

Mapping Out the Journey

II Peter 3:14-16

When I was working as hospice chaplain I had a file for each patient I was seeing. Going to Mapquest I would generate a map on how to get to the home. I didn't have GPS in my car and didn't own a smart phone then so I had to rely on Mapquest to get me to my destination. At the beginning of my day I would see the list of patients I would be visiting and then use Mapquest to plot my course. The first destination began from the office, then I would print out maps from that home to the next and so on for the day. It gave a detailed turn by turn report on driving from one location to the next so that I would arrive safely. It even provided the distance between each turn, the total distance of travel and the estimated time it would take to arrive. That way I could plan the length of my visits accordingly.

On your smart phone you not only get the directions to your destination but you can get an app that will tell you if there are any obstacles ahead like construction or accidents. Some will provide an alternate route to your destination.

Peter's letter is a map of sorts. He has provided his readers with an eternal destination. He has given them some navigation tools to help them along the journey until they reach that destination and even shown them some obstacles they will face along the way with instructions on how to get around them.

His closing remarks provide us with a summary of what he has stated throughout his map that will help the Christian arrive in heaven safely. These closing verses are a synopsis of what he wanted his hearers to know to help them navigate through this world in anticipation of the next. These verses may be repetitious, but repetition reinforces the seriousness of the message.

Turn with me to II Peter 3:14-16.

We will close out our study of II Peter in two weeks. Next week will be verse 17 and the following week, December 2 will be verse 18.

December 9 – the promise about Jesus

December 16 – the prophecy about Jesus

December 23 – the proclamation about Jesus

December 24 – the purpose of Jesus

Today I would like us to consider Peter's message.

It's a clear message

It's a consistent message

It's a challenging message

In verse 14 we see that it's a clear message.

I. IT'S A CLEAR MESSAGE – v. 14

We notice two things right away. He again refers to the affection he had for these believers. Once again he calls them "beloved" (KJV) or "dear friends" (NIV). It is the same term he used in verse 1 and verse 8.

Let me remind you that I prefer the term "beloved" over "dear friends". I believe it speaks better to the intent of the word used.

It's a term of endearment

It's a term of empathy

It's a term of encouragement

They shared a mutual relationship as part of the body of Christ because of their union through indwelling Holy Spirit.

For those who call themselves Christians, there ought to be an abiding affection for each other. John asked a very simple yet profound question: how can we claim to love God if we don't love each other? It is a command bred not out of duty but devotion and that's a whole other message.

Peter could show empathy because, like them, he had suffered and endured persecution.

He could offer encouragement because something better was coming. All this is just temporary.

Once again, in his closing remarks, Peter wanted to remind them of his deep affection for them.

The second thing of note is the link between what he just said regarding their behavior and the Lord's coming. "So then" or "wherefore" is that term connecting the two. Because of what is coming in the future on the day of God when there will be a new heaven and a new earth, pursue godliness now. It's a clear message about their eternity.

A. It's A Clear Message Concerning Eternity

Sometimes I will remind David that it's one day closer to graduation. Four more years of High school may seem like a long time, but every day of school is one more day closer to when he will get that coveted diploma. The encouragement is to keep plugging onward. Each day the goal is nearer.

Each day we are here on earth is one day closer to our eternal graduation. It is a day that Peter suggests we should be looking forward to.

A man and woman look forward to the day of their wedding. They have a calendar and mark down the days until the big day.

Couples and their parents look forward to the day when a baby will be born.

Children look forward to Christmas day or to a birthday or a special vacation.

You may look forward to starting a new job.

You may look forward to completing a project.

Those of you who are retired may recall the eagerness of looking forward to that final work day.

Some of us are beginning to think more about it.

There are so many things you look forward to and Peter says that his readers were looking forward to the day of God when there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

Is that a day you are looking forward to?

Is there an eagerness to your anticipation?

I have talked to some folks who say they hope it's not for a while, they still have things they want to do. What can be so important down here that they want the coming of the Lord to be delayed?

Sure, I may have a bucket list of things I'd like to do or see before I check out, maybe you do too, but I would gladly give them up for an eternal stroll through the new heaven and earth. That's something we are to look and live for. I hope there is nothing whatsoever that is keeping you tied to this place.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:33 that we are to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. It parallels nicely our verse because both are a message of eternity and of effort.

