

"Motives For Christian Diligence"

Holiness

2 Peter 3:14-16

Dr. Bruce Bickel

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Bruce: Good morning, men.

Men: Good morning.

Bruce: Nice to be with you today. Don, let's bring some semblance of order to our meeting. *(Laughter) (Music)*

Gracious Lord, we thank You for Your mercy and Your grace. Great is Your faithfulness. It's fresh every day. May we just bathe in that and enjoy it today, as we pray that You'd open our eyes, that we might behold You more clearly for Christ's sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Turn in your Bibles, please, to 2 Peter chapter 3, looking at verses 14-16. We're continuing our study on Holiness. The Apostle Peter writes these words in 2 Peter chapter 3 beginning at verse 14.

"Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by Him without spot or blemish and at peace. And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given Him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures." This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: It's baseball season, men!

Participant: There you go.

Bruce: Baseball starts tomorrow. Or Sunday.

Men: Sunday.

Participant: They all run together.

Bruce: They all run together. *(Laughter.)* Baseball season is starting this weekend. I don't know if Clint Hurdle had been reading the book of 2 Peter, but he made a statement a couple of weeks ago at the beginning of spring training when he said something like this. He said to the team, "You can't rest on the laurels of last year. Just because you won ninety-eight games last year does not mean that you're going to win ninety-eight this year. You need to come to spring training and make every effort to be in shape and use a lot of diligence when you come to practice for spring training."

Now I don't know if he read the book of 2 Peter, but that's exactly what Peter is going to teach us today. He's going to teach us about being diligent. Notice the number of times that Peter says, "Make every effort."

The idea of making every effort, or diligence, is something that Peter uses quite frequently. Four times in this letter he mentions the believer's responsibility to make intense efforts to be like Christ and to walk in fellowship with the Lord. He teaches us to make every effort and to be diligent.

Look at chapter 1, verse 5.

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Transcriber's Note: 2 Peter 1:5. *"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue."*

Bruce: Make every effort to add to your faith these seven qualities—chapter 1, verse 5. Then we go to 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 10. *"Be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure."* Be diligent. Make every effort. And in verse 15 of chapter 1 of 2 Peter, *"Make every effort to see that you remember these things."*

To him, diligence is something that's critically important because it's a responsibility we have. When God gives us His grace, we need to be diligent, to make every effort to maximize those things that God has given us in His grace.

Now notice Peter's admonitions here, in those same verses I just gave you. Notice that when he says, "make every effort" that there is something that follows right after it. There's a consequence to our not making an effort. Let's go back and look at chapter 1, verse 5 of 2 Peter. Add to your faith these seven things, and the results are found in verses 8 and 9.

Transcriber's Note: 2 Peter 1:8-9. *"For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins."*

You make every effort, or you don't, and there are consequences or there are results. So in 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 5, add to your faith these seven things. And the results are found in verses 8 and 9. There's a consequence to our not being diligent that Peter warns us of.

How about verse 10 of 2 Peter chapter 1? The results are found in verses 10 and 11.

Transcriber's Note: 2 Peter 1:10-11. *"Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."*

Bruce: And then in verse 15 it's after his departure. Now we're going to see this same principle today. You see that at the beginning of verse 14. *"Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these things, be diligent to be found at peace with Him."* The theme here is being diligent. And that means to make every effort.

The words *so then, be diligent* in verse 14 make the transition from a long range vision of our understanding of the new heavens and the new earth. And now it brings you down to practical terms. In other words, he says that there is a long range vision of having an understanding of the new heavens and the new earth. And now it comes down to practical conduct. What are you going to do about that to be diligent, as you understand the concept of the new heavens and the new earth?

So he gives us three motives for us to be diligent. That's what we are going to examine today—three motives to be diligent in our walk with Christ.

The first one is this—*the position of the believer*. Do you understand your position as it relates to the Person and work of Christ and God the Father? Understanding your position will be a motivation for diligence.

