

2Peter 12-01-13b

We pick up our study now here in 2 Peter, and as we approach the conclusion of this letter, we're thinking about the theme, the purpose, the message, the reason for which the Apostle Peter felt the need, under the ministry of God's Holy Spirit, to communicate these particular things. And really, there's a great summary statement here. What manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness? Well, I could ask myself the question, say, well, what do you mean by holy conduct and godliness? And this is the question that we've been answering by looking at the imperatives in the letter itself.

If we're going to be the right kind of people in holy conduct and godliness, what will we be doing? We will be fulfilling those exhortations to be diligent about our spiritual lives. So we've reviewed that, and we're back up to sort of the present here. There's a few more imperatives in the letter that we'll note as we encounter them.

But again, the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. And you remember, we talked about this a week or two back, what it means for it to come as a thief. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, Peter uses this notion of the day coming as a thief in the night.

Well, Paul does the same thing in Thessalonians. You yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. And you think, well, what significance does that have for me? Well, Paul begins that passage by saying, you don't have any need for me to write to you about times.

You've already got the map of the dispensation. You've got the map of the plan of God. Paul has told them perhaps in person, perhaps in other letters, perhaps by means of Epaphroditus or some other preachers.

He knows that they know the chronology, the eschatology of the end times. He says, I don't need to write to you about the times and the seasons. You know perfectly that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, i.e., unexpectedly, in a way that produces loss.

He doesn't say, you know, the day of the Lord so comes as grandma with a basket of goodies. That would be sort of a good thing. Wow, it's going to be a pleasant surprise.

No, it comes like a thief. Can't see it, don't expect it, aren't ready for it, and when you wake up you discover that you have lost something you value. That's what it means to come as a thief.

For when they say, this is 1 Thessalonians 5, when they, these others who get caught in the dark with the day overtaking them as a thief, when they say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them, unexpected. It looked to me like peace and safety. It looked to me like sound economy.

It looked to me like stable government. It looked to me like it was all going to be freedom from oppression, freedom from threat, and prosperity, peace and safety. That's what I was expecting.

All of the indicators, all of the data, all of the reports led me to believe that it was all going to be great. And I'm just shocked. Sudden destruction has come.

Nobody saw it coming. As labor pains upon a pregnant woman. Now, what's interesting to me about this particular figure, you could say, you know, sudden destruction comes upon them as a vagabond leaping out of the ditch while you're on a trip.

I mean, it would be completely unexpected. Here you are. You're the guy going down the road to Jericho, and you get waylaid by a bunch of burglars.

You're mugged. And you lay in there in the ditch bleeding and waiting, and sooner or later, here comes the Samaritan to perhaps take care of you. But that's totally unexpected.

What's the difference in that and labor pains for a pregnant woman? You've got a general ballpark here. You've got sort of the nine-month gestation. I mean, you may not know the day or the hour.

But, you know, when you start getting to a certain size and a certain time, you say, you know, it's not like there was no warning whatsoever. What? A baby? Oh, look, there's a baby. I mean, you know, you have some warning.

You have some buildup to it. You don't. It's, you know, although it does seem to happen to, you know, some extremely obese women.

But normally, people have a pretty good idea that there's a baby coming sometime fairly soon. They just don't know the day or the hour. Right.

But they kind of can predict the season. Well, notice Paul says sudden destruction comes upon them as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. Well, guess what? You should have had you should have doped this out.

You had enough information to tell that this was coming. And if it surprised you, it's kind of your own fault. And they shall not escape.

There is no escape. You can't get off the planet. This is like my hypothetical asteroid in the in the other class tonight.

But you, brethren, you believers in the Lord Jesus Christ in the church age are not in darkness. So that this day should overtake you as a thief. This day cannot overtake you.

He doesn't say, now watch out and be sure that it doesn't overtake you. He says it cannot

overtake you. You know why the day cannot overtake you as a thief? Because you will not be here when that day comes.

