

2 Peter 3 (Part 1) :1-18 • The Day of the Lord

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2 Peter, Chapter 3, and we are going to read through the chapter this morning and then get into it. So, follow along with me as I read.

¹ This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, ² that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, ³ knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. ⁴ They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” ⁵ For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, ⁶ and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. ⁷ But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

⁸ But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! ¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. ¹⁵ 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, ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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)

Let's pray. Father, as we go through this final chapter in this letter that we call 2 Peter, we once again humbly come before you as we do each time just to ask that through your Holy Spirit, you would speak words of grace and truth to our hearts in such a way, Lord, that we would grow, as Peter says, in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We ask you, Lord, to help us to not just understand, but also lay hold of these things in such a way as to put them into practice, to walk them out, to live them, be with us we ask Father. And speak to each heart for we pray it in the name of Jesus Christ our savior. Amen. Amen.

Well, you've probably noticed as we've gone through 2 Peter, this letter is really full of reminders. He does a lot of reminding. Peter says in verses 1 and 2, “*This is now*”, he says, “*the second letter that I am writing to you*”, and he says, again I'm writing this to stir you up by way of reminder and so forth. But what does he want them to remember in this case? He wants them to remember the predictions or prophetic statements that were made in the Old Testament related to the coming of the Lord. And he also says, I want you to remember the commandment of the Lord, our Lord and Savior through the apostles.

When he talks about the commandment, he's not talking about a single commandment, like one of the 10 commandments. There are some people who do that. They'll look at this and say, well, he wants us to remember the commandment. The one commandment. And then they pick one that they think is the most important, whether it's the Sabbath or whether whatever they pick a commandment and say, well, that's the one he wants us to remember that one. But he's not referring to a single commandment. Instead, he's talking about really the entire Christian message and that command is to turn from our sin and to call upon the name of the Lord and be saved.

That's essentially the commandment that Jesus passed down through the apostles that we are to remember. But as we get into this chapter, you'll notice that it has a lot to do with the end times or what we call eschatology. And for those of you that maybe are new to the word, let me put a definition up on the screen for you so that you can, we can see it together.

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What is the biblical meaning of eschatology?

The doctrine of end times or the ultimate destiny of humankind, centering on the second coming of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the last judgment.

Those things are what we basically refer to as the study or the doctrine of eschatology. And what we're going to see in this last chapter of 2 Peter, is that as we're dealing with this eschatological kind of overview that Peter gives us, he's going to, we're going to break it up into five areas, and I'll put those on the screen for you so you can see them together. This is essentially what we're going to look at.

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Outline of Chapter 3

- Scoffers and understanding why they mock: 1-7
- Understanding God's timing for the return of Jesus: 8-9
- The coming of the Day of the Lord: 10
- Exhortations to holy living: 11-14
- Exhortation to hold fast to the Scriptures: 15-18

Peter is going to talk about scoffers and how we can understand why they do what they do. And that's verses 1 through 7. And then in, in verses 8 and 9, he's going to talk about understanding God's timing related to the second coming of Jesus. In verse 10, he'll actually refer to the coming of the day of the Lord.

In verses 11 through 14, he will exhort us related to how we ought to live in light of the return of Jesus Christ. And then finally, in verses 15 through 18, he will exhort us related to holding fast to the scriptures and so forth.

So, we're going to go through these here this morning. Let's highlight the first point, which is scoffers and understanding why they mock. Notice that first of all in fact, Peter uses those words, verse 3, "*knowing this, first of all,*" he says, this is the first thing I want you to understand, "*scoffers will come.*" Notice Peter doesn't say, you might run into a scoffer here or there. No, he says "*scoffers will come*". There's absolutely no question about it.