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Secondly, *the hope of the believer*. We have certain hopes that we have. The word *hope* does not mean wishful thinking. It means confident expectation that something will occur. And when we understand the hope of the believer, that motivates us to be diligent, to make every effort.

And then lastly, *the instructions to other believers*. He gives us some very good instructions as believers to work on things that we need to do to be diligent and to give us motivation for diligence. So let's take a look at these three principles that Peter teaches us in these verses.

The first one is this—*the position of the believer*. We've got to understand our position by observing the title given to those to whom he is writing.

Now in the Old Testament and the New Testament there are significant points of principle behind the giving of names. The giving of names in both the Old and the New Testament have much more consequence and significance than in our culture today. The idea of the name was either descriptive of the parents' wishes for the child, or was prophetic of his upcoming personality to be manifested in that person. There was a relationship between names and the significance given in that name. Let me give you some Biblical understanding of this.

The important thing here is how does Peter address them? He says, "*dear friends*," or "*dearly beloved*." That's a significant title of understanding what that means because it describes your position in Christ.

Let me give you some understanding biblically about the significance of names and the giving of names. First of all, you could give a person a name and it would indicate his distinct, visible personality. The name was associated with his personality. The total picture of a person's organized behavior was put together into his own name. In other words, if you gave a person a name, that name was descriptive of his personality. An example would be John the Baptist or Jesus the Savior. Do you understand John the Baptist and Jesus the Savior? When you hear that name, it's descriptive of his personality. It's very, very descriptive, and there is significant meaning to those names.

Knowing the name of a person was the same thing as knowing the essence of the person himself. Knowing the name of that person was the same as knowing the essence or the personality of that person.

Secondly, when you gave a person his name, there was a correlation between his name and his authority. The naming of a person established a relationship of dominion or position to him. Adam was naming the animals. His name, Adam, was a position of authority.

The third possibility was that the name meant protection. There was a correlation between giving the person his name and protection. Biblically, what a person owns he names. And what he names and what he owns he is to protect. So when you gave somebody a name you were giving him the responsibility of protecting that which he owned.

Participant: Is that why the wife takes the name of her husband?

Bruce: That's a good thought. I don't know. Good thought. Why do they take our names for their last names? Could be.

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Participant: They're one. They're one flesh.

Bruce: One flesh. That's the idea, I think, more than anything else in the name—the one flesh concept.

Another possibility would be this: name and reputation. It could either be a good name or a bad name.

Now notice this. The Scripture says, "Believe on the name of Christ." John uses that phrase five times in the gospel of John. The word *believe* means to rely upon, depend upon, trust or adhere to. You believe *on* the name, not *in* the name. You believe on the name. When a person believes on the name of Christ, he reflects the personality and the characteristics of Christ, and also the mission of that Person. So when you believe on the name of Jesus Christ, you are relying upon, depending upon, trusting in and adhering to Him. You are believing on His name. And when you do that, you're taking on all the characteristics of His personality, and that becomes part of who you are. You're taking on the essence when you believe on His name. It's very significant when we do that in the understanding of the correlation between names in the Scripture and the implications and practicality of it.

Now when a person acquires the name—like believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—he takes on the benefits and character of His work and His personality. You take on the personality of Christ. You take on His authority, His protection and His reputation. When you believe on the name of Christ, all four of those things come into play. That's why the Scripture says that you believe *on* the name, not *in* the name.

There is one other significant change in the Bible, and that is the change of character when you become a believer. Now let me give you some different name changes.

The important thing here is that Peter is writing to friends. And that's why you have to understand your position. You need to look at who God says you are by name in the Scripture.

Now let me contrast who you were prior to coming to Christ by name. Then let me give you some name changes to help you understand the significance of the name change that God gives us. I'm not going to give you all of these. But here are some of the names of what you were called before you were in Christ as a nonbeliever.

"Children of disobedience." You see, that describes who you are. It describes your position, your personality and your activity. *Children of pride.* *"Children of the devil."* *"Children of the evil one."* *"Accursed children."* *"Dogs."* *"God's enemies."* *"Enemies of the cross."* *"Enemies of righteousness."* I could go on and on. Those are names that are describing your position as it relates to Christ. Now when you believe—

Participant: Are or were, Bruce?

