

2Peter 3:14-18 "Christ, The Resurrection And The Life"

We're going to close Peter's letter this morning as we consider his exhortation to live lives worthy of the gift of eternal life we've been given in Christ, in light of His second coming.

In our text this morning we see a repeat of verses 10 and 11, which states that since our Lord will return as judge and King and will ultimately destroy this world and its curse, we should walk before Him as our Master who does desire for us to represent Him faithfully until He comes.

But, as we see in verses 12 and 13, we should look for His second coming and be expectant of His return each day knowing that our future with Him is a sure thing and will be a new thing as He transforms this old order into new heavens and a new earth.

And so, as we come to our text this morning, Peter reminds us again that we must consider the truth of Christ's promises against the backdrop of what the world is trying to accomplish by discrediting our Lord.

Simply because the world scorns the truth of God's word, and just because there are many false teachers trying to shake our faith, we should never give up the hope of what lies before us and the word of God which clearly addresses that hope.

But, as we saw last week, if we have such a hope, which is future oriented, we need to also consider the truth of God's word which exhorts us to live holy and godly lives out of thanks for so great a gift.

2PE 3:14 "So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him."

As Peter ends this letter he ends with a note of love for the brethren. The NIV uses the phrase "dear friends." Other translations use the word "beloved". It's an endearing term which comes from the Greek *agapetos*. And it's the kind of agape love our Lord has given us in Christ. In this case, Peter lets his readers know that they are truly loved, not only by the Lord, but also by him.

And so, if there were any doubts by his readers as to his sincerity and pastoral care for them, he tells them plainly that they are truly

loved by him and he desires only their best, which is why this letter was written.

But, he exhorts them once again to look forward to the things he has been writing about, namely, Christ's sure return to this earth to rule and reign and ultimately to judge with the destruction of this world. This is essential to understand and to rejoice in because it takes our focus off of the temporal world and places it on those things which are eternal.

William Barclay makes an interesting point when he says that the doctrine of the second coming of Christ [maintains] "that life is going somewhere -- and without that conviction there is nothing to live for."

For a Christian there is everything to live for. This is exactly what Jesus was trying to convey to Martha after the death of her brother Lazarus.

JOH 11:25-26 "Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

And I guess that's the question we must continually ask ourselves. Do we believe this? If we do, then do we show the world that we believe it with lives of love and obedience to Christ? Or do our lives say something to the contrary?

To Peter this is a big deal; to look forward to this hope and live in the reality of it every day as we await our Lord's coming. And obviously this is a big deal to the Holy Spirit of God who inspired these words.

I mean look how many times Peter has used this phrase "looking forward to" in just the last three verses. Verse 12 ... "look forward to the day of God..." Verse 13 ... "looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth..." And now verse 14 ... "since you are looking forward to this..."

Peter's eyes are on the prize set before him and he realizes that it's not ultimately found in this present world. But he also realizes that because he has this prize set before him that he will not take it lightly when it comes to pursuing it. Paul gives the same teaching in 1Corinthians.

1CO 9:24-26 "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26 Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air."

There is nothing aimless about running the race with Christ as our prize, unless we don't see the race for what it is. And unless we see it, as Peter conveys it, we will always find ourselves on the side of the road as the rest of the racers pass by.

Notice that he says to "look forward to the day of Christ" as we are being diligent in walking in holiness. That's essentially what verse 14 says. "...make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him."

How do we make every effort to do such a thing? We discipline ourselves to know the truth and then to purpose to walk in that truth, knowing that it's not just a set of rules and regulations we're trying to follow, but knowing that Jesus is that truth and it is Him we are following. Christianity is about a person. Christianity is about Christ.

Unfortunately, the Church-at-large over the years has had a tendency to give the impression that Christianity is about buildings and programs and the like, when in fact it's simply about the future and how that future is obtained and held to by faith, in the present.

One future holds condemnation and judgment in being separated from God forever. The other future is being at peace with God through Christ and spending eternity with Him in the Kingdom He is preparing for us.

Everyone's future is moving in one of these two directions. And what Peter has been conveying is that our future is in Christ who died for the penalty of our sins and has given us a sure salvation which includes future promises. Now how are we going to live in light of that?

Well, he says, "make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him." This by the way, is a play on words to contrast the lives of the false teachers Peter has been warning us about.

In 2PE 2:13 we read "they are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures..." But here in our text Peter calls God's children in Christ as being spotless and blameless and at peace with God.

But when he says that we must make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him, he does not mean to suggest that we must somehow earn favor with God as it relates to earning our salvation. That could only be accomplished by the perfect blamelessness of Christ who died on our behalf.

Rather, he means to put an effort into seeking God and obeying our Lord Jesus because of our appreciation for the life He's given us and the future that goes with that life. In other words, don't think that we have no responsibility to love and obey our Lord simply because we've been given a free gift in Christ.

