

## XX. Grow in Grace and Knowledge

June 7/9/10, 2021

2 Peter 3:11-18

**Aim:** To wait patiently for the Lord's return, living lives of holiness and godliness, being grounded in the Scriptures, and growing in grace in knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### A. Waiting for Glory (2 Peter 3:11-13)

*Moo:* In 3:3-10, Peter has focused on teaching Christians what to believe about the return of Christ in glory. Now, in verses 11 to 13, he turns to what Christians should do about it.... Since the false teachers are attacking orthodox Christian doctrine at just this point, scoffing at the idea of a history-ending Parousia, Peter finds an eschatological exhortation especially important. He must not only correct this false teaching but demonstrate to believers its practical significance.... The Parousia brings both destruction and renewal. Christians should live holy and godly lives, then, not only because this world is not going to last, but also because a new world is going to take its place. They should pursue righteous, both to distance themselves from this decaying and doomed world and to prepare for the next, 'the home of righteousness.'

#### 1. What to Do While Waiting (3:11-12a)

<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,

##### a) Final Destruction (3:11a)

<sup>11</sup>Since all these things are thus to be dissolved...

*Moo:* The connection of verse 11 with verse 10 is especially close, since Peter uses the same verb in both, *lyo* ('will be destroyed'). The future rendering of this verb in verse 11 in the NIV is certainly possible. But technically the verb is in the present tense, and Peter may have chosen to suggest that the destruction of *everything* is even now in process. Just as the bodies of Christians are 'wasting away' (2 Cor. 4:16), so the very universe is in the process of decaying (Rom. 8:21). God did not build this world to last forever.

*Gardner:* Now he moves on to draw conclusions. *Since everything will be destroyed...* (Although in the Greek a different word is now used in verses 10-12, the NIV rightly continues to speak of 'destroyed' and 'destruction.' The RSV and others here translate the verb *lyo* as 'dissolve.' The different Greek verbs are *apolyo* and *lyo*.) What about us? What about those who belong to God and *have* repented? What about the faithful who await the return of the Lord? Peter maintains that there should be two altogether positive response to belief in the day of the Lord and Christ's return.

*MacArthur:* The phrase *since all these things are to be destroyed in this way* refers back to the previous passage (3:7-10), in which this universe's obliteration is predicted.

##### b) Holy & Godly Lives (3:11b)

*...what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness...*

*Moo:* That being the case, Peter asks, *what kind of people ought you to be?* The Greek word for *what kind* (*potapos*) can sometimes have the nuance, 'how wonderful, how glorious' (see Mk.

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13:1; 1 Jn. 3:1). Such a nuance would certainly fit well here, but it does not have this meaning often enough to make this idea certain. Yet even if the nuance is neutral (as in most modern English translations), Peter makes the point clear enough by immediately answering his own question: *you ought to live holy and godly lives*. The NIV is a legitimate paraphrase of the Greek, which literally translated reads, ‘It is necessary for you to live in holy conducts and godlinesses.’ The plurals, which are awkward in Greek and impossible in English, bring out the manifold ways in which believers need to exhibit holy and godly conduct. All we should do should be ‘holy’; that is, it should reflect God’s own character of ‘set-apartness’ from this world—a point Peter made in his first letter (1 Pe. 1:15-16)... And all that we do should be ‘godly’; that is, it should reflect the God we have come to know in Jesus Christ. Peter has made this quality of *godliness* a central ingredient in his initial exhortations to believers in this letter (2 Pe. 1:3, 6-7).

*Gardner*: The first and most important, specially in light of the moral corruption of the heretics, is that true believers must live godly lives—*you out to live holy and godly lives*. This command recurs throughout Scripture.... The Christian’s life is to conform morally in all his or her thinking and works, to the will of God. This insistence on holiness as the right response to God is a prominent theme in 1 Peter as well (cp. 1:15-16)... As Christians seek to live this godly and holy life, they must remember the great encouragement found in Peter’s opening verses of this letter, specially verse 3, where he reminded them, ‘His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His glory and goodness.’ God has not left Christians to battle on on their own, but enables them to fulfill this demand and so receive further encouragement, as they look forward to Christ’s return. This leads us into Peter’s second point.

*MacArthur*: Until everything is ultimately replaced by a glorious eternal state, Peter defines *what sort of people ought his readers to be*. In English this assertion sounds like a question, but it is actually an exclamation of astonishment—a rhetorical device that does not expect a response. The phrase *what sort of people* translates the unique Greek term *potapous*, which could also be rendered ‘how astonishingly excellent you ought to be.’ In light of God’s promised judgment, Peter challenged his readers to live in keeping with their Christian hope—allowing their anticipation of Christ’s return to impact their daily behavior.... As Peter drew the practical implications of eschatological truth, he exhorted his readers to also live worthy lives, characterized by both *holy conduct* (external actions and behaviors) and *godliness* (internal heart attitudes and reverence).

*Helm*: We are to wait in *holiness and godliness*. In the original Greek, Peter chose to display a bit of grammatical humor at this juncture in his letter. The words *holiness* and *godliness* are both plural. Literally this reads, ‘It is necessary for you to live in holy conducts and in godlinesses.’ In English that sounds humorously absurd. But when you consider it, it is as if he is telling us, ‘Look, beloved, there are a lot of things for you to do while you wait. There are manifold opportunities to be productive. A waiting life is filled with varied splendor and activity. So get about your holinesses and your godlinesses.’ It was in 1 Peter that we initially came across this word *holiness* from the aged apostle’s pen. There it encompassed the fullness of life in the presence of an ungodly world. Generally, it simply means to be ‘set apart.’ ... What does it mean to be godly? It simply means to reflect the character of your Creator. In essence, when God looks upon Christians and the whole body of Christ, He expects to see in our lives a

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reflection of who He is. That's what godliness looks like while we wait. We represent God in the world.

### c) *Joyful Anticipation (3:12a)*

<sup>12</sup>...*waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God...*

*Moo*: Having begun his exhortation to holy living with an eschatological reminder, Peter concludes it with another: *as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming*. The attitude of expectancy suggested by the word *look forward* is often mentioned in Scripture as particularly appropriate for God's people (see, e.g., Hab. 2:3-4; Mt. 11:3; Lk. 7:19-20). Peter uses the verb three times in verses 12-14 and it therefore becomes a key theme in these verses. Christians need the motivation of the forward look. They need to recognize that God has a plan, that it unfolds just as He wants to, and that it culminates in blessing for His people.... We have encountered the word *coming (parousia)* twice already in 2 Peter (1:16; 3:4), a word used throughout the New Testament to denote the coming of Christ in glory. But this is the only place in the New Testament where the word is not followed by a personal reference. And the phrase *day of God* itself is unusual; 'the day of the Lord (2:9; 3:10) is the customary scriptural designation of the end times ('day of God' occurs elsewhere only in Jer. 46:10 and Rev. 16:14). This unusual wording naturally raises the question about a peculiar focus he wants to bring us. Perhaps he wants to maintain the more 'cosmic' flavor of end events, typical of his treatment in this chapter. On the other hand, Peter is famous for unusual words and constructions, so we should be cautious about reading too much into this one.