Bruce: Correct. Are, for the unbeliever.

Participant: Oh, okay.

Bruce: That's correct. They are for the unbeliever.

Now when you become a Christian, when you believe on the name of Jesus Christ, your name changes. Here are some of the name changes. They're significant. That's why Peter's point is this. You've got to understand that one of the motivations for diligence is the change in your position. And you do that by name.

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Here are some of your names after your conversion. *"Believers."* *"Dearly beloved."* *"Beloved brothers."* *"Spiritual brothers."* *"Sons of God."* *"Chosen ones."* *"Elect."* *"Heirs."* *"Redeemed of the Lord."* *"The righteous."* *"Salt."* *"People of light."* *"Trees of righteousness,"* and so forth.

Peter's point is this. One of the first things to help you understand your motivation to be diligent, to make every effort towards holiness, is to understand the name change that occurred, because when the name changes, your position changes. There's a positional change by your name. You go from this name to that name when you take on the different position.

So his first point is this. Understand your name change and understand the position change. Your name change indicates your positional change.

Notice that character goes along with that name change. Your character changes by that name. And that's your position.

The name he uses here is "dear friends," or "beloved." That's the first motive for our making every effort to be holy, because you recognize the position of your status change from being hated by God in your sins to now being loved by God. You've gone through a name change and a positional change. Do you understand that? You were this, now you are this. Sometimes we just have to remind ourselves who we are now in Christ and how He now refers to us because of our name change. The name change indicates a positional change.

Look at the contrast of your names prior to your faith in Christ. And then look at your name change after your faith in Christ. That's Peter's motivation for diligence. You recognize your positional change by name. Peter teaches that you are in a new position before God because you are now a new person before God. Your position changes before God because you are a new person before God. Your status and character have changed. The issue is not so much "do I accept Christ?", but does He accept me? That's the real issue. You are accepted by God because you are in Christ.

Notice that your position changes His treatment of you. His treatment of you changes because of your positional change. Sometimes, men, you and I have to really fight the battle of the world, which is this. Who are you going to believe? In Romans 12 Paul says, *"Do not be conformed to the system of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* Sometimes the battleground is who I believe. Do I believe what the world says about me—that my enough is never enough? Or do I believe the name change that I went from, from being this to that, because of my believing on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? My position changes and therefore what else changes because of your position? Your character changes. Your character changes as a result of that positional change. Peter teaches us that the first motivation for being diligent is the positional change that we go through.

Secondly, how about *the hope of the believer*? Let's take a look at the hope of the believer. #1, your motivation for diligence is your change in position and your change in character, how God treats you.

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Now Peter has been painting a very vivid picture of the end times in these particular verses on two fronts. One is the destruction of the earth and the other is the construction of the new heavens and the new earth—destructive and constructive.

Have you ever longed to be in an environment where everything is peaceful and you're free from sin?

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: So that everything that you would do would be pleasing to the Lord? Do you ever look forward to that time? That's the new heaven and the new earth. That's what he's saying. You've got to think about this, because that's what it's going to be like. You'll be in a position of having no sin. You won't experience any sin at all. And the result will be that everything you will do will be pleasing to the Lord. Now do we long for that?

Participant: Yes.

Bruce: We give lip service to it. But down in the depths of your heart, do you really long for that? That's what Peter is saying is the second motivation, the hope of the believer. Yeah, Don?

Don: Yeah, Bruce. I said last Friday when I was preaching that it's so hard for us. You know, like you said, we do give lip service to it. But can you really imagine a world without sin, because everything we do, sin permeates everything we do, every part of our experience, whether you turn on the TV, or, you know, what makes a book appealing? Conflict, sin. It's just part of the fabric of everything that we experience. And to imagine a world where there is absolutely no sin, that is just unfathomable. But it's true.

Bruce: That's the hope of the believer.