B. It's A Clear Message Concerning Effort

In Matthew 6:33 Jesus put it in terms of something we are to seek after. The word "seek" is present active imperative. The present tense speaks to both the time and to the duration. Seeking is something we are to do right now and continue doing.

The imperative mood can be a command or a request. The imperative mood addresses the will of the person. In this case it's a command.

The active voice has to do with what action the person is to take. In this case the action is to seek and keep on seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness because it is a command not a suggestion.

In our passage Peter gives a threefold action plan as we look forward to the new heaven and earth. We are to make every effort to be found spotless, to be found blameless, and to be found at peace with the Lord.

The word "effort" (NIV) or "diligent" (KJV) is in the aorist active imperative mood. The word means to hurry up to do a thing, to exert oneself, to give diligence in doing it. Our effort is not to be done

haphazardly or lackadaisically or whenever we want. When we think of tense in the Greek it has to do with some action done in the past, present or future. The word “effort” is in the aorist tense which means it isn’t confined to something that is done past, present or future. It sees the action as a whole without regard to the element of time. While it is something that may have taken place in the past it isn’t limited to the past. As one author noted, the purpose of the aorist tense is to make the action invisible in terms of when it is done. Essentially then Peter is saying that this effort should be made all the time.

Whether or not in the past you made an effort to pursue godly living, in light of what is to come, make an effort now and continue that effort until that day when there is a new heaven and earth. In other words, start and don’t stop. Keep at it. It should be both a consistent and continuous effort.

Now notice that he says we are to “make *every* effort”. That means to do whatever it takes. When it seems hard and you have choices to make in order to reach your spiritual goal, don’t quit. When you get knocked down, get back up and keep going. It’s the difference between Olympians Jim Ryun and Mary Decker-Slaney. Both were favored to win their respective races. During her race she was bumped and fell off the track and just lay there. When the same thing happened to him in his race, he got back up and finished the race giving it his best effort to finish strong.

I Corinthians 9:24-26

Hebrews 12:1-3

Folks, when the circumstances and trials of this race we call life knock you down, Scripture encourages us to get up and keep going. Make every effort. Don’t let it diminish your effort or sideline you. Make every effort to do what?

Peter says to “make every effort to be found”.

In this case the action here is not something we do, but what is done to us. We are now the recipients of the action. We are to be found. It should serve as a sobering reminder that no one can hide from the One who will judge both the living and the dead. We will all one day give an account of our actions. I Corinthians 4:5 “He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.”

II Corinthians 5:10 “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”

We will be found by the ever present all-knowing all-seeing God. He knew where Adam and Eve were in the Garden. He wanted to see if they knew where they were, not physically, but spiritually.

The question to be asked is how do you want God to find you? What do you want Him to find you doing?

Peter gives us the answer. He lists three things that every believer should be diligently found doing.

1. We must be found spotless

In the Old Testament any sacrifice that was brought to the Tabernacle or Temple to be offered to the Lord had to be spotless. It couldn’t have any defect. Leviticus 1:3 “If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he is to offer a male without defect.”

Metaphorically it means to be free of censure, irreproachable, to be without stain. Sin stains, but the blood of Jesus makes us spotless.

What can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

What can make me whole again?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Oh, precious is the flow,

That makes me white as snow.

No other fount I know.
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

I Timothy 6:11-14

James 1:27 (polluted (NIV) – unspotted (KJV))

It's used of Christ in I Peter 1:19 that He was spotless.

In his first letter Peter says we are to be holy as Christ is holy (I Peter 1:16).

In John's first letter he says we are to be pure as Christ is pure (I John 3:3).

Writing to the Romans Paul urges believers to be a living and holy sacrifice that is pleasing to God (Romans 12:1-2). How do we do that you might ask? Paul says in verse 2 that we shouldn't be conformed or molded by the world. Don't let the world squeeze you into becoming like it.

We are to be found spotless.

Then we are to be found blameless.

2. We must be found blameless

In Ephesians 1:4 we read that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless.

