

2Peter 12-01-27a

This is Friday, the 27th of January, 2012. We continue and conclude our study of the book of 2 Peter tonight. We're in chapter 3, and we resume in verse 16.

We'll take a moment as we begin to go to the Lord in prayer and ensure that God the Holy Spirit has a ready and willing recipient for His ministry in each one of us. Shall we pray? Father, we are blessed to have the opportunity to spend time in fellowship with believers who appreciate and value that time, to look into the truth of Your Word, to share the understanding of it with one another, to receive and give ministry in terms of blessing by association with those who love the Lord Jesus and who are looking forward to an eternal future with You. We thank You for this passage of Scripture and the book that it brings to a conclusion, and we ask that as we study it together this evening that Your Holy Spirit will minister it to each heart.

Each of us find here and in the related passages we look at the truth that will motivate us and encourage us and bring us to that place of maturity and function that is pleasing in Your sight and glorifies the Lord Jesus. We ask it in His name. Amen.

2 Peter has been a study in practical Christian living. As with so much of the New Testament, it has addressed the definition of godly living, the basis for it, the means by which we accomplish it. And if you think about this, this is good information to have.

It's one thing to be getting exhorted and encouraged and browbeaten and expected to be a godly Christian person, but if we just go forth and try to hew a path through the forest of life and say, I'm going to be a really wonderful Christian person, we don't have it within us. We're not born with it. We can't think it up.

We need something from God to enable us to live the life that He calls us to. In the same way that salvation is all of grace, our rescue from our lost and hopeless condition and our destiny in the eternal future with God is all provided by God. We can't do any of it.

All we can do is be willing to receive it. And the same is true in our post-salvation life. We can't just decide to be wonderful people.

We can't decide to eliminate our fallen nature and our sinful impulses and our corrupted and corrosive patterns of behavior, the harm that we do to one another, the disappointment that we bring to God in heaven. We can't just decide not to do those things. It takes transformation inside us.

And this is the message that the world at large doesn't understand about Christianity. When Christianity is viewed from the outside, people say, Jesus was a wonderful man. What a nice thought, the golden rule, do unto others, and the gentle Jesus with the child on his knee and so on.

What they don't understand and really can't understand is that the Christian way of life is not a philosophy. It is a process of transformation. We are changed in the inner man.

This is what Peter is talking about in this letter. And since this is our concluding evening in looking at this epistle, I want to just quickly review what we have covered to get to this final few lines tonight. You remember that Peter is writing in the beginning, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

He began by talking about righteousness and that it is obtained by faith. Isn't that what that says? It sounds flowery, but he says, I'm writing to you who have got this precious faith with us by means of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Since we don't have righteousness and we can't produce righteousness, my example of this is someone who has committed kind of a grievous wrong against someone else.

And then if you're unrepentant and unconcerned about that, let's say you were out there taking care of your garden and you put out a bunch of high-powered fertilizer and you slop it all around the edges of your yard. And some of it goes into your neighbor's yard and kills their dog. And you hear about this, but you don't express any concern or any sorrow or any regret to your neighbor.

And then a few days later, you decide to take a pan of cupcakes over to your neighbor. Well, here's some cupcakes. And the neighbor says, you killed my dog.

Why would I want any cupcakes from you? There is a problem in the relationship that means you can't receive and don't want to receive anything. And this is sort of not a very good illustration, but it's a way of getting at the idea that God can't be pleased with our alleged goodnesses. We think we're doing something good, but there is a huge issue that stands between us and God.

There's an unresolved rift. And us deciding that we're going to help a lady across the street or give a couple of bucks to a homeless person or something, and we kind of look skyward and say, see God, I'm not such a bad person. God isn't interested in that, and God isn't impressed with it any more than he would be if after killing the neighbor's dog, you clipped a few of the weeds at the edge of their yard and said, well, they'll appreciate that.

Well, no, they won't. There's a much larger issue at stake. And so it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ that satisfies God.