And we have certainly seen plenty of scoffing in our day. But even here in this first verse that we're looking at related to this verse 3, you'll notice that Peter begins to reveal why people scoff. He says, in the last days, with "*scoffing following their own, sinful desires*", and that is why they scoff. It's because they're following their own sinful desires. People like to say that they have all kinds of intellectual problems with believing the Bible or believing that Jesus is going to return, or even believing that there is somebody named Jesus that is true or real, or whatever. I have intellectual problems with that. I just have some real intellectual problems. And what they want you to think is that they're really intellectual. And they've really thought this thing through. And because they're so intellectual, they got all these intellectual problems. And the fact of the matter is Peter refers right here to the main reason why they mock and scoff and disbelieve, and that is because they're following their own sinful desires.

In other words, it's not so much an intellectual problem, it's a moral problem. And essentially what they're doing is they reject anyone, including Jesus who would be Lord over their life. They want to be their own Lord. They've been taught in this world to be their own Lord, for heaven's sake. And so we come along as believers. We start calling him the Lord Jesus Christ.

They're like, whoa, wait a second. I'm not going to have anybody be Lord, over my life. I do what I want, when I want, and nobody tells me what I can or can't do. It's my life. I'm going to live my life the way I want. And so essentially what they're doing is they're rejecting anyone who would cause them to believe that somehow their life is accountable to someone else.

The Apostle John actually says this same thing. Let me show you this on the screen from John Chapter 3, verse 20 and 21.

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John 3:20-21 (ESV)

For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

John says, "*For everyone who does wicked things hates the light*". Notice, they don't just kind of think the light is a big bummer. They hate it, and it says, and "*does not come into the light, lest his works should be exposed.*"

That's the thing about Jesus. There's a whole lot of light that goes with Jesus and people who are living their own life, they don't want anybody telling them that it's wrong. Don't tell me that you, that's... And of course, they come up with

other excuses today saying that's abusive and you're talking hate language. Those are the kind of key things that get people all riled up today. You tell somebody that they're a sinner or what they're doing is wrong and they'll say "You hate me. That's hate language!" And in some places, they'll put you in jail for telling somebody that they sin. Well, why is that happening?

Because they hate the light. They don't want to be exposed. That's what's really going on, and as believers, we know what's really going on. Okay? So, we're not sitting around wondering why people are mocking and why people are, burning Bibles and on.

Now, next, Peter reveals one of the main arguments that people give. He says in verse 4, they will say, "*Where is the promise of his coming?*". And that's kind of an older way of saying, where's this coming that He said He was going to do? And they use the example that things have always been this way, "*Forever since the fathers fell asleep*". That means ever since our forefathers died, ever since people have been born and lived and died, things have gone on the same and nothing has happened. And so, it's all been going on the same way.

And so, here's Peter's explanation. For this argument that they give verse 5, notice this, and this isn't really a response. It's an explanation for you as a believer. Okay? Verse 5, he says, "*For they deliberately*" circle or highlight that word in your Bible. "*For they deliberately overlook this fact,*" and now he's going to talk about what these facts are.

First, "*that the heavens existed long ago*". Secondly, "*the earth was formed*". Not evolved but was "*formed right out of water and through water*". Why or how? "*By the word of God.*" Again, not by evolution, but by the word of God. God created. Peter says here that the reason that this is going on, that these arguments are being made, is because there is a deliberate act on their part to forget creation.

Okay. They haven't just decided that creation is untenable or unbelievable. It is a deliberate work on their part to disbelieve. I mean, listen, I mean let's face it, if you don't believe in God, you got to come up with some explanation, right? What is an atheist going to do when somebody walks up to him and says, "How do you think things got here?" He's not going to say, "Well, according to the Bible..." He doesn't believe in the Bible. He doesn't believe in God. He's got to come up with some explanation. Evolution's perfect. It doesn't explain everything. I mean, even an evolutionist can't explain to you where matter came from. If you ask them "Where did matter come from?", they'll say, "I don't know." They literally don't know. They do not know. It was just there. And then

it exploded, and then it turned into worlds, and then people evolved on those worlds. And here we are billions and billions of years later. Well, it's just the atheist explanation, but notice that Peter says it's deliberate work on their part. They deliberately overlook it. Right. He goes on to say and they also deliberately forget, “*6 that by means of these,*” meaning water, “*the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.*”