There's been a preceding event of unknown scheduled time that has taken us out. But the day of the Lord, which is the day of judgment, will not come upon us because you are all sons of light and sons of the day. Or if you want to be, you know, gender sensitive, you're children of light.

You are children of the day. Right. The day will come when there is the Trump, the voice of the archangel dead in Christ rise.

We are alive and remain. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. And that precedes this day of judgment, precedes the day of the Lord.

That is the day. That is the light. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

In other words, we believe in the pre tribulation rapture of the church. The tribulation is the day of darkness. It is the night.

It is the time when the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ will overtake the world like a thief. And it's going to cost them dearly when he comes because they did not want to be in the light. They did not walk in the light.

They didn't come to the light. They didn't accept the light. Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

And so they go into the darkness and that day overtakes them like a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of the night nor of the darkness.

Pre-tribulational rapture is taught in this passage. Don't let anybody tell you that there's no passages that teach the pre-tribulation rapture. You've got to be blind, deaf, dumb, and vacant upstairs to miss the clear teaching of Scripture.

And I don't mean to disparage anybody that believes in mid or post-trib. There's professors at seminaries that believe this. I don't understand how they can believe it.

I can understand some things. I can understand Calvinists going to Romans 9 and getting wrapped around the axle and flopping down the road on Reformed theology. I can understand that.

I can see how if you weren't careful you could construe Scripture. I cannot by any stretch get a mid-tribulation or post-tribulation rapture out of Scripture. I've tried.

I've read all of their best arguments and to me it is confusion. It is just insensibility, incomprehensibility to me. It is so clear.

It is so cleanly stated. I don't know what more Scripture could do except to just spell it out in two or three monosyllable words. You're not in the darkness so that the day should overtake you as a thief.

Notice he doesn't say those of you that are faithful, those of you that have been in Bible class, those of you that have persisted, those of you that have not fallen back. He says none of you are of the darkness. You're all in the light.

How can he say that? It is irrespective of spiritual growth, irrespective of spiritual standing, irrespective of baby, young man, old man, young, middle-aged in the faith. It doesn't matter. He says you blanket.

None of you are in the darkness in this sense. Why? Because all of the church gets raptured. All of the church is gone.

There is nobody left to be in the darkness for the day to overtake them like a thief. They're all gone. Therefore, since we are not of the night or of the darkness, i.e., we are not destined for judgment, we are not destined to be overtaken and suffer loss unexpectedly, let us not sleep as others do.

Now, Paul does a very clever thing. I'm sure that when he was dictating this to his amanuensis, by the time he got to the end of this paragraph, he was smiling a little bit because he is going to do a little, it's not so much a word play as a concept play with a word. And it revolves around this word sleep.

Let us not sleep as others do, but let us watch and be sober. Let us not sleep as others do. There are people who are just oblivious to the signs and the seasons, the labor pang is going to hit them, they're going to say, what, I'm pregnant, a baby's coming, how did that happen? And it's been building for months.

Those who sleep, sleep at night. And those who get drunk are drunk at night. In other words, if you as a believer are sloppy and apathetic and indifferent about your spiritual life, you are not walking in the light.

You have consciously with malice of forethought, by your own volition, left the light and gone to the darkness and you are falling asleep. When that's not your realm, it's not your place. You're not supposed to be there and you're not supposed to be doing that.

Watch and pray, be alert. Let those of us who are of the day be sober, not drunk. Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess.

In other words, don't be distracted by the material pleasures of this world. It's not so much an injunction against alcohol as it is. Don't be distracted with the things of this world.

You can get drunk on almost anything in the sense of having an unhealthy obsession, an unhealthy investment in it. It can be anything. Let those of us who are of the day, and how many of us are of the day? All of us are of the day.

You are all sons of light and sons of day. Remember verse 5? So let those of us who are of the day, i.e. let's all of us, be sober, putting on, and look at this, the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. Now you sharp-eyed veterans of Bible study, what do you see in that sentence? What do you see in the last half of that sentence? You've all memorized, put on the armor of God, right? Helmet of salvation, sword of the spirit, shield of faith, all that.

