

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER

The Outline

- I. **Introduction: The Apostle's Greeting (2 Peter 1:1-4).** The emphasis is upon *what we all have in Christ*. This is the beginning of what the Apostle Peter would say especially about THE PRESENT.
- II. **THEIR PRESENT NEED (2 Peter 1:5-21).** While there was no difference between the believers, then or now, as to what we have in Christ, yet as far as our growth in the Lord is concerned, there are always great differences. But God's ultimate purpose for us all is the same. We are saved to be made like our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - A. **Their need to add to their faith (1:5-11).** Note Peter's emphasis on "these things" in verses 8, 9, 10, 12, and 15. He was emphasizing their need for spiritual growth.
 - B. **The Apostle Peter's great concern for them (1:12-21).** His concern went beyond his own lifetime, and that is one reason he was writing to them.
- III. **Warnings from THE PAST (2 Peter 2:1-22).** This basically has to do with false teachers, false teaching, and sinful living. This chapter illustrates why it is so important for us to read the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. We need to know about God's judgment of angels, his judgment on the whole world in the days of Noah, Sodom and Gomorrah, and even Balaam. False teachers will lead us into sin. The Bible teaches us that God is not only a God of love, but that He is righteous, and that He judges sin.
 - A. **False teachers past and present (2:1-3).** As true doctrine produces holy living, so false doctrine produces a sinful lifestyle. This is a very important point in this epistle. Corrupt living is always the fruit of false doctrine.
 - B. **Old Testament examples of God's judgment against sin (2:4-16).** Peter wanted his readers to understand that in all of the following examples false doctrine was involved.
 - 1. The angels who sinned (2:4). Cf. Jude 6; Gen. 3:1-5; 6:1-4; Matt. 8:28-29.
 - 2. The flood in the days of Noah (2:5). Cf. Gen. 6:5-8:22; Matt. 24:38
 - 3. Sodom and Gomorrah (2:6-14). Cf. Gen. 18:16-19:38.
 - 4. Balaam (2:15-16). Cf. Num. 22-24; 31:8; Rev. 2:14.
 - C. **The hypocrisy of false teachers (2:17-22).** They promise blessing but produce corruption. They promise liberty, but produce bondage to sin.
- IV. **Assurance regarding THE FUTURE (2 Peter 3:1-16).** Peter began the epistle by speaking about the promises of God; he concludes his epistle on the same note. See verses 4, 9, 13. God's promises are all sure and certain. Therefore, our hope in the promises should affect the way we live.
- V. **Conclusion (2 Peter 3:17-18).** In verse 17 we have a warning; in verse 18 a command to continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge of "our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." To be growing spiritually is our greatest safeguard against sin and false teaching.

2 Peter
Tuesday Bible Class
March 5, 2007

Intro: In his introductory remarks on his commentary on 2 Peter, A. T. Robertson, in his six-volume commentary on the New Testament, said, regarding 2 Peter,

Every book the New Testament is challenged by some one, as indeed the historicity of Jesus Christ Himself is and the very existence of God. But it is true that more modern scholars deny the genuineness of 2 Peter than that of any single book in the canon (VI, 139).

But in spite of all of the criticism Dr. Robertson treated it like any other book of the Bible.

We need to recognize that many of the so-called scholars are not believers in Christ. And so, even though most of them are well educated, as unbelievers they are not really qualified to pass judgment on the Word of God. But even some who are saved, have questioned its place in Scripture. Much has been written about this controversy, but I find it very wearying to struggle through what has been written about Peter's relationship, or non-relationship to this epistle. But it has been accepted as a real part of the Word of God, like the other books of the Bible, since early in church history. We should have no hesitancy in accepting it as of divine origin. There is nothing in the epistle that is contrary to accepted doctrine about the members of the Godhead or any of the other teachings of the Scriptures. It emphasizes holy living and warns against false doctrine. It fits perfectly into the teaching of the other books of the Bible.

