

## 2 Peter 3:13-18. Waiting in Righteousness

---



This passage brings us to the close of Peter's second letter to the first-century church. He has presented a compact and powerful presentation of the gospel message that includes a call for godly living as the faithful await the end of the age, an end that will be ushered in by the second coming of the Messiah, Jesus. Peter speaks to the form of behavior that is consistent with the appropriate expression of one's faith in one's life.

**2 Peter 3:13. *Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.***

### **Look Forward.**

When we look at the past or present state of the world that we live in, it is easy to become overly focused upon the pain and suffering that is such a part of a world that is immersed in the secular and pagan behavior of the greater population. When we focus upon the evil of this world we can lose sight of the blessings that God has provided for those who have placed their trust in Him. We can also lose sight of the promises that God has made, promises that we can find encouraging when the messages of this world work to discourage us. Consequently, Peter reminds us to keep our attention focused upon those promises.

In a form similar to the writings of Paul and John, Peter reminds us to look forward to the coming age when the faithful will be ushered into place that will be new and different to us all. The very nature of the world that we now know will be replaced with an entirely new experience, characterized by a completely different environment, one where righteousness dwells rather than evil. At some point in God's plan the time and existence of this physical universe will be ended, and the faithful will join God in eternity, either through death, or through the second coming of Christ. We can only look forward now, though as through a

“glass darkly.”<sup>1</sup> God has revealed this promise of a new heaven and new earth, but He has revealed few of the literal details of this new existence. This may be largely due to the complete inability for us to understand the nature and context of the reality of eternity.

As people who are fully immersed in this physical cosmos, we lack the experiential knowledge to understand the context of an entirely different environment. Like the fish who know of no other world than their underwater surroundings, unable to comprehend an environment without water, we have no context to fully grasp an environment where we are not immersed in the nature of this cosmos and the sin that so characterizes its people.

Though Peter is not able to describe the “physical” characteristics of this promised new heaven and new earth, he clearly states that this new environment is characterized by righteousness. Instead of finding ourselves immersed in a sin-sick world as we now do, we will find ourselves immersed in a place where righteousness reigns instead of evil. The faithful will find themselves in the presence of God where no sin may dwell.

### **Live Faithfully**

**2 Peter 3:14.** *Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.*

Peter now simply assumes that the faithful will be obedient to his call to look forward to this new heaven and earth with great joy and expectation. His “wherefore” identifies that the following behavior is directly related to that joy and expectation: that the faithful will be found living lives that rise above the sin-nature of this world, lives that are submitted to the Holy Spirit. Peter describes some of the evidence of that obedience:

**Be diligent.** Using the same word that he uses in chapter 1, verse 5, Peter prefaces the statement with a call to a consistent, conscientious, earnest, and persistent effort towards righteous living. One who does so diligently, does so with a focus on that which is godly.

**Be Found at peace.** Peter’s admonition may remind us of Paul’s recommendation to the Philippians:

---

<sup>1</sup> C.f. 1 Corinthians 13:12.

**Philippians 4:8-9.** *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. <sup>9</sup>Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*

The opposite of peace may be turmoil, and when we look at our own lives, do we find ourselves more focused upon the turmoil around us, or on the peace and joy that God's Holy Spirit inspires in us? We may need an occasional reminder to return our focus upon the LORD and receive from Him the encouragement and resources of love and blessing that serve to overcome the consequences around us that serve only to bring us turmoil. Peter states that the faithful should not be "found" in turmoil, but rather in peace. Peace is found when one's heart and mind are brought under the control of the Holy Spirit who communicates the truth of the LORD's love, a truth that makes impotent the lies of the evil one who seeks to immerse us in constant turmoil.

**Be Without spot or blemish.** The biblical narrative makes it clear that all people will be subject to the final judgment of God<sup>2</sup> and that all people will be shown that Jesus Christ, is indeed the LORD, YAHWEH.<sup>3</sup> However, in that immense sea of peoples, all will be judged according to only a single standard: their faith in God. Though all are held accountable for their actions in this life,<sup>4</sup> and all come before Him having been spotted and blemished by sin,<sup>5</sup> God has forgiven the sin of the faithful through the work that Jesus Christ did on the cross when He took upon Himself the punishment for the iniquity of the faithful.<sup>6</sup> The power of the cross served to destroy sin's power to condemn the faithful,<sup>7</sup> presenting them to the throne of God as if without spot or blemish.

