

# What Sort Of Person Ought You Be

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[ 0 : 00 ] text, which I like and which I will use in a sense to hang this on. And since I'd like you to get hold of it, it's in the second part of verse 11 of 2 Peter chapter 3.

What sort of persons ought you to be? Well, the text really goes on, but I'm just going to put a question mark at the end of that.

What sort of persons ought you to be? And what will make you into that kind of person? I talked to somebody yesterday about the South Sea Islands and how certain tribes in the South Sea Islands are far superior to other tribes in the South Sea Islands.

And I said, what's the difference? He said, oh, it's all genetics. So I was happy that he had come to such a full and satisfying answer for him.

I don't think it's always as easy as that. And I'd like just to sort of let this question settle in on your minds and hearts.

[ 1 : 15 ] What sort of persons ought you to be? As I began, I prayed that my words and the meditations of all our hearts would be acceptable in God's sight.

And I wonder if you can take a moment to say where the meditations of your heart are right now. I mean, what are you thinking about?

Where are you going? What are you thinking? What are the concerns? What are you and the ■■■■■■ educations? What are you thinking? Youföowane j lemon-bandy.

What is the most part? What is the most part of your heart. What is the most part of your heart, of passion? to pray, to share in prayers as Harvey asked us tonight. Suddenly we have to try and bring to the surface something that's going on underneath and it's difficult to do.

And to try and bring to the surface the things that are going on in our minds and to tie that with what Peter has written to us in chapter 3 is something I am anxious to do tonight, but I need your full cooperation in establishing where your meditations are at the moment and what it is you're thinking about and whether into that I can read these verses so that you can make some sense of them and God can nourish and feed you in your spiritual life with that bread which is better than bread and that is the word of God.

[ 2 : 47 ] So, chapter 3, verse 1 begins in answer to the question what sort of persons ought you to be? This now, Peter writes, is the second letter that I have written to you, beloved.

In both of them, I have aroused your sincere mind by way of reminder. Remember that this strange reality that at the heart of God's revelation of itself are words written on his face.

That's, to me, such an amazing reality that God speaks to us through the word written.

And Peter reinforces this when he says, I have written this letter, this second letter, I've written to you, beloved. In both of them, I have aroused your sincere mind by way of reminder.

So he's written a letter which is his print like that that you're looking at. And the purpose of that print is to remind you of something.

[ 4 : 02 ] That's why you read it. It's to be for you a reminder of something. Now what that something is, seems to be locked into your sincere mind.

I'm not sure whether your sincere mind is that sincere at the moment. It seems that what is being said is that what you need to know, you already know.

The function of the scriptures is to remind you of that which you already know. And I remember our rector when I was a child, one of the things I remember about him preaching was that sincere means without wax, which refers to the fact that an unfinished product might be glossed over by putting wax in the parts that were slightly defective to make the fear as though it was all there.

But it had wax. It's what, in our minds, there isn't little patches that are covered up because of the imperfections. This mind is sincere. It's totally told.

And in that sincere mind, Paul places this reminder and he does it by the process of the written word. God is very mechanical about this, it seems, that this written word into our sincere minds serves as a reminder.

[ 5 : 35 ] I want to tell you that your sincere mind may be something less than sincere sometimes. I've known times in my own life and maybe it's just that I knew it consciously, maybe it's more than that, but if you have committed yourself to a lie, in other words, you're told a lie, you've established a lie in your life, then your mind can't be sincere after that because all your mental efforts are then required to make the lie appear to be true.

And you have a heavy commitment to making what is a lie appear to be true. And we waste an enormous amount of time and in that condition it's very difficult to receive what Peter wants us to receive is what he's written here to arouse our sincere minds.

All it will do is arouse our fear that the lie will be seen and we will be betrayed by it and so we can't hear what is being said.

And it's a really amazing thing that so often we waste so much time by not being able to hear what's being said or what's being read and the tremendous blessing it is to us when suddenly we can hear with a sincere mind what's being said to us.

And we're not committed to ideas or to lies or delusions or illusions or illusions but we can hear what's being said. So the purpose of the letter is to remind you and just as you might wake up in the morning and look at the list of things you've got to do that day and that powerful reminder will get you out of bed and on your way because you know you've got to be somewhere by 730 that list is a kind of reminder list for you for that day.

