

Living now in the Light of then

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[0 : 00] Some years ago, when I was a youth group leader, we decided to take the youth group out ice skating. Not sure if you've ever been ice skating before, but I'm not particularly good at it.

It was about two minutes before I was on my backside on the ice. But for the record, it wasn't completely my fault. Can you hear me okay? Yep, okay.

You see, I just gingerly pushed off from the barrier, all nervous, kind of feet going like this. Sometimes when another girl who couldn't skate either was coming towards me in the opposite direction.

And then she yelled out, move, move. And I yelled out, I can't, I can't. And then I tried to at the last minute, feet up, backside down. And I spent the rest of the night skating around with this big wet patch on my backside.

But here's the thing. I knew that would happen. I knew the moment people said, oh, let's go ice skating, that I would wet my pants from the ice, you see.

[1 : 00] And so certain of my future was I that I prepared for it by packing a spare pair of pants that I could wear home. And here's the point. By packing my pants, I was preparing for my future.

I was living in the present in light of the future. I was living now in light of later. And we do this in all sorts of ways, don't we? You know, if you're a girl going to a wedding or a 21st, you might prepare by getting your hair done.

If you're a guy and you're going to meet someone you like, you might actually have a shower and do your hair. Although these guys, guys seem to take more time doing their hair than girls, actually. Anyway, that's another story.

Or if you're going on a long trip, you might prepare by getting a full tank of fuel and checking the tire pressure and so on. You get the idea, don't you? We often live in the present in light of the future. And this is essentially what Peter wants his readers and us to do tonight when it comes to Christ's return. He wants us to live now in light of Christ's return later. How are we to live in light of this return later?

[2 : 07] Well, again, it's by growing in godliness. He's a one trick pony, Peter. Growing in godliness. So have a look at point one, verse one in your Bibles.

He says, Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

Now, here Peter says he's written both his letters. That's one and two Peter in the Bible as reminders to do what? Well, to stir their present thinking that they might remember past teaching. The teaching of the prophets and the command of Jesus himself. But what teaching does he want them to remember? At first glance, you might think it's the teaching about the day of the Lord, like we heard in the first reading.

But that's actually not what he wrote one Peter about. And even here in 2 Peter, it's certainly a big topic, but it's not the big application. The big application is growing in godliness.

[3 : 20] And that's what he wants them to remember. That's what the prophets said and Jesus taught. For example, on the next slide, we read in Leviticus, God says, be holy because I am holy.

The prophets also condemned Israel for not being holy. What's more, Jesus said on the Sermon on the Mount, be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly father is perfect. And Peter said in 1 Peter, just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.

And we see the same thing in 2 Peter, don't we? Chapter 1, verse 3, God has given us everything we need to live the godly life. And even today, if you look down in verse 11, he says, what kind of people ought you to be?

Well, you ought to live holy and godly lives. You see, this is why he's written both his letters. And this is the past teaching and the command of Christ he wants us to remember.

Why? Well, again, so that we won't follow the evil desires of the scoffers and false teachers, and so be carried away. Remember last week, where the false teachers would appeal to people's sinful nature, so like the prosperity gospel, which appeals to people's desires to be rich in this life, or the world that scoffs at the idea of a judgment day, and so teaches us to just live for ourselves, which can be appealing sometimes, can't it?

[4 : 51] I mean, the missing church to go out with friends or study or relax is sometimes appealing. So Peter wants us to grow in godliness so that we'll resist this teaching that appeals to our sinful desires.

And because false teachers and scoffers will keep coming. Verse 3, He says, Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, Where is this coming? He promised. Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.

Christ came to earth the first time to die for us, to pay for our sins at the cross, so that we who believe might be forgiven.

And he will come a second time to judge and put our world right. That's the day of the Lord, our first reading referred to. But people look at our world and see it continue as it always has, and so they scoff at this idea that Jesus will ever return.

[6 : 03] I remember teaching CRE at a local primary school before our state government made it really hard to have it. And I was talking to the children about Jesus, and the teacher was sitting over my left shoulder at the back, marking some of the kids' creative writing pieces.

And I was talking to the kids about Jesus, and I mentioned one day that he would return. And as I did so, I heard this faint kind of snort in the background, this kind of sound, as if to say, yeah, right. Now, I can't be sure that the snort was directed at what I said. I mean, the teacher may have been marking some piece of hilarious, creative writing from the kids and just laughed, snorted.

But I strongly suspect it was at what I said. There are scoffers today, just as they were in Peter's day. They're like the false teachers. Of course, the real reason they scoff is so they don't have to worry about giving an account.

For when Jesus returns, those who believe are already declared right with God. So we, chapter 1, verse 11, will be welcomed into his eternal kingdom. We'll receive an inheritance in the new creation.

[7 : 17] We'll frolic like well-fed calves, as Malachi mentioned. And if you don't like the word frolic, it just means rejoice. But those who reject will receive an eternity of judgment for our sins or their sins, which is not a nice thought, is it?

And so rather than think about that or change from following their own evil desires, then it's just easier for these scoffers to deny it will ever happen. That way they don't have to worry about ever giving an account.

