

Intro:

We are working on a series called “Christian Growth”. At the moment we are in 2 Peter 3.

The chapter ends with an admonition to Christians to ‘Grow in Grace’. That is the goal of progressive sanctification. There are four aspects of it highlighted by what we call the ‘beloved be’s’ of 2 Peter 3.

1. Beloved be mindful (1-2)
2. Beloved be not ignorant (8)
3. Beloved be diligent (14)
4. Beloved be ware (17)

Each of these exhortations has something to do with the mind. And each of them has something to do with Christian growth.

In fact, we might refer to these four things as components of Christian growth.

The first component of Christian growth is this: *Beloved be mindful of the Word.*

- Christian growth starts with the Word of God.
- Christian growth is rooted in the Word of God.
- Christian growth is sustained by the Word of God.
- Christian growth is directed by the Word of God.

The second component of Christian growth is this: *Beloved Be Not Ignorant ... of God.*

- We are warned against ignorance (that means knowledge is available)
- We are called to accuracy (that means God can be known)
- We are able to be changed by this knowledge (by repentance)

This afternoon we come to the third component of Christian growth:

Beloved Be Diligent

... of your walk ...

Read 2 Pt 3.10-14

Proposition: The third component of Christian growth is motivational – we find here the thing that inspires our minds towards diligence in Christian growth.

I. The reasons for diligence ('these things' 3.14)

A. The imminence of the Day of the Lord (10)

1. The coming of day of the Lord

'Like a thief' – suddenly, unexpectedly

a. A repeated metaphor of suddenness

- 1) Mt 24.42-44
- 2) 1 Th 5.2
- 3) Rev 3.3; 16.15

b. A term with ominous portent 'the day of the Lord'

- 1) Used many times in prophetic Scripture
- 2) Designates the whole period from after the Rapture of the Church to the consummation of all things

This day will be upon the earth without warning – it will arrive suddenly and the time for repentance will soon be past.

For the believer, the arrival of the Day means the immediate call to the judgement seat of Christ to be rewarded for things done in the body.

The sudden return may catch some unawares.

2. The consummation of all things puts the things men value in perspective

a. The heavens will be destroyed

b. The earth will be burned up

ILLUSTRATION: How large is the universe?

In truth, no one knows. I found an article published in 2004 that says the Universe is 156 billion light years in diameter (who knows if they are right? God knows!)

- Light travels at about 186,000 miles per second (that's moving!)
- That is 11,160,000 miles in a minute.
- And 669,600,000 miles in an hour.

- Which means 156 *billion* light years is a whole bunch.

How much power is in the universe? It is impossible to say.

- Sun = 109 Earths
- Surface temperature = 5,500° C
- Currently scientists say that it will take 5 billion years to burn out

Suppose all that were to burn up all at once?
Multiply that by a universe wide meltdown all at once.

- It might make our Canada Day fireworks look shabby.

Everything men set their hearts on will be burned up...

“It may very well be that the world many of us have known most of our lives is gone forever. The events of less than a decade, since September 11, 2001, have altered not just our existence in the United States but the face of civilization globally. This has stunned many Christians. Despite their knowledge of Scripture, their professed pilgrim character, ... and their supposed enthusiasm for the return of Christ, the fact is that they’ve sunk down deep roots in contemporary culture. For years, perhaps all their adult Christian lives, they prioritized many of the same playthings and the carefree existence that their worldly neighbours did.”¹

Pastor Minnick goes on to make another application, but let me make this one concerning the things people like you and me value in this world: They will *all* be burned up. All!

¹ Mark Minnick, “Of Inestimable Worth”, *Frontline*, May/June 2009, “FrontLine Pastor’s Insert”, p. 1.

B. The rapid approach of the Day of God (11-12)

1. 'Hastening' of the day of God

- a. The verb can mean "desire earnestly" – this would speak to the kind of anticipation with which believers should look for the day of the Lord.
- b. The KJV adds the word 'unto' – 'hastening unto' – as if it is descriptive of our condition — 'we are rapidly approaching the day'

2. The coming day of God is only delayed by the wait for the day of the Lord

- a. Two different terms
- b. The 'burning up of all things' does not occur 'in' the day of God but 'because of' the day of God
- c. The day of God is not the same as the day of the Lord
 - 1) All things will be burnt up with intense heat in the day of the Lord (see v. 10)
 - 2) Then the day of God will come in – this is ultimately what we are looking for, the eternal kingdom of our God

This consummation will surely happen – the repetition adds to the emphasis of the surety of a final fiery end.

3. There is a pattern of conduct this realization inspires (more in a moment) (11)

C. The prospect of the Eternal Day(13)

This is what we are looking for!

- 1. The new heavens
- 2. The new earth

The home of Righteousness! (Rev 22.1-5)

II. The object of our diligence

A. Holiness and godliness (11)

1. Holiness: separated from evil
2. Godliness: separated unto God
 - a. Peter's concern in this epistle (1.3, 5-7 – note 'diligence')
 - b. Peter's concern in his first epistle (1 Pt 1.15-16)

B. Peace with God ('be found by Him in peace' 14)

1. This is not your evaluation of your state but His 'found by him'

C. Spotless and blameless (14)

1. Character:
 - a. Spotless: no defect or defilement
 - b. Blameless: no justifiable cause for reproach
2. Comparison (2.13)

There are false teachers and false professors in the church who are stains and spots on our feasts.

III. The intense attention of our diligence

- A. Root meaning 'make haste' – thus, 'make haste to be zealous, active, concerned about something'
- B. Paul wrote to Corinth to stir up their zeal for repentance from self-will and pride (2 Cor 7.11-12)
 1. Repentance from their party spirit
 2. Repentance from their corrupt toleration of sinning members
 3. Repentance from their lawsuits and divisions
 4. Repentance from their marital problems
 5. Repentance from their compromising the pure testimony of faith (by connection with idolatry)
 6. Repentance from their marring the order in worship
 7. Repentance from their rivalry and breaking fellowship in communion
 8. Repentance from their divisive insistence on sensational gifts
 9. Repentance from false doctrines of the resurrection
 10. Repentance for the sake of giving an offering to needy brethren

What was needed was Christian zeal.

- C. The writer of Hebrews exhorts us to full diligence for a full display of our salvation (Heb 6.9-12)
1. Convinced of better things of you (9)
 2. God remembers a diligent Christian life (10)
 3. We desire the same diligence out of you for a full testimony, a full realization of Christianity (11)
 4. So that you will not be ‘sluggish Christians’ but imitators of the best Christians (12)

It is this kind of diligence that the Lord calls you to.

Conclusion:

Proposition: The third component of Christian growth is motivational – we find here the thing that inspires our minds towards diligence in Christian growth.

Bob Wieland finishes last in marathons.

- He finished last in the 1986 New York Marathon.
- He finished last in the 2003 Los Angeles Marathon.
- In the 1986 New York Marathon, his time was 4 days, 2 hours, 48 minutes and 17 seconds.
- He placed 19,413th.
- Why so long? He ‘runs’ on his hands.
- In 1969 he lost his legs in a land mine while serving as a combat medic in Vietnam.

The director of the Marathon thought he had given up. Wieland, it turns out, does not give up. “It would be a waste of energy,” he explained last night.²

Wieland is a Christian, but he entered these races in support of secular causes, like cancer research.

He finishes these competitions by simple diligence, hiking his body forward with special pads under his hands.

Our passage is calling us to personal diligence in Christian growth.

Beloved be diligent in your Christian walk!

² Robert Thomas Jr., “Last Marathoner: First-Class Spirit”, *New York Times*, 11.6.86.