[ 8 : 0 0 ] In precisely the same way the reading of this epistle Paul Peter says is to remind you to remind you of who you are of what you've been called to in Christ and of what God's purpose is in your life so that we need constantly to be reminded and reminded and reminded and that's why we come back to reading the scriptures again and again and again because we need to be reminded about those eternal realities which aren't written down on our shopping list or in our diary for the day they have to do with the whole of our life and the whole of eternity so Paul writes by way of a reminder to our sincere minds look in verse 2 then of chapter 3 and it says that you shall that you should remember so it's reminding our sincere minds on the one hand secondly it's remembering in verse 2 the predictions which is translated in another translation of this passage that you should remember the commandments of the holy prophets and the commandments of the Lord and Savior through your apostles and so you're to be reminded of what is in your mind which is in a sense what he makes the first appeal to and then he says and then to remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandments of the Lord and Savior through your apostles and so you have the prophets you have the teachings of Christ and they are they are to be brought to your remembrance your reminder and remembrance are the same root word in Greek in this passage you're to be reminded you're to remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandments of the Lord and Savior through your apostles and that really is a wonderful picture of what the New Testament is it is the it is the the commandments of the Lord and Savior through your apostles the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ is the New Testament which you read that is these are the men who knew him who heard him who were disciplined by him and who subsequently bore witness to him and that apostolic witness to Jesus Christ is through your apostles of which Peter recognized himself to be one even as he wrote this letter so they are to be reminded and they are to remember the predictions and the prophecies well having been reminded and remembering then in verse 3 you are called upon to understand first of all you must understand this so now your mind having been your mind having been reminded the scriptures having been brought to your remembrance now you are to understand the circumstance in which you have to live your life every day he said those circumstances are that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing mockers with mocking following their own passions now so you have if you look in verse 1 you have the beloved being reminded the teaching brought to their remembrance they are called upon to understand and then it

says how the scoffers think and the way they think is that they follow their own passions and I think J.B. Phillips it is who translates that men whose only guide in life is what they want for themselves that's following your own passions is there anything in this for me and they that's how they interpret everything that's the principle of interpretation that they apply and such people will come into the world and their scoffing will carry the day we we meet in the media all the time scoffing and so this isn't unusual Paul Peter's prediction is quite accurate that people who whose only guide in life is what they want for themselves are scoffing and it tells how we're to understand how this works the way it works it seems is that they ask rhetorical questions rhetorical questions not to edify people but rhetorical questions that are asked simply for effect that is they say where is the promise of his coming and leave a great stillness to follow that to suggest that well there isn't any fulfillment of that promise it's an empty promise the promise of his coming now it's not a bad question really it's one that confronts every Christian every day where is the promise of his coming in all the mess of our world where is the promise of his coming and then to be go back to being reminded to remembering to understanding how God is going to answer that question and so

Peter tells us that that's how the scoffers scoff then they back up this rhetorical question which is asked simply for effect by saying ever since the fathers fell asleep all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation and that's the kind of another day another buck philosophy things just go on and on and on and on it's a terrible tedium to life nothing is going to change everything is happening without any possibility of change and here you Christians are all excited about the promise of his coming and nothing is changing it's all the same people are still behaving in the same rotten way people are still starting fires and wars and earthquakes and fires and murder and sedition and lying and cheating and stealing and raping it all is the same we've heard it before and we'll hear it again and it goes on and on and on and nothing changes and that's how the scoffers scoff and you can't be a sensitive person in our world without feeling something of the weight of that therefore having to be reminded to remember and to seek to understand now the great difficulty with the third chapter of second

Peter is that it talks about floods and fire and the end of the world when you feature anything as prominent as that it's hard to pick up the details that surround that and I don't want to spend a lot of time telling you about the end of the world but Peter does and so we have to look at it but I don't want you to be totally fascinated by it because I want you to see the argument around it he's these scoffers whose only guide in life is what they want for themselves who ask questions that are rhetorical that they won't stop and listen to the answer who then make generalities to say that everything is the same as it always was and nothing will change then they go on and argue even further and say and deliberately it says ignoring certain facts they go on and work that way ignoring facts scoffing having their thinking is dictated to by what they want for themselves asking rhetorical questions and using generalities so that's the kind of thinking that we're up against all the time that's the kind of impact that you run into in the world and it's an enormous put down of the whole of the