They purposely ignore creation. They purposely ignore what the Bible says about the fact that the God who created all things through His word destroyed all living beings on this planet once already. And so, they naturally overlooked the fact that there's another global destruction that's coming. It's happened once. It happened through water, and the earth wasn't so much destroyed as all living things were destroyed except for those on the ark. But this is why he says they have completely missed the fact of the warnings God has given us related to these things, that there is another global destruction that is awaiting this world.

Now, let me pause for just a moment here and perhaps answer a question that maybe one or two of you might have going through your heart or mind. And that is, why does the Earth need to be destroyed? I mean, God destroyed all living things on the earth at one time. We read about that in the Book of Genesis, but the question might arise, why does God need to destroy the earth? I mean, why can't we just kind of keep it as it is? I mean, I kind of like Glacier National Park. Been there, it's really pretty. I've seen pictures of the Swiss Alps. Those are really gorgeous. Man, those northern lights that you can see from those northern parts of the world are pretty sweet. Why does it have to go away? Why does it have to be destroyed? And the very simple answer is that sin has corrupted this world and we forget that.

We forget that sin has corrupted this world. We forget that this world has not just been corrupted, it has been made into a dangerous place to live. Do you know how many people die every year from natural disasters, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, volcanoes, and heat. People die from the heat. People die from the cold. That wasn't God's intention. The earth has been corrupted by sin, and it is a dangerous place to live. And we forget that sometimes because it's just, we just live with it.

That's why Peter says in verse 7, look with me in your Bible: “*7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire*”. In other words, God destroyed all life on this planet through water. He's going to destroy the planet at one point, at the next point through fire. He says, “*being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.*” And this is something that we know through the word of God, and it's not something that we're all bummed

out about because we know that God is going to create a new Earth and it's going to be the way Earth was intended to be. It's not going to be the dangerous place that it is today. I mean, good grief, if you sit out in the sun too long, you will get skin cancer. That's the world that we live in. That's not going to be the way it's going to be with the new Earth. And that was not the way it was intended to be. Do you think God created a situation where you just simply go outside and you fry your skin?

That was not, and so you know, these things are going to be made new. And that brings us to our second point of the chapter, which we highlight next.

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Understanding God's timing for the return of Jesus in verses 8 and 9. This is where Peter answers the question of why the coming of our Lord has been delayed. He says in verse 8: “⁸ *But do not overlook this one fact, beloved,*”. Unbelievers purposely overlook things. Now, you as believers be careful not to overlook this fact, he says. And he refers to them as beloved. That tells you he's talking to believers, “*that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*”. (ESV)

Now, this is Peter's way of simply conveying to you and me that God doesn't view time in the same way that we view time. If you've walked with the Lord for any period of time, speaking of time, you know this. You know that God's timing is not your timing and your timing is not God's timing. You guys are rarely on the same page as it relates to timing, right?

We always want things to go faster than they do. And sometimes they go way too fast. And we kind of realize that. We have this interesting and kind of annoying habit as humans of judging God's timing. If it doesn't happen to meet up with ours, we get pretty angry. If something seems to take forever to us, then God is taking forever just because it seems like it's really long to me. But we

forget the fact God's never late. And His timing is impeccable, perfect. We forget that. We forget that.

Now I do want to address this statement that Peter makes that a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day. I want you to know that Peter's not giving a literal kind of equation for understanding God's timetable. In other words, you can't take it literally and say that if God says something's going to happen in a day, that really means it's going to happen in a thousand years. That's not what Peter is doing here. He's simply using this statement to make the point that God's view of time is very different from ours.