In Ephesians 5:27 we will be presented to Christ as a blameless bride.

Philippians 2:14-16a "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life..."

It should be sobering to think that complaining and arguing can keep us from becoming blameless and pure.

How do I respond to my spouse or children?

How do I respond to my parents?

How do I do my chores?

How do I do my homework?

How do I do my job?

How do I respond to slow traffic?

Complaining really means that I am not content with God's will. It is an expression of unbelief that prevents me from doing what pleases God.

That we are to be blameless and pure does not mean absolute or sinless perfection. It means complete devotion to God, doing what pleases God.

It's the kind of character Paul says a church leader should have. He's to be above reproach, which means no one can bring a legitimate accusation against him. I say legitimate because people are falsely accused all the time. Jesus was. So was Joseph who was wrongly accused by Potiphar's wife even though he was blameless of any improper and immoral actions against her.

The political leaders didn't like Daniel. They tried to find something in his work habits that would discredit him but couldn't find a thing they could pin on him.

They were blameless.

We are to live in such a way that others can't point an accusatory finger of blame.

In Colossians 1:22 we read that God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ's death to present us "holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation."

In Jude 24 it says we will be presented to God without fault.

To be spotless and blameless speaks of moral purity with Christ as our pattern. People may appear to be blameless but they are far from spotless as was the case with the Pharisees. Their religious appearance was merely a façade covering up what was really in their heart. Jesus called them hypocrites. We are to be both blameless and spotless

This is, of course, is the complete opposite of the description of false teachers whom Peter called blots and blemishes (2:13). Their actions were scandalous and immoral and unethical. You,

however, are to be spotless and without blemish at the appearing of Christ. That is how you should be found by Him.

3. We must be found at peace with God

There is only one way to be at peace with God and we read about it in Romans 5:1. It comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

J. I. Packer suggests that being at peace with God describes the attitude of the believer who meets the Lord without shame because he is blameless and spotless.

I John 2:28 “And now, dear children, continue in Him, so that when He appears we may be confident and unashamed before Him at His coming.”

This peace could be what we receive through faith in Christ with God.

This peace could be a call for any unsaved in the audience to receive Christ and so experience that peace now with God.

In the context of the passage Peter is speaking about the destruction of the world, the patience of God in salvation, and the perseverance of the believer in godly living. The peace spoken of here refers to true peace of mind that comes from confident faith in Christ. Yes the world will be destroyed. Yes there is pending judgment, but the believer has assurance in the promises of God that frees him from anxiety and fear. The believer who is pursuing a godly life will experience the unfathomable and inestimable and unquenchable peace of God because it has surrendered his heart and mind to the Lord who sustains Him with peace that is beyond the understanding of the believer (Philippians 4:7). It is a sustaining peace because it has surrendered all cares to the One who cares for all.

With the divine clock counting down to end of the world and its destruction, this believer is at peace with God.

We are to let this peace rule our hearts (Colossians 3:15).

Jesus said He would give us this peace (John 14:1).

Jesus said we have this peace in Him (John 16:33).

It is a peace we are filled with (Romans 15:13).

The kingdom of heaven has this peace (Romans 14:17).

It is difficult to be at peace with God if we are not pursuing a life characterized by being spotless and blameless.

It's a clear message concerning your eternity and your effort.

It's also a consistent message.

II. IT'S A CONSISTENT MESSAGE – v. 15-16a

A. It's A Consistent Message That Is Promising

Peter again refers to the promise that he spoke about in verse 9. God's patience gives the opportunity for other people to get saved. Every day He delays means someone else can hear the gospel, repent and be saved.

A neighbor

A co-worker

A check-out clerk

The mailman

A relative

A friend

Who do you know that God is patiently waiting for?

It's a consistent message that is promising.

It's a consistent message that is prudent.

B. It's A Consistent Message That Is Prudent

It's always good to have some backup when you are making an important claim. The testimony of others can lend credibility to what you are saying and Peter does that by referring to his good friend Paul. It's significant that he calls him a dear brother because about 20 years earlier Paul had to confront Peter about some lifestyle choices that were

undermining the gospel message. Peter was doing some things that were inconsistent and confusing. Galatians 2:11-14

Peter was clearly in the wrong. Paul confronted him and from what we can tell from our passage Peter didn't hold a grudge against Paul. As a matter of fact, Peter's statement infers that they were really good friends.

