

He is not slow in keeping his promises

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[0 : 00] We're reading from 2 Peter 3 verses 8 to 10. Let's awaken our hearts and minds with the word of the Lord. It says from verse 8.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar. The elements will be destroyed by fire.

And the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. I just thought I'd read to you from Psalm 90 just a little bit.

It says from verse 3. You turn people back to dust saying, return to dust you mortals. A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by or like a watch in the night.

Yet you sweep people away in the sleep of death. They are like the new grass of the morning. In the morning it springs up new but by evening it's dry and withered. And then I just want to read to you from the end of Malachi as well.

[1 : 42] We're not going to do the whole Bible. I'll just get to this bit here. This is the penultimate and ultimate verse of the Old Testament. Chapter 4 verse 5 and 6.

They're two really important bits of context.

What we're looking at here. But why don't we pray? Let's pray. Gracious Lord and Heavenly Father, the powerful Creator and Judge, the Lord for whom a thousand years are like a day. Father, we come before you as your creatures, as mortals who are like the grass of the field.

Entirely dependent upon you. Father, we pray we'd understand our position as we look at your word now. We pray, Lord, we listen well, that your spirit would indeed infuse your word in our hearts.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. It can be very difficult to tell someone they're fired. I don't know if you've been in that position before in your life.

[3 : 02] I want to say show of hands if you've had to sack somebody but I don't want to do that at the same time. Oh, somebody's proud of it in the back row. That's great. No, I'm just kidding. I say a lot of things I regret. That'll be one of them.

Anyway, it can be difficult to tell someone they're fired. I've had to do it, especially when you care about them. Kath and I, we, I got like diagnosed with anxiety disorder when I was, just before I went to Bible college.

And one of the things that I worked out and helped me was watching mindless TV. So it's medical. That's why I do it. Kath and I watched this show on Apple TV called Acapulco.

Show of hands if you've seen Acapulco. All right. That's good. I don't know whether we watched it because we've watched every other thing on the internet. But anyway, it's about a young bloke called Maximo who gets a dream job of managing the flashiest resort in Acapulco.

He's quite an endearing character. One of the hardest things he has to do as this sweet, innocent young local guy is learn to fire his friends. In particular, the resort bartender who's been giving free drinks to everybody just so he can get bigger tips from them.

[4 : 14] It's a good strategy, right? You give stuff away for free. They tip you. You make all the money. Now, Maximo knew about this. But the thing about this sweet guy is he just couldn't bring himself to sack him.

Even though he knew that his own job depended on it, he couldn't sack this guy who was slowly destroying the resort by his actions. He loved him too much. That's on Apple TV if you want to watch it.

Anyway, as we continue in this part of 2 Peter, we're going to see that God is incredibly patient with us. He loves us. He doesn't want anyone to perish.

He loves us more than Maximo loved his colleagues. And that's great for us, right? It's great for our neighbours.

It's great for our kids. It's great for our friends. It's great for the entirety of my extended family who haven't yet put their faith in Jesus. But the difference between the Lord and Maximo, there are lots of differences.

[5 : 21] The Lord won't let us rebel against him forever. He is a God of perfect justice, which is bad for anyone who hasn't put their faith in him.

Now, there aren't many verses here, but they do tell us a lot. So if you've got your Bibles open in any translation at 2 Peter 3, verse 8, the first thing we're going to see here is God is patient. He doesn't want anyone to perish. This is such a beautiful part of the character of God. All the parts are beautiful. I love this. It says, Does that seem familiar to you at all?

In the first part of the passage, Peter explained that there will be a judgment day. Remember, even though it was first talked about 800 years before 2 Peter was written, God is going to do it. Malachi spoke about it. Even, you know, 400 years after it was first spoken about, Malachi spoke about it again. God is going to do it. The Lord is going to come and strike the land with total destruction.

[6 : 34] They were Malachi's words. And Peter said in the first part of this passage, even though people will ridicule the idea of that ever happening, remember, even though they'll mock it, does God always do what he says?

