

# Looking Forward Part 2



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**2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3:14–18**

We are going to finish the last paragraph of our study of 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter we started last week. Many of you probably don't realize this, but one of the privileges that I have this fall and winter is I am the assistant varsity basketball coach to Joey for the New Covenant Lions. We had two games yesterday in Morgantown, Kentucky. On game day, I have two main responsibilities. The first is to make sure Joey stays calm during games. My second responsibility, which is supposed to help him some, is to analyze the other team's players when they run out on the floor—picking out which one is the best player, deciding who we should put on that player, and then see who we believe might be a threat to either drive the ball down the lane or to shoot the three point shot. Now, we're familiar with our team, but most of the teams we're playing this year we've not seen yet, so we're not familiar with them so I take my responsibility very seriously. So far, our team has always been on the floor first and then the other team runs out. We have a rotation of eight player—one senior, two juniors, and five freshmen at the varsity level. Now, when this other team we're going to play runs out on the floor, the first thing I always notice is every player we're going to guard seems to be a little taller than our players. Every player the other team has seems to be a whole lot heavier than our players. When you look at their legs, their arms and their faces, you

suddenly realize they are a whole lot more mature than our players. And then I realized that in some of those positions we are going to be out skilled when we began to play. It's just amazing how varied the height, weight, maturity, and skill level is with teenage boys between freshman year to a senior year, just four years difference. Do you agree? If I could just say this publicly, we need our boys to grow, not over the next few years; we need them to grow over the next few weeks!

Last Sunday we concentrated on verse 1 of 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3, but today we're going to concentrate on verse 18. We will talk about the three verses in the middle, but when we come to that 18th verse, I want you to listen intently because that's how we're going to finish in Peter's concluding verse to his second letter to the church.

### **Scripture**

***"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 in them 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. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. (Verse 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 learned last week that because we do not know when the day of the Lord is going to be (it's going to come like a thief in the night) that we are looking forward. When Jesus comes, the present earth and present heaven are going to be done away with. There will be a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. So while we're living in this world of unrighteousness, we're looking forward to that new earth of righteousness. But while we're still here and we're looking forward, Peter reminds us that

we are supposed to be making every effort possible on that day when He comes and we stand before Him on the day of judgment, the Bema seat of Christ, we are to be found as believers—no spots, totally blameless and at peace. I hope you looked forward this week, and as you looked forward to your new home, it motivated you how to live this week for your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Peter is going to tell us three more things in this closing paragraph. First, he's going to tell us to count the patience of the Lord as salvation. Now, if you remember a few verses earlier we saw that the false teachers were teaching that Jesus isn't coming back. Preachers have been talking about Him coming back, but He hasn't come back yet so He's probably not coming back. Peter corrects them by saying there's going to be a delay in the Lord coming and the reason is because God doesn't want any to perish but all to come to repentance. Now, think about this. For you and I who are believers, when the day of the Lord comes, it's going to be a glorious day. We're going to see Jesus, we're going to get a glorified body, we're going to stand before Him, and He's going to set us down on a new heaven and new earth. It's going to be glorious. But think about that person who doesn't know Christ. They're going to stand before God in judgment and they're going to be cast into an everlasting lake of fire forever and ever and ever. That breaks God's heart. So if you want to think of the Lord's coming being delayed, that's why it's being delayed—God wants to give people more time and opportunity to repent.

Now, I have to ask you this question. Why does Peter tell us to count? Old English translates this word as reckon. The word, reckon, means to add it up. I've never figured that out—we add things up, but when we put things on paper, we start at the top and add down, right? We always put the total at the bottom. Well, the ancients put the number at the top, so that's where we get this phrase “add it up.” So add this up—patience of the Lord, salvation. Why would he be telling us this? Because if Jesus comes back today, we have unbelieving spouses, children, parents, cousins, friends, and work associates who are going to spend eternity in hell forever and ever and ever. So you know what ought to be happening to us if we're looking forward to that new home while we're still living here in the old

home? Those people ought to be on our hearts. They ought to be on our minds. We ought to be looking for opportunities to share Christ with them because the reason Christ hasn't come back yet is so they can have an opportunity to repent. But that opportunity's not going to last forever.

