

The Second Letter of Peter
Today's Lesson 2 Peter 3:8-18

- I. Introduction, 1:1-2
- II. The Message of Peter: A Call to Spiritual Growth, 1:3-11
- III. The Authority of Peter: The Means of Spiritual Growth, 1:12-21
- IV. The Caution of Peter, 2:1-22
- V. The Reassurance of Peter in Christ's Coming, 3:1-18a

A. The denial of Christ's coming, vv. 1-7

- 1. The presence of mockers, vv. 1-3
- 2. The accusation of mockers, v. 4
- 3. The willful ignorance of mockers, vv. 5-7

B. The explanation of Christ's delay, vv. 8-14

Peter answers the argument of the false teachers that God's negligence to judge is proof that He will not do so. The evidence suggests that He is unwilling to do so for if He were willing, He surely would have done so. The emphasis in the passage is upon the character of God: His infinite wisdom, power, and grace. This is one of the most debated, used, and abused passages in the Bible!

1. The timelessness of the Lord, v. 8

God sees time with a perspective we lack. God is patient and He is coming! Delay should not lead us to think that He will not; He has not, but because of other reasons. Peter draws from Moses in Psalm 90:4. "A thousand years in your sight are like yesterday /or like a watch in the night" to sustain the point of God's perspective on time (clearly Peter is of the opinion that Moses wrote Genesis).

2. The patience and graciousness of the Lord, v. 9

The "slowness" of God is only a human perspective. The "patience" of God is explained by His work to gather out of the nations and over the centuries from people for himself.

"Not willing" should be translated "not wanting or not wishing." Here is the divine explanation of what seems to be delay in God's actions that formed the basis of the mockers' claim. The delay of God has made our salvation possible ("patient toward you" [the recipients of the letter]).

The "wanting" is a wish, not a divine decree. God has not willed the salvation of everyone ("any" seems to refer to His chosen ones); the Bible does not teach universalism, nor does it teach that God's plans can be throttled by His creatures. God longs for the redemption of His

creatures, but knows that many will reject him. While mankind determines their own actions, they are not sovereign over their choices! Some things in the Bible are beyond our minds to understand. This is one. How can an omnipotent God desire what He has not determined to take place? If God desires all to be saved and they are not all saved, then God cannot affect His desires, and mankind can prevent God's desires from coming to fruition.

It is quite certain that when we read that God will have all men to be saved, it does not mean that He wills it with the force of a decree or a divine purpose, for if He did, then all men would be saved.... We know that all men will not be saved.



C. H. Spurgeon
(1833-1892)

My love of consistency with my own doctrinal views is not great enough to allow me knowingly to alter a single text of Scripture. I have great respect for orthodoxy, but my reverence for inspiration is far greater.

– Spurgeon on 1 Timothy 2:3,4

A more reasonable way to interpret the passage is to interpret “you” as referring to the audience to whom he is writing. The seeming delay of His return is occasioned by the fact that those that God has loved “before the foundation of the earth” have not yet come to Him. “... as He chose us in Him before the foundation In love He predestined us (Eph. 1:4-5).”

Augustine, *Confessions*

“I began to search for a means of gaining the strength I needed to enjoy you, but I could not find this means until I embraced the mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ, who is a man, like them, and also rules as God over all things, blessed for ever. He was calling to me and saying, ‘I am the way; I am truth and life.’”



Augustine on Freedom of Choice



Freedom of the Will

“The will always chooses according to its strongest inclination at the moment.”

— Jonathan Edwards

“Man has free will but lacks liberty.”

— Augustine

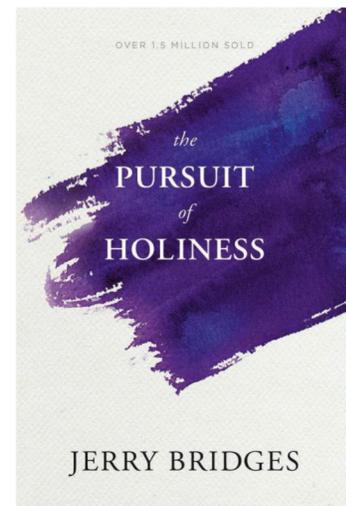
“Fallen man has the ability to make choices but lacks the moral ability to make godly choices.”

— R.C. Sproul

Freedom

- “While the will is the ultimate determiner of all choices, it is influenced in its choices by the strongest forces brought to bear upon it.”

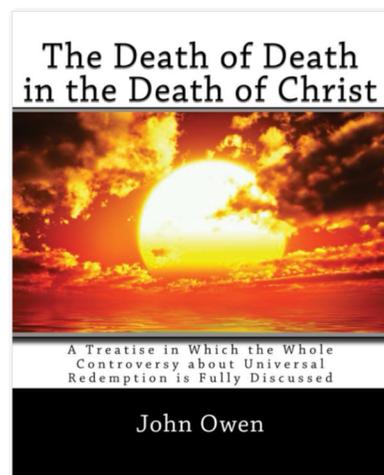
- —Jerry Bridges
Pursuit of Holiness, 127



Grace and Freedom

“Grace proves irresistible just because it destroys the disposition to resist.”

J.I. Packer
Preface: *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, 8



3. The surety of His coming, vv. 10-13

The “Day of the Lord” here refers to a specific time in the future when the earth will again be destroyed, this time as a precursor to the “new earth” (v. 13). It will come suddenly and without warning! The final destiny of the material world ought to motivate us to live lives that point to the Lord Jesus.

a. The fact of His coming, v. 10a

“The Lord will come” is quite the promise; it is a future fact! The implications for our lives should not be missed!

b. The consequences of His coming, vv. 10b-13

1) In relationship to the earth, judgment, v. 10b

Three things will occur with the Lord’s coming: a thunderous noise, cosmic destruction, and motives revealed (the basis of the judgment).