And the reason is because God dwells outside of time. This is something else that we Christians forget all the time. We're prisoners of time. God is not a prisoner of His own creation. He created time, okay? He is not bound by time. He's not bound by anything. So, He doesn't have to wait for things to happen. You do? I do. Bummer as it is, but He doesn't have to wait. Isn't that cool? It'll be kind of cool when we're living with Him in eternity. It's like, well, "when are you going to do that? Right away, there's no waiting."

The point of all this is summed up in verse 9. Look at verse 9 in your Bible: "*9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance*", (ESV) And see, this is the thing the unbelievers are mocking because things seem to be taking a long time. But it's not slowness, it's patience. It's God's patience. The reason for God's patience is expressed in these words. He is not wishing any to perish, but that all should reach repentance or come to a place of repentance. That is why He delays, right? That's why He delays. And for those of you who got saved in the last five years, aren't you glad He delayed? How about those of you who got saved in the last 10 years? Aren't you glad He didn't come 11 years ago and shut things down?

People say to me all the time, why doesn't God just get rid of evil? Why doesn't He just get rid of all evil? I'm like, really? You want God to get rid of all evil? Seriously. Okay, let's say He gets rid of all evil at midnight tonight. Would you be here at 12:01? That's the thing we forget. We think we're not evil. We think, well, I just want God to get rid of evil. That means He's got to get rid of everything. Do you understand the reason He's waiting? Is because He's giving people more time and praise God that He is.

Now that statement that He's "*not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance*". (ESV) We got to be careful not just to read that verse, but we also got to be careful to understand it and remember it the next

time somebody comes along and tells you that God predestined people for heaven and some people He predestined for hell. That is a very popular belief in the body of Christ. And this verse flies in the face of it because this verse says He wants all people to come to repentance. He isn't wishing and in fact, the new King James says, it is not His will, He does not will that any should be lost. This verse is an absolute contradiction to that belief that people are predestined for hell. If you believe that God actually predestined people for hell, then you believe He does wish some to be lost because He made them that way, you see? So next time somebody walks up to you and tells you that, you just bring them back to this verse. 2 Peter 3:9. And this is an important thing to remember. God does not wish that any should be lost.

When it says He doesn't want any to be lost, it doesn't mean that none will perish. Some people have actually gone that far. You see, it says right there, He doesn't want any to perish, that's His will. Who can fight against God's will? He doesn't will that any be lost. Well, the fact of the matter is some will be lost.

This is an expression of God's heart. Do you see? And that's what Peter's doing here. 2 Peter 3:9 is an expression of God's heart. He is not willing, He doesn't desire any to be lost. This was even expressed back in the Old Testament book of Ezekiel. Look at this from Ezekiel 33:

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Ezekial 22:11 (ESV)

As I live declares Yahweh, the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked would turn from his way and live.

He says, that's my heart that they would turn. I take no pleasure in someone refusing to turn. But do some refuse to turn? Yeah. Yeah, some do. But now you know God's heart on the matter.

Now we come to point 3 highlighted on our list. It's the coming of the day of the Lord. And this really just takes up one verse, and this is where Peter gives us some details of the day of the Lord.

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Peter says: ¹⁰ *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.*

Some Bibles say “laid bare”. Now remember something, the day of the Lord is not a day as in a 24-hour period. Whenever the Bible talks about the day of the Lord it is literally a time period. It speaks of that time of God wrapping up things on this earth. And it is a time of judgment for some, and it is a time of great blessing for others. But ultimately, the day of the Lord is a time when the prophecies that God has given through the Old Testament that are corroborated in the New are then brought to fulfillment. That is the day of the Lord, the conclusion of all things before we enter into that time period of eternity. And the first thing Peter says about the day of the Lord as we saw here, is that it'll come like a thief.

Paul says the same thing, 1 Thessalonians check this out on the screen.