It is true that our spotlessness and blamelessness and peace comes from the perfect righteousness of Christ's life, death and resurrection on our behalf. But, not to walk in a blameless or spotless way is to make one wonder if we belong to a Father who is in fact all of those things and who has made us new creatures in Christ.

But, does being spotless and blameless mean being perfect? Well, we're all in trouble if it does. I know that there are holiness movements and denominations who teach that we can reach perfect sanctification in this life where we no longer sin. But they fail to realize that perfect sanctification is nothing short of glorification. And glorification takes place in glory, in the presence of Christ.

There is only one human being who is perfect and it's not me or you. It's our Lord Jesus Christ who is fully God and fully man. But we are called to be imitators of Him and since He was perfect He is the ultimate standard.

We will never come up to that standard in this present life, especially as it relates to trying to earn our salvation, but it should never cause us to throw our hands up into the air and just decide to give up on any attempt to walk in holiness or godliness, or to think that it doesn't make any difference, because it does.

But, so as to remind his readers and us, that just as we should be holy and blameless, in contrast to the false teachers who scoff at the idea of Christ's return, we should realize that He has not come back at this time for a specific reason.

2PE 3:15 "Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him."

Even as God waited patiently in the days of Noah, with the express purpose of giving time for mankind to repent, He is now being patient with men so that they might come to repentance and faith in Christ.

And so, we shouldn't become impatient because it is this extra time given by God that allows us to share with the world this glorious gospel. This means that the patience of the Lord means a holy work for us. And that is a privilege we should not take lightly.

I know that there are many in the church who would try to convince us that their particular agenda is the most important work for us today; whether it's trying to influence Washington with new laws, or making a concerted effort to spend all of our time feeding the poor and clothing the naked or even something as important as speaking out for those who cannot speak for themselves, the unborn, who are being systematically killed each day.

But, as important as all of these issues are, they are not the ultimate issue which should take the highest priority. The highest priority, as it relates to the work we've been called to do, is to bring the message of hope in Christ to the world. That doesn't mean we can't do both simultaneously. But if we neglect the eternal message with only a temporal solution then we've missed our highest calling in glorifying our Lord.

Again, it's not as though we do one or the other. It's not as though we live holy lives and then consider sharing our faith. They all go together. We must live godly lives, we must feed the poor, we must be examples to the world, we must reach out to all people to meet their needs, but we must do these things as we give them the hope Peter has been talking about.

Being fully clothed and fed, but lost forever, is not the solution. Realizing that Christ will come again and expects us to be His witness in both word and deed is what Peter is conveying. In fact, he even shares how this was Paul's message as well.

Paul spoke of the future coming of Christ and how this should affect our lives in being ambassadors for the Lord. What's interesting about Peter's mentioning of Paul is that many people

believe that this letter could not be written by Peter because he addresses Paul as our dear or beloved brother.

Remember, that there was a time in which Paul rebuked Peter publicly for being a hypocrite about his faith in Christ.

GAL 2:11-14 "When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. 12 Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. 13 The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. 14 When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

Some take this to be an irreconcilable split between these two men of God called out by Christ to be His apostles. But that's simply not the case. Each of them knew they were called to be apostles and each of them knew the other was called by Christ. To be so petty as to not allow the possibility for reconciliation is to miss what the fruit of the Spirit is all about.

It is clear that Peter did in fact know that he had done wrong and that he obviously repented of that and reconciled with Paul. And now Peter uses Paul as an example of what an apostle is, and that Christ is using him in that capacity, as Peter shows us how both of them are teaching the same message from the same God who called each.

Notice that Peter shows how Paul had received wisdom from the Lord and then wrote as the Lord led him. Paul himself speaks of this wisdom, but distinguishes it from wisdom you and I might practice in Christ.

1CO 2:6-10 "We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (Isaiah 64:4) - 10 but God has revealed it to

us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God."

What Paul is saying is that this particular wisdom given from God is a wisdom which reveals the very word of God and has been conveyed to us as such. In fact, Peter even makes that connection in verse 16 of our text.

2PE 3:16 "He (Paul) writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction."

In other words, Paul addresses the gift of salvation and its future expectations with Christ's return, along with the responsibility we have to walk with Christ faithfully until He comes again. One place we see this is when he wrote to the church in Thessalonica.

1TH 4:13-18 "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage each other with these words."

But then Paul goes on to say that with this truth in mind, and the encouragement that goes with it, live in this expectation to the glory of God.

1TH 5:4-8 "But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. 5 You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. 6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet."

And so, Peter and Paul, both apostles, both called by Christ to shepherd the church, are giving the same message as a testimony that they are receiving their revelations from the same God and Savior.

