

The Benefit of Prior Knowledge

2 Peter 3:14-18

2 Peter 3:14-18 Introduction

- When Superstorm Sandy hit, some people stayed close to the beach.
- New Jersey governor Chris Christie was on the offensive, describing those who ignored evacuation orders as “stupid and selfish.”
- Barack Obama echoed that attitude, saying: “When they tell you to evacuate, you need to evacuate.”

- Not everyone paid attention. Photos and videos of people surfing, climbing on walls near the Atlantic or strolling the boardwalks quickly surfaced.
- One man was seen riding his jet-ski down a flooded New Jersey street.
- Despite this revelry, the situation was truly severe and we all know some people died.

- When we know something major is about to happen – say, a storm is on it’s way – we understand our obligation to be prepared.
- We may not be able to fully escape the consequences, but between the warnings and the storm, we want to make sure we do everything we can to be ready.

- Peter has given us a letter full of warnings about the future.
- He has made us aware of a final judgment.
- He has reminded us that this world will be destroyed by fire before a new and completely righteous order is put in place.
- He has warned us of the inevitable activity of false teachers who would have us ignore all the warnings.

- Peter’s conclusion to his second letter is essentially a summary of the whole thing.
 - We need to be ready.
 - We need to be diligent.
 - We need to be experiencing constant growth.

We know what’s coming. Let’s act on it.

2 Peter 3:14-18 Outline

- I. Looking forward, be diligent. 3:14-16
- II. Knowing beforehand, beware. 3:17-18

Looking forward, be diligent. 3:14-16

- 3:14 looking forward to these things
- What things? For that we have to look back to 3:13.
- There Peter reminded us that we looking for “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”
- Before we go any farther, we should stop to consider what Peter actually means.

- 3:14 Let’s read Revelation 21:1-5, for just a tiny glimpse of it.
- If we never experienced tears or death, sorrow or crying or pain, then this scene wouldn’t seem nearly so attractive.
- But all of us have experienced those things.
- The fact that it will be a completely righteous environment means that even our own nagging, disheartening sin will be gone.

- 3:14 Because we are looking forward to all of that, Peter reminds us to be diligent.
- We should be diligent to be found in a state of perfect peace with God. Matthew Henry said:
 - *“Never expect to be found at that day of God in peace, if you are lazy and idle in this your day, in which we must finish the work given us to do. Only the diligent Christian will be the happy Christian in the day of the Lord.”*

- 3:14 without spot and blameless
- It is difficult to grasp the exact difference between the two words.
- They became a regular pair. In 1 Peter 1:18-19 Peter uses the same Greek words to describe the complete flawlessness of Jesus Christ in his death.

- 3:14 By contrast, Peter described the false teachers as *blots and blemishes* in 2:13, using the positive forms of the same two words.
- He is telling us to contrast ourselves with those who will face God’s judgment.
- We are to be like Jesus while we distance ourselves from His enemies and endeavor to be as unlike them as possible.

- 3:15 longsuffering ... salvation
- Peter is sending us briefly back to 3:9.
- God may seem to act slowly, but this is due to patience rather than sluggishness.
- He is waiting for more people to be saved by putting their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

- 3:15-16 Peter expresses his extremely high regard for Paul and his writings.
- Paul and Peter were possibly in Rome at the same time, and possibly both as prisoners.
- Under Nero, both died for their faith.
- This statement by Peter shows how early the writings of the apostles were given the same level of authority as the Old Testament.

- 3:16 twist This word “originally referred to a twisting or wrenching motion, like wringing a wet garment.” (Kraftchick)
- If pseudo-Christians wring any text hard enough, they can make it say what they want.
- This is also sometimes known as “torturing the text until it confesses.”

- Nonetheless, the true student of the Word will see that the Bible presents a very consistent message.
- 3:16 Two possible ways that the false teachers were twisting Paul's teachings:
 - They give Paul's words an incorrect sense and then reject them.
 - They misinterpret Paul in such a way as to cause his teachings to support their own misguided views.
- **Maybe they were even doing both.**
 - They could have made it seem like Paul guaranteed that Jesus would return at a very early date. Since Jesus hadn't yet come back, they could have used this against Paul, saying he was wrong, and therefore all his teaching on the Second Coming needed to be rejected.
 - They could have taken Paul's teaching on God's grace and our forgiveness as an excuse to live immoral lives. It seems like even Paul knew of some who were doing exactly this. See Romans 3:7-8, where Paul describes their distorted views.
- 3:16 We might be kind of relieved that at least Peter admits that some of the things Paul wrote were hard to understand.
- We would all probably have to agree with Peter on that one.
- Still, the false teachers Peter faced – and we face today – are not simply misunderstanding.
- 3:16 Untaught means not that they simply lacked teaching, but that they refuse instruction. It refers to one whose mind is untrained and, therefore, undisciplined in habits of thought.
- Unstable refers to one whose conduct is not properly grounded upon the evident truths of God's Word.
- 3:16 Lucas and Green comment here:
 - *"There is a note of sober reality for us in all this as we take up the responsibility to handle God's Word with integrity, honesty and a desire to seek out what it says. Parts of it may well be difficult to understand, and that is a reason for hard work and thinking, getting to grips with a whole Bible book rather than reading only our favourite verses, ..."*
 - *"Peter wants us to know that serious Bible study requires effort. There is all the difference in the world, though, between finding the Bible difficult, and willfully twisting it to say only what we find helpful or relevant or reasonable to believe. Where is the voice of God if he says only what we want him to say?"*

