

Final Exhortations

2 Peter 3:14-18

Rev. 21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God."

That's our eternal salvation, our eternal home. And we shall be the bride, beautifully dressed for her husband. Jesus Christ will be the bridegroom. And God will live with us. For ever and ever.

That's what we are looking forward to, isn't it? In the words of Peter which we studied last week, "we...look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."

We're looking forward to a new home.

There is an obvious application of that. I hope that you can sense what it is even before I identify it from the final verses of Peter's second letter. Since we're looking forward to a new home, the home of righteousness, it stands to reason that we ought to be practicing righteousness in our present homes! Since we will be spending eternity in the home of righteousness, it makes perfect sense that we ought to pursue that righteousness now.

The main subject of this whole book has been the day of the Lord, the day of his judgment and second coming in glory. Peter

has condemned the false prophets and pronounced their judgment. But Peter's final applications, his final exhortations, are not based upon the certain destruction of the ungodly. Instead, they are based upon the assurance that God's true people will be made perfect in glory. Because of that promise, we should seek to be blameless in the way that we live here and now.

This is so important, because it addresses the issues of motivation. Motivation for holiness and godliness. Motivation that is anything but legalistic or self-righteousness works salvation. Motivation that is anything but simplistic or shallow, anything but emotional manipulation. This is real stuff, for every one of you struggles with sin. As I do. We need this motivation.

The exhortation is simple, and listen to it with all its simplicity.

I. AS YOU AWAIT YOUR ETERNAL SALVATION, BE BLAMELESS IN THE WAY YOU LIVE.

v.14 "Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things..."

"Since you are looking forward to this..." What a glorious motivator. Since you are looking forward to the new heaven and new earth, since you are looking forward to the fulfillment of God's promises regarding our salvation, since you are looking forward to the eternal fulfillment of those promises, since you are looking forward to heaven, be blameless in the way you live.

I'll say it again, and again. It is NOT, "Be blameless so that you can look forward to going to heaven." That's works salvation, and it's a curse, because you could never be blameless enough. Never perfect. Your life is not the ground upon which you are permitted to enter heaven. Jesus is!

But since Jesus invites you to heaven, since he has prepared

a place in heaven for you, be blameless in the way you live.

Peter puts it in the form of an exhortation.

v.14 "...be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless."

Be diligent. We've seen that word before.

2Pet. 1:10 "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure."

The same root word is found in,

2Pet. 1:5 "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness."

Make every effort.

The word is found again in,

Heb.6:11 "And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

Diligence is a biblical value. Hard work. And if you fail to realize that the quest for godliness is hard work, you are terribly deceived. It is extremely hard work, because the human heart is desperately wicked!

The point is,

A. Work hard in your walk with God.

This is such a delicate balance, and I tread on dangerous waters every time I bring this subject up, because I do not want to lead you into self-reliance. I do not want to encourage your self-

satisfied self-righteousness. Just the opposite. I want to crush those things, for you can do none of this apart from Christ.

But I don't want to encourage spiritual laziness either. I don't want the gospel of God's grace to give you a moment to think that you can go on happily in your sin.

Work hard in your walk with God, to put sin to death. "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."

As you await your eternal salvation, make every effort to be found blameless in the way you live. Specifically,

B. Strive for the purity which brings God's approval.

That's what it means to be blameless. Peter uses two synonyms, also using the word "spotless." Ultimately, it means without sin, and though none of us will obtain that level of perfection while we still live in this present age, still the exhortation is valid. Strive for purity. Work hard to be spotless.

Actually, Peter says, to be found spotless. To be found by Jesus to be spotless and blameless. To be found by him at peace, with a clear conscience.

Jesus, of course, is the one who is entirely spotless and blameless. He is the "lamb without blemish or defect," according to 1 Peter 1:19. And so the exhortation is to make every effort to become like Jesus, so that he would grant you the approval of his favor.

v.14

Now, God alone can accomplish this in us, hence the great benediction found in,

1Ths. 3:12 “And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, 13 so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.”

These things are not the least bit contradictory. The benediction and the exhortation fit together perfectly. I will pronounce the benediction, even as we would pray, “that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.”

I will also proclaim the exhortation to “...be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.”