Then, I had another thought...See, the New Testament presents salvation in three phases—justification, sanctification, glorification. There's a sense in which I can say I have been saved. It's a moment in the past—I'm justified, I'm made right with God. But there's another sense in which right now I can say I am *being* saved in sanctification. God is moving me further and further away from the image of Adam more and more into the image of Jesus Christ right now. And then when Christ comes back, it's going to be a day of glorification. As a believer, I'm going to receive a new glorified body. In this patience of God, while He's giving unbelievers the opportunity to repent, do you know what He's giving us opportunity to do as believers? He's giving us the opportunity to repent as well—not of the nature of sin, but of acts of sin. Trust me; you don't want to stand before God on the day of judgment as a believer with unforgiveness in your heart. You don't want that anger. You know what I'm talking about, right? You know that attitude you have? You know that quick critical judgment you make? You don't want that in your life when you stand before Jesus. I think what Peter's saying to us is you better deal with that. Are you dealing with any of that? Add it up. He hasn't come back yet; you have time to get it right. Start today.

Then, Peter reminds us that Paul has also written a letter to this church. Isn't that cool? Can you imagine being a first century church and you get a letter from the Apostle Peter and a letter from Paul who Peter identifies as our beloved brother? I mean, I was trying to think how cool this would be. Wouldn't this be so neat if there had been a day when Hardin could have had like a John Piper preach to us, maybe a John MacArthur, or maybe a RC Sproul? Can you imagine what a blessing that would've been? This church hears from Peter and they hear from Paul, and what Peter's saying is we both agree that the Lord hasn't come back yet in order to give people an opportunity to repent. And he talks about Paul writing as a beloved brother. See, don't listen to those people who tell you Paul and Peter didn't

get along. That's not true. Yes, Paul corrected Peter but Peter took it well. He knew he should have been corrected and he calls Paul a beloved brother. Then he says that God, in all of His wisdom, gave Paul the ability in all of his letters to write wisely, so Peter knew that when Paul wrote he was being gifted by God with the ability to write. But then, Peter made the statement that some of Paul's writings are really hard to understand. I would've never known that. Would you have? I mean, I thought Paul was a piece of cake! Have you ever read the Apostle Paul? What in the world is he talking about when he does those run on sentences—just sentence after sentence, after sentence after sentence!

See, Peter recognized that Paul wrote on a different level than even he wrote or most of us even understood. But then, do you know what he said? He said... *There are some false teachers that take what Paul has said, even though he agrees with me, and they twist Paul's words and they bring about their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.* I want to stop there just for a moment. Let that sink in—"as they do the other Scriptures." At the time Peter's writing, the early church used the Jewish Bible as their Bible. What you and I call the Old Testament is the Scriptures, 39 books. Peter has already written to us that the Holy Spirit of God anointed those men to write what they wrote, so that they weren't writing their words they were writing the very words of God. Paul said every Scripture is inspired by God. Every Scripture is *theopneustos*, breathed out by God! And now Peter, talking about Paul and the letters he's written, puts them in the same category of the Old Testament prophets and the 39 Old Testament books. Wow! Peter recognized that when Paul wrote his letters, he wasn't writing his own words he was writing the very words of God.

Do you know what people do with Paul's letters? Do you know what people do with the Old Testament? Peter says they twist them. They make them say things that they really don't say; therefore, he tells us we better take care. Take care means to be on guard. Be on guard that every time you hear somebody teach about Scripture, they may be twisting it and it is going to bring about their destruction. But if you're a believer, a real believer, and you come under false teaching and start being led by false

teaching, you could fall down and lose your own stability. Peter's worried about the church falling down so he says to be aware. I just wonder what Peter would say if he was here today. Some of you are reading some junk on the internet. It's just pure junk. We have about 20 channels on our TV and some of that is just pure junk. It's twisted thoughts. It's not teaching the Word of God at all; it's teaching someone's version of the Word of God. Last week I shared with you about a TV ad I saw on a news broadcast about a book. I got a text that afternoon that said, "Hey, I saw that same ad. I bought the book. We agreed when the book comes, he's going to use it to start a fire." Peter says, be on guard. You can't trust everybody that's teaching the Word of God. There are some people who already have a belief about God and how they think how God ought to be, so they take Scripture and twist it to present their view of God, which is really not God.

Now, I'm not saying we do it correctly but the entire 40 years I have been here, there's a reason we start in verse 1 of a book and go to the last verse of the book—it's because it makes us keep God's Word in context, and it makes it a little harder to read what *you* want Scripture to say into that verse. That doesn't mean we still can't mess it up and misinterpret it, but it helps keep us from twisting. Now, there's nothing wrong with churches teaching topically but I think that's the hardest way to teach the Bible. You have to spend several hours and days choosing your topic.

