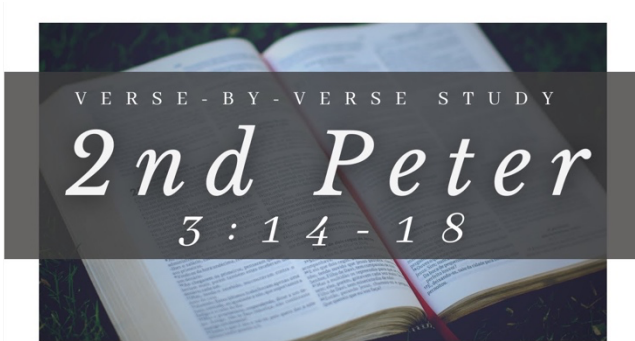


20230103 2 Peter 3:14-18 Be Steadfast – Be Diligent – Grow in Grace !

¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, ***be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;*** ¹⁵ and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶ as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.



¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; ¹⁸ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

On Sunday, we learned that Peter calls us to live in a manner of “holy conduct and godliness”. He told us that the whole world is going to burn, and that we should spend time on what counts. We learned that our salvation has three aspects to it: 1) past – justification which frees us from or removes us from the penalty of sin, 2) present – sanctification which frees us and removes us from the power of sin, and 3) glorification – which frees us and removes us from the presence of sin. The same general exhortation is being found here when Peter says “BE DILIGENT”.

According to the online dictionary, diligence means “Constant and earnest effort to accomplish what is undertaken; constancy in the performance of duty or the conduct of business; persistent exertion of body or mind; industry; assiduity.”

I would have told my children that it includes “DON’T GIVE UP. NEVER SURRENDER. KEEP ON KEEPING ON.” Of course, we need to surrender sometimes, but it’s a general idea of **being persistent about accomplishing something**. And what are we trying to accomplish? We want God to have His way with us so that we become more and more conformed to the image of Christ. As our minds are renewed (seeing things God’s way) we become more and more like him in our holy and godly living. As John the Baptist said, “He must increase, and I must decrease”.

If we have been saved, we are in phase two which is the part Paul calls “working out our salvation with fear and trembling”. We don’t work FOR our salvation with fear and trembling, rather we are working OUT our salvation through fear and trembling. That means living out and growing in our identity in Christ.

Knowing your identity is important. I mentioned on Sunday that my dad taught me certain things by telling me, “McMullens do this. Or, McMullens do that.” I just learned to

live out what it meant to be a McMullen. Remember when the Lord had to show up and tell Gideon who he was. God called Gideon to be a judge when he was hiding down in a wine press gleaning wheat. That's not what you do down in a wine press, but Gideon was hiding down in that press to protect his crop from the attacking Midianites. Gideon didn't show much courage at that point, We read,"

11 Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites. 12 And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!"

The Lord spoke into Gideon his true identity. He said, "Gideon, you're a mighty man of valor so start acting like it!". That's exactly what He does with us.

We might feel we're defeated but God says, "You're more than conquerors". (Romans 8:37)

We might feel we don't know God's plan for our lives, but God says, "I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

We might feel we deserve condemnation for some mess we've gotten ourselves into, but God says, "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1)

The list goes on and on. It is important that we learn to not be easily shaken.

v.14 We talked last Sunday about the fact that Jesus IS COMING AGAIN. So let me ask you a question. How do you want the Lord to find you? Watching TV? Wasting your days on things that have no lasting eternal merit? Do you want Him to find you indulging your flesh? Viewing pornography? Drinking your life away? Being horribly busy doing things that have no everlasting merit? Know for certain that **He will find you doing something**, and Peter tells us that we should want to be found without spot and blemish. This is yet another call to holy living. "Holy living" means consecrated living. Living in way that you're separated out to do what God wants you to do. Don't confuse holy standing in the Lord with "holy living",

v. 15 Peter is saying that we should enjoy God's patience in not burning up the earth because for now we're being saved from it and so are others. It gives others the chance to come to know the Lord Jesus.

v. 16 I think it's interesting that he says although some of Paul's teaching is difficult to understand, it is able to be understood with teaching. He comments that those who are not taught use Paul's words and twist them to say what they want to say or to support their own errant arguments. We've all met people that take things out of context. He

also says Paul's writings are as important "AS THE OTHER SCRIPTURES". This reminds us that the scriptures, including what Paul wrote are the INSPIRED WORD OF GOD. He adds that not only do they twist the words of Paul (they distort and overstretch it), but they twist all of scripture just to support whatever it is that they want to teach. Interestingly, he says they do this to the point that they destroy themselves. False teachers continue to stretch the scriptures to say something that they do not say.

v.17 He tells us "you know all of this, so take care" that you're not carried away with these people and these teachings. If you get caught up in that kind of teaching YOU LOSE YOUR STABILITY. You lose your grounding. You end up living in doubts of all kinds.

GOD'S WORD BRINGS US STABILITY. IT GIVES US A FOUNDATION UPON WHICH TO STAND. IT GIVES YOU A BASE UPON WHICH YOU CAN BUILD A SOLID LIFE. When people take things out of the word that aren't in there, it creates an instability in people's souls. When they add things that are not in there it also creates an instability.

The word is meant to bring comfort (and yes conviction). But even when we're convicted our hearts are filled with hope because we know that He loves us and wants the best for us. We're not tormented but we're brought back to understanding what it is that God wants of us. It actually is a comfort.



v.18 BUT GROW IN THE GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE. The verb "grow" is the present imperative tense. "BE CONTINUALLY GROWING" moving forward. When we are growing, we are changing. It's good from time to time to take a spiritual inventory of where you are and maybe ask

yourself, "Am I growing or have I leveled out?" Am I reacting in the flesh or am I responding in the Spirit.

And with that, we finish up with Peter's letters.

Let's finish by reading how Gene Peterson paraphrases this passage in the Message

14-16 So, my dear friends, since this is what you have to look forward to, do your very best to be found living at your best, in purity and peace. Interpret our Master's patient restraint for what it is: salvation. Our good brother Paul, who was given much wisdom in these matters, refers to this in all his letters, and has written you essentially the same thing. Some things Paul writes are difficult to understand. Irresponsible people who

don't know what they are talking about twist them every which way. They do it to the rest of the Scriptures, too, destroying themselves as they do it.¹⁷⁻¹⁸ But you, friends, are well-warned. Be on guard lest you lose your footing and get swept off your feet by these lawless and loose-talking teachers. Grow in grace and understanding of our Master and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Glory to the Master, now and forever! Yes!

Let us pray.