The only way to be found without spot or blemish is to be found with a genuine faith in God that is characterized by complete submission to Him. Those who lack faith in God may look forward to the new heaven and earth with great anticipation, not realizing that, without faith, that new heaven and new earth

---

<sup>2</sup> Revelation, Chapter 20, e.g.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 45:23, Revelation 14:11, e.g.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Revelation, Chapter 20.

<sup>5</sup> Romans 3:23.

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 53:6.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:55.

will be eternally outside of their grasp as they find themselves separated from God in death as they chose to be in life. Peter's statement is an admonition to be found to be a person of faith, for a person of true faith will be found at peace, without spot, or blemish.

### **The LORD's Forbearance.**

**2 Peter 3:15. *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;***

Peter reminds us that the purpose of Jesus' work is to provide a means for the salvation of the faithful from the condemnation for sin that they truly deserve. All of us deserve eternal separation from God, but Jesus provided a means that we would find forgiveness from that sin, a means found simply by one's placing their full faith and trust in God. In doing so, one submits to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, evident in the truth of His word and the work of His Spirit.

One of the conflicts that entered the early church was precipitated by Jesus' apparently delayed return. It would appear that the apostles, though never expressly stating so, fully believed that Jesus would return in their lifetime. When Jesus did not promptly return, some were becoming discouraged and disillusioned. Both Peter and Paul wrote that the delay in Jesus' return (longsuffering) serves to keep the door of salvation open longer, allowing more people to come to God in faith.

Peter also cites the writings of Paul to remind his readers that the two apostles are in complete agreement on these points. Paul also writes of a new heaven and new earth, the second coming of Christ, and the call to the faithful to live godly lives until Jesus' return.

### **The Lost's Foolishness**

**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.***

Again Peter refers to the agreement between his letter and the letters of Paul, noting particularly that this entire doctrine of eternal salvation is difficult for the "unenlightened," those who are unlearned and unstable, find very difficult to

understand.<sup>8</sup> The teachings of Peter and Paul are rejected by those who reject the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the rejection of the LORD brings eternal separation from God, eternal destruction.

The people to whom Peter writes are immersed in their sin-sick world as we still are today. They witness violence, hatred, and persecution all around them. They often find themselves the objects of that persecution, facing anything from marginalization, rejection, or even death. This same persecution against the faithful continues today. Peter reminds his readers that the gospel that both he and Paul present is the true gospel, a gospel of peace and promise that this wicked world wholly rejects. The faithful can be assured that they can wait for Jesus' return, waiting on God's promises in peace and in anticipation. Destruction awaits those who persecute them, those who blaspheme the Name of God, those who so vex the faithful.

**2 Peter 3:17. *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 steadfastness.***

Like that fish that is immersed in a world of water, the faithful are immersed in a world of sin that touches us on every side. We do have the opportunity to hear and learn the truth of the gospel when we spend time with God's word either alone or in community. However the bulk of our experience often involves hearing the false truths of this wicked world, falsehoods that are accompanied by arguments that could be convincing to those who are not well-steeped in their faith. Peter's use of "beware" is consistent with his call to diligence, as he notes the pervasive danger that the falsehoods of this world pose to the faithful. It is easy to be misled into falsehoods when one is not well-versed, or well-focused on the truth. The falsehoods of this world can lead the faithful into discouragement, depression, and all manner of ungodly thoughts and actions. The power of Satan to mislead and misdirect the faithful is not something to be taken lightly.

Peter notes that there is the possibility of a "falling away" of those who are misled and misdirected by the lies of this world. It is important to note that Peter does not imply that such falling away is a falling away from salvation. Salvation is an act of God, not an act of man. Salvation is a gift of God that is given to people of faith as He forgives them for their sins, a promised forgiveness that is empowered by Jesus' death and resurrection.

---

<sup>8</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:23, 2:14.

