

Protection in Sanctification, part 4

2 Peter 3:11-18

(preached Pine Grove 7/26/20 Sun PM)

Introduction

If you will, take your Bible and turn to 2 Peter 3:11.

Lord willing, we will finish off this 2nd and final letter from Peter to the church tonight.

As Peter's life draws to a close, he loves the church enough to warn them of false teachers, and so the Lord inspires Him to write this letter to guard believers from being led astray by a false teacher.

Let me read verses 11-18..

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.

In 1997, a group of 39 people who called themselves Heaven's Gate committed mass suicide in San Diego California.

The group had been founded decades earlier by Marshall Applewhite and Bonnie Nettles.

The purpose of the group was to graduate from this earth to a higher evolutionary level.

And in order to graduate, the group committed suicide in order to leave this world and hop on a spaceship that was supposedly trailing the Hale Bopp Comet.

Now before you think that these people were mentally ill, understand that Applewhite drew much of his wrapped thinking from the Bible.

In fact, Applewhite was the son of a Presbyterian pastor.

He was well versed in the Bible and considered himself an expert in end times issues.

He even borrowed from the book of Revelation in saying that He and Nettles were the Two Witnesses of the book of Revelation.

However in his view of the end, the two witnesses would be killed, brought back to life, and transported publicly to a spaceship in the sky.

Applewhite even visited a number of churches to garner support and followers, but thankfully, most churches rejected him.

Eventually, he and Nettles recruited followers, and the group grew.

Then in 1995, the Hale Bopp comet as discovered, and Applewhite grew convinced that this was the the sign of the end.

So he began making preparations for the group's departure.

He told all the members of the group to sell all their possessions and leave their families behind.

They then pooled their money and rented a house for \$7000 a month outside of Sand Diego California.

They then purchased alien abduction insurance for each member that would pay out \$1000000 to a named beneficiary of each member of the group.

On the day of the supposed arrival of the spaceship, they each put on matching outfits consisting of black shirts and sweat pants along with Nike shoes.

In the pockets of the sweat pants, they each placed \$5.75 to cover space tolls.

And then in stages all 39 member took a lethal mixture of poison and applesauce followed by a shot of alcohol.

Now understand I don't like to talk about such things, but I use this introduction to remind you that the end of time fascinates people.

It fascinates people to the point that they will listen to someone who uses the Bible in such a sick way.

It fascinates people to the point that they will do just about anything to make sure they are ready for the end.

Even abandon family and sell possessions and commit suicide.

This is clearly demonic, but Heaven's Gate is not the only cult that used the end times to further their cause.

There have been hundreds of others and there will be more in the future.

I am sure there are some out there even now.

Now, I don't think that any of you would fall in with such a cult of the end times, but it is fascinating reading about these groups and their leaders who often use the Bible in their teaching.

What is also fascinating to read about is what they tell their followers to do in light of the end approaching.

Heaven's Gate is not the only group who has told their followers to sell all their world possessions in preparation for the end.

A group known as The Brethren, also led by the son of a Pentecostal pastor, told their members to sell

everything and live on the streets to prepare for the end of time.

Jim Jones did the same, and so did David Koresh.

And where did this instruction come from?

It often came from Scripture that these men twisted to suit their needs.

Understand that a person with no money or possessions or family has no escape from these cults.

This is why selling everything is often required before a person can become a member.

Now with that in mind, we have been a good biblical look at what is coming in terms of the end of time.

Despite what people think and say, Scripture is fairly clear on the events of the end time.

It does require some work and study and effort as we will see tonight, but the Lord has given us enough information to give us a picture of what is coming.

And for starters, it doesn't include a spaceship in the tail of a comet.

It doesn't include you to move into the same house with other believers.

In fact, we have no vacancies at the parsonage, so don't get any ideas.

And for sure, there is nothing in the Bible about selling all your possessions and putting some money in your pocket in preparation for the rapture.

So what does the Bible say in terms of getting ready for the end?

Well, as you can see from our outline, we are going to see 4 practices of the believer to prepare for the rapture of the church and the end times.

1. Live Holy (11)
2. Look Intently (12-13)
3. Love Peace and Patience (14-16)
4. Learn Consistently (17-18)

Now remember, Peter has spent this final chapter identifying an error that false teachers spread.

And though there will be plenty of options, the Lord inspired Peter to address their heretical teaching that Jesus will not return.

False teachers mock the notion that Jesus is returning either in the rapture or the Second Coming.

But Peter makes it clear that Jesus will return.

He will return to rapture the church and then 7 years later, He will return to defeat the Antichrist and establish His kingdom upon this earth for 1000 years.

