

2 Peter
November 25, 2007
2 Peter 3:1-18

I. Wholesome Thinking

2 Peter 3:1-2

3:1 Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. 2 I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles. NIV

Verse 1: The first letter might have been 1 Peter, but Peter might also have written a lot of letters to a lot of people. “Wholesome thinking” is certainly consistent with 1 Peter.

Verse 1: What is wholesome thinking?

1 Peter 2:1-3

2:1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. 2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. NIV

In this section, Peter is undoubtedly also including a correct understanding of God as Creator and us as His creation.

Verse 1: What are some of the world’s teachings that might prevent wholesome thinking, something that the false teachers might teach:

- No difference between right and wrong
- Everything is a personal choice; nothing is wrong.
- Religion provides value only if it allows a person to adjust to society
- Worse sin is being intolerant of others.

Verse 1: “Stimulate” means to wake up or arise.

II. Change is What It is All About

2 Peter 3:3-7

3 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.” 5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. NIV

Verse 3: The scoffers are the false teachers of Chapter 2. Some of the scariest words are reserved for false teachers, such as: 1 Tim 4:1-2 and 2 Tim 3:1-9.

Verse 4: Certainly if you talk to enough atheists or other non-believers today, you will get words like these. A starting place will be ridicule of Jesus’ words in Rev. 22:7, where Jesus is saying that He is coming soon. How do we answer these people?

- Verse 4: Evolutionary theory is based on uniformitarian assumptions. Once God enters the equation, He is the ultimate cause for everything, and nothing caused Him. As such, standard cause and effect does not exist. Indeed, all agree that it is impossible to determine the ultimate cause of the creation of the universe through science, since cause-and-effect require some “cause” for the cause of the creation.
- Verse 5: Certainly, if we agree that God created the world out of basically nothing (water is sometimes equivalent to chaos), then he should be able to destroy it if he determines He wants to. Indeed, although Peter does not bring up the point directly, Jesus holds together the universe (Col. 1:15-20, Hebrews 1:1-2). If the “fire” in below verses represents nuclear fire, then Jesus could potentially be the cause if He releases what He holds together.
- Verse 6: Peter has already alluded to Noah’s flood. He does so again with a play on the word water.
- Verse 7: God promised that he would not destroy the world again with water (Gen. 9:8-17). The future destruction is to be one of fire. The use of fire here, especially when compared with 3:10, makes this final destruction to sound like one of a nuclear cause.

Why is the day of the Lord important to believers? Most Biblical sections that deal with Christian growth will reference it.

III. God’s Patience, Our Impatience

2 Peter 3:8-9

8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. NIV

Verse 8: Undoubtedly Peter has Ps 90:4 in mind:

**4 For a thousand years in your sight
are like a day that has just gone by,
or like a watch in the night.**

Verse 8: The only way that it is possible for this verse to be interpreted literally is if God is totally outside of time. If we assume that time is part of the created universe, then God would also have to be out of it if he created it.

Verse 8: The sense is that God cannot be accused of being slow because a thousand years is like one day to Him. Yet, when He starts to work he can do in one day what it takes men to do in a thousand years.

Verse 9: This verse indicates that God has a plan for men and this world. What is it?

Verse 9: Why is God patient? What should we be glad of God’s patience? What does God’s patience have to do with our personal growth?

Verse 9: How do we feel when God is slow in answering our prayers, or in fulfilling His promises? What should we do in these situations?

IV. Destroyed by Fire

2 Peter 3:8-10

8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. NIV

Verse 10: 2 Peter is the only book that says that the world will be destroyed by fire (although Amos 9 comes close)

Verse 10: When will the Day of the Lord come? It is appropriate to feel that it is coming soon. However, it could be several more thousands of years before it comes. See Deu. 7:9.

Verse 10: If someone tells us that they know when the Lord will return and shows us their information, how should we react?

V. Change is What It is All About

2 Peter 3:11-13

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. NIV

Verse 11: The purpose of prophetic truth is not speculation but motivation. Michael Green writes: "Without the truth, embodied in the second coming doctrine, that life is going somewhere there is nothing left to live for."

Verse 12: How can the Christian today speed the coming of the Lord? By prayer (Matt. 6:9-13) and by work, completing God's church on earth, which apparently also includes living holy and looking forward to the day of God, per verses 11-12

Verse 13: See Isaiah 65:17, which was written before Peter wrote this. Rev. 21:1 was written later.

VI. God's Patience, Our Impatience

2 Peter 3:14-16

14 So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. 15 Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. 16 He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

NIV

Verse 15: This verse references verse 9 via the mentioning again of “salvation” and “patience”:

Verse 16: Most heresies are a perversion of some fundamental doctrine of the Bible. How can we avoid falling into such errors, following the false teachers?

Verse 16: What happens to people who blindly twist the Scriptures?

Verse 16: “Other Scriptures” would imply that at least some of Paul’s writings were also considered Scripture by the time that this letter was written.

VII. Be on Your Guard and Grow!

2 Peter 3:17-18

17 Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

NIV

There are only two options for Christians. We can be growing, or we can be carried away by false beliefs, falling from our exalted position in Christ. If you think that you are neither growing nor falling, then be very careful (1 Cor. 1:12).

This closing passage reminds us of Peter’s great statement: 1 Peter 5:8

8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

NIV

Verse 17: Did you notice all the “Dear Friends” or “Beloved” in Chapter 3?

Beloved...be mindful (3:1-2)

Beloved...be not ignorant (3:8)

Beloved...be diligent (3:14)

Beloved...beware (3:17)

In many ways, Peter seems to be offering very personal advice in this chapter to the recipients of his letter. The “therefore” in verse 17 indicates that Verses 17 and 18 are the summary of that personal advice; it is also the bottom line of the entire book of 2 Peter.

This advice is simply:

-Don’t be taken in error and fall

-Instead, grow in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

How do we grow? That is what this entire epistle has been about!