

Living Now in Light of Then

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[0 : 00] Please take a seat. There's an outline in the bulletin that you might find helpful and it would be great if you could have that insert handy.

I'll be following along on that Holman translation. Well a few years ago I was a leader at a youth group and the youth group decided to go ice skating.

I don't know if you've ever been ice skating before but I'm not particularly good at it. And in fact it was only two minutes before I ended up on my backside on the ice. But for the record it wasn't completely my fault.

You see there was this other girl coming towards me who couldn't skate very well either. And as she was coming towards me she was screaming move move. And I screamed back I can't I can't. Although I didn't want to hit her so I did try and move. And as soon as I tried to move my feet went up and my backside went down bang and hit the ice. And so for the rest of the night I was skating around with a big wet patch on my backside.

[1 : 06] But here's the thing. I knew that was going to happen. I knew the moment people said oh let's go ice skating that I would wet my pants. From the ice I mean.

And so certain of my future was I that I prepared for it by packing an extra pair of dry pants so that I could wear them home. And so by backing those pants those dry ones I was preparing for my future.

I was living in the present in light of the future. In other words I was living now in light of then. And we often do this in all sorts of ways in life don't we?

If it looks like rain you might pack an umbrella. Although I've discovered being in Melbourne it's hard to know if it's going to rain or not. Some friends of ours are preparing to have their first child.

And so they're decorating the baby's room and buying a cot and the like. They're preparing now for their future. And this is what Peter wants his readers to do when it comes to the future event of Christ's return.

[2 : 05] He wants his readers to live now in light of Christ's return then. Especially because there have been false teachers around who are denying that return.

And we heard about those false teachers last week. And he again refers to them in the opening verses this week. Which brings us to point one the scoffers and verse one. Peter writes.

Dear friends this is now my second letter I've written you. In both letters I want to develop a genuine understanding with a reminder. So that you can remember the words previously spoken by the holy prophets.

And the commandment of our Lord and Saviour given through your apostles. First be aware of this. Scoffers will come in the last days to scoff. Living according to their own desires.

Saying where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep. All things continue as they have been since the beginning of creation. Peter says here in verse 3 that scoffers will come and deny Christ's return or his second coming.

[3 : 11] You see when Jesus returns two big things will happen. At first Jesus will fully establish his kingdom on earth. It will literally be heaven on earth. But before that happens he will secondly bring about a judgment day when he returns.

It's what the Old Testament prophets called the day of the Lord. Doug mentioned it in his prayers and we heard about it in our first reading. In fact we just said it in the creed that Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead.

But as we're seeing these scoffers and false teachers deny this return. Why? Well because they want to live according to their own desires rather than God's. Verse 3. And if there is no return there is no judgment day.

And if there is no judgment day then there's no having to give an account of how we have lived. Which means they can live according to their own desires. But Peter has written both his letters 1 and 2 Peter to remind his readers to follow God's desires.

To be godly unlike these false teachers and scoffers who are being ungodly. He says in verses 1 and 2 that he's written to remind them of the words spoken by the prophets and the commandment given by Jesus through the apostles.

[4 : 21] Now what commandment do you think Peter is thinking of here? If we were just looking at the letter of 2 Peter you might think it has a commandment about Jesus returning or something like that.

But he said he's written both his letters to remind them of this commandment. And I think the big thing in common in 1 and 2 Peter is the commandment to be godly.

In 1 Peter it's to be godly despite the suffering from outside the church. And in 2 Peter it's to be godly despite the false teachers inside the church. In fact in 1 Peter he says be holy because God is holy.

Which echoes Jesus' words on the Sermon on the Mount. Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. And here in 2 Peter he's already said God has given us everything we need for life and godliness.

We sang it at the beginning of the service. And so for this reason add to your faith godliness and so on. In other words grow in godliness. And so I think the word commandment here is a general command to try and be godly.

[5 : 22] To be holy. To be perfect like God. And this is exactly what these false teachers have turned their back on in chapter 2 verse 21. Instead they have followed their own desires and denied any return of Christ where they will have to give an account.

In fact they say nothing has changed. Everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation. And so they laugh and scoff at such an idea. But it's no different today. I remember teaching CRE in a primary school in Carlton.

And I was talking to the children about Jesus. And the teacher was sitting at the back of the classroom just marking some of the students' work. Now as I taught the children about Jesus I mentioned Jesus' return.

And as I did so I heard this faint kind of snort in the background. You know those those kind of things as if to say yeah right. Now I can't be sure if this snort was directed at what I said or at some hilarious piece of work the children that the teacher was marking.

But I strongly suspect the snort was directed at what I said that Jesus will return one day. You see people scoff and snort at this idea like the false teachers did back in Peter's day.

