

LIVING ON EARTH WITH A DIVINE NATURE - Part fifteen

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WHY THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS HASN'T HAPPENED YET

2 Peter 3:8-9 - "But ***do not overlook this one fact***, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. [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***."

It seems to be a fact of life that certain truths frequently ***escape our notice***. Peter seems to intentionally repeat that idea - of ***things escaping our notice*** - two times in this third chapter:

2 Peter 3:5 - "For they ***deliberately overlook this fact***, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God...."

Then he gets to that very same idea in today's text:

2 Peter 3:8 - "But ***do not overlook this one fact***, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Notice, the ***first*** overlooking is ***deliberate*** (5). The ***second*** is ***careless and unintentional*** (8). The people described here are discouraged and distracted.

Peter is saying all of us will get into trouble - not just theological trouble or doctrinal trouble - but ***real life trouble*** - if we don't take the time to think things through - to ***make the appropriate mental connections*** - to ***make sure our heads are screwed on right when we approach God's truth***. Your head matters. Everyone thinks. But not everyone thinks about the ***right things***.

Peter seems concerned that, for many and varied reasons, our thinking gets more influenced by ***circumstance and culture*** than by ***Scripture***. It is very unlikely that your soul will be saved without processing these important insights from today's text. So Peter outlines a great contrast here between ***two crowds of people*** who were in trouble because they hadn't noticed things they should have noticed:

First, Peter addressed the wicked mockers of the Second Coming who wanted to be left undisturbed in their sinful ways - 2 Peter 3:3 - "....knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires."

These hadn't noticed the ***plain facts of biblical history***. It was forgetful - foolishly forgetful - to say that everything continued uninterrupted from the moment of creation. It was forgetful - foolishly forgetful - to think that God wouldn't judge them for their sin in the ***future*** when He had already judged the world for its sin in the ***past***. They desperately needed to notice that fact.

Second, Peter addressed those sincere believers ("beloved" vs.8) who were in danger of missing the reason Jesus hadn't come back yet. And because they had missed this truth they were also in danger of neglecting what they should be doing in the mean time. That is the context for understanding the message of **verses 8 and 9**.

1) **PETER PRESENTS A BIBLICAL APPROACH TO DEALING WITH DIFFICULT QUESTIONS**

You can't live the Christian life for very long before you are forced to come to terms with ***doubts*** that confuse your mind and ***trials*** that bring pain your soul. It's important to remember that these situations

are not sinful in themselves. They are an unavoidable part of living in this fallen world. And, even more importantly, they can be opportunities for growth and development and purifying of faith and commitment to Jesus if we **respond to them properly**.

But we **must** handle them properly. We can't just run and hide. We can't just pretend these questions and trials don't exist. The Bible outlines a **method - a means of approaching** - these issues from a Christian perspective.

2 Peter 3:8 - "But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Notice what Peter is saying here. It's very simple, but very important. When you are agitated and confused, when you are under fire and trial, when you are deeply disturbed in your heart - usually when you're either angry or broken-hearted - **make sure you don't forget things that are very basic - "Do not overlook this one fact...." (8).**

This is all it takes to mess up your whole mind. You only have to lose sight of **one important truth** to be totally wrong in your thinking. So go slowly. Keep your emotions in check. Stay in the Word of God. Don't make quick, rash judgements.

I was stunned by a Face book post Reni showed me. It was posted by a young woman who used to faithfully attend this church. She now denies Christianity completely. And what strikes you most forcefully is her **anger** against the church, Christianity, and her cultish upbringing in the church. How does that happen?

"Well, I would never forget something as important as the eternal, patient nature and character of God, Pastor Don."

I know you wouldn't forget that **right now**. But your thinking changes when you are the one agitated and troubled in soul. Truth is much harder to keep a hold of when your life is under strain and fire. **Ever notice how you can forget every part of your body that is healthy when you have a toothache?**

Our real problem is we are almost constantly looking at life **temporally** while God is constantly looking at it **eternally**. If we're going to think properly about God and about ourselves and about our world, we will have to step back, silence ourselves, and get God's eternal perspective on things.

