

The Slowness of the Last Days

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[0:00] So we're going to turn to our Bible reading. Do grab a Bible. We've got plenty of visitors' Bibles around at the auditorium. If you're not sure where they are, wave your hand and I'm sure one of the welcome team can bring one to you. And we're reading this evening from 2 Peter chapter 3 as Willie Phillip, our senior minister, returns to this chapter with us. And we're going to be reading 2 Peter chapter 3 verses 1 to 10. So do turn that up and follow along to page 1019 if you're using the visitor's Bibles. 2 Peter chapter 3 beginning then at verse 1. This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them, I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles. Knowing this, first of all, that 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.

For they deliberately overlook this fact that the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word, the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. 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. Well, amen. This is God's word, and we'll return to it shortly.

Well, do open your Bibles, if you will, with me to 2 Peter chapter 3 once again. We should have been here last Sunday evening, but I'm afraid I was in my bed with flu, so I'm grateful for Josh stepping in at the last moment to help, but glad that we're back here together this Sunday evening. And we spent a few weeks looking at the second letter of Peter. We're focusing on chapter 3 on some of these verses here, just to try and give us clarity and focus, but of course we're really looking at the whole message of Peter's letter. And remember, this is a letter that is written to ordinary Christians, Christians, and it's written to fortify their faith in a difficult time. They're living in tough times.

[3:56] It's worth noticing that this is not a letter written, first of all, to church leaders. It's not like Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus, although of course those letters also are to be read by the whole church. But it's striking that Peter is writing here to all the believers, and it's because he expects the whole church, he expects all Christians to take responsibility for not falling into error, for not swallowing the falsehoods that are presented by the world outside, which so often are falsehoods that begin to infiltrate the church as well.

The pressure for a culture to change the church, a delusional culture that is all around about us, will often risk a crisis of truth within the church. Isn't that so? That's certainly something that we see today, if we look at the mainstream Christian churches in our Western world.

But of course, it was also so way back then, way back in the first century. This is not something new. That should be an encouragement to us, as well as a warning to us. Chapter 3, verse 17, right at the very end of the letter, remember? It says it very plainly.

Some were clearly in danger of being led away into error, says Peter, by lawless people. They were in danger of losing their own stability in their Christian faith.

So clearly the situation was very serious. At least some of their, well, I suppose we would call them theological professors, bishops, moderators, leaders, these sorts of people, at least some of them

were in truth, according to Peter, nothing other than scoffers and skeptics.

[5:44] That's what he calls them in verse 3, isn't it, of chapter 3. And he says that will be characteristic of the world, and indeed infiltrating the church, until the Lord Jesus comes again.

He's talking about people who will undermine the truth of the gospel of Christ. And Christian, professing Christians, will fall for it. Now, Peter tells us in the first chapter, doesn't he, that God has always, and will always, give us everything we need for life and godliness.

He says that in chapter 1, verse 3. He's given these things to us in the great and precious promises of the gospel, the biblical gospel of the Old and New Testament. And that's what he focuses on. Remember in chapter 3 here, verse 2. Notice the prophetic word, the words of the prophets, and the command of our own Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, which comes to us, notice, through his apostles.

That is, through their authoritative teaching, their authoritative writings, in what we call the New Testament. We have that. God has given us, in the Bible, everything we need.

[6:50] But alas, as always has been, Peter warns the church that, just as in the past, alongside the true prophets, there were false prophets. And so he says in chapter 2, verse 2, they will be false teachers among you.

And what will they do? Well, they'll bring in, he says, destructive heresies. And friends, that's the story of the church throughout 2,000 years. That's the story of the church still today. And that's why this is a vital message for us in this letter.

This is not some old relic to look at in a museum. And last time we saw, in verses 4 to 7, we saw the characteristic telltale spots of these skeptics, these scoffers that he's speaking about.

And like the leopard, these spots don't change through time and history. What do they do? Verse 4, they deny God's word. Where's the promise of his coming?

You can't believe the Bible anymore, not today. Not if you're an intelligent person at any rate. I mean, this is ancient writing. We've got to reinterpret it, of course, for our own time and our own culture.

