

“S.A.U.L.”

2 Peter 3: 18-15a

8 But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. 9 The Lord isn't really being slow about His promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed but wants everyone to repent. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment.

11 Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live, 12 looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along. On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames. 13 But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness.

14 And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in His sight. 15 And remember, our Lord's patience gives people time to be saved.

NLT

NIV But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. 11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

14 So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him. 15 Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation,

The title of the sermon this morning is “S.A.U.L” and to tell us a little bit about what a SAUL is I have asked Ken Skibbe to explain. It stands for Secure, And Undisclosed Location. Why do we need them? (What are they for?)

During the “Cold War” SAUL's were extremely important. Many if not most citizens knew WHAT they were, but very few, if any, knew WHERE they were. Then

Communism fell, the Soviets went out of business, so to speak and things relaxed. The super secret locations of “Secure And Undisclosed Locations” were no longer a priority. People found out WHERE some of them were. But now our planet is tense again with terrorist threats. So we have “re-opened some of the SAULs. Now facing terrorist threats, Washington is trying to take these secrets back.

At undisclosed locations far enough from the capital to survive a nuclear blast, a hidden federal government is at work, scores of officials swallowed up by the hills. They toil in rocky warrens, micro-Washingtons stuffed into tunnels, with communication links, emergency food rations and stale air. The government won't say where they are. The problem is, lots of other people are sure they know.

These installations have neighbors over the barbed-wire fence. Satellite pictures are available. And how hush-hush can anything be when motormouths talk about it online and on conspiracy theory podcasts? "It's simply a matter of connecting the dots," said Steven Aftergood of the Federation of American Scientists. -Calvin Woodward, "Gov't seeks safety in secret locations," Associated Press, March 25, 2002.

Of course, Saul, is the name of Israel's first king. King Saul was jealous of David, the story goes. This became especially so after the King heard the people singing, “Saul who slays thousands and David who slays tens of thousands.” David was the “giant-killer,” the savior of Israel, defeater of enemy armies and beloved by his people. King Saul felt threatened and hunted David trying to kill him. David, understandably kind of wanted to stay alive, so he spent much of his time running from Saul hiding in Secure And Undisclosed Locations.

Modern day S.A.U.L.s are pretty much like the ancient ones David used, except now they're equipped with cell phones, computers, WIFI, beds, hot water, fishing rods, etc. What I want us to get from this is that David had this what I will call a “hunker-in-the-bunker” mentality. Stay put, stay quiet, stay hidden stay alive. For some reason David kind of liked being alive. [NOTE 1] At times, hunkering down is necessary, like when your king and his hostile army, or an enemy terrorist organization is hunting for you. There were some in the early church who also had a “hunker in the bunker” mentality. They had reason to be afraid, to stay put, stay quiet, stay hidden. Scoffers were scoffing. Persecution was rampant. And those apocalyptic images in Peter's letter are well,... scary!

Judgment! Fiery destruction! Heavens disappearing with a roar! The earth laid bare! The end of time and life as we know it is scary! It sounds eerily like the results of an all-out nuclear holocaust.

Understandably, the ancient church, the Christians wanted to hide, to lie low for awhile. Peter, however, disagrees. Today's passage, Peter's final exhortations if you will, tells us that we need to get out there and follow Christ for people to see. Peter insists that when the going gets tough in uncertain times—like then and like now—rather than hiding in a SAUL somewhere, we must live holy, godly, spotless and blameless lives, and be at peace with God, in front of people so they can see! [NOTE 2] Our society says hunker down, be quiet, keep your religion to yourself and tolerate

anybody and everybody's opinion on religion. It's a matter of personal choice." Peter says, "Ainngghht! NOT!" Peter says we are to live lives that are set apart for God. For God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Yahweh. We are to live godly, spotless and blameless lives and be at peace with God. Okay, what does that look like Pastor Rick? Well, before we get into that let me illustrate that experts are finding out the Bible is the truth. It was proven that it is not healthy to hide.

A study from Duke University suggests that there are many factors that contribute greatly to emotional and mental stability: 1) the absence of suspicion and resentment. Nursing a grudge was a major factor in unhappiness. 2) Not living in the past. An unwholesome preoccupation with old mistakes and failures leads to depression. 3) Not wasting time and energy fighting conditions you cannot change. Cooperate with life, instead of trying to run away from it. 4) Force yourself to stay involved with the living world. Resist the temptation to withdraw and become reclusive during periods of emotional stress. This is another case where research shows the Bible to be right.

For starters, don't just sit there, do something! Don't just kick back, waiting for the end of the world to come. We are called to action. In various places in Scripture we are told to labor in His vineyard, to be witnesses, to go and make disciples, teaching them, baptizing them. We don't know when the end of the world and Peter's fiery obliteration are going to occur. It's going to come like a thief in the night. It might come tomorrow, next week, next year, or 500 years from now. We simply do not know. Acts 1:7 reads, "It is not for you to know the times or season which the Father has put in His own authority." Matthew chapter 24:36 records Jesus saying, "But of the day and hour nobody knows, no not even the angels in heaven. Only Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knows the time. So why not live every day as if it was your last so you have no regrets. 2 Peter chapter 3 tells us that God's measurement of time is totally different than ours. "A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day." [NOTE 3]

So all these books and movies that come out in the last decade or so that drive us to consider what we would do if we knew we only had a short number of days left to live are valuable. They help us to start to think about the attitude that Peter is talking about that we should cultivate.

