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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

I can't trash Aggies or Longhorns, so two Arkansas Razorback fans, Tom and Joe, were hunting in the woods when they got lost. Trying to reassure his friend, Joe said, "Don't worry. I've always heard that if you get lost that you should shoot into the air three times, and someone will come find you." So they shot in the air three times and waited. Nobody came. After awhile they tried it again, but still there was no response. They decided to try it again and Tom said, "I hope it works this time because we're down to our last three arrows." That's what I call ignorance.

As the Apostle Peter completes his second and last letter, he's writing to address the widespread spiritual ignorance existing in the churches of his time. These Christians couldn't understand the truth about the second coming of Christ; some were even mocking the fact that Jesus hadn't returned yet. Peter reminded them that with the Lord, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day.

They were ignorant about the day of the Lord, so he provides some information for them. But the words of scripture aren't here to simply give us information. These words are designed for transformation. The Bible tells us how we should live in light of the truth.

2 Peter 3:10: "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE OUGHT YOU TO BE? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. [The word, "speed" means "to desire"] That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

In light of the truth about the second coming of Jesus, what kind of people should we be? I want you to focus on three words that should describe our lives: looking, living and learning.

1. I SHOULD BE LOOKING FORWARD TO THE FUTURE

Peter used the phrase “looking forward” three times in this passage. The first two are found in verse 12 where we read, “as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.” Then in verse 13 we read, “we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.” I entitled this series from 2 Peter “Living in Fast Forward,” because the Bible gives us the wonderful opportunity to know what’s going to happen in the future. It’s like fast forwarding through a movie or sporting event to see the final outcome. Because we can look forward to the victory of Jesus we can live in victory now. There are two future events to which we should be looking forward:

(1) I should be looking forward to the day of the Lord

“The Day of the Lord” is mentioned more than 30 times in the Bible. It doesn’t refer to a single, 24-hour period. It is used like the expression, “we live in the day of nuclear energy.”

The Day of the Lord refers to the time when God will dramatically intervene in human history and set in motion the events of the end of the world as we know it. I believe the Day of the Lord is a period of time that will begin when Jesus returns to rapture the church, and will carry all the way through the tribulation, and the millennial reign of Christ on earth. After all, we just read that with the Lord, a day is like a thousand years.

In this section, Peter is referring to only one aspect of the Day of the Lord, the end of the earth as we know it. He writes that this planet will one day be destroyed by fire. A hundred years ago, the idea of the entire planet being destroyed by fire was unthinkable. But we live in the day where there are enough nuclear weapons on earth to totally annihilate the human race.

It’s hard to read these words in 2 Peter without thinking of a nuclear explosion. It says in 2 Peter 3:12, “That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.” (2 Peter 3:12) The word “heavens” doesn’t always mean the dwelling place of God—it also refers to the atmosphere of earth. The Bible speaks of the birds that fly in the heavens. A nuclear explosion may be triggered by either fission or fusion of atomic particles. The bombs dropped on Japan at the end of WWII utilized nuclear fission. Most modern nuclear warheads are activated by fusion, which is much more powerful. Physicists will tell you the only heat hot enough to melt all the elements on the periodic table is that which is created from nuclear fusion.

Since the advent of nuclear weapons, the possibility of nuclear annihilation has been a possibility. President Dwight Eisenhower said in one of his last speeches: “Without a moral regeneration throughout the world there is no hope for us as we are going to disappear one day in the dust of an atomic explosion.” Before you start buying your bomb shelter, I believe this final fire will take place long after Jesus has come to take the church home to heaven.

The whole point of this passage is for us to be ready, because the Day of the Lord—the rapture that begins it all—will come unexpectedly. Peter says it will be like a thief. He wasn’t the only one to use that analogy. Paul used it in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, “The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.” (1 Thessalonians 5:2) Jesus used the same picture when He said, “You do not

know on what day your Lord will come. If the owner of the house had known at what time the thief was coming, he would have kept watch. So you also must be ready.” (Matthew 24:43-44) Our job is not to figure out the exact details of the Day of the Lord—our job is to be *ready*.

(2) I should be looking forward to a new heaven and earth

Before you get upset with the idea of this old earth being destroyed, notice the promise there will be a new heaven and a new earth. And it will be a LOT better than the old messy place.