2) In relationship to our behavior, hastening, vv. 11-12

Though we will not be part of the judgment that the Lord will bring to the earth and unsaved mankind, there is instruction to be garnered from it for us. First, we should conduct ourselves circumspectly, not living in a careless manner. Second, we should live with great expectation of His coming. It should fill us with eagerness and hope. Third, we are to hasten that day (from this statement two questions emerge).

First, why should we hasten such a terrible day as that when existence will end and judgments will be final? It will be a day when all wrongs perpetuated on the earth will be made right in judgment; it will be a day when God’s justice will be vindicated! See Ps. 94:1-7. Remember we are to pray, “Thy kingdom come (Matt. 6:10a).” As Christ-followers, we should be concerned that God’s justice prevail.

Second, how does one hasten that day when it has been decreed from eternity? Again, the human mind cannot grasp infinity. There are ways apparently though the whole thing is a mystery to me (Perhaps the answer is: by doing what is right, by sharing the gospel, by praying for the lost).

If the verb, “hasten,” is transitive describing an action found in the direct object then it means “to urge or to be eager for.” If the verb is transitive, it refers to an action. The grammar does not help us so we must look carefully into the context.

3) In relation to our confidence, surety, v. 13

Peter ends on a triumphant note. We have the hope of a new dwelling place where only righteousness exists. There will be no disappointments when God fully dwells among His people; all will be joy and delight (our nature's changed). There is a new world coming!

C. The conduct of the believer in view of His coming, vv. 14-18a

1. Plan a peaceful entrance into glory, v. 14

It means to live out the gospel in our lives.

2. Be understanding, vv. 15-16

a. The fact to be understood, v. 15a

Peter's readers are to take a different view of the "delay" in the Lord's coming. The apparent delay is not fickleness nor ineptitude on God's part, but His compassion for the lost. All of God's children have not been gathered to Him through the proclamation of the gospel as yet.

b. The collaborative source, vv. 15b-16

Peter cites the writings of another apostle, Paul. That Peter is writing to the same group may indicate that Paul has died causing shock and a greater danger of false interpreters of his message. He calls Paul's writings "Scripture" or sacred writings. It may be that Peter wrote not only to warn the recipients of predators that would come, but also to comfort and instruct them. That Peter is writing to churches in various provinces of Roman Asia Minor lends credence to the view that Paul's letters (such as Ephesians and Colossians, for example) were to be read widely (what we call circular writings.). Ephesians seems to have been written to churches in a geographical region, since the designation of the city is not found in our best manuscripts (it received the designation since Ephesus was the major city in a region).

3. Be on your guard, v. 17

Believers have a responsibility (a middle imperative) to check what other say about Jesus. Believers must not be spiritually naïve!

4. Be growing, v. 18a

The book concludes as it began with an exhortation to growth. We are to be actively growing (Present imperative)

V. Conclusion, 3:18b

Peter ends with a benediction.

Thoughts

1. One of the reasons for the "delay" in God's return is that the body of Christ is not complete, the "garden" not full; all the redeemed have not been gathered. The Lord has a divine purpose for the elongation of time and that is to gather

myriads and myriads of people to himself. Remember that God created a “garden” to dwell among His people and He will not be defeated in His determination to create “a greater garden,” defeat His enemies, and dwell among us receiving glory and praise from us forever. What does this tell us about the God we love and serve? Do you praise Him regularly for allowing us to be included in His “garden?” Do you have insight into God’s purposes for the world and His church?

2. Unbelievers, and even some believers, doubt the return of Christ because of what it entails, judgment. Judgment or accountability is the antidote to unwise living. To justify lascivious freedom, moderns adopt adages: “Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die;” “Life is full of sound and fury signifying nothing;” “Have it your way;” “You deserve a break today so get out and get away.” Mankind wants to avoid divine judgment for their actions. In what sense are you a modern? Are there things in your behavior that practically denies accountability?
3. People make excuses to justify their behavior. Often the excuses they make are as poor as the error they seek to defend. Bad theology leads to bad morals; bad morals lead to poor, unfounded excuses. Because something has not happened does not mean that it cannot or will not happen. Delay may hint to justification, but it depends on the veracity of the one who makes a truth claim. In this case, it is God who by his very nature is truth, power, and faithfulness. Men lie and distort the truth for self-advantage; God only speaks the truth. You and I can either count on that or count on nothing. Do you allow appearances to shake your trust in God’s promises?
4. False teachers and false teachings abound in our culture and sadly sometimes is found in the churches. What is the antidote to such devastation? Peter tells us it is the Old Testament Scriptures and the sacred writings of the apostles. While the Bible has hard-to-understand topics at times, the message of the Bible is clear when the Spirit through His regenerative work instructs. The Spirit in regeneration reveals the wonder of the person of Christ to us. Anything that is contrary to Christ, the focus of the Bible, is clearly wrong. Are you guarding against the intrusion of falsity by listening to the voice of God, the Bible? Are you focusing on Christ as the grid for understanding all of Scripture?
5. Are you growing in your knowledge of the grace of God? The only way to do so accurately is to become increasingly knowledgeable of the Bible. This is the antidote to a lot of mischief.