Peter says that the end of the world as we know it will come quietly when we least expect it. So we can't be lulled, placated, or dulled into a "hunker-in-the-bunker" state of mind. Peter proclaim: "Don't hide yourself away. Pay attention not to whether or not the thief is coming and when, but rather pay attention to your responsibilities as a Christ-follower. [NOTE 4]

Peter says it's all right to wait for the new world, for kingdom come. Waiting is okay. It is passivity that is NOT okay. So, in the meantime, let's do something valuable and significant in our spiritual lives. Next let's ask some questions: What does it mean to be a peace with God? What does it look like to be spotless and without blame? How can we be holy? What does it mean to be godly? These questions are not easily

answered, especially if we are hunkered down in a spiritual bunker, or hiding our heads and hearts in the proverbial sand. **[NOTE 5]**

Verse 14 talks about Peace with God. When somebody comes to the end of their lives they find themselves having settled and trying to set straight all the paths and people in their lives. They tie up loose ends, they say “I love you” to special people in their lives. They asks forgiveness and give forgiveness. People who do that discover, sometimes very unexpectedly, that they are at peace with God, their Maker. To be at peace with God is to attempt such human feats daily. To forgive, to be forgiven, to love and to say, “I love you.” Make the time to fix the broken parts of your life. Seek healing for the wounds you have received and the wounds you have caused. If healing is not possible then at least seek to apologize and love. To be at peace with God may look like being ready at any moment to go home to heaven. Are you ready?

Jesus warns us, that before we lay our gift on the altar, we should be reconciled to our sister or brother (Matthew 5:23-35). We ourselves are the treasure, the gift, laid on God’s altar. To be ready for that daily, one must seek reconciliation. If it is peace we want, we must reconcile with those we’ve hurt or been hurt by. **[NOTE 6]**

When Peter talks about being spotless he is not talking about moral perfection. It is a fact that the only sinless person in history is Jesus Christ. The word is a reference to a stain on your clothes. When we step into the world or into God’s presence, our clothes should be clean. We should be careful not to suffer the embarrassment of preaching about the stain on someone else’s clothes when our own garments are soiled with the stain of bad conduct, immoral behavior, shady deals, or bad character. So confess your sins to God and ask Him to help you to not repeat them. Receive His unconditional love that has no limit. Receive His forgiveness, so you can be clean. Jesus took the blame on the cross. Receive His gift of forgiveness and freedom so you can be blameless.

In an age of uncertainty and fear, people are looking for those who are able to live without staining themselves, without spilling moral filth all over their pants. To live holy and Godly lives is to remember every day that God is present, alive, and observant, and to respond accordingly. It is to live knowing that at any second you might look up and see Jesus standing there with you. We cannot be Christ to the world if we insist on living anonymously in some kind of spiritual cocoon, or some Secure And Undisclosed Location. The world—not to speak of God—wants to know where we are. How many times have we had testimonies recently that reminded us that people are watching you if you claim to be a Christ-follower. The world needs to see and observe Jesus followers. **[NOTE 7]** Such self-disclosure may not be safe or secure, but for the Christian, the Christ-follower, it is the only way to go! WE are called to walk our talk, to live out the principles taught in the Bible for others to see. This is essentially because you and I and the way we live our lives may be the only Bible some people ever read. Think about it. There are people out there, maybe your next door neighbor that need to see you living at peace with God, living a spotless and blameless life that is set apart for God and pointing them to Jesus Christ. That life is a light. Jesus told us to let our light shine before men. Jesus’ life was THE Light. If we are Jesus followers then we must be a

light. Okay, now what are you going to do about it. Walk out, say good sermon Pastor and live the same you, that you were living the last 5 years? Please write down on paper one thing that you will do today about what God has spoken to you through me today. Let's pray ... AMEN

Sermon Notes on "S.A.U.L." based on 2 Peter 3: 8-15a
Given at Doster Community Church on October 8, 2023

- I. We have to avoid the "hunker-in-the-bunker" mentality. As the sign outside says, there are 365 occurrences of the phrase, "Do not fear" in the Bible. We must not give in to fear. We must live holy, godly, spotless and blameless lives, in front of people so they can see us following Jesus.
- II. Our society says hunker down and be quiet, keep your religion to yourself and tolerate anybody and everybody's opinion. Pete says, "No". Pete says that we are to live our lives like they are set apart for God, "Holy."
- III. We don't know when the end of the world will come. We know that it will be a fiery obliteration, but not when. It is going to come like a thief in the night. So why not live every day as if it was your last?
- IV. If we look closely at what Peter is saying here, he does not say that we shouldn't be on the look out. Waiting is Okay. Passivity is NOT okay.
- V. Verse 14 talks about "peace with God." To be at peace with God is to forgive and be forgiven; to love and to say, "I love you." To take the time to fix the broken parts in our lives, at the very least to apologize and love. Matthew 5 tells us to be reconciled to our sister or brother before we lay our gift on God's altar.
- VI. Spotless does NOT mean moral perfection. The only morally perfect person in all of history was Jesus Christ. The word is a reference to a stain on our life. So confess your sins to God, be reconciled, and forgiven.
- VII. We cannot be Christ to the world if we insist on living anonymously in a spiritual cocoon or SAUL. We are called, yea even commanded to be a light, to be a witness, to flavor our community with the salt of a life lived following Jesus. What are you going to do about it?