

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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What Sort Of People Ought We To Be?

by Dan Trygg

“Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. ¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, ¹⁵ and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, ¹⁶ as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. ¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled people, you fall from your own steadfastness, ¹⁸ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

2 Peter 3:11-18

“But you, dear friends, remember the words foretold by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; ¹⁸ they told you, ‘In the end time there will be scoffers walking according to their own ungodly desires.’ ¹⁹ These people create divisions and are merely natural, not having the Spirit. ²⁰ But you, dear friends, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, expecting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life. ²² Have mercy on some who doubt; ²³ save others by snatching them from the fire; on others have mercy in fear, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.”

Jude 1:17-23

What should be the end result of a study of the end times, and the return of Christ? What effect should it have on us to realize that this world will be destroyed, and that there truly *is* a judgment and an ultimate destiny of heaven or the lake of fire? It *should* have a significant effect. It *should* clarify our thinking and our perspective about what is important in life. It *should* impact how we choose to live, ...how we spend our time, money and efforts. Peter asks this question in a rhetorical way, “Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, *what sort of people ought you to be?* In these closing eight verses of 2 Peter 3, and in just a few verses toward the end of Jude, we have a wealth of important applications we ought to consider and pursue in response to these realities.

Peter asked, “What sort of people *is it necessary for you to be?*” This is more than an “ought” in the sense of a recommendation. This is a sober reality that is to be taken seriously. **The first application has to do with how we live: “What sort of people is it necessary for you to be in *holy habitual-behavior and good-devotedness?*”** **Holiness is dedication to God, ...*separation from* the impurities and inane distractions of everyday life, and *consecration* to live for God.** More than simply an outward change of behavior, however, it is vital that the focus of our hearts be adjusted toward a healthy, passionate, single-minded reverence for God. Our thinking and behavior *should* take on new focus and initiative. **We should *recognize that relationship with God is of supreme importance*, ...and *that* ought to translate to *what is important to our hearts, what occupies our minds, and what directs our activities*.** Most of us who are serious followers of Christ are probably already doing this, to some extent. A *clearer vision* of the tenuous and temporary nature of our lives, and of the reality of coming events, however, *should heighten our passion* to live for Christ.

What should that look like? **What kind of changes should result? We should be “waiting for” or “anticipating” the coming of the day of God.** The Greek word indicates an expectation with appropriate tension. These events are not going to be a cake walk. We need to be anticipating *with a readiness or preparedness of mind*. **But, we are not to be fearful. We are to be *hastening the coming of the day of God*.** How do we do that? *We do our part to fulfill the mission.* We help make disciples, and we help each other to grow, to mature and to support one another.

Since we *are* looking for these things, we ought to “be diligent” or “make every effort” spotless and blameless to be found in Him in peace. *Can you see a theme here?* If we know, and really believe that these visible, tangible things that surround us are going to be *destroyed*, ...that they will *burn*, ...and that the only things that matter are relationship with God Himself, and our ability to influence others to seek Him, ...well, then, **doesn't it make sense that we ought to “make every effort” to be at our best?** Why would we *not* want to be spotless and blameless? We ought to want to grow, become mature, solid and Christlike in our walk, so that we are found to be living well for Him, when He comes. **And a key part of that is *peace*, ...both *inner peace, peace with one another* in Christ, and, as far as it depends on you, also to be *at peace with all people*** (Rom. 12:18).

The enemy would love to pull us into quarreling, arguing, enmity and strife. Those are all works of the flesh, not the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19-23). **We are told repeatedly to stay away from foolish controversies, arguments, conspiracy theories and speculation.** Such things are *diversions*, ...*they distract us from what should be our focus*, ...and they can easily pull us out of the beauty and dignity of Christlikeness, and into the ugliness of our sinful,

human flesh. If we are going to stay spotless and blameless, then we need to remain focused on what is good, and not take the bait of Satan. It is a choice to engage in foolishness, ...or to excuse yourself from that line of conversation. There are much better, more important things to talk about. **“If this world is going to be destroyed in this way...”, does talking about politics, or sports, or the economy really matter that much?** Should I get heated up about these kinds of issues, and put an obstacle in someone else’s way because they don’t agree with me, ...or because my attitude is unkind or disrespectful? **What sort of people ought we to be?** We stay “spotless” when we don’t play in the mud, and we stay “blameless” when we give no one a reason to judge us or hold us at fault. **We remain at peace when our hearts are focused on loving God and valuing others, instead of arguing with them.** What does their opinion matter, anyway? In fact, what does *your* opinion matter, ...if all these things are going to be destroyed? **What matters is, “Are we ready?” and “Are they ready?”.** And, **“How can I show them the Jesus I would like to tell them about?”**