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1 Thessalonians 5:2-4 (ESV)

² *For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.* ³ *While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.* ⁴ *But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.*

We're going to leave that up for a minute because that's an important passage. We went over this in 1 Thessalonians. This is talking about rapture. Remember that Jesus comes first in the air for His church. We're caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

Then after the tribulation period, He comes to the earth. Now, listen, when He comes to the earth, people are not going to be saying peace and safety. The wrath of God will have been poured out for like the latter half of the tribulation period. People are not going to be saying, oh, everything's fine. We're all good. We're at peace. Everything's peaceful. We're safe. They will be saying that prior to the rapture of the church, and then destruction will come upon them. What

does He mean by that? That's when the tribulation period begins. The antichrist rises to power. Things all look good for a while and things fall apart later.

So, this is an important passage for us to remember. But I want you to also see something because he addresses you personally as believers. He says, even though the day of the Lord is going to come like a thief, he says it's not going to be a thief to you. Why? Because we're expecting His coming. Right? Come, Lord Jesus, that's our heart. That's our cry. That's our desire. Come Lord Jesus. We want you. We're expecting Him. We believe He's coming, and we believe He could come at any time. Listen, if you believe He could come at any time you're going to be ready.

If your house was literally going to be broken into and you knew when that thief was coming and could come at any time, you'd be ready. You'd have an alarm system set up. You'd have your big guard dog sitting out front, with big, gnarly teeth, and you'd have all these things in place to get ready for this person that you knew was going to come. Well, you know Jesus is coming, and so for you, this is not going to take you by surprise, like a thief. That's a very important thing that Paul says there in that passage in 1 Thessalonians.

He then goes on to talk about how the day of the Lord will affect the present earth. He says, the heavens will pass away with a roar. The heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved with the earth, and on. And it's just going to be, it is God's final judgment and it'll be total.

But the point of all this is not destruction. There's a lot of burning up. You can read this and kind of go, wow, pretty destructive God, you got there, but that's not the point that Peter's making here. Peter is saying that everything is going to be laid bare before almighty God, and it's going to be exposed, it's going to be brought into the light. And that's really kind of what he's saying here. Evil will be exposed and burned. Paul makes a very similar statement in Romans 2:16:

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Romans 2:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

Everything will be laid bare. Everything that can burn will burn. But there's going to be things that can't burn right now. First of all, you can't burn if you're a believer in Jesus Christ. Your judgment has already taken place on the cross. Jesus was judged for you. And the only thing that's going to burn in your life

and in my life are the things that we didn't do for eternity. The things that didn't last. But those things we did for the Lord, those will remain, and we will receive a reward for those things. But even our earthly worldly works, they will burn. So, in that sense it is a time of judgment, even for believers. Not that you will be judged in the sense of condemned, because again, Jesus was condemned for you. You're not going to be condemned twice. Christ was condemned on your behalf.

All right, point number 4.

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Then Peter gives some exhortations for holy living. I have to tell you that I really believe this section here verses 11 through 14, I believe this was Peter's absolute top reason for even sharing all these things about the day of the Lord. It wasn't to scare you. It wasn't to make you feel weird or to give you a one up when somebody's mocking or anything like that. He wants it to come back to your life. And so he asked this question: *“¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be”*. (ESV)

And that's really the best question. I mean, that's the question we ought to be asking. That's the question of the hour. In light of how God is going to bring about the conclusion of things, what kind of people ought we to be and how ought to change the way we live? It ought to make a difference in the way that we live.

Because you see, here's the deal. There's a king coming. The king is coming, and He is going to take His rightful throne on this earth. That means our lives are meant to be lived for the king even before He gets here. That's the privilege that we've been given as believers today to live our lives today for the unseen king, knowing without any doubt He is coming, and His throne will be restored on this earth. He is already the sovereign, eternal God, but He will sit on the

throne of mankind one day to come. We get a chance to serve Him today, right now, and to live our lives for Him.

