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This is our final morning in the letters from Peter. I don't know about you but I have found them to be rich resources. I've had a wonderful year and six weeks working through these letters which have so many parallels with our current christian experience, both now and we believe in the near future.

I hope you learned some truths that will keep you stable and grounded no matter what the future holds for christians who refuse to let go of the authority and innerrancy of this ancient book.

We need to be able to withstand anything that Satan will devise to throw at us, even as the believers who were the first recipients of Peter's letters were enduring mis-treatment and persecution of every possible kind.

Things are changing so quickly now, that my fear is we'll be caught off guard. Not ready when trouble that actually costs us something, finds us. Peter calls us to calculate the cost ahead of time. He gives us the ballast we'll need so that when the hurricane hits us, our roots are deep and we'll be able to withstand the storm.

Spiritual hurricanes are destined to come. We want to be found standing, after the storm passes by.

So we pick up where we left off last week. Peter has warned of false teachers and their ultimate destruction. That was the main purpose for

this second letter.

And then Peter reminds us that this world is very temporary. That we are waiting to be re-united with Jesus. That we are strangers and aliens in this place. That we aren't living for this world, but for the next one. That this one is ultimately going to be burned up.

14 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,

We looked briefly at vs. 14 last week. Who did their homework? John Piper seashells. I thought it fit so well with Peter's words here. Therefore beloved, since you look for these things . . . what things.

A shout to "come up here". The exit from this world in which we are aliens and strangers. Sojourners. Travelers. We aren't citizens of this cosmos. This world system that's destiny is fire.

We are detached from this world. Our citizenship is in another place.

When Pilate was questioning Jesus in John 18 he said; 35 "*Am I a Jew?*" Pilate replied. "*Your own people and chief priests handed You over to me. What have You done?*" 36 Jesus answered, "*My kingdom is not of this world; if it were, My slaves would fight to prevent My arrest by the Jews. But now, My kingdom is not of this realm.*"

If we belong to Jesus. If we are those slaves He mentioned, that belong to Him, then like Him, we are subjects who belong to a King . . . of another place. Not this world.

Peter didn't have to spend any time explaining what he meant when he said, *Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things* Those folks understood that they were aliens and strangers passing the time *in* this world, but not *of* it, waiting for the coming day when Jesus would call them home.

That's a hard sell these days. It's rare to meet a christian who is detached from this world. And it's complicated. We don't live in a

bubble. And Jesus speaks to this issue. In Luke 19, the parable of the 10 slaves that each get a mina.

12 *So He said, "A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return. 13 "And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, 'Do business with this until I come back.'*

In the parable, again, we're pictured as His slaves. And He gives His slaves each some valuable currency, and He tells them to invest His money for Him, in this world.

We belong to a Master who is a King in another world, who has promised to come and take us to that place, but meanwhile, while we wait for His return, He has given us something that belongs to Him and told us to invest it in this current world while we wait. He says in the authorized version, *occupy till I come*.

We are in this world, but we are not of this world. We are slaves of a King of another realm. But while we wait here for Him, we are to be busy in this world working for the interests of our Master who owns us.

You'll recall, one of the slaves couldn't be bothered working for the benefit of His master. He was all about working for his own interests, not those of His master.

When the master did return, He found some of His slaves, busy conducting His business, making a profit for Him. But He found other slaves who couldn't be bothered to work for His interests.

What will we be doing on the day the Master returns and finds each of us? Peter says; *Work Hard. be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless*

In our analogy, our parable, the 2 slaves who were busy investing the Master's money and found doing that when He returned; they were at peace.

The one slave who buried the Masters property and found by the Master not working for His interests is not at peace with the master. He argues with the Master. *I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow.*

This slave had a dread of the Master. He says because you are grim, severe, harsh, exacting. Is that not the worlds view of our God? They won't take His yoke upon them because they have a false view of Him. A grim, severe, exacting, harsh God.

They are found, not at peace with the creator who owns them. Those slaves are stained and blemished. The filth of this world stains and blemishes.

Vs. 15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation;

Peter restates the purpose of God's delaying judgement.

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some understand slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

God delays judgement so that men can be brought to safety. The window of opportunity to come to safety is wide open.

Paul says the same thing; Romans 2:4

Or do you disregard the riches of His kindness, tolerance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you to repentance?

Paul always says the same thing as Peter. Well almost always. And before Peter goes to sleep, he needs to settle one final thing for all time. This is the story of Peter and Paul. Don't worry, it's the short version.

Peter and Paul had history with each other. How could they not! The two men most used by Jesus to advance His new covenant. Judaism is temporarily set aside. The church rises up as the voice of God in this world. It has a direct connection with the God of creation.

Once God spoke through the old testament prophets. Now He will speak to the world through His Son, and through the chosen apostles. Chosen by Jesus.