And we have been reviewing this in our minds over the past few weeks.

We have looked at this graphic, and though we examined every passage, we have set a general feel of what is coming.

Now with those things established in our mind and heart, Peter addresses the next logical question.

And it is simply.

Now that I know what is coming, how do I live?

What do I do?

How do I prepare?

So let's look at 4 practices of the believer in light of what we know is coming.

1. Live Holy (11)

Verse 11..

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

In verse 10, Peter summarized the events of the end.

The end begins with the rapture of the church.

It is a signless event that comes without warning.

In the same way that a thief would not announce his plans, the rapture will come unannounced.

It will come quickly and swiftly, and just like a thief, the Lord will snatch all true believers from the earth.

He will then begin to destroy the world in the 7 years of tribulation that follow the rapture.

He will then destroy the armies of the world in the Second Coming.

But the destruction will cease for a 1000 years of Christ's reign.

However, when those 1000 years come to a close, the Lord will destroy the present heavens and earth, judge all unbelievers of all time at the Great White Throne Judgment, and then make all things new.

And in light of knowing all that, Peter simply tells us to live holy.

And this would include outward holiness and inward holiness.

The end of verse 11 says holy conduct and godliness.

Conduct refers to outward action and godliness is inward holiness.

In other words, think and act holy in light of what is coming.

And what is the nature of holiness?

It is a separation from the world.

WE don't think like the world.

WE don't act the world.

Now this doesn't imply becoming a recluse or a hermit.

WE live in the world, we are just not of the world.

Heaven is our home, so our thoughts are there, and our behavior lines up with the holiness of heaven.

The point is simple.

Since believers know that the present heavens and earth are not going to last forever, stop thinking and acting like they are.

Don't lay up treasure.

Don't try to hold on to earthly things and earthly ways.

Since a new heavens and earth are on the way, stop trying to hold on to this one.

But let me also add that anyone who understands that the rapture could happen any minute of any day will certainly have a desire to be thinking and acting holy when Christ calls us to meet Him in the air.

Which of you want to be engaged in sinful activity when the rapture occurs?

Which of you want to be caught doing things that Christ died to forgive when he appears to rescue you from the wrath to come?

Think holy, live holy, act holy because you could be face to face with a holy Christ in a matter of moments.

Now this leads right into the 2nd practice of the Christian in light of what we know about the end.

2. Look Intently (12-13)

Verse 12 and 13.

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.

One benefit of gaining a biblical view of the end times is the comfort it brings.

Most people have such a fear of what is coming.

Even believers are often reluctant to talk about the end due to their fear of what it may bring.

Let me assure you of something.

If you are in Christ.

If you are saved by faith in Christ alone, there is no fear of anything that is coming.

No fear.

No dread.

No worry.

In fact, these verses give us the proper attitude toward the end of time.

And that attitude is an attitude of eagerness and excitement.

Looking for hastening the coming of the day of God speak of an attitude of expectancy.

Now understand, this is not teaching that we can speed up the end, but this etching that we can be looking forward to it.

And let tell you that one result of the craziness of this year has been a rise in the desire of my own heart to see Christ return.

Look, when things are running normal and life is going as we think it should, there is a tendency to want to delay the end.

But let things worsen, and let me tell you, you ain't nothing yet in how bad things can be.

But let things worsen, and the Lord's people grow in their desire for His return.

But understand, Peter is saying that believers should look for and hasten the end all time, regardless of how good or how bad life is.

And why should we look forward to that day?

Look at verse 13.

***we are looking for new heavens and a new earth,
in which righteousness dwells.***

Have you ever lived in a world that was filled with righteousness?

Yea, me neither.

Will you live in a world like that?

Absolutely, if you are a believer.

And if you have a desire to see what world is like, look for and hasten the coming of Christ.

In other words, keep your eye on the sky and keep your heart of heaven.

And one day, you will know what it is like to live in a new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells.

Wish I had time to give you a taste of a world like that, but check out Isaiah 65 and 66 and Revelation 21-22 is you want a little picture of that world.

But let me give you two more practices in light of what is coming.

3. Love Peace and Patience (14-16)

Verse 14..

14 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,

Verse 14 seems to be closely related.

To be spotless and blameless is to live a life that looks holy on the outside but is also holy on the inside.

As the end approaches, don't be a hypocrite.

Don't be hiding sin, but be confessing sin and repenting of sin and avoiding sin.

And understand, life that is lived in that way is a life of peace.

As the end nears, you aren't nervous about what your life is like.

You won't be concerned about what the Lord will find or what others will find out about you.

