

Letters From A Fisherman
Week 28
2 Peter 3:8-14
“While I’m Waiting”

Introduction

For we know that if our earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal dwelling in the heavens, not made with hands. Indeed, we groan in this tent, desiring to put on our heavenly dwelling, since, when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. Indeed, we groan while we are in this tent, burdened as we are, because we do not want to be unclothed but clothed, so that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now the One Who prepared us for this very purpose is God, Who gave us the Spirit as a down payment.

So we are always confident and know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the LORD. For we walk by faith, not by sight. In fact, we are confident, and we would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the LORD. Therefore, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to be pleasing to Him. **2 Corinthians 5:1-9**

As we come to the final passages of 2 Peter, I feel that it would be wise to mention something we discussed when this study began. The Apostle Paul tells us that our faith has three main “ingredients”, if you will; those being *faith*, *hope*, and *love* (**1 Corinthians 13:13**). I find it simply amazing that The Holy Spirit inspired three different apostles to represent these elements. Paul, as you may well know, has always been considered the “*faith apostle*” for the main thrust in the majority of his writings are directed toward the message of salvation by grace through faith.

For you are saved by grace through FAITH, and this not from yourselves; it is God’s gift — not of works, so that no one can boast. **Ephesians 2:8** (emphasis added)

John the apostle has long been credited with being the “*love disciple*”, for he often speaks in his writings of the love that will accompany the transformation in the Believer, when they are filled with The Holy Spirit. John was obviously paying close attention to Christ when He said that “people would know His disciples by their love one for another” (**John 13:35**). It is therefore John, the love apostle, who gives us such powerful verses in regards to the wellspring of love within each and every genuine Believer.

Dear friends, let us LOVE one another, because LOVE is from God, and everyone who LOVES has been born of God and knows God. The one who does not LOVE does not know God, because God is LOVE. **1 John 4:7-8** (emphasis added)

And finally, rounding out the group is none other than Simon Peter, the “*hope apostle*”. His letters are filled with messages of the hope we share in Christ and His return. Peter wanted every suffering Believer in this world to be constantly encouraged by the hope we have in Christ. Our use of the word hope today is much different from the word used for hope in *The New Testament*. When we speak of hope, we often say things such as “I hope my favorite football team wins the game this Sunday.” It is a word that speaks more to a wish over which we have no control.

The Biblical word for “*hope*” is “*elpis*” in the Greek, and it speaks of a confidence in something that is a guaranteed certainty. We await the return of Christ, knowing full well that He *will* in fact return. We are able to endure all things in this wicked world, for we have the calm assurance that our Savior has overcome the world, and He will set things right in due time. This is the hope that Peter speaks of again and again in his letters. So, it is no surprise that as he comes to the end of his last letter, he once again reminds us of this hope, and how we should conduct ourselves as we await the fulfillment of every one of God’s promises. So let us discuss how we must strive to please Him as we await the return of our Great King. While we’re waiting we are commanded to live in *Purity, Preparation, and Peace*. Please allow me to explain.

Purity (vs. 8-11)

Dear friends, don't overlook this one fact: With the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord does not delay his promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief; on that day the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, the elements will burn and be dissolved, and the earth and the works on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, it is clear what sort of people you should be in holy conduct and godliness...

2 Peter 3:8-11

First off, let me start by saying, this pastor is by no means an extreme Calvinist (I'm not an Armenian either). Many Calvinist interpret this passage by saying that Peter is only speaking of the "elect", when he declares that God does not want "any to perish". So they would add to the passage "...any of the *elect* to perish." There are some problems with this interpretation on its face. For the Calvinists also believe in *irresistible grace*. Therefore, it would be impossible for any of the "elect" to perish in the first place. I believe that Peter wrote exactly what The Spirit directed him to write. **For God so loved the world (John 3:16)**, that he sent His One and Only Son to die for them. And he did this because He doesn't want anyone (literally) to perish. And this is why He delays in the destruction of the wicked. God wants sinners, *all of them*, to come to repentance. He knows full well that all of them will not, but He loves with great patience nonetheless.

