

"11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. 14 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, 15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. 17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." 2 Peter 3:11-18, NAS95.

As we are coming to the conclusion of our study in 2 Peter we want to review some things of significance so that we do not lose sight of the big picture of this letter.

We established that the primary purpose of the letter is stated in two verses:

1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3:18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

That is it. The entire letter will emphasize over and over again how important it is that we grow in our knowledge of Christ. Now of course there is an explicit reason for this as well which is stated in the letter and that is found in 1:16 and 2:1

"1:16 For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty."  
"2:1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies.."

But what we want to add to this from today's text is that the growth that guards us from that which is false is not static. It is not growth for growths sake. When we understand 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter and 1<sup>st</sup> Peter together as a unit I believe we can understand that the doctrinal teaching and encouragements of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter and our stated purpose of 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter are not stand alone issues.

Lets review 1<sup>st</sup> Peter:

Peters' purpose in writing his first letter seems to be based on clearly making it known to his readers about the heavenly inheritance. He also follows Christ's example, if we would reflect back to the Sermon on the Mount and other passages where Jesus guarantees persecution for the believer, to give consolation to the persecuted, and to

prepare them for a greater approaching ordeal. Peter exhorts all by letter's end - husbands, wives, servants, elders, and people to live as good citizens wherever they are, so as to give no reason for the enemy to reproach Christianity or the Gospel of Christ. Rather he would hope that they would win them to it, reminding them that they are established in the faith and others can be as well.

So if we combine the two letter's clear purposes, we can easily see why the purpose of the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter is not static, it helps us accomplish the purpose of the first.

Sound doctrine, sanctified living and a future hope are not meant to be compartmentalized or just boxed up in our lives so we can be seen as pleasing Christ. There is a dynamic and a context for these things and that is the preaching of the Gospel. We need the right doctrine, right living and real hope to be gospel witnesses.

These truths are placed in the context of the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter as a dynamic that should be energizing us for the preaching of the gospel because we know with certainty that final judgments of the world is coming.

These are some of the things that Peter is determined to continue to remind them of. These are the glorious truths that we need to embrace with all of our hope in Christ. These are the truths that will keep us true and faithful to our Christ rather than having our minds polluted with the lies of false prophets. These are the warnings to some and the words of blessing to others throughout the last days that began on Pentecost and which will end with the return of Christ.

The significance of what Peter has written has not become diminished in any way.

We are living in a time that is just as corrupt as Peter's day. We are faced with the same challenges and even sometimes the same false teachings although they may be disguised in a different outer garment. We need to have all of our hope in Christ as much as they did. False prophets will always be the same or a minor variation of those who preceded them, the scoffers will raise their voices as loud as they can and encourage lust in others until Christ returns because they are nothing but blind leaders of the blind.

Christians who are looking for a fulfilled kingdom on earth or a Christian America or any other form of a godly utopia will be disappointed and will only help immature believers to be looking for hope and help in the wrong place.

Peter wrote,

**that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.**

Remember it all, the warnings that the false prophets will come and the blessings that are reserved for those who are Christ's. Remember and help others to remember and to remember and to remember until it is no longer your work to do so, as Peter did.

Our work is to hold forth the Word of Life while living right before God and in expectation of the certain judgment of the world and blessing for those who are Christ's.

Peter wrote in vs.12,

**"12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!" 2 Peter 3:12, NAS95.**

But how do we hasten the coming of Christ?

There are varying views. One is post-millennialism. This view holds that the millennial reign spoken of in Revelation 20 is not a literal earthly reign but consists of the present age becoming more Christianized through preaching; a larger portion of people will be converted that will lead into a long period of righteousness and peace.

Christian teaching and belief will eventually dominate the earth although sin will not be completely eliminated. Nations will work together for good and the world will prosper and the wealth will be shared more evenly all moving toward a golden age.

Of course there is much more to this view but these are the essential points.

Hastening or to speed its coming is a correct notion. But in what way is this correct?

From one perspective there is nothing we can do to hasten or speed the coming of Christ. It is a fixed eschatological event. It has been decreed and will not arrive a second late. God's divine forbearance concerning the ungodly will come to its appointed

end. We mentioned in our last study that Christ will come as a thief in the night, at an unexpected time. Chapter two of this letter addresses more specifically the judgment of the ungodly while here it is the destruction of the domain where the ungodly along with the godly had lived. There is significance in this because where we make our earthly dwelling place is usually where all of our "earthly possessions are". They will be destroyed. Whether it be a pot or pan for daily sustenance or a Cadillac, it will be gone.

In particular, the false prophets had been and many still are greedy and all of their money, mansions, planes, TV studios, corporate headquarters will melt away forever.

**"13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." 2 Peter 3:13, NAS95.**

Yet, something is going to survive that will dwell within the structure of a new heaven and a new earth and that is righteousness. Righteousness cannot exist only as a principle, so it is obvious that if righteousness is going to survive the judgment of heat it must be something tangible. It is. We are the righteousness of God in Christ. His people will survive destruction and inhabit the new creation.

This does not exactly answer the question of how we hasten the return of Christ.

However, vs. 14 begins to.

**"14 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, 15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction." 2 Peter 3:14-16, NAS95.**

This looking forward leads to a renewed call to holiness, in expectation of the Lord's return and in gratitude for his forbearance. These are themes about which Paul also wrote, and mention of him leads to a warning that certain people (it could be the false teachers of ch. 2) are ready to misunderstand his words.

