

Scoffing Versus Truth

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Date: 26 May 2019

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[0 : 00] Now will you turn with me please to 2 Peter chapter 3. 2 Peter chapter 3. We're going to take some aspects of the whole chapter but we can read a few verses from the beginning.

This is now the second letter that I'm writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles knowing this first of all that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing.

Following their own sinful desires they will say where is the promise of his coming? There is nothing new under the sun as the Bible itself tells us and we find that the resistance we know of in our own day to the gospel to our emphasis in the gospel that Christ will return on the day of judgment.

That's something that Peter had to face and the apostles had to face. The church has had to face all the way down through the generations. Peter mentions the coming of Christ in the first part of the letter where you find him saying in chapter 1 verse 16 we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

And then he goes on to speak about what he saw on the Mount of Transfiguration that you find described in the gospels where Jesus was transfigured where he shone so brightly that they couldn't see they couldn't look at him directly it was just more bright and brighter than anything they could describe.

[1 : 53] And what Peter is doing is drawing his reader's reminder minds back to that as a reminder of that first coming of Jesus. Then he comes here to speak about his coming again the second coming which is what he means here in this particular chapter where he talks about the coming of the Lord and how that's being scoffed at by those who scoff at the truth of the gospel.

Where is the promise of his coming? But ever since the father fell asleep all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of the creation. So what Peter is doing is saying that the majesty that he saw a glimpse of at least in that first appearance of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration is something he now relates to the second coming of the appearance of Jesus which will come as a more splendid appearance than was ever seen in his first coming.

And he is now concerned that we actually know how to live not only in consequence of the first coming of Jesus but in anticipation of the second coming.

And therefore the burden of his letter really is to bring these Christians to whom he's writing a message of encouragement a message of confirmation of the things they believe of the things they're living out in their lives because they are indeed themselves in a world where they face false teaching.

It's very obvious as you read this letter and the first letter as well and as we've seen other letters in the New Testament that false teaching while it wasn't new but it had set in in the days of the apostles even into the church of that age and Peter is making it clear here that false teaching is something that they are aware of themselves.

[3 : 46] When you find in chapter 2 of this letter he says false prophets also arose among the people just as there will be false teachers among you who will secretly bring in destructive heresies.

You know friends there are congregations today in the world some of the biggest congregations today in the world are under the teaching of heretics. False teachers within the church within the church in the widest sense of the word church because they deny certain fundamental foundational doctrines of the Christian faith.

The most dangerous thing for you and for me is not facing the false teaching that's out in the world not facing the false teaching that's in other religions not facing the false teaching or the way in

which atheism or humanism or even secularism will seek to reject the things of the gospel the most dangerous thing for you is if you have false teaching coming from this pulpit and from the things that you actually read and hear as you're seeking to know more of Bible truth.

That is what Peter is adamant about. That's always been the case for the church. The most dangerous thing for the church is false teaching from inside because people if they're persuaded by false teaching will end up with false living with the kind of lifestyle that is contrary to what the Bible itself sets out for us.

So this is the environment in which Peter is operating and writing and writing this to these people. He needs to remind them of certain things and as we'll see he's reminding them especially of facts and that's so important whenever we face false teaching.

[5 : 41] We go back to the facts that God has established in his work of salvation especially. So let's look at two things. Here is a context where we're confronted with scoffing and a context where we're comforted by truth.

When you're confronted with scoffing we need to come to be comforted and assured by coming to the truth of God and seeing what is that saying to us in regard to the scoffing to the unbelief to the ridicule of the gospel that you find in the world.

Well here is Peter and these readers confronted by scoffing. What is that scoffing driven by? And what do these scoffers actually conclude from their own mindset?

These are the two issues that we'll look at under how they're confronted by scoffing. What is it driven by? Well he's telling us he is saying here that they are driven by their own sinful desires.

Verse 3 They're knowing this first of all that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing following their own sinful desires. Now the last days are the days from the ascension of Christ when he went back to glory until he comes back again.

[6 : 57] So you can say in a real sense the last days Peter is referring to just as Paul refers to it as well includes everything that happens in history from the time of Christ being in this world or at least from the time of his going back to heaven until he returns.

These are the last days the final era or age of the world in this history. What he's saying is these people are driven he says by their own sinful desires.

It's a radical difference to the Christian mindset that believes the Bible the truth of God's word. Let me just remind you of what Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans in chapter 8 where he describes there the difference between the Christian mindset the saved mindset and that of those who reject the truth or the unsaved.

He says remember there in verse 5 of chapter 8 of Romans and he says there for those who live according to the flesh according to their own sinful mindset set their minds on the things of the flesh but those who live according to the spirit set their minds on the things of the spirit that's the Holy Spirit God's spirit.

To set the mind on the things of the flesh is death but to set the mind on the spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God for it does not submit to God's will indeed it cannot.

[8 : 25] Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. And Paul says you however are not in the flesh but in the spirit if in fact the spirit of God dwells in you.

Now he's dealing there with a big contrast a huge contrast the mind of the flesh the mind of the spirit the carnal mind the spiritual mind in the older translation. what he's saying is the unregenerate mind the unbelieving mind the mind of the flesh the terminus of that the characteristic of that is death.

The contrast with that is the mind of the spirit the mind in which God has produced an acceptance of his truth so that we live by that truth so that that truth shapes our life into what it ought to be. And that's the radical difference that Peter is pointing out as well where he's stirring up their minds by way of reminder to remember these predictions knowing he says this that these scoffers are going to come following their own sinful desires.

See the Christian has a different standpoint. If I can put it this way the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is something that you frequently find in the way in which if we can use the word the scoffers as they put it there the unbelieving mind to the unbelieving mind to the scoffing mind that is something that they see as ridiculous.

[9 : 55] And it's within the church that some of that is found as well. There are people within the church there are preachers within the church there are ordained ministers within the church in the

wider sense today who don't believe that Christ actually rose from the dead.

They believe that that's just something that conveys a truth to us without needing to believe in the facts physically of his resurrection from the dead. Now you and I don't believe that.

You and I know that Christ rose from the dead. We believe the Bible in its description of Christ literally meeting with people after his resurrection and the Bible's description of the tomb having nothing left in it but the grave clothes that Jesus left behind.

What the scoffer says from outside of the resurrection in other words you could say that when you believe in Christ when you trust in Christ when you commit your life to Christ obviously you believe his word when you do that as well but you're taking your standpoint then in looking out at the world and looking out at everything in fact from the standpoint of Christ's resurrection if you like from within Christ's resurrection.

If I can explain that somehow let's say you're looking into a very ornate magnificent house and it's night time and it's all lit up and you can see some of the wonderful artifacts in that house from outside and you're trying to just get a more detailed view of them but you don't want to go inside the house you're just you're not of a mind to go and ask for access to the house you prefer to do from outside and you see a wonderful painting there on the wall and you can't really see it and you can see something of the outline of it something of the detail but only just a tiny little bit.

[11 : 36] the person inside the house has the advantage hasn't he? Because they're looking at it from being inside they can go up close they can see the detail they can see the brush marks they have a far better view of it from different angles looking at the Christian faith from outside of salvation is a bit like that.

he makes out some details of it because these people the scoffers are still following their own mindset their own sinful mindset their own resistant mind their own unbelieving mind they see some things and they say well yeah but that's not for me that's really quite different to the way I want to live my life.

Whereas when God takes you inside you then appreciate what you see you value God's truth you see the Bible as something that you didn't see necessarily before as absolutely vital to your human development certainly to your believing development.

So that's what you're facing as Peter was facing this idea that all of these things are all very well for Christians but actually they're not really true anyway so it's not worth believing in them we'll just go on with our scoffing that's what so much of the world today thinks.