*Gardner*: The second response must be one of joyful expectation and anticipation of the fulfillment of God's promises. *As you look forward to the day of God* captures this sense of waiting but also looking forward.... Christians never need fear the coming of Christ. For all the talk of destruction and judgment, the Christian can look forward to that day without fear because, through repentance and faith in Christ, he or she can be assured of salvation from such horrors (v. 15).

*MacArthur*: If believers are *looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God*, such eager anticipation precludes being worried about it or afraid of it.... *Looking for* expresses an attitude of expectancy, an outlook on life that watchfully waits for the Lord's arrival.... *The coming* translates the familiar term *parousia*, which literally means 'the presence.' In the New Testament it does not primarily describe a place or event. Instead, the term emphasizes the personal, bodily arrival of Jesus. Some commentators equate the *day of God* with the 'day of the Lord,' but they are not synonymous expressions. The *day of God* refers to the eternal state when God will have permanently subdued all of His enemies. However, the 'day of the Lord...refers to the final, tumultuous events accompanying the last judgment of unbelievers. [DSB Note: MacArthur makes this 'distinction' based on his pre-millennial viewpoint; he wants to separate the *parousia* from the consummation by the millennium. But he is certainly reading more into this phrase, *day of God*, than is present in the text, to justify his theological position.]

### d) *Hastening The Coming (3:12a)*

<sup>12</sup>...*waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God...*

*Moo*: Christians, says Peter, are not only to *look forward* to this *day of God*; they are also to *speed its coming*. The verb used here (*speudo*) can also mean 'strive,' 'make an effort,' 'be eager.' Peter uses a form of this word with this meaning in 1:5; and if it has this meaning here,

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we would translate something like the NIV margin note: ‘as you wait eagerly for the day of God to come.’ But this word has the sense of ‘hastening’ in its other New Testament occurrences (Lk. 2:16; 19:5, 6; Acts 20:16; 22:18), and the idea that believers may actually ‘hasten’ the end of history, while at first sight strange, it is in fact deeply rooted in Jewish and Christian teaching. The rabbis claimed that the Messiah would come if only all Israel would repent or obey the law perfectly for one day—a teaching found in different forms in Jewish literature.... We may think that the idea of Christians hastening the coming of Christ takes away from the sovereignty of God, for doesn’t the Bible make clear that God determines the time of the end? We have here another instance of the biblical interplay between human actions and God’s sovereignty: human acts are significant and meaningful, but God is nevertheless fully sovereign.... If we ask for further details on how Christians can hasten Christ’s return, Peter would give no explicit answer. But he has already claimed that the apparent delay in the Parousia is because God wants everybody (or, as we argued, all God’s people) to repent.... God’s people can hasten Christ’s return by their sincere and complete rejection of the hold of sin on their lives. By connecting what he says here about hastening the coming of the day of God and with his exhortations in verse 11b, Peter also suggests that the holy living of God’s people is a way to speed up the eschatological timetable. And we can include evangelism, recall Jesus’ words (Mt. 24:14).... Finally, we may add to the list the prayers of God’s people, for we have been taught to pray ‘Your kingdom come’ (Mt. 6:10).

*Gardner:* If the delay in Christ’s coming is due to God’s grace as He waits for His people to repent, then their repentance reflected in their lives, speeds the return of Christ. Of course, we need to be careful here. Peter is not implying that Christ’s return is dependent on the people of God coming to repentance. The ‘coming’ is entirely in the sovereign hands of the heavenly Father but still, from our perspective, repentance and godly lives among God’s people should provide us with an even greater reason for having a lively and confident expectation that this return may be at any time.

*MacArthur:* Peter’s use of *hastening* only strengthens that concept [of expectancy]. Rather than fearing the world’s impending demise, Christians long for it, knowing they have everything to hope for and nothing to fear from the Father who loves them.

*Sproul:* Some think *hastening* means that, by our efforts, particularly in world missions, we can shorten the days. We are certainly encouraged to exert such effort, but I guarantee that all the labor in our hands is not able to change the day that God has appointed from the foundation of the world.

### 2. What We Are Waiting For (3:12b-13)

*...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.*

#### a) *The Old Passing Away (3:12b)*

*...because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!*

*Moo:* In the last part of verse 12, Peter describes again the cosmic effects of the day of God.... *Heavens* refers again to the unseen spiritual dimension of the universe (see 3:5, 7, 10). *Destroy* (Greek *lyo*) occurs again as a key verb (see also vv. 10-11). The word *elements* (*stoicheia*; see

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comments on v. 10) is either the heavenly bodies or the basic physical components of the earth—more likely the latter. Peter is then here announcing the destruction of the entire universe—heavens and the earth (see also vv. 5 and 7). The word *melt* is a particularly appropriate one in this context, for it was used in the Old Testament to depict the cosmic disasters that will accompany the Day of the Lord (e.g., Mic. 1:3-4; cp. Is. 63:19-64:1).

*Gardner:* Peter now summarizes in two brief sentences what he is saying. The promise of God to judge on the day of God has not failed as the heretics have maintained, for the destruction will indeed take place.

### b) *The New Being Established (3:13)*

<sup>13</sup>*But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

*Moo:* But Christians do not ‘look forward’ only to destruction of the universe; they also ‘look forward’ to its renewal. God has promised *a new heaven and a new earth*. The promise Peter has in mind is almost certainly the one in Isaiah 65 and 66, the only Old Testament passage in which this idea is mentioned.... The same image is picked up in Revelation 21:1 in the description of the eternal state that follows the Millennium and the judgment of God.... The important point here for Peter is not speculation about the exact nature of this ‘new heaven and earth,’ but that it will be *the home of righteousness*. We live in a world where wrong often prevails; a world in which faithful Christians are often persecuted for doing God’s will, while evil people enjoy the rewards of their sin, a world in which innocent lives are ripped from wombs and God’s laws are flaunted and mocked. All that will be eradicated in the next world (cp. Rev. 21:3-4).

