

2 Peter 3:14-18

Beware and Be Growing

As Peter concluded his last letter to the believers, he wanted to impress on the believers that he loved so much the importance of living holy lives and continually growing for the glory of God while we wait for our blessed hope. Life is too short to waste our time with frivolous pursuits and false doctrines. We must be growing for the glory of God.

I. Faithful _____ (2 Peter 3:14-15)

- Our forward look should not _____ us from our present duty. It should, in fact, encourage us to live righteously now, knowing that our eternal transition could happen at any moment. (1 John 3:2-3; Titus 2:11-13)
- A life of _____ and constant unsettledness is a symptom of life that is not in harmony with God. (Colossians 3:15)
- To be “without spot” means that you are _____. (1 Peter 1:15-16, 19)
- The blessed hope of Christ’s return and our eternity in heaven should never be an excuse to live loosely or _____. (1 Timothy 6:14)
- We are motivated to wait patiently when we understand that the waiting gives others a chance to be _____. (Romans 2:4)

II. False _____ (2 Peter 3:16)

- The fact that the Holy Spirit lead Peter to call the writings of Paul “scripture” on the same level as the Old Testament scripture is strong evidence that the writings of both Peter and Paul were _____ of God. (Galatians 2:11-13)
- Even the writers of scripture themselves had to work hard and depend on the Lord for wisdom and _____ of the Bible. (1 Peter 1:10-11)
- A mature, faithful Christian will seek to understand God’s Word as God gave it, not to find some _____ or hidden meaning of their own “private interpretation.” (2 Peter 1:20)
- When we mistreat the word of God, we do so to our own _____.

III. Final _____ (2 Peter 3:17-18)

- We have been forewarned so we can be _____. We can be on the lookout lest we be led astray and fall from faithfulness. (1 Peter 5:8; Matthew 26:41)
- While we watch, we must _____. We must grow in grace by adding to our faith godly character. (2 Peter 1:5-7)
- We must grow in _____ by “taking heed” to that “more sure word of prophecy” and being “mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets.”

Conclusion

When Peter wrote, “To him be glory both now and for ever,” it was so much more than a generic conclusion, a formal ending or a simple doxology. It was his heart's desire. It was life’s motivation. It is now his epitaph. And we can only say, as Peter did, “_____.” π

2 Peter 3:14-18

Beware and Be Growing

God uses all kinds of people. He uses the refined and educated, but He also uses the rough and ignorant. Simon Peter was the kind of person that most people would place in the latter category. He was the kind of guy that always had something to say, even when he should have kept his mouth shut. He probably would not have been the first man that you or I would have voted for if a pulpit committee had presented him as a candidate to pastor a church, but that didn't matter to Jesus. Jesus called Peter to follow Him, changed Peter from a fisherman to a fisher of men, and later charged Peter with shepherding His sheep.

The change that came over Peter's life through his time with Jesus is best summarized in Acts 4:13. "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Peter may not have been very polished to begin with, but through the grace of God Peter changed. As he learned more about Jesus, he grew in grace and in knowledge. The life of Peter is a case study in the power of Jesus to transform an individual. We can admire Peter for his loyalty and his boldness, but we must give Jesus the glory because it was only through His teaching, training and empowering that Peter became the man he was.

As Peter concluded his last letter to the believers, he knew that his time on earth was coming to an end. He had reminded them of the promise of Christ's return. He had warned them that scoffers would continue to mock them for believing that promise. He had encouraged them to live right anyway. He wanted to impress on the believers that he loved so much the importance of living holy lives and continually growing for the glory of God while we wait for our blessed hope. Life is too short to waste our time with frivolous pursuits and false doctrines. We must be growing for the glory of God.

I. Faithful Motivations

2 Peter 3:14-15 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. [15] And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

Having reminded the believers of our future hope of heaven in the previous verses, Peter brings our minds back to the present day and instructs us how to live in light of that future hope. We do "look for such things" as a "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" but that forward look should not distract us from our present duty. It should, in fact, encourage us to live righteously now, knowing that our eternal transition could happen at any moment. It is one of our primary motivations for sanctification. The hope of Christ's return and the knowledge of its imminence should have a purifying effect on our lives.

1 John 3:2-3 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. [3] And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Titus 2:11-13 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, [12] Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; [13] Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

Peter says that we should strive to live so that when Jesus comes, it will be found that our lives are characterized by "peace, without spot, and blameless."

Peace is that spiritual tranquility that comes when we are in a right relationship with God. Peace with God results in the peace of God in us which in turn leads to peace with others. It is an inner grace that works itself out in every area of light. A life of agitation and constant unsettledness is a symptom of life that is not in harmony with God.

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

To be “without spot” means that you are unblemished. Peter used this same word to describe Jesus in 1 Peter 1:19. “But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” That is the standard that we should strive to meet and the criteria that we should evaluate ourself by. No sin is acceptable. No contaminate is allowable.

