



Parkway Fellowship

Don't Forget • Don't Forget This One Thing • 2 Peter 3:1-18 • 03/31/2019

Main Point

God tolerates evil for now so more people can become Christ-followers.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the longest you've ever waited for something (waiting in a line on Black Friday or camping out for tickets, etc.)?

Why did you wait? Was it worth it?

Did you make good use of your time while you waited, or was that time largely wasted? Explain.

Jesus said He was coming again soon more than 2,000 years ago and we're still waiting. He meant it when He said it, but He thinks about time differently than we do. We think waiting 5 minutes at our favorite fast food restaurant is long! God sees the bigger picture. We must not forget that there is great, important purpose in our waiting for His Second Coming.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Ask a volunteer to read 2 Peter 3:1-7.

Why do you think Peter wrote about Jesus' return to these congregations? Why do we need to hear a message about Jesus' return in our day and time?

When Peter used the phrase first, be aware of this (v. 3), he stressed that what follows is to be considered carefully. Peter could have meant believers were not to be surprised or caught unaware at the rise of scoffers among them. The Greek term rendered scoffers comes from a word that means "to treat with scorn, mock, or

ridicule.” These scoffers would make fun of Christian beliefs, but Christians could trust that God has proven His faithfulness.

In verses 5 and 6, what are two facts usually ignored by those who dismiss the idea of Christ’s second coming?

Scoffers conveniently ignored the creation account in Genesis 1 and the flood in Genesis 6–9. In the beginning, God spoke His creative word and formed the heavens and the earth. He intervened in Noah’s time, pronouncing judgment on people’s wickedness. The waters covered the earth, and everybody except Noah and his family perished. Thus, both in creation and judgment, God had intervened to alter the world’s order of events. He has proven His truthfulness throughout all time.

How does our understanding that people live forever—either in heaven or hell—influence the way we look at those around us? How does it affect our view of God?

| Ask a volunteer to read 2 Peter 3:8-10.

Why isn’t God slow to fulfill His promises? How did Peter describe God’s sense of time?

What should we do in light of Jesus’ promised return?

Peter wrote about Jesus’ return because he cared about the believers he was writing to and wanted them to be prepared. Some may consider God slow in sending Christ back, but Peter understood that God sees time differently than we do. A thousand years is like a day to God. Peter wanted everyone to be certain of Christ’s return without worrying about the exact time. Peter taught that Christ would come like a thief—at an unpredictable time.

Why has God delayed Christ’s return even to this day?

Why do you think some people refuse to repent and be saved in spite of God’s patience in delaying Christ’s return?

The interval between Christ’s resurrection and return did not indicate God was “dragging His feet,” but rather, demonstrated His patience. The second coming’s seeming delay actually demonstrated God’s compassion. He was allowing people the opportunity to experience His salvation. This gives us all the more reason to diligently share the message of Christ.

| Ask a volunteer to read 2 Peter 3:11-18.

Why do you think Peter included this description of the cataclysmic events related to Christ’s return?

Peter did not intend his description of Christ's second coming to cause believers to fear. He meant to encourage them to live rightly. Their conduct and character were to reflect the character of Christ. Believers' lifestyles were to demonstrate holiness—their being set apart for God's service and for moral purity, so that unbelievers might be led to Christ.

Peter wanted people to wait by being diligent and patient with God. To remain faithful, we must grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ so that we will be prepared for the day when He returns.

In what ways does our certain future give us present hope? Purpose?

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

In this week's message, we were asked the following questions: Who is going to be in heaven because of you? Who is in your life that God wants to pursue through you? With those questions in mind, how do you respond to the following:

What do you need to remember daily so that you will share our faith with unbelievers? What will you do to remember those things?

What does it look like practically to be “diligent” to share the message of Christ?

Pray

Thank God that He is not slow to fulfill His promises, but is working all things in His timing. Ask Him to give you peace and patience as you live in the knowledge that Jesus will return. Pray for the people in your lives who do not know Him to come to saving faith, and invite Him to give you new opportunities to share the gospel.

Commentary

| 2 Peter 3:1-18.

3:1-2. Peter referred to his epistle as the second letter he had written to his readers. Presumably the previous letter was 1 Peter (see Introduction). In both letters Peter reminded his readers not to forget the teachings they had received through the prophets and apostles. The command may refer to the revelation of God in Christ through the apostles, or possibly to specific warnings about false teachers.

3:3-4. The teaching of which Peter spoke included accepting Christ's return, which had been rejected by the false teachers. The apostles expected the presence of scoffers and their activities, and Peter warned his readers that scoffers will come in the last days to scoff. They were on the scene in Peter's day; they would

also be present in the future. The last days refers to the period of time between Christ's incarnation and His return. The scoffers mocked Christ's return because many years had passed and it had not yet occurred: Ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they have been since the beginning of creation. The fathers probably refers to the OT patriarchs given the mention of the beginning of creation. Because the false teachers distorted the OT Scriptures, Peter countered them by alluding to the OT.

3:5-7. The heretics argued that the world was unchanging, that it would remain so, and thus that the Lord would not return. To counter this charge, Peter took his readers' thoughts back to creation to show them that the world had not always been orderly and that the source of the world's order was God. Peter appeared to speak of water as the element out from which God formed the earth. By the word means by God's decree—He spoke and it happened. To counter the false teachers' claims, Peter also reminded his readers of the great flood that took place in Noah's day when the earth was destroyed. So God does demonstrate His power and intervene in judgment in a world that otherwise seems unchanging. By the same word, He will do it again when Christ returns.

3:8. What seems like a delay makes the Lord's return no less certain. Peter noted that God views time differently than human beings do. Christ will return in accordance with the divine timetable, not ours. Dear friends recalls the recipients of the letter (1:1).

3:9. The Lord has not yet returned, says Peter, because He is patient with you, not wanting any to perish. You is variously interpreted as a reference to the letter's Christian recipients (identified in 1:1) or else more broadly as all people. In chapter 1 you and your both refer back to the recipients identified in 1:1. Peter's later use of dear friends, seems also to point back to those identified in 1:1.

3:10. God's patience toward sinners is not inexhaustible. The Day of the Lord will be sudden and will catch many people unprepared, as when a burglar sneaks in and robs a house.

3:11-14. Peter insisted that the anticipation of the Lord's return and its accompanying events of judgment should rouse Christians to holy living. Evil will be completely destroyed when Christ returns, and righteousness will permanently dwell in the new heavens and a new earth (Isa 32:16).

3:15-16. Peter notes that the teaching in Paul's letters said that the Lord's patience provided opportunities for salvation (Rm 2:4). Peter grouped Paul's letters together with the rest of the Scriptures. This reference does not necessarily mean that Paul's letters were already circulating as a complete collection. Peter may simply have been referring to the Pauline letters that were widely known and accepted as Scripture at the time he wrote 2 Peter. In any event, Peter clearly affirms the God-given authority of Paul's writings.

3:17-18. Since Peter's readers had now been warned about the false teachers in their midst, he instructed them to be on their guard and not be led astray. He also encouraged them to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. He closed with a doxology in which he ascribed glory to Christ both now and forever.