

**As We Wait for Christ's Return**  
**2 Peter 3:14-18**

We have spent now 23 weeks in 1-2 Peter. We conclude this second letter today.

- Jesus predicted Peter's denial of his Lord, but then said, "When you have turned again, *strengthen your brothers*" (Lk 22:31-21).
- He did that. And one of the ways he strengthened his brothers and sisters and continues to do so, is through these inspired letters.
- They have strengthen us during a weary time of life. **[Pray]**

Now I'm not a prophet nor the son of a prophet (but I work for a non-profit); however, this much I know to be true: Christ will come again and make all things new!

Last week we considered this fact.

Peter taught us that God's word reveals it, God's work in the past supports it; God is patient in delaying it; and God's people live in view of it.

This passage is a continuation of these truths.

**3:14** - "Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these..."

**What do we while we wait?**

- It's not nothing; it's not non-sense; we're not killing time; **we're not wasted away again in Margaritville.**
- **it's**: "be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace" (3:14)
- **It's** "be established in the truth" and be a "growing" Christian (v. 17-18)

Once again, eschatology becomes the basis for ethics, or godly Christian living.

One's view of the end really matters.

Barclay gives three inscriptions on pagan tombs that reflects this reality.

- **One one tomb, hedonism is illustrated:** "I am nothing, I was nothing, so you who are still alive eat, drink and be merry."
- **On another tomb apathy:** "Once I had no existence; now I have none. I am not aware of it. *It doesn't concern me.*"
- **On another is despair:** "What is below?" "Deep darkness.:" "What is upward? All a lie." "Then we are all lost."

A lack of belief that history is going nowhere leads to hedonism, apathy or despair.

Maybe you wouldn't put that kind of inscription on your tombstone, and but you sense in your heart that you are drifting into

- **Hedonism:** you're indulging the flesh regularly, rather than pursuing godliness;
- **Apathy:** you've lost zeal and passion for Christ, perhaps during this covid time.

- **Despair**: you look at the events of the world and feel hopeless.

You need to reflect **deeply on the fact of Christ's coming**.

- You may believe it in your head, but you need to work it in your heart.
- You need to keep this vision of a new heaven and earth always before you.

**The belief that history has a telos, a goal, should inspire Christians to godliness (not hedonism) to worship (not apathy) and to hope (not despair).**

The sky is not falling for the

Peter's words here should help us work this into our hearts as he tells us what to do while we wait on his coming:

- (1) Be diligent to reflect the purity of Christ,
- (2) Experience the peace of Christ;
- (3) Be established in the truth of Christ; and
- (4) Grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

While we wait...

### #1: Be Diligent to Reflect the Purity of Christ (3:14)

This verse restates what was said in **3:11**.

- What sort of people ought we be? (there's a corporate nature to this as well)

- The false teachers denied the Lord's coming, and had a **live-how-you want** kind of ethic.
- Christians affirm the Lord's coming and are called on to **"be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish"**

Several themes re-appear here at the end of the letter:

**Be diligent** – see **1:5, 10**. Peter loves this term! (Spoudadzo)

- The second coming shouldn't lead us to passivity, but to passion.
- Paul uses it in Eph 4:3 - "be eager/diligent to maintain the unity of the Spirit..."
- Phil 2:12-13 – we work, but the good news is God is empowering our work.
- Hamilton, "I'm not throwing away my shot, shot... young scrappy and hungry..."
- We're to not throw away our shot in this life; but make it count; and one of those ways is godliness...

Be diligent **"to be found by him without spot or blemish"**

- The hope of the this Second Advent is that **He is coming**: "found by him"
- How will he find us?
  - Make every effort to be conformed to the **image of Christ, the spotless one**.
  - **Phil 1:9–11**: And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.
    - One of the way we're "blameless..." not grumbling, shining in a world of complainers (Phil 2:13ff)

**Without spot or blemish...** The language out of the sacrificial system where sacrifices were to be without spot or blemish.

- in contrast w/ the false teachers who were “blots and blemishes” (2:13)
- **Christ is the only one ever without spot or blemish. The pure one. (1 Pet 1:19)**
- **But by faith in Him we are counted righteousness.**
- **And we’re then given everything we need for life and godliness. (2 Pet 1:3)**
- **We will not be morally perfect in this life; but through Christ we’re to make every effort to be holy, and we know that we will be perfected on the last day.**
  - 1 John 3, his hope purifies us.

This is more important than your looks or your bank account or your accomplishments.

- Be diligent in the pursuit of godliness.
- **Doug Ponder, first date meeting who would be his wife: brown shirt, shrunk up, not pressed, stone washed jeans also shrunk up; white socks and running shoes. She was on her way to meet him and she called her friend because she was second guessing. Her friend said, “Go on the date, you can change the clothes easier than you can change the man.” Now he’s a really, really sharp dressed godly professor.**
- Put on the character of Christ in view of the coming of Christ.