Christian faith reason I want to share this with you is because it came up in the man's Bible study one Wednesday morning not long ago and I was very struck by how we do run into this kind of thinking all the time it's very difficult to know how to handle it and Peter tells us how to handle it here and I want you to see how to handle it because I think it in part is the answer to the question what sort of persons ought we to be well he says that they choose to be ignorant of certain facts one is that the when you read this in verse 6 and 7 sorry 5, 6, and 7 they chose to be ignorant of the fact that the word by the word of God heavens existed long ago an earth formed out of water and by means of water through which the world that then existed was deluded with water and perished that by the same word the heavens and earth which now exist have been stored up for fire being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men so he says they ignore the big picture and the big picture is that the words the world was created by the word of

[18:40] God from water and was destroyed by water and that the prophets and this was apparently a big current theme just as our world is dominated by the thought of nuclear destruction so for them their world was dominated by a concept of fire that's why James Baldwin that negro writer who wrote a book during the sort of height of the race riots in the states and he entitled his book the fire next time and he took it from Peter it was the flood the first time the next time it's going to be the fire and destruction is going to be complete there isn't going to be anything left but a little trickle of ash after that fire has burned out so Peter puts it all before you in quite a startling way and that's helpful I think to know that that's what it says and undoubtedly that's what it means though undoubtedly too you can't understand that fully nor cannot all we know is that the probability in most of science and certainly in our nuclear age we have assent to this possibility that the world will be in fire well

Peter says that the mockers don't pay any attention to that they ignore this fact and so then in verse 8 he goes on and speaks to the beloved to whom he addresses the letter and whom he has said remind remember understand he now says to them do not ignore this one fact beloved that with the Lord one day is a thousand years and a thousand years is one day in other words that your understanding your time perspective is all smashed you don't have it and you need to constantly get time in perspective and we see time in terms of our three score years and ten the tiny little bit of time in which we live our lives and that's only that's only a reflection in a mud puddle of the universe because it's our time is so limited and we need to be reminded that with God time is entirely different and I think that that's an important reminder an important thing to remember an important thing to understand and as

Peter says here an important thing not to ignore that a thousand years is this one day then in verse 9 he goes on and says the Lord is not slow about his promises some count slowness but is forbearing toward you not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance and so God has put things on hold so to speak not because he doesn't have the right and not because we haven't achieved that excellence in human existence whereby the fire is the most hopeful thing that could happen but because God is waiting and on us to come to a place of repentance so it's not an evidence of God's carelessness it's an evidence of God's love that time is on hold and we have this period during which the hope is we will come to repentance remember that

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes on him should not perish but have everlasting life and so the very argument which the scoffers use to say where is the promise of his coming Peter says it's still in place and time is being given but it will come to an end certainly and God is waiting in order that we will come to the place where we come to terms with this reality well so that's how Peter explains where the promise of his coming is and says in verse 9 the Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness but is forbearing toward you not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance he goes on in verse 10 and says but the day of the Lord will come like a thief and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise and the elements will be dissolved with fire and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up and there's lots of reasons why that could happen and it's not a happy thought but it's almost intelligent people would say the possibility of it is very real indeed and that it's hard to imagine how else this world will come to an end but in that way and I don't think people down through the centuries realized how much of a part of that we are of precipitating that very end but again I don't want you to become fascinated by that because we're not living in terms of the fear of the end we're living in terms of faith in the

God who is in control and there is no suggestion that God is not in control in this situation now I know we could get into a long argument over coffee about nuclear bombs and 1 Peter or 2 Peter 3 but I'm not going to get onto it right now you can try it at coffee or if you like and we'll see where we get to but just look at this the way it's written here verse 11 says since all these things are thus to be dissolved what sort of persons ought you to be in other words this is the context in which you are called to live your life and so you ought to live lives of holiness and godliness and those two words mean that your life is lived not guided by what you want for yourself but your life is lived seeking to know in your life who god is and your life to be marked by that relationship and the marks of that relationship in your life are holiness and godliness you are to wait for and hasten the coming day of god because of what the heavens will because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved and the elements will melt with fire so he comes back to say it again but you see and this is the lovely thing in verse 13 which I think you've got to read in capital letters according to his promise what we're waiting for is a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells that's the ultimate purpose of god the ultimate purpose of god is not to burn this planet to ascend the ultimate purpose of god is a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness now that's what we long for that's what we look for and that's what god is going to bring about and that's what we're called upon to wait for that's what we're waiting for we're not waiting in fear of the fire we're waiting in faith of the new world wherein righteousness dwells that's the focus of our lives so it's very different isn't it that's why

