

How Should We Then Live

2 Peter 3:7-18

7 . . . 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. (2 Peter 3:7-18 (ESV))

Today, we return to the words given to us here in 2 Peter 3, and remind ourselves of the reason we took a few weeks detour over into the Book of Revelations, and there studied about the “Soon Coming End” of this earth, and our life on it. Here, beginning in verses 10 of 2nd Peter 3, God gave Peter these dramatic words of warning, saying that

10 . . . the day of the Lord will come like a thief, (without forewarning) 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 (laid bare for all to see) 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. (2 Peter 3:10-13 (ESV))

May I remind us that although these words are very stern words of warning, God does not leave us without hope. These words confirm to me that while God surely will be ever so severe in the turmoil of the “last days”, He is also ever and always “kind” to anyone and to everyone who will “turn” and give their hearts to Him. Those words in Romans 11, verse 22,

22 Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. (Romans 11:22)

A stern warning to us, but given with kindness and promise.

This is God our loving Father who, over the thousands of years that the world has been in existence has, with great patience and love, endured with man and with man's continual turning to his own way. And so, here He gives us these words that both assure us of His patient love, and encourages us to make right choices. First in verse 9,

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. (2 Peter 3:9)

And then also in verse 15,

15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation. (2 Peter 3:15)

God truly is patient and kind towards His beloved creation, giving us every opportunity and numerous extensions of time. But there is a limit to God's patience. In other places in these scriptures, we are told that He will not strive with us forever. There will come a time, and it seems even now fast-approaching, when the people of this world will reach a point of “no return”, completely corrupt, and simply no longer “redeemable”.

And God's solution to our corrupt condition seems also to be fast on its way. But according to these words, the solution that He will bring will not be one that the world and its lost people are hoping for. These words tell us that God's solution to our unredeemable condition is to completely destroy everything, to wipe away this earth and everything on it, and then to create a whole brand new one, one where sin and corruption will never again exist. Verse 10,

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 (laid bare for all to see). (2nd Peter 3:10)

And then verse 13,

13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2nd Peter 3:13)

Just as we have been studying about over these past few weeks, in the twinkling of an eye and without forewarning, God will begin taking the step by step measures that will completely wipe away this world as we know it today, and then to create everything brand new, a new heaven and a new earth, a joyous kingdom and home where His righteousness will reign for all eternity.

Recall God's precious words that we studied in chapter 21 of Revelations, describing for us mansions and living conditions more glorious than our minds can imagine.

2 And I 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 the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." (Revelation 21:2-5)

Folks, this is all very, very real and it truly can be ours, but only if we are willing to do our part. And our part is such a very simple one. We have only to open our hearts and "by faith" receive the precious gift of salvation that the Lord Jesus provides, and He will do the rest.

May I take just a moment and rehearse for us again that precious experience when God so lovingly invades our wretched souls and redeems us from our sins? These words can be found in Ezekiel chapter 36, beginning in verse 26.

First, God reaches His loving hand into our wretched flesh and removes our old heart of stone. He then gently replaces our old heart of stone with a "heart of flesh", one that He can mold and shape into a heart that can eventually love Him and desire His presence. Then next, He puts a new spirit within us, a spirit that can receive His Spirit. And then, He does that. He puts His Holy Spirit within our spirit, and we are immediately and eternally reborn into a whole new person, the old is gone and the new is come. And as

a new person, we are then able to begin to think whole new thoughts and have whole new desires and behaviors. What a sweet and glorious change that is!

And again, the only thing that is required of us is to “by faith” receive this precious gift from Him, and then His promises will begin to flow from Him into us, and then through us and out to others. And as He does that, we become whole new and different people, able then to begin to actually be the kind of beloved children He wants us to be, as we await these soon-coming future days spoken about here.

Again, I plead with us to believe these words and to accept that they are really true. And that it really is worth all that we will have to endure in this present life to receive it!