Living a sanctified life in view of Christ’s coming is also conveyed in Paul’s prayer for the Thessalonians:

**1 Thess 5:23–24.** “Now may the God of peace [shalom] himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.”

- **The goal and the hope** (he will do it); he is at work in us.
- **What does this godly diligence look like?**
  - Practice Spiritual Disciplines: Scripture/Prayer/Serving/Stewardship/Community
  - Be under wise leaders
  - Join a recovery group to seek release from addictions
  - Spend time in counseling
  - Go through the membership process
  - Read books to nourish your soul
  - Limit your media engagement

Whatever action is needed, it is worth the effort!

## **#2: Experience the Peace of Christ (3:14)**

In light of the *Parousia*, “**be at peace.**”

What does this mean? Peace with God or peace with one another, or both. Both are to be pursued, to be sure.

**Peace with God** through Christ. (So NIV)

- A satisfied conscious – ready to see the Lord.
- It involves being right with God. So Moo and Baucham.
- You’re able to say, “**It is well with my soul.**”

- We will stand in his presence with joy rather than experiencing his wrath.

**Peace within the community of faith** – peace with your brothers and sisters.

- “But given that the type of issues mentioned in this book could disturb the community and that the references to scoffers and false teachers could leave them hunting for such people and thus damaging the solidarity of the community, one suspects that this add-on phrase is a reference to being at peace in the community, which is a significant Christian virtue (e.g., 1 Pet 3:11; Jas 3:18). In that case peace is not to be taken with “in him” [NIV] but as a separate thought added to the sentence.” (David’s; also Piper’s view, fellowship w/one another)
- Phil 1:9-11, love abound in light of the day of Christ...

In the **Sermon on the Mount**, these two ideas, purity (point 1) and peace are back to back; and when James gives the qualities of a peacemaker, he lists peace first (**James 3:17**).

- So the two are connected.
- Those who are walking in purity will be peacemakers.
- It is our purity that we have in Christ, and the purity that we pursue practically, that compels us to live at peace with others.
- Peacemakers are those who have found the peace of Christ, and are eager to live at peace with everyone (Rom 12:17).

Further, there is a peace that believers in the second coming can enjoy in that we know all wrongs will be righted by the judge of all the earth. (Rom 12:17-18)

- This doesn’t mean we don’t work to promote justice (we do) but rather we know that not all will be made right in this world, but it will one day, when the Prince of Peace appears and brings total shalom on the earth.
- **Michael Green:** “I remember a Bantu woman telling me in South Africa that she could face the humiliations to which her color daily made her liable without rancor or bitterness because she knew that the Lord Jesus would return one day, and then all wrongs would be righted. Such an attitude can, of course, easily lead to a quite un-Christian quietism; religion can become the opiate which dulls the people to acquiesce in injustice. But the parousia hope can both spur men to Christian action here and now, and also give a due perspective to those enigmas which, in this life, *are never resolved*.”
- It is by knowing that God will have the last word, that we can endure the trials on earth now.
- He will right all wrongs.
- **Phil 4:5b-** “The Lord is at hand” - before: gentleness, after: don’t be anxious.
  - We don’t have to freak out because the Lord is at hand.
- So experience Christ’s peace personally, by being reconciled to God through Christ.
- Experience Christ’s peace relationally, as you bear with others, as you forgive others, as you seek to live in harmony with one another.
- And experience peace in this already-not-yet reality, as you as you anticipate the coming of your King.

### #3: Be Established in the Truth of Christ (3:15-17)

Peter now quotes Paul for support and finally concludes with the phrase “**take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your stability.**”

- He wants them to be rooted and established in sound doctrine.
- **1:12** – “though I know you are established in the truth”
- He wants them to never drift away from it.
- To have a firm footing, not be swept away by false teaching.
- Stay the course, don’t lose your stability.
- **Be like a boxer/football player with proper stance so that you’re not knocked over.**

**15:** Peter reiterates the fact that the delay in the second coming is an expression of the Lord’s **patience** and is an opportunity for **salvation**.

- When the Lord appears, this opportunity for salvation will be lost.
- Now, the time between his ascension and his return is the age of salvation.
  - This is the most significant thing about this age.
  - **We study the Dark Ages, the Middle Ages, the Industrial Ages, or the technological age; what is infinitely more important is the Salvation Age!**
  - Jesus has opened up a way to be saved from judgment; and experience everlasting joy.
- The Lord is saving people!
- It’s a word to any who are not converted: come to Christ.
- It’s a word to believers, to be diligent to make the gospel known while there’s time.