Of course he does. And here, Peter wants his readers to know God's timescale is different to ours. And he takes us to Psalm 90 to remind us that God's timescale is different to ours.

A thousand years in your sight are like a day, the psalmist sang. The psalmist is saying, the sheer majesty of God is incomprehensible for us.

We think 30, 40, 90 years is a long time. It's nothing. It's like the grass growing in the morning and withering in the evening compared to the power and the majesty of God.

Time is, it's a different scale with him. And Peter's referring to that here in order to say to his readers, God's timing is different to our timing. God's patience is different to our patience.

[7 : 44] We don't get it. We can't get our head around it. I look around at the folly of the wisdom of the youth of my children because I've lived so much longer than them. What a fool, right?

Compared to our creator God for whom a thousand years are like a day. God's timing is not our timing. But a key reason behind his timing in verse 9 is his patience.

He is patient. He's not slow in keeping his promise to judge the wicked. Instead, he's patient. That instead, it's a contrastive conjunction, right?

It's strong. It's a big but. Don't be mistaken. God is not slow in keeping his promises. No, he's patient.

He's patient. And this case, the reason he's being patient is clearly stated in verse 9. He doesn't desire that anyone should perish. How good is that, right?

[8 : 49] What sort of a God would create people just to destroy them? Well, God doesn't desire. What does God desire? God doesn't desire that anyone should perish.

That is, he wants everyone to come to Jesus. He wants everyone to come to repentance. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, but, by contrast, he's patient with you.

Not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. I love that about the character of God. This is a refrain in the scriptures. This is an important part of the character of God.

Did you know this about God? It stands out like lights on a Christmas tree in a dark night. God's desire is for all to turn to him. In 1 Timothy 2, verse 4, Paul says, God wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

That's what God wants. How good is that? Twice in Ezekiel, in a book that at times can be very angry, in a book that reflects the justice of God, God says, I do not delight in the death of the wicked, but I am pleased when they turn from their ways and live.

[10 : 05] That's what God is like. That's the God that we follow. Now, to be clear, and also a bit confusing, and Kath said, don't talk about this, just go through, it's a bit too distracting.

And I was like, I'm going to talk about it. The Bible is also clear that it is only and entirely by the decree of God that anyone would turn and be saved.

Got it? It's only and entirely by the decree of God, a D word, decree of God, that anyone would turn and be saved. Yet, what's the other D word? What's the desire of God that everyone would be saved?

We believe that God is sovereign over every part of salvation. I watched an amazing 2 minute, 50 second video by Pastor David Bott during the week, and one of the distinctive characteristics of Gracie Evangelical Church is that we believe that God is in charge of every part of salvation. Absolutely. God rules. Okay? God is sovereign over salvation. The only reason anyone would turn to God is if he decreed it.

[11 : 13] And we take comfort in that great truth, knowing that if we are a believer, praise the Lord, he's done it for us. It's great. Every aspect of it.

But while we hold that truth firmly, like one track on a rail, we hold the other truth firmly, like the other rail. That while God might decree who is and isn't saved, his desire, as unquestionably expressed in the Scriptures, is that all would turn to him.

Is that all would turn and put their faith in Jesus. That everyone would come to repentance. We don't try and force those two rails together, do we? Because we don't want to crash the truth train, right?

But God's decree is what saves us. Yet his desire is expressed in his patience. And that is that he doesn't want any to perish, but everyone to come to repentance and to believe in Jesus.

Peter says, this is why the day of the Lord hasn't come yet. God is patient. Are you patient? And sometimes, I had red hair at some stage in my life, a bit like Robert used to have blonde curly hair.

[12 : 34] I used to have red hair. And I was not very patient as a child at all. And I've gotten better as I've gotten older. Sometimes I might make a loose threat to my kids.

I'll say to them, look mate, this is the third time I've asked you to get off your phone and go and clean up the kitchen. You've made a massive mess in there. And if you don't do it, I'm taking your phone off you for a month.

Because I'm losing my patience, right? And so I just throw this big month out there of my kids not having any screen time, which I will suffer for. For them, that is akin to condemnation.

