

2 Peter 3:1-7 (Time is Relative).

Introduction

I read a book by Paul brand entitled The Gift of Pain which has had a huge impression on me. Paul Brand was a medical doctor who spent his life treating leprosy patients in India. **In his book he makes many references to the absolutely amazing design of the human body.** And in one point of the book he challenges us to think through the process of how the human brain creates a model of the world. And I'll try to summarize.

Think about this. **Our brain, which is the only part of our body that really processes information at the conscious level, never gets to actually see the world.** It's functionally buried in a cement bunker 50 feet beneath the earth in total darkness for its entire existence. **The brain itself is encased in hard bone never to see the light of day with the exception of two people in our church.** **The brain has 5 senses that give it information about the world it will never see.** From the moment of birth the brain tries to construct an internal model of the external world. It creates a picture of how the world works. **The eyes transmit information to that underground bunker about that narrow band of the electromagnetic spectrum that we can see.** The ears carry sound information which is basically ripples of energy carried through a medium like air. **Smell, taste and touch are also sent to the brain and the brain takes all these billions of bytes of information and constructs a model of reality based on these 5 senses.** Often times this information is incomplete, wrong, or contradictory and the brain has to put together a "best guess" as to what the senses are telling him.

Elaborating on this point, Paul Brand in his book talks about how the simplest things we do on a daily basis are incredibly complex.

Each day after dissecting and attending classes in medical school I would go home, open the door and warmly greet my Cardiff landlady, Granny Morgan. At least that was the version of reality presented to my brain after it had evaluated a series of coded messages. Touch corpuscles in my fingers sent in a report of a pressure of

124 grams per square centimeter while nearby temperature sensors reported an input of 2 calories per second. My brain receiving these signals from a thousand nerve fibers in my right hand, assembled a composite impression of a warm object imposing upward and downward thrusts on that hand, and comparing these sensations with its databank of past experiences, it diagnosed a handshake.

Meanwhile millions of rods and cones in my eye identified zones of shading and color which the brain sifted through and recognized as the patten of the face of Granny Morgan. And tiny hairs in the inner ear sent in reports of molecular vibrations and specific tonal frequencies; the brain related those thousands of bits of code to past records of my landladies voice.

That is so awesome. Even this description is a gross simplification of the complex functions our body perform. To think of what goes on in our brains at the subconscious level at astonishing speeds is truly humbling. **So this is what our brain is doing and over time we learn to trust the image of reality that is presented to our brain.** Our brain does a good job of creating a model of the world based on experiences presented to us.

But here is a problem. What happens when a really major thing, something really, really important occurs very infrequently? **For example, let's say you live on an island long before the age of technology and you notice that crops grow really, really well right at the base of this well-watered mountain year after year. But your crops out in the flat desert don't grow nearly as good as these crops at the base of the mountain.** **So after 10 years of observing this pattern you move your house and your family to the base of this mountain to plant crops only to discover that this mountain happens to be a volcano that had been dormant for 200 years and decides to erupt and bury your house in a lava flow.** That would be a bummer.

But what information did your brain have to avoid that? Nothing. **We call these unpredictable, infrequent, painful, surprising interruptions CATASTROPHES.** Well in our text, we are going to be talking about a catastrophe that will catch many

people off guard. **That catastrophe will be the return of Jesus Christ in judgment.** And many people will plead ignorance when he returns. **What information did I have to avoid this catastrophe?** **My eyes have never seen Jesus?** How did I know he was real? **How did I know it wasn't just a story?** Everything my 5 senses ever delivered told me that world continues as it always has since the beginning of time. **How can you hold me responsible to submit to someone I have never seen with my eyes?** **But what our text tells us this morning is that while Jesus' return is catastrophic in the sense that we cannot anticipate it, it is not catastrophic in the sense that we did not know about it.** Men DID AND DO know about it, they are aware of it, but because of their sin they refuse to heed the warning. So if you have your Bibles you can open up to 2 Peter 3.

