

# **THIS WORLD IS NOT MY HOME: I WILL NOT GET TOO COMFORTABLE HERE**

## **II PETER 3:14-18**

**IN ORDER TO LIVE ABOVE THE UPS AND DOWNS OF  
LIFE, WE MUST REALIZE THAT OUR FINAL ETERNAL  
DESTINATION IS HEAVEN.E**

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#### **II. LEARNING TO LIVE WITHOUT CONFUSION (VS 15-16)**

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# **THIS WORLD IS NOT MY HOME: I WILL NOT GET TOO COMFORTABLE HERE**

## **II PETER 3:14-18**

Here we are, at the end of our studies through I & II Peter. I started this series off with the sermon title “If this world is not my home ... then why am I so comfortable here?” I would like to say that as a result of our studies through Peter’s two letters we could definitely say, “This world is not my home: I will not get too comfortable here.”

For us that have enjoyed a measure of success and comfort in this life, it is easy for us to become confused. We have become rather satisfied at what this world has to offer, and we don’t look forward to leaving this world behind to go to our eternal homes in heaven. For most of us here this morning, we think that death is the worst thing that could happen to us. From their writings, the Apostles Peter and Paul looked forward to going home to heaven. Throughout church history, when Christians suffered as a result of unfair treatment, injustice, and persecution, the church’s eyes were turned away from this world and focused on heaven.

Suffering has a way of putting life in perspective. When we face severe illness or death, we usually start to see things in a different light. Worldly things don’t mean so much to us. We are able to let little things go. Let me give you an example. You

remember that church I used to pastor, ... the one that was so tough. (How tough was it?) Let me tell you. It was so tough that the deacon board was pretty worldly. I had a husband and wife who were deacons in the church. The problem was that they argued with each other about everything, ... and the often held on to their anger. For years, neither was willing to apologize to the other. One day, the wife got deathly sick. The husband felt a little pang of remorse, but let it pass. While he was visiting his wife, she looked up at him and said, “ Alvin , the doctors say that I am seriously ill, and that I could die. If I pass away, I want you to know that you are forgiven. ... But if I pull through, things stay the way they are.”

Look, I know that it is hard to focus on heaven as our home and holy living as our duty. But we continue to remind ourselves and one another that we are destined to live in heaven for eternity. We are not supposed to get too comfortable here.

My hunch is that most of you here this morning are not much different from me. We have become very comfortable living in this world and we don't spend much time thinking about our eternal homes in heaven. The only time we tend to think about heaven or The Lord's Return is when things are going really badly for us or if we are facing some serious illness. Here's how I prove this to myself. I test myself by my reaction to the ups and downs I face in everyday life. If things are going well, I am really happy. If things are not going the way I think they should, I get really discouraged, and sometimes even depressed. At the very least, I get angry and unhappy. Those reactions demonstrate to me that I am too comfortable in this world. I have a lot invested in this world. But the main idea of this morning's text will demonstrate to us if we are on the right path. **IN ORDER TO LIVE ABOVE THE UPS AND DOWNS OF LIFE, WE MUST REALIZE THAT OUR FINAL ETERNAL DESTINATION IS HEAVEN.** This is certainly not that difficult to understand. It may be difficult to accept and to live, but it is relatively simple to understand. Peter has stated over and over again in these two letters that this world is not our permanent home. This world, and everything in it, will be burned up at the end of clock time. Everything material will pass away. The Lord Jesus will someday return to bring us home to our eternal homes. One way or the other, through our death or through the rapture, we will leave this world and go to our eternal homes. Peter said that because we know that we have eternal homes waiting for us in heaven, we are to

be living holy lives while here on earth.

Verse 14 gives some pointer on learning to live in this world. The most important piece of advice is that **IN ORDER TO LIVE WITH JOY, WE MUST FOCUS ON ETERNAL VALUES**. What's hard for us is that we have learned to operate by our five senses all our lives. For at least the last 200 years, we in the West have been trained that everything real can be observed and measured using our five senses. Anything that cannot be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, or touched is not real. In other words, whatever is not empirical is not real. In the end, we cannot live like that, but we try.

If we were to be completely honest, we would have to admit that the most important issues in life are not empirical. For example, we cannot measure love. Behavioral psychologists may try and quantify it or explain it chemically, but in the end, that approach does not seem to satisfy us much. If we trust the Bible, then we would say that our spiritual life is as important as our physical life. What happens in the physical world affects the spiritual world, and visa versa. As moderns, we have been taught to separate the spiritual from the physical, but the Bible says that human beings are a complete physical spiritual unit and that the spiritual world and the physical worlds exist in a connected manner.