**15b-16: “Our beloved brother Paul...”**

- You can sense the respect and unity with Paul and Peter. He has *agape for his adelphos*
- Despite having a conflict mentioned in Gal 2, both commended each other.
- Peter may have a specific passage in mind, but most likely, he’s referring to the overall essence of Paul’s message.

Peter states that Paul had been given much “**wisdom**” – uh, yes.

- He’s saying there’s a **consistency** with his teaching and with Paul’s, even if the false teachers try to use Paul for their own agendas (perhaps his teaching on grace).
- So then, we have yet another passage highlighting the reliability of Scripture!
- **There are lots of competing voices out there — Price is Right game show**
  - Who will we listen to? Listen to Christ through His word.
  - His word is accurate, authoritative, reliable, nourishing and sufficient.
  - **John Wesley: “O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be homo unius libri (a man of one book).” (Psalm 1).**

**16a: “all his letters”** - by now his letters were being collected, copied, circulated and considered “Scripture” (16c)

**16a: “these matters”** probably includes the patience of the Lord as well as other issues that Peter has addressed like the new heavens and the new earth, and how eschatology should inspire godliness; how this is the day of salvation, and so on.

• **Rom 13:11–14**

**16b: “hard to understand”**

- **Will Smith, “Parents just don’t understand”**
- **“Readers just don’t understand”** Peter says about Paul.
- Indeed, Paul’s words are difficult in places, but Peter has in mind those who were never grounded in the first place in apostolic doctrine
- These unsteady souls “twist” Paul’s words along w/ the other “Scriptures”
- **Baucham: “The false teachers themselves are incompetent exegetes because they have never taken the trouble to understand Christian teaching thoroughly. They and their followers are a case of the blind leading the blind”**
- It will lead to **“destruction”** A Strong warning.
- The twisting of Paul’s words to justify their own sensuality, and their rejection of the Parousia, will not lead to salvation but judgment.
- Peter doesn’t want the flock to be devoured by such wolves.

**17: The Point: Don’t get carried away by those who twist the Scriptures!**

- **Not everyone lady wearing yoga pants is doing yoga!**
- **Not every teacher is teaching sound doctrine, even though they may have an appearance of wisdom.**

**“Take care”** “be on your guard” – in this case against false teaching.

- It’s the image of a boat being run off shore.
- What’s at stake is losing one’s position, of making shipwreck of your faith.

Watch out for **“the errors of lawless people”** by being fastened to sound doctrine.

**#4: Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of Christ (3:18)**

Verses 17-18 summarize the book well: **“be a guarded Christian** (v. 17); **be a growing Christian** (v. 18); and do all of this by having a glorious vision of Jesus Christ (18b)

As we wait on Christ’s second coming, grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

- **“The Christian life is like a bicycle, once you stop moving you fall off.” (Green)**
- Paul speaks of pressing on to know Christ more and more (Phil 3:7-13)
- Past victories didn’t cause him to put it on cruise control!

Grow in grace.

- We have been given grace in the past, as we expressed faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins;
- We stand in grace now as those who have been justified;
- We’re nourished and strengthened by grace;

- We want to grow in this grace – experiencing his grace daily, understanding and applying the gospel more deeply.
- JC Ryle: “When I speak of a man growing in grace, I mean simply this—that his sense of sin is becoming deeper, his faith stronger, his hope brighter, his love more extensive, his spiritual-mindedness more marked. He feels more of the power of godliness in his own heart. He manifests more of it in his life. He is going on from strength to strength, from faith to faith and from grace to grace.”
- Grace... Not fat heads but changed hearts...

Growing in knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

- Press on to know more and more of Jesus.
- His glories are inexhaustible.
- There’s never a point when we have “arrived.”
- Spurgeon said in his lecture on Ministerial Progress:  
 “Know Jesus. Sit at His feet. Consider His nature, His work, His sufferings, His glory. Rejoice in His presence: commune with Him from day to day. To know Christ is to understand the most excellent of sciences. You cannot fail to be wise if you commune with wisdom; you cannot miss of strength if you have fellowship with the mighty Son of God.... Saints of sixty years’ experience, who have walked with Him every day, think they know Him; but they are only beginners yet.”

We’re only beginners.

Australia, 2000.

- What a big world, big ocean... the glories of Jesus Christ are inexhaustible...
- We only have our toes in the water!
- For all eternity will we continue growing in our knowledge of him!

**18b:** All of this is done for Christ’s glory in the present and future.

- He deserves glory now and until “the day of eternity.”
- The letter is framed with reference to the deity of Christ (2 Pet 1:2)
- **Rev 1:5-6**
- This is the ultimate goal of everything: the glory of Christ.  
 We give him glory because our salvation is owing to the work of Christ; our perseverance is made possible through the grace of Christ, and our place in the new heavens and new earth will be ours because of Christ.
- To him be the glory forever.