



2 Peter 3:10-18 **Be Holy, Be Diligent, Beware**

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro
www.calvarydcmetro.org

In my service as a Reserve Chaplain there are two things I do a decent amount of: invocations at retirements and counseling. And interestingly, the two are often related. It's not unusual for someone to walk into the chapel, or pull me aside as I walk through their office and start talking with me about how concerned they are about what is going to happen next.

These are usually higher-ranking individuals – both officer and enlisted, male and female – who are either retiring or are considering retiring – voluntarily or involuntarily.

Now, remember, I'm a pastor, not a career counselor or headhunter. So I take a different tack in my conversations with these people. I try to use these critical periods in their lives to help them see more clearly what they're already beginning to understand - that there is much more to life than the insignia on their collar or the title on their signature line – those things only last so long. Life on earth is significant, and real, but it is fleeting. The question they, and we all, need to answer, is not, "what should I do next?" But, "why am I here?"

As military members they understand the concept of completing the mission. They've been working toward that goal for decades by the time we talk. What I try to help them see is that they've been working on smaller, tactical, and operational goals, but ignoring the larger strategic mission of life. So I ask them – what is the mission of your life? What are you trying to accomplish with your time on Earth? Once you understand that, then you can start to make smart decisions about what to do next.

So, what is the mission of life? What is this all about? What are we trying to accomplish?

We'll answer that question this morning as we finish Second Peter – we'll see that he tells us what comes next and gives us three ways that what comes next should affect our lives right now.

We said last week that both the religious and non-religious person agree: you came into this world with nothing and you won't take anything with you when you go. So no matter what background you come from, you have to agree that, if there is anything more than this life after this life, what comes next can't simply be about what you bought or built while you were here.

The Bible teaches that it is appointed for a man to die once and then the judgment (Heb 9:27). We will all stand before God one day and give an account for how we have used our lives. What we spent them on. What they were all about.

That day can come in one of two ways: it can come through our own natural or accidental death, or it can come because He has come back to bring an end to the world. There will be no warning, no advance notice of when that day will occur, nor is there often any warning for any other day on which people die.

Look with me at 2 Peter 3:10:

[10](#) But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

Or your translation may say they will be “laid bare.” The idea is the same – everything will be passed through the flames. As we saw last week from Revelation, one day everything that now exists will be destroyed. Only our souls and our choices are eternal. Think about that – only your soul and your choices are eternal. Nothing else will last.

With so much at stake, and so little warning for when it is all going to happen, let’s go back to our original question – what is the mission of life? And how should we be living? Peter says in light of this coming judgment by God, which we will all face, we ought to be three things: be holy, be diligent, and beware.

[11](#) Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, [12](#) looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? [13](#) Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

If we really believe everything that the Bible says about who God is and what He is going to do, if we really believe Him when He says He is going to scrap everything and start from scratch again, then what affect should that be having on our lives? How should that affect the things we choose to pursue, and how much of ourselves we give to them?

Peter says we ought be looking forward, not to what we can accomplish here on earth, but to what God has promised. We should be reflections of holiness and godliness not the ordinary and the selfish.

The word holy means set apart – set apart for a specific purpose – in this case, set apart for God. *Your life should be lived for Him.* It should be lived in a manner that brings Him pleasure. Your greatest ambition should be to please Him, not to achieve something for yourself. Now that doesn’t mean you can’t accomplish things, you absolutely can, and should, but the choices you make about WHAT to pursue, and HOW and WHY you pursue them, should reflect the fact that, if you belong to Christ, you are holy – you are set apart for Him.

So, it’s not just that you’re a student – you’re a holy student – a student for God. And you have to figure out what that means – how is that going to make you look different? Because

it WILL make you look different – things about your life ought to be different because you're holy – set apart, to be a student for Jesus.

You're not just a nurse – you're a holy nurse – a nurse for God. And that should manifest itself in an obvious way. You're not simply concerned with what certifications you have and what recognitions you've received, you really care about your patients – you let the love of Christ flow through you into them and their families, you take extra steps that your co-workers wouldn't take, because you're not just doing this for the hospital – you're holy, you're doing it for Jesus.

You're not just a mom – you're a holy mom – a mom for God, trying to love your kids and teach your kids, and provide for your kids in a way that pleases God.

You're not just a soldier – you're a holy soldier – a soldier for God.

You're not just a teacher – you're a holy teacher – a teacher for God.

You get the picture. It's not as much about what you do as it is about the motive and the manner behind how and why you do it.

To use Peter's words, you're not just spiritual when it's convenient; you're actually (vs 12) "looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God." Your walk with God moves from being an optional or supplemental part of your life to being the center of your life where it belongs.

And that all sounds great, right? And it's really encouraging for us to think – wow, I can live my life consecrated to God. I can be a holy IT guy – a tech for God. But how does it all play out? What does it look like in the day to day? Peter says it's not going to be easy. He tells us not only do we need to be holy; we also need to be diligent in our holiness.

[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.

Now you can see Peter goes on a little rabbit trail there about Paul. In the next week or two as we do a topical study on the Bible – what it is and what it says, we'll get more into what Peter says here about Paul, but for now, take a minute and be comforted by the fact that yes, Peter did just say that some parts of the Bible are really hard to understand – especially some of the stuff written by Paul. So, if you've ever felt like what you read in the Bible was kind of confusing or left you going, huh? You can know you're not alone – even one of it's own authors agrees with you.

But Peter's remarks about Paul are wrapped around his admonition that we all be diligent in our attempts at holiness and godliness. Unfortunately, it's not enough simply to think of yourself as a holy dad, or a holy analyst – you need to actually live that out and that means making real sacrifices in the pursuit of real goals.

You need to be willing to say no to some things and to keep saying yes to others so that your life does look different. You will have to CONSTANTLY resist the flow of the crowd, constantly swim against the tide if you are going to be different as God calls you to be, because you're trying to accomplish a different goal. There's a great example of this kind of dedication going on right now with the Olympics.

We've been watching the Olympics lately and that means we've also been watching the commercials. I can't stand the one about the Chevy Cruze price tag – it drives me nuts, but I love the Citibank commercial that shows the perspective of different athletes training, preparing for the Olympics, and so it opens with a guy swimming and you hear him say:

“Take a day off? I don't even take a morning off.”

Then there's a guy swinging from the uneven bars:

“I haven't ordered dessert in two years.”

Then there's a girl riding a bike:

“You know that best selling book everyone loves? I haven't read it.”

And finally, a guy throwing the discus:

“I haven't watched TV since last summer. Hey, I've been busy.”

The point is, these athletes have all given their lives over to the pursuit of one thing, and *everything else that they do carries a reflection of that greater goal*. It's not that they don't want to take a morning off, it's not that they don't want dessert, it's not that they don't want to read the book or watch TV, and it's not there is anything inherently wrong in any of those things, it's just that these athletes know that those things are not going to get them as far down the road toward their goal as others things are, so they make choices that reflect their goals and they accept the sacrifice. They look at everything in life and ask: will this get me closer to where I need to be? And in a world where hundredths of a second count, those are important choices.

So, how does that reflect in our own lives? Are we as diligent as the Olympians in staying focused on our goal? Or are we like kids with ADHD at a carnival - constantly distracted by every new shiny and pretty thing that comes along?

Peter is encouraging us all to be dedicated, holy, set-apart for the sake of knowing God and making Him known, and then reflecting that in the choices we make. We ought to be

ordering our lives in such a way that we believe will get us, not to Brazil in 2016, but to Heaven at any moment.

But we live in a world, just like the Olympians, full of temptations that will distract us from our goals. Peter knows that, so he encourages us: be holy, be diligent, and now, beware.

[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;

It's so amazing to me, but a good percentage of the Old and New Testament is addressed to people who *already know God* but who are confused, misled, or drifting away. If you've been with us for a few weeks, you may remember that the whole purpose of this letter we're reading now was to warn people who already knew Jesus not to fall away from Him.

How can that be? Well, as we've discussed before, the Scripture is very clear – there is no way anyone can ever take you away from God. No one can ever snatch you out of His hand He tells us in John's gospel. And He also says there is no way He's ever going to leave us or send us away. But it's a little less dogmatic about whether we can know Him and then walk away from Him. In fact, time and time again, in Scripture and in our own lives, we see people who knew of God, who knew about God, whom we may have said had a relationship with God, but who eventually drifted away.

Peter warned us in chapter 2:3 that one of the reasons some of them did so was because they were covetous – that means they wanted more than they had. They wanted stuff or experiences – stuff that will eventually perish and burn, or experiences that God says no to or not right now to, and they went chasing after those things instead of chasing after God. So now Peter warns us again, one last time: “beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.”

It is absolutely CRITICAL that you regularly ask yourself – why am I doing this? Why am I pursuing this degree? Why am I working this job? Why am I hoping for that job? Why am I writing this check? Why are we having this baby? Why am I staying home with these kids? Question yourself and your choices and make sure you haven't been led away from your goal of holiness and godliness. If you don't remind yourself of it regularly, it will slip from your mind and you will become easily distracted. That's why Peter uses a word like “beware.”

Earlier this summer we went on a vacation with our extended family to the Outer Banks. While we were there Ben and his cousins discovered boogie boards for the first time, and they had a blast. It was kind of stormy off and on that week, so there were some decent waves – they were breaking pretty close in, but they were great for the kids.

There was also a pretty strong current where we were and as the kids kept riding the waves they would drift farther and farther down the beach. It only took a couple of minutes for them to drift 100 yards or more, so every now and then I had to tell them to pick up their boards, come out of the water, and walk back up the beach back to where our

family was and then they could get back in. It was easy for them to pay so much attention to what they were doing wave-by-wave that they forgot to check how far they were drifting.

Most of you know this – you just need to be reminded: there is a current of life – and it will slowly pull you off track if you don't pay attention. You have to be diligent in your commitment to holiness and you have to “beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.”

There can only be one number one spot in your life – you can only have one true allegiance – it's either to God or to something or someone else, but it can't be split up. So, instead of drifting along in life, instead of allowing your goals, your decisions, your ambitions to be influenced by those around you, do this instead:

[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.

Here is the antidote – here is the anchor – here is the way to stay on course, to remain holy – it's not for you to do more yourself, it's simply to understand more of what has already been done. Stay focused on who Jesus is, and the grace He has brought you by what He has done. Grow in your knowledge and understanding of what His life was all about, and you'll gain insight into how to live yours.

I've said many times – Christianity offers you three things that are unique in all the World's religions – no one else has all three:

1. Instruction from the Father about how you should live
2. Forgiveness offered through what Christ has done for you, not what you have done for Him, when you don't live like you should
3. Power through the Holy Spirit to live the way God commands.

Grow in your understanding of that and you'll know what to do in the thousands of choices that make up the path of your life.

And here's the cool thing – now there's freedom. Now you can choose from a variety of options. Because life isn't just about what major you choose, or what career you choose, or what career you choose next for those who are retiring, it's about glorifying God in everything you do. It's about loving Him and loving people. It's about knowing His Son and making Him known. You can do that on a big scale or a small scale. You can do that with lots of people or with a few people. You can do it with big people, or with little people, or with big people who act like little people...

You can be who God wants you to be almost anywhere under almost any circumstances. And that takes a lot of the pressure off. God is nowhere near as concerned about what you do as He is about why and how you do it.

Do all that you do for Him, and you'll spend your life well – you'll be ready to face the judgment because you stand before Him in Christ, and you'll stand with Peter "looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God."

As we close this morning I want to give us some time to search our hearts and hear from God – how are we doing? Are you interested in being holy? Are you being diligent in your pursuit of holiness? Are you being wary of getting distracted and falling away? Are you growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus - or are you drifting in your walk? Ask God to check your coordinates for you right now.

Or, is this foreign to you? Maybe you've been gathering some data about God, but you've never really come to Him and said, "I need you to be the center of my life – not just a fringe interest, but the unifying thread of my life." Have that conversation with Him today – tell Him you're sorry for living for yourself instead of for Him, ask Him to forgive you through Christ, and offer up what remains of your life to Him. Don't worry about what you've done so far – He's really good at picking up the pieces, and He knows how to get you where He's always wanted you to be – you'll just have to be diligent and beware as you follow Him.

So take a few moments now – all of us, and bring these things before the Lord. Talk to Him about your life right now.