

Roy's Sermon for May 22, 2022

## 2 Peter 3:12b-18 'The Final Chapter: Grace And Peace!'

Over some years now we have journeyed with Peter. Firstly through Peter's life with Jesus, an ordinary man serving an extraordinary God, from his calling in John 1, his walking on the water to Jesus in Matthew 14; His God inspired declaration of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 16: "you are the Christ the son of the living God." and then immediately on the back of that same declaration In Matthew 16:23 "get behind me Satan, you do not have in mind the things of God but the things of men." Then with James and John at Jesus' transfiguration in Matthew 17, and also in that chapter, Peter fishing for gold! His words of vanity at the Last Supper Matthew 26, 'even if the rest run I'll die with you Lord'; his falling asleep with James and John as Jesus sweat blood for His people In the garden of Gethsemane. Peter's cutting off the servants ear, his threefold denial of Jesus, even calling curses down upon his own head if he knew him. To his restoration by Jesus into ministry on the beach in John 21! And in the book of Acts, all through his fire and brimstone preaching which entailed miracles, beatings, and imprisonments!

Then on to First Peter as he exhorts the believers to beware of falsehood and false teachings from outside of church. Through 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter, where he has been doing the same, but warning them of those dangerous deceivers that had crept in among them. And he has been doing this with those words, Remind. Refresh. Remember. Rouse. And recall! Yes beware of all false teachers and teachings. All through chapter 2 and that lengthy character analysis of those deceivers, of whom there are so many today. "Springs without water, clouds driven by a storm." Ch.2:17 They promised much but have nothing of substance.

Chapter 3:2 he wants to "rouse us to a sincere mind." Not merely a profession of the lips, but moved by the Holy Spirit to stand against all scoffers of God's truth, claiming that Jesus's second coming is a myth, everything goes on as it has always done! But Peter counters this by citing Creation, the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, that God's day will come. He is not bound by time v8! V10 "He will come like a thief in the night" "everything will be laid bare." Since this is true v11, we are called to "live holy and godly lives as we look forward to" and "speed the coming of the day of God." And doing this through the proclamation of the gospel with our mouths and also within our lives!

Beloved, Peter was a man of many seasons, moods, strengths and weaknesses. Often acting with passion before thinking. He was a clear example that Christians are real people. Not superheroes, hopeless or perfect. Just real and ordinary people who are "saved by grace through faith in Jesus."

And as we bring this the series to an end, as this letter comes to a close, so too do these things close the book on Peter's earthly life! And he finishes just as he began. With passion and love for the Lord. And practically showing that love, by loving God's people. As he had been instructed by Jesus to do so many years before!

So the text for the morning is 2 Peter 3:12b-18 'The Final Chapter: And Grace And Peace!' 12b "That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat." Yes we can feel the urgency in his voice as he reiterates this picture of such absolute destruction as he speaks of such things even on a cosmic scale! V7 "The heavens and the earth are reserved for fire." V10 "They are destined for fire." V12 almost the exact same words as v10. Three times in six verses Peter warns of "the destruction of all things." If we put v10 and 12 together, we have "the heavens melting away and the earth laid bare." It creates in my mind not only the absolute end of all things physically, but also one of there being no place to hide, as we see in Revelation 6:14-17: "The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then

the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

All is revealed you see. As in Isaiah when he saw the king with his own eyes, (and yet only in a vision) and his life because of sin was unravelling at the seams! Yes "let the mountains fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

Brothers and sisters can you see that in writing these things in the way that they have, both Peter and John peel back the covers so to speak, to reveal things as they really are. Even as God sees them! After that terrifying reality in Revelation 6:14-17, Revelation 7 unveils the church glorious and in glory with God! Revelation 7:9-12: "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb. All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying, Amen. Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God forever and ever Amen."

Yes, Peter does the same thing in chapter 3:13. Notice the words: "But in keeping with his promise." In chapter 1:3-4 he wrote, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises." Then speaking of those deceivers in chapter 2:19 and of the false things they asserted of God: "They promised them freedom while they themselves are slaves of depravity." Then in v9 of chapter 3: "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise as some understand slowness." And now in v13, "But in keeping with his promise."

O brothers and sisters, could we have any greater assurance than this? That our salvation, that our future glory of heaven is not based upon the speculations of deluded men, (whether that be false teaches of the scriptures or some other idol promoting devil) but the very promises of the Creator of the entire universe. And not only that, "But God is not slow in keeping his promise." Yes we are glory bound! Yes Jesus through John revealed the destruction and judgement of all things in Revelation 6 and then the church in the Kingdom glorious in Revelation 7. Well, so too has Peter driven home the end of all things on these three occasions, even showing us what we had been delivered out of, to prepare us to see that which awaits in that place, where Jesus has gone on ahead of us, Praise God!

"But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth." These trials, hardships, sufferings and pains of this life will be no more. The uncertainties which seem to constantly hover over us in this life will be gone forever when Jesus comes. "In keeping with his promise," or when He takes us home in death! In Isaiah 65:16b-19 we read: "For the past troubles will be forgotten and hidden from my eyes. Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people, the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more." Yes "the former things will be remembered no more. Nor will they come to mind." Not only will our own hardships, and failures be forgotten by us, but also, God will cast away from us all that condemns us, through Jesus! "The home of righteousness, or where righteousness dwells." And of

course, that is, where Jesus is! Being righteous yes being made right with God comes only and always through Jesus. Through the precious and shed blood of Jesus!

Yes those who truly are in Christ “are looking forward” with spiritual eyes so to speak, we can see beyond the here and now, and the fleeting things that are this life. Paul speaks as we have seen before, of us as “living in these tents.” And again, as we have seen before, he calls our bodies “tents” because they are temporary dwellings which are pitched and then soon after are pulled down, and moved on to another place. Well, so too it is for the believer. These temporary dwellings, our bodies, we will one day exchange for permanent celestial ones, which we will wear before the King for all eternity. Amen! V14 “So then, (or from the original) for which reason why beloved ones, since you are looking forward to this make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, (and the word is actually unblemished,” and at peace with him.”

Brothers and sisters can you see? Peter is painting a picture of that acceptable Old Testament offering to God. The sacrificial animal had to be “without spot or defect” meaning blemish. And of course this language the Jewish people understood. And where Peter says, “make every effort,” it is the same root word as in v12 when speaking of “the day of God” and that we “speed it's coming.” Friends, there is nothing passive about this. Or about our response to God's mercy through Jesus, within the Christian's life. “Make every effort.” Or “with all diligence.” That “we be found spotless and without blemish and at peace with God” when Jesus comes. No friends, there really is no sense in our response to God having been “saved by grace through faith in Jesus,” that we are to let go and let God, as the saying goes.

Now let me first qualify this. By all means, we are in God's hands, and we trust in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit for all things. Even our Justification our Sanctification and our Glorification. Those three steps of the Christian life. Forgiveness. Transformation. And Heavenly Glory. Yes we trust God through Christ and the Holy Spirit for all things. But though we have grace and glory bestowed upon us, we are to be active in our Sanctification. That process through which God the Holy Spirit is transforming our lives through our study of God's Word day by day, until we see heaven's gates! Paul says in Philippians 2:12 “Continue to work out your salvation.” But of course he is not saying what workout how to be saved, he is speaking to the Saved of God. No he is saying what also Peter is saying before us, “make every effort to be found spotless and without blemish and at peace with God.”

Again, as in v1 he is “rousing us to a sincere mind.” Remember, not merely affirmed or professed, but moved! Well here he is affirming that same thing. The opposite of this would be, get along to church each week, singing a bunch of hymns, put your money into the bag, listen to sermons and Bible studies. And yet the sum total of all of those things for us, which are actually pertaining to the transforming of our lives in preparation of meeting the King, is basically zero! Brethren notice again, that after speaking of “making every effort, because we are looking forward to the new heaven and new earth,” because judgement is coming, Peter again speaks of God's “patience.” The word is “makrothumia” and it actually means “longsuffering.” Which I think is a great description of what “patience” really is. To bear with, in effect to suffer through, because of our genuine love for someone! “Bear in mind,” or mark this, that “our Lord's longsuffering means salvation.” Or in other words, do not treat the “longsufferingness” of God with contempt.”

Do not take this badly perceived delay of our Lord's second coming, as a licence to sin. That's what those others have been doing, and that's what they have been seeking to drag you into. Do not be like them. “Make every effort to be found by him to be right with God.” Even as the brother of our Lord Jude also warns: V3-4 “Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the

salvation that we share, I felt I had to write to urge you to contend for the faith." The word for content he is "epalowgidsesthai" and it means to contest strenuously. To fight! "For that which was once for all entrusted to the saints." And why? "For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you, they are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a licence for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only sovereign Lord." You see their perverse ungodly actions, are the denial of Christ as Lord of their lives. Which is a denial of His Sovereign rule and authority!

No don't be like them, don't use the patience of God as a licence to sin, that is sheer madness, the consequences of which are hell! "Just as our brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him." Beloved, Peter does something here which we need to take note of and emulate. He calls Paul "Our beloved brother" and this is significant. In Galatians 2, at one stage in Peter's ministry he was more than happy to eat with and fellowship with the gentile or the non-Jewish Christians. But when some high ranking Jews came to Galatia who were from "the circumcision group," he then separated himself from those brethren, in effect ashamed to be associated with them. And this caused many others to do the same, even Barnabas; Mark the gospel writers' uncle! Yes they separated themselves from the gentile Christians, which of course is who we all are.

Well Paul would have none of it, and he called him out for it in front of everyone and openly accused him of his hypocrisy, his two facedness! It would have been a very embarrassing and humbling experience for the apostle. Who really when you think about it, was in some ways even Paul's senior! It was Peter who preached the first sermon on the day of Pentecost. Tens of thousands had been saved through Peter's preaching, long before Paul was saved himself in Acts Chapter 9 on the road to Damascus.

So friends, this shows us firstly, that Peter knew first hand of that which he spoke, when he exhorted the believers to "make every effort to be found without spot or blemish." Yes he knew very well that our sanctification and our growing in Christ never ends this side of glory. And the other thing that is clear here, is that any differences that they may have had are long gone, as Peter has been reconciled to Paul, his beloved co-worker in Jesus' gospel ministry! He calls Paul "Our beloved brother."

Brothers and sisters, differences of opinion are going to occur among us. But we should never let those things divide the body of the Lord. Because if we do so, the only victory that is one is by Satan. As Peter Marshall puts it, the greater good is always for the body of Christ, His church! This must always be our goal. And by his words we can actually see just how reconciled Peter has been to Paul, some ten years after the Galatian incident. By affirming that as he spoke, so did Paul. They were on exactly the same page! V16 "He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters." Yes we are of one mind, Peter says. Satan has not and cannot divide us! He may have added, though that was a humbling and difficult time for me personally, Paul was right to speak as he did. I was in the wrong, he might have said.

Yes Beloved, the only person who gains a victory when we go down to the grave with enmity in our hearts, is the Evil One. The longer we carry such things the happier he is and the heavier they get. We need to flee from such things and leave them at the Cross! Yes like Peter we need to make good all such situations if they are within our power! So now he brings this whole emergency warning to a close. V17 from the original. "You therefore beloved ones, already knowing this, guard yourselves lest by the error of lawless men you are carried away by them and fall from your own "sterilmou" firmness of mind." Yes they "already knew" all of this stuff. As now do all of you, as we have been seeing throughout this letter. Peter hasn't wanted to or tried to introduce anything new to the

believers, no. It has all been about Reminding. Refreshing. Recalling. Rousing, in a last ditch effort to get them to Remember and hold fast to those things that “they already knew” to be true. Yes to sure up their resolve to stand firm in the face of these lawless men! And he calls them “lawless” because they were governed by nothing but their own imaginations. The same things with which they troubled the minds of others. Yes they shook the “firmness of the minds” of the believers. Even in a sense loosing that firm grip that the gospel had upon them. Not the grip of their salvation, but of their assurance!

That's what deceivers do Brethren. They trouble our minds. They shake within us those things that we cling to that we know to be true. But no they can't rob us of our salvation, but what they can do, is almost shake the assurance out of us! That is why we shouldn't entertain those new and improve versions of Christ's gospel message. No we shouldn't entertain the devil with our ears or our minds! No don't do that, though v18 “but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever Amen.”

Lucas points out that Peter began his letter with a prayer using the words “Grace and Peace” and in effect he closes with the same. In v14 it is “Peace.” And now in v18 “Grace.” Surely if there are two things that after years of hardship and trials, (with perhaps the greatest still to come as he is about to yield up his very life upon a cross,) for Jesus. Yes beatings, floggings, imprisonments, attempts upon his life. But yes if they were two things that Peter truly understood which he wanted to instil in those whom he loved so dearly in Christ, with these his parting and final words, it was “Grace and Peace.” And friends, as Christians, we also do face the uncertainty of our own future, as more and more the things, (that like the believers in Peter's day) those things that we hold dear are being trampled underfoot. And as we increasingly become strangers in a foreign land!

Surely we need also to be constantly reminded of those same two things. “Grace and Peace.” Forgiveness for sin and reconciliation to God, and Peace within our hearts in the face of all things, until He calls us home. Yes “Grace and Peace.” so as we now close this book on our walking through Peter's life with Jesus, (an ordinary man serving an extraordinary God) may I suggest that we could sum his life up in just a few words. Passion, mistakes, repentance, service, love, “Grace and Peace.” O dear friends, if with such words our lives can be concluded, we will walk in good company. Because as with Peter, our lives will also cry, All glory be to God, Amen! Yes “Grace and Peace!” Let's pray!