What else do you see here? Remember, it's been a while since we went over it, but do you remember what we conveniently called the triad of Christian virtues? You find it at the end of 1 Corinthians 13. Now abideth these three. What are they? Faith, hope, and love.

What do you have here? The breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet, hope. What's the difference in the helmet and the breastplate? Would you put your helmet over your chest and put the breastplate on your head? Wouldn't make much sense, would it? They protect two different parts of the body. They're shaped differently.

They have different purposes and functions, right? So why isn't it the helmet of love and the breastplate of hope, I ask myself? Well, what's behind the breastplate in your physical body? That's your heart. That's the core of your emotions and your motivations, the thoughts and intents of the heart, right? This is your motive force. This is where you decide to act.

Now, I'm not talking about actual biology. I'm talking about from a biblical point of view, from the understanding of the ages, people say, well, I had a gut feeling that I needed to do this. It was in my core here.

I was motivated. I felt that something needed to be done. I had a motivation.

The thoughts and intents of the heart that are judged, that's your motivations, right? It's based on knowledge. It's based on information. It's based on truths and perceptions and things that are in your head, right? So faith and love are down here in the area of action, of motivation.

Hope is the helmet that protects your head, the noose. You get the cardia down here. You get the noose up here.

And hope is up here on the head. The hope, hope of salvation, hope of deliverance. I decide based on hope that I am going to be a person of faith.

I decide that I'm going to heed these imperatives. I make the decision. And it's going to work itself out in faith and in love when I live my life.

I set the policy. Now I'm going to carry it out. Policy is in the head.

Action is in the heart. Policy is based on hope. Action is based on faith and love.

Does it make sense? There's method to this. It's not an accident. That's why the helmet is always deliverance, the hope of deliverance, the expectation of deliverance.

Because there is an expectation, because I know this event is coming up soon, I have a policy. I have a set of priorities and goals and values up here. And it's going to motivate take place in my life.

Because I have set these policies and goals and priorities, now I'm going to act. And it's going to outwork. It's going to be expressed in and protected by my faith and love.

It's going to express itself in love. Love for one another. Love for those who are outside who need to hear the word of truth.

For God did not appoint us to wrath. Appoint is like the word appointment, right? We do not have an appointment with wrath. The church does not have an appointment with wrath.

Wrath is not on our schedule. The tribulation, one-third of the earth burning, searing, rocks fall on me, flee to the hills, it's not on the church's schedule. God did not put wrath on our calendar.

I just don't know how much more clear it can be. But to obtain deliverance through our Lord Jesus Christ. Why is it that we're not here for the tribulation? Because the Lord Jesus Christ delivers us out of the world.

This is the picture of Enoch. Enoch walked with God and he was not. For God took him.

When Noah builds the ark and is delivered through, and Shem is on there, the Shemites, in his loins as it were, delivered through the judgment. This is your 70th week of Daniel. Your Old Testament saints who are obedient and get in the ark, are delivered through.

Don't take time to get your coat, flee to the hills. When you see the abomination of desolation, it's all kinds of instructions for the faithful on how to be delivered through the judgments. We are not Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

We are Enoch. Enoch walked with God and he was not. For God raptured him.

God took him. Why is that in the Bible? Because it is fitting. It is a picture.

We're not appointed to wrath but to obtain deliverance through our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep. Now here's the little twist on sleep. Whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Now, wake or sleep in this context is more whether we're alive or dead, right? But it also, it has this double entendre, because he

said up above in verse 6, let us not sleep. He says, look, we're not of the night or of the darkness, we're of the day, we're children of the light, so live accordingly.

But, whether we wake or sleep, even if you sleep, even if you are a backslider, we're going to live together with him. You can't be such a bad believer that God leaves you behind at the rapture and you go through the tribulation. Whether we wake or sleep, we have been delivered, obtained salvation, deliverance, through him.