[6 : 32] But these false teachers and scoffers deliberately forget the power of God's word. See verse 5. They willfully ignore this. Long ago the heavens and earth were brought about from water and through water by the word of God.

Through these waters the world of that time perished when it was flooded. You know the flood of Noah. But by the same word the present heavens and earth are stored up for fire.

Being kept until the day of judgment and the destruction of ungodly men. Now do you see what Peter is saying here? He's saying first in verse 5 he's saying that God's word created the world. Then in verse 6 it also judged the world. There was a judgment day through the flood. And if God's word has done that all in the past then verse 7 it will do it in the future.

God's word can bring about another judgment day. God's word can bring about a new created world or renewed world. See what Peter's saying? They've forgotten the power of God's word which created the world and judged the world in the past.

[7 : 38] And therefore can certainly do it again in the future when Jesus returns. Peter says the scoffers have deliberately forgotten this. Willfully ignored this he says.

Presumably because they wish to live according to their own desires. And so it's easier to forget the power of God's word. Which will bring about this day of judgment. Where they'll have to give an account.

It's easier just not to think about it. Instead forget about it. Forget it will happen. Even though it's pretty silly logic. Forgetting about something doesn't make it not happen.

One of the latest sports out there is a sport called wing gliding. It's different to hang gliding. Instead of hang gliding you have a special suit that has built in wings. And there's a slide.

Here we are. That's a picture of one. Now when it first started this new sport. There was a man who went out and he actually as he was gliding hit some rocks on his way down.

[8 : 34] And was severely injured. And I remember him being interviewed and he was asked. Why do you do this when you know the dangers? And his response was.

You just don't think about it. Yeah I should have probably checked the wind speed more carefully. But I was just keen to get out there. And so I didn't think about it. Now what would you call that kind of person?

Don't tell me. It's a rhetorical question. Instead of checking the facts more carefully. He just didn't think about it. He willfully forgot to check the facts. Because he wanted to get out there. He wanted to follow his own desires.

Just like these scoffers did. They willfully forget the power of God's word. And so just don't think about it. Rather follow their own desires instead. And can I say if you're a person here this morning. Who thinks this business of Jesus' return. Is a little too far fetched to be true. Can I encourage you. Don't be like this wing glider guy. Or these scoffers who just don't think about it.

[9 : 33] But check out the facts for yourself. And see if they are true. Admittedly though. Jesus' return is taking some time. There is a delay.

Which brings us to point two. And Peter says. Though there are two good reasons for this delay. The first one is in verse 8. Verse 8. He says.

Dear friends. Don't let this one thing escape you. With the Lord. One day is like a thousand years. And a thousand years. Are like one day.

Peter says here. The reason it seems like it's taking so long. Is because we view time differently. To the way God does. Now we need to be careful. Peter is not saying that one day in God's time. Equals a thousand years. In human time. A kind of like one human year equals seven dog years. You know how that kind of works. He's not saying that. It says like a thousand years.

[10 : 30] Not equals a thousand years. Rather what Peter is saying is. We view time differently. To the way God does. We think of time in lifespans. God thinks of time in terms of eternity.

And so it may seem like a long time to us. But it's not to God. And we've had this experience with children or grandchildren. Have you ever. You know. If you've got kids. You know what this is. If you've ever babysat grandchildren. You know what this is like.

You know. If they ask you for some food. And you say. Just wait five minutes. How long do they usually last? Five seconds. And after ten seconds. They say. It takes so long. We're coming to food now.

They view time differently. Don't they? It's the same with us. It may seem like a long time to us. Who are sometimes impatient. And think in terms of lifespans.

But it's not a long time for God. Who thinks in terms of eternity. And so the first reason. As I said. For why it seems like. Jesus is taking so long to return. Is that we view time differently.

[11 : 25] And from God's perspective. He's not taking that long at all. But having said that. He is taking some time. Why? Verse nine. The Lord does not delay.

His promise. As some. Understand delay. But is patient with you. Not wanting any to perish. But all. To come. To repentance. You see.

The delay. The delay is not because. Jesus is stuck in some heavenly traffic jam. When he's returned back to earth. Rather. It's God. Being patient. Before he sends his son. See.

We think. We're the only ones. Who are waiting. For Jesus to return. But God. Is patiently waiting too. He's waiting for more people. To turn to him. God wants to give people.

More time. To repent. Rather than. Perish. For God desires. Not the death of a sinner. But that all should turn. To him. And be saved.

[12 : 18] He says something. Peter says something similar. In verse 15. He says. Also regard the patience of our Lord. This waiting time. As an opportunity for. Salvation.

See what he's saying. God's delay is really. An opportunity for more people. To have salvation. And I wonder if this is how we think. Of our time here on earth.

See when we think about the time we have. In life. We often think about the things we'd like to see. The things we'd like to do. The things we'd like to accomplish. But God has given us this time.

