

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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The Fulfillment of All Things

by Dan Trygg

“Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, ² fulfill my joy that you might think the same thing, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose (lit., ‘thinking the one thing’). ³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard (‘consider, think’) one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mindset in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard (‘consider, think’) equality with God a thing to be held on to, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, and being made in the likeness of humans. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself (‘made Himself low’, or ‘lowered Himself’) by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Philippians 2:1-8

“The fulfillment of all things is at hand; therefore be sound-minded and clear-headed unto prayers. ⁸ Above all, having the stretched-out *agapē*-love unto yourselves, because love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one speaking words of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies, in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and the might unto the ages of the ages. Amen.” 1 Peter 4:7-12

Most translations begin verse seven with “the end of all things is at hand”. This makes us think that Peter is thinking about the end of the age. Most commentators seem to follow this line of thought. **The Greek word translated as “end”, however, is *telos*. It can mean “end, goal, completion, fulfillment, or outcome”. It refers to the fulfillment or accomplishment of something, ...the consummation, end purpose or result of a process, plan or objective. *Peter may be referring to the “goal” or “fulfillment” of all things that God had set in motion, in regard to His plan for us.***

The context is *not* about the end of the age. The context leading into this verse is about us living for God. It is about turning away from living for ourselves and choosing to serve God. And, the context that follows this verse is about utilizing the gifts that God has given to us effectively, so that “in all things God may be glorified” (vs. 11). So, I don’t think this is a statement about eschatology (the “study of last things”) at all. I think this is a statement about a present reality that is available to us *now*, ...but something we must knowingly engage in.

Another aspect that supports this idea is the Greek word that is translated as “at hand”. This is the same word used by John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles in their proclamation about the kingdom of God (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7). They proclaimed a repentance, ...literally a “change of perception”..., because the kingdom of God has come near. The word means to “come near, approach, come close”, but the form of the word means that it *has* come near, and it is *still* near. In 1 Peter 4:7, then, *what Peter is saying is that the “goal” or “fulfillment” of all things “has come near”*. The idea is that God’s purpose or objective is ready and available to us *now*.

Since this is true, Peter says that it is important for us to be sound-minded and clear-headed. We need minds that are sharp, healthy, well-informed. Take note what the focus is: “unto the prayers”. Why is this? Because the things that God has set in motion, and are now available to us, are spiritual things. We obtain them through prayer and petition. We need a sound and healthy understanding of what God has made available to us, *and* we need to have minds that are clear and undistracted so that we *will* ask for the things God desires for us to utilize. James, the brother of the Lord, said “You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask, and you do not receive, because you ask badly (wrongfully, unhealthily, sick-ly, incorrectly), in order that you might consume it on your pleasures” (Jas. 4:2,3). The things God is making available to us are *not just about us*. They are the things He is making available to us to empower us to serve each other and to glorify Him. We will benefit from these things, as well, but the focus is not just on ourselves. As Philippians 2 says, “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard (‘consider, think of’) one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

Where do we start? Peter jumps right in: “Before all things having the stretched-out *agapē*-love unto yourselves...” **Before everything else, *agapē*-love should be our petition.** This gets right to the heart of the matter, because *agapē*-love is *not* a human love. *It is a love that originates with God.* When it is expressed through people, it stands out. Jesus said it should and would be the noticeable mark that we are His active-followers. The apostle John clearly says that this love comes from God. It possible only for those who are born of God and experientially know God (1 Jn 4:7). ***This kind of love is not an emotion, it is a choice, ...a mental bent and commitment to act on behalf of that person’s well-being.*** It is preferring them and their interests before your own. It is that mindset that Jesus

exemplified when He emptied Himself in order to serve and save us. This is *not* something you can do from yourself, or on your own strength. **This *agapē*-love must be birthed, supported and expressed through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.** The *agapē*-love of God has been poured into the heart of every born-again believer in Christ (Rom. 5:5), but it is something that is a by-product of the Spirit's activity in our lives. Often the bursting forth of *agapē*-love and the release of the Spirit in our lives is opened up by experiential revelation and knowledge of God's deep and inexhaustible love for us (Eph. 3:14-21). Remember John's words, "those who *agapē*-love are born of God and *experientially-know God*." **Paul interceded for the believers in Ephesus for this experience, and it should be a premier focus of our own prayers, ...both for ourselves and for one another in Christ.**