I may as well be damning them to the corner of hell in their mind by taking their phone off them. You know what? I don't actually want to do it. The reason I'm saying that to them, the reason I'm saying, I'll take your phone off you, isn't because I'm some sort of nasty overlord who delights in seeing them without screens.

No, I actually just want them to delight in cleaning up after themselves. I want them to learn to have servant hearts. And so, I just, I'm patient.

[13 : 41] Before I inflict the punishment, I let a bit of time pass. But, my patience is not a thousand years. I reckon I've got about 45 minutes up my sleeve.

God is not like that. He is so patient. And his patience is driven by his desire that none should perish.

You think about God in the history of the Old Testament. He's been patient with humanity from the beginning. You may not remember this, but what did he say to the first humans would happen if they sin?

You'll die. Yet they ate the fruit. And did they die? Well, yes, they did. Because God always does what God says he will do, right?

But was he patient with them? Absolutely he was. They lived for hundreds of years, over which time he clothed them, he fed them, he gave them descendants. God's patience, it's been there from the beginning.

[14 : 50] He waited thousands of years for humanity to listen to his word through the prophets. There's a beautiful part in Romans where it says, I held out my hand all day long to you. God is so patient.

He demonstrated his patience by withholding his judgment, by sending his son to bear his judgment on our sin. Jesus is God's final act of patience towards us. How great, right?

You want to know if God is patient? After thousands of years of rebellion, he sends his son to hold out an offer of salvation to us one more time. God is patiently holding the offer of forgiveness out right now to sinners.

Like me, like you, our neighbors, our colleagues. One last offer. God's final word. This is why we're here today.

This is why I'm in Bathurst and you're in Newcastle or the greater Newcastle region. God's left us here because he's patient. He doesn't want our families, our neighbors, our classmates, our colleagues to perish.

[16:02] There's this beautiful part in Matthew's gospel. We're looking at Matthew next term in church and there's this beautiful part where Jesus looks around at the crowd and it says that he sees that they're harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

And how does he feel towards them? He has compassion on them. That's the character of God for our world. God's left us here among these harassed and helpless people and if we're part of his church, he's left us here to help these people come to a knowledge of truth about Jesus.

Is that how you understand why you are where you are? Why you're in the number of the house that you're in?

Why you're in 22 White Street? Why you're doing first year electrical engineering? Do you understand that you are where you are as a member of the people of God because God is patient and he doesn't want any to perish?

He's placed you there that you might witness to his character, that you might share the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ and that your neighbours, your colleagues, your classmates, your friends, your children, your parents, they might somehow see your good deeds or hear the gospel and turn and glorify God on the day that he comes to visit us.

[17:19] That's God's plan. You're a plant in whatever context you're in. You might have think that you moved to Newcastle for family and you might have think you moved there to study or for friends or for a relationship or for a job for the career.

Wrong. You are there because God is patient and he does not want the people of Newcastle to perish. He's decreed that some people in that city might come to know the Lord Jesus Christ and you are part of his plan.

You're an expression of the patience of God. God. That's our purpose. Do you talk to people about Jesus? How do you live out your purpose?

Maybe you might invite people to church. Maybe you try to live a godly life around them. Maybe God's blessed you with children and you think to yourself, well, God's given me these kids in order that I might reveal his character to them so I'm going to try and read the word with them.

I'm going to try and point them towards Jesus and when they get older and rebel, I'm going to pray for them. If we understand our purpose, if we understand the character of God, if we understand the heart of God, it reshapes how we act in our circumstances.

[18:43] If I'm at work to be a witness, there are things I just don't do. You know, I was an accountant. I became a Christian while I was an accountant. I know that my clients were interested in earning and saving as much money as they could.

Before I was a Christian, the way that I acted in order to make that happen for them, well, it had to change when I became a Christian because I'm trying to witness to them. When I'm getting out of my car after the commute, I've got to drive about three and a half minutes to get home from church. It's very easy for me not to want to talk to my neighbour. Jeff is the guy that I usually see. He's on the top side where the fence doesn't extend all the way to the front. And I'll see him there and sometimes I've had a bit of an intense day.