Letters often crisscrossed from church to church. Peter would have read Paul's letters and so was well acquainted with what the Apostle had to say. Peter says that Paul wrote the same thing about God's patience, about salvation and about Christ's coming. He wasn't preaching and teaching something different.

Paul spoke prudently. He spoke wisely meaning that his writings, like Peter's, were also inspired. They were both led by the Holy Spirit in their writing. Peter found great value in what Paul wrote because it supported his own message. Paul's writings were just as authoritative as his. These two men were in agreement when it came to the gospel.

It's a consistent message that is persistent.

C. It's A Consistent Message That Is Persistent

Notice the first part of verse 16.

Paul's message is the same. He never backed down from his core message. Whether about salvation or the return of Christ, all his letters were consistent and it's no wonder because all his letters were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Everywhere he went he preached the gospel.

It's not clear if Peter was referring to Paul's writings regarding salvation or to Christ's return. But one thing is for sure, Paul was consistent in what he wrote and taught. Peter refers to Paul's letters to substantiate the consistency of their writing.

But Peter also acknowledges that Paul's message was also challenging.

III. IT'S A CHALLENGING MESSAGE – v. 16b

While Peter refers to Paul's message to affirm what he is saying, he also says that Paul's message was challenging because it was hard.

A. It's A Challenging Message Because It Was Hard

Throughout church history there has been a lot of discussion and debate regarding the content or intent of what Paul had to say in his letters. What did he mean by:

The law of conscience – Romans 2:6-16

The two natures of the believer – Romans 7:1-24

Predestination – Romans 8:28-30

The sovereignty of God and the free will of man – Romans 9:17-24

The olive tree and Israel's future – Romans 11:1-29

The freedom of Christian conscience – Romans 14:1-23

Spiritual gifts – I Corinthians 12-14

Women's place in the church – I Corinthians 11:1-16; 14:34-35

Some of Paul's writings could be hard to understand. That word carries the idea of being hard to interpret, that they were very complex.

As we study, we do our best to interpret what he means by the context of the passage, by cultural times in which they were written, by cross-referencing with other passages, and by the help of the Holy Spirit who is here to help us understand. We don't have to be in the dark. Even though they may be challenging to understand, ask the Holy Spirit for insight. He's here to teach us.

It's a challenging message because it can be hard. It's a challenging message because it can be harsh.

B. It's A Challenging Message Because It Was Harsh

Scripture that is hard to understand can be twisted. In the context of the letter Peter is referring to false teachers who twisted Scripture to say something other than what it really means for their own personal gain.

For example in II Timothy 2:17 Paul spoke about Hymenaeus and Philetus who twisted Paul's teaching about the second coming.

In Philippians 1:17 Paul spoke about those who preached Christ out of selfish ambition to cause problems for him.

Peter says such men were unstable and unlearned. Being "unstable" means they wavered in their spiritual character. In James 1:8 we read that "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." The person may claim to be a believer but his actions reveal something entirely different.

The word "unlearned" refers to a lack of information or someone who is untaught. This person makes no effort to try and understand Scripture. Instead he interprets it as he pleases for his own personal and often time's immoral gain.

The word "wrest" (KJV) or "distort" (NIV) means to torture or twist. It was used of people who were put on the torture wrack and twisted as punishment for their crimes. False teachers twisted Scripture in a torturous way to say what they wanted to justify their own evil desires. Peter says they do it to other Scripture as well. But he concludes that it will be to their own destruction or ruin. John concludes Revelation by saying that anyone who adds to or takes away from the prophecy will receive the same plagues found in the book as a harsh punishment for their twisting Scripture.

Warren Wiersbe wrote that "false teachers are multiplying and their pernicious doctrines are infecting the church. God needs separated men and

women who will resist them, live godly lives and bear witness of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. The time is short!"

Peter's closing remarks are a reminder of what is at stake. It is calling us to a godly life that is spotless and blameless in character while we look forward to the coming of Christ. His letter serves as a roadmap to guide us safely to our eternal home.