Let me give you some examples of this right out of the Scriptures:

Psalm 73:1-9 - "Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. [2] But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped. [By the way, God bless the person who can honestly take a step back and see what's happening in his or her own heart - who can *admit* it.] [3] For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. [4] For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek. [5] They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind. [6] Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment. [7] Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies. [8] They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression.[9] They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth."

I know it's a lengthy text, but pay attention as the Psalmist continues:

Psalm 73:11-17 - "And they say, "How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?" [12] Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches.[13] All in vain have I kept my

heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. [14] For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning. [15] If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed the generation of your children.[16] But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, [17] until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end."

Don't miss the point of Asaph's words as he studies the prosperity of the wicked who mock God while he tries to be faithful and is suffering for it. You can look at the moment and be confused and embittered. **Or** you can get your mind on God in His sanctuary and remember His holiness and his judgement. You can look at the prosperity of the wicked **right now**, or you can look at the **destruction of the wicked - "their end"** - and end up praying words like these:

Psalm 73:27-28 - "**For behold** [whenever you see that word, do you see a command from God for you to **do** something? Stop and *look deeply at this!*], **those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.** [28] **But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.**"

What a marvelous phrase - "**...it is good for me to be near God...**"(28). This is not just **belief** in God, but **gaining perspective from the nearness of His presence**. Face difficult issues and trials and questions **in** His presence rather than allowing your difficulty or doubt drive you **away** from His presence.

Let me give you another example how important it is to remember the eternity of God when facing problems. It comes from the life of Job:

Job 30:16-28 - "**And now my soul is poured out within me; days of affliction have taken hold of me.[17] The night racks my bones, and the pain that gnaws me takes no rest. [18] With great force my garment is disfigured; it binds me about like the collar of my tunic. [19] God has cast me into the mire, and I have become like dust and ashes. [20] I cry to you for help and you do not answer me; I stand, and you only look at me. [21] You have turned cruel to me; with the might of your hand you persecute me. [22] You lift me up on the wind; you make me ride on it, and you toss me about in the roar of the storm. [23] For I know that you will bring me to death and to the house appointed for all living.[24] "Yet does not one in a heap of ruins stretch out his hand, and in his disaster cry for help? [25] Did not I weep for him whose day was hard? Was not my soul grieved for the needy? [This is Job's way of saying his trial wasn't due to personal wickedness on his part] [26] **But when I hoped for good, evil came, and when I waited for light, darkness came. [27] My inward parts are in turmoil and never still; days of affliction come to meet me. [28] I go about darkened, but not by the sun; I stand up in the assembly and cry for help.**"**

And then, suddenly, without warning, God starts to speak to Job and his smart mouthed friends. For four chapters Job faces questions like these from God:

Job 38:1-12 - "**Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:[2] "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? [3] Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. [4] "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. [5] Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?[6] On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, [7] when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?[8] "Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, [9] when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, [10] and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, [11] and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed'?[12] "Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place...."**

As if the point wasn't quite made yet, God asks a few more easy to answer questions:

Job 38:34-38 - "Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that a flood of waters may cover you? [35] Can you send forth lightnings, that they may go and say to you, 'Here we are'? [36] Who has put wisdom in the inward parts or given understanding to the mind? [37] Who can number the clouds by wisdom? Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens,[38] when the dust runs into a mass and the clods stick fast together?"

Finally, after Job crawls out of his hole, he gives God the only intelligent answer he can think of:

Job 42:1-6 - "Then Job answered the Lord and said:[2] 'I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. [3] 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. [4] 'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.' [5] I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; [6] therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Notice that last phrase - "...and repent in dust and ashes." ***Additudinal repentance is the highest form of repentance. It's not like repenting of theft or adultery. It requires more humility and honesty. And it's infinitely more freeing to the soul.***

Now, here's the point I'm trying to make with all these Bible passages - and it has a great deal to do with the **eighth verse** of the third chapter of 2 Peter. The confused Psalmist still had to face the prosperity of the wicked while he, in his godliness, suffered pain and silence from God. And Job never did get any answer from God as to the reason for his suffering. Job still had to sit there scraping his boils having watched the death of his family and the loss of his wealth. ***At the time of the writing of those verses we read, their situations weren't improved one bit.***

But their **attitudes** changed. Their **framework** for approaching their situations was radically improved. What happened? What did they come to see that they didn't remember before? Just one thing - ***one fact that Peter said we must hold on to*** - God is eternal, from everlasting to everlasting. If you don't think right about **God** you can't think right about **anything else**. That's a very important life principle. You can't map Him out with your limited mind. You can't measure Him with your yardstick.

