

Letters From A Fisherman
Week 29 (Finale)
2 Peter 3:14-18
“While I’m Waiting (Part 2)”

Introduction

Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witness surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

As we come to the end of our study entitled, “*Letters From A Fisherman*”, covering **1 and 2 Peter**, we have received a wealth of information as to how we are to live as we await the return of our LORD Jesus. So many times we allow ourselves to become distracted by things that have no eternal value whatsoever. We live in a materialistic society bent upon immediate self-gratification at any cost. And if we are not careful, we can find ourselves chasing after the same emptiness this world lives for. This doesn’t mean that Christians are to become stoics, who cannot enjoy life for fear to do so it may be sinful. But rather, it means that we learn to keep the proper balance. Always mindful of the fact that this life is not all there is.

I think my favorite phrase in all of Peter’s writings is **“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind...” (1 Peter 1:13 KJV)**. As we have discussed this mindset many times throughout this study, it is good to be reminded once more that we are to live as pilgrims on a journey to the promised land. Therefore, we must have our minds set and ready to depart at any moment. To live for the ever expectant return of Christ is to reorder our priorities, so that what we desire is also what He desires of us! After all, if you knew for sure that Christ would return this coming Friday, exactly how would this change the way that you live this, your final week, on earth? And *that* my friends is how the Christian should live ever day of their lives!

Peter knew when he wrote his final letter that his time was at an end. But rather than use what little time he had left to contemplate his coming demise, he chose to prepare others for the return of Christ. For it is the saint of God, who longs to not only see the face of Jesus, but that everyone around him behold this same glorious visage for themselves. We are here to be His witnesses, to share His love, mercy, and grace with all who would hear. Peter’s priorities were in order. He knew the difference between the temporal and the eternal, and he lived to leave a legacy of faith behind him.

I want you to imagine, if you will this morning, your own funeral service. Yes, I know that for many this seems to be a morbid direction to go! But what will the people at your funeral have to say about you? That you lived for pleasure and knew how to party? That you amassed a great fortune to be fought over by those advantaged enough to inherit your earthly estate? Or will people say that they came to Christ as a result of your testimony? When The Day of The LORD comes at last, will your treasures endure or will they be burned up?

Don’t store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don’t break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:19-21

So, in his parting words to the scattered and persecuted church, Peter gives one last message of hope and encouragement, as well as a warning to any who would be led astray by those who would pervert Scripture to suit their own selfish desires. Many a sincere, and yet careless, soul has been led away by the false teacher, who views them as mere merchandise, rather than lost souls needing salvation.

They will exploit (make merchandise of) you in their greed with made-up stories.

2 Peter 2:3 (illumination added)

So before Peter goes to his own final reward, he gives us all this parting wisdom. *Prepare, Protect and Proclaim, and Persevere!* For Christ is coming soon. Please allow me to explain.

Prepare (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. **2 Peter 3:14**

We touched on this verse last time, especially the part about being at peace when Christ returns, but it is important that when He comes, He will find us doing as He has commanded us. There are approximately one hundred separate commands that Jesus gave in *The New Testament* recorded in the four gospels. And He plainly says, **“If you love Me, you will obey My commands” (John 14:15)**. Sadly, there are many who call themselves Believers that have no idea what those commands actually are!

Peter admonished the first century church (and us) to **“make every effort to be found without spot or blemish..” (vs 14)**. The Greek word that he used “*spoudazo*” carries with it the idea of striving to the point of exertion. In other words, we are to work hard at being all that Christ has commanded of us, giving our all to be found pleasing in His sight when He returns. Peter admonishes Believers to be found “without spot or blemish”, which is meant to draw a sharp contrast between those who believe and the false teachers whom he references as being “spots and blemishes” (**2 Peter 2:13**).

The *Bible* is clear that we are to live as a holy people.