Don: It's the hope of the believer, exactly.

Bruce: That's a motivation for diligence. On my very best day, my holiness effort is tainted.

Don: Sure.

Bruce: It's tainted. And I long for the day when that taintedness won't be there around me anymore.

Participant: Amen. Wow!

Bruce: It will just be gone. And that's what Peter is saying. He says, "I've been teaching you about the new heavens and the new earth, the end times." And you've got to understand, you've got to think towards the end times, because that's going to help you have hope for the fact that one of these days you're going to be in the position of sinlessness, no sin exposed to you. And everything that you do will be pleasing to the Lord and acceptable to Him because of His righteousness in you.

There are three kinds of binoculars that you can buy. They are known as the theater binoculars, the field binoculars and the marine binoculars. And you can either look at the things close at hand, or if you use the strongest ones you can see the stars.

Now there is a point of illustration here for us. The short range ones show you your possibilities. The long range ones show you your certainties. Peter is saying that you've got to look at the long range, because that's where your certainties are. Your certainties are not in the short range. Your certainties are in the long range. And look for the time when the new heavens and the new earth come, and the end times come, and Jesus is in

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control. And you will be living a life of absolute sinlessness in an environment of no sin. And everything you do will be pleasing to the Lord.

Now the Scriptures call this a long term vision. Let me read something for you from one of my favorite theologians by the name of J. L. Dagg. This is what he talks about with this whole point of thinking a long range vision. Do you understand what we're talking about? Short range vision reveals your possibilities. Long range vision reveals your certainties. Peter has been teaching us certainties about the new heavens and the new earth. Now here is what Professor Dagg says about this.

"Since the motives to holiness and to diligence in the pursuit of it are drawn so abundantly from the future world," (meaning the new heavens and the new earth), "a knowledge of that world is of great importance to all people. Every man knows that the time of his continuance on earth is short and uncertain. And while fully assured that he must leave this world, and that the time of his departure is just at hand, to make no inquiry concerning the world to which he is going, or to disregard authentic information concerning it, and the means of attaining happiness therein, is folly to the extreme."

In other words, he's saying that you've got to think with long term vision. Your hope is this. The new heaven and the new earth is coming. When the Lord is pleased to return in all of His glory, that's where I'm going to be. And that begins to develop a motivation for us for diligence.

"It is therefore wise to study the doctrine concerning the future world"—the new heavens and the new earth—"and to study it as a subject of momentous personal interest. With every step in our progress we should ask, 'How does this truth affect my heart?'" How does it affect my heart when I think about the new heavens and the new earth, the end times? When you think about the Lord's return, how does that affect your heart? What are you going to do about what you've just learned?

"Am I still running to obtain this? Am I doing the things that are necessary to obtain the new heavens and the new earth existence? Are my prospects clear? Ought I not to renew my diligence and to seek more earnestly the guidance and help needed that I might finish my course with joy?"

He's basically saying this, friends. While the first motivation for us is a change of position, the second is the hope we have for the new heavens and the new earth, because that's the time where we're going to have freedom in Christ. And everything that you and I will be doing will be pleasing to the Lord. Peter teaches us that this is a motivation for diligence. That's our second motivation. Yes, Ted?

Ted: A thought just occurred to me, that what you just said applies to those who don't believe, because those who don't believe take a short range vision.

Bruce: Exactly.

Ted: Because that's the only hope, those possibilities. And when they take a long range vision, there is despair and nothingness. There is no hope for a long range vision.

Bruce: Amen.

Ted: And that's why it's difficult to get folks who have not been born again to think about what happens after you die. "Well, I'd rather not think about it."

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Bruce: Right. The contrast Ted is reaffirming is this—the difference between possibilities and certainties. The short range reveals certain possibilities, or the lack of possibilities. A long range vision will help us to understand our certainties in Christ. That's the hope that we have. And remember that the word *hope* does not mean wishful thinking. It means confident expectation that something will occur. That's our second motivation, the hope of believers.