So, it's not like, well, the faithful will be raptured and the unfaithful are going to have to stick around and go through all of the grief. It's so antithetical to good order and discipline. Seventy weeks are determined upon your people, Daniel, and upon the holy city.

Your people. The 70th week is for Israel. Now, what if somebody gets saved in the 70th week? If the church is still here, are they church or are they Israel? If it's the 70th week for Israel, are Israel and the church now the same thing? Have they somehow been amalgamated? Have dogs become cats and cats become dogs? Do we have dats and cogs? There's two separate things.

God has a separate program for Israel, separate program for the church. The church clock is ticking when the rapture takes place. You know all of this.

So, therefore, comfort each other and edify one another. Build each other up. Why do we rehearse these things? Why do we go over them? Well, Sam, you know, this seems awfully divisive.

You're telling people that they're in different camps and they're pre-mid and post-drive and they're a-mill and post-mill and pre-mill. Isn't that divisive? Can't we just concentrate on the things that unite us? Edify one another with these things. We need to communicate the truth of the word of God as clearly as we can so that people don't wind up in the darkness, don't wind up being asleep when they ought to be awake.

That is 1 Thessalonians 5. As I mentioned before, Jesus mentioned this coming like a thief in Matthew 24. We've already covered that. Same thing in Luke 12.

In Revelation 3, verse 3, you have the church at Sardis. These things says He who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your works, that you have a name, that you are alive, but you are dead.

I was visiting with a good dear friend talking about the book of life and various teachings of the word of God related to it. And this is one passage I did not include in my discussion, but it should have been in there. I know you have a name, that you are alive, but you are dead.

You people think you're in the book of life in terms of production, but you're not. It doesn't mean they're not saved. The book of life is the book of production.

When we're saved, our name is written into the book of life. Why? It is the ledger of righteousness by faith. Now that you're saved, you have the potential to produce righteousness by faith.

And at the point of salvation, yes, your name is entered into the book of life. The question is, why is it there? Is this the book of trees, or is it the book of fruit? It's the book of fruit. You're a tree.

Tree name is in there. And here are all of these blanks for the recording of fruit. Now, suppose you are a complete loss as a believer.

All of your production is wood, hay, and stubble. There is not a gemstone, there's not a particle of gold dust or silver, anything in there. You are nothing but trash in terms of production.

In terms of production. Everybody's precious in his sight. But production-wise, it's all combustible.

Nothing to enter into the book. Guess what? If there's nothing to be entered in the book, why is your name in there taking up space? Your name is blotted out of the book. The false teachers of 2 Peter and Jude blot their name out of the book.

In some cases, even if you initially accrued some righteousness by faith, if you become such a heinous scalawag that you revoke all of that, your name is blotted out of the book. It is possible to have your name blotted out of the book of life. You don't lose your salvation.

It is not a salvation book. It is a production book. Now, the question comes, what about when you get over to Revelation 20 and 22 and you get the great white throne and it says the books were opened and another book which is of life and the dead were judged out of those books? Well, notice the word.

The dead are judged. Not the living trees. It's bad if you're a living tree and you produce no fruit.

You're a living tree. You've been plugged into the vine and you didn't produce any fruit. You have become a dead branch, right? But you're not the dead in the sense of the unsaved.

The rest of the dead live not until the thousand years are complete. All the believers have been raised. The great white throne is unbelievers only.

The dead are judged at the great white throne. And they're still dead. They're called dead.

The sea gives up the dead. The grave gives up the dead. Hades gives up the dead.

The dead, small and great, stand before the throne and the books are opened and another book which is of life. Now, they are judged out of what's in the books. And anyone whose name is not found in the book of life is cast into the lake of fire.

And you say, well, now see, that just nails it right there. That throws the whole thing into the soup. No, it doesn't.