*Gardner:* However, neither has the most wonderful promise of God of a new heaven and a new earth failed. Just as surely as destruction will happen, so those who belong to God can be assured, *in keeping with His promise*, that He will create *a new heaven and a new earth*. Just as the prophets and specially...Isaiah had promised the conflagration of the wicked, so they had promised comfort to the godly. In Isaiah 66:22 we read: “As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before Me,” declares the LORD, “so will your name and descendants endure.” This too is God’s promise. This too is among the promises which the heretics have scorned yet this is what must provide the joy and anticipation that should be felt by all God’s people as they await the day of the Lord. They await *the home of righteousness*. This wonderful description of the new heaven and the new earth says it all. This is what things will be like when God has taken decisive action on the final day. There will be no more evil, or temptation to follow the corrupt desires of a sinful nature, for we shall find instead a place ‘in which righteousness lives.’

*MacArthur:* *According to His promise*, that new day will showcase a *new heavens and a new earth*, meaning that God will create an entirely new universe (cp. Ps. 102:25-26; Is. 65:17; 66:22). The word rendered *new* (*kainos*) means ‘new in quality,’ ‘different,’ or ‘unlike anything previously known.’ Thus, the new heavens and earth will be far more than merely new in time or chronology; they will also be new in character—a realm *in which righteousness dwells*. *Dwells* (*katoikeō*) means ‘to settle down and be at home,’ or ‘to take up permanent, comfortable residence.’ In God’s new order, righteousness will enjoy a permanent, perfect existence.

*Sproul:* We are not to understand Peter’s words here to mean that God is going to burn up the universe and throw it away. There will be an end to the world as we know it, because we find in

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this text the same language that we find at the end of Revelation of new heavens and a new earth. However, God is not going to annihilate the old in order to create the new. Instead, He is going to redeem the old, shaping it into what He wants it to be.

*Helm:* We are waiting for *new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells*. What an encouragement to stay faithful. Christians are not merely waiting for the world to end. That would be a secular view. Peter does not motivate us with fear. He is not saying, ‘Get your act together before the curtain falls.’ Rather, he is saying, ‘Live in light of the fact that the veil on the next world is about to be pulled back. Before you know it, in the blink of an eye, you are going to be walking onto a stage more grand and more glorious than anyplace you’ve ever set foot on upon earth. We are heading to a promised land where righteousness dwells!’

### B. Waiting in Godliness (2 Peter 3:14-18)

*Moo:* Peter now brings his letter to a close by giving final exhortations to the faithful. He marks the transition to a new paragraph by using the summary conjunction *so then (dio)* and by addressing his readers as *dear friends*, or ‘beloved ones’ (*agapetoi*; cp. the same expression in vv. 1, 8). The use of this same form of address in verse 17 implies another break, though it is not as strong there.... Note how two of the exhortations here pick up language that Peter used early in the letter: 3:14 ‘*make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with Him*’; 1:5 ‘*make every effort to add to your faith goodness*’; 3:18: ‘*grown in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*’; 1:3 ‘*His divine power has given to us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.*’ By returning to some of the key ideas at the beginning of the letter, Peter creates a kind of ‘inclusio.’ These ideas and exhortations frame the contents of the letter, setting its tone and suggesting its overall purpose: to make the knowledge of Christ his readers enjoy fruitful in holy living.

#### 1. Purity (3:14-15a)

<sup>14</sup>*Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.* <sup>15</sup>*And count the patience of our Lord as salvation...*

##### a) Waiting (3:14a)

<sup>14</sup>*Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these...*

*Moo:* Christians are to ‘look forward’ to the ‘day of God,’ when He will destroy and renew the entire universe. They need constantly to look beyond the circumstances of this life and to gauge every thought and every action in light of the eternal state that Christ’s return in glory will introduce.... In light of all that (*since you are looking forward to this*), Peter urges, *make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with Him*.

*Gardner:* Peter again appeals to these ‘much loved’ people who are in so much danger of being led astray. They are to look forward to (literally) ‘these things,’ that is, the new heaven and new earth and all that accompanies the day of the Lord, and therefore should make every endeavor to lead the holy and godly lives of which he has been talking.

*MacArthur:* As those who *look for these things*—the day of God, the new heavens and earth, the eternal state, and the glorious everlasting kingdom—faithful believers are motivated to live in a way that reflects their eternal perspective.

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*Sproul:* The two most important words with respect to the last things of which the Bible speaks are *vigilance* and *diligence*. We should be watching, but not from some mountaintop, disengaged from the work of the kingdom of God. While we are watching, waiting, and being vigilant, we are called to be diligent concerning our sanctification.

### b) Pursue Purity (3:14b)

*...be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish...*

*Moo:* *To be found* has judicial overtones. It conjures up the scene of the court of law, where the judge ‘finds’ defendants guilty or innocent. Peter, we suggested, used this same verb in a similar manner in verse 10m speaking about the whole physical earth being *found* before God—that is, ‘laid bare’ to His searching and infallibly correct judgment. The NIV rendering obscures the fact that in the Greek ‘spotless and blameless’ are associated closely together. Peter used similar language about Christ in His first letter, calling Him a lamb ‘without blemish or defect’ (1:19). (The Greek in 2 Peter 3:14 is *aspiloi kai amometoi*; in 1 Peter 1:19 it is *amomou kai aspilou*. The Greek words *amomos* and *amometos* are variants of the same term.) This 1 Peter reference suggests the original context for the language: sacrifice. The Old Testament regularly demands that the sacrifices offered to the Lord be ‘without spot or blemish.’ How much of this original sacrificial association clings to the words in verse 14 here is difficult to say, for the terms had by this time become regularly used of moral purity. In any case, Peter’s point is clear. Motivated by the Day of the Lord that is coming, believers should work hard to be found perfectly pure and blameless, when God in Christ comes to assess our lives. They should strive to be the opposite of the false teachers, who are ‘blots and blemishes’ (2:13). Remember, however, that this is a goal we are to strive for, not a condition that we will finally be able to achieve. For the New Testament makes clear that the believer will always have sin to confess (1 Jn. 1:8) and that our struggle with sin will never finally end until our bodies themselves are ‘redeemed’ (see Rom. 8:23). But this realization should not diminish our sincere effort to get as close to that goal as possible.

*Gardner:* Here, however, he uses words drawn from the Old Testament sacrificial background. We are reminded of the sacrificial lamb that was to be without ‘spot or blemish’ (e.g., Lev. 1:3; ‘without defect’ – NIV). Such an offering is acceptable to God and is befitting worship of God. But that reminder is probably only indirectly what Peter has in mind. It is more likely that Peter is remembering Jesus, the perfect sacrifice and the perfect example for us to follow. In 1 Peter 1:19 the apostle recalls that we were redeemed by the ‘precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.’ What a difference there will be between these followers of Christ and the heretics who ‘are blots and blemishes’ in the church (2:13).

*MacArthur:* The phrase *to be found* is a sobering reminder that no one will be able to hide from Christ when He returns.... In sharp contrast to the false teachers, who were ‘stains and blemishes’ (2:13), Peter exhorts his readers to be *spotless and blameless*. *Spotless* can denote Christian character, the kind of people believers really are; and *blameless* denotes Christian reputation, the kind of righteous and virtuous people others perceive them to be—because they are.