In order to see. Others. Saved. To see what we can do. To see others saved. Whether even if it's just by praying for them. Now please don't mishear me at this point.

God has given us many good things in life to enjoy. And we're told in the Bible. To enjoy them with thanksgiving. But Jesus doesn't say to his disciples. Go and be comfortable in life.

[13:12] He says. Go and make disciples of all nations. This is what the time we have on earth is primarily for. To see.

To do what we can. To see others saved. I was celebrating New Year's Eve a few years ago. With a friend of mine called Paul. And at one point Paul. Took himself off. For a little while.

And then he came back. And when he came back. I said. Are you okay? Is there something wrong? He said. No, no. I was just praying. And he explained how every year. On New Year's Eve. On New Year's Day. He takes some time out to pray to God.

And he always prays the same thing. He starts off by thanking God. For his patience in the year past. That for the opportunities that he has had to share the gospel. For the opportunities he has to serve his family.

As well as his church family. And pray for his non-Christian friends. And then secondly. He prays for the year ahead. That he might make the most of God's patience.

[14:08] This year coming. You see for Paul. He understands what Peter is saying here. Doesn't he? He sees his time here on earth. As God sees it.

As God being patient. Waiting for people. Giving them opportunities. To repent. Rather than perish. And I wonder if that's how we view our time here. On earth.

But God won't delay forever. God will send his son Jesus to return to earth. It's a certainty. See verse 10. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.

On that day the heavens will pass away with a loud noise. The elements will burn and be dissolved. And the earth and the works on it will be disclosed. Notice how many times Peter uses the word will. In just that one verse. Do you get his point? Jesus will return. It's a certainty. Judgment day will happen. It's a certainty. And on that day Peter says the heavens will pass away.

[15:07] The elements will burn and be dissolved. Now this language of passing away. Burning and dissolving. I don't think it's talking about the earth fully being destroyed. The Bible speaks about the earth being destroyed in the time of the flood.

But the whole world wasn't completely destroyed. It was judged. Rather I think Peter's main point here is the end of verse 10. Where everything or rather everyone's works will be disclosed or made known.

He's saying on this day all the facades of the world will be cleared away. And everyone's deeds will be exposed. On that day everyone will have to give a true account for everything they have done while in the body.

Whether good or bad. Of course we don't know when this day will come. As Jesus said no one knows when he will return. Although people have tried to guess haven't they?

In fact according to some Jesus was supposed to return earlier this year. And here's a slide outside Times Square. May 21st Jesus returns at judgment day. In fact someone told me after church last week there was another man in Sydney who claims to be Jesus.

[16:13] And there's another one in Queensland who says that the end of the world will come at the end of 2012. You know one in Sydney, one in Queensland, none in Melbourne. Yes. Perhaps we're all sane here.

But I did have to laugh when I read an article about a man in the US called Harold Camping. Some of you might have heard of him. The article says this. Harold Camping lets out a hearty chuckle when he considers the people who believe the world will end in 2012.

He says that date has not one stitch of biblical authority, Camping says. It's like a fairy tale. The real date for the end times is October 21, 2011. I did scratch my head at that point there.

You see Peter echoes Jesus' words, doesn't he? That Jesus will come like a thief. Not that Jesus is a bad guy. But as thieves come at an unexpected time, so too will Jesus come at an unexpected time.

We don't know when he will return. But we do know we need to be ready. Point three. Now, the first thing we need to do to be ready is to repent and believe.

[17:23] That's why God has given us this time. God has given us time to repent and believe in Jesus. As we heard in that first reading, there's two camps on that final day.

It's quite graphic language from Zephaniah chapter one, wasn't it? Blood, dung, the like. Horrible. Horrific. Yet, for those who are God's people, Zephaniah chapter three, there was rejoicing.

Gladness. So, the first thing that we need to do is ask ourselves, have we repented and believed in Jesus? It's an important question, given we have a number of visitors here each week.

And to repent simply means to change our minds from thinking we'll ignore Jesus and live our own way, to believing in Jesus and living his way. And the moment we repent and believe in Jesus, God, the great umpire, says, you're safe.

Our sins are forgiven. And we have peace with God now and safety on that day. And so, can I ask again, have you repented and believed in Jesus? That's the first thing you need to do to get ready for his return.

[18 : 32] But what about for us who already have believed in Jesus? How are we to prepare ourselves? Well, verse 11, 2 Peter chapter three, verse 11. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, it is clear what sort of people you should be.

What sort of people should we be? Well, people who live in holy conduct and godliness, as you wait for and earnestly desire the coming of the day of God. The heavens will be on fire and be dissolved because of it.

And the elements will melt with the heat. But based on his promise, we wait for the new heavens or skies and a new earth where righteousness will dwell. Therefore, dear friends, while you wait for these things, make every effort to be found at peace with him without spot or blemish.