And if you remember last time we studied 2 Peter we finished chapter two which is an entire chapter devoted to denouncing the wickedness of false teachers and the consequences of their teaching. Peter now moves into this section where he is going to encourage his readers in the future promise of the Lord's return.

3:1 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, 2 that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, 3 knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. 4 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 these scoffers take the regular course of nature and set it up against the promise of God. **Essentially this person is saying, listen, my brain has been collating information from birth about how this world works.** And the model I have created has no room for the divine. **I've never seen Jesus. You can't show me Jesus and everything I have ever seen tells me that Jesus does not exist.** **Nature is stable. Nature is calm.** Nature is non-violent. And to suggest that there is going to be some violent interruption to what we call normal is the stuff of

fantasy fiction. **But here is what is really interesting.** Even though this argument on the surface seems somewhat compelling and believable, we are told that there is a sin issue under the surface which is causing them to ignore the truth. They **want** to believe a lie.

5 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, 6 and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 7 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.

So the point of verses 5-7 clearly is that there is deliberate ignoring of truth. Now when I first read this text, I have to confess it did not strike me with extreme force.

And that is because I don't think my next door who holds to evolution is deliberately overlooking the fact that God destroyed the world in a flood. He thinks God is a fantasy and Noah and the flood is a fantasy. **But for Peter's readers, this was a bit different. For Peter's readers, the flood was more than likely a universally accepted reality.** And so these scoffers **overlooked a piece of evidence that they knew to be true.** They knew very well that catastrophic interventions by God do happen and they chose to ignore how that reality might impact their bold statement that God will not return. They were being inconsistent and they didn't care. **And to say they were overlooking evidence is a soft way to say it because there is definitely motive implied in their forgetfulness.**

NKJV “they willfully
forget”

NRSV, NJB “they deliberately
ignore”

TEV “they purposely

ignore”

They knew that creation had not always been constant. **But, they were ignoring what they knew to be true because why? They wanted to follow their own sinful desires.** And so the principle that does apply to your unbelieving next door neighbor is that he **ALSO** is ignoring what he knows to be true about the world in favor because of sin.

I can tell you right now that every evolutionist in the world is ignoring the design he sees in creation and is looking for a way to “explain it away.” There are theological and moral implications to a God that scare people. I know that because **Romans 1:20** tells us that God has created us with an awareness of his existence.

“For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. “

CLEARLY PERCEIVED....Men deliberately overlook truth because they do not like the idea of submitting to Jesus.

The Main POINT of the passage:

But Peter is not talking in this passage to unbelievers who willingly ignore the truth. These people will likely never read these words. **Peter is writing to those who do believe in Jesus’ return and he wants to passionately remind them of that.** He reminded them in 1 Peter and he is reminding them again here. And the reason he wants to remind them is that even believers get lulled into sleep. We have never seen Jesus. We have never heard Jesus' voice with our own ears. **And just like these scoffers we may begin to conclude that everything will continue as we see it forever.** And we get sleepy. Our lives are long enough to lull us into a false perception that tomorrow will be just like today.

So the main point Peter is making in this text is that the Lord's return is absolutely certain. He wants them to remember this fact. He wants them to recall it to mind. **It is possible to have a pure and sincere mind and yet have a bad memory!** And so Peter wants to remind the forgetful:

We need reminding about important things that happen infrequently. This IS true. Don't forget to pay taxes, don't forget to change the batteries in your fire alarm, don't forget to check the oil in your car, don't forget to blow out your sprinklers.

Peter is reminding them of something infinitely more important: there is zero question - as certain as death and taxes, God's return is coming. That truth believed ought to do something to you. **If you build your life on that truth, it will impact you.** And, according to the text there are three responses this will invoke in believers. And these three responses will form the theme of our last three messages in 2 Peter.