*Helm:* To paraphrase. We are to be persistently pure and at peace. Persistence is one way to define diligence. We are to be persistently pure.... The phrase Peter uses to convey this is *without spot or blemish*. What a contrast to those who were ‘blots and blemishes’ (2:13). I telling us that we are to be *without spot or blemish*, Peter calls upon the language of the Old

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Testament concept of sacrifice. The lamb was to be pure and spotless. This alone would bring peace with God. Therefore, our marching orders are clear. In this letter Peter has contrasted two kinds of people on the street—those who have no regard for the state of their purity and those who are looking to keep it intact for Christ.

### c) Pursue Peace (3:14c)

...and at peace.

*Moo:* The Greek text associates *spotless and blameless*. *At peace*, then, stands apart as something of an afterthought. This *peace* may be the peace of a satisfied conscience, the tranquility that the true believer can enjoy at the time of the judgment, knowing that Christ has taken care of the sin problem. But the *peace* that Peter has in mind is probably the peace of reconciliation—the restore relationship that the believer enjoys with God through the mediation of Christ (see, e.g., Rom. 5:1-2).

*Gardner:* Not only should a Christian be found on that last day to be Christlike, but also he should be found *at peace with Him*. Peter is not simply talking about peaceful and contented feelings about our relationship with God. Rather it has to do with *not* being God's enemies, not being among those who will be judged by Him.

*MacArthur:* *Peace* (*eirēnē*) could refer to a saving relationship with God and becoming at peace with Him (cp. Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:14). But the apostle addressed his readers as *beloved*, indicating that they were already Christians.... In this context, *peace* primarily refers to the true peace of mind that accompanies a confident faith in the Lord.

### d) Pursue Salvation (3:15a)

<sup>15</sup>*And count the patience of our Lord as salvation...*

*Moo:* The command in verse 15 is parallel to the one at the end of verse 14. As Christians look forward to the end of history, they are not only to strive for holiness, they are also to *bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation*. Christians are therefore to adopt an attitude toward the apparent delay in Christ's return that is exactly opposite to that of the false teachers. The latter considered (NIV, 'understand') the delay to be a sign of God's 'slowness' (v. 9), concluding that judgment may never come; they were, therefore, quite unconcerned about having to answer for their immoral conduct. Christians, on the other hand, are to 'consider' the delay as an opportunity to pursue salvation. (The NIV obscures the relationship between v. 9 and v. 19 by using two different verbs—'understand' and 'bear in mind'—but the verb is the same in the Greek—*hegeomai*, 'consider'). As Peter has pointed out already (v. 9), God's delay in sending Christ to judge the earth is a reflection of His *patience*.... Christians are to use the opportunity afforded by the delay in Christ's coming to pursue *salvation*.... Peter would not be writing as he does to these believers if some of them, at least, were not in danger of succumbing to the false teachers' pernicious influence. As a result, he wants them to consider the time they have before Christ's return as an opportunity to secure their relationship before the Lord.

*Gardner:* Being at peace with God sums up the end result of the gospel of salvation. As Christians reflect on this while looking forward to Christ's coming, they should specially *bear in mind* that the delay in His return (*our Lord's patience*) has meant that they have had time to be saved and to find peace with God.

*MacArthur:* Without question, Peter wanted his audience to wait eagerly for Christ's return. At the same time, he did not want them to grow idle or detach themselves from society, being so

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consumed with thoughts of the future that they forgot about their compelling spiritual responsibilities in the present.... As noted in 3:8-9, the Lord delays His return in order to save the remainder of His elect. Thus Christians should *regard* God's *patience* with joy, knowing that He is daily adding to His family until it is complete.

*Helm:* We press on, knowing that the patience of our Lord is for our salvation. God not only has purposes for us while we wait or promises for us while we wait—our waiting is one of God's great means of accomplishing our salvation.... Notice the implication of counting God's patience as our salvation: our waiting must be productive; after all it is producing our salvation.

### 2. Paul (3:15b-16)

*...just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, <sup>16</sup>as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.*

#### a) Peter's Reason

*Gardner:* Why Peter should appeal to Paul at this point has been a matter of considerable debate. Some have suggested that it shows the apostle Peter could not have written the letter, else he would not have needed to appeal to any other apostle. However, two simple solutions suggest themselves. The first is that Peter knows his letter is closely following on one written by Paul, perhaps a year or two or even only a few months earlier. We have no knowledge of this, but it could offer a very simple explanation of Peter's reference to Paul and a letter he knew they had already received. More likely is that this is yet another instance in which Peter is seeking to show that the promises of God are to be found in the prophets, and from Jesus through the apostles. Peter will go on to talk of Paul's writing as 'Scripture.' Peter, the apostle, is saying that his teaching about the future and judgment and the Lord's coming and His divine patience are all to be found in other authoritative apostolic teachings like those of Paul. Indeed, almost all of the writings of the apostle Paul known to us in Scripture talk at some length about Christ's return.

#### b) Paul's Relationship (3:15b)

*...just as our beloved brother Paul...*

*Moo:* With the *just as* in the middle of verse 15, Peter appeals to the writings of Paul to confirm what he has just told his readers in verses 14-15a. The way Paul is addressed here (*our dear brother*) has led many scholars to conclude that Peter could not have written this letter. For were not Paul and Peter at loggerheads, representing opposite viewpoints on issues such as the law and the inclusion of Gentiles in the Christian community? ... This interpretation rests, of course, primarily on Galatians 2:11-14, where Paul describes a conflict between himself and Peter over just such issues. But this is the *only* evidence for a conflict between the two that we possess. From what we can tell from the New Testament as a whole, Peter and Paul were on the same side theologically (see, for instance, Acts 11:2-18; 15:7-11; note too that the probable amanuensis of 1 Peter, Silvanus [= Silas, 1 Pe. 5:12] was from the circle of Paul's coworkers [Acts 15:40; 1 Th. 1:1]). Calling Paul his *dear brother* would be perfectly natural for Peter and fits well with early Christian usage, for *brother* is often used to refer to coworkers in the gospel ministry (see 1 Cor. 2:13; Phil. 2:25; 1 Th. 3:2; 1 Pe. 5:12).... Why does he refer to Paul as *our* beloved brother rather than 'my' beloved brother? The plural could be 'editorial,' with a singular meaning,

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but...this usage is almost nonexistent in the New Testament. The *our* then may refer to Christians generally or, perhaps more likely, to fellow apostles (see v. 2).