But as The One Who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct, for it is written, ‘Be holy because I am holy.’ If you appeal to the Father Who judges impartially according to each one’s work, you are to conduct yourselves in reverence during your time living as strangers. For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb. **1 Peter 1:15-19**

Now, I realize that none of us will achieve spotless perfection so long as we live here on earth. However, it is spotless perfection that we must strive to the point of exertion (*spoudazo*) to achieve! Show me a Believer who does not strive for holiness, and I will show you someone who doesn’t understand the nature of their calling and redemption. To be “saved” is to be delivered from sin’s power over us. Therefore, we have no excuses when it comes to living a redeemed lifestyle. We must do all that we can, relying on the power of The Spirit and The Word to transform us into the image of Christ.

And at the risk of sounding like a broken record, in order to obey the commands of Christ, we must first KNOW the commands of Christ. That is why Peter admonished us to **“grow in the knowledge of The LORD” (2 Peter 1:2,5; 3:18)**. That is why he uses the word “to know” or “knowledge” so many times in his writings. It is the knowledge of The LORD that teaches us how we are to obey Him. And it is not enough just to simply know The Word, we must also come to know The God of The Word, if we are to grow! Christ has called us to a relationship, not a mere religion.

So, as we wait for Him we must make every effort to prepare ourselves for His coming. For no one who knows Him would ever wish to be a disappointment to Him. Our priority is to serve Him faithfully.

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. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. **2 Corinthians 5:7-10**

To be prepared for His return is to be living according to His will, without spot or blemish in His sight, at peace. And there is nothing more peaceful, my friends, than knowing you are in the center of God's will.

How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathway with sinners or sit in the company of mockers! Instead, his delight is in The LORD'S instruction, and he meditates on it day and night. He is like a tree planted beside flowing streams that bears its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. **Psalms 1:1-3**

Protect and Proclaim (vs. 15-16)

Also, regard the patience of our LORD as salvation, just as our dear brother Paul has written to you according to the wisdom given to him. He speaks about these things in all his letters. There are some things hard to understand in them. The untaught and unstable will twist them to their own destruction, as they also do with the rest of the Scriptures. **2 Peter 3:15-16**

I love this passage! First, Peter reminds them of what he had written earlier, the reason that God seems slow in punishing the wicked and rescuing the faithful is because He wants to save as many as who will believe! This is why we are to share the good news of Christ while we still have breath in our lungs. It is why Peter kept preaching and teaching right up to the very end, as did all the other apostles, for one of the many commands of Christ can be found in **Matthew 28**:

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of The Father, and of The Son, and of The Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. **Matthew 28:19-20**

We are still here, because God has given us time to make disciples! This is what Peter means when he tells us that we must **"regard the patience of our LORD as salvation..."** We must continue to work while we are living in this the age of God's grace, for when Christ appears, our task will be ended.

Peter continued by referencing Paul's writings on this very subject. I cannot help but wonder if the main "letter" he is referring to is Paul's earlier correspondence with the church in Rome (**Romans**). No doubt, all of Peter's audience would have been familiar with this particular writing. And there are most definitely some very difficult passages written in The Book of *Romans*! Remember that Paul was the "faith" apostle, and many in Paul's day twisted his words to say that since we are saved by grace through faith, and not works, then it really doesn't matter how a person lives. Nothing could have been further from Paul's intent, but this is exactly the kind of false teaching that those who pervert the Scriptures are wont to do.

Peter warns us to be on guard for these imposters within the church. They are, in his words, **“untaught and unstable”**, taking things they do not comprehend and using them to their own advantage. The word that Peter used translated *“twisting”* in the CSB is actually a word used to describe the treatment one would receive by being tortured upon the rack, a medieval device used to stretch and contort malefactors in intense pain. What a perfect picture of how the false teacher contorts and *“tortures”* The Word of God! They twist its true meaning until it is no longer recognizable.

