

## **“Divine patience.” 2 Pet 3:8-14**

**But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.**

**Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.**

**Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

You may have witnessed it happening with someone whom you know. Even you yourself may have experience it. What am I talking about? About the same attitudes that Peter describes in his letter to brothers and sisters scattered everywhere.

What attitudes? This is what Peter warns about: “Scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” So, what is this about?

In this respect our time may not be much different than the time when Peter wrote this letter. There is always this tension between faithfully following Jesus or – following the desires of our own sinful flesh. We as Christians are locked in this battle till the end of our lives. Luther called it – simultaneously sinner and saint.

What happens? Satan uses every argument to drive us away from Jesus and this is one of such arguments. “Just look at the world around you! Nothing has changed since ... very, very long time ago. Where is that promised coming of Jesus? When is He coming back? Why hasn’t He come already to struck down the wicked and to take the righteous to Himself? Perhaps, all of that is just ... a story.

Therefore, don’t let your life pass by! Don’t hold back, indulge what your heart desires! Let your heart guide your life! Do what you dream about! Embrace your true self! Don’t let some religious story to rob you of what you desire!”

As I said, you probably have seen people falling away from the faith because they just lost this invisible spiritual battle. You may have had doubts yourself. No wonder,

imagine, if you are born in a Christian family, and since childhood are taught that we are waiting for the coming of Jesus, but... He just isn't coming. Years go by, decades go by, your time is running out, but He isn't coming.

What if you miss your window of opportunity to fulfil your heart-felt desires? The tension in us is growing, and many give up. Peter was familiar with this challenge already in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. This is why he calls out Satan's lies that Jesus isn't coming back, that nothing is going to change.

Peter gives us the true reason, why Jesus hasn't come yet. "The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

Let's reflect on this a bit more. Our God is patient... for He does not wish that anyone would perish, if only they could be saved, and that all would reach repentance. Yes, that sounds good, but how patient is He?

Remember, beloved, "that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." But what does this mean? Let's look at one example from the Bible. The story begins already in Genesis 9 and 10, where one of Noah's sons, Ham, reveals his sexually perverse inclinations.

The same inclinations are later inherited by his descendants. Some of them inhabited Sodom and Gomorrah, others the land that the Lord Yahweh promised to give to the descendants of Abraham. Now listen to this!

Several centuries later we get to Genesis 15, where God Yahweh makes His covenant with Abraham. And then He says to Abraham, that it will take four more centuries before He drives out the inhabitants of that land. Why so?

Because their iniquity is not yet completed. What was their iniquity which God Yahweh was willing to patiently endure for four more centuries? You can read about it in the book of Leviticus, chapters 18 and 20. Child sacrifices, incest, bestiality, you name it. Those who are too sensitive, don't read it, for that is something...

The point of this summary was to illustrate that God Yahweh was patient with such people for hundreds and hundreds of years, until the measure of their iniquity was full and they were either destroyed as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah or driven out of their land as in the case of the nations, who used to live in the promised land.

You may have heard people complain: "How could this OT God be so cruel?" That really is a wrong question. We should be surprised and even shocked: "How could He possibly be so patient with such people for so long?!" But He was... Our God is patient, He doesn't want anyone to perish, but all to reach repentance. Everyone...

Before the Flood God Yahweh was patient as long as possible. Until there were only eight souls left that still could be saved. Only eight. But they were the hope of humanity. God knew that if He didn't save those eight and didn't cleanse the earth from the evil, He wouldn't be able to save us.

Similarly, Jesus could have come many times, but then we would not be born. You wouldn't be born. Our children would not be born. And our grand-children. New Earth and New Heavens would be different without you, and without them.

There still are so many whom our Holy Lord wants to see inheriting His Kingdom, of whom He knows that they will repent, that He withholds His return. For their sake. As He did for us. As long as there will be a chance of someone else to reach repentance, He will be patiently waiting for them. That's our God!

It is good that He doesn't listen our advice. Sometimes after a minor offence or hurt, we wish that our God would pour His justice over our real, or sometimes imaginary enemies and would wipe those evil doers from the face of the earth. It is good He doesn't listen to us, for then He would have wiped us out a long, long time ago.

He is patient, and His patience is not measured in our years, for thousand years for Him are like one day. But one day the very Last Day will come. And as we discussed it last week, also Peter repeats it – that day will come like a thief.

No one knows when. But when it comes there will be no doubt that it is our Lord, Creator and Redeemer coming in His divine majesty. As prophets describe it, it is going to be a very scary day.

Just think about this – we live in this world, and we see its rhythms. Seasons follow one another. Sun rises and sets. Night follows day, and so on. There is enough oxygen every morning and water to quench our thirst doesn't run out.

That is our environment in which we exist. Our home planet Earth. We explore the laws of creation, the laws of nature, we learn how to improve our lives. If there are disasters, they come and go, and we can just wait until they are over.

We feel more or less safe on our home planet. But the day is coming, when “the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.”

If we want to hide something, we may go into our room. Or perhaps to travel to other place, or dive into the depth of the Internet, and we think that no one will know. Hear the words of Peter – the reality as we know it today will cease to exist. Everything will be transformed, and ... everything will be exposed. “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from

another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Mt 25:31-34)

Our Lord is not slow, He is patient, and all of this will come to fulfilment. And since we are waiting for this great and indescribable day, as Peter puts it: “What sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness... as we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells?!”

“Be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.” We don’t deserve the grace and mercy of our Lord. Much less the wonderful future that He has prepared for His chosen people.

We can’t even comprehend the greatness and the otherworldly nature and intensity of the overwhelming goodness that is to be revealed. We can’t possibly appreciate what is prepared for us. But if this is what we are waiting for, if this is what we truly believe, then we will resist the lies of the devil.

He keeps whispering: “Nothing has changed... it doesn’t matter how you live, and what you do... just take it easy!” No! We will listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit, who speaks clearly and winsomely through His chosen servants, apostles.

It is our sin that separates us from our God. Jesus, our Brother, sacrificed His life to free us from the damning power of sin. Now He sends His own Spirit to dwell in us, to renew our hearts, so that our minds and will would be in tune with the mind and will of our gracious heavenly Father.

Once this sinks in, that this is how much our God has done to bring us into the divine fellowship with Himself, how can we be negligent to our holy lives? How can we not resist temptations of the devil and our own sinful desires with all we have?

How can we not strive to praise and thank our Lord and Master not just with our mouths, but also with our hands and feet, with our entire lives, which are not ours anymore, but which Jesus has bought for Himself with His precious body and blood.

I pray that the Holy Spirit would illuminate us to see these things clearly, that He would create in us new hearts, which long for everything that is true and good and beautiful, and that He Himself would take our lives and would use them, so that with everything that we are, and with everything that we do, we would bring great joy and glory to our Father and to our Lord and Brother Jesus Christ.

Come, Lord Jesus, come!

Amen.