

BACK TO THE BIBLE SERIES: 2 Peter: Hope Filled Living in a Culture of Despair

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Message Title: Hope Filled Living Pt. 2

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(NASB, 2 Peter 3) Verse 13:

But according to his promise, we are looking for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

This is talked about more in Revelation Chapters 21 and 22— this idea of Jesus returning and ushering in the new heaven and the new earth. What kind of a place is it? It's a place where righteousness lives. It's a place where things are made right again. It's critically important to understand, we're not just talking about life after death. We're talking about redemption; we're talking about restoration; we're talking about a place where that which is destroyed by sin and death is returned—it's redeemed; it's made right again!

So, when Jesus was talking to his disciples in Matthew Chapter 19, He is talking specifically about His return, and He says to His apostles that they will reign with Him when He returns, and He says, "You will join Me in the regeneration." When Paul is writing to the Romans in Romans Chapter 8, he says, "All creation groans and it awaits the redemption, the renewal of all creation." Creation is not waiting to be annihilated - what would be the hope in that? - but rather, instead, the redemption, the restoration, the renewal of the Earth, as God intended it to be. When you trusted Christ as Savior, you were not annihilated. You were reborn—it's regeneration. "I'm made new and whole again, and this is a process I'm in to reach its fulfillment—the fulfillment of my salvation at the return of Christ."

You have this beautifully illustrated in the resurrection of Jesus. When Jesus arose from the dead, it was His literal, physical, bodily resurrection of the body that He bore on the cross. He even showed the disciples the nail prints in His hands and the scar in His side. It was His resurrected body and we are told that is the first fruit—the prototype of our resurrection and the redemption to come. In 1 Corinthians 15 we are told very clearly, that when the resurrection happens, it is this body that was placed in the grave that is literally, physically resurrected from the grave. Then it is changed—this mortal puts on immortality! It's this body redeemed and perfected back the way God intended it to be. My body is not annihilated, and a new body is created. This body is resurrected and changed. All of that is a picture of the full story of the regeneration, the redemption, the restoration, the renewal of the Heavens and the Earth, in such a way that God says everything that was destroyed by sin and death is made right! As God's ultimate declaration, "I win Round One;" "I win Round Two." "I win!" That's a core theology of the Scriptures. Even the terms themselves speak of this.

In the Greek language, there are two different words for new—new Heaven, new Earth. One of those words is kainos which means qualitatively new. We would probably use the word renewal. The other Greek word is neos, which is a word that means quantitatively new. We would probably use the phrase brand new. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, in 2 Peter, in Revelation 21 and 22,

it's always kainos. It's not brand new; it's renewed; it's restored; it's redeemed; it's made whole again. When Jesus speaks in Revelation 21 and 22, He says, "I make all things new." He doesn't say, "I make all new things." The significance of that is everything that sin and death has taken away from you in this life is ultimately given back and restored. The hope of the Gospel is not just life after death; it is so much more comprehensive than that.

Verse 14:

Therefore, (so therefore, in light of this) beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,

Again, if we know this is true, how shall we live? We should live in peace. This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word shalom. We should live with our souls flourishing. We should live with a sense of wholeness, a sense of rest, that this world is not the end of the story. This world does not win. What sin and death has done to me does not win. Someday God makes it right, and the story is full and complete and whole, and I know that. Therefore, it motivates me to live spotless and blameless.

I'm sure many of us have heard someone say, "Someone is so heavenly minded, they're no earthly good." I would suggest to you I have never in my life, ever met anyone that is so heavenly minded, they're no earthly good. The problem is we're not heavenly minded enough, and that's why we're often no earthly good. It's because we're living for the things of this world. It's because we're building our own kingdom here. It's because we're trying to find our hope in this world, believing somehow, it's going to be different; somehow, it's going to get better; somehow, it's all going to work out. And then when we are deeply disappointed, once again we are discouraged and saddened and in despair, and we lose sight that the hope of the Gospel is that Jesus is coming back and He's going to bring a new heaven and a new earth and God is going to restore that which has been lost or taken away from us because of sin and death.

He goes on to Verse 15:

and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; (in other words one more day for someone today to receive God's gift of salvation) just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 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.
(Vs. 15-16)

So basically, Peter is saying that his brother Paul wrote about these things. It seems obvious the false teachers were distorting some of Paul's writings. Interestingly enough, even by this time, some of Paul's writings were considered to be Scripture, as Peter identifies them. But clearly Peter is saying some of this is a mystery; it's beyond our ability to figure out and understand, but the false teachers twist it and distort it in order to fulfill their own agenda. So, what's his concern?

Verse 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,

Basically, what Peter just said and what he's been saying is that you have in Christ an unimaginably wondrous future that cannot be taken away or lost. But the false teachers are determined to take it away from you. They're determined to lead you astray and to steal your hope. And what Peter is saying in the final words before he will die is, "Do not let them do that to you!" If you are a Christian and you are living in despair, someone lied to you! Someone lied to you and they stole your hope. They distracted you from the truth, and the evidence is the despair you're feeling in your heart. Peter's final plea is, "Don't you dare let someone do that to you. Your future is utterly, absolutely magnificent. Don't ever forget that!"

He (Peter) says:

...be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness 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. (Vs. 17b-18)

He ends with this wonderful doxology of praise to Jesus. In 1 and 2 Peter there has been a very consistent theme. If you're writing to people for whom life is very hard and about to get much more difficult, what do you tell them? What is their source of hope? The source of hope is not to believe that everything is going to work out, that it will all make sense, that if you're a good boy or girl, bad things won't happen to you. The Bible never promises that. But rather it's in the return of Christ! And because your salvation is on the basis of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, granted to you on the basis of His grace and mercy and not your performance, it's as true of you on your worst days as it is on your best days.

