

Promised Return

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[0 : 00] not listening to false teachers because they will destroy us and will destroy our faith. And very much it's about who we're listening to and who we respond to in our lives.

Because in many ways the false teachers that Peter is speaking about, particularly in chapter 2, their philosophy is see and you will believe.

And they were saying, you know, you can only, you know, Jesus isn't coming back, things aren't, as you say they are. It's what we have here and it's what we can see around us and that's what we're to base our life and our faith on.

So they had a kind of, they had some kind of elements of Christian or Christian truth or some religiosity, but it was all based on their own thinking and their own ideas and what was right in front of them as it were.

Whereas faith begins differently and says, faith says, believe and you will see. Now so many people are saying seeing is about believing, but we recognise that we are required, we are asked to put our faith in Jesus Christ to receive that gift of faith and as we believe, then we will see.

[1 : 10] Then we will see what God is doing and we will understand who He is and we will know Him and love Him and appreciate Him. And that also requires that we see God's word as His word.

We recognise it as such and we accept it and we take it as such and the faith that that word inspires within us, inspires change.

The false teachers didn't like the idea of the Lordship of Jesus. They didn't like the idea that God was our sovereign and that we moulded our lives to in obedience to Him out of grace.

You know they said, no you don't need to believe that anymore. Live exactly as you want to live. Do what you want, sleep with who you want, drink as much as you want, live outwardly, fulfil your pleasure.

God will still forgive you anyway and there was no moulding or changing of life towards the living God. But genuine faith Peter says and genuine faith the Bible says demands change in our lives doesn't it?

[2 : 18] It says either our hearts and our lives change to conform to God and to His word and to His will because He is our sovereign and He is our Creator. Or the word changes. There is no other option.

Either we change to submit to the word or we choose to change the word to submit to us. And that is exactly what the motive and the method of the false teachers was.

So Peter here is reminding his congregation and we are reminded because the problem always remains, the challenge always remains for us, a different way.

He is reminding them of the gospel community and he is reminding them of the difference between the false teachers and God.

And I hope just for a moment that we can look at that together. And the beginning of the chapter, chapter 3 is very interesting because it is a reminder to us that his leadership over them as disciples, as followers, was based on a loving community with them.

[3 : 27] He has been really harsh in some of the previous chapters. He said some really difficult things and he kind of read and he goes, that is painful. And yet he comes and he reminds them after the kind of sharpness of his rebukes, he says, dear friends.

In fact, he says that four times in the early passages, dear friends. His teaching to them is based on a spiritual friendship. And that is what we seek here between leaders and people, between ourselves, all of us.

That there is this recognition of gospel community, that we are together in spiritual friendship. And that doesn't mean we just always can they smile at one another and rub each other's backs and

say, hey, you are great today. You are a wonderful person.

It means that we will be honest. Because Peter is very honest here, he is very hard hitting at some levels, but he is hard hitting because he loves them. He is persevering with them.

This is the second letter he says he has written to them. He cares that they follow Christ and follow the way of Christ. It is an honest, Christ-centered friendship.

[4 : 35] It has developed through his trusting of them and their trusting of Him. But it is intentionally spiritual. There still is friends, but he longs for their spiritual good. He speaks to them spiritually and longs for their spiritual good.

So he is honest with them and exposes the dangers that he recognizes that they are in from false teaching and false belief and trust and faith.

And what he wants to do is stimulate them to wholesome thinking. The word for wholesome there comes from a root which suggests something that has been examined under the sunlight.

You have looked at it and it has been very closely examined. It is transparent and clear. You can almost see through it the idea of transparency and clearness. He is saying that he wants people and that Christ wants us to be wholesome in our thinking.

That is transparent and clear and without hypocrisy. That we are people who say what we believe and then live what we believe.

[5 : 48] Not just in the house of God that we saw this morning, but out of the house of God. All things being for the glory of God, whether it is in here or whether it is outside, whether it is eating or drinking or whether it is working or sleeping, that we do it to the glory of God. Wholesome thinking.