[7:59] Remember I mentioned David Attenborough, the naturalist, speaking with such scorn about his school headmaster when he ever spoke from the Bible in their school chapel. How can an intelligent man believe such nonsense?

That's what David Attenborough said. I remember hearing him say that in an interview, and then not long after that, watching him on a television program, talking about how he believed in the abominable snowman. And I thought, my goodness, who's talking about craziness now?

But actually, that attitude often, alas, has allies even within the professing church. Scoffers, who like then, so now, deny God's word, undermine that as the authority of Scripture.

That's what Peter's talking about here. And, as we saw in verses 5 and 6, and they deny God's wrath. They deny God's wrath. The judgment of God upon sin.

And, therefore, they undermine the whole notion of sin and the need for repentance at all. They deliberately overlook, says Peter, they suppress the plain teaching of Scripture, the plain evidence of human history.

[9:14] That God's judgment on sin is actually the explanation for the world that we know, the world that we live in, the world that we experience. The judgment of God upon the sin of human beings explains this world in a way that nothing else can do.

And that's why, of course, the secularists, the liberal optimists, that so dominate our Western world today, the leadership of our world, the rulers of our countries, that's why, so often, their policies, particularly their social policies, are doomed to failure because they're what Peter calls skeptics and scoffers.

They're deliberate self-deceivers about the reality of the human condition and the reality of this world. So they're living, actually, in a world of fantasy. They're deliberately suppressing the reality of the sin of man, the sin of the human heart.

And, therefore, they're deliberately suppressing the result of the curse of God upon this world. And that is what explains our world. The liberal optimist cannot explain the chaos of our world today.

Only the reality about God and God's action in the world can explain our world. I do see that. You see the mark of the person that the Bible calls the scoffer here.

[10:35] The mark of him is that he is in denial about reality. To use Paul's words in Romans chapter 1, he suppresses the truth. And that is the natural hallmark, isn't it, of our natural fallen

human nature.

In fact, let me read what Paul says there in Romans chapter 1. Don't turn it up, but just listen. He says, The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. His invisible attributes, namely His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world and the things that have been made.

So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking.

Their foolish hearts were darkened, claiming to be wise. They became fools and exchanged the glory of the mortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

[11:45] He goes on, They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator.

Suppressing the truth, exchanging truth for lies, deceiving themselves about reality. And actually in our current world, it's not at all without significance that Paul goes on there to talk specifically about the denial of truth and reality, about human sexuality, and about human gender, and so on.

And that's something that's all around us today, isn't it? And that is the hallmark of what people do all the time. Human beings live in denial, deliberate denial, suppressing the truth, overlooking the facts of reality.

It's not just the politicians who think that money grows on trees, governments who think that it can be magicked out of thin air by a wonderful thing called quantitative easing, which magics money out of nowhere so you can spend money you don't have on things you don't need more and more.

But we all do it, you see. We all, at heart, we deliberately overlook, we suppress the truth about reality.

[13:03] And the reason for that is because people fear the truth. We don't want to allow these awkward questions to come into our minds.

I don't know if many of you read the Times. I don't. But Matthew Paris, who is a Times columnist, he's an interesting man. He's a strange mixture.

He grew up, part of his upbringing in Africa, and was very influenced really by missionaries that he saw, Christian missionaries. And was very, you know, he could see the good that these people did, and he had a great respect for them.

And yet, his own chosen lifestyle as a homosexual put him in great tension with that. And so he has great outbursts against the Christian faith at times. But he's an interesting man.

He writes interesting. And this is his autobiography, Chance Witness. And it made me think of that when I was reading these verses about suppressing the truth. Because he's got a very interesting chapter in here called You Better Not Look Down.

[14:07] And in it, he describes how he wakes up in the middle of the night. And as you sometimes do in the middle of the night, when everything is quiet and everything is dark, you hear all sorts of things and you suddenly become much more conscious of things.

And he describes that quite eloquently in this chapter. I want to read some of it to you. In the dead of night, I awoke suddenly for no reason. I'd been working perhaps a little too hard and sleeping fitfully.