This is the final check. This is the final, have you ever been written in the book of life with the expectation that you would produce fruit? No. Were you written in and your name was blotted out? No.

Your name was never written in that book because you were never saved. It's not the book of the saved, but, well, did you somehow produce some righteousness by faith without ever having been expressing faith in Christ? Was there a bookkeeping error somewhere? Are you in there with some sort of gold and silver and precious stones which is the reason you were saved? No. They check all the books including the book of production.

It's the book of life. And these dead, almost by definition, are not in there. But God goes through the formality of checking the book anyway.

Every book is checked. Are you anywhere? Any possibility of a bookkeeping error, any possibility that, oh, well, look, here's a ruby and a topaz ascribed to this guy. He must be saved.

And by the way, at the great white throne, it says as many as were not found written in the book. Because at the end of the millennium, you've got some people that died and they haven't yet had their judgment. So not everybody who stands there is judged.

But these are the dead. These are the ones that are not alive, have not already received their resurrection package. As many as are not found written are cast into the lake of fire.

But it's the emphasis of the name of the book is not, it's not called the book of the saved. It's called the book of life. If you're alive, you should bear fruit.

It is an anomaly. If you're alive and you're not bearing fruit, what's the matter with you? You live to bear fruit. That's your calling and your choosing.

Well, be watchful. Strengthen the things which remain. This is Revelation chapter 3, Jesus talking to Sardis.

Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die. You're a church of believers and you've got a name that you're alive, but you're dead and there's a few living things and they're getting ready to die. You had a pot full of geraniums.

Nearly all of them are dead. Everybody says, your geraniums are doing well. I look at them.

There's just a couple of them that have got a few little green leaves left. Well, strengthen what remains. Weed that stuff out.

Cultivate the few things that are still alive. For I have not found your works mature before God. You are not performing like mature believers.

Perfect means mature. Remember therefore how you have received and heard. You have received and been given the Word.

Remember Peter's emphasis? You've got to have the straight scoop. You've got to have the truth of God. Aim your faith at it.

That's how you live. That's how you produce. He says, strengthen the things that remain.

You have heard and received the Word. Hold fast and change your mind. Get with the program.

Therefore, if you will not watch, if you will not pay attention and be diligent and get with this program, I will come upon you as a thief and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you. You're going to be just like the people who live in the dark and you're going to suffer loss unexpectedly. You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments and they shall walk with me in white for they are worthy.

They haven't defiled themselves. They haven't gone astray. They haven't gone down this dark, bad road.

He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life. What's the implication? These other people in Sardis that won't watch, that won't repent, that won't take that received word and do something with it, their name will be blotted out. Now, does that mean they've lost their salvation? No.

But it means for believers, the Book of Life is a book of reward. It is a book of reward. Rewards are based... How do I know this? Look over in Revelation chapter 20 and chapter 22.

I don't have time to give you all the passages, but it says, who has access to the Holy City? Only those whose names are written in the Book of Life. There's plenty of people outside whose part is in the lake that burns. It's like chapter 21.

It talks about those whose portion is in the lake of fire. They're outside. Dogs, fornicators, those who love and practice a lie.

Guess what? Their names were blotted out of the Book of Life. They are saved. They have eternal life.

They're in the kingdom of the Father, but because their names are not written in the book, they do not have access to the New Jerusalem. They are barred. The gates are open day and night, and they can look in, but they can't go in.

They can see the kingdom, but they can't enter the kingdom, so to speak, in terms of that Holy City. It says, only those whose names are written in the Book of Life have access to that city. I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life.

I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. This is a reward. The fact that your name is not confessed before the Father doesn't mean you're not saved, but this is an honor.

Can you imagine the Lord Jesus Christ bringing you up to the Father's throne and saying, Father, this is my brother or my sister, so and so. Introducing us to God the Father Himself by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. That's a reward.

That's an honor for those who are in the Book of Life. We will have a dwelling place inside the New Jerusalem, those who are, I say we, I hope I'm in that number, that are written in the Book of Life. Look at the letter to Sardis.