Don't you like new things? It was exciting when we moved into this new building four years ago. If you've ever moved into a new house, or bought a new car, you know there's a special enjoyment that comes from new things. The Bible says that beyond the planet's destruction, we can look forward to a new and improved version.

It will be a place where Jesus rules and reigns. As it says in Revelation 11 and was put to music by Handel, “The kingdom of this world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.” (Revelation 11:15) You can read about this new heaven and earth in the last chapter of the Bible: “I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...I heard a voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God will be with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” (Revelation 21:1-5)

If you're a follower of Jesus Christ, that's worth looking forward to! That's why Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come!” If you aren't a follower of Jesus yet, this is not something you can look forward to!

2. I SHOULD BE LIVING DIFFERENTLY IN THE PRESENT

As I've said many times, the purpose of Bible prophecy is *not* to give us details about the future, it is to motivate us to love Jesus and to conduct ourselves as His followers. In verse 11 we find this question: “Since everything will be destroyed this way, what kind of people ought you to be?” He answers the question in verses 11 and 14: “You ought to live holy and godly lives...since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.”

Think about all the things we think are important: houses, land, cars, money, possessions etc. All these things we think are so important will one day be destroyed. Jesus said pagans run after all these “things.” But we should be living with different priorities. Peter mentions two distinct ways =we should be living differently.

(1) I should maintain purity in a corrupt world

Peter uses the words “holy,” “godly,” “spotless,” and “blameless.” Think about the word “spotless.” Your redeemed heart is like a clean garment. God wants you to stay clean. The only

problem is there are plenty of attitudes and actions in this world that will splatter dirt on you.

I don't really like the word “religion.” Religion has more to do with rules and rituals, while I believe the Christian life is more of a relationship with God than a religion. The only time the word “religion” is used in a positive sense in the Bible is in James 1:27. Where we read: “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” (James 1:27)

I once read about a female dignitary who was visiting a coal mine in Scotland. She was wearing a white dress, and as she approached the entrance to the mine, the foreman knew coal dust would soon cover her dress. He said, “excuse me, ma'am, but you can't wear a white dress into the coal mine.” She was rather insulted and replied, “Well, what's going to stop me from wearing this dress into the mine?” The foreman replied, “There's nothing that will stop you from going into the mine in a white dress, but there's plenty that will keep you from wearing a white dress when you leave the mine!”

In the same way, as we encounter the world without Christ day after day, the world tries to “spot” you and pollute you. How can you stay clean? First, by resisting temptation. It is possible to just say, “No” to sin. One of the first verses I ever memorized has also been one of the most practical promises I've ever claimed. The Bible says, “There is no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man. But God is faithful, and he will not suffer you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

But when you do give in to temptation, it's as if the world has stained your heart. At that point, you must do what I John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness.” Confess your sin, repent of it, and claim God's cleansing. Or in other words, when it comes to sin: admit it; quit it; and forget it. That's how you can stay clean in a dirty world.

(2) I should maintain peace with God

Before you become a Christian, you are alienated from God. It's as if you're standing on one side of a chasm and God is on the other side. The reason you are separated from Him is because each of us are sinners by nature and by choice. God is holy, which means without sin. Man has devised many attempts to bridge this gap. He has tried religion, good works, philosophy, and morality—but none of these attempts can connect us with God. The good news is Jesus Christ came to die on the cross to bridge this gap between sinful men and a holy God. The greatest peace treaty of history was enacted at the cross, and it was signed in the blood of the sinless Savior. So the only way we can every have peace with God is through Jesus Christ. The Bible says, “Therefore since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1)

The most important question you'll ever answer is: Have you made peace with God? Once you make peace with God, then you maintain peace with God through your living, loving relationship with Him.

3. I SHOULD BE LEARNING MORE ABOUT JESUS

Simon Peter was an important Apostle. He was known as the leader among the Apostles. This is his last letter, and in the final directive in his last letter, he writes in verse 18: “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” To me, this is one of the most important verses in the entire Bible. Are you growing as a Christian, or does your walk with the Lord seem to be stuck in a rut? Peter mentions two areas in which there should be growth and development.