I'll just wait a few seconds in the car hoping that Jeff goes inside or then I'll get out and I'll just turn. That's not why I'm in 22 Rosemont Avenue.

I'm not there to avoid people. God actually doesn't want Jeff to perish. He's actually placed me in my house. Forget about my job at church.

[19:57] He's placed me in my house to witness to Jeff. It's possible Jeff has some Christian family member somewhere who's praying that God might put somebody in Jeff's life who could bear witness to him and here's this dog skiving off from his car after work trying to avoid Jeff.

God doesn't want Jeff to perish. Our purpose is to live out God's character in the context of our ordinary lives.

Did you realise that? That you are not put on earth to avoid people and get on with life. The reason you are still here is because God is patient.

He doesn't want anyone to perish but everyone to turn in repentance to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We're still here because that is what God is like. But God is also just.

And he will expose everything. Read from verse 10. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.

[21:06] The heavens will disappear with a roar. The elements will be destroyed by fire and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. While God cares deeply about the creatures he breathed life into he is just and as the end of verse 10 says the earth and its deeds will be exposed

before the judge.

Or as Romans 14.12 says each of us will give an account of him or herself to God. Or as Hebrews 9.27 says it's destined for man to die once and after that comes judgment.

Or as Hebrews 4.13 says no creature is hidden from his sight but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

What a terrifying prospect, right? No one will escape the justice of God. It makes sense. Like if there is a creator God and it wasn't just a trivial flick of his you know he doesn't have like he's not just easily bored and so he decided to create the world.

If there's a creator God who actually cares about his creation who created us for a purpose of course he's going to hold us to account for how we live. It just it doesn't make sense any other way. No one will escape the justice of God.

[22 : 41] He can't let our rebellion against him last forever. On the great and terrible day as Malachi calls it that he comes it seems like the old creation will be done away with and the new will come.

Whether it's a renovation or a replacement you guys can talk about that over morning tea. But the destruction of the very fabric of the old order is a sure thing.

Its constituent parts will be laid bare. That's the thrust of what this passage is saying. This is what the Bible teaches and this is what Christians believe that each of us will face the justice of God and none can escape that day.

We won't even have our clothing to hide behind. We'll be exposed and laid bare. That grace that God first showed Adam and Eve in the garden we will be exposed completely before our God.

We don't know when it's going to come. It'll be like a thief in the night. Unexpectedly we'll find ourselves before our creator on that great and terrible day.

[23 : 56] We sold our family farm recently. It's been in our family since European settlement. I have so many memories there. It's basically like my dad was in the bank when I was growing up so we moved around a whole stack but that farm was my real home.

Recently the new owners bulldozed the original farmhouse. Yeah. Well actually it's not the original but it's the one that I grew up in and around because the original one is still there but it's not fit for habitation.

But the one they bulldozed is 130 years old. There's literally no sign of it anymore. I was down visiting my mum last week. It's the first time I've been there since it's happened and yeah there's no sign of it anymore.

And it's heartbreaking to go and see something that was so huge and so important and filled with so many memories and it's gone. how much more the destruction that awaits the heavens and the earth.

You think about the beauty and the love the experiences you've had the marred image of God but the image of God nonetheless in your neighbours and friends and colleagues.

[25 : 16] One day the Lord will come like a thief and all of it will be exposed. The heavens will disappear the elements will be destroyed the earth and everything in it everything done in it will be laid bare.

This is our conviction as followers of Jesus. Because we're aware of the unpredictability and inescapability of that great and terrible day it ought to become urgent for us to engage with our friends and family our neighbours and our colleagues our world how much more important is it for us than any other thing knowing that it could come at any time.

people know in order to apply this stuff you actually have to believe it so the first question I have to ask is do you believe this do you accept this as true do you actually believe a day like this is coming if you do it's big you probably heard this preacher's illustration before if you knew a long-range missile was coming towards your neighbour and you didn't warn them or tell them to escape what sort of a neighbour would you be right it makes sense that if we know the great and terrible day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night that we would prioritise evangelism God hasn't left us here to perfect the art of the Lord's supper God hasn't left us here to nail AGMs