*MacArthur:* With the phrase *just as also*, Peter referenced similar warnings that the apostle Paul had given about false teaching. Peter graciously spoke of his fellow apostle as *our beloved brother Paul*, underscoring their common life and mission. As the two foremost leaders of the early church, Peter and Paul were certainly well-aware of each other's ministry. In fact, both had been present at the pivotal Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:6-21), and both had ministered with Silas (cp. Acts 15:40 with 1 Peter 5:12). More than twenty years earlier, Peter had even been confronted by Paul when he wrongly refused to eat with Gentile Christians (Gal. 2:11-21). As a primary spokesman for the early church, Peter was undoubtedly embarrassed by Paul's public admonition. Nevertheless, he graciously accepted the rebuke and responded with repentance. His respect for Paul was undiminished.

### c) *Paul's Readers (3:15c)*

*...also wrote to you...*

*Moo:* Who is included in the *you* to whom Paul wrote? ... All that we can conclude from this reference...is that the readers of 2 Peter have received one or more letters of Paul. But since we cannot be sure where the readers of the letter lived, we cannot decide which of Paul's letters Peter may have in mind. Nor does Peter's identification of the subject matter of the letter(s) help.... But the point he has made is very general—Christians need to live holy lives in light of the coming of Christ—and Paul touches on this subject in virtually every letter he wrote.

*MacArthur:* Here he appeals to Paul's inspired letters for support—reminding his readers to reject the false teachers and remember what Paul *wrote to* them....Interestingly, Peter does not specify a particular Pauline letter or letters.

### d) *Paul's Wisdom (3:15d)*

*...according to the wisdom given him...*

*Moo:* Paul himself often claimed to be a minister on the basis of the 'grace given to me' (Rom. 12:3; 15:15; Gal. 2:9; 1 Cor. 3:19; Eph. 3:2, 7; Col. 1:25). Peter varies the formula, referring to the *wisdom that God gave him*. Paul refers to his ministry generally as a work of God's grace in and through him; Peter's language focuses more on the basis for what Paul wrote. What he wrote in his letters came not from his own study or imagination; it came from God Himself, who gave Paul the wisdom to understand and apply the gospel in his generation.

*Gardner:* The apostle Paul had made the same point to them, says Peter, acknowledging the *wisdom God gave him*. By this Peter affirms, no doubt, Paul's apostolic authority as God gave him the wisdom for what he said and wrote.

*MacArthur:* Instead, he gives a general endorsement of Paul's inspired writings, demonstrating the divine origin of the revelation given to Paul.

### e) *Paul's Epistles (3:16a)*

<sup>16</sup>*...as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters.*

*Moo:* But it was not only in what Paul wrote to the readers of 2 Peter that he stressed the connection between the Parousia and godly living. *He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters.* Again, critics of the Petrine authorship of 2 Peter think that

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the reference to *all* Paul's letters requires a date in the late first or early second century, when Paul's letters had been gathered together. But these critics are guilty once again of over-interpretation. Peter says no more than that Paul wrote in the same way in all the letters *that Peter has seen*. The language does not imply that all of Paul's letters had been written or that they had been put together into a corpus.

*Gardner*: We do not know with how many of Paul's letters Peter was acquainted. What is quite fascinating here is that it is very early evidence that already at least Paul's apostolic letters were being collected together and being given a wider circulation than their original audience. Clearly, as we shall see later in this verse, the letters were being accorded the status of Scripture. Some have used this fact as an argument for a very late date for 2 Peter, long after the apostle's death. But there is no need to assume this at all. Peter and Paul probably both died under the Neronian persecutions in Rome in the 60s. There is no reason why Peter could not have seen some of Paul's letters which were perhaps being read in the churches in Rome.

*MacArthur*: It is safe to assume that Peter sent this letter to the same regions of Asia Minor as his first epistle (cp. 1 Pe. 1:1; 2 Pe. 3:1). If so, his readers were most likely familiar with several of Paul's letters—since Paul wrote many of his letters to that same area (e.g., Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians). So Peter's reference to *all* of Paul's *letters* suggests Peter's audience was familiar with much of Paul's correspondence. Because Paul was *speaking in* his letters *of these same things* (namely, eschatological events), it makes sense that Peter would cite Paul's works here.

### f) *Paul's Meaning (3:16b)*

*There are some things in them that are hard to understand...*

*Moo*: Peter now comments further on the letters of Paul generally. He makes one explicit point and one implicit point, both of which are fascinating. *Explicitly*, Peter remarks that the letters of Paul contain *some things that are hard to understand* and are therefore misinterpreted by *ignorant and unstable people*. *Hard to understand* translates a word that was sometimes applied to Greek oracles—notoriously ambiguous and difficult to apply.... So, Peter suggests, Paul's letters contain passages that can take on more than one meaning. Many of us feel relieved and comforted when we read Peter's words here. We do not feel so badly about our problems in interpreting Paul, if Peter, a fellow apostle, had the same difficulty!. But the context suggests that Peter is making a slightly different point. It is not so much that what Paul wrote was obscure; rather, it could be easy, by looking at what Paul said in the wrong context or in an unbalanced way, to get the wrong meaning out of it.

*Gardner*: I have known some students of the New Testament who have been tempted to use this verse to excuse their lack of diligence in the study of Paul's epistles! But Peter is not saying that Paul's writings *cannot* be understood. He only says that *some things are hard to understand*, and perhaps he specially has in mind some of his teaching about the future and the return of the Lord.

*MacArthur*: However, in Paul's writings about the day of the Lord, the return of Christ, and the glories of eternity, Peter acknowledged there *are some things hard to understand*.... The word rendered *hard to understand* (*dusnoētos*) carries the additional connotation of 'difficult to interpret.' In using this term, Peter was not implying that Paul's teachings are impossible to understand. He is simply recognizing that some are more complex than others, especially prophetic revelation (cp. 1 Pet. 1:1-12).

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### g) *Paul's Enemies (3:16c)*

...which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction...

*Moo*: The letters of Paul themselves reveal situations in which people whom he had taught seized on one of his teachings, took it out of context, and drew the wrong conclusion from it (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:12)... The letter of James may reflect a similar scenario, as James corrects his readers' misinterpretation of Paul's teaching about 'justification by faith.' In other words, Peter is fully aware of *ignorant and unstable* people who *distort* the meaning of what Paul wrote and bring destruction upon themselves. Almost certainly he is referring to the false teachers whom he has been rebuking throughout the letter. He uses the same word of them in 2:14 ('unstable,' *asteriktos*) as he uses here. What Peter suggests, then, is that these false teachers are *twisting* Paul's own writings as support for their heresies. Peter may be thinking of their faulty eschatology. But he is more likely thinking of their lawless and licentious conduct, which he castigates in chapter 2.