Which is accountable spiritually to one another. Do you have people that will stimulate you to wholesome thinking?

Do you have that kind of friendship with people? If people are honest enough with you who will speak to you and speak into your life, speak into my life and say, well, look, you have been a hypocrite here.

You know, in the way that Paul was able to speak to Peter, well, you have been double-sided here. You are not living as you are. And not in a judgmental or in a kind of arrogant way in any way, but in a loving, caring and what you would always say with trembling, wouldn't you?

You would say it with fear. You would say it with terror because you don't like anything like that. Out of love, you long that your friends are stimulated to wholesome thinking and that you have someone who is going to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.

[7 : 06] And within that community where there is this stimulation to wholesome thinking, there is also that attitude where a recollection of the words spoken in the past by the Holy Prophets are recalled, are remembered and that there is this recognition of truth and a recollection of the Gospel and of the centrality of the Gospel.

Here Peter is speaking about both the Old Testament, the Holy Prophets and the New Testament which includes his own writings, the command given by our Lord and Savior through the Apostles. And so it is really a reminder to focus and found our lives on the Gospel and the Word of God to the Gospel which is given, Mark 1 says, a Gospel of repentance and faith.

That really doesn't change. It doesn't change the words because maybe you think, oh repentance and faith, yeah, we've heard that. Turning and trusting, it's another way of putting it. That's what we're doing.

And what you do, what you do is turn and trust once and carry on the way we were. It's a life of turning and trusting. We're always turning, we're always turning back to God. We're always beginning to face Him in you and we're trusting Him, trusting in His Word and relying on His Word.

[8 : 24] That's what Peter is nailing again and again to these people. Don't listen to the false prophets but return to this Word of God that is trustworthy because it's the Word of Jesus and turn to it and trust in Him.

And in that recollection of the truth, he goes on to speak about the last days and how it will be for us in these last days.

Now the Bible teaches, I'm not going to spend time on this, but the Bible teaches that the last days in different places are the days from Christ's resurrection or from Pentecost through to His return.

So we're in the last days. Ever since Christ ascended and then when Christ will return, we're living. Hebrews 1, 2 tells us Acts 2, 17 tells us we're living in these last days.

Now it may be that the Bible does emphasize focusing and intensity of activity before Christ's return.

[9 : 28] But generally speaking, we are in these last days. And Peter is teaching this early church and he's teaching us because we still live in this last days.

What to expect? And he says it will be a world of unbelief that we live in. But it will be a world where God is still sovereign. And it will be a world where unbelief speaks in ignorance and is intentionally forgetful of God.

Where the sovereign God speaks in wisdom and is intentionally patient. And that's really what we have in this passage here. I don't really have time to unpack that very much this evening.

He's reminding this early young church who are being deceived and taken away from the truth by these false teachers.

He says, look, this is how it will always be. There are always going to be people who scoff in unbelief. In the last day scoffers will come scoffing and following their own evil desires.

[10 : 34] They will say, where is this coming? He promised. Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning. And they reject God and they mock the truth.

Maybe sometimes not overly and deliberately, but there is this rejection of His way and rejection of His truth. And I think particularly this doesn't refer to rampant unbelief outside atheism.

It refers to those who have a veneer of religiosity, who stand in the pulpit, who stand in the place of the church, who still deny God and God's word, who are false prophets, who are trying to preach a gospel, but it's not God's gospel and they're ripping out pages of the Bible, books of the Bible.

And they said, this doesn't apply anymore, this doesn't apply anymore. This is how we understand things now, and they're changing the gospel and they're making up a new gospel, which is in reality no gospel at all.

And they're speaking in ignorance when they say that God has not acted and has not been involved in this world. They are presuming on this His silence, which is unfair and ignorant.

[11 : 50] They're intentionally forgetting this God who has acted intimately in creation and also in judgment.

They choose to forget. They deliberately forget that long ago God's word was formed. They choose to deny a personal creator. Sciences move beyond that Victorian concept.

