

## **2 Peter 3:11-18 Active Waiting**

Peter finished his letter with five instructions about how people waiting for Jesus to return should live.

### **1. Live “lives of holiness and godliness” (verse 11).**

The meaning of holiness includes belonging to God, and godliness means being like God: Jesus shows us what holiness and godliness really look like, and they are beautiful and radical. Peter uses plural words here, suggesting that there are a variety of ways in which we can live holy and godly lives. There's a lot of scope for holy and godly creativity as we respond to the Spirit's leading: it may mean specifically choosing a type of job or a location to live in, or it may mean how you do whatever job you end up with and how you relate to your neighbours wherever you live.

We've heard a lot of prophetic messages recently about God's desire for the British church to increase its care for others, especially with the long-lasting impact of the pandemic and lockdowns. This may be an area that the Spirit is wanting to lead you in.

Peter's point is that we are constrained in what we do now by our anticipation that Jesus is going to return and talk with us about what we've done. We want to be ready for His return, not having wasted our waiting by living for ourselves and doing whatever we wanted. He is going to talk with you about the ways in which you lived a holy and godly life, you're going to want to have something to talk about!

Where, then, is the fact of your belonging to Jesus and representing Him to others making a specific difference in your life?

### **2. “Be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace” (14).**

Talk of “spots and blemishes” for a Jew like Peter mean Old Testament laws about what people and animals could come close to God (Leviticus 21:21, 1:3). Jesus is the perfect priest, the perfect sacrifice (1 Peter 1:19, Ephesians 5:27, Hebrews 7:23-28). So Peter is saying: Jesus has made you pure in God's eyes, make sure that you don't live any other way. Christians are not people who said “Yes” to Jesus once and then get on with their lives. They are people who say “Yes” to Him every day, throughout the day, for all their days. When we realise we've failed to do this, we come back to Him in repentance and He graciously forgives us, makes us clean, and we go again. One of the results of this is that we experience the peace that Peter mentions here.

3. “Count the patience of our Lord as salvation” (15).

Peter reminds us of what he said in verse 9, that Jesus has not returned yet because He wants more people to put their trust in Him. For those of us who have done this, knowing that Jesus is going to return in judgement, we must warn people that He is offering them mercy now.

The “Share Life” course bookmark has a simple order of actions that we can take to help others know about Jesus: pray for them specifically, be a friend to them, invite them to consider Jesus, encourage them to receive Him as Lord and Saviour and be baptised, accompany them in their new life.

#### **4. Don't get “carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability” (17).**

Peter has some very strong language for people who are teaching false things about Jesus and Christianity in chapter 2, and he returns to them here, calling them unstable and saying that they twist and distort Paul's teaching and the Old Testament, with deadly consequences. Peter doesn't want Christians being fooled and ruined by this. Jesus has put us in a safe and stable place – loved by God, saved by grace, kept for glory – false teaching will drag us away from this and into serious danger.

The leaders and preachers at King's are responsible to God for the members here, and for making sure they know the truth. We're not saying that we know everything, but we can usually tell what's good and what's not, what's helpful and what isn't.

#### **5. “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (18).**

The moment you put your faith in Jesus, incredible and complete changes happen but others things take more time. God wants us to grow in becoming more like His Son, before the day when we are finally transformed fully into His likeness.

Both grace and knowledge of Jesus are gifts from God and, like the gift of a good meal, they require a response from us to benefit from them. This can mean realising how patient God has been in revealing parts of our character that need changing one at a time over years rather than all at once, recognising that every good thing we receive comes as a free gift from Him, rather than an earned salary, experiencing His love first thing in the morning and last thing at night, knowing that we are cared for, asking for forgiveness and help day after day.

The New Testament never separates these experiences from the knowledge of who Christ is: the facts of who He is are the reason He is patient and good and loving and gracious to us. We discover these riches through reading and studying and hearing His Word, through encountering His Spirit, through being in the church community. The more we know Him, the more we love Him – and the more we will eagerly await His return, living to please Him as we do.

#### **Questions for group discussion**

- Why do you think Peter chose the five areas Luke mentioned (highlighted above) for his application of how to live in response to the promise of Jesus's return?
- Which of the five most grabbed your attention? Did you think God was speaking to you and how should you respond?

- A question for each instruction:
  - Where is the fact of your belonging to Jesus and representing Him to others making a specific difference in your life? Is there something you have been putting off because it's presently costly but eternally valuable?
  - Is there something you're doing that you know Jesus isn't impressed by, that you won't want to talk with Him about when He returns? It's time to repent and experience the peace of His forgiveness.
  - What can you do this week in the hope that someone you know who isn't a Christian might take another step in the process of coming to know Jesus?
  - How can we help each other not get fooled by false teachings masquerading as biblical truth? (You might want to reference Matthew Clifton-Brown's preach, Springs Without Water, if people haven't heard it.)
  - What has growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus looked like for you? How could you help others to do the same?