*Gardner*: Peter is not at all a counsel of despair for those of us who would like to come to grips with Paul's writings! Rather, we should note that some of those 'hard' passages are distorted by *ignorant and unstable people*. Presumably Peter has in mind the false teachers who, he is arguing, have deliberately (see v. 5) forgotten and distorted and ignored those parts of Scripture that do not suit them. If a passage is generally hard to understand it may more easily be used by such people in a distorted way. Gullible people who cannot easily understand certain Scriptures may too easily be convinced that a false teacher is right in his interpretation. Peter then adds, *as they do the other Scriptures*. In other words, a characteristic trait of these false teachers is that they distort and twist Scripture around to suit their own views and teachings.

*MacArthur*: Those complexities opened the door for *the untaught and unstable*—namely the false teachers—to *distort* what Paul taught about the future. *Untaught* denotes a lack of information, and *unstable* a vacillating spiritual character. *Distort* speaks of wrenching someone's body on a torture rack. The term vividly pictures how the false teachers manipulated certain prophetic issues, twisting them to confuse and deceive the undiscerning. Such distortion often continues today regarding prophetic revelation. Not surprising, the false teachers did not stop with prophecy, but also distorted the *rest of the Scriptures*, including the biblical teaching on God's law, repentance, justification by faith, and sanctification... By distorting *the Scriptures*, the false teachers were simultaneously securing *their own destruction*, as well as the spiritual demise of their followers.

### h) *Paul's Authority (3:16d)*

...as they do the other Scriptures.

*Moo*: The *implicit* point Peter is making emerges from his claim that the false teachers distort Paul's letters *as they do the other Scriptures*. The word *other (loipos)* shows that Peter considers the letters of Paul to belong to the category of 'Scripture.' Some scholars think that this means no more than that Peter considered Paul's writing to be authoritative. But the word *Scriptures (graphai)* always refers in the New Testament to those writing considered not only authoritative but canonical—in a word, it refers to the Old Testament. Peter therefore implies that the letters of Paul have a status equivalent to that of the canon of the Old Testament itself.

*Gardner*: What is fascinating about Peter's comments here is that he links Paul's writing to *Scriptures*. The word *other* is deeply significant, The Greek word translated as *Scriptures* here

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is only used in the New Testament to describe the authoritative teaching of God in the Old Testament. Now Peter links to those foundational and Spirit-inspired writings the work of the apostle Paul. This is one of the very earliest examples we have of writings that we know in the New Testament being regarded as fully inspired of the Holy Spirit and counted as being as authoritative as the Old Testament.

*MacArthur:* The fact that Peter places Paul's writings on a par with the *rest of the Scriptures* clearly affirms that Paul wrote divinely inspired truth. The New Testament writers were aware that they were writing the Word of God, as surely as the Old Testament prophets were. The word translated *Scriptures* is *graphas*, from the verb *graphō* ('to write') that occurs about one hundred eighty times in the New Testament, of which half refer to the Bible, 'the written word.' The noun *graphē* is used about fifty times, exclusively of Scripture, and inclusive of the Old Testament (e.g., Mk.12:10) and the New Testament, as this reference makes clear (cp. 1 Cor. 15:3).

### 3. Progress (3:17-18a)

<sup>17</sup>*You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.* <sup>18</sup>*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

#### a) Beloved (3:17a)

<sup>17</sup>*You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand...*

*Moo:* Peter is aware that his reference to the letters of Paul has led him off into a detour from his main line of teaching at this point of the letter. So, addressing his readers again as his *dear friends* (*agapetoi*, 'beloved'), he resumes the exhortations he began issuing in verse 14. Now, however, they are not so clearly tied to eschatology. Peter looks back and brings to bear on his readers the message of the entire letter. Thus, the negative exhortation in verse 17 reflects the warnings about false teachers in chapter 2, while the positive exhortation in verse 18a reiterates a key idea from chapter 1. The *you* (*hymeis*) is emphatic, standing in contrast to the 'ignorant and unstable' in verse 16.... He is...referring generally to the early Christian teaching about eschatology and its moral implications that his readers had received. Peter's point is that the readers have been amply warned about the danger of false teaching. Forewarned should mean that they are forearmed—ready to resist the perverse attractions of the false teachers' heresies.

*Gardner:* *Therefore, dear friends* draws the reader back to the challenges of verse 11-15. And so by way of summary, Peter makes his final appeal for action by saying *since you already know this*. That is, since they already know false teachers will come among them in the last days, both from apostolic teaching, from this letter from Peter, the words of Christ and even the Old Testament prophets (see specially 3:2), they should take appropriate defensive action. Of course,, the also *already know this* because, as verse 16 has made clear, the ignorant and unstable are *already* distorting apostolic teaching even in Paul's and Peter's own life-time. So Peter makes two final appeals, the first is more negative and defensive and recalls the call he had made in chapter 2 to beware of and recognize false teachers. The second appeal is more positive and urges Christians to go on the offensive recalling some of the great encouragement seen in chapter 1.

*MacArthur:* Peter warns his *beloved* readers *beforehand*, so that they might *be on their guard* against *the error of such unprincipled men*.

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*Helm:* As Peter prepares to utter his last words to the church, we find him picking up the term *beloved* one last time. His heart was full of love for God's people. Over the years he had learned to love the sheep. And now they were his 'beloved'—just as they had always been for God. Knowing that after his death, other, unloving teachers would come along to distort the truth, Peter reminds the beloved to take care.

### b) *Guard Yourselves (3:17b)*

*...take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.*

*Moo:* Christians need constantly to *be on* [their] *guard* (the present tense of the imperative in Greek suggests a constant state of watchfulness). Otherwise, they run the risk of being *carried away by the error of lawless men (athesmōn)*, a word Peter applied to the false teachers in 2:7). *Error (plane)* can also be translated 'wander,' and it is not clear whether Peter is thinking of the false teachers' own 'wandering' from the faith or their causing others to 'wander' from the faith. Perhaps we need not choose; certainly both have been prominent in the letter. The danger in any such 'wandering' is that it may cause a believer to *fall from* his or her *secure position*. Conversion to Jesus Christ provides a solid foundation, a security, for spiritual vitality in this life and glory in the next. The word Peter uses implies that Christians can have confidence in this foundation. But he also, of course, warns about *falling from* that foundation.... Here in 3:17 we again find the typical New Testament combination of security and warning. Clearly Peter is concerned that believers not view their 'security' in Christ (however understood) to condone a careless attitude toward the struggle with sin. Confidence in our status with Christ should never lead to a presumption on God's grace that leads us to toy with the danger of false teachers or that negates serious striving after holiness.