Notice the language of what Peter says, here, "Before all things, be having the stretched-out *agapē*-love unto yourselves, because *agapē*-love covers a multitude of sins." **The focus of this *agapē*-love is toward ourselves as individuals, and those within our group of believers.** This is *not* a "one-another" command, here. **It starts with us.** We have to come through to where we love *ourselves* with the *agapē*-love of God, and also the others in our fellowship of believers. We are commanded to "*agapē*-love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39), ...but if you *don't* love yourself, then you will have nothing to offer your neighbor. The assumption is that you *will* and *should* *agapē*-love yourself. Again, **this is not a selfish love, this is a choice and commitment to seek what is God's best for you.** It is the Spirit-empowered ability to value and esteem yourself enough to turn away from near-sighted selfishness in order to discover and walk in the will of God.

Many of us have been wounded, beat up and held captive in messages of self-accusation, condemnation, rejection and shame. These judgments and inner messages have walled us up inside prisons of guilt, self-reproach and contempt. **We have come to believe that we are beyond the reach of God's love. We are hopeless cases, defeated and beyond redemption. The apostle Paul calls such messages and reasonings "strongholds" of the enemy** (2 Cor. 10:3-5). **We are to tear down all such slanderous imaginations and lies by holding high the brightness of God's amazing, far-reaching, *agapē*-love.** Those messages were purposefully designed by the enemy to keep us from experiencing God, ...to block us from knowing and being nurtured by His grace and love. The enemy knows that we will not be able to walk in *agapē*-love if we do not experientially-know the God of this love. **When we finally can clearly see the *agapē*-love of God, then we will be able to see and understand that this love covers a multitude of sins,** ...our own sins, as well as the sins of others! When *we* are set free by grace and *agapē*-love, *then* we ourselves will be able to become channels of love to others. **The Spirit will empower us to choose to prefer others, and work for their well-being, because of the *agapē*-love of God working in us.**

Peter called this the "stretched-out *agapē*-love." The word translated as "stretched-out" means "intense, zealous, far-reaching, earnest, eager, extended, fervent, constant, unfailing, and persevering". **The word picture is of someone reaching out with ready eagerness and zeal, ...and continuing to stretch forth and beckon, until the loved one is brought to safety, affirmed, comforted and cared for.** This is the stretched-out *agapē*-love of God.

The apostle Paul said that the goal (*telos*) of his instruction was *agapē*-love out from a clean heart and a good conscience and an unhypocritical faith (1 Tim. 1:5). It was the focus, the goal and the fulfillment of what he was trying to teach those who were under his care. **Peter here says that the goal has come near. It is available to us. But we must claim it. We must go after it.** We must remove the barriers, and seek it. **Peter says we must be healthy-minded.** This is a compound word from the verb for "think" with a prefix that means "healthy" or "sound". We must choose to think what is healthy. **We must choose to apply our minds to what is good and profitable, and avoid those things that are untrue, unhealthy, or that divert our attention away from what is essential.** We must build our thought life on what God says is true, ...not what the world says, or even what we may be feeling.

How can we obtain a "clean heart"? How can we find a "good conscience"? How can we have a faith that has no fear, no need to pretend? In Hebrews 10, we are told that **Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice on our behalf, ...a sacrifice that was sufficient to pay for and remove all our sins, once and for all time.** We have been set apart, sanctified to God, once for all, ...and we have been perfected by that sacrifice (vss. 10,14). Therefore, we can have confidence to come before God, through the blood of Jesus. **We can draw near with sincere hearts, hearts sprinkled clean from an evil self-conscience, based upon what He has done. We can come with full assurance of faith, knowing that every sin, failure, fault, or accusation has been nailed to that cross, ...and no one can judge us,** not even ourselves (Heb. 10:19-22; Col. 2:9-16; 1 Jn. 3:19,20). A clean heart, a good conscience, a confident faith are all based upon what Jesus did, and they are offered to us freely as a gift, to be received by faith. **The answer is in Jesus!**

There is one other caveat, ...one other barrier that keeps us from our goal of *agapē*-love. In 1 Timothy, **Paul warns against "strange teachings, ...and paying attention to stories and speculations". These are distractions.** Our world is rife with them, right now. Healthy thinking stays focused on what is real and relevant to our faith. **We need to remain clear-headed and committed to prayers to obtain and experience what God is making available to us to walk in.**