But to deny this is to deliberately forget the power of God's word. Verse 5, Do you see what Peter is saying?

In verse 5, He's saying that God's word created the world. Genesis chapter 1, remember, In the beginning, God said, Let there be, and so on.

What's more, God's word is not just powerful to create the world, it's also powerful to judge the world. So verse 6, it was also put under deluge. In other words, it was flooded. That's Noah, the story of Noah.

[8 : 50] And so, verse 7, By this same powerful word, there will be another judgment and recreation at Christ's return.

In other words, Peter is saying, If God's word was able to do all that in the past, then it's certainly powerful enough to do it again in the future. Peter says, These scoffers have deliberately ignored this fact.

About a month ago, President Trump was having a phone interview with Fox News, and as the headline says on the next slide, Trump ignores hints to hang up the phone.

And it's actually got a YouTube clip of the anchor trying to say, Oh, Mr. President, we're running out of time. Mr. President, and she just kind of gives up in the end. He deliberately ignores the poor lady.

But people do that with Christianity. I remember speaking to someone just outside here in the car park. One of our church members had a flat battery, so they called the RACV.

[9 : 49] And when the guy came, the church member and I were there, and we got chatting to this RACV guy. And given we're on a church grounds, the church member took the opportunity to ask this guy what he thought about church and life and death and so on.

And his response, Oh, I try not to think about those things. He'd rather deliberately ignore the realities of life that we will all die, one day die, and the evidence that there is for Jesus.

If you're here tonight and all this talk of Jesus returning seems a little far-fetched, then don't deliberately ignore the facts that we do have, the evidence we have.

For there is evidence for Christ, even his resurrection. And if he can rise from the dead, then he can return from heaven. Or if you have friends who deliberately ignore the realities of life or the evidence of Christianity, then often what you have to do is pray and wait.

Wait for something to go wrong in their lives, for only then it's often they're willing to listen, to think about the help Christ offers us in this world and the hope of life after death he offers us in the world to come.

[11 : 10] But either way, Christ's return is certain. Point to verse 8. He says, But do not forget this one thing, dear friends.

With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promises. Some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Before Peter gets to the certainty of Christ's return in verse 10, he tells us two reasons why there seems to be a delay. Firstly, he says that God views time differently to the way we do.

In verse 8, when he says that a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day, he's not saying, you know, one day in God's time is equal to a thousand years of human time.

You know, kind of like one human year equals seven dog years, that kind of thing. He's not saying that. He's simply saying that we view time differently. We think in terms of lifespans.

[12 : 18] God thinks in terms of eternity. And so while it may seem like a long time to us, it's not to God. It's kind of like when you were little and you went on a car trip somewhere.

If you were traveling somewhere for 30 minutes, it would seem like forever. And the destination seems so far away. But now that you've grown up, that same trip doesn't seem all that long anymore.

It's the same with us and God. Only we're the kids. He's the adult. And we can often be impatient, but God is being incredibly patient.

Verse 9, giving more time for people to repent. Jesus is not stuck in some heavenly traffic jam on his way back to earth.

Rather, God is being patient. Have a look at verse 15. Just skip ahead to verse 15 for a moment. He says, bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation.

[13 : 18] See, God is being patient, giving more opportunities for people to receive salvation. You see, we're not the only ones who are being patient. God is being extremely patient with our sinful world, giving more time for people to be saved.

For as he says in Ezekiel on the next slide, he says in chapter 33, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live, be saved.

And again, if you're here tonight and you're checking out Christianity, then realize that this time we have is the opportunity to turn to Christ, to be saved.

Because God's patience will not last forever. Only while stocks last, so to speak. Because then Christ will return.

Verse 10. And as I read verse 10, notice the repetition of the word will. It says, But that day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar.

[14 : 27] The elements will be destroyed by fire. And the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Notice the repetition? Four times in one verse.

So do you get Peter's point? And Jesus will return. It's certain. And with it, the heavens will disappear. The elements will be destroyed by fire.

That is, this is a picture of judgment. Where it says in verse 10, everything in it will be laid bare. It's more literally on the next slide that the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

It's this idea of everyone's sins will be seen for what they are. Again, it's an idea of judgment. We'll all have to give an account that day when Christ's return.

And those who already believe now will have been declared innocent, free to go, forgiven. But Peter's point here is that his return is certain.

[15:37] We just don't know when. Of course, it doesn't stop people trying to still work out when, does it? I don't know if you realise this or not, but the guy on the next slide, Ronald Whalen, I think it is, has predicted that Christ will return.

Do you know when? Today. It's a bit small at the top, but he says, the date before us now for which we are preparing is June 9th of 2019.

Therefore, we have been warning people accordingly so that we and others can be prepared. And so, he has just six and a half hours to be proved right. Of course, we're told no one knows when, and not even Jesus knows when, only the Father, but it is certain.

But Whalen is right to say we are to live accordingly. We are to be prepared. We are to live now in light of later. Point three in your outline, verse 11 in your Bibles.

He says, since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.