Paul refers to a “falling” from one’s “steadfastness.” One is steadfast when one is diligently working toward a specific goal. This form of work implies that there is a genuine and well-defined focus in the heart and mind of the faithful that keeps them steadfast in their journey through this life, a journey that is taking them to the new heaven and new earth. That focus can be influenced by the messages and doctrines of this world that work, under the influence of the prince of this world, to distract the faithful. When a faithful Christian has been distracted they lose that peace and anticipation that Peter describes. The faithful can lose the joy of their salvation when they allow it to be overwhelmed by the circumstances of this world.

It is not God’s purpose that the faithful would be defeated by the circumstances of this perverse and evil world, but rather that the faithful would be encouraged and lifted up by the power of the gospel as God has promised to the faithful that this time is short, and the reward of a new heaven and new earth, the reward of righteousness, is eternal.

### **Know Love Forever.**

**2 Peter 3:18. *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.***

“But” implies a distinct break between the behaviors of the previous verse and the behaviors of the last. Rather than be stunted by the circumstances of this world, the faithful are to grow:

**Grow in grace.** We understand that God’s gift of salvation to those who place their trust in Him is an act of His grace. God’s grace is an unmerited gift that is given to those who love Him. Yet, the character and consequence of grace in an individual’s life is far more significant than a simple act of God. The results of that grace serve to impact every facet of the life of a faithful individual. The very thoughts and actions of a person of faith are shaped by God’s act of grace. As one experiences more and more the power of grace to bless an individual’s life, the individual’s faith is strengthened. The obstacles of this world become less and less significant as one grows in their faith. Many Christians fail to grow because of the lack of diligence that Peter prescribes. These can be faithful believers who have been Christians for a lifetime but are still overcome and discouraged by the slightest of this world’s distractions or disappointments. Peter calls for a life that is growing in grace and maturing in the faith, so that

through the power of the Holy Spirit one's life can become more and more characterized by joy, peace, and anticipation of the heaven and earth to come.

**Grow in knowledge.** It may be important to understand that the word, "knowledge," as used here does refer to the form of knowledge that comes from "book learning," but it also refers to a deeper form of knowledge that comes from an intimate relationship with the object of that knowledge. When Peter calls upon the faithful to grow in the knowledge of God, he is referring to a maturation of relationship with God that comes from knowing Him better.

One simple illustration can serve to clarify the minimal value of a "head knowledge" of the LORD. One can easily argue that satan knows God better than any man. No man will ever know more about God than satan does, and it is rather obvious that this form of knowledge does not serve to bring satan to a beneficial relationship with the LORD.

Peter states that the faithful should be continually growing in their knowledge of God in the same manner that two individuals gain in their knowledge of one another. This implies an active effort in building that relationship. For the Christian, that relationship is built through a love for God, a continual and open prayer life, and a consistent study of the biblical texts. When one observes a Christian who is immature in their faith, it will be invariably found that the individual does not diligently exercise these three traits, (love, prayer, and Bible study).

**Grow in Praise.** Peter closes this letter quickly with a spontaneous proclamation of praise to the LORD. Peter shows, by his own example, the priority of praise in the life of a Christian. One who is mature in their faith, one who diligently seeks to grow in their faith, will always be one who is quick to praise God for what He has done. We can praise God for His love, for His act of grace, and for the continual manna of blessing He gives to those who trust in Him.

**Conclusion.** Peter writes to a people who are experiencing much of what we are still witnessing today: a secular, pagan, and sin-sick world that seems to serve as the primary influence in a world that denigrates any who place their faith and trust in the One True and Living God. It would be easy for us to be discouraged while we wait for Jesus to return, yet recognize that He has given us two millennia for more people to be saved. Peter reminds us to be encouraged by the voracity of God's promises. He promises to bless those who trust Him. He promises to vindicate the faithful by the judgment of the wicked. He promises to return, and to provide an eternal home that is free from the influence of sin.

Instead of living in a world immersed in sin, the faithful will reside in a new heaven and new earth where they are immersed in righteousness, immersed in the very love and light of the One Holy God who created us for that very purpose.

Let us be diligent as Peter admonishes: diligent in prayer, diligent in Bible study, diligent in godly living, and diligent in our love for God and in our love for one another that we can, indeed, experience the fullness of the blessings that God has promised.