Peter goes on to say in verse 12 that, and this is an interesting statement, he says: ¹² *waiting for and hastening*, that means to hurry up, “*the coming of the day of God*”. (ESV) And I bet some of you are kind of wondering how in the world does our, the way we live and our own lives and what we do, hasten the coming of the Lord. And Peter doesn't explain it. And I have learned not to elaborate on things that the Bible doesn't reveal. But for some unexplained reason concerning the way that we live, the way we shine our light in the world, the light of Christ, somehow impacts the day of the Lord. And I don't know how. I wish I did, but I don't. So, I have to plead ignorance.

But one thing we do know is that our life on this earth as believers and as followers of Jesus, it's not ours to live for ourselves. It is meant to be lived for Him. It is to be lived actively for the Lord, not passively, just like waiting for the Lord. There have been people in Christian history who believed that the coming of the Lord was so imminent that they just had to go up in the hills and just put on white robes and just wait. They're just going to wait. That's not the way He wants us to live our lives. We're to be actively living for the Lord today. Still being salt. Still being light in this world, loving, caring, praying, ministering, living for His pleasure, not our unselfish pleasure.

I get so many notes from people who have come to Christ sometimes, many times, later in life who live in such a pool of regret for how they've lived their lives for selfish purposes in the past. And they just, oh, they're just, they say, “I think back on all the years I just lived for me, just for me, and I so regret those years”.

Of course, that's the way the world's telling us to live. But that's all why Peter says in verse 14: “¹⁴ *Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace*”. (ESV) Because you know He's going to find you in some condition. When Jesus returns, He's going to find you doing something. What is it He's going to find you doing? That's the question you have to ask yourself: What do I want the Lord to find me doing? Do I want Him to find me just kind of going with the remote, going through the channels with kind of this glazed look on my face. Do I want him to find me looking at pornography in some seedy movie house, watching something I shouldn't be watching, filling my heart with it? Is that where I want to be when the trumpet goes off and we're called to meet the Lord in the air? He's going to find you doing something. And so that's why Peter says, we want to be diligent to be found in Him without spot or blemish and at peace.

Now the final point that we're going to look at here this morning is the exhortation to hold fast to the scriptures.

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- Exhortation to hold fast to the Scriptures: 15-18

And that's exactly how I would expect Peter to end this letter. He says ¹⁵ *And count the patience of our Lord as salvation*, and that really means for other people. Count the delay, consider the delay of our Lord's coming as the opportunity for salvation for others. ...” *just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ 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*”.(ESV) Yeah, there are. 2000 years later, we still read some of Paul's stuff and scratch our head. Yeah. We haven't gotten any smarter than they were in Peter's day. But he goes on, *“which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures*”.(ESV)

All right, the very first thing I want you to notice here is that Peter likens the writings of Paul, did you catch that, to the other scriptures? That's a really important statement. Clearly, Peter considered Paul's writings to be equal in authority and inspiration to the Hebrew scriptures of the Old Testament. Because he says people will do things with Paul's writings just the same as they do with the other scriptures. He didn't say, just as they do with the scriptures. He said the other scriptures. He's linking Paul's writings to the Hebrew scriptures. That tells you something very important.

But he also reminds us here that the scriptures can be twisted. We know that. I mean, we know that. But what's interesting here, is that this Greek verb that he uses, that he says, when he says they twist, it means to distort and to overstretch. Which tells you that their intention is to get the word to say something that it really wasn't ever intended to say. They stretch it, they overstretch it, they twist it in such a way as to get it to say something that it was never meant to say. And that's very important.

Last week we looked at Peter's warning about false teachers. And that was a very important warning because that's still going on today. Well, what are the false teachers doing? They're twisting the scriptures and getting them to stretch beyond their original context and meaning so that they end up saying something that God never intended them to say. And that's happening a lot and we need to understand that.