But with all of this being said, there are still some requirements that do remain for us, before God calls this life to a close. Those words again, beginning in verse 10

10 . . . 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 (laid bare and) 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. (2 Peter 3:10-13 (ESV))

The question being ask of us here in these words is a simple one. It asks, “Since then we know that this world and this life are coming to a soon abrupt and violent end, what sort of people ought we to be now as we live out our days?” Notice here though, that as God asks this question, He also gives us an immediate “hint” about the answer to that question. He ends His question with the words “in lives of holiness and godliness”. And He tells us here 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. (2nd Peter 3:14)

And so, with this to be our quest for our remaining days, to live “lives of holiness and godliness, without spot or blemish and at peace”, what must we do to get about it? How do we live lives of holiness and godliness? And how can we be found by Him without spot or blemish and at peace?

May I first say that God’s call to us in these words is twofold. These words first address our own souls and how we ourselves must get about living Godly lives. But implicit

within all such commands in these scriptures is a command that we also minister that same godliness to other people around us, both to those who are saved and to those who are unsaved.

But we cannot properly minister to others without first equipping ourselves with His holiness and godliness. So, how do we do that?

First, we can always assume that when God gives us a command that He will, without fail, always also give us everything we need to carry it out. Listen to this promise that He gave to us in chapter 1 of this book of 2nd Peter!

3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these (through His own glory and goodness) he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.
(2 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV))

Notice these words carefully. With the salvation of Christ and with His Holy Spirit abiding within us, we really do have absolutely everything, everything, everything, we need already within us to live lives of “holiness and godliness”, without “spot or blemish and at peace.” And so, you and I need only to go ahead and get about it.

How do we do that? This past week, I was reminded of a sermon I heard some years ago, a sermon about Jesus’ miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. Part of the sermon addressed the instruction from Jesus for Lazarus’ friends to help remove the old “grave clothes” from Lazarus’ body.

And that instruction is for you, and for me, and for our friends. As we come out of our unsaved condition, our dead condition, into this new life with Christ, it is very much like being raised from the dead. We were once “dead”, but now we are “alive” in Christ. But like Lazarus, as we come from our “dead condition” into “life”, we are still draped with all of the “old grave clothes” of our old life, with the “stench of death” oozing out from each piece of that cloth . . . habits, mannerisms, corrupt ways and corrupt beliefs. And we need to get those “grave clothes”, those corrupt ways, those habits, those mannerisms off us as quickly as possible. And that not only requires work on our part, it also often requires help from fellow believers. And yes, at the same time, they also require help from us with their “old grave clothes”.

Folks, we cannot bring all those beliefs and habits and ways of death with us into our new life. The old is gone and everything about us is now new.

And recall that God tells us clearly how to become the “new creature” that He wants us to be while we await His soon coming. Those words in 2nd Peter 1,

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-8 (NIV))

This is the answer to the question presented to us here in verse 11.

11 Since all these things (the world and all the lost people on it) are thus to be dissolved (destroyed), what sort of people ought you (ought I) to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God? (2 Peter 1:11-12)

This is the answer. This is how you and I will be able to live lives of holiness and godliness, without spot or blemish and at peace while we await the soon coming day of Christ. And we need to get about it. We need to

5 . . . make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-8 (NIV))

The other obligation that we have as we get about living lives of holiness and godliness is that we must respond to the instruction here in verse 12.

12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God? (2 Peter 1:12)

What can we do to hasten the LORD's return? In Matthew 24:14, we are told,

"And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the End come" (Matthew 24:14).

Obedience to the Great Commission requires that we be both the instruments of drawing lost souls to Christ in salvation, and then teaching and discipling those who come. And our doing that will “hasten” the day of His coming.

So then, as we leave these precious words for today, are you up for the challenge that God has placed before you with His question in verse 11?

11 Since all these things (the world and all the lost people on it) are thus to be dissolved (destroyed), what sort of people ought you (and I) to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God? (2 Peter 1:11-12)

May we pray!