And that's what Peter leads with. That's what he begins with. There is a righteousness that is pleasing in God's sight.

We cannot produce it. We can only lay hold of it by faith. We can enter into it by faith.

We can be partakers of and possessors of the righteousness of Jesus Christ through faith. And that system isn't something that man dreamed up. You remember Ephesians 2, 8, and 9, where

Paul talks about this subject.

And he says, you have been saved by grace through faith. And that salvation didn't come from you. It is a gift of God.

And it isn't something that we do by works. And that way nobody can boast. So even after we're saved, and as we begin to enter into growth and production as Christians, we don't pat ourselves on the back and expect that God is going to assign us great merit and so on, because all we have done is partake of the righteousness of Christ.

This is what Peter begins with. You can always tell what something's going to be about if it's well written, because it introduces its subject at the beginning. He talks about grace and peace at the beginning.

Be multiplied, you. Well, flip down to the end. You remember most of what's in between here.

We had a whole chapter on those who would divert us and destroy us through false and heretical teachings, lead us astray. If we are going to lay hold of Christ's righteousness by faith, what does that mean? What is faith? Well, faith is being informed of God's plan and purpose. God explains Himself, explains how He wants us to behave, what He would like us to do, what He would like us to refrain from doing.

And we believe what God says. We haven't seen God. We haven't seen Christ.

We didn't see the crucifixion. We haven't seen any of the miracles in the Bible. We accept them by faith, and we trust in the promises of God, that if we are obedient and if we are diligent, that we can enter into realms of blessing and realms of opportunity and realms of production and fruitfulness that can't be imagined.

They're part of God's eternal plan and purpose. And so we trust in these things and we do this. That's what faith is.

Faith isn't just clinging desperately to some abstract hope. There are propositional truths in Scripture. God makes statements.

The one who lives and believes in me will never die, Jesus said. Do you believe this or not? Do you believe that by faith you will live forever? If you trust in Christ, claim Him as your Savior, your life is going to go into the eternal future. It will outlast this universe, outlast this world.

Well, we believe that, and because we believe it, it changes us. I've got to live a little bit differently, because I'm not here just to have a good time before I die. I'm here to get ready for an eternal future.

So faith in that proposition, faith in that declaration, that I am going to live beyond this life,

changes me. It changes my perspective. It changes my priorities.

I'm not as worried about getting everything I can in this life. I'm more interested, or start to get more interested, in laying claim to things in the next life. And each one of our faith claims, each one of our faith possessions, changes us, alters our perspective.

It's a practical inner transformation. You can't fake it. You can't fudge it.

You can't fool God with it. We either actually believe, or we don't. And when we actually believe these specific biblical truths, there is a supernatural change within us.

God's truth, unlike geometrical truth, or geographical truth, or mathematical truth, or astronomical truth, or microscopic truth, biological truth, or any other kind of scientific truth, the truth of God, when we believe these things, that partake of eternity and partake of God, they are shot through with God's power, and when we believe them, they change us. I can believe that Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in Ford's Theater. It's a truth, and I believe it.

It doesn't change me. If I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross and paid the penalty for my sins, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father, awaiting the day when the Father will send Him to collect me and you and all other believers of this age, and take us unto Himself, that is divine truth with transformational power. So, Peter is reminding his audience, in chapter 2, the whole chapter was about false teachers.

Why? Do you want that essential, divinely enabled and empowered truth to be set aside and replaced with a false substitute that does not transform, that does not prepare us, does not let us lay claim to eternal things? That's what false teachers do. They rob us. They deceive us, and when I was a little kid, we used to say, you get gypped.

You were expecting one thing, and you're gypped out of it. I'm sure there's some, I'm probably offending, I don't know, gypsies or something, and I apologize in advance. That was a term when I was little.

If you got big-dealed out of something, if you got cheated out of something, that was a term that was used. But what does it mean? You've been deceived, and what you were hoping for and thought you were going to get doesn't happen. This is what false teaching does.