They forget the intimate involvement of a God in whose image we are made and whose design is reflected in this creation. They forget the reality of God already judging a world of sin and brokenness with the flood.

And also speaking in salvation and redemption through Noah and the promise of a redeemer.

So there's a world of unbelief and that's no different from today. That will always be the case. Are you thinking of giving up the Christian faith? Because so many people around you scoff and don't believe. And even in the church people don't believe.

[13 : 05] You say, I don't believe in a church. What hope have we got when we go out of the church? Take comfort in it. God knows that and God's warned us about that. And said, that's what will happen in these last days. That's what will happen.

Even people in the name of the church will say that they are wiser than God, that they are cleverer than Him and they know better and that His word is now outdated and without relevance to us.

And so we'll just mold it and adapt it and change it. That will always happen. There will always be false teachers in our society and in our world.

But what Peter wants to remind us of is that there is also always good to be a sovereign God. A God who speaks in wisdom. And the word is mentioned a lot here.

And I know that's been a bit of a pet thing with me in the last few weeks. I know that you will, the word of God, particularly the word incarnate in Jesus. But we've got a communicating God. That's what Peter reminds them of.

[14 : 09] Look, these guys are speaking nonsense. But we have a communicating, a speaking God who spoke the word in creation, who communicated to Himself, who spoke the word in judgment upon the people of Noah's time.

As we're told, by that same waters in the world of the time, was deluged and destroyed. And then he says he'll speak again in judgment when he returns at the end of these last days.

When the judgment of Noah will prefigure the judgment that will come at the end of time. And he has spoken that by that same word, the present and heavens and the earth are reserved for fire.

And he speaks, this is a communicating God, primarily speaks through Jesus in redemption and salvation. But what's interesting here very briefly is the kind of continuity, discontinuity, that he is in this passage about heavens and the earth.

It's mentioned three times. And there's this heavens and the earth that he creates in the beginning. And then verse 7, he speaks about the present heavens and the earth, this world.

[15:22] This heavens and the earth that you're sitting in just now, going to be destroyed by fire. And then later on in the passage, Tom's going to deal with that next week. I'll leave it up to him. He speaks about a new heavens and a new earth.

You see the continuity, not all the way through. God is sovereign and he is working with the same basic materials. The heavens he creates, the heavens and the earth that he judges, and the heavens and the earth that he's going to recreate.

But the present heavens and the earth will be destroyed by fire. So it's a recreation, it's a renewal, it's a renovation. See when I die, I'll go in the ground and my body will rot away and the worms will eat it.

And my soul will be go to Jesus. But on the last great day, my body will be recreated, reformed to be a glorious body. It's pretty good just now, but it's going to be glorious then.

But it's rot is getting old and decrepit just now. But it's going to be glorious then, my body. And the new heavens and the earth is exactly the same.

[16:25] It's winding down just now. It doesn't mean that we abuse it, it doesn't mean that we are not environmentally careful, it doesn't mean that we don't look after it.

But God is saying it's going to be destroyed by fire because this isn't heaven here. There's going to be a new heavens and a new earth. A recreation within the home of righteousness.

So with my recreated body, I'll be there, so you and Christ. And it will be a new heavens and a new earth. And this is the sovereign God who speaks in wisdom. This is what he's saying will happen.

That's, you know, it links in with the glory that we were speaking about this morning. The everything we do is for God's glory. Why? Because this is the intentional will and mind of God.

This world is winding down. He hasn't forgotten us. Those who want to change his word are speaking in ignorance.

[17:25] And he promises to return to take us home. This is only, we're only here for a short time. And there's an intentional patience in God until that happens, you know.

Don't forget one thing, dear friends with the Lord, a day is like a thousand years, a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise. Someone, there's patient not wanting anyone to perish.

Now this intentional patience is a description of God's timing being different from ours.

There's a quote from Sam 90 there about God being, a day is like a thousand years, a thousand years are like a day. And it speaks of the God in that Sam who is from everlasting to everlasting. God is Creator, the God who has judged the God who saves. And that Sam again picks up on all of these same themes. That this is a God who is patient.