And they conclude therefore that Christ is not going to return that the teaching of the apostles about this is just something of maybe it's a crutch for people who want that sort of crutch something that helps to support them through crisis times or something like that but they're saying where is the promise of his coming ever since the fathers fell asleep all things are continuously away from the beginning of the creation so surely it's just going to be like this where is the promise of his coming when is this going to happen look at all of these hundreds thousands of years since Jesus was in the world if you believe the bible they're saying these scoffers where's the promise of his coming when is this going to come to be fulfilled there's no sign of it happening so we'll just dismiss it can't be true you see what's happening they're depending on their own reason following their own sinful desires and verse 5 they deliberately overlook this fact the bible deals with facts they're deliberately overlooking this fact what they're doing is proving to themselves the things they want to believe that's the terrible thing that heresy is because heresy which is a deviation from the truth of God or a twisting of the truth of God it really at the end of the day sets before people what they want to listen to what they like to listen to and very often that's why heretical preachers when they present their version of the gospel it's not so much what they include that's really important to take note of it's what they don't include because you can include a lot about Jesus a lot about God but if you leave out his resurrection as a fact if you leave out as a fact that he's coming back again if you leave as a fact that you need to be born again that born again means radically a change radically in your life from within your very being then you are actually believing heresy and people who believe that want to persuade themselves that that's really what the Bible is saying so they persuade themselves and then they try to persuade others and others will follow them you see what's happening is that they conclude that what's actually stated in the Bible can't possibly be true factually correct and so they dismiss it in other words they don't leave a place for something that's absolutely crucial for any

[15 : 27] Christian life and that's faith faith the Bible tells us in the beginning of Hebrews chapter 11 that when you want to approach the Bible and study the Bible you don't begin with your own

reasoning you don't leave aside your own reason your own mind the working of your mind but you don't begin with that and you don't put that first and foremost what it's saying is by faith we understand that the worlds were created by the word of God that's exactly what Peter is saying as well and the scoffers in the world were saying what you don't actually believe in literal creation do you you don't believe that there was a God who actually created all these bodies these stars the other bodies in the universe the planets and so on and placed them where they are surely you don't believe that's been outdated for hundreds of years for centuries surely you don't believe that anymore well that's the kind of thing that

Peter was facing in his day people who dismissed God's truth when it speaks about facts as if it's not really facts at all and you see what he's saying here is they deliberately overlook this fact this fact of creation this fact of God creating and they don't leave space for faith you know one of the things that the Christian faith as it's usually called as we call it ourselves the Christian faith the Christian way of life opponents of the Christian faith and of the Bible's teaching will actually not want to include anything of faith in a more general sense in your everyday thinking dismiss faith unless it's just faith in yourself or faith in human ability well that's what Peter is actually denouncing here but you see in verse five here it's saying they deliberately overlook this fact it's not that they're ignorant it's not that they don't know anything about the truth this again is something that the Bible is out to actually say to us very often they reject this fact deliberately they choose to ignore this fact the facts of creation the facts of God creating the facts of the flood in the days of Noah all of these things as Peter says are factually correct as described in the Bible what are these scoffers doing they're saying it's not they're not saying I don't know anything about these things what they're saying is well I know about them I know something about them but I ignore them I reject them I don't believe in them I don't see them as factually dependable at all that's what they conclude following their own reason that's what happened so they reject God and his power and creation and his sustaining of all things and if I can take you back again to Romans just to finish that point it's important in the very opening chapter of Romans that Paul is dealing with certain types of human behavior which he regards as deviations from the norm or from what's acceptable to God and that's very current in our own generation as well though there are other things as well as that that the Bible denounces nevertheless this is what he's saying in Romans and chapter 1 you remember how he's concerned in verses 18 to 23 to say that even through the creation itself through what you see in the creation around you God is speaking to us he's saying the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men for what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them for his invisible attributes namely his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made or by the things that have been made so they are without excuse now he's not saying that they are without excuse for being ignorant which is how some people interpret that what Paul is saying is they are without excuse for not having accepted the evidence that they have in the creation itself and following other devices into idolatry which is what he goes on to describe alternatives to God to the living God so that's where we are today as well we are confronted by scoffing and this is the nature of scoffing it's driven by sinful desires driven by a heart that only looks to itself and its own reasoning and its concluding thereby that these things the Bible presents as facts are actually not so at all and therefore they choose something else instead let's look though secondly at how Peter deals with that and wants us to be comforted by the truth two things in that firstly the importance of a believing mind he calls here a sincere mind he says there I'm stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder when he uses that word sincere it's also found in 1st Peter chapter 2 it means unpolluted unadulterated not having been poisoned because what he's saying is here are your minds you're still believing the truth of God you're facing all of this heretical poison that's going about about [21 : 00] Jesus about his coming again and so on and I'm addressing your unpolluted your sincere mind that's very strong language but then it is the Bible it is God's word it is God's truth and when you come to the Bible you don't expect to find a God who's politically correct you don't find a God who panders to human preferences as far as how things are described when God wants to describe what's offensive to him he'll describe it as he sees it not as you and I would like to see it not as we would prefer it to be so he's calling it here the unpolluted mind and by implication the mind of the scoffer is a polluted mind the filth of unbelief and of sin and of sinful desires and a sinful lifestyle characterizes that mind now he's saying you have your sincere mind your unpolluted mind and so