Then, if you're going to choose a verse out of the middle of a book, you have to study everything before that verse and everything after that verse. You have to study everything in that testament then you have to study everything in the Bible before you can know what it's going to say. I don't know how you had any time to do anything else. That's just too hard for me so I choose the easy way—just pick a book, do four verses—I don't have to ask God what I'm willing to teach next. I just start with the next verse and spend all week studying that verse. Does that make sense?

Please be careful. I have to be careful, because some of the guys that I respect the most could also twist Scripture, *I* could twist Scripture. So let's take care. Doctrine matters. What you believe matters because if we believe wrong, we will lose our foundation, we will lose our footing, we will lose our stability, and won't have the influence for God that God wants us to have.

Then Peter says, verse 18, "But..." I knew it; you knew it too! Peter was either going to end with a "therefore" or end with a "but." Right? After saying all of this stuff, he's now going to tell us something awesome, and here's what he tells us, "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." So here's what we're going to end on this morning, talking about growing in grace and growing in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now growing has been on my mind a lot lately as the assistant coach of a varsity basketball team. Remember last week I told you we have a rotation of eight on our team—one senior, two juniors, and five freshmen. Every game so far, we give up inches, we give up weight, we give up maturity, and in most instances, we give up skill. The reason is because most teenage boys don't really start really growing until somewhere between their freshman and sophomore years. By their senior year, normally they're not going to grow much. So when you're us, and you're playing that team who has two juniors and two seniors and their youngest player is a sophomore...well, you get it right? So I've been studying growing because I'm going to try to help Joey get our team to grow. Now, I'm not talking about growing over the next two to three years; I'm talking about growing over the next few weeks...we're in the midst of a season. Here's what I've learned from the experts. There are four main ingredients to growing, if you're a boy. First ingredient is genetics. Second ingredient is diet. Third ingredient is exercise. Fourth ingredient is sleep...rest. Now one of these, the experts tell me, determines 80% of our growth. It's genetics. So if you're a kid here and you want to be an NBA professional ball player, or play in the NFL, just look at mom and dad and say thanks. I didn't have a chance. Why? Because 80% of my physical growth came from my mom and my dad. That's discouraging if you have moms and dads like I had, and papaws and granddaddies like I had. Now just so you know, my great granddaddy Cunningham was six ft. four, but he married a four ft. two lady and destroyed it. No disrespect, but why couldn't he have fell in love with somebody who was like six ft. two then I could have played for the University of Kentucky!! What I'm telling you is if you're a guy and you're desiring to grow, 80% of your growth has already

been determined. But you know, that 20% might make a couple inches of difference, and that's diet, exercise, and sleep.

Now, Peter's not talking about physical growth he's talking about spiritual growth. And when I examine that, I like that because he wants us to grow in grace and he wants us to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Which means what? Let's just state this obvious fact. 80% of our growth is determined by our spiritual genetics. Thank you Father! Spiritually, I have the DNA of my heavenly Father. Now, if you don't know my Father, can I tell you about Him? He's omniscient, He's omnipresent, and He's omnipotent. Do you know what He did? Just to brag on Him a little bit, there was a time when there was no one, nothing but Him...Father, Son, Holy Spirit. He took nothing—now nothing is nothing; nothing is not something—and created the heavens and the earth. And then, do you know what He did? He decided He wanted to have a being on this earth that could mirror who He was in heaven, so He reached down and got Him some dirt and He fashioned it, and then He breathed a living spirit into it. All of a sudden, it jumped up and it had a body, it had a soul, had a spirit. That's my father! 80% of our spiritual growth is determined by our spiritual genetics! God the Father and God the Holy Spirit came together to converge on you, and you have God's nature within you. You have a nature that's alive to Him and dead to sin, no longer alive to sin and dead to God! Why are you settling for the life you're living? That's why Peter says, "But grow..." Grow! The dad in me, the papaw in me, the farmer in me, the pastor in me wants to grow. I have the potential. Hear me say this and hold me to it—I have the potential in every situation of every moment of my day to be like my Father. He gave me a picture of who He is...it's His Son, Jesus, my big Brother! Do you know what He's already done? He's already lived this life for me. He's faced every temptation and more, yet without sin. And what I know is I have the genetic potential in every situation of my day to act like Him, and so do you. But we have to grow, grow in grace and knowledge.