Now the third thing is that he gives us some *instructions*. He's basically saying this. How do I qualify for the new heavens and the new earth? Peter says that there is a transition. How do I qualify for entrance into the new heavens and the new earth? And that's where he gives us some instructions.

He basically says three things. *Be reconciled, be sanctified and be grateful*. Let's take a look at these three requirements for entrance into the new heavens and the new earth.

First of all, the NIV says, "*Be at peace with Him.*" The New American Standard says, "*found by Him in peace.*" He's talking about reconciliation. "*Be reconciled to God.*"

Both of these are referring to the investigation that Christ does as to the true character or standing of that person. In other words, are they reconciled to God? Anyone who enters the new heavens and the new earth must pass this test. They have been reconciled to God. That's the first requirement. That means you're at peace with him. It's a sign of being reconciled to God.

Are you at peace with God? If you are, that's a sign of being reconciled to Him. If you do not have peace with God, it may be a sign that you're not reconciled to Him. The first indication is being reconciled to God.

Now what do we mean by *reconciliation*? Here is what I think is a good definition. Reconciliation is the sovereign work of God in which His alienation from sinners is removed through the appeasing sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Now God's alienation toward our sin arises out of His just wrath over our sin and our rebellion. In reconciliation, then, God's alienation is removed because His wrath is appeased in Christ. The wrath of God is appeased in Christ. That's reconciliation.

Are you reconciled to God? Peter says that the first requirement of your long range vision is to think of this. Are you really reconciled to God? Do I have peace with God? Reconciliation starts right there.

Participant: Bruce, would you say that reconciliation is almost the same as regeneration? Not almost the same, but (*unclear*.)

Bruce: Well, there can be no reconciliation without regeneration. Reconciliation or regeneration—which comes first, Bishop Rodgers? Help us out.

Bishop Rodgers: Aha! Well, I'd say that by grace you're reconciled and therefore regenerated to receive it.

Bruce: Amen.

Participant: One of the products of regeneration is reconciliation.

Bruce: Yes. Correct. When God regenerates us, it starts the process of our being reconciled to Him. That's the sovereign work of God, where the alienation from our sin is removed because of the appeasing work of Christ. That happens when we believe on the

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name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our position changes. We're regenerated. And the consequence of that is going to be reconciliation. We have peace with God. Yes, Tom?

Tom: You know, I think it's interesting that Paul talks about the fact that we are ministers of reconciliation. That's really what we're to spread, and not so much regeneration, which is His process of this. We need to tell people to be reconciled, to come back to the Father.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: We need to call people to be reconciled to God.

Participant: Yes.

Bruce: Yes, Bishop Rodgers?

Bishop Rodgers: You know, there's a big quarrel about whether we're reconciled to God or God is reconciled to us. And the answer is—

Participant: Yes.

Bishop Rodgers: First He reconciles Himself to us on the cross that we might be reconciled to Him.

Bruce: Amen. Amen. It's all accomplished at the cross. You know, you've heard me talk about the twenty-eight attributes of God. It's my understanding that the one place where all of the twenty-eight attributes were put on display is the cross.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: All twenty-eight are right there. You go through the list and all of it is pictured right at the cross. That's where the reconciliation is accomplished. His alienation is removed because of the appeasing work of Christ on the cross.

Let's take a look at 2 Corinthians 5:18. Tom mentioned that. It's an interesting verse for us.

2 Corinthians 5:18. Well, let's start at verse 16. *"From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard Him thus no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."*

Now notice this. *"All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself."* Christ reconciled us to Himself, and notice what happened. The consequence of that is that He gave us the ministry of—

Participant: Reconciliation.

Bruce: Reconciliation. We are part of the world's reconciliation process through the sovereign work of God as we preach the gospel of Christ and have intimate relationships with other people. *"All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."* Those are critical verses for us to understand our calling in life. We are involved in the reconciliation process by the proclamation of Christ.

