

## **INSPIRED TEXT MESSAGES – Part 5**

### **TEXT MESSAGE FROM PETER**

**Dr. Derek Morris**

- Preaching passage: 2 Peter 1:1-2, 3:1-18
- Subject: What the heart of the text message was that Simon Peter sent to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours.
- Complement: grow in grace as they wait for the certain return of Jesus.
- Exegetical idea: Simon Peter told those those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours to grow in grace as they wait for the certain return of Jesus.
- Preaching idea: God wants you to grow in grace while you wait for the certain return of Jesus in glory.
- Purpose: To remind my hearers that the return of Jesus is certain and that we should grow in grace as we wait for that blessed day.

It wouldn't be right to do a series on Inspired Text Messages and not include an inspired text message from Peter. After all, in spite of his fumbings and failings, Peter is listed first on each of the lists of the 12 apostles. Peter was undoubtedly considered one of the pillars of the Christian church.

Two inspired text messages bear his name. We are going to look at the shorter one today—2 Peter. Do you remember the 3 questions that we are going to ask? Who? What? So What?

The answer to the "Who?" question seems obvious. The inspired text message which bears the heading 2 Peter starts with these words: "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ." By including both his proper name, Simon, and the name that was given to him by Jesus, Peter, the author seems to leave no doubt

as to his identity. He is Simon Peter, brother of Andrew, one of the 12 apostles. He points out in 2 Peter 3:1 that “this is my second letter to you” and he refers to another key leader in the Christian church, the apostle Paul, as “our dear brother Paul” 2 Peter 3:15.

So at first reading, the answer to the question who authored this inspired text message seems obvious: Simon Peter, one of the 12 apostles. But a number of Bible scholars challenge that assumption. Why, you might ask. Well, the vocabulary in 1 Peter and 2 Peter are drastically different. These two texts messages have only 100 words in common. 599 words are unique, either found only in one or only in the other. Now it’s true that the subject matter is different in each of these text messages, and so you should expect some different words, but only 100 common words when they are supposedly written by the same author? 2 Peter also includes 57 words that are only found in 2 Peter. We call those hapaxlegomena—single occurrence words. 32 of those 57 unique NT words don’t even occur in the LXX, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures.

But before you discard this text message as the work of Simon Peter, one of the 12 apostles, let me point out that both letters have the same greeting: “Grace and peace to you in abundance” (1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:2). In both letters, God’s patience is the basis for His postponement of judgment. (1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:9) While there are distinct differences in vocabulary between 1 Peter and 2 Peter, both text messages also includes the same words that are used rarely or not at all in other parts of the NT—words like godliness or virtue and manner of life. And both letters also encourages the reader to grow—“grow up in your salvation” 1 Peter 2:2 and to

“grow in grace.” 2 Peter 3:18

What about all the unique vocabulary? Certainly the topic is different, so you can expect some different words. Perhaps Peter did some extra reading in his old age and increased his vocabulary! More likely, he had the assistance of a scribe. Peter was inspired by the Holy Spirit to share a message with fellow Christians and it was certainly not inappropriate for him to utilize a scribe or a writing assistant to help him with that assignment.

Personally, I’m going to stick with Simon Peter, one of the 12 apostles as the author of this inspired text message. Who are the intended recipients of this second inspired text message from Peter? “Those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours.” That includes all of us who have believed in Jesus and accepted Him as our personal Savior and Lord.

So we have answered the “Who?” question—Simon Peter, perhaps with a little scribal assistance, to every follower of Jesus. Let’s turn our attention to our second question: What? What is the content of this inspired text message. Well, if you read the whole text message, there are some similar themes to the text message sent by Jude. I’m convinced that Peter had access to Jude’s text message and reaffirmed some of Jude’s warnings about false teachers. The unique part of Peter’s text message that I want to focus on with you today begins in 2 Peter 3:1-4

“.....”

This text message was written a little more than 30 years after the death,

resurrection and ascension of Jesus to heaven. People were getting restless. “Where is the ‘coming’ He promised?” We ought to show some patience and mercy to those today who struggle because *we’ve* been waiting for almost 2000 years! Don’t be too hard on your friends who are skeptics. By the way, there is a difference between a skeptic and a scoffer. A skeptic is struggling with honest questions. A scoffer is an antagonist. Show patience and mercy toward those who are struggling with the apparent delay in the return of Jesus. If we’re honest with ourselves today, we would have to admit that most of us probably have times when we struggle with the apparent delay in the return of Jesus. I say “apparent delay” because there is no evidence that His return isn’t right on schedule. We are so time bound, but how does Peter describe the Lord’s relationship to time? 2 Peter 3:8

“.....” That’s not an equation—1 day = 1000 years. How do we know that? Because the next phrase says “a thousand years are like a day.” In other words, the Lord views “time” differently from the way that we view time. He is from everlasting to everlasting. His purposes know no haste and no delay. It’s true, in Peter’s day and in our day we’ll meet skeptics and even scoffers who say “where is this ‘coming’ He promised?”

How should we respond to that question? The same way that Peter responded in 2 Peter 3:10. “But the day of the Lord WILL COME.” Jesus spoke clearly about His return in glory on numerous occasions. He is either a lunatic, totally out of touch with reality, a malicious deceiver, presenting a message that he knows will never be fulfilled, or He is speaking the truth as Messiah, Son of God, Savior of the world.