It tells you everything you need to know about the Book of Life. You can be in it and you can be out of it as a believer because it is a book of production. It is a book of reward.

Now, the book of reward and production is checked for the dead. Is there any way we can find to keep from putting these people in the lake of fire? Well, let's check all the books. We'll even check the book of reward and see if by any chance there's some worthy work that they produced.

Of course, being dead, they can't. Being unsaved, they can't. Righteousness is not possible when you have rejected the Son of God.

So they are not found written in the book and they are cast into the lake of fire. So for them, instead of a book of reward, it becomes a book of judgment. Same book, probably, but totally different purpose at these different judgments.

Well, Peter says, be diligent. Pay attention. The time is short.

The elements are going to melt with the fervent heat. What kind of people ought we to be? Think about it. Consider that day near and act accordingly.

So if you go back now, just real quickly, to 2 Peter chapter 3, he says, Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless. Got another imperative there in verse 14, don't we? Therefore, in light of all of these things we've reviewed, he's summing up. This is the big finish.

Looking forward to these things. That's your helmet of hope. That's your policy-setting view.

Your eyes are in your head, right? Up there, protected by the helmet. Looking forward to these things. Be diligent.

He said be diligent twice in chapter 1, didn't he? And he's saying it again. Be diligent. You've got to work at this.

You've got to put some effort into it. You've got to think a little bit. It's not going to happen.

You're not going to fall backwards into it. You're not going to have a happy accident and have these things take place. You've got to work at it.

Be diligent. To be found by Him in peace without spot and blameless. This is the same Peter who said the devil roams the earth seeking whom he may devour.

So who do you want to be found by? Do you want to be found by the devil? Or do you want to be found by the Lord Jesus? Do you want to be found by the devil, devourable, or do you want to be found by the Lord Jesus Christ without spot and blameless? Thinking, you know, this delay, this extra few days, this extra week, however much time I've got left in my life, this is the mercy of God. I've still got some time to add some ledger entries in that book of life. I've still got a chance to lay hold of righteousness by faith.

It would be a mixed blessing if the Lord Jesus came right this instant. Wonderful in many, many ways, but all the time for improvement is over with. All the chances for righteousness by faith are over with.

I don't know about you, but I am going to use whatever time remains to me to try to do better. Try to do more. Try to be more diligent.

Try to be more true to my calling and my choosing. Try to do these things that Peter has enjoined and has exhorted us to do. Be diligent.

Be found without spot and blameless. Be found by the Lord Jesus, not by Satan. As also our beloved brother Paul.

Now this is what we're going to pick up next week. Peter's going to talk about Paul and talk about the difficult things that Paul has put in his letters. Well, what are these difficult things? What is it that people rest to their own destruction? I've got a list.

It's already done. You just can't see it because I didn't get to it tonight, but we'll get to it next time. And it's very interesting that Peter is familiar with the writings of Paul.

Which letters? And there's one in particular that I think is going to really surprise you. It surprised me. And happily so, because it confirmed one of my cherished pet theories.

So that's what we'll look at next week. But in closing, look at those imperatives. Circle the imperatives in this letter.

Look at the remaining three that we haven't seen yet. And that tells you Peter's heart. It tells you God's heart and his purpose for us in whatever time remains to us in this life.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you that you have not left us to fend for ourselves or to figure things out as best we can.

You have clearly communicated your plan and purpose. You have provided every resource, every support, every mechanism, every form of guidance, the enablement and empowerment of your Holy Spirit to fulfill these things and to maximize the potential that has been given to us through the Lord Jesus Christ and his faithfulness and his work on the cross. We pray that we can don our armor, that we will understand the functions of our heads and of our hearts and we can fulfill these imperatives that we see so clearly presented to us in this great letter.

As a result, we know that the Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified both now and in the day of his coming and we will be prepared for service both now and in the ages to come. We ask and pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.