*Gardner:* First, he says, you should recognize the false teachers for who they are and *be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position*. As we have seen throughout the epistle, there is a need to recognize who the enemy is and that is done by being 'on guard' all the time so that true believers are not carried away into error. Peter has shown all sorts of ways in which believers should be on guard. They should watch out for immorality, for the distortion of Scripture, and beware lest they or others forget the promises of God. The dangers of being carried away by error are real enough.... The word *error*, which comes from the root word 'to wander,' reminds us of the false teachers who have 'wandered off' in 2:15. They are *lawless*, a word used in 2:7 to describe the people of Sodom. Reference to *your secure position* here recalls 1:12 where Peter had encouraged his readers by acknowledging that they 'are firmly established in the truth.' ... Truth leads to standing firm before God while *error* leads to the *fall* before God on the judgment day (see 1:10-11).

*MacArthur:* *Unprincipled (athesmōn)* is literally 'without law or custom,' and came to mean 'morally corrupt'—the essential character trait of spiritual deceivers. In keeping with Peter's warning, believers must not allow themselves to be *carried away* by the unscriptural lies of false teachers (cp. 1 Tim. 1:18-19). Rather, they must be alert and discerning lest they *fall from* their *own steadfastness*. *Steadfastness (stērigmos)* indicates firmness or firm footing; it is the very opposite of being unstable. Peter's concern was not that his readers would fall from salvation, but that they might slip from doctrinal stability and lose their confidence in the truth. For this reason the apostle urged them to be spiritually perceptive, or discerning, so that their eternal reward would not be diminished.

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*Helm:* He actually lists two reasons for this important reminder to *take care*. The first is so *that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people*. The image of being carried away is a frightening one. Throughout this letter, the idea that people are being carried along one path of life or another has been present (cp. 2:2, 15, 21)... Aware that we are all on a dangerous journey, Peter plants one last warning sign along the road—‘take care that you are not carried away.’ ... The *lawless people* whom Peter refers to were those who claimed that we will never have to give a final accounting for the way we live our lives because Jesus is not coming back. So here we learn that an intimate relationship exists between what we believe about the return of Christ and the kind of people we run with through life.... The second reason Peter reminds us to take care is found in the latter part of verse 17: *...and lose your own stability*. With the word *stability*, Peter comes full circle—not only in this letter, but in his life. From the outset of this letter our stability has been his utmost concern (cp. 1:12). His aim in writing has been that we would be ‘established’ in the faith. He has been laboring for firmness of faith—sure footing—people planted squarely on solid ground.

c) *Grow in Grace and Knowledge (3:18a)*

<sup>18</sup>*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

*Moo:* After his final warning Peter issues a final positive exhortation... if we are to find a single ‘key verse’ for all of 2 Peter, this would probably be it. Here Peter summarizes his root concern, that his readers, resisting the heresy of the false teachers, continue to grow spiritually, becoming more and more like the Christ whom they confess. Peter spelled out this growth in holiness in some detail in 1:5-10.... The *grace...of Jesus Christ* will mean the grace that He bestows on us. But *knowledge...of Jesus Christ* can mean either the knowledge that Jesus Christ gives us (see 1:5-6) or our knowledge of, our relationship to, Jesus Christ (see 1:2-3, 8). While the Greek word Peter uses here can point to the former interpretation, the sweeping nature of the exhortation and the relationship to chapter 1 suggest that the second is correct. (The word used here is the simple *gnosis*, which Peter uses elsewhere in the letter to depict our own ‘knowledge’—1:5-6. When Peter refers to our knowledge directed to Christ, he uses the compound *epignōsis*—1:2-3, 8; 2:20).

*Gardner:* Secondly, Peter says that they should *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*.... Peter is not saying that you have to be highly educated in order to *grow in the knowledge of our Lord*. Certainly, as he has shown, Christians will want to read and learn from the whole of the Bible. Certainly teaching and preaching from God’s word are some of the ways we grow in our knowledge of the Lord. But let us not allow Bible study to be regarded as an ‘intellectual study.’ God will use our intellects to whatever depth he has given us such abilities, but growing in the way Peter now describes is not simply an intellectual exercise. It is about listening to God’s word, grasping His promises and His commands, and then seeking to live out that truth. Often it is the least intellectual members of a church who will put to shame the academics in our midst. Because they have grown further than others, they have grown to see that they must live by what they have been taught. It is important to see that Peter puts *grace* before *knowledge*.... In the Christian faith, the fact of the matter is that not only do we come to know God in the first place by His grace, but that all subsequent growth is also part of His continuing gracious activity in our lives.... Is this *knowledge* of Jesus speaking of our personal relationship with Him, as in 1:2? Or is this *knowledge* something give to us by Jesus, like the *grace* already mentioned? It may really be both, but the former is more likely in this context.

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The wonderful final appeal Peter is making urges growth, for which we have the continuing grace of the Lord, and thus urges an even deeper relationship with (knowledge of) Christ.

*MacArthur:* Instead of falling prey to the schemes of false teachers, Peter encouraged his readers to pursue Christlikeness and spiritual growth—a goal that every believer should have.... *Grow (auxanō)* means ‘to advance, or increase in the sphere of.’ We are to grow in *grace* through the *knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*. Because of His *grace*, God forgives the sins of His children. They in turn feed on Scripture and commune with Christ, thereby increasing in their *knowledge* of Him.... It is crucial to note that Peter designated Jesus as both *Lord and Savior*. Pursuing a deeper understanding of the fullness of Christ’s person, both in His saving work and His lordship, will provide believers with the doctrinal stability they need to avoid being misled.

*Helm:* Just as we are to stay on guard against spiritual adversaries, we must also keep seeking to grow spiritually strong. This, too, is nothing new for Peter. From the outset of the letter he has enjoined us to grow in our faith (1:5-11).... Peter uses his thematic word, *knowledge*, one last time in this verse. Much like in his comparison in the second chapter (2:20), Peter writes of a knowledge of *our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*. This knowledge is fundamental to the foundation, to what he is so adamantly trying to establish in his readers. Strength and stability in the faith comes from *this knowledge*. A clear warning to those who would live by another knowledge come from *this knowledge*. And those who have fallen away will be picked up with *this knowledge*. But ‘knowledge is not the only thing at work in this last statement. Peter also writes of *grace*. Grace is given but it is to be grown too. Too many grow weary and quit along the way. They end up stopping altogether and take up with presumptuous sin. May it not be so for you and me. May we be known for *knowing* God.

