble those favors may be, they give evidence of the love that prompts the dispensing of them. Those who have much of this world's good things, who have a well ordered and comfortable home-life, have good opportunities for this kind of service; and while some of those in less favored circumstances might hesitate to show the hospitality they feel toward those more favored, such advances on the part of the latter class quickly show that the class distinctions based upon relative degrees of wealth or pedigree, etc., which obtain in the world, find no recognition in the body of Christ, where all are one. And those in humble circumstances will have no pride of rivalry, etc., to sustain, but in simplicity and love will delight to manifest the hospitality they feel toward both those in more and those in less favored circumstances – to minister to them both of their temporal and their spiritual good things according to their several needs, as good and faithful stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Then let every member of the body be solicitous for his influence over every other member, taking heed that he place no stumbling block in his brother's way, but that in all things his course shall prove helpful to the saints. "If any man speak," says

the apostle, "let him speak as the oracles of God." If we would teach the truth, let us first prove it and make sure that it is truth, and not present crude ideas and human imaginations to stumble the weaker brother. And likewise in dispensing religious reading matter, we should be similarly careful to speak by this agency also as the oracles of God. No tract or book or paper should be handed to another, which we cannot endorse. Thus we may speak as the oracles of God and minister of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever.