our mind is so important and how our mind our thinking is shaped today let your thinking let my thinking while it's important to know everything that's going on in the world let your thinking and my thinking be shaped by God's truth by God's word because that's what it's for and that's the highest use of your mind that you can actually engage your mind in in conforming to the truth of God second thing is that these scoffers were actually predicted now this is an interesting point

I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment knowing this first of all that scoffers will come in the last days and this is something that actually was predicted by the scriptures long before Peter wrote his epistle why is that important because as you find in the bible predictions of what what's going to happen in the last days that itself confirms or it's a point that confirms that this bible is actually reliable that this word is actually God's truth that you confront the scoffing of this generation that you and I belong to with the facts of God's truth with the facts that it reveals and with this fact among others that this word itself is a dependable reliable word and indeed in many respects there is no more important fact for you to know and to understand and to believe and to appreciate than that that this word of the scripture is in fact reliable it's a word that God has given us in its entirety as his own word and so the more skepticism and the more scoffing you find coming into the world as you listen to their response to the gospel what that is doing is actually not as they think because of their thoughts actually denouncing the truth as they think well that proves the ridiculousness of the Bible it actually does the opposite because the more unbelief and scoffing and ridicule you get of the gospel and of the Christian life and of the church's emphasis when we emphasize the things that are pleasing to

God and things that are not pleasing to him all of that is just confirming the truth of the Bible not the opposite that's what Peter is emphasizing for them how comforting that is for us today when you're confronted with the temptation just to let go the truth of the Bible and to just choose yourself what appears to be factually dependable and what isn't here is God saying to you everything in it is because even the unbelief of these last days is predicted in the Bible in fact when you go to Paul again and Peter mentions Paul here later in the chapter as you know when you go to Paul and some of the last writings of Paul when he wrote to Timothy for example you'll find him saying there in just teaching Timothy how he was to follow on in his ministry of the gospel from Paul himself well in 2nd Timothy the last letter that Paul actually wrote we believe he says understand this that in the last days there will come times of difficulty for people will be lovers of self lovers of money proud arrogant abusive disobedient to their parents ungrateful unholy heartless unappeasable slanderous without self-control brutal not loving good treacherous reckless swollen with conceit lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of

God and so on what a list he's giving there of characteristics to be found in the last days of those who oppose the gospel look around you listen to the word the world listen to what's being said look into how the news is presented to us look into documentaries look into books that are written about ethical issues about history about the world as we see it and here is the bible saying it's all predicted by God of the last days you can rely on this you can build your eternity on what this bible says to you because the scoffers overlook the real events that are described but that's the next point how comforting it is that you can depend on this bible so the importance of a believing mind sincere mind scoffers are predicted but it deals with real events you see it speaks here about the days of Noah and how by the word of God the flood came as God in fact had himself said beforehand to Noah and through

Noah the world was deluged by water and by that same word the present heavens and earth are stored up for fire against the day of judgment what is Peter doing see if Peter wasn't really factually correct about the flood and what happened in the days of Noah he can't build any arguments if you take these things as just fables or fairy stories or not facts or just made up events you can't build any arguments on them you can't build anything as a preparation for eternity on them and that's exactly what Peter is doing in other words you come to this passage you pull out anything that appears to be factually accurate and then you've got nothing left because the argument there as to how to prepare for the second coming of Christ is related to the factuality of what happened in history in the days of Noah that's his view of the future it's tied to his view of the past and it's all to do with being factually correct need to move on the time is going the importance of a believing mind but finally in this matter of being comforted and assured by the truth of

