October 10, 2021 COME BACK AND PUT EDITED VERSION HERE

Sermon 8

2 Peter 3:8-10

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Go ahead and open to 2 Peter 3 and we will continue on in our study. The whole study has been amazing, and encouraging, and challenging. I was out last Sunday and I was at a church down in Senoia. They were celebrating their tenth anniversary as a church. When they started, they asked me to be an external elder as they were getting their leadership in place to kind of help oversee and talk through stuff. So, I wanted to be there for that. I hate not being here but I got to go back and experience that and it was just an awesome service, an awesome sermon. So, we pick up and we’re going to be in chapter 3, verses 8-10, but really focusing in on the patience of the Lord.

Alistair Begg is one of my favorite preachers to listen to because he’s so faithful in how he handles the Scripture, and he has a Scottish accent, which is just easier on the ears. I’ve heard him say this so much,

### Patience is something you admire and appreciate in the car behind you and that drives you crazy with the car in front of you.

Right? I want to be shown patience but I don’t really want, or know how, to show it.

(Hi, Adam and Lauren. I was with y’all last Sunday. I was talking about you and I didn’t realize you were in the room, but it was good stuff. It doesn’t always go that way. Wait a second—what did I say? The service was awesome and the pastor there is super smart.)

But patience, we know, is a virtue. I think about it and I was so convicted this whole study. For those of us who have kids, I go back especially to when my kids were young, and they’d come up when you were working on something or into something and trying to get something accomplished, and it would be, “Dad?....Dad?....can we do this? Dad, why does this color smell this way?...Can we….Dad….later can we….?” And you say, “Just give me a minute. Let me finish this,” and it continues, “Dad….Dad….Dad??...” Then, finally, you go, “Hey listen!! I…Just…Need…You…TO BE…PATIENT!!!” Like me….I blew it. “Follow my example, children.” You know that moment? My wife is awesome. She’s always been awesome. She’s extremely patient. But she would catch my eye and we would be like, “We both know the irony here, right? You’re picking this up, right?” Yeah, I’m not being patient and I want that from them. We both know it.

The patience of God is such an underrated attribute of who He is. I think if we rightly understood it we would wake up thanking God for His patience that He did not take us out in our sleep. Throughout the day, as you realize what you just thought, and what you said, and what you’re doing, in light of the holiness of God, in light of the grace and the mercy He’s already shown you, we would just thank Him for His patience.

Tonight, I’m excited because that’s really what God is highlighting about himself in our text. If you remember, we already walked through these scoffers and these mockers who are making fun of the doctrine of the return of Christ. If you’re a believer, we should hold fast to the belief that Jesus will return and we should hold fast to it in such a way that we believe that it could happen at any moment. We should expect that it’s going to happen. That should be a thought in our mind as we wake, as we go on our way, as we lay down, that Jesus could come back at any moment. These mockers are making fun of that belief, making fun of that truth, and saying, “Where is He? What’s going on? Why hasn’t He come back yet? You still really believe that? 2000 years later and you really believe that? You believe that Jesus is going to ride in on a cloud?” They are mocking it. And we walk through how Peter dismantles and takes apart that argument that they make. It was awesome.

Tonight, we go into the, “Okay, but for real, it has been 2000 years since Jesus stood on that hill and told His disciples, ‘I’m coming back. Go get busy and tell everyone about me. I’m coming back.” As He ascended into Heaven and rode into Heaven on the cloud of glory, an angel stood there and said, “Listen, get busy. He just told you what to do so get busy because He’s coming back the same way as you saw Him go.” Well, that’s been 2000 years, so is it wrong to ask, “Why the delay? Why has it been so long?” And tonight, Peter is going to tell us why. He’s going to give us the why.

I’m starting my timer now—free introduction. Let me give you the main idea of the sermon tonight; let me give you the main point and then we will work through it. Here’s the main idea:

### Jesus hasn’t returned yet because God, in His patience, is saving souls from eternal punishment through the spread of His gospel. But make no mistake, Jesus will return to judge the Earth and all those on it.

Let’s read it one more time.

### Jesus hasn’t returned yet because God, in His patience, is saving souls from eternal punishment through the spread of His gospel. But make no mistake, Jesus will return to judge the Earth and all those on it.

His patience is our salvation. So, let’s look at verse 8. I’ll read 8-10 and then we’ll work through it.