Peter is among the first born of the church. He is in the first four chosen, and he rises unchallenged to be the leader of the apostles of the church. He's the mouthpiece for the 12. He's always front and center. Impetuous, often saying the wrong thing. He's a fisherman. Salt of the earth with real salt.

Paul is untimely born. After the church is established and beginning to grow, Paul, whose name was Saul of Tarsus, is like the polar opposite of Peter. He's educated at the feet of Gamaliel. That's a big deal to the jews.

Paul compared to Peter is like in our world, comparing a construction worker to an East coast New York elite. They really were worlds apart. If we're talking colors, Peter was as red as you could find, and it's like God looked down and said, I'm going to find someone who is as far polar opposite blue as Peter is red.

Paul's out with a band of radicals, with letters from the Jews, and he's killing christians. Paul was an ethnic cleanser. As radical as you can get, and his bulls eye; is the church. Listen to his own description in Galatians.

1:11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

13 For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; 14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. 15 But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased

16to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, 17nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

18Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. 19But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. 20 (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.) 21Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 22I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; 23but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." 24And they were glorifying God because of me.

It really was a scenario that only God could conceive of and execute. Saul the christian killer becomes Paul the apostle.

Speaking from a pure human standpoint, because we all retain much of our old fallen flesh, our personalities change, but some traits stubbornly hang on, right. Do you think impetuous untrained fisherman chief of the apostles of the church Peter would feel challenged by someone like Paul?

Do you think I would feel challenged if some brilliant young good looking guy with M-div certificates out the kazoo showed up and wanted to fill this pulpit?

Paul shows up in Jerusalem again after 14 years. Gal. 2:6 *But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. 7 But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised 8 (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), 9 and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the*

Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

And add to that the incident at Antioch. You say what's the incident at Antioch.

Ga.2:11 But when Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. 13 The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

Paul gets right in Peter's face because Peter was acting the hypocrite. Peter's enjoying a ham sandwich and hanging with the gentiles until some of the pharisaical jews show up, and then he separates from the gentiles and goes back to his old cultural standards.

It confused and alienated the gentile christians. Peter was starting a multi-tiered christianity that day. Elite christians with jewish heritage and ordinary christians. And Paul wasn't having any of it.

So there's *that*. And the region of Galatia is included in the folks that Peter addresses this letter to, so there were some I'm sure who were there that day. I'm sure that story made the rounds. How Paul shut down Peter. The two big guns. We can't help ourselves. Us nobodies have a normal curiosity about the goings on of the royals.

So, Peter, before he dies, takes a paragraph to once and for all answer our curiosity about their relationship. Did they hate each other? Were they oil and water forever afterward? Peter says;

15and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,

I think this is really a classy move. Peter acknowledges Paul, and not only acknowledges him, but elevates Paul's words as equals to his own.

. . . *just as also our beloved brother Paul* . . . The word translated beloved is a form of the root word agape. And the word translated brother is a form of the word philao. Two kinds of love in one reference.

We love Paul because God loves Paul and God has shed abroad in our hearts HIS very love for Paul. That's agape love. It comes from another source. It's God's love and God supplies that love by His Spirit in our hearts for those who belong to Him.

And that's not all, Peter says, Paul is like a brother to me. I love him not just with the love the Spirit gives me, but also as my brother. That's a family love, born out of common experience and comradery in purpose.

Peter is a bigger than life character, but he's not too big to get a course correction, by the Spirit, through the agency of a brother. Peter has a genuine heart felt love for Paul, who loved him enough, and loved the gospel enough to not allow Peter to mess things up.

That's how real Christians roll. When someone comes and chastises you, out of love for you, they want the best interest of the church and the best interest for you . . . it may sting for a moment, but in the end, you love those folks who care enough to do that.

So that's one question settled at the end of Peter's life. Settled for the church, once for all time. Peter and Paul genuinely loved each other.

But Peter settles a second question here, once for all time.

Is Paul really an apostle? And are his writings on an equivalent basis with the other apostles? I mean, he was untimely born. He wasn't with Jesus when y'all were with Jesus during His earthly ministry. Is he the real deal?

Peter puts those questions to rest also. Sweet Peter.

16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Peter says, if you're a construction worker, or a fisherman, say, Paul writes at a level that will require some work. He's a brilliant guy, a gifted thinker, a logician. When you read Paul's letters it's not Dick and Jane and Spot the dog. There's some work required.

Note that Peter doesn't say Paul's letters are impossible to understand. There's a whole copout in the church today of people who dismiss this ancient book as beyond our understanding.

They sound oh-so spiritual as they say with false humility, we just can't begin to understand this book. It's impossible, so we just flow with the spirit. Sounds really spiritual, doesn't it. That's thinly disguised new age post modernism. Baloney. This book is NOT impossible to understand, but admittedly, some of what Paul writes is at a level we would call . . . difficult.

