

# Not Wishing for Any to Perish – 2 Peter 3:9

The following article contains excerpts from “A Book of Bible Study”,  
Copyright 2014 by Joseph F. Harwood

<https://www.abookofbiblestudy.net/>

[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

A Scripture verse used by some to say that God desires that no one would perish, and everyone would be saved, is 2 Peter 3:9. Peter began in 2 Peter 3:3 by warning us about scoffers who will question why Jesus has delayed His second coming, implying that He will never return at all. Then in verse 8, Peter said we should not forget that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. Immediately following, we read: ***“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”*** (2 Peter 3:9).

Some interpret this verse as saying that God is not willing that anyone ever born should perish, but that everyone should come to repentance and be saved. Such an interpretation would contradict many Scriptures which teach that God chooses some, His elect, to be called to faith in Christ, while others He hardens. Contradiction is confusing, but the Bible assures us that God is not a God of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). When we interpret 2 Peter 3:9 in the light of the context of 2 Peter, and in the light of the rest of the Bible as a whole, the meaning becomes clear, and the apparent contradiction is resolved.

When Peter said that God “is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” we must ask ourselves to whom Peter referred. Is he referring to every person who has ever lived, or does the “you” in this verse refer to a particular group of people? ***The letter of 2 Peter is addressed to believers (2 Peter 1:1), and therefore the “you” in 2 Peter 3:9 refers collectively to all of God's elect, to those who will at some point be brought to faith in Christ.***

And further, when we consider the context of 2 Peter 3:3-15, within which verse 9 is found, we see that Peter referred to the span of time between when Jesus ascended into Heaven, and His second coming (2 Peter 3:3-4, 10). So, when he wrote in verse 9 that the Lord is patient toward “you”, and “not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance”, Peter was teaching that God is patient with His elect, and not willing that anyone among them should perish, but that all of them will come to repentance (see also verse 15). This was the reason that he gave to believers as to why Christ’s second coming had not yet occurred. When all of God’s elect are in His time brought to faith, then Christ’s second coming will occur.

Jesus taught in John 6:37-39 that there are a certain number of people whom the Father has given to Him. These are God’s elect, and He is not willing that any of these will be lost. Paul taught that there are a certain number of Jews who will be numbered with spiritual Israel, or those who will be brought to faith in Christ (Romans 9:6-8, 11:1-5). These have or will receive God’s mercy, in that they are chosen by grace (Romans 11:5), whereas the others are hardened and unable to come to Christ, being blinded by God Himself (Romans 11:7-8). Paul also spoke of a certain number of Gentiles who will be brought to faith in Christ (Romans 11:25-26).

If Jesus had hastened His second coming and returned the day after He ascended into Heaven, the Apostle Paul would not yet have been brought to faith, as he was sometime later, in God’s time. Likewise, many of us who have been brought to faith in Christ over the succeeding centuries would never have been born into the world and brought to faith, also in God’s time. The message of 2 Peter 3:3-15 is that Christ’s second coming will occur as all things do, in God’s time and according to His plan and purpose for His creation.

Some of God’s elect are still hostile to the Gospel message, having not yet been brought to faith, just as Saul himself was also hostile to the Gospel message until God intervened in his life to bring him to faith on the Damascus Road. Also, some of God’s elect have not yet been born into the world. In God’s time these will be born into the world, and again in God’s time, they will be brought to faith in His Son Jesus Christ.

The message of 2 Peter 3:9 is that God is not willing that any of His elect will perish, and some of His elect have not yet been brought to faith. When all of those whom the Father has given to Jesus finally do come to Him (John 6:37), He

will return the second time. At that time: “the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.” (2 Peter 3:10).

Therefore, we see once again that a Scripture verse, which some would say teaches that salvation through faith in Jesus Christ is "available" to every individual who has ever been born, does not teach that at all. Rather, when we interpret 2 Peter 3:9 in the context in which it appears in the Bible, and in the light of all the rest of the Scriptures as a whole, we see a different meaning than what the verse would suggest if isolated by itself. 2 Peter 3:9 teaches us that God is not willing that any of His elect will be lost, but that all of them will come to repentance (Ephesians 1:4-5, 1 Peter 1:1-2).