Peter encourages us to consider the patience of the Lord to be an opportunity for salvation, ...and use that opportunity! Obviously, if the Lord had chosen to come earlier in history, we would not have had the opportunity to be born, or to have the option of knowing Him and spending eternity in the new world He is making for us. But, **every day that we have is an opportunity for us to impact other people, so that they might come to know Christ.** Our lives matter, ...our prayers for others matter, ...and our walk and testimony about Christ matters. **We cannot change the past, and we are not guaranteed tomorrow. All we have is today, ...today is the gift of God to us, that’s why it is called “the present”.** God has gifted to us “the present”, ...today. Live for Him today. Make the best use of today that you can. **God has gifted other people this day, as well, and we have the opportunity to share with them the greatest Gift that God has ever given.** Their present choices will determine their future destiny. **Their choices regarding God’s Present to them in Jesus Christ can transform their present, but also their future.** “Behold, *now* is the acceptable time, ...*now* is the day of salvation.” God’s patience is an opportunity for salvation, ...today!

Both Peter and Jude warn about false teachers, ...“unprincipled people”, ...people who have no regard for the law or respectful decorum, ...people who will use whatever means they can to accomplish their selfish goals. **These people will attempt to divert our attention with erroneous ideas, and lead us astray from what should be our main priorities.** We have been warned ahead of time, so that we would *not* be carried away by their folly, and lose our steadfastness in Christ. Jude uses the same word in verse 8 of his brief letter. **These are people who “reject authority”.** Again, they are “unprincipled”. They do not respect the law, or the norms of normal, traditional manners or civic procedures. **In 2 Peter, these people are mockers who are attacking the faith from the outside, ...in Jude, however, these people have crept in among the flock, attempting to stir up strife and division from the inside.** They are grumblers, fault-finders, name callers. They speak arrogantly, but are quick to use flattery to get what they want. Even though they may be hanging out with Christian people, and may be attending church, Jude says that “they are worldly-minded (lit., ‘soulish’), not having Spirit” (vs. 19).

It is significant that neither Peter or Jude advocate that we go on a witch-hunt, or resort to labeling and attacking such people. That would do nothing except feed into the very thing they are promoting: distraction and division. **Instead, Peter says that we are to focus on growing in the grace and experiential-knowledge of Jesus** (2 Pet. 3:18). This is more than theology, ...this is practical, personal relationship and experience. **In similar fashion, Jude encourages us to focus on building ourselves up in our faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, and keeping ourselves in the love of God, welcoming** (expecting, anticipating, and willingly receiving and accepting for yourself) **the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto age-type life** (Jude 1:20,21). (We should be anticipating, looking for, and laying hold of the provision of God’s power to live the life of the age-to-come in the here-and-now.) It is unfortunate that many of our English translations for Jude 1:3 exhort us to **“contend earnestly for the faith”.** The Greek word means to “intensely struggle, to exert great effort, to strenuously wrestle”, but it is not that we are to struggle *against these people,* ...instead, we are to strenuously wrestle *in the faith”.* We are not to fight these people, ...we are to strenuously pursue walking out our faith without deterrence. (The word “for” is not there in the Greek. The grammar indicates that we are to exert great effort *in* or *with* the faith, ...the faith once for all given to the saints.) In other words, **our battle focus is not to directly attack these people, ...our focus is to live the life of faith with integrity and intensity!** The most effective way to expose the lie, and exalt the truth, is to **effectively live the life!**

Finally, we are to make the most of the time God has made available to us. We are to continue to have mercy on those who are doubting, ...save who we can, as if we were snatching them from the fire, ...and even show mercy to some, with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. We are not to give up with impatience upon those who doubt. We are to save those we can with urgency. We are to even offer mercy to those who would seem inadvisable or “unsafe”, taking the risk to help where we can, even if it may affect us. In other words, **we are to continue to do the job that God has assigned to us. We are to make disciples of all people. We are to share the Word of God, whether it is convenient or inconvenient, easy or difficult.** If we truly understand that Jesus is returning, and this world is going to come to an end, ...then, the most important work we can do is tell others about Him.