Peter started his first letter with a theological foundation. By the mercy of God, you have been born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, in order to obtain an inheritance that is so sure, it's already reserved in heaven for you. It's an inheritance that can't be lost; it can't be diminished; it can't be corrupted, and it will reach its fulfillment when Jesus returns and ushers in the new heaven and the new earth.

I understand life can be very, very hard. I understand sometimes it's confusing; sometimes it's disappointing; sometimes it's downright brutal! I understand that. Weeks ago, I stood at the bedside of a young mother. She was unbelievably courageous. So was her husband. She had battled cancer, was in her early 30's – 4 children ages 12 to 2. But she was coming to the finish line and, in a matter of hours, she would die. We talked about the new Heaven and the new Earth. What do you tell a mother with four young children that's about to die, about hope? It's that everything that her heart longs to experience with her husband and her children will be given back in the redemption. God will make right what has been taken away by sin and death. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, Oh death, where is your sting? Oh death, where is your victory? To which Annie Dillard says, "Just about everywhere you look, now that you ask." We feel that deeply! Two hours later Joanne went into the presence of Jesus; her husband Adam is with us. What do we say to give Adam hope? What do we say to give these kids hope? Every day for the rest of their lives they will long for moments with their mom that they will not have on this Earth. We remind them, "The story's not over. It's a delay, but everything your soul longs for you will get, as God makes right what was taken from you because of sin and death."

This past week I met with a young couple, a wonderful young couple—strong Christians full of faith and courage. But in a couple of weeks she will give birth to a full-term baby that will die.

The baby may die in childbirth. They're praying they get a few hours, maybe a few days. That's just brutal...just brutal. And we wish the story was different! What do we say? Where do we find hope in that? The hope is in the promise that one day God will make right what has been taken away by sin and death, that which your soul longs to experience with this child will be realized—just not quite yet, but it is some day.

This past week my wife Patti stood at the bedside of her father with her mom, and they watched her dad go to be with Jesus. Death is all around us, and we are reminded this isn't the way God intended it to be. Something deep within us cries out for something more!

Some of you live with pain and suffering every day; some of you with chronic pain or disease—physical ailments that affect your quality of life every single day. I can't help but think of our Worship Pastor Mike. His story touches me deeply. Mike's health is very, very hard. What Mike would consider a really good day, for the rest of us would be a terrible day health-wise, and that's not going to change. It's not going to get better, barring a miracle from God. We pray and we pray, and we pray, and it doesn't change. What do we say? "It's all going to work out?" "All things work together for good?" Where do we find our hope? We find our hope in the promise that someday God's going to make this right. What Mike and Katie long to experience together with their kids is going to be limited in many ways in this life, so we just keep remembering the story is not over, and everything that you long for will be realized, because the promise is to make right what was taken by sin and death—and one day it will be made right! That's part of the experience of the new Heaven and the new Earth. It's unique for each of us. It's related to what was taken and destroyed by sin and death in this life. That will be part of the fulfillment and the joy of the life to come.

Some of you live in chronic pain every day. You've forgotten what it would be like to live just one day without severe pain. I understand that journey; I lived around it for over twenty years. It's brutal! For some of you, it's emotional pain. For some of you, it's just the disappointment, the struggle, and the discouragements of life. You think, "I didn't think this is the way it was going to be. Life has not turned out to be what I wanted it to be." Where do we find our hope? We don't find our hope in this world. I can't tell you it's all going to work out. I can't tell you it's going to get better. I can only tell you that God has promised redemption and restoration and renewal, and through His salvation, bringing us to a place where things will be made right again. And I can promise you it will be everything that your soul longs for. Everything that you so deeply desire today will ultimately be realized. When I know that and believe that, it changes the way I face everything I go through in this life.

This is such a magnificent truth! It's almost hard to get your mind around it. In some ways it's almost incomprehensible! Your story is utterly magnificent, and your future is beyond your wildest imagination, and it's yours through the death, burial and the resurrection of Jesus.

Cara: Bryan, thanks for reminding us we have a sure hope in our future with Jesus. So, if we want to live with hope, we need to remember the past, the present, and the future of our salvation, and we really need to be on guard.

Bryan: Yeah, so that's absolutely right. Our future as believers is absolutely glorious and nobody can change that. Nobody can take it away from us, but I would say it takes a lot of discipline and effort to understand the truth, and believe the truth, and stand on the truth. You know, Arnie and Cara, since we've come to the end of our study in Second Peter, going to

turn this around a little bit and ask you, what are some of the lessons you've learned from Peter that have made an impression on you, things that will help you to live a hope filled life?

Arnie: Actually, Bryan, this last message that you gave is one of my favorites. This one meant a lot to me about a new Heaven and a new Earth and inheritance, and talking about different people that you know, who have had health issues you know. And I've had health issues since I was four, and this new inheritance that we're going to have and this new hope of a life with no pain, that really meant the world to me.

Bryan: Hmm. That's great. Thanks.

Cara: I think the thing that opened my eyes more, first of all was knowing the heart of Peter, because he's about to die. But the thing that concerns him are these false teachers and what they're doing to the church. Really eye opening for me, because I attend a church with solid Bible teaching. So, I just thought I was fine. I didn't have to worry about false teaching, but it's everywhere. So, if Peter says it's a problem, it's a problem and I need to be aware of that. And just like Arnie says, my encouragement is this new Heaven and new Earth is around the corner. God promised it and it's going to happen, but then God is giving mockers time. And with that time, that encourages me to stay focused on telling people that they can go there too. And try to bring as many people with all of us as we can.

Bryan: Yeah. That's great. Thanks for sharing those things.