

Waiting Well

2Peter 3:14-18

When I was a kid one of the things I used to do as a hobby was build models.

I built a few planes like a Spitfire, an SR71 Blackbird, and one or two others.

I built a model of the USS Enterprise. The imaginary space ship not the real life aircraft carrier.

I also built a handful of cars and a few other things, but the one that stands out in my mind the most is a replica of a river boat.

Do you know the kind I mean?

It is the kind with the giant paddle wheels on either side of the boat.

It had two big smoke stacks because the real life boat was powered by a steam engine that used coal to power it.

It had multiple decks, railing, and ropes.

The reason that model stands out in my mind is because it was the most complex of the ones I had built in those days.

It stands out to me because of the approach I took that hobby.

My approach with every model that I made was to build it as fast as I could.

I regularly made the mistake of moving on to the next step too soon failing to give the glue enough time to dry.

If I used too much glue I didn't bother to take the time to clean it off the model or my fingers I just kept putting it together.

My hastiness always showed up in the final product.

Things were a little crooked, decals went missing, dried glue was often visible, and paint (if I bothered to use it) left a lot to be desired.

As a boy I found it a challenge to wait for things like I was supposed to.

I still struggle with that today.

Anybody else have a hard time waiting for things?

It can be hard to wait and it is even harder to wait well.

As Christians one of the things that defines us as believers is waiting.

Even Christians who have died and are in heaven are waiting (Revelation 6:10).

We are waiting for Jesus to come, the dead in Christ to rise, and the whole of creation to be made new.

[The apostle Peter writes in his second letter about these things. He writes to believers out of a tender hearted affection for their good. As he is quickly coming to the end of his life he has a strong desire to give these believers safeguards for their faith. God has preserved this for us so

that we might enjoy that benefit as well. Working through the letter we can see the safeguards of striving for godliness, being reminded of the gospel, knowing the danger of deception, and of thinking on the future namely the coming of Jesus. In our text this morning **2Peter 3:14-18** the apostle brings his letter to a close with one more safeguard for our lives. Having just told us the importance of thinking on the future he turns his attention to waiting for that future. It is really important to be looking forward to the day of the Lord, but it is also important for us to be waiting well in the meantime. How do we wait well for Jesus? Peter gives us three important ways in these verses. The first thing we need to wait well is to...]

Point #1 – Be diligent. (Verse 14)

It is easy to become lazy about our walk with Jesus and the Devil loves that because he knows that a lazy Christian is a declining Christian. Born again believers looking forward to Jesus' coming must fight against that, we must...

Verse 14 begins with the word 'therefore' which tells us that Peter is connecting what he is about to write with what he has just written.

He has just written to the church about the coming of the 'Day of the Lord'.

That phrase in the Bible often means the end of this present world and it includes a number of events.

Peter in these verses has the big picture in mind. He has in mind the coming of Christ, the defeat and judgement of all God's enemies, and the destruction and remaking of the whole universe.

That is what we are waiting for according to **verse 13**.

Now look with me at the first half of verse 14. (**Verse 14a** stopping at 'these')

As Peter is coming to the end of this letter to people he really cares about, his assumption is that they are waiting.

That is how he says it here. "Since you are waiting for these" that is the 'these' of verse 13 "the new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."

Every genuine Christian is waiting for that.

What should we do while we wait? The second part of verse 14 starts to answer that for us (**Verse 14b**).

While you are waiting, 'be diligent'.

The idea of the word in the original language is to work hard, to spare no effort, or to do your best.

At what? What are we to be doing our best at while we wait for Jesus to come?

First, he says to work hard to 'be found by him without spot or blemish'

He is not talking here about going down to the store and buying a makeup kit to try and hide all of our physical imperfections.

He is talking about the spots and blemishes of our moral failings.

He is talking about getting rid of actions, words, thoughts, and feelings that go against God's will.

Wow! That is a tall order. If you are thinking, "It is impossible to be without any spot or blemish" you would be correct.

Because it is impossible we need to remember the gospel.

If we forget the gospel we will through up our hands in frustration or sink into despair at our lack of success.

If we forget the gospel we might start to think that being ready for Jesus' coming is all up to us.

If we remember the gospel we will know that it is only by faith in the death and resurrection of Christ that God deals justly with our sins and places on us the righteousness of Jesus so that when He sees us He sees no spot or blemish because we are covered by the soul cleansing blood of God's Son.

If we remember the gospel, what God has done for us then we can strive, work at, do our best to get rid of things in our lives that God hates being free from the burden of condemnation.

We never make ourselves perfect. Only God can do that for us.