[18:26] And the recognition then and the recognition now for us is that ongoing need to be prepared. Because he's coming back.

And we don't forget him. And we don't forget his word. We don't forget his promises and we don't forget his wisdom. Isn't it so easy for us to do that?

We spend our lives needing reminders. The Bible's full of these things which he don't forget. He gives us one day in 70's, he says don't forget.

It's a redeeming God. It's a day that he wants us to set aside so we don't forget. He gives us a sacrament. He said do this in remembrance. Don't forget. He says he's giving us a community and friendship so that people will come up to him and say dear friend, don't forget, don't forget.

It's so much of what he gives us. The providence that we face. The loss of a friend. Standing at the grave side of a friend. Saying don't forget, don't forget.

[19:30] Visiting someone. Visiting someone this week who is two months to live. He's dying of cancer, he's not a Christian. He come away from a house like that and you say don't forget. You don't forget the shortness of life.

You don't forget the promise and the wisdom of God who asks us to be prepared. You know, live your life for His glory.

That will make you prepared by coming to Christ. That makes you prepared. Not Christ this evening, you are not prepared for eternity.

That is a most solemn thought. And the only preparation that you can have is by falling into the arms of Christ as your Lord and Saviour.

And you don't need to prepare for that. You just need to come. And in so doing you will be prepared for glory and for heaven and for this new heavens and the new earth.

[20 : 33] The home of righteousness. If Christ isn't, if you're not covered, as I spoke on Friday at the wedding about the robe of righteousness, which is God's gift to us, this beautiful wedding robe spiritually, not covered in that robe of righteousness, you will not be at home in heaven.

You will be awkward. You will be out of place because only the robe of righteousness will prepare and fit you. That is covered in what He gives His gift of salvation.

And it's the motivation for us to go out with the gospel. We pray for corners. So we pray for ourselves. This is going to be a year we hope when our focus and our prayer life is on evangelism, on reaching out with the gospel because we know God is patient.

And not wishing anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. Mystery at the very heart of this revelation of God. A God who waits until all who are saved will come in.

And a God who offers salvation to all. And as He does so, He uses us to reach out. We need to reach out to as many as many people in the city.

[21 : 51] And we need to recapture and grow our evangelistic heart to share this gospel and not be taken in by false prophets. You say, live how you like.

Abandon the church. Forget the commandments. You don't need to be obedient. Grace allows you to be anything you want to be.

It's not the gospel. And it's certainly not a gospel of gratitude that we seek and long to follow and live in our lives. Amen. Let's pray together.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You that we don't need to spend time inventing new truth. We don't need to spend time bringing a message to others that we think they might like.

That we think they might be attracted to if it's different from the gospel. We know that that's an impossible task. And we ask that You would give us humility and courage and boldness.

[23 : 06] And trust that we'd be turning and trusting. That we'd be repentant and faithful. That we would believe that Your promises are wise.

And that You're a sovereign, everlasting God. And that what You have said, what You've prophesied, what You've spoken will come to pass. And therefore we pray that we live in the light of that.

That it would transform our thinking and our priorities. And our ideas and our behaviour and our conversation and our attitudes. And that God would indeed have all the praise and all the glory.

We pray this year for Cornerstone to be just overflowing with new people. In whom You're already working, coming to faith in Jesus.

And what we pray for them, we pray for Christchurch in Creigantiny. We pray for our fellow sister churches in Buclun and Leith.

[24 : 07] We pray for churches of the gospel partnership. And every church where Jesus is preached in this city. And we pray for ourselves that we might see many people among our friends, our families, our parents, our children.

Coming to know Jesus, to be transformed, to be given life, to be excited and thrilled by that prospect. And that we ourselves would be excited and thrilled to hear the testimonies of many who come to know Jesus.

And this church will not be big enough. And indeed that our nation would see a great turning to the living God. So that all will come to a living faith and inhabit this new heavens and this new earth.

The home of righteousness. Amen.