I don't want us to be confused by the oversimplification that the physical material world is bad and that the spiritual world is good. That is the mistake the false teachers in Peter's day were trying to introduce into the church. It is the same fundamental principle that the documents in the DaVinci Code operate from. God created us as physical spiritual beings. Jesus came down and took on human flesh. Jesus physically rose from the dead. We will be physically raised from the dead and we will live in eternity as spiritual physical beings.

The physical universe will be burned and be replaced by a new heavens and a new earth. The trick is to focus on things that will exist in both. The Apostle Paul said it like this, "And now, these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (I Corinthians 13:13 / NIV). We know that the fruit God's Holy Spirit produces in us is: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. We know those things will last for eternity.

In the first phrase of verse 14, Peter spells out our motivation for living Christian lives. He says that we are people living in hope. Again he addresses his congregations as “beloved.” God’s love for us is what will carry us on through life, past the grave, and into eternity. In eternity, God’s love is what will hold our eternal existence together. We can live filled with hope because God loves us, has promised to journey with us through this life, has promised to never leave us nor forsake us, and is waiting for us to inhabit our heavenly homes.

Peter goes on to say, “since you are looking forward to this.” He has stated over and over again that Jesus is coming to take us home. To be sure, Jesus will judge the living and the dead, ... but He has promised to bring those who believe in Him safely through the judgment. Many Christians throughout the years have suffered a great deal at the hands of evil people. Many have laid down their lives. Many of us have sacrificed a great deal. We have been mistreated by people, and have experienced a great deal of injustice. But we look forward to the day where Jesus will vindicate us and right all the wrongs we have suffered. We can live in hope, even in the midst of injustice and suffering because we know Jesus will put everything and everyone in its proper place. It will happen so we should not look for personal vengeance or fret about what we have or don’t have.

Peter’s next thought is that because we know that Jesus will come to set everything right, we want to make sure that we are living our lives in the pursuit of holiness. Again, Peter said that Jesus could return at any moment. If He were to show up when you least expected it, would He find us spotless and blameless? This description of spotless and blameless has to do with sacrifice. Before an animal could be sacrificed, the priest would examine it. It could not have any defects. Once the priest declared it spotless and blameless, it could be sacrificed.

When Pilate declared that he found no fault in Jesus, that was Jesus’ death sentence. There was no spot or blame in Jesus. He was the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Peter has instructed that we are living stones. We said that meant that we are to be living examples of what God has accomplished through His love. The Apostle Paul said our lives are to be living sacrifices of God’s love, mercy, and faithfulness. Our salvation and our reconciliation cost God a lot. It cost Him His life. If we remember

that we are passionately loved by a pure and holy God, out of love, we should continue to try and live pure and holy lives in response to His love. We are beloved because God loves us. We are holy because the blood of Jesus makes us holy.

Because of this, we are to be living in grace. I'm not sure that we realize what a gift we have received from God in that we can live in peace with Him. By all rights, God should hate us. In fact, we were enemies of God from the time we were born. All of us can easily look back on our lives and see that we have harmed many people and we have offended God greatly. We deserve to be humiliated, executed, and sent to hell for eternity. But because of God's great act of love in Jesus Christ, we can be at peace with God by receiving Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Let me take this opportunity to explain peace again because I don't think we get it. We tend to think of peace in terms of the absence of conflict. In other words, if my wife is behaving, if my kids are behaving, if my car is working, if I am appreciated at work, and if my family and I are all in good health, I am at peace.

This is certainly not the Bible's definition of peace. Peace comes from the Hebrew word *shalom*. It means that all is right between God and me. It means that even as I walk through difficult times, ... it means that even as I experience physical, spiritual, and emotional suffering, ... it means that even though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, ... I can know that everything is right between God and me.

This peace that we enjoy between God and us is not dependent on how good we are. We must once again remind ourselves that if this type of peace was dependent on our own goodness or holiness, we would never be able to experience it.

