

## Sermon Outline

# “Living While Waiting For the Lord’s Return” 2 Peter Series, part 9 2 Peter 3:14-18 – Mark Mitchell – December 18, 2011

## Introduction

1. Three times in the space of three verses, Peter uses the word “waiting”: “... *waiting* for and hastening the coming day of God” (v. 12); “... according to his promise, we are *waiting* for new heavens and a new earth” (v. 13); and, “Therefore, beloved, since you are *waiting* for these ...” (v. 14).
2. The word “to wait” means “to expect,” “to watch for,” or “to wait with anxiety.” It describes the disposition of someone who is eagerly anticipating something or someone’s arrival.
3. In this passage, Peter is calling us to wait in eager expectation of the Lord’s return. And the way we wait matters to the Lord. Waiting with anticipation of the Lord’s return leads to right living until he comes. So how should we wait?

## Strive to Be Holy (verse 14)

1. The anticipation of the Lord’s return is the ground for holy living. We’re exhorted to “be diligent,” to strive, and to make every effort to be holy. Holiness requires grace-motivated effort. This means remembering that God has empowered us by his Holy Spirit and has given everything we need for life and godliness. With this in mind, we must exert effort.
2. What does this look like? It can look like diligent effort to get out of bed earlier than our body wants to so we can spend time with God in his Word, in worship and in prayer. It also can look like diligent effort to be “found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.” Because we must all appear before his judgment seat, we must put off indulging our sinful desires and strive to put on holiness, righteousness and godliness.

## Think Rightly (verse 15)

1. How are we to think about the fact that the Lord has not yet returned? We are to rightly understand that God is patient and is waiting for maximum repentance. Peter is echoing here (positively and in shorthand fashion) what he has already stated negatively in 3:9: “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” God is patient and his grand purpose is that none should perish but instead come to salvation.

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2. Why do we need to be exhorted in this way? Because the wrong thinking of the false teachers and scoffers led them to wrong ways of living. The false teachers reasoned, "Because God is slow to fulfill his promises, Jesus isn't returning and there is no final judgment." Their wrong thinking became an incentive to immoral living.
  - a. If we're not careful, we can do the same thing. We can think of the Lord's delay as an excuse for ungodly living. This can lead to being lax, careless, lazy and indifferent. This wrong thinking can extinguish the fire of our love and devotion to Christ.

### **Watch Carefully (verse 17)**

1. We are to "take care," "be on our guard" and "watch carefully," so that we do not lose our stability. Peter exhorts his readers and us: Don't be carried away by their false teaching. Don't be carried away by their immorality. Don't be carried away by their lustful passions. Don't be carried away by their ignorant boasting. On account of these things, God's wrath is coming. Instead, watch your life carefully so as to please the Lord and walk in godliness.

*"Paying attention to warnings does not quench confidence but is the means to it. So also Peter was not putting a damper on the assurance of his readers. He knew that assurance becomes a reality by heeding warnings. Those who are on their guard will not fall away from their secure position, while those who are careless are apt to slip away because they ignored warning signals." – Thomas Schreiner*

### **Grow Spiritually (verse 18)**

1. Peter concludes his letter with, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Grace can mean a couple of different things in Scripture.
  - a. First, "grace" is God's undeserved goodness in our lives. As sinners, the only thing we deserve from God is his wrath and punishment. The basis for God's favor (grace) toward us is the perfect obedience and sacrifice of Christ.
  - b. But grace can also have a second meaning. It can refer to the working of God's divine power in our lives through Christ. God's divine power, or grace, has given us everything we need for life and godliness.
2. So when we're exhorted to grow in grace, Peter means for his readers to grow in their experience of God's grace, to grow in their understanding of God's grace and to grow in their appreciation of God's grace. In other words, don't settle for your current experience of God's grace.

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*“There is unspeakable comfort ... in knowing that God is constantly taking knowledge of me in love, and watching over me for my good. There is tremendous relief in knowing that His love to me is utterly realistic, based at every point on prior knowledge of the worst about me, so that no discovery now can disillusion him about me, in the way I am so often disillusioned about myself, and quench his determination to bless me.” – J.I. Packer*

3. Peter also exhorts us to “grow ... in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior.” The primary vehicle for this is the Bible, the Word of God. Through the words of Scripture we come to know Christ. It should be the cry of our hearts that we want to know Christ. If a failure to watch ourselves can lead to losing our stability, growing in grace and knowledge will make our salvation ever more secure and assured.

## Conclusion

1. Jesus Christ will return. It is certain and it will be sudden, like a thief in the night. As we eagerly wait for and anticipate that great day, we should be like children waiting and anticipating Christmas morning. We should allow the knowledge of the certain and sudden return of Christ give us power and purpose to pursue holiness, think rightly, watch carefully and grow spiritually.

## Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a Care Group to read 2 Peter 3:8-18.
2. In your life, what are you waiting for (e.g., a job, a spouse, better health, a restored relationship, a dream to be fulfilled, etc.)? Why can waiting be hard? Why is it important to the Lord how we wait?
3. Why does Peter exhort us to eagerly wait and anticipate the Lord’s return? Why does this kind of waiting lead to right living?
4. In what ways has the Lord been patient with you? Are there any areas in your life in which the Lord is waiting patiently for you to surrender?
5. In this next year, what one area of your life do you desire to grow in holiness? What would grace-motivated diligence look like?
6. How does growth in grace and knowledge of Jesus cultivate and deepen your relationship with the Lord? In the coming year, how can you grow in these two areas?