It was pitch dark and I was wide awake two hours still before dawn. Annoying, because sleep is precious. I was thirsty. You know where everything is in your own flat.

So without switching on the light, I padded gingerly to the bathroom, filled a cup with water and sat on the edge of the bath to drink. Sleep fell away. Blind people don't miss much.

The immediacy of vision crowds out components of our perception which are more important. When the light comes on, an invisible monitor turns down the volume of our other senses. But sound, touch and smell go very deep.

[15:10] And we think best with our eyes screwed up. Sit in the dark for a while and the deeper elements of our sentience begin to swell. I did so on the edge of the bath.

I became aware of new noises. As if someone was turning up all the sound knobs. All at once, I could hear the faint, low, continuous rumble of London in the night. The blurring of a million distant noises.

Factories, trains and cars. Now I could hear the very slightest hum from my stereo in the sitting room. I must have left it on standby. The compressor working in my fridge was just audible from the kitchen.

And so amazingly was the gentle, unfocused tick-tock of the quartz kitchen clock. From outside, I could hear the Thames at night whispering on the wall beneath. He goes on, and I sat absolutely still in the blackness.

All at once, I was aware of a sound louder than all the others. It had been there all along, but I hadn't focused upon it. It was a singing in my head, that weird, discordant, electrical noise as of transformers in a substation or a high-voltage overhead power cable.

[16 : 17] White noise. As I concentrated, it seemed to swell, to become almost deafening. Yet I knew there was no change in the volume, just an uncharacteristic tuning in to a perception we usually screen out, but which is always with us.

I was eavesdropping, as it were, on my own central nervous system, my own heating, my ventilation and power supply. I was listening to the white noise generated by my own electronics. And now I could hear my blood, too, coursing through the artery near each ear. I could hear my heart, strong, and regular. Each smooth, powerful pulse followed by a gush past the ears.

What a piece of work is man. I would have rejected the design outright. I'd have called for something solid and straightforward to fix. Too clever by half, I would have said.

All of that black box technology, the super sophisticated electronics, those eggshell delicate parts, sacrifice sophistication. Design me something durable, robust. Yet the machine sitting on that bass edge was both.

[17 : 29] Man is an almost miraculous combination of fragility with resilience. It doesn't bear thinking about.

It doesn't bear thinking about. You'd better not look down if you want to keep on flying, B.B. King used to sing. It seems to me that human viability is an impossibility sustained by inattention.

We mustn't eavesdrop on those noises too often or for too long. The singing in the wire should stay mostly a secret. I switched on the light and it fled.

I switched on the light and all these things that made me think of the almost miracle that is a human body were suppressed all over again.

You see, that is the self-deception, isn't it, of the scoffer. That is the human heart hiding from the truth. But you see, the Bible calls us always back to the truth, back to the facts.

[18 : 38] Look at verse 8. Do not overlook this fact, says Peter. Come back to reality and consider the truth.

Don't put the lights on and block it all out. And you see, in verses 8 to 10 here, he answers the ignorant question of the scoffers. First of all, in verses 8 and 9, he answers the question there in verse 4.

Where is this coming? Where is the judgment of God? And he explains what seems to be the apparent slowness of it. And then in verse 10, you'll see that he addresses the issue of verse 5. He makes clear and plain the evidence of God's wrath and judgment that one day will be made utterly plain. We'll look at that next week. The suddenness of the last day that Peter says is very real.

But tonight, I want to focus on the slowness or the apparent slowness of that day. Where is the promise of his coming? Is God really feeble?

[19 : 39] Is he powerless? Is he unable to promise or to deliver on what he's promised that Christ will, in fact, come again? Is he impotent to do these things?

Or is he, as Friedrich Nietzsche, so clearly proclaimed that God is in fact dead? Should we listen to Richard Dawkins who just last week was pontificating about the 20th anniversary of that book of his, *The God Delusion*?

Should we listen to him? Should we listen to those adverts that he put on the buses 20 years ago? There's probably no God, so stop worrying and just enjoy your life.