There is one absolutely essential aspect in that effort you make. You must believe God. You must believe the Bible. Thus the exhortation,

II. AS YOU AWAIT YOUR ETERNAL SALVATION, ACCEPT GOD’S TRUTH IN YOUR HEART.

Peter speaks of the truth of the Scriptures in,

v.15-16

Peter first mentions,

A. The truth of salvation from God.

Referring back to his explanation of why the judgment has been delayed, he writes,

v.15

Our Lord’s patience means salvation. Our Lord’s longsuffering

forbearance means salvation. Remember,

2Pet. 3:8 “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 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.”

Peter is likely quoting Paul here also, from,

Romans 2:4 “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”

Christ puts off the day of his coming because he has a concern for our salvation. God’s kindness, his patience, means that more people have the opportunity to come to repentance. And more people are.

v.15

Peter aligns himself with Paul, joining with him in the ranks of the apostles. And he speaks of,

B. The truth of wisdom from God.

Now, in an apostolic sense, wisdom from God means inspiration. It means they wrote as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit, writing the very words of God. And so Peter refers to,

C. The truth of the Scriptures.

v.16

Peter is saying several things in that verse. First, there is no contradiction between what he writes and what Paul writes. Among the apostles, in the writing of Scripture, there are no differences. No contradictions.

Now, I'm not exactly sure what Peter is referring to when he mentions that Paul's "letters contain some things that are hard to understand." Actually, I find more things in Peter hard to understand, since Paul is generally so rational and logical. You might not want to accept what Paul says, but usually he is pretty painfully straightforward.

But Peter's point is that you need to read what Paul has written with a clear and teachable mind. Those things which are hard to understand may well be hard to understand because of personal prejudices. As Peter says, "untaught and unstable people distort" them.

Peter is again taking to task the false teachers, those who distort the words of Scripture. Those who are willfully ignorant, and refuse to learn. Those who are unstable in their profession of faith.

But the real important part of that verse is the reference to the "Scriptures." By the time of Peter's writing, there was already an established, accepted category of writing called the Scriptures, a word which means "that which is written." The obvious implication is that the word was used exactly as it is today, as a designation of inspired writings. A title for the Bible. Indeed, when Jesus would quote the Scriptures of the OT, he would often begin with the words, "It is written."

Even by Peter's time, there were books accepted by the church as part of the canon, belonging to what was called the 'Scriptures.' Peter includes himself in the list of authors, and no doubt has reference to the OT Scriptures as well. Actually, Peter is here putting the writings of Paul on the same level as the writings of the OT. He is obviously conscious of God's work of inspiration and that his letters are God's revelation.

How devastating it is to realize how many people today have rejected the divine origin and authority of the Scriptures. "To their own destruction." And so I will reinforce to you that while you await your eternal salvation, you must accept God's truth in your heart, God's truth which is revealed by the words and pages of the Scriptures.

With that foundation, Peter then says,
v.17

The simple exhortation is to reject error.

III. AS YOU AWAIT YOUR ETERNAL SALVATION, REJECT ERROR.

Reject what is untrue. Reject what contradicts Scripture. But that, too, takes effort. So Peter says, "Beware."

A. Be on guard against lawless men. v.17

How easy it is to be carried away by error, especially error that sounds good and sounds a lot like the truth. Such are the ways of Satan, the father of lies. How clever he is, to masquerade his lies with the appearance of truth.

Be on guard. Do keep close company with the false teachers. Don't listen to them out of curiosity. Stay away. They are lawless men. As Peter has already stated,

2 Peter 2:18 "For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. 19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by

him also he is brought into bondage.”

So many people promise freedom. They promise success, prosperity. And they reduce the demands of God’s law, carrying away those who are unstable and vulnerable. And they cause many people to fall.

Note the ending of,
v.17

Now, that “steadfastness” from which they fell does not mean the fullness of salvation. The secure position was not the position of regeneration and the assurance of salvation. Rather, the secure position is the stability of being established in the faith. So,

B. Be on guard against spiritual instability.

Clearly, many people who profess Jesus Christ are yet unstable, vulnerable, easily enticed. Especially by the promises of freedom, freedom from the obligations of the law. Freedom from the apparent restrictions which the Bible places upon the people of God.

Untaught and unstable people distort the Scriptures, don’t they? Then and now. Ignorant and unstable people are subject to fall. To leave Christ behind. To give up all profession of faith. To fall from their secure position.