So false teachers are still an issue, so he warns us here that this is happening. Verse 11, or I'm sorry, verse 17, I beg your pardon. He says, *“¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care.”* And that just simply means be careful. Be careful. Be careful of what? Be careful that you're not carried away with the error of these people that twist and stretch the scripture. He calls them lawless people: *“with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability”*. (ESV) If you get caught up in somebody who's twisting and stretching the word, notice the deal. He says, you lose your stability. Did you catch that? You lose your stability.

Here's the thing, God's word gives us such incredible stability in our lives when we understand it and when we embrace it as it is given. I mean, it is wonderful. We become much more stable human beings, emotionally, spiritually, even physically. It changes our lives. It brings a, a foundation of stability into our lives. But when somebody comes along and twists the word of God and makes it say something that it wasn't intended to say, what happens to people? They lose that stability. Suddenly they're just like they're hanging on because everything's shaking and moving all around them. And suddenly now their whole salvation is in question because they haven't done things just right and it's all depending on them. And so now they're like, oh man, what am I supposed to believe?

Don't lose your stability, man. Do you know that there are people who are tormented by the things the Bible says? Tormented to the point of sleeplessness. Tormented by scripture. You think wow, how could somebody be tormented by the word of God? Well, it's easy actually. All you have to do is think wrongly about a passage or have it taught wrongly to you because it's been twisted or overstretched, and the word will torment you. It's meant to bring comfort. Conviction. Yeah. Sometimes heavy conviction. Something interesting about the conviction of the Lord, have you ever noticed when God convicts you of sin you never feel condemned or hopeless? When God convicts us of sin, there's hope in our hearts. We know we've been busted and we know that we're going to be okay and that He busted us because He loves us.

Now you give somebody a law and you tell them you better not cross that line, or you're dead. And then they do, and they're condemned by that. Then they're tormented for weeks or months or years until they finally, hopefully come back to a place of understanding what's really being said in the scripture. And then they can rest.

The final verse that he gives in this chapter should be the goal of every believer. He says: *“¹⁸ 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)

About the verb grow, this is a little insight into Greek tenses. Okay, so this gets a little wacky, but the verb grow that Peter uses here is in what we call the present imperative tense. And what that means is it could be accurately rendered, be continually growing. It's talking about an ongoing action, keep growing, continually moving forward. Here's the question every Christian needs to periodically ask themselves: Am I growing in my walk, in my understanding and the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord? Am I growing? Have I plateaued or am I growing? Very important question because we need to be growing. We need to be maturing growing up in our understanding. And with that, we conclude Peter's second letter.

And next week, Lord willing, we are actually going to go back and pick up the Gospel of John. We haven't done the gospel of John yet in this third pass through the Bible because I always break up the gospels with the epistles. So, we're going to go back and hit John. Aaron said to me before the service, he said, “So it's going to be a couple, two or three years in John?” Yeah. Well, we'll see. I wouldn't mind to be found teaching through John when Jesus comes. Right. Let's stand together.

We're going to have some prayer team folk up here to pray with you after we're done. So, feel free to come up and get prayer this morning. Father, I thank you so much for the wonderful two letters written by Peter. I thank you, Father, for the reminders that we have in them of just your love for us, the gospel message, the prophetic warnings, the prophetic statements about your second coming, and Lord, that you've chosen to reveal this plan of yours with us. You didn't have to do that, but you did. And we're so thankful that you did, and we rejoice Lord in knowing that there is a future and a hope that is ours because of Jesus. And Lord, I just pray for anybody who's listening this morning who has not yet bowed the knee to you and said, “I want to be a part of that future. I need to have my sins forgiven. I turn from that old life of living for my own pleasure, and I turn to the Lord, I ask you to forgive me. Make my life new. Make me a child of yours. Thank you, Father.”

Lord. If there are any who just prayed that in the quiet of their heart right now, I ask you to fill them with your Holy Spirit and with the knowledge that no man can take away that they're born again through the Spirit of the living God. Thank you, Father. We pray all of these things in Jesus' name and all God's people said together, Amen. God bless you. Have a good rest of your Sunday.