Well, Peter has two clear answers, you see, to the scoffer's question. First of all, he says the scoffer is utterly, utterly wrong about who God is in relating to our world of time.

And the scoffer is also utterly, utterly wrong about what God is doing in our world of time and of history. Look at verse 8 because, you see, here Peter is first of all proclaiming that God and God alone is the ruler of time.

[20:53] God is not a mere creature in time as we are. God is the creator of time. Therefore, he is the Lord of time. In fact, he alone is the interpreter of time. God is the ruler of time.

And that's why, you see, verse 8, with the Lord, one day is a thousand years, and a thousand years is as a day. Because, you see, if God created this universe, then he created not only space and matter, but he created time itself.

You can't have space without time. That was, I think, Einstein's great discovery, wasn't it? The space-time continuum. It's beyond me. Some of you eggheads will probably understand it. The relativity of time, he talked about. But you see, we are creatures of time. We are time-bound. We are space-bound. We are ourselves only relative.

So how can we possibly break out of our own tiny existence and understand that which is above and beyond space and time, that which is eternal?

[22:00] Well, of course we can't. It's impossible. Only one who is outside time, only one who is above time, can possibly give a true estimate of time in terms of true speed of time in relation to something outside of itself, in relation to something fixed, something absolute.

We can't get our heads around that, can we? But we do know something of it in our own experience. We do say things like, oh, time really dragged then, didn't it? Time really dragged during that sermon. Maybe you're thinking that already.

But I'll tell you, any preacher looks at the clock and thinks, oh my goodness, time is absolutely galloping. And we say things like, we say, time flies when you're having fun. Spend two hours on a sunny evening with a pretty girl and oh goodness, it's like a couple of seconds, it's gone.

If you're a bloke in love, spend two hours in a maths class, very different thing. Although again, probably one or two of you eggheads like that sort of thing. You're not the normal ones by the way, just in case.

But we're trapped in time, aren't we? We can't get an accurate or objective understanding of it. I wonder if you've ever been in a train going out of Central Station when there's another train on the same platform going out at exactly the same time at exactly the same speed.

[23:18] It's such a weird feeling. You look out of the window and it doesn't appear at all that you're moving and yet you can feel the train moving. But if you're in a helicopter looking down like that police helicopter that goes around sometimes, you would see, wouldn't you, both of those trains are moving.

You can't see it when you're in that train relative to the other one. And that's how it is, you see, with God and time. He is the ruler of time. He's above looking down, seeing the movement of time. He created it and only he can interpret it truly and accurately. And it's the arrogance, you see, of the scoffer to have only that egocentric view of the world, a material-centric view of everything, to try and explain everything only in relation to the material because you're looking at the thing only from inside the world and only from your own perspective.

As if that's all there was. Just you and your view on things. Well, that's like trying to judge the speed of your train by only looking at the other train that's going at exactly the same speed as you are. You can't. But you see, the scoffer is fundamentally egocentric, self-centered. That's the very heart of what sin is according to the Bible, isn't it?

[24:41] Being self-centered and not God-centered. God created us to worship him as the center. And sin is to try and turn that around and put us at the center. And the scoffer can only think about God in relation to himself and his view.

And therefore, his whole understanding of time and of matter is just false. It's foolish. But the truth is that time and indeed world history can only be explained properly by the eternity that time was created within.

The created must be explained by the uncreated. The visible must be explained by the invisible, not vice versa. That's what the Bible says. Hebrews 11, verse 3, very plain.

The universe was created by the Word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. But the arrogance of the scoffer is to think that we can explain the unseen purely in terms of what is visible.

Purely in terms of what we can see and feel and touch the empirical sciences and so on. And you know, that is the height of arrogance to state that, isn't it?

[25:58] Because to think like that, you have to insist on what is actually unprovable. That what you see is absolutely all that there is.

That anything else is even utterly impossible. Not that there's even the remotest chance of it, but to assert that that is a fact is actually to claim omniscience for yourself.

It's one thing to doubt that there's anything more, but it's quite another thing to insist that there cannot possibly be anything more than what you can see or feel and touch. That is to assert God-like omniscience.