Let's talk about growing in grace first and use the three other ingredients to talk about growth. Let's talk about the diet we need to eat in order to grow in grace, the exercises that we need to have as disciplines in order to



grow in grace, and then let's talk about rest. You know at Hardin we like to say grace is God doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves so that we can now do what He did, and that is live an obedient life to our Father. If I can shorten that, grace is God's enabling power. I was raised to believe that grace was just God's equal opportunity. It was God doing for all of us equally, and then He backed up and it's all on us. I don't believe that, can't support that with Scripture. Paul says I am what I am by the grace of God. He knew who he was in being transformed from a sinner to a saint. He was someone who murdered believers and then became a preacher of the gospel and it was because of the enabling power of God! In Romans 5, Paul paints this picture that we've been justified by faith and therefore we're at peace with God. Then, it says through Him we have access through faith into this grace in which we stand. In other words, if you're a believer, the grace that God saved you by, you're now standing in. Wow! So, can I ask this question? How deep are you in God's grace? Are some of you are still just putting your toe in and checking out grace? You haven't completely abandoned belief in your own works to belief in God's grace. Are you knee deep? Are you waste deep? Are any of you up to your neck in grace? See, Jesus gives us access to God's grace through faith. Now we're supposed to grow in this grace in which we stand—we're not growing grace; we're growing *in* grace.

So, what do you think our diet should be? Now, you'll notice here that Peter doesn't tell us how to grow in grace and knowledge, he just tells us to do it. I want to try to show you how. Here's what your diet has to be...humility. Remember what Peter told us in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter chapter 5. What are we in the church supposed to do? We're supposed to clothe ourselves with humility. Why are we supposed to clothe ourselves with humility? Because when God sees pride, He resists it, He opposes it. But when God sees humility, He gives grace. James said the same thing—Humble yourselves under God's hand. Why? Because God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. Remember what Paul said to church at Philippi? Don't look out for your own interest but look out for the interests of others...actually put others ahead of yourself in your thinking. So humility is that ability to put others ahead of yourself, to quit thinking about yourself and think about the others around you. How are you doing? I know that's one of those

things we don't like. As a kid, I was told if I would eat certain things I would grow big and strong. I didn't eat it. I tried it a few times but I didn't like it, so I spit it out and vowed to never eat it. I didn't physically grow up big and strong. Now, I want to tell some of you who are younger—now that I have grown up, some of those things I wouldn't eat when I was a teenager I now eat and I like it...and I'm growing, just not up! ☺ I know you don't like humility. We live in a country that says it's all about you. And yet, we serve a God who says it's not about us, it's about others. So we don't like humility. That's why some of our marriages are in trouble, why some of our children's lives are in trouble, why some of our businesses are in trouble, why some of our churches are in trouble, why some of our friendships are in trouble—because we're not growing in grace. We're not growing in God's enabling ability, God's enabling power, we're not trusting in what God is doing for us, and He's resisting us because of that pride. Yeah.

Now, if our diet's going to be humility, what's our exercise going to be? Again, it's going to be something I don't like. We're going to have to walk. I'm a runner; I don't run now, but my whole life I've tried to run. Celisa walks. I don't like walking because I don't have time to walk. It takes too long to walk. It takes me twice as long to walk. Now, when I was younger, it would take me three times longer because I could run faster, but now I run slower. It's about half speed. Get this picture. I don't like to walk, but when it comes to spiritually exercising, I have to walk in the Spirit not in the flesh. The reason some of us aren't growing in grace is because we're walking in our flesh; we're not walking in the Spirit. How do you walk in the Spirit? You stay clean. The God who lives inside you is holy; therefore, He wants your body, His temple, to be holy. You ought to see Memish get in my truck. She can hardly drive it for the dirt. If you see her vehicle and my vehicle, they're totally different. She's not comfortable in my truck because of the dirt. The Holy Spirit is not comfortable in some of us because of the dirt. So if you're going to walk under His control, you have to be clean. Let's deal with the junk, let's deal with the spots, let's deal with the blemishes; let's be clean before Him in confession.