I believe that the Scriptures give us several glimpses into the very heart of God, and we would do well to understand them before we make assumptions about His plans and purposes. Listen to God's instruction to the prophet Ezekiel in regards to the wicked:

Tell them, 'As I live — this is the declaration of The LORD God — I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked person should turn from his way and live. Repent, repent of your evil ways! Why will you die, house of Israel?'

Ezekiel 33:10-11

Quite frankly, I believe in both predestination and freewill. And I am humble enough to stand before you and tell you today that how they work together is miles and miles above my pay grade. But rest assured, God understands His plan perfectly. And He says in His word that He doesn't want anyone to perish, so I will trust Him and take Him at His word. Our God loves, and He has commanded us to love not only those who love us, but also those who do not love us in return. And just where do we get the ability to love like that? Answer: From Him!

But in spite of His great love for fallen man, our God will keep His word when it comes to the great and terrible Day of The LORD. This world, and all those who would rebel against God, will come to a violent end. His grace provided a means of escape, but His holiness requires punishment for all who refuse His grace. Simple as that.

Therefore, as we rely on God to keep His promise, we should live accordingly. The priority of the child of God is to live like we know He is soon returning! It is so easy to become distracted by the things of this world, but we must never lose sight of the fact that this world is not going to last. Therefore, we prioritize and restructure our lives accordingly. If I am convinced with a certain hope that Christ will indeed return, and soon, then I live in a way that honors Him. For I most certainly do not wish to be ashamed at His coming.

The Believer who is anxiously awaiting the return of Christ will live in purity. The exact words that Peter uses to describe our rightful conduct are "*hagios*" (holiness) and "*eusebeia*" (godliness). We have discussed these words many times throughout this study. Holiness simply means to be set apart. We do not belong to this world. Therefore, we do not behave as it does. And godliness simply means to have the right attitude of worship for our God. In short, we do what is right, for the right reason and with the right heart motivation. We do not simply obey the law. We obey the law, because we love The God Who wrote the law. That is "*eusebeia*" (godliness). We live in the expectant hope (*elpis*) of Christ's return, and therefore, we live out what we believe in our everyday lives. Show me someone who lives as if Christ will never return, and I will show you someone who is not really a true born again Believer, for the Believer proves out his faith by living in purity until Jesus comes for him.

Preparedness (vs. 12-13)

...as you wait for the day of God and hasten its coming. Because of that day, the heavens will be dissolved with fire and the elements will melt with heat. But based on His promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. **2 Peter 3:12-13**

If we are truly living as though Christ can and will return at any moment, then naturally we will live in anticipation of His coming. The only people who look toward the return of Christ with any sense of dread are those who are not prepared for His return. But if we are living in holiness and godliness then, of course, we have nothing to fear. In fact, Peter says that we are to “*hasten the day of His coming*”. This can be interpreted in a couple of different ways.

The first explanation for “*hasten its coming*” is simply the fact that as those who love Christ, we anxiously anticipate His return. And of course, when our priorities of this life are truly in order, a great longing to see our Savior face to face and to be eternally in His presence should outweigh any other consideration. This is why we are commanded in The LORD’S prayer to ask:

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. **Matthew 6:10** (KJV)

As Believers, we long for the day when everything will be made right and The King of kings reigns upon the earth the same as He reigns in heaven. As it stands now, the prince of this world is none other than Satan himself, and one needn’t look very far to see what a disaster he has made of things. But a time is coming when he shall be bound, and Christ will reign (**Revelation 20**). So, as John the apostle would proclaim, **“Even so, come LORD Jesus!”** (**Revelation 22:20 - KJV**).

Yet another way that we can “*hasten The LORD’S coming*” is to be about the work of the great commission. I firmly believe that God knows everyone who is going to come to faith, therefore, we should be about the work of Christ’s command to go and make disciples (**Matthew 28:16-20**). For when all who are going to be reached have been reached, then God will call us to Himself. We are part of God’s eternal plan for this world, and therefore, we must be about our Father’s business.

