



Part 9 – While We Wait

2 Peter 3:14-18

“Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?” (3:11). Peter’s answer is that believers must live lives of “godliness and holiness” (3:11). The return of Jesus and the final judgment are rallying points for Christians to pursue godliness.

Beginning in verse 14 Peter calls his readers to “be diligent to be found in him without spot or blemish, and at peace.” Knowing that the Lord is indeed returning and that there will be a final judgment, we ought not be “carried away by the error of lawless people and lose your own stability” (vs. 17). Instead, we are to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (vs. 18). The depths, goodness, and perfections of Christ are such that we will never exhaust the knowledge of Him. Until the day Christ returns, we are to “count the patience of the Lord as salvation” (vs. 15).

“Since you are waiting for these...”

Eschatology is ethics. In other words, what God’s word teaches us concerning the coming judgment and the consummation of the new creation is meant to produce in us a uniquely Christian way of life. As Peter transitions into a summary of what he has written he leaves his readers with a series of exhortations each of which are grounded in the promise of Christ’s return.

1. Be diligent

Vs. 14 – “...be diligent to be found in him without spot or blemish...” – The word translated “diligent” means that we should make every effort toward a specific goal. Earlier Peter writes that believers are to apply “all diligence” in pursuing the Christian virtue (1:5-7). We are also to “be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election” (1:10). This diligence is exercised in light of Christ’s return. “The [false] teachers’ libertine lifestyle and ethics were inseparable from their eschatology. They rejected the future coming of Christ and therefore lived however they pleased.”¹

“Without spot or blemish” is a way of describing the believer’s sanctification. As we interpret Scripture with Scripture, we understand that completed sanctification does not occur in this lifetime. We also know that it is the Lord’s gracious work to sanctify us. So Peter’s exhortation to be diligent in this way is no different from the Apostle Paul’s many exhortations to “strive” and “discipline” ourselves for godliness. The Lord’s grace does not cancel any need for the diligent pursuit of godliness on our part. Being “without spot or blemish” is meant to contrast against the false teachers who are “blots and blemishes” (2:13).

2. Be at peace

Vs. 14 – “...and at peace.” – This is the peace of being in right standing with God. Having been justified by grace through faith we are at peace with God (Romans 5:1). The world promises pleasure and riches. But Jesus promises peace. And while we are passive recipients of God’s gracious work of justification, we respond to that act of grace positively. While we do not contribute to our right standing with God (justification) we most certainly are called to live actively in response to that grace.

3. Consider the Lord’s Patience

15a – “Count the patience of our Lord as salvation...” – The false teachers considered the Lord’s “slowness” in returning as a repudiation of his second coming and final judgment. But as we saw in the previous section, we should always consider the Lord’s patience (his present delay in returning) as a merciful opportunity for sinners to repent. This should energize, not only our own swiftness in repenting, but our active witness to unbelievers.

4. Be good stewards of God’s word

Vs. 15b-16 – Here Peter employs a bit of an excursus to discuss how everything he is writing to them is backed up by the Apostle Paul whom he calls “our beloved brother.” Notice how Peter classifies Paul’s

¹ Thomas Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (Nashville, B&H, 2003) p. 393

letters as the product of “the wisdom given him.” Here he places Paul’s writing alongside with what he affirmed earlier that “no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God...” (1:21). There, Peter is referring what we call the Old Testament. Here, Peter is classifying the apostolic witness in the same way.

He warns his readers that both false teachers and the ignorant were twisting the Scriptures (especially the words of the Apostle Paul) for their own sinful purposes. By describing some of Paul’s writing as “hard to understand” does not mean that misunderstanding is excusable. Indeed, the word used here (*dysnoetos*) does not mean something that impossible to understand. He means simply that because some of what Paul wrote is challenging, both the ignorant and the false teachers will twist its meaning. Indeed, Paul had to correct some of the churches from misunderstanding the gospel of grace as a license to sin (Romans 6:1). He had to rebuke the Corinthian church for using the doctrine of justification apart from the law as a cover for their acts of lawlessness.

Notice how Peter compares Paul’s epistles to “the other Scriptures.” This is a crucial statement! Paul’s letters that were already circulating among the churches are identified by Peter as “Scripture.” The word translated “Scripture” (*graphe*) is used 49 times in the New Testament, always in reference to the Old Testament (the Bible preached by Jesus and the apostles). “The Greek word ‘other’ refers to ‘other’ of the same kind...Peter clearly identified Paul’s writing as Scripture.”²

- Peter is not offering us random thoughts on Scripture. Rather, “he wants us to be certain that the whole Bible bears witness to the promise of Jesus’ return.”³ And now, the Apostles affirm that same message with all the appropriate urgency. Christ is returning to judge the world and those who have scorned his grace in this lifetime will face the same fate as the false teachers.
- The first generation of Christians were already receiving the writings of the Apostles as holy Scripture. And the church has done so ever since. Christians steward God’s word faithfully by receiving it preached, believing it, and reading and meditating upon it daily.

5. Take care

Vs. 17 – “...take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people...” – Forewarned is forearmed. Peter now brings forward the central message of his letter. Believers are to be able to identify and reject false teachers and their lawlessness. The doctrine of Jesus’ return and the final judgment will come under repeated attacks from those who seek to justify their lawlessness. So Christians must take care to not be carried away by such errors.

6. Grow

Vs. 18a – “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” – The grace of Christ here is the grace that he bestows on us. To grow in this grace likely means that we are to be diligent in living according to the implications of this saving grace. There are particular virtues which are in consonance with the gospel. “The ‘knowledge of Jesus Christ’ can mean either the knowledge that Jesus Christ gives us (1:5-6), or our knowledge of, our relationship to, Jesus Christ (1:2-3, 8).”⁴ It may also be that to grow in “knowledge of our Lord...” captures both ideas.

Jesus is Lord and Savior. That is, he both brings us into a right relationship with God wholly by grace *and* is himself the Lord who governs our lives. We do not get to divide the Person of Christ as though we can take him as Savior while rejecting him as Lord.

The Glorious Christ

Vs. 18b – “To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.” – Most of the New Testament letters end with words of greeting and a benediction. The exceptions are Romans (16:25-27), Philippians (4:20), and Jude (vv. 24-25) which end in doxologies as does 2 Peter. This particular doxology is Christocentric. That is, it focuses specifically on Jesus Christ. Glory is ascribed to Jesus both at this very moment and all the way through “the day of eternity.” That last term is unusual in that it ascribes eternality to one particular day. But this grounds the doxology in creational and eschatological categories which point to that everlasting day, the day of eternal rest and reward.

² Schreiner, 398 (see also, Douglas Moo, p. 212 and Michael Green, pp. 172-173).

³ Dick Lucas, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995) p. 151

⁴ Douglas Moo, *2 Peter, Jude* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) p. 214