## 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. 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. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

*Lord, we just pause to ask you again to be with us, and Holy Spirit, that you would guide my thoughts and words and that they would be yours. That you would use my thoughts, my tongue, my emotions, and that I wouldn’t be a distraction but that you would preach to us your Word and that we would receive it with meekness. I pray that you would save souls tonight.*

So, verse 8, he says, “Do not overlook this one fact.” This is in view of what he said earlier about the mockers, those who would scoff this route. He says they intentionally overlook—they intentionally overlook what they know, what God has already shown in history, what we can know from the Word, from creation, from how God has already intervened in human history. He says they intentionally overlook it. Then, he says, “But beloved.” He turns his attention back and he’s talking directly to the Church. He’s talking to us. And he says, “Don’t overlook this. Don’t miss this. Get this. Don’t overlook this.” Don’t overlook what? He says this one fact with many points. He says this, “That with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” He’s referring back to the Psalm that we read together at the beginning of the worship service, Psalm 90, that Moses gave us. He’s referring back to how the Lord perceives and experiences the flow of time. And the point is that it’s very, very different from how you and I experience the flow of time.

I like the way the CSB, the Christian Standard Bible, puts Psalm 90:4. It says it this way,

## For in your sight a thousand years are like yesterday that passes by, like a few hours of the night.

The point isn’t to give us some code for unlocking how the end times are going to play out. His point is, “Do you want to know why Jesus hasn’t returned yet? First, God does not experience time like us.” If you have a problem with the fact that the New Testament says that the return of Christ is near, it’s at hand, it’s soon, it’s imminent—we should believe that. The New Testament talks that way and if we have a problem with it being 2000 years, the first thing Peter would say to us, like he said it to them when it had only been a few decades, is, “Hey, listen. God doesn’t experience time like you do.” We sang about it. He’s the Ancient of Days. He’s eternal. There is none above Him, none before Him, and all of time is in His hand. He’s not bound by it like we are. We’re bound by it. We are caught in the flow of time. We can’t get out of it, we can’t go back upstream, we can’t go downstream any faster—we’re experiencing time the way that time has been ordained to pass. God is transcendent over time. He’s above it, He’s beyond it, He created it, and He is sovereign over it. He sees it all. He’s all-knowing and He is ever-present. So, His experience, His perception of time, is not like ours. So, for God it’s been but a few moments since Jesus left that hill. He is coming soon—no matter how long it takes for us to see it happen. God transcends time. He’s above and beyond it. He’s eternal. He has sovereign authority over all of time. In fact, He is directing all of history toward its appointed end, according to His perfect wisdom and will.

We can relate to this some, right? John Ridenour, when he came in tonight we were talking and I don’t even remember how we got there but the conversation quickly went to how John was saying that in his seventies, now, how fast time has gone by, how quickly the years when his children were young, and now his grandchildren growing up. You hear people talk like that. I say this. I cannot believe that my oldest is 13 and that my current youngest is 8. That doesn’t compute. We say things like this, “It just seems like a moment ago. I remember when Molly was born. I was there, relaxing.” You know how an hour spent at the DMV—your perception of that hour is very different than an hour spent doing anything else. Right? Your favorite hobby, right? Our perception is that we can kind of get it, that for God the passage of time is so different. He says remember that; don’t overlook that. Begg says,

### The desire of the psalmist, Moses, is to contrast the eternality of God with the short span of human life. What Peter wishes to contrast is the eternity of God with the impatience of human expectation.

ALL of the New Testament promises that Jesus will return soon, that it is close, that it is about to happen,and is true, but must be understood in light of God's timing and plan not our perception or expectations. Verse 9,

## The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness…

Here, Peter borrows from Habakkuk, or if you were my Old Testament professor, “Habbacook.” He would say it and it would sound like he was coughing up a hairball. But in Habakkuk 2:2-3, what’s happening here is that the Lord is showing Habakkuk, who is having trouble with what God is doing—God is using a wicked nation to judge Israel, who is wicked, but in Habakkuk’s estimation not as wicked as the nation He is using. What God is saying to him is, “Don’t worry, I’m going to judge everybody. On the Great Day of the Lord, everyone will be judged.” God says this to him,

*And the Lord answered me: “Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. 3 For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.”*

The truth is, there is no delay. Everything is happening according to God’s plan. God said it himself in Isaiah. He is the Lord, there is no other, there is none like Him. He has appointed the end from the beginning and everything is happening according to His will. Peter does not deny the imminence of Christ’s return.

Peter does not deny the imminence of Christ’s coming here. We see from 3:12 that he expects Christ to return soon. But Peter, like all the New Testament writers, does not prescribe when Christ would return or set a date. He preserves the tension between the imminence of Christ’s coming and the uncertainty about when He will come.

That’s from Thomas Schreiner. God is not slow. He is not slow. But the Scriptures are written in such a way that every generation of believers should live with an anticipation that Christ could return in my lifetime, that it could happen any day. This pushes us, as we will see in the coming weeks, toward holiness, and purity, and a passion for evangelism.

Then, he says this,

## 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.

He’s patient—God is patient. This is God’s underrated attribute.

I think I’ve gone to this passage a lot, every time I’ve preached since I studied Exodus 34 for a sermon for camp, because I just didn’t realize when I set out to study it just how much of a cornerstone this interaction between God and Moses is throughout all of the Bible. It’s God revealing himself to us in such a powerful way. When Moses says to God, “I want to see your face. I want to see your glory,” God says, “You can’t see my face and live but what I’ll do is I’ll hide you in the cleft of the rock and I’ll pass by and I’ll let you see the backside of my glory,” and here it is, “and I will declare my name to you.” This is what God says as He passes by Moses, answering Moses’ question, “How can I know you more? What are you really like?” God says this in Exodus 34:6-7,

*6The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious…*

Here it is.

## …slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

He’s slow to anger. What’s He saying? He’s patient, He’s longsuffering, He withholds His wrath in His divine forbearance. God is patient. It’s essential to His nature. If God wasn’t patient, we wouldn’t be here talking about anything, because He would have destroyed Adam and Eve from the very beginning. It would have been over. He would have just poured out His wrath, because His wrath was there, and it was real, and it was holy, and it was just, but in His patience—think about redemptive history and all the flawed heroes of the faith and how at any given time, as you read the stories and you go, “This guy’s a knucklehead…what’s she doing? How can God be just and not just destroy? How can He say that they’re righteous? How can He forgive them? How can He love them?” Well, fast forward—how can He forgive and love any of us? He’s patient. Listen to Romans 3:23-26,

## 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness,…

Here it is.

*…because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

His divine forbearance—this is His patient restraint, holding back His wrath. Listen to what Vine’s Bible Dictionary says about this word,

His withholding punishment. It represents a suspense of wrath which must eventually be exercised unless the sinner accepts God's conditions. In Rom 3:25 it is connected with the passing over of sins in times past, previous to the atoning work of Christ.

How could He not destroy Adam and Eve? Why didn’t He destroy Moses and the children of Israel in the wilderness as they grumbled? How could He show that patience? Because in His forbearance He held back His wrath until the right time. It’s not different from how He is patient with us or why He can be patient with us. It’s because He stored up all that wrath—the wrath that we symbolically drank with the cup of juice. Because the cup that Jesus drank was the wrath of God stored up from the beginning for the sins of all time. How can He be patient with me? How can He be patient with you? Because there already has been a great and terrible day of the Lord. Throughout the Old Testament, there are these days of the Lord on Israel, on Babylon, on Assyria, and all these little nations, on Judah. The day of the Lord, the day of the Lord, the day of the Lord—it’s always the pouring out of wrath on the wicked and the salvation of the righteous. There already has been a great day of the Lord—it’s the day that Jesus hung suspended between Heaven and Earth on the cross and He cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” and He drank and consumed the wrath of God toward our sin so that God could be patient with us. In your unbelief, in your rejection of the Gospel, in your acting as if God is not there and does not see you, or hear you, as if He’s not really, truly offended by sin, it’s because Jesus absorbed His wrath that God can be patient with you in every single moment of your life, and to offer you forgiveness, and redemption, and sonship.

So, he says, in answering this question, “Why hasn’t Jesus returned yet? Is He slow or forgetful? Did He get lost or distracted? Is it all just made up?” – No, He’s incredibly longsuffering. He is so patient in order for men and women, boys and girls, to be saved. He says,

## … not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

So, who is he talking about here? He’s already said that God is patient towards “you.” So, who is the “you”? Well, in verse 1 of chapter 3, he says, “beloved.” “Beloved, don’t overlook this.” Who are the beloved? He’s talking to the Church; he’s talking to believers. He says, “In this second letter that I’m writing to you, beloved, I want to stir up your mind. In the first letter he wrote, they’re the elect. It’s the Church. He’s talking to us, he’s talking to Christians, and he’s saying this, “The Lord is patient toward you, not willing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” The ‘any’ and ‘all’ are us, they’re believers. What’s he saying? God in His patience…God in His patience. Why has it been 2000 years? Let me ask you this question: Aren’t you personally glad it’s been 2000 years? Yes. I’m glad Jesus did not come back before 1998. That’s when He saved me. I’m glad, at least, that He waited until four weeks ago—that’s when He saved my boy. That’s when He saved Walker.

Why didn’t He come back this morning? Maybe it’s because you need to hear this message and you need to see the beauty—the beauty of the patience of God towards you—that while you have known the truth of the Gospel that you’ve continued to reject it. Maybe tonight you cry out in repentance, you reach repentance, because that’s His plan. He’s not coming back until all reach repentance and faith; He’s leaving no one behind. He’s not leaving anyone behind. He’s declared the end from the beginning. His will shall come to pass and His will is He is not leaving any of His sons or daughters behind to perish, to experience eternal punishment. That is the hope and the beauty and the power of the Gospel towards us in Christ Jesus, so don’t reject it. Don’t reject it. He’s patient. He is more offended by the sin of the world, by its rejection, by its mocking, by all of its abortions, and wars, and hate, and adultery, and murder—He’s more offended by all of it than any of us put together but He suffers through it. He is longsuffering through it. Why? Because He’s not leaving anyone behind. And you and I—if we’ve experienced that patience, if we can know, “I am saved. I’m forgiven. I’m redeemed. I’m not going to spend forever in Hell because God was patient enough to wait for me,” then we should know that we need to look at that example, and follow that example, and have the same view of our lives. That we would put up with whatever suffering would come our way in this life—to what end? So that people can hear the Gospel. Because if people hear the Gospel then Jesus will save some, because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. And God has called us to share it, to preach it, to live it out. There’s no other way. It’s His plan. He’s going to save people and He’s going to use us to tell them. But don’t get it twisted—the fact that God doesn’t judge sin on the spot doesn’t mean He has given permission for some sin in our life or approval of a lifestyle, a habit, or addiction. His patience gives us an opportunity to repent.

So, the promise is given, right? He’s not coming back, He’s not coming back until all those who will reach repentance reach repentance. But then, He gives the warning. Promises and warnings go together hand and hand in Scripture. Verse 10,

## But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

That day is coming. This is a good warning for unbelievers and believers. Don’t use His patience as an opportunity for the flesh. Don’t buy into the lie that everything is okay because He hasn’t hit you with a lightning bolt. No, no, no—He’s patient. He knows that day is coming. He knows it’s coming. This is a warning for unbelievers to repent. The meaning is clear. The Lord’s return will be without warning and unwanted for those who have not repented and trusted in Christ for salvation. It’s unwanted like a thief, right? A thief doesn’t call you and say, “Hey, at two o’clock in the morning I’m going to come by and steal your kid’s bike from in front of your garage.” You’d stop him. It’s unwanted. That’s not a visitor you’re looking forward to, right? For the unbeliever, that’s what the return of the Lord will be like. No warning and the world will be going on just like it always has, like in the day of Noah. Just like when they were eating, and drinking, and sinning, and living as if God didn’t exist, and then boom—the flood came. He said it will be that way. Jesus will return to judge the world and it’s unwanted. So, it’s a warning to unbelievers to know that things aren’t going to always be like they are right now. The world is not going to keep spinning like it is right now. Jesus will return. This life is but a vapor and you will stand before the Lord and give an account of your life.

Here’s what’s crazy. For the mockers, they mock that it’s been 2000 years. But here’s the deal. Here’s the deal. Whether Jesus returns in our lifetime or not, you only get one lifetime. We read it earlier—maybe 70 years, or if by some means of strength, 80 years. What is that in light of eternity? A vapor. “It’s appointed unto man once to die and then to face judgment.” So, hear the warning—the warning is meant for our good, so that you would see the patience of the Lord and embrace His grace and mercy through the Gospel.

This is also a warning and an encouragement to believers. We do not know when He is coming, we will not know the hour, the day, the year, or maybe even the decade, but we should not be caught unprepared. We should be ready like a good servant for his Master’s return. We should welcome the return of Christ with joy, not with guilt or shame. I’m going to read that again. This is also a warning and an encouragement to believers. We do not know when He is coming, we will not know the hour, the day, the year, or maybe even the decade, but we should not be caught unprepared. We should be ready like a good servant for his Master’s return. We should welcome the return of Christ with joy, not with guilt or shame.

In Matthew 24:36-51[[1]](#footnote-0)—I don’t have time to go there but I encourage you to go read Matthew 24, because the main point that Jesus is saying is, “Be ready! Be ready! Don’t be caught living like the world when I come back.” For them, it’s like a thief. For us, it’ll be unexpected but we should be ready for it. We should live with an anticipation, and that’ll be the difference between being caught found in sin and being caught found faithful.

He says,

## … and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

This is God’s judgment on every sin, every transgression, every iniquity, every thought, word, or deed, of every kingdom, every nation, every tribe, every people group, every man, every woman – all of our acts will be seen in light of the holiness of God and they will be judged accordingly. So, please don’t take the patience of God as indifference toward your sin.

Listen to Romans 2:4,

## … Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? 5 But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.

Promise and warning—He’s coming. He hasn’t come because He’s patient. He’s storing up wrath for the next great day of the Lord. So repent.

Listen to Douglas Moo here,

Imminence, defined biblically, means that the return of Christ and the culmination of history are always impending. The Return of Christ is the next event in salvation history…The Christian must always live in expectation that human history may suddenly come to an end.

So, our application. Again, I would say this—if you’re not a believer, if you haven’t repented and put your faith and trust in Jesus, our prayer is that you would see this and you would hear the warning, that you would not presume on the kindness of God but that you would repent. Put your faith and trust in Jesus and experience His grace, and His mercy, and His love, and that you would surrender to Christ and that you would receive His salvation. If you’re a believer, see God’s patience and allow it to humble us, and to motivate us to emulate Him. Why has He not come back yet? So people can get saved. So, what should we be about? Working so that people can know the Gospel. That’s what He told us to do before He left. That’s what He told us to do, “Go tell everybody!” Everything else—listen to me, Red Oak—everything else that we do in life—our families, our work, our hobbies, everything—everything better be leveraged for the good and the spread of the Gospel. That doesn’t mean we can’t have a hobby, it doesn’t mean you can’t pursue a passion at work, but if you’re not leveraging those things for the Gospel then what are we doing? That’s going to burn up, that’s going to dissolve, it’s not going to last, it doesn’t really matter. All that matters are eternal things and the only eternal things on Planet Earth right now are the souls of men and women and boys and girls. So, let’s be about showing them the goodness, and the kindness, and the love of God on display through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Let’s be about that.

Sneak peek into what’s coming up—Jesus says that hastens His return. How does that work? I don’t know. I’m stuck in the flow of time with you but God says it hastens His return. So, do you know what I do? I believe it—I believe it. So, let’s be about the Gospel.

Let’s give Charles Spurgeon the last word here,

God calls us, until the world is destroyed with fire, to go on saving men with all our might. Every year that passes is meant to be a year of salvation. Let us make it so by more and more earnest efforts to bring sinners to the cross of Christ. I cannot think that the world is spared to increase its damnation. Christ came not to destroy the world but that the world might be saved through Him. So, as every year rolls by let us regard it as salvation. Let us spend and be spent in the hope that by any means we may save some.

Pray with me.

*Lord Jesus, we love you and we thank you for your goodness, your kindness, your steadfast love. And Lord Jesus, God, Yahweh, we worship you for your patience. Thank you. Thank you for being patient with me, a sinner. Thank you that you didn’t destroy me today because of my thoughts but that you are patient towards me. God, I pray that we would wake up tomorrow morning with this on our mind, that you are patient but you are returning. I pray that would drastically change how we then spend our lives. God, I pray that you would receive glory and honor in how we worship you now through song, and I pray that in your kindness that you would lead lost men and women to repentance right now; that you would convict them of sin and give them the gift of faith, that they would cry out in belief and repentance and that they would surrender to you and that you would be glorified. We love you, Lord. In Christ’s name, Amen.*

1. ## But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. 37 For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, 39 and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. 42 Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

   ## 45 “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? 46 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 47 Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. 48 But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ 49 and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, 50 the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know 51 and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-0)