II Peter 3:8-18

In vv 1 of chapter 3 Peter speaks to us of an important principal of Christian living. As Christians we need often to be reminded. In chapter 1, v 13 he has told us, "he is stirring us up by way of reminder". Now in chapter 3, v 1 we have the same reminder. Peter knew that we as Christians are prone to forget.

- We forget the great pit from which we have been drawn.
- We forget the solid rock our feet have been placed upon.
- We forget the great price that has been paid for our redemption.
- We forget to follow his commands.
- We forget to love and care for each other as brothers and sisters.

So Peter reminds us. We need to make it a regular practice to "remember" by reading His Word, listening to His Spirit and communicating with Him in prayer.

We will find it nearly impossible to live the Christian life as we should without regular reminders.

Peter has been reminding his readers that scoffers will come saying, "Look at how long the prophets have been saying Christ will return. Christ isn't going to return. It has been so long. It's not going to happen.

In vv 8 and 9 Peter gives two reasons why the scoffers are wrong.

First… Peter says God doesn't count time the way we do.

God is above and outside the sphere of time. God sees all of eternity past and eternity future.

Peter says, to God one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Peter quotes Psalm 90:4 where we read,

For a thousand years in thy sight
Are like yesterday when it passes by.
Or as a watch in the night.
Peter says, "Don't forget this one thing. God is not slow; He simply doesn't operate according to our timetable."

Peter challenges us to remember.

God has never failed to keep a promise. He won't start now.

God is waiting because all around us are souls lost without a savior, ignorant of God's promises, daily headed for a Christless eternity in hell. If we aren't concerned for the lost around us, we've missed the point of God's patience. We need to stop wondering why he isn't coming and start spreading the good news. We must not allow human reasoning to keep us form our hope and our duty to spread the glorious good news of the gospel. Time should be regarded as an opportunity. Peter saw the years God gave the world as a further opportunity for men to repent and turn to Him.

Every day we are given is a gift of mercy to be used wisely.

In v 9 Peter gives a second reason God will fulfill His promise.

Peter says the Lord is not "slack" about His promises. Literally slack means tardy or late. God does not forget His promises, nor is He late in following through on them.

Peter says He is longsuffering and compassionate. God wants as many people as possible to come to faith in Him.

God, Peter says, is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. God is not "late". Rather, he is being exceedingly patient, giving people time to turn to Him.

Love is the reason that He delays the destruction of the world.

Paul speaks of this in 1 Tim. 2:4… who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.\(^1\)

God is not indifferent. God gives people free will. Some will exercise their free will and will reject Christ, but that is not God's desire. It is God's desire, not His command, that all be saved.

Some have taken the view that these scriptures teach a universal salvation where all men will ultimately come to salvation. In their view no one will be lost. All will be saved.

We need to guard against this false teaching as vigorously as we can.

Scriptures do not teach universal salvation. Scripture teaches that "all we have sinned", "There is none righteous, no not one".

God is loving and full of mercy, but he is also just. His perfect love causes Him to be merciful to those who recognize their sin and turn back to Him. He cannot ignore those who willingly sin and do not repent. God promises eternal life and peace to all those who repent and accept His offer of salvation.

He promises eternal life and peace to all those who repent and accept His offer of salvation.

He promises only judgement and destruction to those who do not choose to follow Him. The Life Application Bible Commentary has this insightful comment on these verses:

We must not sit and merely wait for Christ to return; we should live with the realization that time is short and that we have important work to do; we must participate with God in his deepest desire for the world—repentance and faith. Be ready to meet Christ any time, even today; yet plan your cause of service as though he may not return for many years.

End of quotation

In v 10 Peter urges us to think about the end time events which will come upon the earth. He refers to the end time event "the day of the Lord". He says the day of the Lord will come as a thief.

the heavens will pass away with a roar.

Lit. the word could be translated "with a crackling roar".

The word was used to describe:

- The whirring of a bird's wings in the air
- The sound made by a spear as it hurtles through the air
- The crackling of the flames of a forest fire
- And the sound of a shepherd's pipe

Peter describes three aspects of the day of the Lord. He says,

(1) "The heavens will disappear with a roar".
This describes the end of the earth's atmosphere and the sky above.

(2) Peter says, "the elements will melt with fervent heat".

Apparently the celestial bodies, the sun, the moon, stars and planets will be destroyed. Some believe this refers to the destruction of the four basic elements (earth, air, fire and water). The destruction could also include hostile spiritual powers in the heavens.

(3) "The earth and all the works that are therein shall be burned up."

There have been many different interpretations of this phrase, some of which include:

- The earth disappears
- The earth being burned up
- The earth being laid bare so that all the works that people counted on in this earth in place of God will be revealed for their futility, and then they will all be annihilated.

Hebrews 1:10-12…

10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: 11-They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; 12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

This seems to speak of this time of annihilation. We aren't sure exactly what is referenced here, but it will surely be a judgement of cleansing by fire.

Peter sees the second coming and the day of the Lord which will immediately follow the second coming as times of terror for those who do not know Christ.

John in the Revelation speaks of the mighty men who will call for the rocks and mountains to fall on them to hide them from the wrath of God.

If you are here without Christ today, I urge you to get right with Him before you leave

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this place today.

We who know Christ as savior need to remember that God has promised to spare us from His wrath which will be poured out upon mankind on the day of the Lord.

We have not been promised we will be spared from man's and Satan's wrath which will occur before the second coming. We must be sure we know the reasons for our faith so we can stand strong if and when we endure persecution.

Down through the ages Christians have never been immune from persecution. It is not reasonable for us to expect to escape persecution. We need to expect it and prepare for it.