We can, however, work at it. We can strive for it. We can do our best. That is what we should be doing while we are waiting for Jesus.

Not only to be without spot or blemish but to be 'at peace' it says.

It is possible that Peter could mean a couple of different things by that, but he is probably intending to relate the word 'peace' to being without 'spot or blemish'.

The fact is living life according to God's commands is a great way to live.

It is simply knowing that God's ways are best and trusting Him with the results.

Nothing else can give you rest and peace in your life like trusting God.

Not only does that foster peace in our lives as individuals but it also brings us peace with one another.

Think about it. What causes fights among believers? Pride, selfishness, worldly desires and alike.

If we are trying hard to fight against those things it would make sense that it would have a positive impact on our fellowship with one another in the church.

For us to enjoy that it takes diligence, we have to striving for it, and making our best effort.

[When I was just a teen I wanted to get a job as a caddie at Point West Golf Course. I sent in a resume and a few days later called to ask about the job. The man I spoke to said, “No.” Not to be deterred I called again the next day. Again he said, “No.” I called him every day for about two weeks until finally he said, “Yes.” I wouldn’t let it go. I kept trying. Why? Because I wanted that job and tried my best to get it.]

Most of us know what doing our best looks like.

We know what is it to work hard at something we want.

The question is, do we want the things that God wants?

If we are truly born again then we will.

Now, no doubt we are still at war with our sinful nature.

No doubt we will fail in some way every single day.

In the face of that I find this verse really encouraging.

[God is not saying to us here, “It’s all up to you and if you aren’t perfect then you are on your own.” What He is saying here is “Do your best!” Try hard to be in reality what you are through faith in Jesus. Because of the gospel we need not despair. We are forgiven and loved by God and that is 100% because of the finished work of Christ. That means we can try our best for doing what is right out of love for what is right instead of fear of condemnation. Even better as we try our best at this we will make progress and get to enjoy the fruit of obeying God. That is what the LORD is asking of us while we wait for Jesus. He wants us to be diligent at doing what is right. Secondly, to wait well we must...]

Point #2 – Trust the Lord and His Word. (Verse 15-16)

It is a very easy thing to say that we have put our lives in God’s hands and believe the bible. It is something else altogether to be truly convinced of these things in our hearts and minds.

The word ‘And’ at the beginning of verse 15 tells us that this next command is also related to our waiting for a new heavens and earth. (Verse 15a stopping at ‘salvation’)

What does he mean here by “the patience of our Lord”?

One way we could take this would be patience with us.

How many of you are glad that God put up with our rebellion and instead worked in more ways than we know to bring us to the place where we accepted Jesus as our Saviour?

He could have ended our lives at our first inkling of rebellion and would have been right to do so, but He is patient.

That is an amazing truth, but Peter here is likely getting at something else.

What has he been talking about? He's been talking about God bringing about the end of the world and he has been dealing with scoffers who say, "Why is it taking so long."

With that in mind it makes the most sense to take patience here as meaning the LORD waiting to bring about the end.

On the surface that may seem like a strange thing to say for a guy who is staring execution in the face.

It may seem like a strange thing to say to people who are going through tough times for the sake of Jesus.

Wouldn't salvation be for Jesus to come right now and putting an end to all that?

If we think of salvation as primarily being about ending our pain and trouble then God's waiting for the end seems like delaying salvation rather than bringing it about.

Without a doubt our final salvation means being free from pain, sorrow, and death but the main gift of salvation is something different.

When Jesus describes eternal life He says this in **John 17:3**

"And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

Jesus says knowing God is what is central to eternal life.

That is about more than intellectual knowledge, it is about a soul satisfying relationship.

In other words enjoying the greatness of Who God is forever is the goal of salvation.

If we can see that and we can see that God does all that He does to call attention to the greatness of Who He is including His timing to bring an end to this current creation, then we can see that His waiting is really for our highest good because it will help us to see the maximum degree of His greatness forever.

Waiting well for these things means trusting the Lord for that goal.

It also means trusting His word (**Verse 15b-16**).

Of the apostles we have more of Paul's letters in the bible than any of the others.

Peter embraces Paul here as a beloved brother who shares the same vision of glory as all the apostles.

These things, Peter says, are not coming from his own mind nor are they originating with Paul.

Instead, he says, that Paul writes, "according to the wisdom given to him."

Wisdom from where? From heaven, from the Lord Himself.

No doubt there are some “hard things” to understand especially about the end of time.

That is to be expected when we are talking about things of such importance.

Some people take difficult things and “twist” them to suit their own desires and it leads them to destruction.

People do that all the time with the Bible.