Verse 14 is following up on chapter 1:10,

**"10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;" 2 Peter 1:10, NAS95.**

By making our calling and election sure in verse 10 we will not stumble or fall to such

a degree that we will prove to be false, in other words apostates. As long as we practice not forgetting what Christ has done for us and pursuing these qualities by growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ we will never ultimately stumble or fall away from the faith. We will stumble now and again but not in this final sense. The stumble here is like one running a race and when he stumbles he loses the race. If we are truly God's we will run the race and endure until the end.

It reminds me of the scene in Chariots of Fire when Eric Liddell stumbles because he is crowd off the track by another runner. He gets up and continues to run and wins the race even though it almost kills him. If you are Christ's you will get up and run and run even harder because the goal and the prize are Christ Himself.

There comes a time in our lives as believers when our spiritual laziness should be loathsome, and disgusting. That is good. To wallow in it is not healthy. To push forward is what is right.

So as we are diligent in being found in Him, being spotless and blameless sets us apart from those who are false. This is not being perfect but there are no charges that can be brought against us which shows us to be false. Because of this we know peace and have peace. This peace is the evidence of a changed heart. There is peace when we know that we will sin but that we can fight against and do have a desire to live right before Christ and we know that it is not in and of ourselves that we do it but by the provision of Christ's enablement. We need to know who we are in Christ and stand firm in that knowledge. Peter says remember, remember, remember, not just do, do and do.

Only with the peace of God that surpasses all human comprehension along with knowing that we are at peace with God through Christ can we bear in mind that God's patience is giving time for more to be spared from wrath and it is also giving us more time to work out our own salvation unto the revelation of Jesus Christ, which is the glory of God.

Let me read to you from my friend, Shane Becker's blog on gospel Sanctification

where he is quoting from Alexander Whyte concerning William Marshall who came to understand true sanctification.

From Whyte: "In his classical book on Sanctification Walter Marshall tells his readers that he had been labouring all his days to squeeze oil out of a flint. That is to say, he had been labouring all his days to squeeze holiness out of his own sinful heart. And he had gone on performing that fruitless toil till a great spiritual teacher took him and told him that he was to have all his sanctification, as well as all his justification, out of Jesus Christ alone. That great spiritual teacher tells us that he himself for nearly seven years sought for satisfactory signs of grace in his own heart. It took him all that time till he was taken off entirely from searching for the grounds of peace and the source of power within himself, and was lead to look simply to the grace of God and thus to live and grow by faith in Christ alone. Up to that epoch-making conversation with Thomas Goodwin, Walter Marshall's whole life had been one long and painful and fruitless endeavour after inward holiness of mind and heart. But when he opened his whole mind and heart about that matter to Thomas Goodwin, that great spiritual teacher told him that he was to look to Jesus Christ for the sanctifying of his sinful heart, as well as for the cleansing of his sinful conscience. And ever after that illuminating and enfranchising interview with the great Puritan, Marshall set himself to study the person and work of Christ in a new way, and to preach the person and work of Christ in a new way, till he attained to that eminent spirituality of mind and heart and doctrine out of all which he wrote in his ripe old age his standard work on 'The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification' . . . The right living of vs. 14-16 is not attributed to our labor, although we do and must obey what we are commanded. It is rooted and grounded in Christ as we discovered in our study earlier in 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter.

Peter in vs 15-16 is also saying that what he is teaching is also found in the wisdom of the apostle Paul concerning the second coming. And in all the letters Paul has written so far that have been shared in the Christian community there are things that some do not understand. There were those who deliberately misrepresented Paul such as those who said Paul denied any kind of law keeping,

And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), "Let us do evil that good may come"? Their condemnation is just.

Ignorant and unstable people in the context of vs. 16 act this way in relation to what they cannot understand of Scripture and it is to their own destruction. We should not be this way. We are to grow in the knowledge of Scripture and build a firm foundation for Christian living but as we said earlier not just for the sake of Christian living but for the sake of preaching the Gospel.

Peter ends his letter with,

"17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." 2 Peter 3:17, 18, NAS95.

What they already know may mean that there have already been places where the false teachers have infiltrated. It could mean that they were given this advice before the false teachers started being present.

They are being warned to be on guard and to remain in the secure position that a true knowledge of Christ gives them. They can be steadfast in the face of what is false.

By remaining steadfast they and we can savor more grace and knowledge which are divine gifts from God, which enable us to grow and to bring Him, Christ, glory by revealing more of Christ as He is being patient with the world.

John Piper has a good insight here:

"So Peter says, "May grace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God," and closes with the command to grow "in the grace and knowledge of our Lord." If we but knew a fraction of the future God is making for us; if we could begin to feel that all our deepest longings will be satisfied, that every beauty of this world will be preserved and heightened, that every good affection will soar, that every proper relationship will be restored forever, that all pain and frustration and ugliness will vanish, that the fish will bite before the worm hits the water, and Jesus will fill the world with golden light—if we could believe what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Corinthians 2:9), our hearts would be

freed from the greed and fears that cause us to sin. We would escape from the corruption that is in the world, and become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).”

Brethren, because Christ is our Lord and Savior we can make progress in these matters because Christ helps us to do so. It is not about us, it is about Him and His glory. We are to do this now and forever, forever being the beginning of the new heaven and earth when Christ returns.

We can live in a way that glorifies Christ and that is a part of preaching the gospel.

We are to take advantage of God’s patience, not just for ourselves but for Christ’s sake, for the sake of the Gospel, for the sake of those whom Christ will yet call unto Him. And may it be that Christ will be pleased in his purpose to use us here and around the world to be a means of preaching the gospel whereby the nations may be glad.

May it please God to grant us to be a pleasant aroma in the world and not just a foul aroma. May He be pleased to grant us divine unction and a steadfastness that will enable us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ until his coming, Amen.