

2 Peter 3:8-14 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: For the Lord, one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. 9 The Lord is not slow to do what he promised, as some consider slowness. Instead, he is patient for your sakes, not wanting anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance.

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that day the heavens will pass away with a roar, the elements will be dissolved as they burn with great heat, and the earth and what was done on it will be burned up. 11 Therefore, since all these things will be destroyed, what kind of people ought you to be, living in holiness and godliness, 12 as you look forward to and hasten the coming of the day of God? That day will cause the heavens to be set on fire and destroyed, and the elements to melt as they burn with great heat. 13 But according to his promise we look forward to new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

14 Therefore, dear friends, as you look forward to these things, make every effort to be found in peace, spotless and blameless in his sight.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. Christmas is just 19 days away. But you knew that, didn't you? No one is going to wake up on December 26th and think, "Oh, no! I forgot about Christmas." We might do that with other people's birthdays, but there are no "happy belated birthday cards" when it comes to Jesus' birth.

This is true especially for the kids. In our house it started with telling our kids to "Give me a minute, I'm looking at Christmas gifts on my phone." And their eyes lit up with excitement. Then, packages started arriving at our house and now the kids have to stay out of a certain room. Their excitement grows. Soon those gifts will be wrapped and start appearing under the tree and the excitement will hardly be contained.

With all the gifts, the decorations, the music, the movies, we're not going to forget to celebrate Jesus' first coming. But what about his second coming? It's been nearly 2000 years since Jesus ascended into heaven. 2000 years since the angel told the disciples, "**This same Jesus who you saw go into heaven, will return the same way you saw him leave.**" 2000 years is a long time!

The devil, world, and our sinful flesh say it's been long enough. He's not coming back. And subconsciously we start to believe it. It's rarely on our

minds, as we plan for the future, it's usually far from our thoughts, so that the thought that does move closer and closer to us is that Judgment day isn't real. And so it doesn't really affect our lives. "God's being lazy and slothful, I will too, in how I live my life." Oh how the devil takes what is so good and wonderful and gracious, and turns it into evil. The delay in Jesus' second coming isn't uncertainty or sloth, as the devil, world, and sinful nature would have us think. It's patience! Peter tells us today, [God] is *patient for your sakes, not wanting anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance.*

It just doesn't dawn on us that Jesus hasn't returned for 2000 years because God is being patient. No one is that patient! Think of all that has happened over the last 2000 years! Not long after Jesus' ascension all the persecutions that broke out. And God was patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but to repent and be saved. And think of the crusades. People fighting other people using God's name for sometimes nothing more than an excuse to fight and kill, and conquer, and still God was patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but to repent and be saved. And you have the dark ages, and plague, and peoples' lives so destitute and depraved and short, and still God was patient not wanting anyone to perish, but to repent and be saved. And then there was the Holy Roman Empire basically taking over all of Christianity, leading multitudes away from Christ and instead to themselves for salvation, and still, God was patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but to repent and be saved. And then after a time of reformation you had people held captive again by their monarchs and dictators that they couldn't even worship God as taught in the Bible so they had to flee to a new world, and still God was a patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but to repent and be saved. The Civil War, World War I, The Holocaust and World War II, and still, God was patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but to repent and be saved.

And when we see what the world is like today, how it is being driven over the cliff of whatever you want to call what is going on today, God's patience astounds us again, and you know why. And when we think how patient he has been with us, sinners for whom God's patience should have run out long ago, it's... humbling. **The Lord is not slow to do what he promised, as some consider slowness. Instead, he is patient for your sakes, not wanting anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance.**

How have we used this patience of our God? To our shame it hasn't always been to shun the ways of the devil, the world, or our sinful flesh, to clean out our hearts and prepare for our Savior's coming. Instead we use the time God has given us to linger and wallow in, to indulge, and gratify our sinful flesh with the filthy, unholy things of this world.

And when we see how bad and awful our world has become, it rarely dawns on us that, maybe we should repent, maybe we should think about the way *we've* been living. Things like Coronavirus, and political and civil unrest, tragedies and accidents, and basically 80% of what's happened in 2020 should lead us to do this, to repent — to turn from sin and turn to our Savior, to despair of ourselves and ask the frightful question, how can anyone be saved? How can I? Instead we look not to how we've been living, but how the world is living and prop ourselves up — see how much better we are? how much holier? how much more God-pleasing? Repent of what?

So we don't think about Jesus' return much, and when we do we are constantly being deceived that our sins aren't that serious. And if the devil has convinced us that our sins aren't serious, his work is done. We'll turn from our Savior on our own, because if sins aren't serious, who needs a Savior? And without our Savior, where will we be **on that day when the heavens pass away with a roar, the elements are dissolved as they burn with great heat, and the earth and what was done on it is burned up?**

Do you really want to take the chance? Jesus said that the last day will come like a thief. Unexpected yes, but Jesus' point wasn't just that we need to know it's coming, but to be ready, to be on guard. If we're not careful we could lose everything.

How can we be ready for Jesus' return? How can we be on guard throughout our long night of waiting? Peter tells us: “**Make every effort to be found in peace, spotless and blameless.**”

Our peace comes from Christ. Because for all the times we failed to shun the ways of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, Jesus painstakingly stayed the course and kept God's law perfectly. For all the times we strayed, willingly indulging and gratifying our flesh, for every sin however great or small, Jesus died for them all. He gave his life to free

you from death. **Making every effort to be found in peace, spotless and blameless** begins with turning from all that Jesus died to save us from.

But what will we find as we strive to do so? Peace? No, because we won't be spotless or blameless. We fall short. We fall into sin. But even as we continue to fall into sin, and though by our works we surely don't deserve it, by Jesus' works — his life for us, his death in our place, and resurrection from the dead — heaven is still ours. Peter says it right here: **According to**, not our works, not our efforts, but **according to his promise we look forward to new heavens and a new earth...** So **Making every effort to be found in peace, spotless and blameless** continues as we trust that Jesus' death and resurrection have paid the price of every sin in full, yours and mine included.

A life of making every effort to turn from sin and every effort to trust in God's forgiveness is really a life of repentance. When we recognize our sin, confess how deep it goes in our lives, when we look to Jesus as our Savior and trust that he has by his death on the cross paid the price of our sins and by his rising from the dead guaranteed that we too will rise, we have nothing to fear. We have peace because we will be found spotless and blameless at our Savior's return.

Finally, our **every effort to be found in peace, spotless and blameless** culminates as we struggle with every ounce of strength we have to “**live holy and godly lives,**” not so that we might be saved at Jesus' second coming but because we have been saved in his first coming.

Peace is the word traditionally assigned for the 2nd Sunday in Advent. Hope, peace, joy, love. We have peace because God is patient. Christ has not returned yet. We are at peace that for sinners the world over, sinners like us, his patience has not run out.

So when we see all these things happening around us, things that in the past or as recent as last week would have caused us to ask, “What is God doing?”, we know. He's being patient. May we continue to use and treasure his patience as we prepare to celebrate his first coming, and as we look forward to his second coming, making every effort to live a life of repentance — to daily turn from sin, turn to our Savior, and live for him.

Those who welcome him truly, know their need surely. Those who see their Savior clearly, love him most dearly.

So as we wait, as keep watch, may we remain ready and on guard, though
at peace, today, tomorrow, and forever. Amen!