Peter clearly spells out these three responses and it is important to see them with your own eyes. **The first two responses we should have knowing that Christ's return is certain is found in verse 11.** The first response is not explicitly stated but is obviously derived from the very first clause...

After describing the divine nuclear warhead that will blow up the universe Peter writes, 2 Peter 3:11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved...we can stop right there and grab a point of application.

1. **This World is Not Our Home (What we will be studying today).** If the heavens and earth are going to be burned up, then it doesn't make much sense investing in it.

2 Peter 3:11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,

2. **Live lives of holiness (Your holiness matters when you meet Jesus).**

2 Peter 3:15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation,

3. Plead with people that they come to Christ (With judgment stakes so high and Christ's return certain, we need to open our mouths) The reason Jesus is slow is because he wants people to repent.

This World is NOT our Home.

So the main point here is don't replace the **carpet**, put in **vinyl windows**, install a **new fence** and put **granite countertops** in the house your renting. If it's not your home, don't invest in it. Why? Because when you move out you loose it all! **And since this world is not our home, since we will be moving out, since all these things will be dissolved according to 2 Peter 3.11, we should not invest in it.**

What this translates to is a call to protect yourself from worldliness. It is a call to resist the seduction of the world. **It's a call to not invest your heart in this world like Lot's wife.** It is a call to not LOVE the world. It's not your home.

And the Bible is really clear about this. But I am not always sure we hear just how crystal clear the Bible is in this regard. **I am not so sure we even want to know how clear the Bible is in this regard.** I know that I find myself at times taking some parts of the Bible more seriously than others. **That is opposite of anything I would ever say.** We would never say that the Bible varies in its importance or that some parts are more important than others. **But there are some passages whose claims are so staggering and so difficult and so challenging that I tend to act like they have little brackets around them [optional].**

Consider 1 **Jn 2:15, "Do not love the world or anything in the world."** This sentence is not subtle. **It's not difficult to understand.** It's abrupt and to the point - only ten words. It's black and white. **"Do NOT love the world."** **It's sweeping in its impact.** Do not love ANYTHING in the world. And it's pretty much strategically aimed at my heart.

I read a verse like this and my mind tries to empty it of its authority. File down the edges, start comparing myself with those I think are more worldly than I (never of comparing myself to those who are less).

This is a hard statement because the world's tentacles reach into almost every area of our life. The list of “do nots” gets very long.

1. Do not love the world’s sitcoms.
2. Do not love the world's movies.
3. Do not love the world’s music or pop culture.
4. Do not love the world's humor.
5. Do not love the world’s fashions and styles.
6. Do not love the world’s clothing and sense of beauty.
7. Do not love the world’s money and the power and influence that money buys.
8. Do not love ANYTHING in the world.

And inevitably, one of these “do nots” is going to hit very close to home. Inevitably we are loving some part of the world that God tells us not to love.

When you think of the the world you tend to think of the stuff the world offers. Possessions, power, influence, sex, money, etc. But did you notice that in that list nothing there is prohibited by the Lord.

- Owning is not prohibited. Job and Abraham were rolling in cash.
- Power and influence are not prohibited. David and Solomon were the most influential people of their day.
- Sex in the proper setting is not prohibited.
- Entertainment is not prohibited.

So if possessing these things is not worldliness, what is?

Joel Beeke describes it this way: “The goal of worldly people is to move forward rather than upward, to live horizontally rather than vertically. They seek after outward prosperity rather than holiness. They burst with selfish desires rather than heartfelt supplications. If they do not deny God, they ignore and forget Him, or else they use Him only for their selfish ends. *Worldliness is human nature without God.*”

worldliness is coveting what the world has to offer. Coveting is the heart condition. Materialism is when coveting has cash to spend.

“worldliness is the wrong response inside of us as we observe the environment outside of us.”

Worldliness is not having money, worldliness is looking at the money you have (or don't have) and loving it or trusting in it or worshiping it. And THAT God tells us is absolutely forbidden.