You are at peace because your life is an open book to the world and to the Lord.

Could this be referring to peace with others?

Sure, but understand, you will have peace with others in general if you pursue inward and outward holiness.

Therefore, if you know what is coming, be a lover of peace.

Make peace with God through Christ.

And keep peace with God through obedience, repentance, and confession.

So love peace, but also love the patience of God.

We talked about this last week, but understand that God delays his return in order to save the lost.

WE should look for the end.

WE should be eager for the end.

But we also appreciate the patience of God in delaying the end to save souls.

As we keep our eyes to the sky, we keep our mouths open speaking the gospel, and begging God to save the lost.

I have often said that a proper view of the end make believers pursue holiness and pursue the lost.

If you know what is on the way, you want to be obedient and you want to evangelize the lost.

The rapture rushes us to excellent behavior and urgent evangelism.

And then a final practice of the believer in light of their knowledge of the end is found in verses 17-18.

But I want to grab the end of verse 15 and 16 as well..

WE will call this..

4. Learn Consistently (17-18)

So Peter says that the Lord's patience in delaying his return equals the salvation of souls, and then he adds this at the end of verse 15..

just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16 as also in all his letters

Though Peter and Paul had some confrontation in the past at Antioch, Peter loved Paul.

And here he affirms that love and he affirms Paul's writings as Scripture by saying that Paul was inspired by the Lord to write about the end times too.

In fact, Paul had even written about how the Lord's delay in coming leads to salvation.

Listen to what Paul wrote in Romans 2:4..

4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

So the Lord had inspired Peter to write about the Lord delaying His return in the same way that He inspired Paul.

However, the Lord gave Paul way more information about the end times as well.

1 and 2 Thessalonians are filled withheld times information.

Along with 1 Corinthians and then there are references to the return of Christ in nearly all of Paul's letters.

So Peter affirms all of that as Scripture here, but he does say that is can be hard to put all of Paul's writings together.

Verse 16...

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.

And Peter's point is clear.

Since it is difficult to piece all of PAul's writings about the end times together, false teachers come along and twist his words to suit their needs..

And this has clearly had an effect on the church through the years.

Today, there are as many end times views as ever.

It is quite a mess, and though not everyone is a false teacher, many have led astray by false teaching about the end.

And the call of Peter here is to be aware that there is twisting of the words that the Lord inspired Paul to write.

Which leads to verse 17..

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.

The call of these verses is to stay sharp in your view of the end times.

The call is to continue to clear up the muddled mess of the end that false teachers seek to make.

Be on guard against wrong views of the end times.

And you do that by staying in the word which grows our knowledge and builds our walls of protection higher.

Peter wrote this is 65 AD, and I can assure you that the mess about the end times that we have today is a result of people not obeying the command to be on guard from false teaching about the end.

I don't want to be as the preacher who only talks about the end times.

But also don't want to be the preacher who never talks about it.

The same should be true for you.

Don't be the believer who brings up the end times in every conversation.

But also don't be the believer who never brings it up and never studies it.

Simply learn and grow constantly in your knowledge and grace of Christ and that would include knowledge of His return.

That wraps up 2 Peter, and let me end with a couple general thoughts about the letter.

Conclusion

#1 - False teachers are real.

I have named names in this letter, but I haven't scratched the surface of the cesspool of flash teaching today.

But understand, what Peter wrote about the existence of false teachers in the 1st century is still true today.

False teachers are real men and women who are agents of Satan.

#2 - False teachers are hard to spot.

Listen carefully.

These people are hard to spot.

They don't carry pitchforks.

They don't wear red suits.

They look like a true teacher.

They even say things that a true teacher says.

They smile. They hug. They shake hands.

You will love them, and often be shocked that they are false teachers.

But one look at Scripture and you will know, which leads to point 3.

#3 -False teachers are easy to spot.

God has no left you without warning in terms of these people.

Open your Bible and hold up God's description of these people to their life, and you will spot these people.

And let me say this.

If a man or woman in ministry doesn't want you looking at their life, that alone is reason to be on guard.

#4 - False teachers are end times twisters.

Though the false teaching of these men and women can be about a variety of things, God chose to use Peter to alert us to their error about Christ's return.

So this is not a minor issue.

How you view the end matters.

Now that doesn't mean a wrong view keeps you out of heaven.

So this is not a salvation determiner.

But let me balance that with this.

It is also not an unimportant issue.

The Lord devoted the final chapter of the book about false teachers to alert us to how they spread lies about the return of Christ.

So it is important, and my hope is that we would all be changed because of what we know is coming.

Let us pray.