1 Peter 1:15-16 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; [16] Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

While we wait for Christ’s return, we must also strive to be “blameless.” The idea of this word is similar to being “without spot” but with an emphasis on our testimony before others. Paul also used this word to describe how we should live in light of the imminent return of Christ.

1 Timothy 6:14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

The blessed hope of Christ’s return and our eternity in heaven should never be an excuse to live loosely or carelessly. It should motivate us to live pure, holy lives for the glory of God.

And while we are waiting we are to maintain the perspective that the wait is evidence of God’s patience that is our salvation, just like Paul said.

Romans 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

The same patience of God that leads some to reject the truth of the second coming is what gives them a chance to repent and be saved. We are motivated to wait patiently when we understand that the waiting gives others a chance to be saved and proves the longsuffering, grace, mercy, and love of God.

II. False Interpretations

2 Peter 3:16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

Speaking of Paul’s writings, Peter says a word in 2 Peter 2:16 about the Pauline epistles and how some people treat them. First, it is noteworthy that Peter had a high view of Paul’s writings at all, seeing that he and Paul had not always been on the best of terms. There was one incident in particular that could have resulted in Peter being bitter toward Paul if Peter had not been humble enough to accept Paul’s rebuke. In Galatians 2, Paul wrote of an occasion where he had to publicly confront Peter for causing disunity in the church.

Galatians 2:11-13 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. [12] For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. [13] And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

Since this almost certainly written long before Peter wrote his second epistle, it is apparent that Peter took Paul’s rebuke to heart. Peter was no stranger to rebuke, after all. He had had to learn

how to handle it properly. He did not become offended or get bitter when he had to be called out. In fact, he demonstrates a tremendous amount of respect for the one who had rebuked him. The fact that the Holy Spirit led Peter to call the writings of Paul “scripture” on the same level as the Old Testament scripture, which would include the record of Paul’s personal rebuke of Peter, is strong evidence that the writings of both Peter and Paul were inspired of God.

Notice that he also said that Paul’s writings contained “things hard to be understood.” Here is Peter writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit declaring that the things that Paul wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit were not always easy to understand. This should encourage us to keep studying and not give up when we find ourselves struggling to understand the Bible. Even the writers of scripture themselves had to work hard and depend on the Lord for wisdom and understanding of the Bible. Peter also wrote about this in his first epistle.

1 Peter 1:10-11 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: [11] Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

But instead of rightly dividing the scripture that can sometimes be difficult, there are those who twist and distort scripture to fit their ideas, wishes, and irrational feelings. Peter describes this as “wresting” scripture and it is something that is done by those who are “unlearned and unstable.” A mature, faithful Christian will seek to understand God’s Word as God gave it, not to find some secret or hidden meaning of their own “private interpretation.” We need to read it and learn it that we might “take heed” unto it, not so that we can make it mean what we think it should mean.

When we mistreat the word of God, we do so to our own destruction. Lies lead to destruction, so when we twist the truth of God’s word into a lie, it causes harm to our souls. We miss the blessing of knowing, believing and living the truth. We endure the pain, misery and frustration of living by lies. False interpretations lead to spiritual ruin. If we would grow in grace, we must hand God’s word properly.

III. Final Exhortation

2 Peter 3:17-18 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. [18] But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Last words are significant, and that is certainly true of Peter’s words in these final verses. The two final instructions he gives are a summary of his burden for all believers. We must beware and we must be growing for the glory of God.

We must beware because there are many false teachers that are corrupting the gospel message and leading people astray. They are motivated by greed and covetousness and will say whatever they need to say to line their pockets so they can live their luxurious lifestyles. But we have been forewarned so we can be forearmed. We can be on the lookout lest we be led astray and fall from faithfulness.

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Peter knew how easy it was to be overtaken by temptations. He was the one who asserted he would never deny Christ, and yet a short time later denied his association with Jesus three times. He heard Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus said, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matthew 26:41) He had learned the

hard way just how badly Satan desires to sift each of Christ's followers as wheat. The Holy Spirit uses those experiences in Peter's life to give added weight to the admonition to "beware."

Watching diligently for spiritual dangers is important, but that's not all that we must do. While we watch, we must grow. We must grow in grace by adding to our "faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." (2 Peter 1:5-7) We must grow in knowledge by "taking heed" to that "more sure word of prophecy" and being "mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets."

Conclusion

And all this must be done to the glory of God. Peter's final words are a fitting end for a man whose life had been transformed so drastically by Jesus. Jesus invited that rough, outspoken fisherman from the hill country of Galilee to follow Him and let Jesus make him into a fisher of men. As Peter walked with Jesus, he changed, and he grew, though he stumbled many times along the way. He saw Jesus fill his net with fish, so much so that the net was breaking and the boat was sinking. But that was nothing compared to the harvest of souls that Peter saw God bring in on the day of Pentecost when 3,000 responded to the invitation of Peter's first sermon and were saved. So when Peter wrote, "To him be glory both now and for ever," it was so much more than a generic conclusion, a formal ending or a simple doxology. It was his heart's desire. It was life's motivation. It is now his epitaph. And we can only say, as Peter did, "Amen."