But we have to remember that these prohibition are not intended to prohibit joy but rather to point us to “Solid joys and lasting treasure.” - Newton. What we do not realize is that loving the world will kill us. We main gain the world but we will loose our soul.

Do you remember the story of Moby Dick from either the movie or the forced reading in high school? **The captain of the ship is named Ahab and the entire story is about his pathological hunt for this incredibly elusive whale.** By the end of the book, Ahab has lost all reason. He is absolutely possessed by the thought of capturing the whale. **He cannot enjoy life because the only thing he cares about is sticking a big fat harpoon right into the soft flesh of this giant whale. He is willing and anxiously ready to sacrifice anything to get it.** And at the very end of the story in a last ditch effort to harpoon his obsession, he heaves his spear into the air to his elation the harpoon strikes the whale. He finally gets what he wants! The whale reels back in pain and thrashes in the water and begins to dive, but what Ahab does not realize is that the rope is wrapped around his leg and the last scene of the book is Ahab being **slashed from his feet**, mercilessly **ripped over the**

side of the boat and helplessly drug into the foaming sea to his death. Ahab gets what he wants but the very thing he wants becomes the source of his own destruction.

The parallel to loving the world is **uncomfortably striking**. **Loving the world is staking your heart to the very thing that is bent on killing you.** **Sticking your harpoon into the banking system and stock markets of the world or into the fashions of the world and the value structure of the world will drag you down into the dirty, foamy depths of joyless disinterest in God.**

So for the rest of our time this morning, let's look at 3 things which tend to stake us to the world and then look at the one thing from our text today that will pull up that stake and free us to pursue Jesus. **There are lies we believe which cause us to think that it is a good idea to stake our hearts to the world.**

Lie #1: My stuff makes me happy.

Just like Ahab we think that if we harpoon the world (acquire health or wealth or power or whatever it is) that the capturing of that elusive creature is going to make me happy. **And in a certain sense it is true that stuff makes me happy.** Who is happier? **The guy who is starving to death gnawing on a piece of shoe leather in Calcutta India, or the guy who just enjoyed a gourmet steak dinner next to his pool that overlooks the beach in Fort Lauderdale, Florida?** There is a sense in which money makes you happy.

So why is it a lie to believe that money does not make me happy?

Because money does not meet the ultimate demands of the human heart.

Proverbs 23:4-5 Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist. 5 When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven.

I met a guy this week in the oil changing shop who had tatooes up his neck and on the backs of his hand and he looked like he had been in a gang so I asked him, "Did

you used to be in a gang?” And he said yes and it turns out that he had spent 10 years in prison and got saved and started a ministry to people in jail and also to Native Americans who live on reservations. And we got to talking about his work on Indian reservations and he said last week he went to a funeral of a 9 year old native american girl who hung herself. **He said, “Why do you think she hung herself.” Because she is starving for attention. In their culture, they make a big tepee and have a big memorial service that lasts for days when someone dies and she was so starving for attention that she fantasized about being the center of attention for days on end and so she hung herself.** He went on to say how ironic it was that the Native American people who have all their physical needs met through the income generated from casinos and government programs have the highest rate of alcoholism and suicide in America.

So while physical needs are important and to produce a level of temporal happiness, they do nothing for soul satisfying happiness. **And that is why this world will never satisfy.** That is why it is such a sad thing to stake your heart to something that will never satisfy. So lie #1 is we think that our stuff will make us happy.

Lie #2: My stuff makes me feel important.

I guarantee every one of us stakes our heart to this lie. **The stuff we have and the positions we hold and the money we possess and the people we hang out with give us identity.** And we are largely blind to just how much of our identity goes into our possessions.

If you have had to file bankruptcy or if you have had to downsize your home or lifestyle, that does something to our identity. **Conversely if we get a raise or get promoted, that does something to our identity.** You can almost feel it. The kind of car you drive, clothes you wear, gadgets you cart around, technology you possess, house you live in, foods you eat, job you perform....it makes up your unique fingerprint. It is who you are.