Here is how we learn to live from an eternal perspective. We are incredibly loved by God, not because we are good, worthy, holy, or anything else. We are simply loved because God chose to love us. Because we realize how much God loves us and how much He gave so that we could be in a right relationship with Him, we dedicate ourselves to living holy and upright lives. If we are honest, we have to admit that even when we try our hardest, we still can't do it. And that's where we have to constantly apply grace to our lives. What we cannot accomplish, God covers with His grace. Our hope is that one day we will leave this world either through death or the

Second Coming of Christ, and we will then be made perfect to live in heaven with Jesus for eternity. We can enjoy this life only if we understand that life here is only temporary and that it is meant to prepare us to live in our eternal homes. **IN ORDER TO LIVE WITH JOY, WE MUST FOCUS ON ETERNAL VALUES.**

The devil knows that he cannot have us. He knows that we are headed for heaven. And so what he wants to do now is to suck the joy out of this life. He can only do this if we allow him to confuse us about God's love and His plan for our lives. In verses 15-16 we must be learning to live without confusion. **IN ORDER TO LIVE WITH CONFIDENCE, WE MUST NOT BE CONFUSED BETWEEN THE RELATIONSHIP OF GRACE AND HOLINESS.** In other words, we must be careful not to presume on God's grace and take Him for granted. On the other hand, we must remain humble and never become self-righteous and fool ourselves into thinking we are good.

In verse 15 and the first half of verse 16, Peter defines grace. One of the things that prevent us from understanding God's grace is our self-absorbed attitude of immediate gratification. In other words, for the most part, we are focused on how things and people affect us. If we want something, we want it right away. So when Jesus delays His coming, people tend to think it is not going to happen. Or even if it is going to happen, it hasn't happened for 2,000 years, and so it's not worth thinking about.

You see, we have no idea what God-type love is. We say we love other people, but if we were honest, when we appear to be worried about or doing something "nice" for someone, it usually comes with expectations or it makes us feel better. Peter makes it clear that the only reason God has delayed Jesus' second coming and the judgment, is because He loves us so much, He is waiting for as many people as possible to repent and be saved. Part of trying to understand grace is understanding how self-centered, self-absorbed, proud, and arrogant we actually are. Our love and good deeds almost always come with strings attached.

And then look what Peter does here at the end of verse 15 and the beginning of verse 16. Modern day people cannot put this together. Peter points to the Apostle Paul and acknowledges that Paul and Paul's writings are directly inspired by God.

Modern day commentators say that proves that Peter is not the author of II Peter. Why do they say this? Well because in the book of Galatians, we find out that Peter and Paul had a very public argument in which Paul had to publicly rebuke Peter. Modern scholars judge Peter based on their own personalities. They say that Peter could never have given that type of public credit to Paul. Uh, how about that Peter was a genuine believer, that he would have taken Paul's rebuke, and that he would have repented and admitted that Paul was right?

Let's not forget Paul's humility as well. John Mark screwed up on a mission's trip with Paul. Paul did not want anything else to do with John Mark. Barnabas took him under his wing and they hooked up with Peter. Paul then admitted that John Mark was a valuable asset to the Christian community.

Just maybe, the apostles practiced what they preached. Is that so hard to understand? They had both received an incredible amount of grace privately and publicly from the Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly they could extend grace to one another. In fact, as we try and piece the early church history together, it seems as if Peter and Paul may have spent some time together in Rome before they were killed.

Let us understand grace clearly. I don't care how good we think we may be. According to God's standard of goodness and holiness, we are as filthy as pigs. Here is another interesting fact about grace. It doesn't matter how bad we think we have been, we are still as dirty as filthy pigs. Now isn't that interesting? Let's take the best person in our church and put her alongside the worst person in our church. They are both as filthy as pigs. Once you're filthy, you're filthy. Is the best person able to look at the worst person and say, "You're filthy?" Well they could, but in reality she is just as filthy. Grace starts from the humbling premise that I am rotten through and through. I am selfish, self-centered, self-absorbed, proud, and arrogant. I deserve to be cast out of God's sight and sent directly to hell for eternity. But only by God's grace can I be saved.

It doesn't stop there. Once I am saved, I must pursue a holy lifestyle. But no matter how hard I try, I can never live up to God's standard. The more I try, and the more I conquer sin in my life, the farther away I seem to be to reaching that goal of holiness. Again, only by God's grace is the difference made up. I do my best to be

holy and good, but I never seem to succeed. But by grace, God applies the blood and righteousness of Jesus to make up for all my lack of goodness and holiness.

I was going to say that it takes humility to come to this decision, but I erased the sentence. It doesn't take humility. It takes honesty. If any of us think we are good in any way, then we are liars. And when we start lying to ourselves, we get hopelessly lost.

Peter and Paul were able to honestly look at themselves and come to the conclusion that if it wasn't for God's ongoing application of grace to their lives, they would be lost for eternity. The only response to God's grace is to extend it to, and share it with others.

Both Peter and Paul made it crystal clear that there is nothing we can do to earn our salvation. It comes freely by way of God's grace. In the second half of verse 17 it would be easy to get a confusing idea of grace.

I am not as noble as Peter, but when it comes saying stuff, I'm a lot like him. Peter was a fisherman and Paul was highly educated in the areas of Scripture, Philosophy, and Theology. Peter is saying that some of Paul's stuff is even hard for him to understand. Paul writes about some topics that have perplexed scholars throughout the years. For example, he talks about the fact that God is completely sovereign and in control, ... yet we have free will. He talks about the fact that somehow Israel and the Church are connected, ... yet somehow they are different. He talks about faith and works, law and morality, the body and spirit. All these are difficult to put together. But for this morning's text, Paul says that everything is done by God's grace, ... yet we are called to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. He says that outside of Christ we have no righteousness, ... yet we are to live holy lives.

Now look how Peter describes false teachers or people who think they are smarter than they actually are. He says they are ignorant and unstable. Look at this little phrase towards the end of verse 16. He says that they distort the truth. The word distort is very graphic. It is the same word used to describe torture. It is like putting someone on the rack where you torture them and twist them all out of shape.

Some people used to say, “I’m a very good person. I have done a lot of good things.” Listen to how twisted they are. They have already assumed that they have done something good. They become self-righteous and twist themselves into thinking that they have actually done something good. What have they done? Have they given a few dollars? Have they volunteered a few hours? Have they helped a few people? What exactly is it that they have done that’s good? If you are one of these people who think that you are good or that you have done anything good, please go to our church library and read some stories about Father Damien, who gave his life to go minister to lepers. Read about Mother Teresa and all she gave up to work among the outcast covered with sores in India . Read how Jim Elliot and his friends gave their lives to reach the Auca Indians for Christ. Let me say two things about these examples. If you are sitting here this morning thinking you are pretty good or thinking that you have done something really good, please compare yourself to these people. I don’t think there are many of us who could say we have done anything good if we compare ourselves to these heroes of the faith.

Secondly, if you were to ask these people themselves, not one of them would think they had done anything that was remarkably good. In fact they all thought they were horrible sinners. So if you think you are good in any way or if you think you have done good in any way, please get that out of your head because that makes you self-righteous and there is no grace for you. You have rejected God’s grace in favor of your own righteousness.

On the other side of that coin is the people that say, “If I can’t be good or do any good, then I won’t do anything and just sin so God’s grace can cover my sin.” Again, Peter says those people are ignorant, unstable, and torture the truth of Scripture. We are to try and be good, we are to try to be good, we are to pursue holiness because that is what God wants us to do. We are to love God and love one another because that’s when we are most like God.

Two things about this truth we need to explain. First of all, we cannot be good or do good without God’s grace. All of our resources come as a direct gift from God. Every penny I have and every material possession comes to me as a gift from God. God presents me with opportunities to do good. He puts the desire in my heart to do

good. And He empowers me to do good.

Secondly, no matter how much I try to be good, do good, and pursue holiness, I always come up short. I need God's grace to make up the difference. Let me just quote a short passage from the Apostle Paul. Notice how everything comes by God's grace yet we are called to go out and do good works. "8God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. 10For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago" (Ephesians 2:8-10 /NLT).

We are commanded to pursue holy lives. We are commanded to be living testimonies of God's love, grace, mercy, and power. We need God's grace to do these things and we need God's grace to make up for all our sins, defects, and failures. It takes determination and dependence to live holy lives. Don't be confused. **IN ORDER TO LIVE WITH CONFIDENCE, WE MUST NOT BE CONFUSED BETWEEN THE RELATIONSHIP OF GRACE AND HOLINESS.**

And now, Peter gives us a final reminder in verses 17-18. We need learn to live for eternity. In other words, **IN ORDER TO LIVE WITH HOPE, WE MUST BE SURE WE ARE ON THE RIGHT PATH.** In other words, we have to remember that heaven is our home and this world is not our final destination. We are just passing through on the way to heaven. It is easy to get distracted by the things of this world and it is easy to comfortable here.