It is short, but it is powerful. It shows the great concern that the Apostle Peter had for the people of God. It seems that it was written in the 60's A.D., probably a year or two after 1 Peter. Peter's statement in 1 Peter 3:1 is a confirmation that this second epistle was written to the same group of churches to whom he wrote his first epistle. It strongly encourages spiritual growth, and warns against any and all departures from the faith. So for these reasons, and others also, we are on good ground and in good company when we accept this epistle as written by the Apostle Peter under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter is shorter than 1 Peter. It can be read easily in fifteen minutes. But it covers a lot of ground for the edification of those of us who know the Lord. And it is full of warnings against false teachers and false teaching. Peter refers to several OT incidents, but I believe I am correct when I say that he did not actually quote from the OT even once. It is an epistle that Christians of all ages and at all levels of spiritual maturity need to read and re-read. The exhortations are few, but those that are included are of tremendous importance.

In a general way I believe we can say that chapter 1 deals with *the present*. Chapter 2 deals with *the past*. And chapter 3 deals with *the future*. These are general division because there are some past references in chapter 1. In chapter 2, verse 1, most of the chapter has to do with the past, but he was warning his readers that just as there were false teachers in the past, so they could expect that there would be false teachers to come. Then in chapter 3 we see much of what is to come. However, in verses 2, 8, 14, 15, 17, and 18, we have exhortations that applied to the present.

There are those who have suggested that "knowledge" is the key word of the epistle. See 1:2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 14, 16, 20; 2:9, 20, 21 (2x); 3:3, 18. In most of these it is an experiential knowledge that Peter was referring to, and in some a thorough, personal acquaintance. And it is usually of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

What did Peter exhort, or command, the people to do?

- 1) 1:5-7 – adding to faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.
- 2) 1:10 – "Make your calling and election sure."
- 3) 1:19 – "Ye do well that ye take heed . . ."
- 4) 3:1-2 – "That ye may be mindful of the words spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment

of us the apostles . . .”

5) 3:8 – “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing . . .”

6) 3:14 – “Be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace . . .”

7) 3:15 – “And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation . . .”

8) 3:17 – “Beware lest ye also, being led away . . . fall from you own steadfastness.”

9) 3:18 – “But grow in grace . . .”

Peter seems to have had at least four purposes:

1) To encourage them.

2) To remind them. See “remembrance” in 1:12, 13,15; 3:1.

3) To warn them.

4) To exhort them.

March 6, 2007

When we put 1 Peter and 2 Peter together we see that the Lord’s people to whom Peter was writing did not understand the Lord’s ways with them. Consequently their faith was being tested, tested to the limit. They probably had thought when they first turned to the Lord that life would be entirely different, that most of their troubles were past. But their experience had shown them that was not the case. But we are in basically the same situation today. The world was not a good place to live in those days, and we know that it is not a good place today. Our circumstances are very different today from what their circumstances were in the first century, but basically we live in the same kind of a world that they did, one that is hostile toward God, one that is self-seeking and self-confident, with little or no thought of the consequences of their behavior. And so, as we can see especially from the latter part of chapter 1, the Apostle Peter was concerned for them, deeply concerned. And his concern was increased by the fact that he knew that he was not going to be on the earth much longer. His heart was expressed in all three of these chapters. His concern for the people of God in his generation ought to be our concern for each other as God’s people in our generation. So let us read this epistle, and study it together, as though it had been written for us in the twenty-first century. We need it. Peter would not have had any idea when he penned the words of verse 15 that his epistle would continue to be read, and continue to be up-to-date for the next 2,000 years, and only the Lord knows how much beyond our generation the words of the Apostle Peter would be sorely needed by a suffering church.

Now let us take a brief overview of the epistle. I have already mentioned that there is a distinct and different emphasis in the three chapters into which this epistle is divided. Chapter 1 emphasizes the present. Chapter 2 causes us to look at the past. Chapter 3 turns our attention to the future. The question that seems to run through the epistle is, *Are the promises of God trustworthy, or not?* The Apostle Peter would assure us that they are.