[ 27 : 24 ] I think being fascinated by the floods and the fires in chapter three should be replaced by faith in what's described in verse 13 his promise a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells that god is in control so he concludes in these last few verses therefore beloved since you wait for these be zealous to be found by him without spot or blemish and at peace the whole concept is one of worship and you presenting your bodies a living sacrifice holy acceptable unto god count the forbearance of our lord as salvation in other words the time he's giving us right now is not to be regarded as the mockers do where is the promise of his coming no this time is a time of salvation it's a time in which the very gifts that god has for us are to be claimed and shared with as many people as we can share them with and so he goes on in this lovely sort of nudge for

St. Paul Peter talking about Paul also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him speaking of this as he does in all his letters and so Peter says if you don't believe me read Paul and so we can go back to reading his epistles again if you like which are the largest part of the New Testament let me remind you and he said there are some people that are hard to understand in what Paul has written things which are hard to understand in which Paul has written and ignorant people and unstable people twist to their own destruction as they do the other scriptures and it's a lovely principle of scriptural interpretation that it's not to be twisted and it's not you're not to take the scriptures and make it say what you want it to say you are to sit before the scriptures and allow it to say to you what it does say go back to the beginning of the chapter to remind your sincere mind to call to your remembrance to give you understanding that's what scripture is for but scripture has been proven useful to a whole lot of people who've taken it and twisted it in order to make it say what they want it to say and uh and I think we're better to be agnostic about what scripture says and to wait and to wait and to wait on god to show us what it says than to do what we are so often tempted to do in our intellectual arrogance to twist it into saying what we want and thereby undermining what scripture is um then in uh verse 17 you therefore beloved knowing this beforehand beware lest you be carried away with the errors of lawless men and lose your own footing or your own stability it's very easy to be carried away by this go back to chapter 1 verse 13 of uh 1 Peter and it says i mean um to Peter chapter 1 verse 13 i think it right as long as i am in this body to arouse you by way of reminder and uh that's why we we very much need to be reminded of these truths because the scoffers are very plausible and very sophisticated and very intellectual kind of people in our society very often and you can get swept off your footing very easily indeed by scoffers they're hard to stand up to so we need to look at this bulwark that Peter provides us in chapter 3 facing the ultimate calamity of the destruction of the world and say even in the face of the inevitability of that we have we are not to be swept off our feet by that with the errors of lawless men then in that lovely simplicity of verses 18 verse 18 he says what it's all about how should we then live we should live growing in the grace and knowledge of our lord and savior jesus christ that's that's we're to be reminded of that we're to remember that we're to understand that we're not to ignore in the midst of all things and the result of that is that rather than being swept off our feet losing our stability by the fascination with the errors of lawlessness we will grow in the grace and knowledge of our lord and savior jesus christ see it is

knowledge it's not just high in the sky awareness it's knowledge and grace for the growing then he ends his abyssal by saying to him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity that's what our lives are about that to him will be given glory through our lives by the life which we live which is to be a life of a continuing sacrifice to god a living sacrifice to him of the whole of our lives growing in grace and knowledge of our lord and savior jesus christ and by our lives we will give glory both now and to the day of eternity so that's the question answered by peter chapter 3 the question which says what sort of persons are you being that's the way you're going to think and as a result of thinking in that way that's going to form who you are and I trust that that passage will continue to be for you a reminder a remembrance a source of understanding and a warning not to ignore the facts and we pray with you father we are so much the our minds are so much and through so many mediums the victims of the ideas of scoffers the rhetorical questions the thinking which is dictated by self interest deliberate ignoring of facts so our God we pray that you will by this word remind us call to our remembrance give us understanding give us courage that we don't ignore facts we live in such a way that our lives are continuing to sacrifice to you in grace that means given knowing the grace of our Lord

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