Notice verse 19. *"That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."*

We cannot create reconciliation. We can give the message of reconciliation, which is the gospel of Christ. Do you understand that? We talk about the fact that Christ accomplished the removal of the alienation and the appeasing of God's justice at the

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cross. We can preach the message of Christ crucified. That is the message of reconciliation. That's the message we need to be preaching.

A friend of mine just attended the Shepherds' Conference at John MacArthur's church, Grace Community Church in Los Angeles. He said that one of the most significant messages he heard, and I think it's on YouTube, is a message about preaching Christ and Him crucified. It's a very, very passionate plea to preach Christ and Him crucified from the pulpit, and not to talk about politics and other things. It's a very, very passionate thing. What we need to be preaching is Christ and Him crucified because that is the message of reconciliation. You don't need to talk about politics. You don't need to talk about other things going on in the world. You need to talk about Christ and Him crucified. That's the message of reconciliation. God is reconciling the world to Himself and therefore we are reconciled to Him. That's our message. You might want to go check that out on YouTube. It's a very passionate message on preaching Christ from the pulpit. It's by Paul Washer and it's called the Shepherds' Conference. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSJf14A-H_M

Now reconciliation refers to a change of attitude towards us. God changes His attitude towards us through reconciliation by the work of the cross.

So we need to be diligent, men. We need to be diligent, to make every effort to see that you are reconciled to God, and that you by faith have applied the finished work of Christ to yourself. That's where it all begins in diligence. Do I apply that to myself? That's the only way to gain entrance into the eternal life in the new heavens and the new earth. Be reconciled is Peter's first instruction.

The second one is this. *Be sanctified*. What is the mark of being righteous? He says to be spotless and blameless. The mark of being a righteous person is being spotless and blameless. Look at 1 Peter 1:19 and you'll read that again.

Transcriber's Note: 1 Peter 1:18-19. *"Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."*

Bruce: The character that qualifies us for entrance into other new heavens and the new earth is the copy of us in Christ. In other words, it is not our righteousness, it's not our spotlessness. We are wrapped in the robes of righteousness of the spotless Lamb of God. Only those in this condition will pass the investigation to enter into the new heavens and the new earth. Look at 2 Peter 2:13, about the false teachers.

Transcriber's Note: 2 Peter 2:12-13. *"But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you."*

Bruce: Don't be like the false teachers. He says to be like Christ. Don't be like the false teachers; be like Christ. Don't be like the wolves; be like the Lamb of God. Be wrapped in the righteousness of Christ.

So be sanctified. That means to be set apart.

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Be reconciled. Be sanctified. And thirdly, he says to be *grateful*. Be grateful that the sentence of condemnation against you was not speedily executed. He talks about the patience of God. *"Indeed, the patience of God is salvation."* In other words, be very, very grateful that when the Scripture says, *"The soul that sins shall die,"* that it wasn't instantaneously applied to you. In His forbearance, His patience, His long-suffering, be grateful that He didn't speedily execute His law against you because of your sin.

So what is patience and long-suffering? It can be defined as the suffering of opposition, injuries and insults for a long period of time without punishing them. That's God's forbearance.

Notice what he says in verse 15. *"There are some things in them that are hard to understand,* which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures." Understand His forbearance.

The Scripture has one standard. The Old and the New Testament are the same. The Old Testament says this. *"The soul that sins shall die."* The New Testament says, *"The wages of sin is death."* Be grateful that He didn't apply it to you when it occurred. That's the long-suffering of Christ. He says, "View that as salvation."

I was talking with a friend of mine recently. He was really troubled by this idea. "Why didn't God save me sooner?" He said, "I didn't have a chance." And he went through this whole litany of all the churches he went to, and he heard all of this man-centered gospel. He said, "I didn't have a chance to come to saving faith." He said, "How come God didn't save me sooner?"

And I said, "God didn't save you sooner because you weren't ready. It wasn't the time for it to happen. He was protecting you for fifty years. His long-suffering was protecting you. You need to be grateful for the fact that He didn't apply His justice to you at the moment of your sin. And be grateful for the fact that He protected you for fifty years so that He brought you to the point of regeneration and salvation."