He says. How we who are already Christians prepare for that day, it's pretty clear, isn't it? We need to be godly and holy.

Verse 14 says we're to make every effort to be found without spot or blemish. The words make every effort remind us of chapter one, where we're to make every effort to grow in godliness.

[19 : 39] The words spot and blemish actually remind us of the false teachers last week whom Peter called spots and blemishes. We're to be the opposite to them who lived according to their own desires.

Instead, we're to be without spot and blemish who follow God's desires, who think his thoughts after him. In fact, we're to live holy and godly lives now because that's what our new home is going to be like then.

Do you see the logic of verse 13 and 14? Let me read it to you again. He says. But based on his promise, we wait for the new heavens and new earth where righteousness will dwell. Therefore, since we're looking forward to this, dear friends, while you wait for these things, make every effort to be found at peace with him without spot or blemish.

Peter is saying because we're going to live in a home of righteousness, because we're going to live in a home where we live rightly, holy, godly all the time, then start living like that now, he says.

When children are asked what they want to be when they grow up, one of the top five answers is an astronaut. Now, it takes an incredible amount of training to become an astronaut and what they do to prepare for their time in outer space, they start practising at NASA or wherever it is, they start practising anti-gravity chambers.

[20 : 56] So they get used to living without gravity now, so that when they go to outer space, they'll be fine then. They start practising now, eating space food, you know, the space sticks, I think you buy them from Woolies even, or Safeway, you know, tubes, things like that.

They start living now as they're going to live then in outer space. See, Peter is saying the same thing for us. We're to start practising now how we'll live then. When Jesus returns, as I said, it will be heaven on earth.

It will be better than we can imagine. There will be great joy and rejoicing, as we heard in Zephaniah chapter 3. But there we will always live to honour our God who gave so much for us. And so we just start practising for that day by living now lives that honour our God who gave so much for us. We live now as we'll live then.

Now, I know many of you are doing just that, honouring God with the way you treat people, by the way you forgive others, by the way you look to play your part in sharing the gospel, even if it's just praying for others.

[21 : 58] Or by the way you seek to teach your children or grandchildren about Jesus, by reading the Bible with them or whatever it is. By the way you visit one another and encourage one another.

So well done and keep going as you look forward to our new home. Keep seeking to live holy and godly lives, lives that, for example, love one another deeply, as God has loved us.

I mentioned a couple of weeks ago a guy from one of my old churches who struggled with autism. I will call him Steve. He was the one who used to take some supper at Bible study, then lick it and put it back.

He'd invade your personal space and dominate the conversation, things like that. And I remember watching at the end of church, Steve, as he'd head towards some people and those people saw him coming and they would walk the other way, except for one guy called Rob.

Rob would actually walk over to Steve and ask him how he was going. Rob knew that he wouldn't have a very coherent conversation with Steve. In fact, Rob knew that he'd have to exchange Star Wars lines because Steve knew the whole Star Wars trilogy off by heart.

[23 : 07] But Rob did it anyway. Talked with him, exchanged Star Wars lines, even laughed with him. In other words, Rob showed real love for him. Why? Two reasons.

First, because Jesus loved Steve enough to die for him and make him a brother in Christ. And if Jesus loved Steve that much, then so too would Rob. But second, if Jesus had made Steve a brother in Christ, then Rob would love him as such in the next life.

So he thought he'd start practicing loving him as such now in this life. You see, this is part of what it means to live a life without spot or blemish, a holy and godly life like God who loves us deeply.

And so we're to keep seeking to live lives like that now for that's how we'll live then when Jesus returns. And we're to keep seeking to use the time we have to see what we can do to see others saved, to see the time we have on this life the way God sees it, as him being patient with the world, waiting for more people to repent rather than perish.

This is what Peter wants for his readers and for us, to live now in light of Jesus' return then. And so remember to grow in godliness by grace.

[24 : 21] That was chapter one. For God has graciously given us everything we need for life and godliness. And chapter two, beware of the false teachers by being on guard, if you remember our French lesson from last week.

And then chapter three, so that we might continue to live now in light of Christ's return then, where we'll enjoy a life in perfection forever. So let me close this series in 2 Peter, the way Peter closes his own letter from verse 15.

He says, Therefore, dear friends, the two summary verses, Since you know all this in advance, be on your guard, so that you are not led away by the error of lawless people and fall from your own stability, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your promises to us in the Bible.

That if we turn to you and believe in Jesus, we will be saved. Father, we thank you that you enable us to do this by your Spirit. And Father, we pray for us here this morning, who know Jesus, we ask, Father, that you might help us to live lives now, as we'll live then, when the Lord Jesus returns.

[26 : 05] We ask it for his sake. Amen.