I hear so many people these days complaining about the shape our country is in. They think they can solve this world’s problems with politics. But they are sadly mistaken. There is only one hope for the wickedness that is so prevalent all around us, and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Would that we could be less political and more spiritual! If you want the world to change, become a witness not a politician. To be prepared for Christ’s return is to be doing the things He has commanded of us while we wait.

It is also important for us to see two distinctions in Peter’s word usage in this passage. He speaks of “*The Day of The LORD*” (**vs.10**) and “*The Day of God*” (**vs.12**). These are two separate and distinct things. The *Day of the LORD* speaks of the time when God will destroy the wicked along with the earth upon which they dwell. *The Day of God* speaks of the time of peace and righteousness that will occur when all evil is vanquished and Christ reigns in glory. As Christians, we understand that both “days” are rapidly approaching. We feel sorrowful for those who will perish at The LORD’S return, and yet, joyful at the promise of our LORD making all things new. This bittersweet reality is described perfectly by John the apostle as he is given the revelation of what is to come at the end of all things.

So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, “Take and eat it; it will be bitter in your stomach, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.” Then I took the little scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it. It was as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I ate it, my stomach became bitter. And they said to me, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings.” **Revelation 10:9-11**

To live in preparedness for the return of Christ is to realize that for the Believer it will be a time of great joy.

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of The LORD’s glory, as the water covers the sea. **Habakkuk 2:14**

This verse speaks of the “*Day of God*”. But for those who refuse to believe, The “*Day of The LORD*” will be a great terror of which none will escape. So we must be about the business of witnessing in order that we may hasten the day of His coming!

Peace (vs. 14)

Therefore, dear friends, while you wait for these things, make every effort to be found without spot or blemish in his sight, at peace. **Peter 3:14**

So, because we have this hope in Christ, we “make every effort” to live as though He could return at any moment. His coming, and our being called to Him is our priority in life. For as Peter has so eloquently stated, everything we own in this world will eventually be incinerated. I once saw a bumper sticker that read, “He who dies with the most toys... wins.” It should actually have read, “He who dies with the most toys wins... *nothing*.” The things that this world values are temporary, but the things that matter to the child of God are eternal, and it is in those things, that we place our hope and for which we eagerly await.

Jesus is coming back, in this we have an assured hope. And when He returns, Peter wants Christ to find us unashamed at His coming. This means that not only will we be found living in purity and all preparedness, but also at *peace*. The word for peace in *The New Testament* is “*eirene*” (pronounced i-ray'-nay), and it is from this word that we derive the English “*serenity*”.

Many scholars have debated exactly what Peter meant as he encouraged those in the first century church to be at “peace”, when Christ returned. Did he mean, at peace with God through the reconciliation that Christ offered upon the cross? Or did he mean at peace with one another? For we are to be recognized by the world as Believers by the manner in which we love one another. Or did he possibly mean that we should trust in Christ fully, and therefore, enjoy the peace that passes all understanding due to the hope that we possess?

I would beg to argue that it is actually all of these at once, for to be born again is to be at peace with God, reconciled to Him eternally by grace through faith. And once we have been born again, we learn to live with one another in peace and harmony, for we have The Spirit Who teaches us to love our neighbor as ourselves. And finally, to be born again is to obtain the hope that Peter so marvelously speaks of in these epistles of our faith. We are at peace knowing that all things will most certainly work together for the good of those who love God and have been called according to *His* purpose (**Romans 8:28**). It is this wondrous inheritance of peace that enabled the Apostle Paul to exclaim:

I know how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content — whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. I am able to do all things through Him Who strengthens me. **Philippians 4:12-13**

It is when our faith reaches these heights that we can truly say that we are at... peace. May our LORD find us thus while we are waiting for His return.

Now may The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of The Holy Spirit. **Romans 15:13**

Now may all who live with this great *hope* declare with one voice... **TRUTH!!!**