

With Anticipation  
December 4, 2016  
Allen Power

2 Peter 3:3-13,17-18

Opening discussion: Waiting – on a plane, in a doctor’s office, in the carpool line. How good are you at waiting? Are you impatient or do you welcome the break? Are you productive or are you bored? **What kinds of things do people do while they’re waiting? What’s the most irritating thing you’ve seen people do while you’re waiting? How do YOU normally use waiting time? This morning’s lesson is titled: “With Anticipation.” What’s the difference between anticipation and waiting?**

Anticipation is a more positive word than words like “wait,” or “delay.” Children anticipate Christmas morning; students anticipate graduation; young people anticipate adulthood, marriage, and career; parents (and grandparents) look forward to a birth with great anticipation [Susan’s comment.]

Big Idea: A believer’s hope is in the return of Jesus. That should fill us with anticipation! The question: Are we “cooling our heels” or growing in grace?

As Peter begins to wind down his last letter to followers of Christ, he says he wants to remind us of some important things. Let’s pick it up in verse three:

2 Peter 3:3–14 (NLT)

<sup>3</sup> Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. <sup>4</sup> They will say, “What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created.”

<sup>5</sup> They deliberately forget that God made the heavens long ago by the word of his command, and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water. <sup>6</sup> Then he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood. <sup>7</sup> And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are

being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed.

<sup>8</sup> But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. <sup>9</sup> The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment.\*

- Peter says “above all” we need to know that in the waning days before Jesus returns there will be “scoffers.” **What’s a scoffer? What are these scoffers scoffing about?**
- Verse five says, the scoffers “*deliberately forget*” or are “*willingly ignorant*” of some historical facts. **What do they “deliberately forget?”**
- With just a word God created the earth; with a word He destroyed it by water; and one day, with just a word He will judge this earth with fire.
- Do you ever wonder why people so fiercely attack the biblical account of creation and a global flood? Why don't they just shrug their shoulders, roll their eyes, and move on?
- If creation is a myth, and the flood is a myth, then God's power over earth doesn't exist. Attacking creation and the flood is how “thinkers” bring God down to size. One day the “thinkers” will have another thought coming!
- Peter says the scoffers love to taunt Christians: “*Are you guys still here? I thought Jesus was coming to get you! It sure is taking a long time!*”
- Time? In verse eight Peter says, “*Let me set you straight about time.*” He alludes to Psalm 90:4 in teaching a theological truth about our Heavenly Father. God doesn't wear a watch or own a calendar.
- In our human frailty we live in three tenses: past, present, and future.
- John Phillips: “*God, by contrast, gathers all of time, past and future, in to an eternal present tense...We look at our calendars*

*and accuse God of being too slow. God looks at His calendar and sees that He is right on time.”<sup>1</sup>*

- Verse nine is an important verse: God is not slow; He's patient.
- **Why is God delaying Christ's return?**
- Do you get impatient when it's one minute past time to board a plane? *"I'm here, let's go!"* Aren't we glad that God doesn't run eternity like an airline?
- Oh, there's a set schedule for when He'll return, but it isn't published on the digital board. God is saying, *"Be patient. Trust me. I'm waiting on a few stragglers who haven't gotten on board yet."*
- Chuck Swindoll suggests, we personalize verse nine replacing the words "any" and "all" with the name of someone you know that doesn't know Christ: *God is patient "not wishing for (name) to perish but for (name) to come to repentance."*<sup>2</sup> That DOES give that verse new relevance.
- **By the way, though we don't know God's timetable, how can we participate in the process of "speeding" His return?**
- Matthew 24:14 (NLT) tells us *"...the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations\* will hear it; and then the end will come."*
- God knows how many will be saved and who will be saved. We can help by sharing the gospel with as many as we can while there is still time.
- Remember: What appears to be a delay for me means salvation for someone else. God is not slow; he's patient! Aren't you glad He is?
- Regardless of what the scoffers say, Jesus is coming back and his followers should be living with hope and ANTICIPATION. How do we?