But the created being in time and space can no more possibly explain the creator than, well, than a character in a play can explain the playwright. If you could interview William Shakespeare, he would be able to tell you an awful lot about the character of Hamlet.

But Hamlet can't tell you anything at all about William Shakespeare, can he? He can't tell you whether he really was the man from Stratford or whether he was the seventh Earl of Oxford or whoever else it is that people think Shakespeare actually was.

[27 : 11] Hamlet doesn't know anything of that because he was created inside a world that Shakespeare alone made. And that's what verse 8 here is saying to us, you see, about the issue of time.

It's quoting from Psalm 90 where we sang earlier on. And that's the Psalm, isn't it? All about God's permanence and man's transience. God's infinite, everlasting nature but our finite mortality.

From everlasting to everlasting, you are God, says the Psalmist, but you're the God who returns man to dust and says, return, O children of man, for a thousand years in your sight, but as yesterday when it's passed, there is a watch in the night.

We're like grass. We sang it, flourishing in the morning and yet by evening fading and withering. We can't deny that, can we?

If we're honest. Where is Nietzsche's bold declaration now? Can anyone prove that God is dead?

[28 : 21] It's a fact in history that Nietzsche's dead, but Peter says stick to the facts, stick to the things that are plain and obvious that God by definition is the Lord of time and that the skeptic by deliberately suppressing that truth is therefore inevitably utterly wrong about who God is in relation to this world of time and therefore totally unqualified to call into question the veracity of God's word of promise.

And as Christians, I think we can be bold to turn the question back on the skeptic to ask them, well, do you think the key to life's whole meaning is just to be found in the natural world alone?

Do you think the meaning of your life is to be found purely in the combination of dust and water that makes up your body, for example? Is that the case? Because if it is, you have to answer the question, well, why do we deeply, instinctively feel and know that that is not the case?

When you stand at the grave of a loved one, and you hear those words, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, dust, dust, can you just be detached and say, well, that's all it is, dust and ashes, yeah, so it is, nothing more to it than that, now it's gone.

But that's not how it is standing at a grave of a loved one, is it? Because that's not all there is to human life, not at all. The life of my loved ones, the life of your loved ones, can only be explained with reference to God who is the ruler of time, and with reference to the eternity that we were created for, and the eternal God who created us that we might find him and know him.

[30 : 30] But second, you see, when you're all wrong about that, about who God is in relation to time and eternity, then you're bound to be completely wrong also, aren't you, about what God is doing in time.

And you see, in verse 9, Peter makes very clear, doesn't he, that not only is God the ruler of time, but he is the great redeemer in time.

Look at verse 9, the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promises, some counselness, but he's patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

You see, to the scoffer, to the skeptic who dismisses any thought of the coming of the Lord Jesus again in power and glory, to the scoffer, the slowness, the apparent inaction for 2,000 years means nothing more than impotence.

That God can't do anything. Either he is dead or he is impotent. He has no power. But Peter says, no, no, no, you have got it completely wrong.

[31 : 42] You have no idea about God at all because, once again, your whole frame of reference is yourself. It's your own feeble, finite mind. It's your own selfish and sinful heart. But God is not like you.

And God's slowness is not powerlessness. It's patience. It's patience, says Peter. And that patience, in fact, is what speaks of his very great and marvelous power. You see, the scoffer says, oh, God hasn't judged. God hasn't acted to judge, so he can't. There's no judgment. He's powerless against us. He's powerless against evil, or else he doesn't care about evil.

But let me ask you this. Here's a question. Who's more powerful? The parent who can't control his temper, lashes out indiscriminately at his child every time he's slightly annoyed.

Or, the parent who's very controlled and measured and patient, and yes, does administer discipline and punishment, but at the right time and in the right way.

[32 : 58] which of those two parents would you say is the more powerful? Well, you know the answer. Proverbs 16, verse 32 says, whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty.

And you see, the God of the Bible is defined, indeed he defines himself by his slowness to anger. That's inherent in his very name, the Lord, Yahweh, Jehovah.