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2 Peter

2 Peter 1:1-21

March 12, 2007

I. Introduction: The Apostle's Greeting (2 Peter 1:1-4).

In addition to identifying himself as the writer of this epistle, he emphasized in these introductory *what we all have in Christ*, as compared in the remainder of the chapter where he stressed *that which was the present need of his readers*. And, of course, this would apply also to every true child of God who reads this epistle. So the message of the epistle is timeless.

A. R. Fausset of the JFB commentary made some interesting comparisons between 1 Peter and 2 Peter. And he said that this accounts for the different styles between the two epistles which is why some deny that Peter wrote the second. For example, he mentioned that the sufferings of Christ were more prominent in his first epistle because he object was to encourage *suffering* Christians. The glory of the Lord is more prominent in his second epistle because he was emphasizing getting *a fuller knowledge of the Lord* as the antidote of the false teaching that had even in those days become prevalent, and which threatened to become even more prominent. He pointed out also that the Lord Jesus Christ is referred to as "Christ" most frequently in 1 Peter, while in 2 Peter "Lord" predominates. "Hope" is characteristic of the first epistle; "full knowledge" in the second. Peter emphasized his authority as an apostle in both epistles, but it seems to be stronger in the second. See 2 Peter 3:1-2 as well as his reference to Paul in 3:15-16.

If you are looking for evidence that Peter wrote 2 Peter as well as 1 Peter, Dr. Fausset gives extensive proof that Peter was the writer of 2 Peter just as he did 1 Peter.

When Dr. Fausset referred to *a fuller knowledge of our Lord*, he was referring to Peter's use of the Greek word, ἐπίγνωσις. The simple word for *knowledge* in Greek is γινῶσις. To put the preposition ἐπί on that verb as a prefix makes it mean *knowledge upon knowledge*, or *additional knowledge*, or *a more complete knowledge*. Sometimes it is translated, *a full knowledge*. Peter used some form of this word in 1:2, 3, 8; 2:20, and twice in 2:21. No one know our Lord as fully as He potentially could be known, but all of us must seek to know the Lord better than we know Him now.

Another word that I might emphasize in Peter's epistles, is the word "precious." Whatever is "precious" is of great value, perhaps irreplaceable. It is very dear to us. Peter used some form of the Greek word for "precious" in 1 Peter 1:7, 19; 2:4, 6, 7; 2 Peter 1:1, 4. It is very clear that what is "precious" to a child of God would not be precious to a worldling. We need to ask ourselves if what was precious to Peter, is precious to us.

Much more could be said by way of introduction, but now let us get to the first four verses of chapter 1. As I have said more than once, here the Apostle Peter mentioned what is at this very moment true of all of us. And these truths have been descriptive of us since we first came to the knowledge of Christ as our Savior.

Peter's introduction to this second epistle is in the first four verses of chapter 1. (Read 2 Peter 1:1-4).

1:1 "Simon Peter" – It was characteristic of letter-writing in New Testament times for the one writing the letter to put his name first. We don't do that, but we should. When we get a letter, if we can't tell who it came from by the envelope, we always look at the end of the letter to see whose name is there. I notice that when I take an e-mail to Lucille for her to read, she always looks at the end of the letter first to see whose name is there. So I think that they were smarter about letter writing in the first century than we are today.

When Peter wrote his first epistle, he simply began with, “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.” But here in 2 Peter, it is, “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ.” Why the difference? Well, I don’t know that we can say for sure. One suggestion in a commentary which has been made up of the commentaries of Robert Leighton and Griffith Thomas and put together by Alister McGrath and James Packer, suggests that it may be “an old man’s reminiscences” (p. 261). “Simon,” or *Simeon*, was the name given to Peter by his parents. It was his original name. “Peter,” which means *a rock*, is the name given to Peter by the Lord. “Simon” represented what he was before he knew the Lord; “Peter” is what the Lord made him afterwards. So, as he began to write informing those to whom he was writing, of the false teachers and teachings that they would have to face, he probably was thinking of the changes that the Lord had made in his life when and since he was saved. In the Gospels he was more like Simon than he was Peter. But in the book of Acts his character is more rock-like. Perhaps he was wondering where would have been, and what he would have been, if the Lord had not saved him. It was a silent tribute to the Lord and to the Gospel that by God’s grace “Simon” represented the past, and “Peter” represented the present.