The descriptions in v 10 are classic renderings of the day of the Lord described by the prophets.

They include, as mentioned before:

- The heavens passing away with a roar
- The elements melting with fervent heat
- The burning of the earth and its works with fire

In vv 11-14 Peter says since these things are going to happen, God is faithful, how should we then live in light of the second coming and the day of the Lord judgement?

Peter lists seven characteristics which should be in our lives as we wait for Christ.

1\textsuperscript{st}… \textit{holy conversation}

The word means conduct or manner of living.

The root of the Greek word \textit{holy} means "to be set apart for the service of God". A holy life is a separated life, separated from the world and to God.

2\textsuperscript{nd}… \textit{godliness}

Lit., piety toward God.

Webster defines godliness as "devotion to religious duties/practices; loyalty and devotion to parents/family".

Strong's carries the idea of holiness.

Kenneth Wuest points out that both \textit{conversation} and \textit{godliness} are plural and could be
translated "holy behaviors and pieties".

3rd... Looking for the coming of Christ

The word means "to expect", "to look for", "to wait for".
We need to remember that we have been told to occupy or "be busy" till He comes.

4th... be diligent

Do your best; make haste; take care; hurry on.
The word speaks of intense effort.
The sense is "Do your best to be found with respect to Him, in relation to Him as to His second coming". We need to be diligent to be in Him as we wait for His coming.

5th... in peace

...refers to the saints living at peace with one another.

6th... without spot

...means free from censure or rebuke, without reproach.

7th is blameless.

...That which cannot be blamed or found fault with. Our lives should be lived in such a way that there can be no blame attached to our behavior.
They can complain about our Christianity, but they should not be able to find anything to fault us for.
What a challenging list of virtues for us to aim for as we live for Him.
Because we are looking for and expecting His second coming, Peter says we should live holy and godly lives.

In v 15 the NIV translates, Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation.
The believers were waiting perhaps impatiently for the Lord's return. Peter says the delay
in His return was an indication of His patience.

The false teachers were saying it showed that God was slack concerning His promise. Peter says God "is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance".

God's patience means salvation for many more who will have the chance to respond to the gospel message.

Peter makes a remarkable statement in v 15 where he calls Paul his beloved brother. Peter did not hold a grudge. In Galatians we read the account of Paul rebuking Peter because he was inconsistent in his behavior toward the Gentiles.

Paul says, I withstood him to his face. Evidently it was a sharp exchange, not a very pretty meeting. But Peter was gracious and accepted the criticism and did not hold a grudge against Paul.

How we need to copy that behavior. How easy it is for us to think less of a brother or sister who confronts or slights us.

How we need to learn to confess/forgive and forsake the hurt. We need to give up the right to hurt back when we are hurt. Peter also makes a remarkable statement about Paul. He says that God gave him the wisdom to write his epistles. He says that sometimes Paul is difficult to understand.

Then he says, the unlearned and unstable wrest or distort as they do "the other scriptures" to their destruction.

Showing us that Peter was reading Paul's writings, and by the inspiration of God Peter calls Peter's writings Scripture. This shows us that Paul's epistles were recognized as Scripture at that time.

Several ways Paul's doctrines could be subverted come to mind.

Paul's doctrine of grace could be twisted into an excuse to sin.

Paul's doctrine of Christian freedom could be twisted into an excuse for unchristian license. Paul's doctrine of faith could be twisted into an argument that Christian deeds were unimportant.

William Barkley says about vv 17-18,

Peter tells us certain things about the Christian life:

(1) The Christian is forewarned. He cannot plead ignorance. He knows
the right way and its blessings; he knows the wrong way and its disasters.
He has no right to expect an easy way, but he can expect a cross.
He must be diligent to guard against those who would attack and pervert
the faith.

(2) The Christian is a man with a basis for life. He should be rooted and
grounded in the faith.
There is a certain inflexibility in the Christian life.
The Christian will never cease to believe that "Jesus Christ is Lord".
The Christian must never cease to be aware that it is his duty to make his
life match his belief.

(3) The Christian must be always growing in the Christian faith.
Daily he should experience the wonder of grace. He must daily grown
more and more like his saviour.
It is only with a firm foundation that a great building can tower into the air;
and it is only because it has deep roots that a great tree can reach out to the
sky with its branches. The Christian life is at once a life with a firm
foundation and with an ever outward and upward growth. The letter finishes
by giving glory to Christ, both now and to the end of time.

Quickly, some lessons to remember...

- The importance of remembering
  
  We need to think often of the basics of our faith.

- Christ is coming; be ready.
- While you wait be busy spreading the good news.
- Only those who repent and accept Christ as savior will escape God's wrath.

- Seven virtues for us to live:

  (1) Holy conduct
(2) Godliness / piety
(3) Looking for Christ’s return
(4) Diligence
(5) Peace
(6) Spotless
(7) Blameless

- Don’t hold grudges.

  Give up the right to be bitter or to hurt.

- Paul’s writings are as authoritative as Jesus’ words.
- Never say, “Let us sin so grace may abound”.
- Never allow freedom to be license to sin.

- Faith and deeds go hand in hand.

  Faith without works is dead.

- We know the right and the wrong. We are responsible to follow the right.
- It is our duty to be sure our life matches our belief.
- Never stand still. Always keep learning and growing.

Quite a tall order, my friend, Peter gives us. It is only with God the Holy Spirit’s help that we can live up to it. Let’s ask Him to help us live for Him.

If you are here without Christ, we want to give you a brief invitation to accept Him as your Lord and savior.

As we sing just one verse of #375 would you indicate your desire to come to Him by standing, raising your hand or coming forward?