You see, Peter is saying, "Be grateful for that." Look at God's long-suffering—that He didn't execute His sentence against our sinfulness immediately. Be grateful for that, because that should be viewed as God preparing us for regeneration and salvation. Be grateful for that.

God bears with sinners because His name and His nature is love. He bears with sinners because His nature and His name is love. It is the actual design of His long-suffering to bring the elect to salvation. And the Lord Jesus is not going to come back until all the elect come to saving faith. And remember this. As we said a couple weeks ago, the elect will never die until they are born again.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: They'll never die until they're born again. And when is the Lord going to return? When all of His elect come to saving faith. But the elect will never die until they are converted.

Be hopeful. Are you one of the elect? What does the evidence say? That's what Peter is saying. Take the evidence. What does it say? Are you reconciled? Are you sanctified? Are you grateful? Those instructions are what Peter is teaching us about the scrutiny that

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the Lord Jesus is going to do to us when He investigates us to see if our character is correct to come into the new heavens and the new earth. Are we reconciled? Are we sanctified? And are we grateful? Those things ought to be the motivation for our diligence, to make every effort to walk in our holiness. Yes, Don?

Don: Bruce, I don't know if you're going to cover this. But I think that verses 15 and 16 are some of the most important verses in all of Scripture.

Bruce: Please go ahead and expound on that.

Don: Okay. First of all,--

Bruce: Look at verses 15 and 16, please, of 2 Peter chapter 3. Don is going to talk about this.

Don: First of all, Peter refers to Paul as his beloved brother. Formerly he persecuted him.

Bruce: Right.

Don: In verse 16 he talks about some things of his which are hard to understand. And he says—and this is my translation—*"that untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction,"* which says that there is the possibility of twisting Scripture, which is done so frequently today in so many ways. There is only one correct interpretation of a passage. And people need to be taught, and that's why we have seminaries. That's why we're to study. And, you know, so many people twist Scripture in so many ways, whether it be in morality, or the character of God, or in many, many ways.

And then what's also interesting to me is that Peter refers to Paul's writings as Scripture.

Bruce: Yes.

Don: It's very, very revealing. People say, "Well, I believe the words of Jesus, but I don't believe the words of Paul are Scripture." But right here Peter refers to Paul's writings as Scripture, on a par with the whole rest of the Bible.

Bruce: Amen to that. Wonderful! Thank you, Don.

Don: You're welcome.

Bruce: That's why we've been talking about which Jesus do you believe in—the Jesus of human imagination—the twisting, as Peter refers to in these verses—or the Jesus of Biblical revelation? There is only one revelation. We need to be careful not to twist the Scriptures.

Well men, let's summarize this very briefly. Do you have difficulty with your diligence? Do you have difficulty making every effort? Then consider these things. Consider the change of your position from sinner to saint. Consider that—your change of position from sinner to saint. Consider the hope of a home of righteousness, where everything that you will do will be pleasing to the Lord. Consider the peace that God has extended to you through Christ. Consider the credentials you have of being identified with the spotless, blameless Lamb of God.

And then consider the following: the long-suffering of God which permitted your salvation. Do you understand that? Consider the fact that God delayed so you would come to saving faith, because you were one of the elect. That ought to be a motivation for us to be grateful and to motivate ourselves for diligence.

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And then lastly, one more. If you're not in Christ, what name does God call you? What name does He call you?

Participant: Sinner.

Bruce: It reflects your status before Him. If that's the case, men, may God save you and change your status before Him for His glory. Let's be diligent, men. Make every effort towards your holiness.

Let's pray. Father, remind us again to consider these things, that we would be motivated for diligence, that we'll make every effort to maintain the integrity of the life that You've given us through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. And may it be so, Father, that You would be glorified, that we will be salt and light, to slow down corruption and expose sin in this world. And Father, help us understand this, that there is one interpretation of Scripture and we should not twist it, to study to show ourselves approved. And may it be so for Jesus' sake. And all the Brave Men said, "Amen!"