

November 12, 2017

Practicing Our Readiness Drills for Christ's Return - Seeking God's Guidance from 1st and 2nd Peter

Sermon Topic: Growing in the Grace and Knowledge of Our Savior 2 Peter 3:14-18

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Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. 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. Amen. (ESV)

- Theme of 2nd Peter: Defend yourselves with biblical knowledge and spiritual maturity against the deceptions of false teachers.

Critical Point #14 - The best defense against the deceptions of the false teachers is to focus on Christ's Second Coming review of our lives and by so doing, increase daily our dependence on and love for our Savior.

Introduction – Running short on retirement dollars? Is Prudential telling you to set more aside, that you are going to run out of money before you run out of years? Have I got a deal for you!! Gloria Copeland tells me that according to Mark 10:29-30 which says, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, **with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.** (ESV) Here's what she says: Give God \$10 and he will give you a \$1,000. Give God \$1,000 and he has to give you \$100,000.” I like that, don't you? Or better yet, here's Creflo Dollar telling me “When we pray, believing that we have already received what we are praying, God has no choice but to make our prayers come to pass.” “Yes Massah.”

1. If we are anxiously awaiting the return of Christ, we then should and would be concerned to be found morally pure and relaxed about that imminent encounter. **Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.**
 - Therefore let's adjust our lives to concentrate on His Second Coming. Here are some questions:
 - Is Jesus more concerned that you have 3 million dollars stored away to make it until you are 99? Or does he want you focused on using your money for the expansion of the Kingdom of God?
 - Does Jesus really care if the Vikings win today in Washington DC, or stay in first place in their division or win the Super Bowl? Obviously he has already decided and it rates very, very low on his priorities. So why is it such a big deal to us?

- Are we more concerned about our children's GPA and scholarship abilities than we are about their spiritual development and their ability to defend their faith against hostile professors?
 - There are many ways we can determine if we are looking more to our own comfort now and in the future than in God's smile upon our faithfulness. But a person focused on the Second Coming of Christ will:
 - Be using every talent they have to glorify God, and
 - Be studying His word daily to improve their knowledge of and love for Jesus, and
 - Be discipling their family in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and
 - Be modeling a life of utter dependence on God so that others see and hear the source of that person's hope, and
 - Be cleansing their life from all filthy language, filthy content, filthy thoughts, and from all lying, all cheating, all coveting, all slander and gossip. These should be extremely rare.
2. If we are anxiously awaiting the return of Christ, we should consider His delay an opportunity to a) reach more people for Christ and b) to work out our own salvation. **And count the patience of our Lord as salvation,**
- Do you find yourself thanking God that he has given you one more day to reach more people for Christ and one more day to work on removing the blemishes in your life by treasuring Him more than you treasure your sin?
 - "You are What You Love" by James Smith. Deep reading but intensely profound. It tells us how to love God more each day. Piano lessons, and driving lessons. . . the thousand answers to prayer and the thousand prayers of gratitude (ex. Pixels on a page or the gift of a flesh and blood whose faithfulness is incalculable).
3. If we are anxiously awaiting the return of Christ we will believe wholeheartedly what Peter is saying and what Paul confirms in his letters as well. **just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters**

1 Thessalonians 5:23 Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (ESV)

1 Thessalonians 3:13 so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. (ESV)

1 Corinthians 4:5 Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God. (ESV)

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (ESV)

4. If we are anxiously awaiting the return of Christ we will not twist the harder sayings of Paul to condone an immoral lifestyle. **There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.**

They twist this:

Galatians 2:16 yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. (ESV)

But they forget this:

Romans 6:1–2 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? (ESV)

Notice how Peter feels about Paul's letters: **as they do the other Scriptures.**

This is huge. Paul believed His letters were inspired by God. Peter believed Paul's letters were inspired. Same as OT. Now when Alex or I stand in the front preaching God's word and we handle it faithfully – we are speaking the very voice of God. This cannot be understated!

5. If we are anxiously awaiting the return of Christ we will not be deceived by the seductive preaching of false teachers but prevent it by growing in both the grace and knowledge of our Lord.

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. 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. Amen

- Like physical trees we are to grow spiritually strong by sending our roots deep into the soil of the knowledge of Jesus and receive the rain and sunshine of his grace daily.
 - Grace – the constant gifts we receive daily from heaven above, for example all of the fruit of the Spirit, all of the perseverance that comes from trials and suffering, all of the strength needed to endure, all of the love needed to forgive.
 - Knowledge – the deeper knowledge of Jesus that only those willing to invest the time in the word and in prayer will experience. In six weeks I will start a sermon series on the Life of Christ in the gospels as seen by all 4 at the same time – a harmony of the gospels. We will go deep into His life and learn from his actions how to love to live to thrive, to endure and to be victorious.

Application

The main title for this series has been Practicing Our Readiness Drills in Preparation for Christ's Return. These hearers were going through tremendous persecution. Everything they needed to know about how to endure is in these 8 chapters, 5 in 1 Peter, 3 in 2 Peter. If persecution comes to you, and most likely it will someday, remember this: Peter has told us how to survive without stumbling. Hold on to your Bible whatever you do. It is worth dying for. Yes it is. Keep it safe. Keep it hidden. Keep it for your eternal sake and your children's and grandchildren's eternal sake. It is that important.