That's why there is this enormous warning, and as much as it's a warning against false truth, it is an exhortation to cling to God's truth. We try to find faithful, accurate presentation of the truth of God's Word so that when we put our faith in it, it does its transformational work, we have righteousness credited to our account, and we are more and more fully prepared for the future with God. And that leads us to chapter 3, which we have looked at most recently.

Peter says, this is the second time I have written to you on these things, reminding you that you will be warned, and stick with the testimony of the prophets and the apostles that you have in

these writings. Stick with the truth that is transformational. Stick with the truth that is preparing you for the eternal future with God.

And don't let somebody convince you that God doesn't exist. Where is He? I haven't seen a miracle in hundreds of years. This is all hearsay.

It's mythology. It's made up. Where is the promise of His coming? If it was real, He would be here by now, etc.

Peter says, look, to the extent that God has seemed inactive, this is His mercy. You can't have faith if you see everything. On the day that the Lord Jesus is revealed, those people are out of faith options.

They can no longer be saved by faith. They can no longer grow in grace and knowledge by faith. They can no longer prepare for the eternal future by faith.

Why? What does Hebrew say about faith? Faith is the substance of things that now are only hoped for. It is the evidence of things that are not seen. Once you see, and once there is no more future hope, guess what? No more faith and no more opportunity.

People standing before the judgment can't make a last-second decision. Oh, well, God, now that I see you sitting on the judgment seat, now that I see the Lord Jesus Christ, well, of course I believe, of course I accept. Sorry, it's too late.

These things have to be received by faith. That's God's criteria. How does God know whether someone is sincere, whether someone is genuinely interested in relationship with Him? He has set up human history to operate on faith.

In our age, Jesus said, Thomas, you've stuck your fingers into the scars in my side and the holes in my hands, and you believe. That's fine, but blessed are those who won't see these things, and yet they're going to believe anyway. Those are the ones God is looking for.

That is the true test of our inclination for or against God. If we incline ourselves toward God, we accept what He says by faith. We accept the witness, the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit by faith.

And everybody has that inner testimony. Everybody has this testimony of scriptural truth in one form or another, and we make our decision on faith. When the faith time is over, salvation time is over.

Growth time is over. Opportunity time is over when faith is no longer an option. And so Peter says the delay in the return of the Lord Jesus Christ is salvation.

He says Paul has written about this in his letters, and we saw in Romans chapter 2, and you see

allusions to this. We see this in, for example, Romans chapter 8, 19, where Paul says that the whole creation is groaning and waiting for the revelation of the sons of God. This is when creation will be relieved of the curse that mankind brought on it.

He wrote about it in his first Corinthian letter, chapter 15, verse 24, talking about the coming of the end, when the Lord Jesus delivers the kingdom, the millennial kingdom, to God the Father, and he puts an end to all rule and all authority and power, as it is known in this world. He talked about it in 1 Thessalonians 4, 15. This we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means get ahead of those who are asleep.

There is a time allocated for this life, and then there is the time of the rapture. 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 10, When the Lord Jesus Christ comes in that day to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony to you was believed, it rests on faith, and the glory of Jesus Christ is going to be reflected in His saints. Sanctified ones.

What does it mean to be a saint? Or sanctified? Set apart? It means to have laid hold of righteousness by faith, to have been transformed in the inner man. And those are the ones that He is going to be looking for in that day, to be glorified among, because those are the ones who believed the testimony of the prophets and the apostles who set down God's truth in Scripture. So, that brings us now to the section of chapter 3 where we resume tonight.

We saw that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat. Both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Now, is that a declaration? Is that a propositional statement of truth? The earth and the works in it will be burned up.

The elements are going to melt with a fervent heat. That's what the Word of God says. Now, do we believe it? Is this something that we say, I absolutely take that for fact? And not only do I believe it in the abstract, not only am I academically assenting to it, but I am alerted by that information.