And then, let's yield to Him. Sometimes I have to do it six or seven times during the day. I want to be honest with you, when I see certain people coming, I have to do a double take up and say okay Lord, this is not about me. They're going to rile my flesh but I'm not going to let them, I'm going to surrender to you, I'm going to yield to you right now. I yield. And then, once I yield, I'm conscious that I am now not in control but the Holy Spirit is in control of me. I'm now going to trust that what I do is going to be what He's leading me to do. Once I've done this, I have to rest. When I say rest, I mean I have to trust that if I'm hungering to be humble, if I'm hungering to walk under the control of His Spirit, I can rest in Him doing what He said He will do—He will do for me what I could not do so that I can now do what He did. In that situation, I can live up to my potential in Christ and whether I've just come to Christ as a new believer or I've been walking with Him all my life, in that moment I can be like Christ. Wow.

Now, how do we grow in knowledge? I think you know what the diet's going to be—it's the Word of God, in particular, the gospels. We have four beautiful pictures of Jesus, and most of us never read them. Why? Why have you not read Matthew lately? Why have you not read Mark lately? Why have you not read John lately? Why have you not read Luke lately? It tells us who Jesus is. It tells us what Jesus did in certain situations. And then, we read the New Testament letters because they talk about His body, the church, which we're a part of. And yes, throw in the Old Testament too. But if you're a new believer, don't start in the Old Testament; start with that beautiful picture of Jesus.

Now, what's our exercise? We have to study. We have to learn to cook. We are so blessed to live in Western Kentucky because we have some of the greatest restaurants, tremendous restaurants. They're really, really good. Celisa and I occasionally enjoy eating at a fine restaurant, but do you know what we love best? Eating at home. We love eating at home because we are really good cooks. Now, when I say we, the 'W' is a capital and it's Memish. I'm the 'e,' and it's really, really small but I do help. We get the pots and pans out, we get the meat out, we get the vegetables out, and we cook and we eat what we cook. Spiritually, it's okay to eat out. Can I tell you all about this great spiritual eating place? Hardin Baptist Church.

Tell your friends about it. The meals are awesome, Amen! But this can't sustain you. You can't come on Sunday morning and eat one time. When it comes to knowing who Jesus is and growing in the knowledge of Him, you have to learn to cook. You have to learn to open up God's Word and read it and study it. Do you need help? If you're a lady, we have some great Precept classes here where you can learn how to study God's Word. If you're a man, we have some discipleship groups that meet once a week which are awesome. You can learn how to cook from some men who've been cooking for years as they share knowledge with you and they share how they cook God's Word. So we have no excuse.

Then, we have to rest. We have to rest in what we know is true in God's Word. And just know that with God's enabling power and with us knowing who Jesus is, not just intellectually but experientially because of our relationship with Him, we can trust that this next week we're going to handle the situation differently. Why? Because this week, we're going to show that we've grown in grace and in knowledge.

As the assistant coach of a varsity basketball team, we drove two hours to Morgantown, Kentucky to play two games. We were so thrilled because we were playing the weaker team first, then a JV team was going to play next, and then we were going to play the best team last, an undefeated team from Lexington, Kentucky private school. I agreed with Coach Joey that we needed to get such a lead in the first half that we could rest a little bit and play some guys who normally are not in the rotation so we'd be ready for that undefeated team. Well, let's just say the game did not go as we wanted the game to go—double overtime, four players fouled out, and we lost. Can I just say our head coach doesn't like to lose at all? We get the team huddled together while the JV game is playing. I heard him tell the players, "Guys, in November it's not about winning and losing, it's about growing." And he reminded them of some things, "We got no legs left, we have nothing left. We're going to play this private school from Lexington in about an hour." So we walk out on that court and those guys are several inches taller than us, many pounds heavier than us, and maturity, not in the same class. Skill...oh man, undefeated! But you know what Joey and I saw? For the first time this season, we saw our Lions fully implement the

knowledge that Joey had given them, and each one of the eight played within their game where it wasn't about them, but it was about a team. And when the first half was over, the score was 42 to 20; we were ahead! Yes, they made a run on us, Joey prepared them for the run, and when the run was over, we still won by 15, 16, 17 points! Wow!! Can I just say the team in Lexington is not undefeated now because they played the New Covenant Lions who implemented the strategy and the teaching that Coach Joey had instilled in them!

When will we as the church of Jesus Christ get over ourselves individually, and play as a team and do what we do in the enabling grace of God, do what we do in the full knowledge of who Jesus is, and quit trying to do our own thing? It's wrecking our homes. It's wrecking lives. No one is seeing how Jesus would've lived if He were here. That's the opportunity God gives us; will you commit to grow? Will you eat right? Will you exercise right? Will you rest in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ?