

# 1 & 2 Peter: Faith Under Fire

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!  
According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the  
resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and  
unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith  
for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.  
(1 Peter 1:3-5 ESV)*

## **The Day of the Lord**

**February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

**2 Peter 3:1-13**

**Assistant Pastor Levi denBok**

### **Introduction:**

Good morning. Please turn with me in your Bibles to 2 Peter, chapter 3. You'll find that right near the end of your New Testament.

Last week, we studied chapter 2 and we listened as Peter passionately denounced the false teachers in his church. He was firm. He was uncompromising. It was almost uncomfortable to read.

In today's text, we come to see why Peter wrote with so much fire. He wasn't merely engaging in a theological debate. False teachers who preach a false gospel lead men and women into the bowels of hell! Eternity is at stake! So no, Peter didn't waste any time with pleasantries.

These dangerous teachers denied the return of Christ. They laughed at the idea of final judgement and they encouraged others to do the same. In today's text, we find Peter's response to their dismissive attitude about the return of the King. Look with me at chapter three, verse one. Hear now God's holy, inspired, inerrant, living and active word to us today:

This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, <sup>2</sup> that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through

your apostles,<sup>3</sup> knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.<sup>4</sup> They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”<sup>5</sup> For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God,<sup>6</sup> and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.<sup>7</sup> But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

<sup>8</sup> But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.<sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

<sup>11</sup> Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,<sup>12</sup> waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!<sup>13</sup> But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3:1-13 ESV)

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Look at verses one and two of our text this morning. Do you see a recurring word? “Remember”! Peter is urging his church to remember the word of God spoken consistently through the Old Testament prophets, Christ himself and the New Testament Apostles. In today’s text, he is particularly concerned that we remember what the word of God has taught us about the day of the Lord.

The more I have reflected on our text this week, the more I am convinced that we need this reminder. I worry that we have been influenced by our secular, materialistic culture more than we’d like to admit. I worry that we are so stinking rich and comfortable right now that we have lost the ability to look ahead to the future.

Ultimately, I worry that we as a people have not spent nearly enough time deeply reflecting on the coming judgement – what Peter describes in today’s text as the day of the Lord. By God’s grace, I want to encourage you to lean in close and to listen intently to Pastor Peter’s reminders about the coming day of the Lord.

## The Day of the Lord

The first thing Peter tells us in today's text is that the day of the Lord:

### 1. Will be denied by the scoffers

Peter writes in verse 3:

knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. <sup>4</sup>They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." (2 Peter 3:3-4 ESV)

The arrogance just drips off the page. "Oh really Peter? Is this the same 'Day of the Lord' that Joel preached about 1000 years ago? The one that Isaiah warned about 700 years ago? Those prophets are dead! This promise of judgement has proven to be nothing more than a scare tactic."

They deny this coming judgement, of course, because they are slaves to their evil desires. If judgement is truly coming, then they will need to leave behind the sin that they so treasure. But they're not ready to leave that sin behind, so they lie to themselves. The Apostle Paul wrote about such men:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, **who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.** <sup>19</sup>For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup>For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. **So they are without excuse.** (Romans 1:18-20 ESV)

Peter and Paul are making the same argument. These scoffers – these people who deny God and who deny His coming judgement – are willfully suppressing the truth. They know that there's a God! Open your eyes and look at this incredible world! Watch the sun rise over the horizon each morning and take a moment to think about how miraculous it is that – even while you sleep –

your brain tells your lungs to breath and your heart disperses oxygenated blood throughout your bloodstream. This world and everything in it provides ample evidence for the glory and the goodness of God.

We all know this to be true! But, in order to justify living the sinful life that we want to live, we suppress the truth. That's what the scoffers did in Peter's day, and they will do it in our day as well. This leads us to Peter's second warning. He tells us that the day of the Lord:

## **2. Will bring judgement and destruction for the ungodly**

He writes in verse 7:

But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. (2 Peter 3:7 ESV)

He goes on to say in verse 10:

the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. (2 Peter 3:10b ESV)

The Bible is clear on this: The day of the Lord will bring judgement and destruction for every single human being who has not placed their trust in Jesus Christ. On that day, there will be no place to hide. Every secret that has been kept in darkness will be brought to light. Every evil thought, every wicked deed, and every malicious word that has ever been spoken will be exposed. Each and every one of us will give an account to the Judge. The author to the Hebrews warns us:

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:31 ESV)

Jesus taught about hell with far more frequency than most seem to realize. Jesus – the One who lived his life with a perfect love for the world – often incorporated deathly-serious warnings about eternal judgement into his teaching. Take, for example, this parable from Matthew 13:

<sup>47</sup> “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. <sup>48</sup> When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. <sup>49</sup> So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous<sup>50</sup> and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 13:47-50 ESV)

Just as in Peter’s day, there are false teachers now who would have you believe that hell is nothing more than a colourful illustration. They would have you believe that judgement is not forever. They will assure you that God would never send anyone to hell.

That is a message that provides false comfort for the sinner. It is not the message of the Bible. It is not the message of Jesus, or the Apostles, or the Prophets. We will never be truly useful for Christ until we surrender ourselves to believe the gospel that he preached – and the gospel that Jesus preached included a very serious warning about the judgement that is coming. Charles Spurgeon – perhaps the greatest preacher since the Apostles, said:

The more I look into the subject of the world to come, the more I am impressed that all those who would lessen our ideas of the judgement that God will bring upon the wicked are waging war against God, and against virtue and the best interests of men.<sup>1</sup>

The day of the Lord will be a day of judgement and destruction for the ungodly.

Third, Peter warns us that the day of the Lord:

### **3. Will come like a thief in the night**

In verse 10, he is clearly drawing from a sermon that he heard Jesus preach. Jesus said:

<sup>42</sup> Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. <sup>43</sup> But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. <sup>44</sup> Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. (Matthew 24:42-44 ESV)

Like a thief in the night, Christ will return when we least expect him and, in that instant, whether

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *Sermons on Proverbs*. (Public Domain, printed in 2012), 49.

we are ready or not, we will all stand before him in judgement to give an account for this life.

Are you ready for his appearing today?

Is there a pet sin in your life that you are allowing to linger for “just a little while longer”? Are you still waiting for that perfect timing to share the gospel with your loved one? Are you using the gifts that God has given you to further His kingdom in this world? Or are you living for yourself and for the fleeting pleasures of this life?

The day of the Lord will fall upon us in a moment when we least expect it. If you have not yet made peace with God through the blood of Jesus Christ, then don't waste another second. Don't even wait for me to finish this sermon. Repent of your sin and place your trust in Jesus Christ today!

Fourth, Peter tells us that the day of the Lord:

#### **4. Will usher in the new heavens and the new earth**

Thankfully, the day of the Lord is not only a day of destruction. It IS that for those who have not surrendered to Jesus Christ, but for those who have – for those who have become children of God – the day of the Lord will be a glorious day! We will stand before God and the list of all of our sins will be read, but – thanks be to God – we will come to see that the debt for our sin has already been paid!

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, he didn't die for his own sin. He had no sin of his own to die for. He died instead as a substitute for all of the sins of those who would repent and place their trust in him. He died for your sin and mine.

And so, after the complete destruction of the heavens, the earth and all of the ungodly, the next chapter of eternity will begin. Peter describes it in verse 13:

But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3:13 ESV)

Have you ever stopped to wonder what this world will be like when it is no longer under the curse of sin?

Think about the beauty that we see already on this earth. I have an apple tree of some sort in my front yard and, for about two weeks in the spring, that apple tree sprouts these bright pink and purple apple blossoms. When the sun hits that tree just right, I look out my window and I feel as if I'm living inside of a painting.

But the bloom doesn't last. That same tree drops dead apples and dead leaves on my lawn in the fall and it has branches that need to be chopped down because there's no life left in them. The same beach that draws admirers from across the world also gives birth to tsunamis that carry entire families to their graves in the sea. The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 8 that the earth itself is actually groaning under the curse of sin like a woman in childbirth.

But Peter tells us that the beauty that we have seen in part is going to give way to a beauty that will last forever and that will make everything that we have ever seen pale in comparison! Our bodies will be perfected. There will be no more sickness. No more cancer. No more wheel chairs. Anyone who looks forward to Heaven and wonders: "Will I even enjoy myself?" has never tasted of the goodness of God!

The new heavens and the new earth will exceed every one of your wildest expectations! There we will enjoy the perfect, uninterrupted presence of the God who made us and who loves us! The Bible tells us that there won't be any sun in Heaven because God Himself will emanate light from His very being. Our best attempts at understanding what Heaven will be like are the same as the infant in Amanda's womb trying to understand what this world will be like. How can he prepare himself to see the sun? How can he picture in his mind the colours of Fall?

The day of the Lord will bring an end to this world as we know it and it will usher in the world as God intended it to be. It will be glorious! And, finally, Peter tells us that the day of the Lord:

**5. Is presently delayed because of God's patience and mercy**

Listen to the irony in verses 8 and 9:

<sup>8</sup> But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (2 Peter 3:8-9 ESV)

The irony is that the delay that these rebels use to justify their rebellion is actually God's merciful gift to save them from judgement! Do you know why Christ has not returned yet? Because he is so merciful! He has not returned because, if He returned right now, some of my family members would go to hell forever. He has not returned yet because there are still people in your home, in your school, in your workplace who are currently on the path to eternal torment.

So, He waits.

I still remember the day that God removed my old, sinful heart and gave me a new heart that loves Him and longs to know Him more. As I sat down to write this sermon I was blown away by this thought: What if God had not shown patience to me? What if the day of the Lord had come before I was saved? He didn't have to wait for me. I had already ignored warning after warning. He could have sentenced me to an eternity in hell and He would have been just to do so!

But He didn't. Because he is patient towards us not willing that any should perish. God does not delight in judging the wicked. We read in Ezekiel:

For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live. (Ezekiel 18:32 ESV)

God is not wringing his hands in Heaven, longing to pour His wrath upon you. In fact, just the opposite, these verses provide us a glimpse into the heart of God and what we see is that God is eager to pour out His mercy on you! He is holding back judgement, giving you every opportunity to repent.

But we also see in this text that God's patience will not last forever. The door on the arc was eventually sealed shut. Jesus gave the same warning in Luke 13:



“Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.<sup>25</sup> When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us,’ then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’<sup>26</sup> Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’<sup>27</sup> But he will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!’<sup>28</sup> In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. (Luke 13:24-28 ESV)

Please don’t let that be you! Don’t forfeit your eternal life by neglecting God’s patience!

As we conclude this morning, I want to ask one question that jumps out at me from the text. If the day of the Lord is coming – if at any moment, the God who holds the keys to both Heaven and Hell is going to judge our lives – what sort of people ought we to be?

### **What Sort of People Ought We to Be?**

That is perhaps the most important question you will ask in this life. Thomas Schreiner notes:

The destruction of the world is not related to satisfy curiosity. Knowing the outcome of this world should motivate believers to live a new quality of life.<sup>2</sup>

Peter did not write this letter to tickle our curiosity this morning. I would be so discouraged if you left today saying: “Well wasn’t that interesting! It’s nice to mix it up every once in a while! I wonder what we’ll talk about next week!”

By the grace of God, this letter is supposed to CHANGE US FOREVER! When Peter says that 1,000 years are as one day, he is quoting Psalm 90. This same Psalm goes on to say:

So teach us to number our days  
that we may get a heart of wisdom. (Psalm 90:12 ESV)

O that we would learn to number our days! The heart of wisdom lives with the end in sight.

That’s what Peter is after in today’s text and he tells us as much in verses 11-12:

---

<sup>2</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude, The New American Commentary*, vol. 37, 38 vols. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2003), 389.

<sup>11</sup> Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup> waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! (2 Peter 3:11-12 ESV)

So, with the day of the Lord in mind, what sort of people ought we to be? First, Peter tells us:

### **1. We ought to be holy**

I truly believe that reclaiming this awareness of God's coming judgement is going to set some people free from their bondage to sin. One of the reasons why we allow sin to linger in our lives is because we lie to ourselves.

We tell ourselves that we'll deal with this sin another day. Perhaps tomorrow we'll be ready.

We tell ourselves that our sin is hidden from the world and hidden from God.

Do you want a truth that will knock those lies right out of your head? Peter gives us one right here in today's text. The day of the Lord is going to sneak up on you like a thief in the night. Will God return to find you flirting with your secretary? Will He return to find you cheating on your taxes? Will He find you drunk? Will He find you talking down to your wife? Your husband? Will the Lord return to find you watching pornography on your phone?

Don't be a fool! You have never sinned in secret. Neither have I. The Judge of the living and the dead sees all things. Every deed done in darkness will be exposed in the final judgement and that day of judgement will come when we least expect it. We are like criminals, sitting in the waiting room at a court house. The judge will call us in at any moment. Now is not the time to be carrying on in sin – now is the time to ask yourself if you are ready for the trial that's about to begin. Are you ready? Jesus has told us what we must do to ready ourselves.

Repent. Turn away from that sin today. Lay it on Jesus and let him take it to the cross.

Believe. Believe that Jesus Christ died on that cross to set you free from the penalty for your sin. Jesus said that he is the narrow gate – he is the only entrance into the new heavens and the new earth. Stop trying to earn your way in. Believe in Jesus. Take him at his word. And live!

Finally, Peter tells us:

## 2. We ought to conduct ourselves with urgency

Peter tells us that we are to wait for and even hasten the day of the Lord. What on earth does that mean? We know, of course, what it means to wait. We should be looking expectantly for the return of the King. We should live in such a way as to show that we expect his coming.

But how do we *hasten the day of the Lord*? Believe it or not, we say something very similar every time we pray the Lord's prayer. We pray: "Thy kingdom come" which is just another way of asking God to: "Hasten the coming of the day of the Lord!"

Now, let's think about that for a second. We have just finished discussing how the day of the Lord will bring judgement and destruction for those who have not placed their trust in Christ. How then can we go on to pray: "And God, let that day come soon!"?

It seems conflicting, until we see what our role is in "hastening the day of the Lord." Listen to what Jesus taught in Matthew 24:

And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, **and then the end will come.** (Matthew 24:14 ESV)

Do you see that? When we pray: "Let your kingdom come" we're really saying: "Send us out into our city and into the nations and bring many people to salvation!" The Bible tells us that we hasten the day of the Lord as we proactively preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact, I would go so far as to say that anyone who hears about the day of the Lord and who responds by hiding in their basement and asking God to come quickly has never known the true gospel!

This doctrine should light a fire in our bones to share the gospel with our loved ones! It should motivate us to knock on the doors of our street again and to invite our neighbours in the South Ward to church. It should cause us to live with a very real sense of urgency – an urgency I fear that we have lost somehow.

As we conclude this morning, I want to issue a challenge to you:

If you believe that Jesus is the only way to the Father.

If you believe that Heaven and Hell are real and that they are forever.

If you believe that the Lord could return at any moment and that we're not promised tomorrow.

Then I want to invite you to write the names of three loved ones on a sheet of paper and to put that paper in your wallet. I want to challenge you to pray every day for God to soften their hard hearts. And – here's the real challenge – I want to invite you to share the gospel with one of the people on that list before March 1.

That gives you 11 days. Perhaps you're thinking: "11 days?! You expect me to do this in 11 days?!" Yes. If what we have just read is true, we might actually be giving ourselves ten days too many! If you're not sure how to share the gospel – if you're not sure that you even know what to say – then I would love to talk to you after the service. I suspect the person sitting next to you would probably have some helpful tips. Let's work together in this and make sure that every one of us is equipped to give a reason for the hope that is in us.

Tell your loved one that there is a holy God who made us and who loves us. Tell them that our sin has separated us from Him. Tell them that He loves us so much that He sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross for our sin. Tell them that we can be in a right relationship with God forever if we will simply confess our sin, turn away from it and put our trust in Jesus Christ. Tell them that life with Christ is so much better than anything that this world has to offer!

God is patient toward us, not wishing that any should perish. In His mercy, He is delaying the day of judgement. But his patience will not last forever. This is a sobering message. This is the consistent message of the Bible – Old Testament and New. This is the truth that Peter will not allow us to forget. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Let's pray together.