I am chastened. I am motivated by that information. Why should I spend my life solely to build up a career, solely to achieve some sort of accomplishments or some sort of recognition or some sort of lasting monument to myself, when this earth and the works that are in it will be burned up? If I want to do something with my life that is meaningful, if I want to do something with my time on this earth that has lasting value and significance, where should I put my attention? Where should I put my energy? In those things that transcend this world, that transcend this life, transcend this universe, and that is, by God's grace, eternal life, eternal truth, the eternal presence and company of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

So, looking at this truth that is in the Word of God, I believe it. It changes me. I am less interested.

And the more firmly convinced I am of this and the more motivated I am by it, the less interested I am in what people think or what level of achievement I attain or how much money I am able to stick into the bank or how big of a mansion or how many houses and barns I can fill. Jesus' parable pertains here, the man who achieved a lot and went to bed that night thinking, I'm going to build more barns and load up more grain. Thou fool, this night thy soul is required of thee.

So, who cares about the barns now? This is the idea. So, therefore, in verse 11, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness? What is it we take with us? Not possessions, not achievements, not recognition, not popularity, not any other thing that typically attracts us. It is holy living and godliness.

These are things that are written in God's books. After the universe is destroyed, what we have laid hold of by faith is still recorded and written down and is the basis for our life and our fate in the eternal future. So, what manner of persons ought we to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God? I've illustrated this and mentioned it many times.

We all know how it changes us when we anticipate something exciting, something desirable, especially in the near future. We're about to have a wonderful experience. We're about to have a wonderful visit.

We're about to do some really exceptional thing. This is like little kids at Christmas. They get excited.

Look at all those boxes under the tree with my name on them. Look at the lights. Look at the sounds.

Look at the times and the seasons. It's just a joyous, fun time. We get to see people.

We get to do special things. School is out. Things in the near term change us, change our priorities, change what we choose to do.

And when we are looking forward eagerly to a thing, we live a different kind of life. And Peter says, looking forward to the dissolution of this universe, what kind of people ought we to be? Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which, when God's day comes, the day of man and the day of sin and the day of evil that is represented in this universe will all be done away. Being on fire, the heavens will be dissolved and the elements will melt with fervent heat.

And it's so interesting to me that the further science gets, the more they eventually catch up to what they consider to be sheep herders and goat herders that wrote scriptures thousands of years ago. Here's the Apostle Peter, a fisherman in Galilee, who knew what the ending scenario

would be for the universe 2,000 years before our great PhDs of physics and astronomy and so on finally figured out that, oh, you know, the universe began with a hot big bang and it's going to end the same way it started in a great molten puddle of superheated plasma, something that isn't matter and isn't energy. It's just a big hot something or other.

And they should have just read 2 Peter. He told him that 1,950 years ago. So nevertheless, we, according to his promise, just think about that.

We, according to his promise. It doesn't say we, according to the evidence that we see on Mount Ararat. We, according to the glowing pillar of cloud and fire on Mount Sinai.

We, according to the great gap in the sky where we can look and see the throne of God. What does it say? We, according to his promise. Now, what's the promise of God worth? What's it worth? I know people that if they make you a promise, in fact, they don't even have to promise.

They will just say a thing and you can bank on that thing. If they say they will be there at a certain time, you can count on them being there. If they say they're going to do a certain thing, you can count on it.

It's going to be like the sun rising tomorrow. Their integrity is legendary. If they say a thing, that's good enough.

There are other people that say a thing and based on past experience, you say, well, maybe. I'm not going to hold my breath. I'm not going to leave myself without any other options because this just typically doesn't come true.

We can have the opposite sort of reputation. Well, we, according to his promise, how much stock do we put in the promise of God? This has been the theme through this whole letter. He started with it.

It was in the middle. You can't go with false information. You've got to lay hold of the promises of God, the truth of God.

That's what transforms. That's what prepares for the future. So we, according to his promise, are looking for that new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells.

This is what we look forward to. Look around. Look at the election season.

