

"Living for the Promise" – 2 Peter 3:11-18

This morning, Lord willing, we're going to finish our exploration of 2 Peter. As I've reminded you fairly often, 2 Peter has been given to warn us about dangers that lurk from within the Church. Not everybody who claims to be a Christian teacher will tell you the truth about Jesus Christ. Paul tells us:

... evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. (2 Timothy 3:13)

And the Apostle John informs us:

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. (1 John 2:19)

Truth matters. We Christians need to test every teaching. We need to be discerning. And we need to ...

... contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 1:3)

The gospel is all about Jesus, so, it is not surprising that false teachers always attack some aspect of Jesus or some aspect of Jesus' work. And Peter has been warning us of scoffers who will try to get us to doubt the promise of Jesus' return.

"Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." (2 Peter 3:4)

If Satan can get you to doubt the promise of His coming, then Satan can get you to focus on the here and now. "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you die," he says. "You need to get all you can get right now, because this life is all that counts. You need to live your best life right now."

The truth is, Jesus Christ is coming back. This world system is on a collision course with judgment.

And ... the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. (2 Peter 3:10)

That is a promise from the word of God. That is a promise given to us by the God who cannot lie. It is not a matter of if ... it is a matter of when.

As Christians, we must not doubt the promise of God. We need to conduct our lives informed by that promise. We need to be living for the promise.

Well, what does that look like? What are the practical implications of living for the promise of Christ's coming? Peter poses that question as he wraps up this second epistle:

Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? (2 Peter 3:11-12)

As we look at our text this morning, I think you will find five practical exhortations ... five characteristics of an eternal mindset ... five things that define what manner of persons we need to be as believers in Jesus Christ. We need to be ...

1. Looking forward to our perfection.

2. We need to be found in peace and at peace.
3. We need to understand that God's long suffering, God's delay in bringing judgment on this world is exactly what brings salvation to us.
4. We need to beware of losing our focus.
5. And we need to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Let's look a little closer at each of these aspects of living for the Promise. First of all, we need to conduct our current lives while looking forward to our perfection. Verse 14 begins:

Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, (2 Peter 3:14a)

What things? Well, the coming Day of God, principally. When Jesus comes again, it will not be as a suffering servant. It will be as a conquering King. The dead in Christ will rise first.

Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

We're talking resurrection. These bodies of death must be replaced. Your body is not suited for eternity. You know that. The body you have now is subject to disease and death. Worse yet, it has this horrible sin nature. Your redeemed soul wants to be obedient to Christ, but your flesh wars against the law of your mind. (Romans 7:23)

Jesus is going to deliver us from these bodies of death! We are going to get resurrected bodies that will be absolutely free from sin, bodies that won't age, bodies that will never die, bodies that will be perfectly adapted for the new heavens and the new earth in which righteousness dwells.

The Day of the Lord is going to be a day of horrendous judgment.

For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:16-17)

Living for the promise involves a clear understanding of what things will perish, and what things will last forever. We need to invest in those things which will last forever. We need to invest in seeking out and doing the will of God. We need to be looking forward to our perfection.

Secondly, we need to be found in peace and we need to be found at peace. Looking at verse 14 again:

Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; (2 Peter 3:14)

How can we be found without spot? How can we be found blameless? Only by finding our life in Jesus Christ. *Sola Fide!* By faith alone. We need to be found in peace. We need to demonstrate the peace that passes understanding.

I have to tell you, born-again Christians struggle with this. I struggle with this. Let me ask you a question: Do you believe the Bible when it says ...

... we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

Do you believe it? Then why, oh why, do we Christians spend so much of our time being so agitated?

When you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord, when you confess your sins and trust that Jesus died to pay for them, when you believe He was raised from the dead so that you can have a living relationship with Him, you make peace with the Creator of the universe. You are no longer at war with God. You have been redeemed. You are a citizen of the heavenly city, the kingdom of God. And as Paul so eloquently stated:

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

That really ought to give us some peace of mind! So be found at peace!

Jesus made sure that He left a record, telling us exactly what we could expect from this world as the Day of Christ draws near.