Be on guard against such spiritual instability, that you might become firmly established in the faith. This warning and this exhortation ought not to cause you to fear for your own salvation or to doubt the assurance of it, but it should stir you up out of laziness and spiritual idleness. The warning is appropriately given to all who would wish to remain comfortable in that lethargy,

those who wish to remain inactive and un-alert in the face of daily spiritual issues and battles.

Be on guard against spiritual instability, and to speak of that in a positive manner,

IV. AS YOU AWAIT YOUR ETERNAL SALVATION, GROW IN GRACE.

This is how Peter ends his letter. Grow in grace.
v.18

What does it mean to grow in grace? Simply this, that you advance in your spiritual maturity and increase in your experience of the grace of God to change the way that you live. It means that your relationship with God grows deeper and deeper with each passing year, that the maturity of that relationship grows more and more intimate and personal. It means that you become stable, strong and steadfast.

It means that both your life and your doctrine are kept pure, that you are rather successful making every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

But most of all, it means that you,

A. Grow in the knowledge of God.

v.18a

We’re back to where we started in this book.

2Pet. 1:2 “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”

So let me ask you a direct question, and I want you to consider this question deeply, as an issue of your own heart. Are

you growing in grace? Are you growing in the knowledge of God?

Are you growing in the knowledge of God's character, his attributes, his purposes, his revealed will? Are you growing in your understanding and appreciation of his self-revelation given in Scripture?

Are you growing in the knowledge of his love? Do you remember how Paul prayed for his people,

Eph. 3:17 "...that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height-- 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Is that prayer being answered in your life? Are you gaining power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ?

What if the answer is "no?" Then heed these exhortations. Make every effort to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Make every effort to get to know God better, as he reveals himself in the pages of Scripture.

And what is the necessary effort? Read the Bible. Read about God. Think about what you read. Meditate upon it and memorize it. There are no shortcuts to obtaining the knowledge of God.

And pray. Pray diligently, to the one who hears you. To the one who has made you.

Also study. Find good teaching and place yourself under it.

Study the Bible. Read what others have to say. Listen to teaching whenever there is opportunity.

Oh, I invite you with every sermon I preach and every Bible study I teach, come to know God. Come to know him deeply. And personally. Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And,

B. Grow in the worship of God.

Peter ends with a doxology, a blessing.

v.18b "To him be glory both now and forever! AMEN."

Growing in the knowledge of God means, by definition, that you participate in worship. More and more. With fervor and interest.

Ascribing to him glory now. As you look forward to ascribing him glory forever.

We get so sidetracked these days, thinking about worship. And we think of ourselves, our own interests and pleasures. We think about our own benefit and enjoyment. And those thoughts ought to be the last thing on our minds.

Think of God. Of his glory and goodness. And sing his praise with your voices and with your hearts. All of this, as you await your eternal salvation.

The question again, "Are you growing in the worship of God?" Does worship take a priority in your life? Now, it must, or you wouldn't be here this morning. But are you here, just out of duty or obligation? Are you sort of begrudging the intrusion church in an otherwise busy day?

Or is this simply the most enjoyable and most delightful thing that you could possibly be doing?

Grow in the worship of God, letting your whole life sing as a doxology of praise. Let these words be the natural overflow of the thoughts and intentions of your hearts. "To him be glory both now and forever."

I often fear that is not the case. I often fear that our busyness in the things that are of secondary importance intrudes on that which is of first importance.

And so the exhortation is so timely. "Grow in grace." Advance in your knowledge of God and in the experience of worshipping him. Persevere in your faith by moving forward, not stopping to sit down in the middle of the journey.

Again the application is for each one of you. Make every effort on your part to do these things, even as you pray to God to grant you such strength.

I'll end where I began, with a description of our eternal home, our eternal salvation. Meditate deeply upon this description, and as you do, draw near to God in the assurance of his love. Know more of his goodness as he describes for you your eternal destiny. And sing his praise more fully.

Rev. 21:1 "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be

with them and be their God. 4 "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Rev. 21:5 "Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." 6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. 7 "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son."

Then, skipping to,

Rev. 21:22 "But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. 24 And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. 25 Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). 26 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. 27 But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

Rev. 22:1 "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. 4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their

foreheads. 5 There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.”

To him be glory both now and forever! AMEN.