Peter also confirmed for us that the writings of Paul are in and of themselves, *“Scripture”* inspired by the Spirit just as *The Old Testament* writings of Moses and the prophets (**vs. 16**). I find it astounding how wonderfully affirming Peter is of Paul’s ministry and teachings. After all, this is the same Paul who once rebuked Peter for being a hypocrite, when he distanced himself from Gentile Believers (**Galatians 2:11-21**). Peter, being a true follower of Christ, obviously accepted Paul’s rebuke with grace and held no hard feelings against God’s ambassador to the Gentiles. For here, he refers to him as *“our dear brother”*. Agape love forgives all (**1 Corinthians 13**), and Peter loved and regarded Paul as the brother in Christ that he was. We could learn much from his example.

So, in order to be what God has called us to be, we must preserve, and defend the truths of Scripture, and have no regard for those who would torture and twist it to their own ends. To be honest, there are more preachers out there doing so than we could even imagine. The so-called *“prosperity gospel”* is neither prosperous, nor gospel. It only serves to elevate those who would *“make merchandise of us”*. God’s Word must be honored and preserved by His church, who are awaiting his return. We must unapologetically protect and proclaim the Word of Truth.

Persevere (vs. 17-18)

Therefore, dear friends, since you know this in advance, be on your guard, so that you are not led away by the error of lawless people and fall from your own stable position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. 2 Peter 3:17-18

The *Bible* teaches us that in the last days there will be a great falling away from the faith (**2 Thessalonians 2:3**). I used to believe that meant the world would fall into utter nihilism, rejecting any religious belief whatsoever. And while this may be true to some extent, I find as I grow older and hopefully a bit wiser, I actually understand this truth better. People will not, by and large, abandon religion, they will abandon Christian doctrine in favor of something they like better. Paul spoke of this watered down self-serving faith in his correspondence with Timothy.

Preach The Word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths. 2 Timothy 4:2-4

For you see, we have any number of so-called preachers talking about *“Jesus”* these days. But sadly, their version of Christ doesn’t line up with the Jesus of The Scriptures. Theirs is an idol of their own making, just as pagans in *The Old Testament* times carved gods for themselves out of wood and stone. A person who claims to follow this *“manufactured Jesus”* is just as much a pagan as those who would worship Baal, or Zeus, or Buddha. For a plastic imitation faith is no faith at all. So we, as Believers, must know what we believe, and in Whom we believe, so that we will not be led astray.

I have personally witnessed during my years in ministry, many people walking away from the faith, simply because they do not like hearing truth. They prefer something that appeals more to their own fleshly desires. So they seek out preachers who make them feel better about themselves.

I recently heard a song on Christian radio which said in essence, "God loves me just as I am and He wouldn't change a thing." What?! *That is the most ridiculous nonsense that I ever heard.* God does most certainly love you, for *The Bible* says that **"while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"** (**Romans 5:8**). But make no mistake, my friends, while God loves you, He most certainly intends to change you! He wants to remake you in the image of His One and Only Son. And that absolutely requires us to be changed. It's called "sanctification", and The Holy Spirit begins that work in us the instant we say yes to Jesus. So, as Peter says, be on your guard. Just because someone labels something as *Christian* doesn't necessarily make it so!

So, how then can we insure that we are not led astray, that we will be able to discern the false from the truth? Peter tells us one last time at the close of his final letter: We must grow in the grace and Knowledge of our LORD! To know Him and to know His Word is the recipe for growth. A counterfeit is so easy to spot, when you are familiar with the real thing. So don't look for a church that always tells you what you want to hear. Find one that teaches God's Word unapologetically, for that... is a place where you can grow. And growth is the key to perseverance in the faith!

Our LORD is coming back for us. So we are to *gird up the loins of our mind* in preparation for our journey to the promised land. We must protect and proclaim the Word of God, sharing the gospel of grace for our God is allowing time for sinners to repent. And finally, we must persevere in the faith, not allowing false doctrine to sway us from the path of truth. We are able to do all of these things by growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ Jesus! So, as we come to the conclusion of this study, I leave you with the doxology of a fisherman whom Christ conformed to be a "fisher of men". And his parting words to us:

To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.

2 Peter 3:18

And let the redeemed, who wait for His coming, all say... **TRUTH!!!**