But I want you to see what Peter does here for Paul. He's talking about what Paul has written to the churches and he in his discussion puts everything that we have, that Paul wrote, at the same elevation as . . . quote . . . "*the rest of the scriptures*". unquote. The rest of the inspired scriptures

Well people have argued that the word for scriptures just means writings. It doesn't have to mean inspired scripture. You can't get that out of what Peter says.

And I would tell them to read the rest of what Peter says there. *as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

Did you catch the part about destruction? People can dismiss what I write with little or no consequences. No one will be destroyed if someone twists and mis states what I write. Because it's not inspired

scripture. But if you twist and misquote Paul, you will be destroyed . . . because his writings are on the same basis as all other inspired by God, scripture.

Take that, red letter christians. Paul's letters are inspired at the same level of authority and inspiration as the words of Jesus. Peter included Paul as full apostolic authority, and his writings as inspired scripture equivalent to any of the other new testament authors.

When the church was canonizing the writings in the 3rd and 4th century, that fact was never once questioned. Ever. And Peter cemented that fact once and for all, inspired by the Spirit of God, in these simple statements. Peter and the Holy Spirit say Paul's writings are scripture.

17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,

Who do we listen to? Who has authority in the church of God to dictate dogma that is authoritative?

Answer, the authors of the New Testament. Apostles, chosen by Jesus, and close associates of those apostles who in some cases did inspired writings. Men like Dr. Luke who were with Paul and recorded for us the Acts of Jesus and the Acts of the apostles. John-Mark who was with Jesus and then was amanuensis for Peter.

That apostolic era ended and those writings, the ones with obvious inspiration were canonized and they became the New Testament. The inspired scriptures have authority over the church. Only the inspired scriptures.

One of the shouts of the reformation was Sola Scriptura. Only the Scripture. The reformers rejected all other sources of dogmatic authority that had crept into the church.

Church magisterium and traditions and apostolic succession in the

papery were all rejected by the reformers. Sola Scriptura. *17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,*

18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

We talked about salvation back in vs. 15. The patience of God, the delay while He waits for His elect to be called out of this world and into His family, His church, His chosen elect ones.

Salvation has a dual personality. We often think of it as a point in time. The day we recieved Christ as Lord and Saviour, the day He quickened us from the dead, and gave us His Spirit to dwell in us and with us.

And that's correct. At that moment, when we were quickened to life from death, spiritually, we inherited by faith, a positional reality. We are righteous before God with a righteousness not our own, but the righteousness of Jesus, imputed to us, once for all.

Our sins, past present and yes, future, are taken away, imputed to Christ who pays for them once for all, at the cross.

Those truths are positional. Immutable. Unchanging. Written in the book of life. Protected in heaven. Waiting for us to claim them for eternity and to worship our Saviour who purchased all of that for us.

That's the positional side of salvation. But there's also a practical side. Position and practice sometimes don't look the same. Position; complete, in Christ, once for all time, secure. Spotless. Blameless. At Peace.

Practice; well that's another thing isn't it. I long to look like those positional truths, but I often don't. Too often. I battle with a fallen flesh that doesn't seem to be as redeemed as my spirit does. It still longs for all of the old things.

So there's a very real sense that salvation is a living breathing daily process. My position is secure. Guarded in heaven, spotless and blameless forever, waiting for me. But practically, I continue to grow more Christlike as I study this book and daily walk with Jesus. He allows things to come into my life that will expand my faith in Him if I'm faithful and obedient.

It's like the story of the disciples who walked daily with Jesus for 3 years. They were not the same men when that 3 years was over. And as I walk daily with the living Christ, by the Holy Spirit, I'm not the same person either as when I began.

Peter says; *but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*

Don't get side tracked by the cares of this world. Don't get side tracked by false teachers who twist the scriptures to somehow allow for the sin in your life to flourish. Don't get sidetracked by any of the things he warns about in his two letters.

Instead . . . *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* Walk with Him daily by looking into this book, and you will stand firm through all the storms, and grow to be more like Him, until you see His face, and the process is instantaneously completed.

To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Even Peters final doxology teaches us.

Jude says; Jude 1:25
to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all time, and now, and for all eternity. Amen.

Paul says; 1Tim 1:17
Now to the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

God says; Isaiah 42:8

*"I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another,
Nor My praise to graven images.*

Jesus says; *For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory,
forever, Amen*

Peter says; *To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity.
Amen.*

The Him in the final words of Peter's letter is Christ. The Lord Jesus.
Interchangeable with the Father. God of very God. The Lord, Jesus.

*18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus
Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

There is no contradiction. Jesus is God.