<sup>11</sup> Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live, <sup>12</sup> looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along. On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames. <sup>13</sup> But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness.

- Question: If everything is going to be destroyed, why are we so focused on material possessions? There's nothing wrong with

- enjoying “things,” but ponder this: if I calculated my time, thoughts, and focus as a ratio, what percentage of my focus is on material “things” versus eternal reality?
- How can I change that ratio? How should we live while we wait for Christ?

<sup>14</sup> And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight. (Some translations: without spot or blemish, and at peace.<sup>3</sup>)

- None of us is perfect, even if we’ve come to salvation in Christ. We certainly don’t earn that salvation by our actions and deed.
- **So, if we’re guilty sinners saved by grace, how can we live a “blameless” life? What do you think that looks like?**

Philippians 2:12–15 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

<sup>14</sup> Do all things without grumbling or disputing, <sup>15</sup> that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

- John Phillips: *“The word blameless means ‘not open to censure or adverse criticism.’ We are to be at peace with God and man and clean and blameless in His sight.”<sup>4</sup>*
- Consider this: Unsaved people don’t expect Christians to be perfect, but they DO expect us to be DIFFERENT.

1 Peter 2:12 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

- What else should we do while we wait, Peter?

2 Peter 3:17–18 (NLT)

### *Peter's Final Words*

<sup>17</sup> You already know these things, dear friends. So be on guard; then you will not be carried away by the errors of these wicked people and lose your own secure footing.

- Be on guard so false teachers can't throw you off your spiritual footing!

<sup>18</sup> Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

- **What do you think it means to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus?**
- First, let's be clear about what "grow in grace" DOESN'T mean. When we're saved we get all the grace we'll ever need. There is a vast difference between grace growing and our growing in grace. God's Grace never increases—it is always infinite, so it cannot be more.<sup>5</sup>
- What we CAN grow in is our appreciation and understanding of God's grace in our lives. We do that through a growing knowledge of Jesus.
- Charles Spurgeon makes this point:

*"The more you know of the Savior, the better you must love Him. The more you discover of His beauties, of His excellences, of His virtues, of His perfections, and of His glories, the more your soul will be drawn towards Him. I tell you who do not love Christ at all, it is because you do not know Him, for if you knew anything of Him, you would love Him in proportion to your knowledge!"<sup>6</sup>*

So, What's the Takeaway?

- No matter what the scoffers say, Jesus is coming back. If you're a follower of Christ, His return should fill you with anticipation!
- It's also a fact that when Christ returns, He will judge this earth with a powerful, painful, and fiery justice.
- Yet, our patient Heavenly Father is delaying to allow as much time as possible for people to come to Christ and be spared that judgment.
- While He delays, are we believers "cooling our heels" or growing in grace?
- How can we KNOW if we are growing in grace?

- Quoting Spurgeon again:  
*“... there cannot be any grace at all except as we know Christ! And there can be no growth in Grace except as we grow in our knowledge of Christ.”*<sup>7</sup>

- Then Spurgeon gives us a test:  
*“We may always test whether we are growing by this question—Do I know more of Christ today than I did yesterday? Do I live nearer to Christ today than I did a little while ago? For increase in the knowledge of Christ is the evidence as well as the cause of true growth in Grace.”*<sup>8</sup>

- Will you and I take the test this week? Are we closer to Christ? Do we know Jesus better than ever? The more we know Him, the more we'll grow in grace.

<sup>1</sup> Phillips, John. *Exploring the Epistles of Peter: An Expository Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005. Print.

<sup>2</sup> *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*. (1995). (2 Pe 3:9). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (2 Pe 3:14). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

<sup>4</sup> Phillips, John. *Exploring the Epistles of Peter: An Expository Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005. Print.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols46-48/chs2700.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*