That's why in verse 17 Peter warns us to be guarded. Look Peter has confidence in his congregations. They know the basic truths of the Gospel. God loves them. God redeemed them through the blood of Jesus. Jesus came to die for them. He rose from the dead and will physically return for them one day. They know this but there will always be false teachers around trying to distort the basic message of Christianity. And the most dangerous thing is that these false teachers and fake Christians will try to pass themselves off as real, authentic Christians. They will claim to be good and appear to be good. But their hearts are evil and they are headed for

hell. Peter says, “Don’t be fooled by them. They are headed for hell. Don’t let them fool you and don’t let them take you down with them.”

I think that Peter has adequately warned his congregations, ... and I hope through the preaching of these books of his, I have adequately prepared all of you.

The key is to keep growing as illustrated in the first half of verse 18. You know, if you believe the same things you have always believed, and if God is not changing your thinking and behavior, ... you probably need to be worried. We need to be growing in knowledge and behavior. In other words, the Christian life is not just about getting more knowledge about the Bible. It must be accompanied by growth in our behavior. Let me just tell you this from my perspective as a pastor. I have been here for 17 years. There are some people who have not changed one bit of their thinking or behavior over those 17 years. Both the Apostles Peter and Paul say that if you are not growing, then you are dying. If you are not growing, then you are probably not saved. Now I’m not here to judge or condemn anyone. Each one of us need to apply those concepts to our own lives. I hope you are growing in knowledge and behavior. But again, let’s not forget that we must grow equally in grace. Otherwise we will become self-righteous.

The more we grow in grace, the more we come to realize that life is not about us. It is all about God. The second half of verse 18 ends these letters by reminding us to live lives that glorify God. In other words, we are to be drawing attention to God. We all like to be the center of attention. We want to feel important or valuable. But that’s not what we are here for. We are here to draw attention to God and His love, mercy, grace, and power. When we get up in the morning, we should say, “To You Lord Jesus Christ be glory now and forever in my life.” We know we are on the right path if we can authentically say we are living for God and have our eyes focused on heaven. **IN ORDER TO LIVE WITH HOPE, WE MUST BE SURE WE ARE ON THE RIGHT PATH.** That path is a life that recognizes what is important for eternity.

Think with me about the most beautiful painting you have ever seen. Think about the most beautiful house, or piece of furniture, or any material thing you own. It may be beautiful and valuable here on earth, ... but in reality, ... it’s garbage. It’s

firewood. It will all be burned up on the last day. Gold will be used like blacktop in heaven. It's the stuff that the road is paved with. Jewels of all sorts, are merely used as building material. Is there any piece of art that can compare with the beauty of heaven? Is there any house that can compare to the house Jesus is building for us? Let's keep life in perspective. Let's put all the garbage in this world in perspective. We must use the material world to accomplish the eternal goals of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. We must use the stuff we have been given to bring glory and honor to God.

But it seems as if things only find their proper perspective in life as we are faced with the prospect of death. Listen to how Doug Moo expresses this in the last chapter of his commentary on II Peter:

“It must have been God's providence that led me, at the very time I was commenting on these verses, to go through a scare about my own life. Though undoubtedly magnified by my own hyperactive imagination (it operates on all eight cylinders in the middle of the night), a medical problem I faced posed genuine concern about the possibility of cancer. For three days, for the first time in some years, I confronted my own mortality. I hated it; sleep was difficult and anxiety was constant. But I also found myself thinking about God and eternity a lot more than usual, reading my Bible with more attention than normal, and caring far less about what I ate and about material things in general. Confronting eternity sharpened my spiritual appetite even as it dulled my sensual impulses. I discovered just today that the medical problem is not cancer, but a relatively minor and easily cured matter. And already I can feel myself slipping back into the usual lackadaisical spirituality.”

In referring to the return of Jesus and the end of time, Moo goes on to say, “Since we are talking especially about eschatology, we might note in passing that the contemporary church seems largely to have turned away from preaching and teaching on eschatology. The old ‘Prophecy Conferences’ have been replaced with ‘Marriage Seminars’ and ‘Financial Stewardship Workshops.’ Certainly we need to address issues of marriage and finances in the church. But the problem is one of balance. In a spirit of condescension toward some of the more intricate eschatological debates, too many pastors and Christians have abandoned eschatological preaching altogether. But effective preaching about ‘the last things’ may be one of the best ways to help

Christians internalize a worldview that puts eternity and this world in their right proportion.”

I’m hoping that after studying through I & II Peter, we can all say, “This world is not my home. I will not get too comfortable here.”