2 Peter 3:8 - "But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

"Just where is the promise of His coming anyway? It's taking such a long time!"

To you it's such a long time. But for God, if a thousand years are like one day, and if two thousand years have passed since Jesus left this earth, then it's been ***like two days of waiting in the eyes of God***. That's like ordering your new couch thinking it will be delivered on **Wednesday**, and finding out it won't come until **Friday**.

Look carefully at that verse again. Peter says we can actually renew our minds and cure our souls just by remembering "***one thing***"(8). Don't let your head spin with a thousand things. Just keep one thing anchored firmly in place.

It's not easy to do. The hardest part of being on pilgrimage is learning to see things from God's viewpoint rather than our own. They say the hardest part of training seeing-eye dogs is training them to see things from the perspective of the **person they are leading**, rather than **their own dog's perspective**. A dog, on its

own doesn't have to walk **around** that table. He can just walk **under** it. But if the dog is leading a six foot tall man, he has to remember the man can't go **under** the table. The **dog** has to learn to see obstacles from the **man's** perspective.

So, as much as you and I can, we must look at life from the perspective of God's revelation. Keep the big picture in mind. It will help shape your thinking. It will build faith and patience.

2) **PETER SAYS THE REASON JESUS HASN'T COME BACK YET IS GOD IS ANXIOUSLY AWAITING THE CHANCE TO SHOW MERCY TO MORE REPENTANT SINNERS**

2 Peter 3:9 - "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward **you**, [Just make a mental note of those two words for now] **not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.**"

There's a "**you**" and an "**all**" in this verse. When **mockers** forget the Second Coming, they treasure their sins and live in their lusts (**2 Peter 3:3**). When **Christians** forget the Second Coming, they **lose their passion for the lost**. **They forget God is "...not wishing for any to perish, but that all should reach repentance"** (**3:9**).

It's amazing how badly we can distort truth without even trying. Usually, when people complain about God, the reasoning goes something like this: "**How can you say God is loving and caring and good? Look at the mess this world is in. Look at the hatred and cruelty. Look at the suffering. Why doesn't He come and do something about this? Either He cares, but can't do anything about this mess, or, He could do something about it all, but He doesn't care.**"

And it never dawns on the minds of many that the reason He waits is **He cares so deeply about those very ones who spit in His face**. He doesn't want any of them to perish. Not a one. Peter says, all these people need desperately to repent. God wants "**all to reach repentance.**" There is still no other way for people to be saved. And for people to repent, they usually have to come to the end of themselves. Sometimes they try everything else before they come to God. Sometimes that process takes years. **O, the rich love of God to give stubborn, rebellious people more time! How good He is to bad people.**

This verse also gives us our reason for living. Remember those little words, "**....to you....**" in the middle of **verse 9** - "**God is patient toward you....**" It is referring to **Christians**. Strangely, God says He is giving **Christians** more time on behalf of the **perishing**. God is giving **us** more time to fulfill our true calling as disciples. His patience is for **us**. It doesn't make us lazy or slack. It makes us **busy**. God, it seems, is waiting for **us**. These people can't just be written off. If this ninth verse means anything, it means that **God hasn't written these sinners off. He's still waiting for us to reach them.**

Later on, in **verse 15**, Peter will say we are to "**count the patience of our Lord as salvation...**" That's what I'm inviting all to do today. God is being patient beyond all reason. His arms are still open to the worst of sinners. Don't miss your moment. Be saved. And then, be busy reaching the lost. Either way, God is waiting with a great, loving, world embracing purpose.