Look at the news. Look at the economy. Look at Europe.

Look at Africa. Look at the Middle East. Look at Asia.

Look at Iran. Look at North Korea. Look anywhere you want to look.

Look at ourselves. Wouldn't it be the most gratifying, wonderful relief and blessing to live in an

environment where righteousness is the default. Righteousness is the expectation.

Righteousness is literally at home in that new universe. Kadoike'o means dwelling according to. This is to dwell, to be at home.

Christ at home in your hearts. Same word, same idea. So, new heavens and new earth.

And how real is that? How prepared will we be? How transformed and able to enter into it will we be? Well, how much righteousness have we understood? How much righteousness have we accrued? How much of it have we laid hold of by faith? That's how at home we will be in a universe where righteousness dwells. Remember the first chapter of John, men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil? Well, to the extent that we are transformed, we more and more look forward to just the opposite. And that brings us to verse 14.

Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things. Three times in the space of five verses here, Peter says, looking forward to, looking forward, hasting. This is hope.

One of the three great Christian virtues along with faith and love is hope. Confident expectation. The promises of God are real.

I believe them. I bank on them. I build my life on them.

I am looking forward. And this motivates me to be diligent. If you know company is coming tomorrow, you're diligent to clean the house today, right? If you know a test is coming tomorrow, you are diligent to study tonight.

Usually, you know, right the night before. You pull an all-nighter. Why? You're diligent because you know this thing is coming.

You fully expect it. Peter says, beloved, if you're looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace without spot and blameless. And we looked at the meaning of those words last week.

And consider that this long-suffering, this delay, this patient waiting that's going on where God has not yet sent the Lord Jesus back. He hasn't yet allowed the tribulational period to be invoked and all of the destruction and the things that are written about in Revelation 4-19. God has delayed those things.

He has put it off. He has held it back. He is waiting patiently for deliverance.

More people can be saved. More people can grow in grace by faith. More people can be transformed.

More people can be ready for the eternal future. There is more reflection of the glory of Jesus Christ. More vindication of His work on the cross and redeeming and propitiating and reconciling.

The more people that come to Christ, the more people that come to faith in God, the more worthwhile and efficacious the sacrificial work of Christ becomes. And so God is patiently waiting. He wants to get as much as possible.

If you imagined the ark of Noah, how quick would you be to shut the door knowing that the flood is coming? If you could hold off the flood thinking maybe someone will be convinced, maybe someone will get on board, you wouldn't want to close that door until the last possible moment. And this is how God is. The long-suffering of our Lord is salvation.

Paul has written about this. I've given you the passages where he references the end. I would say the most pertinent passage and the one that was in Peter's mind is Romans chapter 2. Do you not know that the goodness of God, the patience of God, the forestalling of judgment by God is leading you to change of mind? He's hoping you'll change.

He doesn't want to drop the hammer without giving everybody every possible minute to repent, to change. He speaks in his epistles of these things in which are some things hard to understand. This is a compound word.

Noetos is the word from like noose, the mind, to understand. And then you have the word S-U. Let's see.

Now I've got to find it. My screen jumped. The prefix is S-U something.

I can't remember the third letter. But it's the word that we use this in English to negate something. We say that it is difficult.

We talk about several terms that have it that I'll give you right after the break. But we're at a good stopping place here, so we'll stop. And when we return, we're going to pick up and look at this idea.

Why are some things hard to understand? Why doesn't God just make it easy? Why does it take some sort of effort to come to a proper understanding? Why wouldn't it be just so easy? Why wouldn't it all just be the golden rule? Why wouldn't it be thou shalt not? Why are there difficult things to understand? Because it seems to provide an opportunity for people to destroy themselves. Peter says here, things that are hard to understand, untaught and unstable people, twist them to their own destruction. Well, it seems like it's God's fault.

If God made it easier to understand, they wouldn't be twisting it to their own destruction. Well, that's what we're going to address as soon as we come back from the break. And I'll give you that Greek word.