### 4. Praise (3:18b)

*To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

*Moo:* Most New Testament letters end with greetings, references to fellow workers, a request for prayer, and/or grace wishes. Doxologies (ascriptions of glory [Greek *doxa*]) at the end of these letters are unusual—we find them only here, in Romans 16:25-27, Philippians 4:20; and Jude 24-25. Why Peter has chosen to end his letter in this way is unclear. The absence of some of the usual epistolary features may suggest that he is sending this letter along with others or that he is writing to a number of churches. Another unusual feature of the ending is that the doxology is to Christ. Normally glory is ascribed to God; only here, in 2 Timothy 4:18, and in Revelation 1:5-6 do we find doxologies directed to Christ—although we do find a ‘blessing’ of Christ, as God, in Romans 9:5. But this certainly fits the high view of Jesus Christ that Peter presents from very beginning of his letter (see esp. 1:1). The doxology is unusual in one other way. New Testament authors usually ascribe to God glory ‘forever and ever’ (Greek *eis tous aionas*; see, e.g., Jude 25). But Peter uses a different expression—literally translated, ‘unto the day of eternity.’ ... Better, in light of Peter’s focus on this subject in chapter 3, is to give *day* an eschatological meaning: the ‘day of the Lord/of God.’ Christ’s coming will inaugurate the eschatological age—a *day* that will last forever. We glorify Christ, looking to this day and earnestly waiting for it.

*Gardner:* *Glory* expresses the divinity of Jesus. Peter thus ascribes worship to Jesus as God, much as he opened his epistle by reference to *our God and Savior Jesus Christ*. The Christian’s faith begins and ends with the grace of Jesus Christ, the *Savior*. The Savior ‘saved’ His people from the judgment of God by taking that judgment on Himself as He died on the cross. He calls

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people to Himself, forgives them, and continues to uphold them so they stand firm. Undoubtedly, He is to be worshiped from the depths of our being, *both now and forever* for all eternity. (The Greek is perhaps better translated as ‘both now and into the day of eternity,’ implying that Peter is thinking of our worship of Him as it continues beyond His return beyond ‘the day of the Lord.’)

*MacArthur*: Peter closed the letter with a doxology, calling believers to worship and adore God. They are to give *Him* all *the glory, both now*, in the present, and in *eternity*. Clearly the pronoun *Him* refers back to Christ and is a sure affirmation of His deity and equality with God. After all, the Old Testament declares that divine *glory* belongs to God alone.... The only possible conclusion, then, is that Christ is worthy of the Father’s glory *because* He Himself is God. Peter began this epistle with an affirmation of Christ’s deity in 1:1, and he now ends with the same.

For next time: End of Bible Study. Summer break!

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### Lesson Summary

#### XX. Grow in Grace and Knowledge (2 Peter 3:11-18)

**Aim:** To wait patiently for the Lord's return, living lives of holiness and godliness, being grounded in the Scriptures, and growing in grace in knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

##### A. Waiting for Glory (3:11-13)

In light of the truth concerning the dissolution of the creation at the *Parousia*, Peter exhorts Christians to live holy and godly lives, while waiting in joyful anticipation for the coming day. We can do so because we have the sure hope that we are not destined for destruction, but rather for a new heavens and new earth, where righteousness dwells.

###### 1. What to Do While Waiting (3:11-12a)

- In light of his teaching regarding the dissolution of creation at the *Parousia*, Peter asks: *What sort of people ought you to be?* He gives a two-part answer
- First, we are to live *lives of holiness and godliness* (both are plural); *holiness* (external actions and behaviors) and *godliness* (internal heart attitudes and reverence)
- Second, we should be *waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God*
- *Waiting for* ('looking forward') means joyful anticipation of the *Parousia*
- *Hastening*; we cannot change the date; but we can live holy and godly lives in anticipation that will make its appear from our perspective to come more quickly

###### 2. What We Are Waiting For (3:12b-13)

- The old creation will pass away: *the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!*
- We are looking forward to the promise of a *new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells*; cp. Is. 65:17; 66:22; Rev. 21

##### B. Waiting in Godliness (3:14-18)

Peter provides further exhortation while Christians wait for the consummation. We are to pursue purity, peace, and our salvation. Peter digresses to mention the Apostle Paul, who also teaches these same things. Equating Paul's inspired letters with Scripture, he warns against misinterpreting them, as the false teachers do to their destruction. Rather, we are to guard ourselves against such error, which is destabilizing to the faith. Instead, we are to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

###### 1. Purity (3:14-15a)

- *Beloved, since you are waiting for these* Peter gives three more exhortations regarding how Christians are to live while waiting for the *Parousia*
- First, live *without spot or blemish*; i.e., pursue purity; cp. 1 Pe. 1:19; 2 Pe. 2:13
- Second, pursue *peace (eirēnē)*; reconciliation with God; peace of mind
- Third, *count the patience of our Lord as salvation*; remember, the Lord's patience is why the *Parousia* is delayed, to bring in the elect; our salvation is being accomplished

###### 2. Paul (3:15b-16)

- Peter refers to *our beloved brother Paul*; Peter and Paul are the 2 leading figures of the New Testament church and have a long relationship with each other
- Paul *also wrote to you*; apparently, Peter's readers had also received letter(s) from Paul; possibly Ephesians, Colossians, or Galatians (if recipients in Asia Minor)

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- Paul writes *according to the wisdom given him*; Peter’s endorsement
  - Paul writes about similar things as has Peter *in all his letters*; apparently, Peter and his readers were familiar with more than just one of Paul’s letters
  - Paul’s letters contain some things *that are hard to understand* (but not impossible)
  - As a result, the false teachers (*the ignorant and unstable*) have twisted *to their own destruction*; not surprising, given their denial of the *Parousia* and their pagan lifestyle
  - Peter equates Paul’s letters with *Scripture (graphai)*
3. Progress (3:17-18a)
- Peter calls his readers *beloved* one last time, and gives them two final exhortations; the first (negative) ties in with chapter 2; the second (positive) with chapter 1
  - First, they are to guard themselves: *take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless (athesmōn) people and lose your own stability (stērigmos)*
  - Second, they are to *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*; this is the overall ‘theme’ of 2 Peter
4. Praise (3:18b)
- Peter ends with a doxology to Jesus Christ: *To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

In 2 Peter 3:11-18, Peter concludes his second epistle with a series of exhortations about how to live the Christian life while waiting for the *Parousia*, the return of Jesus Christ in judgment and glory. He gives two exhortations in light of the fact that the old creation will be dissolved by fire. The first is to live holy and godly lives; and the second is to live in joyful anticipation of that coming day. Peter provides a motivation for living well; not only will the old creation be destroyed; but also, and more importantly, we are waiting for God to fulfill His promise of a new heavens and earth in which righteousness dwells.

Verses 14-18 contain further exhortations for godly Christian living while waiting for the consummation. We are to pursue purity, peace, and the working out of our salvation. Peter digresses to mention the Apostle Paul, who also teaches these same things. Equating Paul’s inspired letters with Scripture, he warns against misinterpreting them, as the false teachers do to their destruction. Rather, we are to guard ourselves against such error, which is destabilizing to the faith. Instead, we are to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This final exhortation is the overall theme of Peter’s second epistle. Peter ends with a doxology of praise to the Lord Jesus Christ: *To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*