

Dartmouth

Bible Notes



Notes from the Pulpit Ministry of Dartmouth Bible Church

Series: General

Scripture: various

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Peter's, Paul's and John's Vision for the Future

2nd Peter 3:1-9 (NASB)

3:1 **T**HIS is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2 that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior *spoken* by your apostles. 3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” 5 For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water, 6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. 7 But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 8 But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

Introduction Whenever I go to Dallas I have the opportunity to think about the future. I see new things every time I travel there—last week I saw Dallas’ newest building, a brand new bridge (the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge) and I walked through a new church (Watermark) which has about 7,000 people/week worshipping there—almost all are under 35. I wonder what the future holds for our church? Will we keep growing? Will we change in how we do things or will we remain the same? Will we reach anyone with the Gospel or will we become a private organization?

And I listen to thinkers on the subject of where The Church is at today, and what the priorities seem to be and what the shifts are in church body-life thinking. Some say that the traditional, “biblically bound” and centered church will be left in the dust—that young people will abandon it for more post-modern approaches. And some of our more traditional and conservative thinkers blast away at “emergent” churches and their leaders and prophetically rail at them—“apostates!” “False teachers!” “Neo-liberals!” And I wonder what will be the future of this church at 52 Morton Avenue.

As I have been interviewing people from the past of our church, as I write a *History of Dartmouth Bible Church*, it is clear that we have changed. Several people from the past commend us and a couple of others shake their heads. But all agree that the original vision was for a place where the principles of the Bible

would be faithfully taught in a straight-forward way and that the Town of Dartmouth would be provided with a theologically conservative church in a time when there was none.

For those of us who think about the future, even while we're reviewing the past I thought it would be good to think about what the apostles' vision for the future looked like. Or, three of them anyway. What was on their hearts as they looked at a future that soon enough would be apostle-less?

Peter's Vision for the Future

Even in Peter's day he knew it would be hard to remember what is important for a Christian. He foresaw that cynicism would become prominent and a great world-wide *doubting* that Jesus IS coming back. In waves of increasing intensity over the centuries this has become the way of the world. To KEEP believing in Jesus is the hard thing! And so he wrote that HE was going to keep reminding people of what the Word of God says. ***I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles*** (2nd Peter 3:2).

I am taking this to mean that for Peter, a great passion was to get Christians to **remember the Word of God**. Before Christ, it was the Old Testament. After Christ it was what the (Peter said ***your***) apostles spoke, at least those things that are COMMANDS. What is the greatest command that Jesus uttered: to love the Lord God with all our hearts and souls and minds. And what is the second greatest command? To love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37,39; John 13:34,34; 15:12,17). So, loving God and loving people around us HAS to be part of any vision for the future, if we are going to be in line with what the apostle Peter said was important. How about Paul?

Paul's Vision for the Future

1st Corinthians 9:19–27 (NASB)

19 For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. 20 And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; 21 to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. 23 And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it. 24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

Paul is an apostle with a great heart to get the Gospel as far as possible, and to get it to anyone at all who will listen. He is SO impassioned with that priority that he does ***all things for the sake of the Gospel***. That's pretty convicting because I don't think I do that. I think I do some things for ME, and some things for the betterment of Dartmouth Bible Church and some things for the staff and some things for the Gospel—like, being on campus. I am a contradiction sometimes because I think I am pretty energized about preserving my reputation and looking cool and keeping power and influence. I'm not sure how Pauline I can claim to be! How about you?

But we can say at least pretty confidently, that Paul was about **accommodating the Gospel**. He wanted the Gospel to come up one way or another whether he was with Jews or non-Jews. And he wanted to be able to say at any time, "Hey I live a pretty consistent Christian life." I don't want to be caught in any kind of hypocrisy and people say, "OK, your Gospel is non-sense because your life doesn't back it up." Accommodating ANY CHANCE to share about Christ, and letting this priority affect even his personal choices has to be part of any Pauline vision for the future. So whatever Dartmouth Bible Church is going to be in the year 2020 or 2030, it needs to place high importance on the Word of God and the apostolic commands in it, and on sharing the Gospel and living consistently with it. What about the apostle John?

John's Vision for the Future

2nd John 6–9 (NASB)

6 And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it. 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. 8 Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. 9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

In a little-referred to writing of John's (2nd John) we see that whoever he was writing to, were told to hold on to what they had accomplished and to guard their reward. What reward? We are told throughout the New Testament that we are saved by grace. Salvation is not earned or merited by any kind of holy living or righteous acts and good-deed-doing. Redemption comes as a free gift, by receiving it by faith. BUT at the point that saving faith occurs, we start to achieve a certain *remembrance* in heaven about what we do here. It DOES matter greatly how we live here for Christ because it will be remembered in heaven. John told "the chosen lady and her children" to ***watch themselves*** so that they wouldn't lose what they had accomplished. What would that be? I think it is all that we have grown in grace, any influence we have achieved for Jesus

Christ. But it can all go down the drain and any future remembrance of it forfeited. John's vision for the future is to LIVE IN the future. Believers and churches of Jesus Christ need to configure themselves, designate their assets, plan to use their energy in maintaining whatever position for Christ they have thus far achieved. To NOT do so, and to become distracted by THIS world, or by depression or self-obsession, or by conflict has some kind of effect on what we will experience in the future after Christ comes again.

Again, we go back to Peter: ***In the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts.*** This can get into OUR heads too if we're not careful. We can get side-tracked and cave into our OWN desires and passions. John and Peter—who knew each other very well, BOTH told the first century believers to hang on to their hope of what is coming.

Any New Testament church should have a future feel about it. They should each have a sense internally that what is coming in the future is MORE IMPORTANT than what we feel now. That's going to affect how we make decisions. So I would say that if a church is *Johannine*, it will **value and guard its reward in the future**. More needs to be said about rewards and crowns, but Brendan is preparing a class for Sunday School that will explore that subject.

What will DBC be in 2020 or 2030? Whatever it will be, and whoever is in control had better remember what Peter, Paul and John said were important. Whether DBC is bigger or the same size (I certainly hope it is not smaller), whether it is still at 52 Morton Avenue or at some other address, whoever is pastor and whoever the elders are, and whoever is teaching Sunday School and leading the worship and making decisions about missionaries and doing evangelism—it had better SMELL LIKE the Word of God, the Gospel and the future! Forget any of these and we lose a whole apostle, as regards what THEY said was important.

I am excited about the future. Individual Christian disciples come and go. Pastors come and go. But the future has a big place at center stage for the body of Christ—the *bride* of Christ. When a person becomes a Christian he doesn't just get forgiveness of all his or her sins—as important and wonderful a thing as that in itself is—he gets a place in heaven with remembrance of all he did HERE for Christ. He gets a future which is full of an exciting glory and hope and joy and purpose. We only get whiffs of it here. We only catch glimpses of it here. But down there after Jesus comes back, maybe long after all our lives are over here on planet Earth, its all going to come together and make sense. There WILL be some memory of this place because there will be rewards *then* for what is done for Christ *now*. My whole life is permanently infected with that conviction. I'm looking forward to getting there. I hope you are too!