That's exactly, isn't it, how God revealed himself by name to Moses on the mountain. You can read it later on in Exodus chapter 34 when Moses asked to see and to experience the glory of God.

And the Lord came past him as he was hidden in the cleft of the rock and proclaimed his name, the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Faithfulness and faithfulness. The skeptic loves to suppress that too. They're as good at suppressing God's mercy and love as they are at suppressing his just wrath and his judgment on sin.

[34 : 13] I don't know if you ever did read that book by Richard Dawkins that he was celebrating 20 years of the God delusion. I did, and it was a book that was replete with utter ignorance, contempt, full of deliberate overlooking of the actual reality, the facts of Scripture, about what Scripture itself tells us God is like and what God is doing.

And Peter says God is not slow, as some count it, as though he was powerless to do what he promised to do or forgotten. But no, God is not vindictive or capricious either, as people like Richard Dawkins want to believe.

He is a just judge. He will punish sin. But Peter says he is patient. He's patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish.

He is not a capricious, malevolent bully like some people want to aver. He is a compassionate and merciful Savior. And that is the true God of the Bible in the Old Testament, just as in the New Testament.

In fact, Peter's harking back here to Ezekiel. Do you remember when we studied the prophet Ezekiel? He's almost quoting him in Ezekiel 18. Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord, and not rather he turns from his way and lives?

[35 : 41] And Peter says that's why there's a slowness. in the coming of the last day. It's not that God is impotent, it's that he is infinite in his mercy towards you.

So he creates time for us so that we may reach repentance. You need time in order to repent, don't you? I don't know, I guess maybe that's why there's no repentance or salvation for angels and spirits.

They're not in time, they have no time to repent. But God has created us in a world of space and of time. He's given us time as a gift of life that we might find him and know him and come to repentance.

That we might be his. He is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance. I wonder if you've ever thought of that. That the purpose of your very existence is that you should have time.

Time to find repentance towards God and therefore discover your destiny. As a redeemed child of God, as one whom he calls to partake in his divine nature.

[36 : 55] That's what the psalmist of Psalm 90 understood, isn't it? When he said and prayed, Lord, teach us to number our days so that we may gain a heart for wisdom. We understand so that we'll understand what our whole of life is all about, why we're here and what it's about and who we're to find.

The scoffer just scoffs at all of that, you see. Maybe you've spent most of your life scoffing and joining him and just that kind of thing.

Scoffing at God's word, scoffing at his gospel. Well, if that's the case, friend, Peter says to you, do not overlook this fact. The fact that God alone is the ruler of time.

He created time. He alone controls it. He alone explains it. And that God is the redeemer in time. And that the time he's given you on this earth in life is for one purpose and one alone, that you should reach repentance, that you should find life and find eternal life with him, which is what he made you for.

What are you doing? What are you doing with the time that God has given you? on this earth? How often have you thought about that?

[38 : 16] And will you repent in time? It's a long time since I've been to Chester. There's a beautiful cathedral there. And in the cathedral in Chester, there's a clock and it has an inscription on it with a poem.

I've read it to you before. It's called Time's Paces. Let me read it again. When as a child I laughed and wept, time crept. When as a youth I waxed more bold, time strolled.

When I became a full-grown man, time ran. When older still I daily grew, time flew. And soon I shall find in passing on, time gone.

O Christ, wilt thou have saved me then? Well, will he have saved you then?

Have you found that repentance and that way home to the heart of God? Have you? Friends, let me say to you, if you are at all uncertain about that question still this evening, don't let today pass without finding out the answer to that question and being sure.

[39 : 41] Because Paul the Apostle Christ says today, today, now, is the day of salvation.

Tomorrow? Well, who knows what that will bring.

let's pray together. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness, but he is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

And so, Lord, we ask that today, indeed, we will hear your voice, and we will not harden our hearts, but help us to rejoice in your gift of time, time to repent, time to find you, time to find in you who we truly are, and what you've made us for, and the joy and the wonder of that great discovery.

May it be ours, every one of us, here this night, we pray, for we ask it in the gracious name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

And that's it.