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Knowing beforehand, beware. 3:17-18

- 3:17 While unstable people will inevitably twist the Scriptures, a real risk Peter sees is that you who are stable will fall from your own steadfastness.
- The wicked may be able to lead legitimate followers of Jesus astray – at least for a time.
- “Led away with” is all one word, having the idea of being carried away with or alongside someone else.

- 3:17 Peter sees these false teachers perhaps offering us help or some useful ideas, but eventually making us sway and then fall.
- The fall he mentions is the same word Luke used about Paul’s ship on the way to Rome “running aground” and then being “cast against the rocks.” in Acts 27:26, 29.

- 3:17 Peter has given us ample counsel against them through all of the following:
 - Advanced knowledge of their activities.
 - Warning against their immoral lives.
 - Reminders of the message of the apostles.
 - Old Testament Prophecies of the past.
 - Warnings of God’s future judgment.

- 3:18 So How can we believers maintain our steadfastness and avoid being among the “unstable” crowd that is too easily led astray?
- By growing spiritually.
- “Be constantly growing” or “Keep on growing” is the literal translation.

- 3:18 We must grow in grace.
- This has to do with Christian character traits, the things Peter wrote about in 2 Peter 1:5-7.
- To grow in grace means to become more like the Lord Jesus Christ, from whom we receive all the grace that we need (John 1:16).

- 3:18 In this verse, knowledge *“is that deepening experience of Christ and understanding of the truth of Christ which should continue to increase until the Parousia brings a full revelation of him.” (Bauckham)*
- In other words, until Jesus comes we are to continue to grow in our knowledge – our personal experience and deeper understanding of Him.

- 3:18 Wiersbe points out the connection: *“Note that we are challenged to grow ... ‘in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.’ ‘It is one thing to ‘know the Bible,’ and quite another thing to know the Son of God, the central theme of the Bible. The better we know Christ through the Word, the more we grow in grace; the more we grow in grace, the better we understand the Word of God.”*

- 3:18 We need to know more about Jesus, to be sure, but we also grow in that knowledge which comes from persistently obeying him.
- We have to treat His promises as genuine assurances from the *Savior*, and His commands as the actual directives of the *Lord*.
- To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

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2 Peter 3:14-18 Conclusions

- At the beginning of this letter, we said we could sum up Peter's purpose for writing it as follows:
 - To motivate believers in Christian growth.
 - To remind them that growth is based on a combination of both knowledge and obedience.
 - To encourage watchfulness in light of the Lord's promised – and therefore certain – return.
 - To guard against any and all pseudo-Christian teaching that would claim otherwise.

- As we went through the letter we saw:
 - The importance of the Scriptures.
In fact, we saw some of the clearest statements regarding divine inspiration in the Bible.
 - The vital link between the knowledge of God and obedience.
We might also add that distorting such knowledge is vitally linked to disobedience.
 - The seriousness of doctrinal error.
Scripture-twisting is why many will be lost.

- 2 Peter sounded an alarm for us:
- Churches can be attacked from outside to the point of near destruction.
- But worse yet can be the self-destructive tendency within churches which is the direct result of false teaching and lax morals.

- *"If in 2 Peter there is an almost unimaginable severity for the apostate and the false prophet, there is also a vista, beyond our dreams, of unbounded joys for those who, never forgetful of what has been done for them (1:9), daily seek to increase, more and more, in the grace and knowledge of God."*
 - Lucas & Green, *The Message of 2 Peter & Jude: The Promise of His Coming*.

- Today we have been reminded both to be diligent and to beware.
- Peter's conclusion to his second letter is essentially a summary of the whole thing.
- We need to be ready. We need to be diligent.
- We need to be experiencing constant growth.
- Let's finish up by rereading this short final passage once again, beginning in 3:13.

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