What does that look like exactly? Peter most likely means people taking hard to understand passages and using them to teach what is contrary to sound Biblical doctrine that is very clear from cover to cover.

Here is a telltale for someone like that. They use a complicated argument and give you the impression that you don’t understand it because you aren’t smart enough or educated enough to see it.

They will talk about how we’ve been seeing it wrong for 2000 years and how they now have the right interpretation.

They will make a big deal of obscure translational arguments touting their insightful knowledge of the original languages and on it goes.

The common thread is denying the work of the Holy Spirit in inspiring, preserving, and translating His Word.

The truth is you can trust your Bible. The fact is the Holy Spirit is consistent in bringing the written word of God into being and therefore, the more difficult passages must be understood in the light of the clear teaching of the Scriptures as a whole rather than be used to undo them.

[We can trust God to run the universe for the good of His people. We can trust that Jesus will come at the exact right time to maximize our experience of the goodness of God forever. We can trust that God’s word is exactly the way it should be. If you open it and read it with diligence you will be established in your faith. We need that if we are to be waiting well for the coming of Christ. That brings us to one more aspect of waiting well. We need to be diligent, we need to trust God and His Word, and thirdly to wait well we need to be...]

Point #3 – Be growing. (Verse 17-18)

It is impossible to be born again and remain the same. Living things grow and so it is with being made alive by the Holy Spirit.

Verse 17 shows us that there is a connection between trusting God’s word and growing (Verse 17).

Peter expects the fact that they know about people who want to twist the Scriptures to cause them to guard against it.

It is a bit easier to avoid scams when you know what they are.

[I've experienced this with telephone and email scams. I can't tell you how many times I have received a phone call saying I'm about to be arrested because of something with my taxes and others saying I owe large amounts of money on credit cards that I don't even have. I just hang up and have never been arrested or been in trouble with my credit card company. Why? Because they are scams and expecting that makes it easier to avoid.]

It is the same within the church.

Peter says, "take care that you are not carried away into error."

Instead he wants believers to remain stable in the truth.

How? He gets to that in **Verse 18**.

If you want to avoid getting taken in by spiritual scam artists and so remain firm in the faith while you wait for Jesus, then you need to be growing.

First, he says, "grow in the grace" of our LORD.

That means that we have to understand that though we put in our very best efforts, we only grow because the LORD is at work in our lives.

Why did we believe the gospel?

Why do we have any love for God?

Why do we have a desire to know His Word?

Why are we motivated towards anything good?

It's all on account of the grace of God.

To the grace of Christ he adds that we are to grow in the 'knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.

One of the most troubling and heartbreaking things I can think of is someone who claims to be a Christian has no interest in learning more.

People who are bored with Jesus are easily distracted by other things. That is so sad because they ignore the incomparable glory of our LORD for stuff that seems small and worthless by comparison.

[It's like eating plastic pretend food instead of the real thing. Instead of nourishing you it kills you.]

On the other hand people who are willing to stretch their minds and think about things deeply cultivate deep spiritual roots which help them stand firm through all of life.

I find it incredibly encouraging when people share with me that their understanding of the Bible has deepened or that they learned something new from the Scriptures.

[It is sort of like climbing over a hill and seeing a whole new landscape which inspires you to keep walking to climb the next hill expecting to see something else incredible.]

Here is the thing. With God there is no end to climbing the next hill and seeing something incredible.

Some people might say, "I'm too old to learn something new" or "I've already learned all I need to know."

Those things simply are NOT true.

No matter how old you are God is sustaining you for another day by His grace and by His grace He can open your eyes to more of His goodness.

How can we say we don't need to grow anymore in the knowledge of the LORD when He is infinitely glorious in all that He is?

No man or woman can come to the end of all there is to know about God. That is impossible.

Can I ask? When is the last time you were awed by how amazing Jesus is?

Has it been awhile? Has it ever happened?

When is the last time a light bulb of understanding went on in your mind?

If that isn't happening can I suggest to you that it is because you have no desire to grow and because of that you are missing out in your life.

Can I suggest you are leaving yourself open to spiritual danger?

That should concern you a great deal because it should make you wonder whether or not you are really looking forward to the day when Jesus comes.

Every true believer is looking forward to when Jesus comes.

Yes the strength of our desire for that day goes up and down in life for various reasons because we are works in progress.

Though our longing for a new heavens and earth may vary it is at least there.

We are looking for these things, but we have to wait.

While we wait we need to wait well.

We do that by being diligent, by trusting the LORD and His word, and by growing in Christ.

How amazing would it be if we all were looking forward to the day when Jesus comes and we were all waiting well?

Let's pray towards that end.