[16:53] That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth or new heavens, skies, and a new earth where righteousness dwells.

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort as they do other scriptures to their own destruction.

Peter says, in light of Christ's return, we're to live holy and godly lives. That's his big application. And he notes that Paul writes the same sorts of things in his letters, like in 1 Thessalonians and Philippians and so on.

And it's interesting, though, that Peter, in verse 16, he acknowledges that what Paul writes is sometimes hard to understand, not impossible, but hard to understand, which is kind of reassuring for us.

[18:11] But ignorant and unstable people will distort his letters just as they distort other scriptures. And we see it today with false teachers, don't we?

But by saying that, he's actually putting Paul's writing on the same level as other scripture. Did you realize that? Which means we can't do what I often hear people doing, and that is saying, oh, that's what Paul said, but I follow what Jesus says.

You know, that's the apostle Paul. I don't, you know, he doesn't like women. He doesn't do this. He's a bit, you know, over the top, a bit zealous, a bit fanatical. Well, that's not true at all to start with, but he's on the same level as other scripture.

But Peter's point here is that we're to live holy and godly lives now in the light of Christ's return later. And that includes verse 14, making every effort to be found without spot or blemish.

And those words, make every effort, remind us of chapter 1, verse 5, don't they? We're to make every effort to grow. And the word spotless and blameless or literally without blemish remind us of the false teachers who in chapter 2 were spots and blemishes at your suppers and banquets.

[19:31] You see, Peter wants us to live in light of Christ's return by firstly living godly rather than worldly lives. Why? Well, we've already seen so that we won't be carried away by the false teaching that appeals to our sinful nature.

But it's also because this world will pass away and we belong to the world to come that's on its way. The new heavens and earth where righteousness, godliness, holiness dwells.

So don't live worldly lives but godly lives. Lives that reflect our true home. I remember when my wife's brother got engaged to a Swedish girl and they decided that they would end up living in Sweden which is what they've done.

and I remember before he moved over for the wedding and his new life, new home and started living there, he started acting as Swedish as he could here.

You know, he started talking to his parents in Swedish, he started going to saunas at the gym because all Swedes have saunas in their holiday homes and so on. He started drinking really strong coffee because lots of Swedes drink really strong coffee and he started even eating Swedish cake with green icing.

[20 : 48] It's this cake on the next slide. He even wanted one for his birthday. It tasted terrible and I had great fun paying him out when I realised that the name of this cake is called Princess Cake.

But the point is he started living now as he would live later in his new home. That's what Peter is getting at here. Peter is saying since this world will pass away since our true home is where righteousness dwells then don't live worldly lives live godly and righteous lives.

Live now as we'll be living later. And these godly lives include speeding the day. Verse 12 again he said we're to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day and speed its coming.

It's literally as we're looking and speeding the coming of that day. But how do you speed the day of God? Well two ways.

Firstly by praying for it and we do every time we say the Lord's Prayer actually. You know the Lord's Prayer our Father in heaven hallowed be your name your kingdom come.

[22 : 04] Yeah we pray for it that's how we speed the day. Secondly we can speed the day by sharing the gospel. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 24 I think on the next slide he said and this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come.

Once God has saved all his chosen people then Christ will return. and so we can speed that day by doing what we can to share this gospel. Of course we're also to share it because we want to see people saved.

After all that is why God delays for he desires not the death of a sinner but that they should turn and live. And so we're having an invite a friend series at 5pm in two weeks as we heard earlier tonight Essentials for Living Well and so why not start thinking about who you could invite and start praying that they might accept.

In fact why not go out to one of their things you know if they invite you out for drinks and so on so that when you invite them to one of your things they might be guilty and go yeah I better go whatever it takes no not whatever it takes but we're to do what we can in a godly way to see people saved for god's patience means salvation is still available but as I said it won't last forever well we're to firstly live holy and godly lives now in light of that day later which includes secondly speeding its coming and thirdly looking to its arriving verse 12 mentions both looking and speeding and in verse 13 it picks up the looking again looking forward to the new heavens and new earth our true home because when you look forward to something in the future it helps us to persevere in the present doesn't it

I like having a holiday plan for after exams looking forward to that holiday helps you persevere in studying even if it means missing out on parties or whatever because of your studying because you know that what's coming will make it all worthwhile well looking forward to the new heavens and earth helps us persevere in following Christ even through suffering and even if it sometimes means missing out on things for following Christ because we know what's coming will make it all worth it indeed it will more than make up for whatever we suffer or miss out on for following Christ it's like a church sign I showed the morning church a little while ago on the next slide it says come work for the Lord the hours are long the pay is low but the retirement benefits are out of this world we're to live now in light of later living holy and godly lives speeding its coming and looking to its arriving which will make following

[25 : 18] Christ more than worthwhile and so Peter concludes his letter by summarizing those themes that we've seen of guarding and growing verse 17 and I'll finish with this therefore dear friends here at 5pm church since you have been forewarned be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to him be glory both now and forever and the church said Amen all you go to us to his great and you thank cont that goodower and great and we S-