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Among the Christian community, there is so much anxiety, so much agitation and so much hand-wringing over the state of our culture. And listen, it is absolutely okay to be grieved for the souls that are perishing. We should be doing whatever we can to rescue them! We want others to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, but why would anyone want to be like a grumpy, angry Christian?

Let us not act as if there is any chance that the devil is going to win, folks. In the world, there will be tribulation, but Jesus has overcome the world. We can be of good cheer. We can be found in peace ... and at peace because of what Jesus has already accomplished. He won! It is a done deal. If you are found in Him, you are on the winning side.

And what has He accomplished? Our salvation!

... and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation (2 Peter 3:15)

Have you ever wondered why God puts up with such foolishness on Earth? "What's taking Him so long?" you might ask. "Why doesn't He just judge the world and get it over with?" Well listen, if Jesus had come back before 1972, I'd be in hell right now. I would be toasting and roasting! I'm really glad God was patient enough to wait until I came to saving faith!

If God wasn't longsuffering, every one of us would have been smoked the first time we committed an act of rebellion against Him.

The wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23)

God would be perfectly justified in sending every sinner to hell, but instead, He provided an alternative. He offers a plea agreement. "Let Jesus pay the penalty instead and I'll impute His righteousness to your account," He says." All you have to do is believe. All you have to do is accept Christ's sacrifice by faith."

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

God is longsuffering. God is putting up with the most heinous rebellion for the sake of the elect.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

We should understand this, because it has been recorded in Scripture.

... and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. (2 Peter 3:15-16)

Now this is a parenthesis. Peter is turning away from the subject to add an explanation. Apparently, some of the false teachers of Peter's day had twisted the words of Paul. Peter admits that some of Paul's writings were hard to understand. It's true ... you could spend a lifetime trying to mine the depths of spiritual wisdom found in Romans, or Ephesians, or any of Paul's epistles. But the devil has been twisting scripture since the garden. He uses untaught and unstable people to do so even today.

But isn't it interesting that Peter, in the First Century, placed Paul's words, Paul's writings at the same level of authority as the rest of Scripture? "... as they do the rest of scripture," he says. Peter certainly considered Paul's letters to be inspired.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Don't be surprised when false teachers quote scripture to support their heresy. It's their favorite trick. It's the devil's favorite trick. Look beyond their proof-texting. Be sure you are yielding to the full-counsel of God's word. And don't get too flipped out over the evil we see among unbelievers, because God's longsuffering is salvation.

You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; (2 Peter 3:17)

Peter has warned us about false teachers who masquerade as Christians. John has warned us about false teachers who came out of the visible Church. Paul warned us that people will gather teachers who will scratch their itching ears and turn folks from the truth to fables. (2 Timothy 4:3-4) Jude warned us to contend for the faith because ungodly men have crept in and turned God's grace to lewdness and deny our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus warned us that false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive the elect, if that were possible. (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22) You have been warned!

You know deceivers will come. You know deceivers are here. They crawl out of your television sets like so many cockroaches; they creep out of your computer monitors; their lies can be heard on so-called Christian radio shows; they line the bookshelves of Christian book sellers. And sadly, they occupy far too many pulpits in Christian churches throughout the world.

Beware, folks! Be wary. Approach every teaching with a bit of skepticism and test every teaching by the truth of God's word. Don't be led away with the error of the wicked. Don't fall from your own steadfastness. Don't let false teachers seduce you with lewdness. Don't let them entice you with the stuff and junk of this world.

Stick closely to the simple truth of the Gospel. Commit yourself to fervent prayer. Commit yourself to serious Bible study and become saturated by the pure truth of God's word. Don't neglect the *koinonia* – the fellowship of fellow believers. It is so important that we meet together. It is so important that we worship together. It is so important that

we study together. It is so important that we hold one another accountable. It is so important that we support one another, because we are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Praise God if you have trusted Jesus Christ alone for your salvation but then continue to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling! (Philippians 2:12)

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

Verse 18 sums it all up:

but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen. (2 Peter 3:18)