God hasn't left us here to finally sort out which version of be thou my vision we're going to sing it's the Lord's prayer of songs isn't it we've all got our own historical version of it God's left us here because he's patient and he doesn't want any to perish now none of the things we work on at church like songs and the Lord's supper and AGMs are evil but they're not why God's left us here

God hasn't left us here so we can cloister ourselves away on church camps or so we can send our kids to Christian schools so they can make Christian friends and become Christian school teachers one day and play soccer on the weekend with their friends from church it's kind of funny but it's often how the Christian life is lived out God hasn't left us here for that purpose I'm not saying Christian schools and Christian soccer teams and you know Christian community is evil please don't hear me saying that but this is not heaven is it we're not here as an expression of heaven on earth we're here because God's patient not wanting anyone to perish God's left us here to point the people in this world the people in our ordinary lives to his patient and gracious offer of life in Jesus before the heavens and the earth are laid bare how do you go at positioning yourself for evangelism have you positioned yourself and your family to have the opportunity to do it in the way you've set up your life think about it if you're at the very early stage of having kids or you haven't had them yet ask yourself how are we going to set this thing up so our family can witness to the Lord Jesus Christ it might be the case that you decide to send them to a [29 : 15] Christian school or to homeschool them to give them a solid anchor in the faith so that when they go out into the world they can live for Jesus but make sure you're very clear with them that that's what you're doing you're not hiding them you're not cloistering them from the evil world no you're actually setting them up to reach this world it might be that you decide to send them to a state school we did that with our kids you're throwing them to the wolves in a sense if you do that make sure you read the Bible with them and ask them how they're going at sharing the gospel with their friends because we are here for that purpose if you're part of a team a sporting team with all your Christian mates from church invite somebody who's not from church into the team or go and join a team with a couple of your Christian mates that isn't from church God hasn't left us here just to cloister ourselves away he's patient this is so offensive to Christians when I say this I love that I can do it at your church camp and not my own but it's really important for us to understand that we're not here to perfect ourselves and ignore the world around us we're here for the

Paul says to the Thessalonians I lived among you for your sake that's why we're here I think about this and I get a little bit emotional because I'm a bit tired but also like my whole family is non-Christian like how would I have come to Christ if I didn't have a Christian mate at school or if I didn't have some minister who was willing to play in a secular AUSTAG team and invite me along like if we're not doing that in our life how will people ever know you know I've spoken to a few people who've gone to Zambia to share the gospel that's great right there's so many people that have gone to Zambia in this church it's amazing I'm not even asking you to go to Zambia like go to I don't even know the name of a single suburb in Newcastle but just go there and point people to Christ how do you go with talking to people about

Jesus I find it hard I've become involved in the local athletics club because all of my life is Christian and our kids are now like at the age where they don't want us to be part of their school community anymore they're all in high school so things have changed so the only way I can meet non-Christians is through sport for me and I find it really hard to work out how to shape my conversation towards Christ and I've been there for 12 months now in Bathurst and it's only really this week I feel like I've started to make any kind of progress with that but we've got to be doing it I think sometimes I'm so concerned that people won't like me if I talk to them about Jesus but consider glory right they'll love me they'll be like thanks so much for saying that to me how do you go at prioritising evangelism do you know what God is like do you know his desire for the world and does that character reflect in the way you use your life why don't we pray and ask

God for help with that because this is actually really hard for us so let's pray our heavenly father we thank you so much for your character we know that you're in charge of everything that you alone are sovereign and you rule everything but we delight to read that your desire is that none should perish we delight in hearing about the compassion of the Lord Jesus on the crowds heavenly father we delight in you offering your son to forgive us for our sin lord help us to understand that the reason that you've left us here and you haven't just taken us back to glory is because you don't want anyone in this world to perish father give us your heart for this world that you've set us in give us your heart for our neighbours give us your heart for our family heavenly father please use us to win people for your kingdom that on that great and terrible day they might see your glory having turned to you we would love it if you used us that way and we pray for your strength in it by your spirit through your word amen