(1) I should be growing in grace

Grace is that wonderful blessing God gives to us, even though we don’t deserve it. It is unmerited favor. The popular acrostic for grace is God’s Riches at Christ’s Expense. Those of us who are the recipients of grace should also be dispensers of grace to others. We should be showing kindness and favor to those around us, even if we think they don’t deserve it.

Peter was growing in grace. I love the big fisherman. He was from the country, and he had been called unlearned and ignorant. I believe he was the first redneck. If Peter were alive today, he’d be wearing boots drive a pickup truck with big tires and a rifle rack in the back window. He’d have a bumper sticker that said, “God, Guts, and Guns made America great.”

Old Peter was always popping off. In one single night, we see Peter pulling out his sword and slashing it toward the head of one of the guys sent to arrest Jesus. A couple of hours later he’s cussing like a sailor, denying he even knew Jesus. Don’t forget, that’s the same guy who wrote this words. Well, he’s not exactly the same guy—he had grown in grace.

Did you notice the words he wrote about Paul? He calls him his “dear brother” and compliments his letters, referring to them as scriptures. That’s grace.

Paul and Peter had a little history. They had a face-to-face run-in a few years earlier. Paul wrote about it in Galatians. “When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles.” (Galatians 2:11-12)

If Peter had been the same old redneck, he probably would have written harsh words about Paul, or at least not written nice things about him. But he had grown in grace. How about you? Can you think of another Believer who has opposed you or hurt you? Can you call them your dear friend? If you can’t, it means you’ve got some growing in grace yet to do.

(2) I should be growing in knowledge

The word “knowledge” or “know” in the New Testament can be used in two ways. First, it can refer to intellectual knowledge. What we might call “head knowledge.” You can grow in this kind of knowledge by studying the scriptures. And the Bible instructs us to “study to show

yourself approved, a workman who is not ashamed." (2 Timothy 2:15 KJV)

But the Bible word for knowledge can also mean experiential knowledge. This isn't head knowledge; it's heart knowledge. It is knowing the Lord. As we grow in knowledge we come to know Him better and better. Our intimacy with Him becomes deeper and deeper. Salvation is all about knowing God. Jesus said, "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God." (John 17:3)

CONCLUSION

The greatest tragedy in the church today is there are thousands of people who claim to be Christians, but they are stuck in a level of spiritual immaturity. They are spiritual babies. We all love babies. We love to ooh and ahh over them. But there's nothing attractive about a 40-year-old baby.

When you fill out an application you may be asked to give your highest level of education. You can check "high school diploma," "college degree," "graduate school degree," or "post-graduate." If you were filling out an application asking your level of spiritual maturity, what would you check? Kindergarten? Grammar school? High School? Graduate school? The main difference is this, you can graduate from the schools of this world, but in the school of Christ, you are always a student. If you ever have the attitude you have arrived, then you are in trouble. The process of spiritual growth involved being continually shaped and molded into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Here's the question you must consider honestly: Are you becoming more like Jesus every day? Spiritual growth requires discipline. It's as if Jesus is saying, "I never said it would be easy...I only said it would be worth it."

Do you *want* to grow? Do you want to become more like Jesus? You must understand the key to spiritual growth is maintaining a daily quiet time. The Christian life is a relationship, not a religion, and the more time you spend with Jesus, the more you'll grow. When you get fed up with spiritual immaturity, you'll start having a quiet time. Your life will never change until you change something you do daily.

I close with this little poem written by an unknown author. It summarizes the difference in our lives when we take time to spend time with Jesus everyday: We mutter and sputter / We fume and we spurt / We mumble and grumble / Our feelings get hurt. / We can't understand things / Our vision grows dim, / When all that we need / Is to spend time with HIM.

You don't have to wonder about the kind of person God wants you to be. The scripture teaches that we should be looking forward to the future, living differently in the present, and learning more and more about Jesus every day. When you understand that, you can concentrate on being the person God intends you to be.

OUTLINE

I SHOULD BE...

1. LOOKING FORWARD TO THE FUTURE

- (1) To the day of the Lord
- (2) To a new heaven and earth

2. LIVING DIFFERENTLY IN THE PRESENT

- (1) Maintain purity in a corrupt world
- (2) Maintain peace with God

3. LEARNING MORE ABOUT JESUS

- (1) Growing in grace
- (2) Growing in knowledge