I remember when I was younger I used to look at BMW's and think, "That is such a dumb car. It pretty much just looks like a regular sedan and goes a little faster, but its so expensive. If you had money, why would you buy that? Why would anyone pay that much for a sedan?"

Now it totally makes sense. **Identity.** Everything beyond necessity is all about bling. Brands are all about identity. The price tag of a fashion brand name is hardly ever justified on the basis of "better quality." A petite cotton t-shirt is approximately 84 cents of material. It's not \$94 worth of quality. It about identity. If you think about it, wearing a shirt that says Anne Taylor is a very weird thing. It would be the same thing as wearing shirts that say David O'Hara. It's an identity issue.

And when we think our stuff will solve the identity longing we have in our soul, we are like the man in the proverbs who lunges time after time after that evasive seagul.

Lie #3: My stuff makes me secure.

When you get older in life, perhaps you stop aquiring at the same rate you used to. Your house is paid for your cars are paid for your boats and cabins are paid for and you pretty much realize that retirement means a full time job of maintaining your estate. And so the game changes from acquiring to security. How can I guarantee that I protect my lifestyle. And even if this does not describe you, we are all victims of trusting in our bank account rather than in God. I will trust the number in my account for a roof over my head next month. I will trust the number in my account for food.

There are many days of the week when the thought of God never enters the mind but the bank balance enters the mind regularly. On those days it may be more appropriate to sit down at the dinner table and fold your hands to pray and say,

Dear almighty earthly cash,

We thank you for providing us with the food we are about to enjoy. We praise you for your goodness to us and how you protect us and watch over us.

Almighty God we thank you for the richness of mercy you provide in sustaining our daily needs. We are so dependent on you, and we just want to pause to acknowledge that nothing we do can be accomplished without your help. In the name of God, Amen.

That is very sacrilegious and that is the point. Money does not provide security. Money provides the illusion of security. And we all love a good illusion. How quickly things can change. Do you remember the story of the rich fool. Jesus says of that man, "Today your life will be required of you." So there are three lies we believe.

1. Money makes me happy. 2. Money makes me feel important. 3. Money makes me secure.

TRUTH: My happiness, importance, and security is in the person of Jesus who is in me and is coming.

"When someone sets his affections upon the cross and the love of Christ, he crucifies the world as a dead and undesirable thing. The baits of sin lose their attraction and disappear. Fill your affections with the cross of Christ and there will be no room for sin." - John Owen.

Christ provides us with true happiness, true importance and true security. **And we must live our lives in light of this reality.** But living our lives this way is the ultimate in putting all your eggs in one basket. This is why Paul says in 1 Cor. 15, we are of all men most to be pitied if Christ did not raise from the dead. **You are the ultimate fool if you make decisions that involve voluntary pain and misery, no financial security and lots of ridicule and persecution only to die and find out that it was all a hoax.** **But since it is not a hoax, you may be a fool for Christ in this world, but you are the most happy of happy Christians to enter into heaven and know that you lived your life for your Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.** But because living our lives this way means sacrifice and risk, we tend to live lives that

represent a diversified portfolio. We have some eggs in the world's basket and some eggs in the return of Christ.

"I believe that one reason why the church of God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the church.... Wordliness is growing over the church. She is mossed with it." - Spurgeon.

Do you propose objectives that demand no radical breach with man's fallen nature? Do you live your life focussing on material results, success by numbers, esteem, recognition. **Do you make decisions that avoid being a fool for Christ.** Are you actually willing to suffering for truth and suffer for Jesus? Or are you happy to put the material gods of this world on the same shelf as God?

The truth that Christ will return should absolutely control us. It should absolutely change the way we live our lives.

Luke 12:32-40 "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 35 "Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, 36 and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. 37 Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. 38 If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! 39 But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. 40 You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."