And so, Peter is essentially saying that, like the wisdom Paul receives from God, he too is also receiving revelation from God so that he might instruct the church with God's very word. And so his letters, along with Paul's letters, must be considered on an equal par with the writings of the Prophets who gave us the O.T. Scriptures.

Notice what Peter says here in verse 16. "... His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction...."

Peter is saying that there are some things which Paul writes that might be considered hard to understand. This by the way, doesn't mean that they are impossible to understand, only that sometimes we have to dig and study to show ourselves approved. I know that there are those who feel that the book of Revelation is not simply hard to understand but impossible to understand.

That simply is not the case. The Lord wrote all of His revelation, Genesis through the book of Revelation, through His prophets and apostles, that we might be informed of His will and word. He didn't write it to simply confuse us as though that was His aim. But He does write that we might diligently seek Him and meditate on what the Spirit of God has revealed.

But in any case, the point Peter is making here is that the same words which Paul writes as an apostle, which the ignorant and unstable people distort, is the same kind of inspired word which the prophets received. In other words, Paul knew he was writing Scripture for our instruction.

He knew He was writing the word of God and He knew that it was just as inspired as the O.T. Scriptures and Peter knew this as well. All of the writers of the N.T. knew they were writing on behalf of God and that this was His very word, because they knew their particular inspiration didn't come from themselves. Peter makes this clear in this very letter.

2PE 1:20-21 "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For

prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

And so, we can know for certain that both the O.T. and the N.T. Scriptures are inspired of the Holy Spirit and therefore reliable for faith and practice of the life we've been given in Christ. This is why Peter continues.

2PE 3:17 "Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position."

If you know that the word of God is sure, as it relates to your salvation and the hope we have in Christ, then don't fall prey to those who would come along and try to bring disrepute to it. And if you are being faithful to study the word of God then you will not be as likely to fall into the error the false teachers are bringing.

This is why Peter says to be on guard. The imagery is a soldier at his post watching for any intruders. There may not be an intruder anywhere in sight, but the possibility that they could suddenly appear makes one attentive at all times.

This is why we are constantly studying the word of God. When you know and understand the truth, when error comes you can recognize it, expose it and then instruct in a way that takes that error from your midst.

There's a lot of bad teaching both inside and outside the church today. We must be careful not to fall into the trap of staying infants in our faith, or not maturing in our faith, by feeding on bad spiritual food which can stunt our growth. Paul addressed this as well when talking about growing in the knowledge of the Son God.

EPH 4:14 "Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming."

And this is how Peter ends this letter.

2PE 3:18 "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen."

What Peter means to say, with the contrast between verses 17 and 18, is that those unprincipled men who are untaught and unstable

and distort the Scriptures to their own destruction, are not the ones by whom you can grow in grace.

And by the way, the phrase, as the NIV puts it, "ignorant and unstable people," is not jab at Christians who may find it difficult to grasp some of the hard teachings of God's word, but rather an indictment on the false teachers who choose not to follow the truth. They are untaught because they will not learn the truth which contradicts their agenda. And for this reason they are unstable.

As long as we're faithful to seek God's truth and abide by it, we will be neither ignorant nor unstable. We may not have all the answers to everything written in the word, but we will be willing to find the answers as we long for the pure milk of the word and by it grow in respect to salvation.

And so, Peter concludes with a doxology, a praise and worship ending to this letter, with Christ as the recipient of that praise and worship.

As we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior we will find that our desire to worship the Lord in word and deed will grow as well. I like the way Peter puts it here in verse 18.

2PE 3:18 "To him (that is Jesus Christ) be glory both now and forever! Amen."

Peter is in awe of the One who is the resurrection and the life. The One who told Peter to tend the lambs, to shepherd the sheep and to follow Him. This is the same Jesus who walked along the dusty roads of Galilee teaching and preaching about the Kingdom of God with Peter and the rest of the disciples.

And now, Peter honors Jesus as the One true God who is also Savior. Honor and glory both now and forever is reserved only for God. And Peter is teaching us here that the same Jesus who received worship from Thomas when He showed Thomas His nail prints after His resurrection, is the same Jesus who is now at the right hand of the Father full of glory.

And what we must conclude is what Peter has shown. The way, the truth and the life, who is Christ, must be our goal and our prize and the reason we look forward to the future. Don't let the scoffers and the false teachers or the enemy and the circumstances of life steal the joy of your salvation.

But keep in mind that the salvation we have in Christ today is only a down payment of what we will receive in the future. Look forward to the day of His coming, and as you do, your today will be a life which can handle the trials and tribulations and temptations that we all face, but we can face them in Christ's victory and comfort, to His honor and glory.

For all the trials Paul went through he always had his future home in mind. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Let me end with another doxology from the half-brother of Jesus, who later came to accept Him as his Lord and Savior.

JUD 1:24-25 "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy - 25 to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen."