

Over the last few weeks, as a bible teacher, I've found this 2<sup>nd</sup> letter of Peter pretty 'tough going' – not because it's hard to understand, but because it's been a tough topic.

For a fair lump of this letter, Peter's been warning us about false teachers, and he's been so scathing. But now he switches from attacking the **false** teachers, to encourage the faithful.

And this is the sort of passage we preachers **love** to preach on.

When it comes to the return of Jesus, it's **critical** for us to be '**reminded**' of this, over and over again. And that's what Peter's doing today – he's **reminding** us of the return of Jesus, and he's **reminding** us of the coming Day of Judgment, because the two go together – we cannot have one without the other...

Some long for the Day of Judgment, "Lord, all of this injustice – step in and make things right." Well, He will make everything right – evil will be dealt with, when Jesus returns... But beware: **All** evil will be dealt with.

And some long for the return of Jesus, "Lord, we long for Your Holy presence, in a whole new way." And He will come, but when He comes, He comes as judge. We can't have one without the other...

So, let's get into it...

Before we get to the end of this final chapter, three times, Peter refers to the faithful as his "beloved".

He:

- **reminds** the beloved – of the impending return of Jesus (today’s message);
- **commands** the beloved, to make every effort to be holy and at peace (which is how we want to be when Jesus returns);
- **warns** the beloved – to be on guard, and to be firm in our faith (while we wait for Jesus).

But isn’t it a wonderful thing – to know that we are “the beloved”.

To be the:

- beloved of Jesus;
- beloved of our Heavenly Father;
- beloved of the Apostle Peter;
- beloved of each other.

To me, you are my beloved... And hopefully, I might even be yours...

Righto, the purpose of Peter’s letter (Actually, it’s the purpose of **two** letters that he’s written to this church.) I’m not sure if **1<sup>st</sup>** Peter as the other letter or if it’s a different letter that we don’t have anymore. But this is the **2<sup>nd</sup>** one that he’s written to **this** church.

And “In these letters”, he says:

**I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder**

The NIV puts it like this:

**2 Peter 3:1 (NIV84) ....I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.**

*You see, if false teachers are like weeds that invade and choke out a fruitful crop, **wholesome thinking**, is like a selective herbicide that will protect the crop from weeds...*

*I'm reluctant to say this, but for the home gardeners out there, "wholesome thinking" in your faith (and in the church as a whole), is like what 'weed-n-feed' is, for your lawn...*

*And I cringe when I say that... , and if you don't know why I cringe, it's because you're not an agronomist.*

*Weed&Feed is a mixture of MCPA and Dicamba (broadleaf hormonal herbicides). It comes packaged in little plastic bottle that you can plug on your garden hose, and you squirt it out over your lawn, and it kills broadleaf weeds. But it's also got a little bit of urea and a bit of iron in it, that spruces up your lawn and greens it up,,,, but only for a very short time...*

*Now, some quick agronomy... Your weed control would be far better if you bought some KambaM and applied it with a sprayer. As our farmers know, "It is not 'best practice' to apply a herbicide through a garden hose" ... And likewise, your lawn would do far better if you applied fertiliser in a separate operation... But for many, Weed-n-Feed remains a convenient option...*

*I digress.... The thing is, false teachers won't get a foothold in our church, if wholesome thinking, is what we do.*

Last week, we learned that False Teachers entice unsteady souls. And that to be become a strong Christian – a stable Christian, is to build our lives on the solid rock Word of God, and do it. And so if wholesome thinking is what we do, false teaching will immediately be recognised for what it is, and it'll be rejected outright...

To stir up a **sincere mind** – to stimulate **wholesome thinking**. It's to encourage logic and reason and thinking on the things of God – **without** our thoughts being influenced (and misguided) by things of the flesh...

But, how do we achieve that – how do we have this pure thinking/sincere mind/wholesome thinking...

Well, it's all to do with what we feed our minds. Wholesome thinking, is to study the word of God... Not the word :

- that's been contaminated
- that's been treated like plasticine and moulded into a shape what our flesh really likes the sound of; and
- not the word that's been added to (to try and improve upon it)...

It's the predictions of the holy prophets (Old Testament), and the commandment of the Lord and **Saviour**, (teachings of Jesus) as passed down to us by the Apostles...

Actually, it's not just “**the Apostles**” – Peter refers to them as **your apostles**.

Did you know that? Did you know that you have “apostles”? They are **our** apostles. We have to take ownership of them. God provided the Apostles for **us** (for our benefit). And we must listen to them.

You see, the Apostles were given the authority to pass the word of Jesus on, and to nail down, what the Gospel is.

And if we:

- hold fast to the teachings of the Scriptures; and
- **don't** treat them like plasticine; and
- **don't** bend them and mould them into something they are not;
- do allow the Word of God to cut deep and to:
  - challenge us
  - renew us
  - equip us
  - train us in righteousness

then our faith will spring into life, and it will be uncontaminated with the lies that the devil would endeavour to sow into the church....

The pure solid rock word of God, is like a herbicide that knocks out false teachers, and it's like a fertiliser that invigorates our faith. And these are not just empty words – it's true.

V<sup>3</sup> knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

You and I, are living in “the last days” (as was Peter)... And Peter is telling us: this is of first importance – **above all**, we need to know this: That in these last days (in which we live), there will be scoffers, and they will be:

- doing their scoffing
- following their own sinful desires
- living as if the return of Jesus is **not** going to happen (at least, not any time soon)...

Do not listen to them... We know that Jesus **is** coming...

Jesus told several parables about His return, and there’s a common thread that runs through them:

- He was a long time coming; and
- He returns unexpectedly, which means many were not ready.
  - the wicked servants who were beating the other servants;
  - bridesmaids who ran out of oil;
  - the night watchman who falls asleep;

Jesus is coming, so be ready...

*It’s strange to me, that in recent times, atheists seem to have become evangelists. There once was a time when atheists were content with their own disbelief, but now, many see it as their duty to convince others, ‘**not** to believe in God’...*

*During this week, we had the census. And in the lead-up to the census, atheists have been running an advertising*

*campaign to try and get people to tick the “I don’t have a religion” box on the census...*

*Where am I going with this?*

*A few years ago, in England, some prominent atheists paid to put advertising on the side of a bus that said:*

*“There’s probably no God, now stop worrying, and enjoy your life.”*

*Interesting turn of phrase “probably no God” ... Of course, to say “There **is** no God, would be a statement of faith because it can’t be proven... And basically their message is, live your life as you please, because there’s probably no god...*

*It’s all about you....*

But as disciples of Jesus, we know there definitely **is** a God...

There’s a God who:

- loves us;
- saves us;
- restores us; and
- is with us through His Holy Spirit; and
- is returning again, to judge the living and the dead.

But the scoffers continue. Their whole premise, is “*This is the way it’s always been*”; “*We are living in a stable, unchanging universe – it will be **eons** before our universe changes*” ... “*The laws of nature are what make the world go round*”,,, But what they forget, is “the laws of nature”, are God’s laws, and our Lord, is Lord over all creation.

*There seems to be a lot of very expensive space research happening at the moment. Several unmanned vehicles have been dispatched to Mars (and other planets)... And what they seem to always make a big deal of, is they're digging up soil samples and boring down into the crust, hoping to find evidence, that there is (or at least was) water on Mars...*

*Why? Because they believe, if they can find water, then it's possible there once was life... (no matter how crude or rudimentary)...*

And they act as if water is the source of life... But what they overlook, is the key ingredient of life, isn't "water" – it's the Word of God...

And to explain this, Peter takes us right back to the beginning, and water plays a prominent feature here.

Genesis 1:1–2 (ESV) **1** In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. **2** The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

And in the **whole** account of creation, water is a prominent feature.

Peter says that the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God,

You see, it wasn't just water on its own – the **Word of God** was the critical factor...

Water and the Word of God together, was creative. But still in Genesis, when we get to the flood of Noah, the water wasn't creative – it was destruction. By means of both water **and the Word of God**, the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.

What's the critical ingredient? Water?– is that what caused the flood? No. It was the Word of God... **Creation** was by the Word of God. And the whole of the Cosmos, is subject to the Word of God...

And Peter reminds us:

<sup>7</sup> But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

*Scientists **also** believe that Planet Earth is eventually going to burn up...*

*They believe there will be minor burnings (extinction-level events nevertheless):*

- *When I was a child, nuclear holocaust is what we feared. BTW, nations are continuing to increase their arsenals of nuclear weapons... (and some rather concerning rogue states)*
- *The strange thing is though, we seem to be more concerned today about a 1.5 degree warming of the*

*atmosphere... (Who 'd have thought???)*

*But scientists tell us:*

- *there's the possibility of having a collision with an asteroid; or*
- *changes in the activity of the Sun:*
  - *solar flares;*
  - *coronal mass-ejection;*

*But of course (they tell us), there's the **inevitable** major burning up of planet Earth when our sun nears the end of its life.*

- *hydrogen core fuel spent – helium*
- *less dense – less gravity to keep it contained*
- *expands – red giant*
- *earth consumed – burnt up*

*But of course, according to scientists, that's billions of years away...*

But even so, all of this, is overlooking the one fact – It's not elements/chemistry/physics that maintain the order of the universe – it's the word of God... It was by the word of God that:

- the Earth was created;
- the wicked perished through the flood; and
- it will be through the Word of God that the earth is judged and destroyed... (And renewed)

And so, the astro-physicists are quite correct: the Earth will be destroyed by fire. But it won't be on their timeline... **God's** the one in control of scheduling around here...

Now, it might seem like it's been a long time, since Jesus ascended into heaven. And that leads some to have the attitude, "He ain't comin'". But Peter says, <sup>8</sup> **But do not overlook this one fact...**

To overlook something, is to forget about it, and it's to miss the significance of it. And there's 2 ways to overlook significant facts:

In V5, he refers to "they", and he's talking about "the scoffers" - **they deliberately overlook this fact...**

But now in V8, he's talking to "the beloved". And "the beloved" don't **deliberately** overlook the facts, but we do sometimes forget the **significance** of the truths of God...

<sup>8</sup> **But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.**

*I do a bit of photography... And to get the best photos, you need different lenses for different jobs.*

- *a telephoto lens will bring things close so we can see detail (great for taking a photo of a bird);*
- *But to get a photo of a landscape vista, you need a wide-angle lens to take it all in – to capture the expanse of the view;*
- *But then to get a photo of a small flower, you need a macro lens, to get in close and get the fine detail...*

Our God is not restrained by the limits of man... He sees the ‘big picture stuff’, and to Him, a thousand years, “Huh, but a day”,,, and so from God’s perspective, it’s only 2 days since Jesus ascended into heaven...

But He’s also the God of detail, and He can focus in on things that are really close. And one day is like a thousand years... He doesn’t miss anything. Every little detail, He’s intimate with. Every little event, involving every single person, God is intimately involved in every second...

And even though it’s only like 2 days since Jesus was crucified,,, the **day of His crucifixion** was like 1000 years... God loves us, that much... It was like 1000 years, that His Son bore the scourge and hung on the cross...

The Lord isn’t slow. He’s patient... But His patience will come to an end.

In Psalm 85, we get an image of the justice of God and the mercy of God.

Psalm 85: (ESV)<sup>10</sup> **Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.**

This is something that was perfectly demonstrated at the Cross. The righteousness of God, demands justice. But the

love and mercy of God made peace possible. And so, at the cross,

<sup>10</sup> Steadfast love and faithfulness meet;  
righteousness and peace kiss...

And if we understand this, then we'll understand why God has been so patient. He doesn't want any to perish, **but that all should reach repentance.**

Those who repent of their sin, and surrender to Jesus as their Lord, are saved. And so, God has been patiently waiting,,,,, but there will come a moment, when the waiting ends.

It'll be unexpected – pretty-much the whole world will be caught unawares. Peter repeats what Jesus said – that <sup>10</sup> ... the day of the Lord will come like a thief

*In their retirement, my Mum & Dad were living in Highfields. And they used to have a Bible Study Group meeting at their house each week. And one night, after the study, the first person to leave came straight back inside again and said, "Somebody's broken a window in my car, and they've taken things." And then they started checking. Somebody else's had also been broken into. And then they checked the house, and during Bible study, (with a group of about a dozen people in the house) they'd slipped into the laundry, gone down the hallway into the bedrooms, and taken everything that was valuable...*

*Completely unexpected. And that's what thieves do — they prey on our apparent trust that “Nobody would be so brazen” — but they prey on our unawareness or lack of vigilance. ...*

And the point **isn't** that Jesus is evil like a thief, but that He **is** going to suddenly appear – completely unexpectedly, and those who are not vigilant, will not be ready.

the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

It'll be a time of cosmic destruction and renewal, but it's not merely a physical thing... It's also a time of judgment. **the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.**

Every:

- lie will be exposed for what it is;
- conman will have his deception revealed;
- liar;
- slander/liable word spoken;
- hidden abuse;
- prideful act

It'll all be exposed.

Alright, now we **know** these things, but do we overlook them? Do we miss the significance, that Jesus is coming, and the world, and everything that we've managed to accumulate in this world, is going to be burned up and destroyed. It'll be finished with. Everything earthly thing, is temporary...

And every hidden thing in **my** life will be exposed...

Do we truly grasp the significance of these things? Or do we choose to overlook their significance???

Surely, if we did grasp the significance, wouldn't our lives be a whole lot more focused on things of eternal value??? What sort of people ought we to be???

Well, Peter gives us 4 answers:

## 1. Lives of Holiness

We are **made** Holy by the Grace of God, and through the blood of Jesus. It means we have to repent of our sin and submit to Jesus as Lord.... That's where holiness begins, but to have a **life** of holiness, is a life of obedience and righteousness... We walk in the ways of the Lord, keeping in step with the Spirit, as the character of Christ becomes our character.

## 2. Lives of Godliness

This is true religion – to have a holy reverence of God – a fear of God – a healthy awe-struck fear of God – that God is so much higher than I am – That's what Godliness is.

### 3. Waiting for the coming of the day of God

Jesus is coming – the day of The Lord is coming, and this is the day that we are looking forward to (graduation; wedding day)... Our master has been a long time coming, but let's be ready for Him...

If you knew that Jesus was going to appear at 3:37 tomorrow afternoon, would you be doing anything different today??? And that's the point. We are to be living today, as if Jesus could very well make His appearance this very hour.

And:

### 4. Hastening the coming of the day of God.

You know, sometimes Christians, when we observe something happening in the world, that appears that it could have the fingerprints of antichrist on it,, sometimes we get all up-in-arms, "We've got to stop this, because this is antichrist coming"...

But Jesus said, "These things must take place"...

- antichrist will come;
- the beast will come;
- persecutions will come;
- the great tribulation will come;

This is all the will of God, and it's not our role to shut these things down...

If it were at all possible for us to shut these things down, we would be 'slowing down' the coming of the day of the Lord. And we're not told to slow it down – we're told to **hasten** it...

Disciples of Jesus are not told to try and stop the forces of evil. When the Devil makes war on The Saints, our calling, is to **endurance and faith**<sup>i</sup>.

But how can we hasten the coming of the Day of The Lord???

Well, if God's patience is because of His mercy for more to be saved, we **hasten** the coming of the Day of The Lord with evangelism...

We share our faith. We:

- **warn** people of the coming Day of The Lord
- **tell** them the good news of how they can be saved;
  - Jesus is our saviour; and
  - there's no other way...

That's how we hasten the coming of the Day of the Lord...

**And** we pray,

- Come Lord Jesus.
- Your Kingdom come;
- Come in Glory;
- Come in Power.
- Come as the bridegroom, for the bride who awaits.

Let's pray that now.

Lord Jesus Christ,

We long for the day of Your coming.

Lord, forgive us,

for when we haven't remembered the significance that  
You could appear at any moment.  
Lord, help us to live each day,  
expectantly awaiting Your return.

And Lord, while we wait,  
by Your Holy Spirit,  
fix our hearts on things of eternal significance.

Remind us to live lives of Holiness;  
And lives of Godliness  
– that we would have a reverential awe of You;  
That we would be eagerly awaiting the Day of The Lord;  
And **hastening** Your coming.

Lord, we thank You for Your mercy,  
that You have mercifully waited,  
to share Your grace with more...

Lord, give us the same hearts of love,  
that we would share with our friends & neighbours ,  
- that we would share with the world,  
the Good News,  
that there is Life and Salvation in the Name of Jesus...

Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Revelation 13:10