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Text: 2 Peter 3:11 – 18

Place: midweekchurch

Title: Get ready for forever!

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The newsreader on the evening news soberly, but with a hint of panic, tells us that the world will end in exactly one month. It's just like countless science-fiction movies: a huge comet is heading for earth and will impact in thirty days. Nothing can be done and it will mean the end of life on earth! What will you do?

Once the initial hysteria dies down I bet a lot of people won't turn up for work! For some it will be a month-long party. Let us eat and drink for in thirty days we die! Others will gather their family around and make it as meaningful as possible. Still others will try and undo things they regret, or tie up loose ends in relationships. Maybe some will try and do that one thing they have longed to do all their lives but have kept putting off. Or people may be simply overwhelmed, stricken by their impending death and the end of all things. And many will see it as the opportunity to throw off all restraint and drown themselves in violence, destruction and crime.

What would you do?

Your answer is important because it will show the desires of your heart.

And it's more than just a hypothetical.

In **2 Peter 3** Peter reminds us that the end is coming. It may be in a month's time, it may be tomorrow! It may be in a few years' time. But the end is coming, and the day will arrive like a thief, when many will least expect it. And so in these final verses of his last letter Peter makes us consider: how will you live knowing that the world is about to end?

As he says in **verse 10 of chapter 3, 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.** The coming cataclysm will rend creation. The destruction will be utter and complete. And, as he has been building his argument all through this letter, it is inevitable. God has *promised* it will happen, therefore it *will* happen.

So Peter asks in **verse 11, Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?** Is it a cause for panic and despair? Is it an excuse for self-indulgence? No. Peter gives us three things to set our focus on.

In many of the science fiction movies that deal with the end of the world there's a scene where the hero is walking down a street with a determined look and steady walk. All around him is panic, chaos and destruction, fires and car wrecks. But he knows exactly what needs to be done. Planes can be crashing all around him but he doesn't flinch from the task before him. That's the kind of picture Peter draws in these verses. While the world runs around aimlessly as the end nears, or worse still, carries on as though nothing is happening, the Christian is focussed, steady and resolute. She is focussed on three things.

In **verses 11 – 13** Peter says **live a godly life!**

In **verses 16 – 16, win the lost!**

And in **verses 17 & 18, Grow in grace!**

What kind of people ought you to be? he asks in **verse 11**. **You ought to live holy and godly lives** he answers. In these verses Peter gives us a negative motivation and a positive motivation. Back in **verse 7** he says that the world is **being kept for the day of judgement and destruction of ungodly men**. He's saying, 'Since you know about this day of destruction, and through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ you have been saved from that judgement, then live according to your new nature.' If ungodliness is going to be judged, then live a godly life! You don't want to be part of that destruction.

The way you live shows the reality – or otherwise – of your salvation. Now, with the day closer than ever, is the time to get serious about living a godly life.

There was a street near our house in Sydney that was fascinating to drive along. Everyone flew along it until a point as if by magic they slammed on the brakes and drove very sedately. They waved politely to their fellow motorists, gave way to ducks crossing the road, allowed people to back out of their driveways. Everyone was happy and considerate! Why? Because there was a speed camera there! Then once they're out of range of the camera they speed up, honking at the car in front who's still doing the speed limit!

Sadly, human nature needs the threat of punishment to at least put on the façade of righteousness. Sadder still, we Christians often need to be reminded of judgement to keep our lives in check. We can begin to coast, to not worry so much about sin in our lives, make excuses. Our lives can look an awful lot like the lives of people who have no idea that a day of judgement is coming.

Our priorities are just like everyone else's.
Our pleasures are just like everyone else's.
Our conversations are just like everyone else's.

Who would think that we know Judgement Day is rapidly approaching? Jesus says in **Matthew 12:36** **But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgement for every careless word they have spoken**. The day of giving account is coming. Live in keeping with that awesome reality.

But in **verse 13** Peter gives us a positive motivation: the new heaven and the new earth.

When faced with the reality of the end of the world some people might give up in despair. Others will live as there were literally no tomorrow. But the Christian hope extends beyond the end of all things. Jesus promises eternal life to all who believe in him. We are pilgrims passing through this world to our eternal home with God. Our eyes aren't set on this life and the things people chase after here. We have our sights set on **the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness**.

What does it mean for you to say, 'I'm going home?'

After a hard day at work or study, after a day of running around doing errands, even at the end of a holiday – 'I'm going home!' Does it mean Security? Rest? Peace? The presence of loved ones? Isn't it great to go home?

And isn't it great that the new heaven and earth is home for the Christian? Home, never to leave. Home, always with the Lord. Home with one another. Because that is the Christian's destination, God has given us his Holy Spirit so we can live a life now in keeping with our eternal home.

Peter is saying in these verses: live holy and godly lives now because judgement is a reality and so is our home beyond the end of this world.

In between those two verses is **verse 12**. In this verse he continues to encourage us but in a way that is a bit hard to understand. The first part is fine: **look forward to the day of God**. Although it will be a day of judgement and destruction of the wicked, it's the day when justice and righteousness will be revealed. And it is the day that will usher us home.