[28 : 19] God it's not just the importance of a believing mind but the imperative of a godly life imperative of a godly life how do you set out against unbelief against scoffing against what is untrue well it depends of course in your mind of course it's been as we said the importance of a believing mind but you also need to live a godly lifestyle that's one of the things that counters heresy that counters the false teacher that counters the sinful lifestyle and he talks here about from verse 11 onwards he talks about since all these things are thus to be dissolved what sort of people are due to be in lives of holiness and godliness waiting for the coming day of God the coming of Jesus in return you see what he's saying is knowing the truth actually fuels our present godliness of life where he says you have a great advantage you have a huge advantage having this sincere mind having this truth of

God accepted on your part you're in a position not like the scoffers to reject them but to actually attend to how you prepare properly for the coming of Christ since you know all these things what sort of people ought you to be verse 14 he goes on therefore beloved since you are waiting for these things same sort of argument be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish and count that the patience of the Lord which is what characterizes the present span of history that Christ is patient that the Lord is patient not willing that any should perish but in summary what he's saying there is we are waiting for a new heavens and a new earth in verse 13 according to his promise you see the truth again that you believe the promise of God we are waiting for a new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells now put that against the context in which Peter is writing to these people surrounded by scoffing facing this scoffing having this false teaching all around them and even in their midst as a people hold on to the truth of

God's word keep on believing his promise and his promise includes this we are waiting for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells when you are tired of the unbelief when you are tired of you keep praying for people to be saved when you are still tired of the ungodliness and the sound of ungodliness and the filthy language and the lifestyles that are opposed to God and to purity of life when that becomes tedious in your soul as it does from time to time what do you do you turn to the truth of God and you say look there is a better time coming and for God's people there will be a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells and you know when you look into that promise and you put that promise against all that you see that is against God in this world your heart leaps with anticipation doesn't it should do anyway mine doesn't all the time or does yours I'm sure but when you just stop and think of what this is saying instead of a creation that's blighted by sin that's under the curse of God due to our human sin what is the destiny of the creation itself it's going to participate as Romans 8 puts it in the revealing of the liberty of the sons of God the glory of Christ the glory of God's people the glory of a restored universe heavens and earth made new in which righteousness dwells a world an environment in which there's nothing against God in which everything is in accordance with

God's will in which people love what is like God instead of hating it doesn't that set your heart aglow that that is really your destiny as a Christian and doesn't that shine an incredibly bright and important light into the darkness of the present world that's God's truth for you shine that light light in to the gloom and he finishes by an emphasis on growth take care he says in verse 17 that you are not carried away that's you plural with the error of lawless people and you lose your own stability but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and that's plural again grow plural the benefit of growing together as a people as Christians the benefit of belonging to the church of being the church come across it so often in the scriptures what he's saying here is grow grow together in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and in many ways that's really the most important thing about countering false teaching countering unbelief countering scoffing that together we grow in the knowledge and in the grace of Christ and the most important thing at the end of the day anyway isn't it is this relationship with Jesus himself a real person the living

Jesus who is now in heaven and whose return we await grow he says in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and what ultimately matters today to you and to me personally and together as a people is knowing Christ having Christ waiting for Christ's return continuing to believe Christ and to believe his word because that's where the Bible takes us and that's what we're seeking to do frequently in preaching following the pattern of the Bible itself beloved we are stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder God bless these thoughts on his word we're going to conclude now singing in psalm number 2 psalm number 2 from the sing psalms version to the tune

soldo and we're singing verses 1 to 6 the teaching the teaching of these words and throughout the psalm is self-evident that the unbelieving scoffing world continues to laugh at God's truth and God laughs in derision in return which is a very serious thing and God then sets out this constant reminder to the world that God has already chosen his king

[35 : 16] Jesus and that we are counsel to pay homage to him as the royal son in the final verse I'll sing the first six verses there why do the heathen nations rage why do the people's plot invade why do the heathen nations rage why do the people's plot invade as kings combine in enmity her rulers join against God's reign they take their stand against the Lord and challenge his anointed one let us make off their chains promise with their recluse let us become done the one in heaven last the

Lord on high delights them all then he renews them in his wrath his his weight and care on them fall the Lord has made it known to them my chosen king I have been tall star of Zion my own holy hill he is the one whom I have called us if you allow me to get to the main door after the benediction please now may the grace of the

Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and ever more Amen