I choose to believe the words of Jesus because I believe that Jesus was not a lunatic or a malicious deceiver. I believe that Jesus was who He claimed to be, the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior of the world. And I believe that His words about His return in glory are true. “The day of the Lord will come,” Peter tells us. What does Peter mean when he says that the day of the Lord will come like a thief? Will the return of Jesus be secret? Some would answer “Yes!” There will be a secret rapture of the saints. But Jesus clearly taught Peter and the other disciples that “as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” Matthew 24:27 That doesn’t sound secret. But in that same discourse, Jesus also speaks about his coming like a thief in the night. His coming is not secret, but it is a surprise—not that we are not expecting His return, but when it actually happens we will be surprised.

How many of you here believe that Jesus is going to return to this earth in glory? Many of you. How many of you would be surprised if he returned this week? Be honest now. Some of you might say, “Lord, I’m getting married in May! I’ll have to reschedule my wedding!” Or, “Lord, I’ll miss my graduation.” It’s OK. If Jesus returns this week, you won’t worry about what you’re missing. You’ll just be so happy that He’s here. Am I right? You’ll just be so happy that the dead in Christ are going to rise from their graves. Am I right? You’ll just be so happy that there will be no more death, no more pain, no more sickness. Am I right? Peter tells us, in spite of the scoffers, in spite of the apparent delay, the day of the Lord will come.

What about our 3<sup>rd</sup> question? So What? Peter answers that question for us! 2 Peter 3, beginning with verse 11. “.....”

Don't just try to stay out of trouble as you wait for the glorious return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "Grow in grace." "Live holy and godly lives." "Make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace in him." Are you trying to earn your way to heaven? No! But you want to honor your Lord and Savior.

While we wait for the certain return of Jesus in glory, God wants us to grow in grace. How do we do that? We'll what are the essential ingredients for growth? Here is where I need you to send me a text message! What are the essential ingredients for growth? Nutrition. Rest. A healthy environment. Manageable challenge.

We're growing another avocado tree. Where is this tree currently getting its nutrition? From the pit of the avocado fruit. How long will that source of nutrition be adequate? What needs to happen? It needs to sink its roots deep into the soil. To grow in grace, we need nutrition as well. Where do we get that nutrition? Reading God's Word. Attending a church that teaches the Word of God. Participating in a small group Bible study. Watching presentations on our church website! Downloading messages onto your iPod. If you are going to grow in grace while you are waiting for the certain return of Jesus in glory, you need nutrition.

What else do you need? A healthy environment. If I put this avocado tree in the oven, what would happen? It would die. If I started swinging a machete around just above ground level, what would happen? It would be cut down. In order for something to grow, it needs a healthy environment. In order to grow in grace, you need a healthy environment. What does a healthy environment look like? Send me

a text message in answer to that question. What does a healthy environment look like?

What else do you need for growth to occur? I put down that you need manageable challenge? The challenge of breaking through the seed and pushing up toward the sky helps this tender avocado tree to grow strong. But what would happen if I set the seed in concrete, or put a solid rock on top of it? The challenge would be too great. I've learned that we need manageable challenges to grow. Exercise your muscles, and they grow stronger. Exercise your mind and it grows stronger. No manageable challenge and you remain weak or even die.

In our spiritual lives, we need manageable challenges to grow in grace. What kind of manageable challenges might God allow to come our way? Send me a text message on that one? What manageable challenges might God allow to come our way as we grow in grace while waiting for the certain return of Jesus in glory?

In order for growth to occur, we also need rest. Do plants rest? I don't know the answer to that question. Do plants have a rest cycle as well as a growth cycle? We certainly need rest in order to grow in grace while we wait for the certain return of Jesus in glory. That is what Sabbath is all about—a precious gift of rest. And you can find moments of Sabbath rest all through the week! Take time to rest in God's love, rest in God's mercy, rest in God's grace. That's not being lazy. That's an essential ingredient if you want to grow in grace!

Nutrition, a healthy environment, manageable challenge, rest. God wants you to grow in grace while you wait for the certain return of Jesus in glory.

I've been blessed as I have become a friend and Christian brother of Bruce W. Johnson. Bruce and I met more than a year ago. I've seen him grow in grace in the past year, and I asked him if he would share just a brief testimony with us today.

Bruce: many have seen you singing in the choir. They probably didn't know that you were a Presbyterian elder from the Presbyterian church in Walla Walla, WA! How did you end up at the Forest Lake Church?

How have you grown in grace since you have been part of this church family?

What many of you don't know is that in just a few weeks Bruce is going to become a member here at Forest Lake Church by a profession of his faith in Jesus and his desire to live in harmony with the teachings of Jesus. Bruce, thank you for sharing your testimony today.

I'm thankful that Forest Lake Church can be a place where people can grow in grace as they wait for the certain return of Jesus in glory. I pray that you'll be proactive and find the nutrition that you need, find a healthy environment to grow, accept manageable challenges and take the rest that you need to Jesus.

Remember, God wants you to grow in grace while you wait for the return of Jesus in glory!