So it's pretty easy to look forward to that day.

But the second part: **and speed its coming**? How can we speed a day that to God has already been set? Martin Luther puts the verse this way and I think it is helpful: As we look forward to the day of God and run towards it. I like that because it shows our focus is on that day. We're looking forward to it, setting it as our goal. And then we run towards it with single-minded determination.

But how do we run towards that day? How can we hasten its coming?

One way we can speed the coming of the day of God is by praying for it. Jesus taught us to pray in **Matthew 6:10 'Your kingdom come.'** The great heart prayer of the early church was, 'Come, Lord Jesus.' We pray that Jesus' kingdom will come in all its fullness and glory. That righteousness will be revealed and wickedness destroyed. And as we pray that prayer our hearts should come into line with that request. That we would be living as true members of that kingdom, and we would be about the kingdom's work. In **Matthew 24:14** Jesus says this: **The gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations. And then the end will come.**

We are living in days where this is happening. As you and I participate in telling people the Good News, as we support missionaries who are going out into all the world, we see the day of the Lord drawing nearer and nearer. So the amazing thing is the Bible says we can speed the coming day of God by living, praying and working to that end.

And that is what he moves on to in the second main thing to stay focused on: Win the lost!

In **verses 14 – 16** Peter elaborates on what it means to speed the day of God through evangelism. Back up in **verse 9** he said that the delay of Christ's return is due to God's patient desire that everyone come to repentance. The reason we have today is because God is giving people the opportunity to repent and find salvation.

And if that is God's focus for these days, then it must be ours too. But for most of us speaking up about Jesus is the most difficult and scary thing we can think of! But Peter says God has given us three wonderful resources to use in this great work.

Firstly, in **verse 14**, it's our life itself! As we live for God we show the reality – and possibility – of a transformed nature in Christ. Peter says, **make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.** You and I are to radiate God's character to a watching world. Why are Christians so hated throughout the world? Why does living a life of love, service, humility and righteousness attract such violence? The main reason is because we belong to God, not the world. But I also think that it's because Christians demonstrate that that kind of life is possible. That Jesus does change lives. The light only exposes the darkness.

But for those whom God is calling, seeing a consistent Christian life is compelling. The story of Brother Yun from China shows time and time again that someone willing to live for Christ, even in the

face of torture and hatred, draws people to God. His love in extreme situations like prison forced people to ask, 'How can you do that? How can you live in this way? How can you love me?'

Again, our commitment to not live like the rest of the world will challenge and convict. When we refuse to live for today or our retirement but for eternity, our priorities and conversations will be different to the rest of our society.

When we are with a group of friends it's not hard for the conversation to focus almost exclusively on house prices, our children's education, holiday destinations.

They are all important things, but are they all there is? And are they even the most important things? Because Peter goes on to say in **verse 15** that the time is short. God's patience means salvation. The reason you and I have today is so we can share in God's priorities. God hasn't given us these last ten years just so we can get a lump knocked off the mortgage or so we could get that trip in. His patience has meant salvation. His patience in those years may have meant your salvation.

And the reason why you and I are still here is because we have work to do. Things he has planned for us to do since before the creation of the world! You have been given today, so use it wisely.

And the third wonderful resource he has given us for this work of winning the lost is his word. Peter mentions Paul in **verses 15 & 16**. He recognises that Paul has been led by God to write much about his plan of salvation. It is very telling for Peter to say towards the end of **verse 16, as they do the other Scriptures**. Peter recognises Paul's authority as an apostle and that even by this point the church understood that the words of the apostles are just as much God's word as the Old Testament prophets.

People may be attracted by our life.

We may have the opportunity to tell them about Jesus.

But it is God's word that saves them.

It's as they hear the promises of God and believe in Christ they are saved. And that's the greatest resource he has given. It's not up to you or I to convince them, thankfully! You can't argue someone into heaven. But as you give them God's word he will use that powerfully. It might be a tract, or a book, a Bible for them to read. It might be the verses you have memorised, something you write in a letter. God's patience means salvation, and he will use your life, your opportunities and his word to save others.

As Peter brings this letter to a close he gives his readers one last word of encouragement. The world as we know it is coming to a close. We must focus on living a godly life and telling others about Jesus.

He's said live a godly life!

Win the lost!

And now, grow in grace!

Faced with the end of the world some people might just give up. Or they might climb up Mount Warning or go to Cape Byron and wait for it all to happen. Peter says here in **verse 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ**. Don't let his return lead to complacency. Don't just mark time. And don't let your stage in life give you an excuse to not grow in grace. No-one's too old or too busy.

As the day approaches, have your heart and mind focussed on these things. Make it your aim to live a life pleasing to God. Don't be afraid to tell others about Jesus. The time is short! And keep on growing. Get to know Jesus better yourself, growing in the grace he gives.

And when that great day comes, you will not be ashamed or disappointed.