We not may have two names like “Simon Peter” did, but there is the old and the new about all of us. We are not what we used to be, nor what we would have been, if the Lord had not called us to Himself. And while with all of us there are still remnants of the old that still rise to the surface occasionally, how thankful we should be for what the Lord has done in our lives, and what He continues to do. Some day that transformation will be complete with all of us, and Jude 24 and 25 will be true of all of us.

But just as the Apostle Peter had two names, and also had two titles. He was “a servant and an apostle.” The word which he used for servant was δοῦλος. Dr. Wuest said that this word is “the most abject and servile term for a slave of the five words the Greeks used when speaking of one who serves” (p. 15). He was a bondservant. He had been purchased by his master. His master’s will took precedence over the servant’s will. He was to live to serve his master. Sometimes the relationship between a bondservant and his master, was a good one. But most of the time it was not good. Peter delighted in being a bondservant of his Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, and was fully committed to do the will of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter felt unworthy of such a position and such a relationship to his Lord.

But as a servant of Jesus Christ, he was also an apostle. An apostle, by definition, is one sent forth from one to another. The One Who had sent him was the Lord. Those to whom he was sent were the people of Israel. Peter was the apostle to the circumcision. Being a Jew himself, he would have been considered a traitor to his people because of his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Doubtless there were many Jews in the areas where the people lived to whom he was writing. He was commissioned as a personal representative of Jesus Christ, to preach the Gospel to them, and then to see them nurtured in the faith. He described them here in verse 1 of this epistle as “to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.”

“Obtained” is a word which means *to obtain by lot*, by which Peter meant “by divine allotment” (Wuest, p. 16), and this, in turn, meant by God’s choice, or divine election. The faith itself was a gift from God, and how “precious” it was because it was the only way to be saved. It was “like precious faith with us,” Peter said, because it was the same faith that had saved the apostles. God doesn’t have different ways for saving different people. It is “like precious faith” to all!

This salvation was “through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” A righteous God would not lower the standard of salvation for anyone. Peter was saying here what the Apostle Paul said in his second letter to the church at Corinth:

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (2 Cor. 5:21).

Remember also the Apostle Paul's words in Romans 3:24-26:

24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

And then we have that famous apostolic greeting. But remember that this also is a prayer. Its prevalence in the NT epistles is a clear indication that we need to pray this prayer often for those Christians we remember in prayer.

1:2 Believers are saved by grace, the grace of God, but we also live by grace. Dr. Wuest calls these "sanctifying grace" and "sanctifying peace." We are saved by grace, and kept by grace. In Peter's first epistle he said that we are "kept by the power of God through faith until salvation." God's grace is a manifestation of His power. In salvation God is 100% successful in 100% of those whom He saves.

But Peter, as his emphasis in both of his epistles reveals, indicated that we are never to be satisfied with where we are today spiritually. He knew that those to whom he was writing had experienced "grace" and "peace," but he wanted their supply of grace and peace to be "multiplied" daily. Every day shows us the need for the grace of God and for the peace of God. But how is it "multiplied" to us? It is "through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." And Peter here used the word for "a full knowledge" of God and of Jesus our Lord." Jesus, the Name given to Him in His humanity, came as a revelation of God. Our experience of grace and peace will be in proportion to our growth in the knowledge of God and of the Lord Jesus. This is experiential knowledge. It needs to be a continually growing knowledge. This is a knowledge which is inexhaustible. As much as we may know, there is always more to learn. The purpose of our trials is to bring us to a place of knowing God in a greater way. Knowing about God is where we start; but knowing God in the daily experiences of our lives, is what Peter had in mind as he prayed for the people of God.

1:3 It is very likely that Peter was taking a swing at the Gnostics and other false teachers who were causing much trouble among the people of God. As the name Gnostic (from the Greek word for *knowledge* indicates, they claimed to have superior knowledge to what the Christians had. But what the Christians needed to know and to remember was that they already had "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." When they were saved they had been blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places," or *in the heavenlies*, in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). So the Christian life does not consist in getting more, but it needs to start knowing that in God, and in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit Who has given us the Scriptures, we already have all that we will ever need for "life and godliness." We need to know what we have (and we learn this from the Scriptures), and then by faith live to know and to please the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing can come up in our lives for which God and Christ are not sufficient. If we have "all," then no one can give us more!

Verse 1 tells us that we have been chosen for salvation. Here in the latter part of verse 3 we are told that we have been "called to glory and virtue." "Glory" is "godliness," being made like God, and like our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the ultimate purpose of God in our salvation. And it is guaranteed by the "grace" and power of God. The glory of God is God.

But what is "virtue"? The Greek is ἀρετή. The glory and virtue that are spoken of here, are God's glory and virtue. It speaks of the moral excellence of God. In a way it seems to be almost synonymous with "glory." It is similar to the relationship between "life and godliness." All of this has to do with our calling. If any of us had been designing salvation, we would never have conceived of such an amazing purpose, or objective, that God

had in mind before the foundation of the world, and which was the ultimate objective of the Members of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, when Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Paul expressed it in 2 Corinthians 3:18:

8 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Paul was referring to this also in Romans 8:

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Rom. 8:28-30).

But the Apostle John probably expressed it in the simplest way possible:

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2).

Could we have ever thought of such a plan as the ultimate purpose of our salvation? I doubt it very much. How will such a purpose be finally accomplished? Verse 4 tells us.

March 13, 2007

1:4 It was for this purpose that there has been given unto us, all of us, to believers in all generations, and we all still have them, "exceeding great and precious promises."

The Bible gives us truth that we need to know, commandments that we need to obey, and promises that we need to believe. A promise is not something for us to do, but it is something that will be done for us. The promises are God's promises. They are found in His Word. And they are just as valid today as they were when they were first given. They include everything from the beginnings of our salvation to the completion of it when the Lord returns. We don't save ourselves, but He saves us. Our hope is in the Promiser. "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

God's promises are "exceedingly great," a superlative. There are no other promises that can compare with God's promises because they are not only from Him, but they are designed to accomplish more than any other promises could possibly fulfil. And this is the reason that they are also "precious." Without these promises the objective of our salvation could never be accomplished. That objective is to make us like Christ. We are being made "partakers" of the divine nature. "That ye might be" should be translated, *that ye might become*. The word "partakers" has the same basic root as the Greek word for *fellowship*. The effectiveness of our salvation is not only dependent upon His promises, but upon Him, Who He is. By birth we were partakers of a sinful human nature; by salvation we are made "partakers of the divine nature." It is both instantaneous and progressive. We have "escaped," we have been delivered from "the corruption of this world that is in the world through lust." See the Apostle John's definition of the world in 1 John 2:15-17. Robertson quotes an expositor by the name of Strachan who said, "Man becomes either degenerate or regenerate" (VI, 150).

Let us remember that in these verses which form the introduction to his epistle, the Apostle Peter has declared what we all have in Christ. In Him we have "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (v. 3). But it is not a passive life. It is a life of faith where we trust the divine promises and continually exercise hope in God and in Christ.

March 19, 2007

While the first four verses of 2 Peter speak of what we all, as believers in Christ, have because of our salvation, beginning with verse 5 the Apostle addressed our present need. Perhaps I should say, *our ever-present need*. As the Lord's people we never get beyond the need that we all have to grow spiritually. And this is what Peter had in mind – their present and continuous need to grow in the Lord. I have given the remainder of chapter 1 this heading in the outline I have prepared for you:

II. THEIR PRESENT NEED (1 Peter 1:5-21).

(Read in the outline what I have said about spiritual growth, and our need for it.)

It is not that we are not to seek what we do not already have because, as the Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 1:3, God in saving us has blessed us “with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Here, especially in verses 5 through 11, Peter was explaining how, as Peter said in concluding this epistle, we are to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). Peter had evidently told his readers all of this before, perhaps many times. But now he was writing it down so that after he was gone, they could still read over and over what he had taught them so that they would never forget it. So, if it was that important for the people of God in those days, it has to be important for us today.

1:5 From promises in verse 4, we go to commandments in verse 5. It is by the promises that we partake of the divine nature (v. 3) because we are to believe the promises of God. Faith is our starting point. We, as the people of God, live by faith, faith in God's promises, trusting God to fulfill His promises in our lives. Often there are conditions to God's promises, conditions upon which the Lord will fulfill His promises, and so we need to pay attention to them too.

“Besides this,” meaning that we should never be content with the progress we have made spiritually, but must, in the words of the Apostle Paul, keep pressing on. Matthew Henry said on this point, 2 Peter 1:5-11

In these words the apostle comes to the chief thing intended in this epistle—to excite and engage them to advance in grace and holiness, they having already obtained precious faith, and been made partakers of the divine nature. This is a very good beginning, but it is not to be rested in, as if we were already perfect. The apostle had prayed that grace and peace might be multiplied to them, and now he exhorts them to press forward for the obtaining of more grace. We should, as we have opportunity, exhort those we pray for, and excite them to the use of all proper means to obtain what we desire God to bestow upon them; and those who will make any progress in religion must be very diligent and industrious in their endeavours (VI, pp. 1039, 1039).

Some expositors object to the translation, “besides this,” and say that it should be, “for this very cause” (Wuest, p. 22). He quotes Strachan again who said that the words at the beginning of verse 5 “emphasize the fact of the gifts spoken of in verse 4 as having their logical outcome in character” (*Ibid.*). So the promises which God has given concerning our sanctification, or growth in the Lord, give us the incentive to be diligent, or to be eager and faithful in seeking to develop the qualities of character and life that are latent in the promises. This is why it is so important for us to get familiar with the promises of God's Word, especially those promises that have to do with the way we should live. As the Lord's people we are responsible to give ourselves to the development of these characteristics that Peter is about to mention.

The foundation of the Christian life is faith. Faith is a gift of God which all true believers possess. So we face the needs in our lives confident that God is going to help us, that He will give us the desire to do His will, and

the ability to do it. “All diligence” means that we are to make what Peter is about to tell us the primary objectives of our lives. It should be our goal in all that we are, and in all that we do.

Michael Green in his commentary prefers the word *goodness* in speaking of “virtue.” Peter used this word at the end of verse 3, saying that God “hath called us to glory and virtue.” We know that the object of our salvation is not primarily to get us to heaven (although, thank God, that is a marvelous part of our salvation). But the main objective is to make us like Christ. Romans 8:29 says that we are predestinated by God “to be conformed to the image of His Son.” And with that in mind the verse before, Romans 8:28, says that God works “all things together for good.” So “good” means Christ-likeness. And therefore Michael Green prefers the translation *goodness* as explaining what Peter meant by “virtue.” He says that in non-Christian Greek it means *excellence*, by which they meant the fulfillment of that for which anything exists.

In Proverbs 31:10 Solomon asked the question, “Who can find a virtuous woman?” When we use the word “virtuous” today of a woman, we usually mean moral. Solomon does say in verse 11 that “the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her” but it was “so that he shall have no need of spoil.” That may mean that he was not worried that she would be unfaithful to him, but primarily it meant that she would not waste his money or in any way be more of a hindrance than a help to him. And as you read about the woman that Solomon was describing what you learn is that she is *the ideal wife*. And so in verse 29 Solomon said, “Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.” This means, There have been many good wives in the world, *but you are the best. You are a great example of what a wife should be.* Using the word “excellest” he was saying that you are an excellent wife. That is why *excellence* is often used as a translation of “virtue.” The woman of Proverbs 31 is the kind of a woman the Lord intended for Eve to be, but she failed in the worst way.

So, bringing that word “virtue” into our text here in 2 Peter 1:5, Peter was telling the Christians to whom he was writing that each one needed to be *the ideal Christian*. What is the ideal Christian? Well, if God saved us to be like Christ, then a virtuous Christian, the ideal Christian, is the one who is most like our Savior. That is why Peter closed his epistle by saying, “But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” That is how we grow in grace, but growing to be like our Savior. But won’t that tend to make us proud? No, because you won’t find any pride in the Lord Jesus –just the greatest Example of humility. And so Peter finished his epistle, “To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.” If there is anything in us that resembles what people saw in our Lord while He was here on earth, the glory belongs to the Lord because He is the One Who is making us like Himself.

This word “virtue” comes first in the list of the words we will study because it is to be our purpose from the time we are saved, that we will become like the Lord.

Illustrations: Dr. T. J. Bach and Edith Nanz Willies.

This first word gives us plenty to work on, doesn’t it? But by God’s grace we can thank the Lord that we are all going to make it. There probably will differences as to how we are going to be like Christ, but the Lord is not going to give up on any of us.

But what is the next word? “Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge.” Knowledge was a favorite word of false teachers. Many of them were known as Gnostics. They boasted in their knowledge. But Peter knew that they had no exclusive rights to knowledge. It was one of Peter’s favorite words too. But the knowledge that Peter was talking about was the knowledge of God, revealed knowledge. The knowledge of the false teachers was false knowledge, man’s knowledge which is constantly changing.

You will find many professing Christians who minimize the importance of knowledge, the knowledge of Scrip-

ture, the knowledge that has been given to us by God. They say that they want practical truth, but how can you use practical truth if you don't have a solid doctrinal foundation. True teaching has as its objective the practical application of the truth. How would you like to have an electrician come to work on your home who didn't know anything about electricity? Or how would you like to be operated on by a so-called doctor who had never been to medical school?

Knowledge was an important word to Peter, too. He used it five times in the first eight verses of 1 Peter 1. This word is a great argument in favor of reading the Bible, reading it daily, and reading it over and over again. It is a good argument for comparing Scripture with Scripture. The Bible is its best interpreter. It is a good argument for memorizing Bible verses. If you want the knowledge that Peter was talking about then attend a church where the Word of God is taught. But make sure that Biblical knowledge is what you are getting, not a few verses served up with a lot of man's psychology.

This is a life-long assignment. No one ever knows all that there is to know about the Bible. It is inexhaustible. Yesterday along with many of you I finished reading the Book of Deuteronomy. I hated to finish it. Reading it through this time for was just like reading it for the first time (and yet I have read it many times before). I told Lucille yesterday that I would like to go right back and read it again instead of going on. When I first started attending Central Bible Church while the church was still downtown, I was talking to a man after the service, and he said to me, 'Well, do you think that we got enough this morning to last us all week?' Now I loved to hear Dr. Mitchell teach the Word. In fact, he was the one who really opened my eyes to what expository teaching is. But as wonderful as the message was which we had just heard, we could be blessed by it all week, but we need to be adding to our knowledge by reading the Word every day. When I was growing up my Dad never said to our family as we were eating our Sunday dinner, "Eat all you can because we are not going to have anything to eat until next Sunday. Just as we need food for our bodies every day, so we need food for our souls every day, the food of God's Word. We can't be virtuous Christians unless we are feeding on the Word of God.

5:6 What is the next word? Add "to knowledge temperance," which means self-control. I heard a well-known preacher say yesterday on KPDQ that we should let our children make their own decisions because it would help them with their self-esteem. Where does he find that in the Bible? The thing that I remember about my childhood is that I had too much self-esteem. And it has followed me into my adult life. I never learned it; I was born with it – and so were you! "Temperance" means self-control. You and I will never be like Christ unless we have it.

This word for "temperance" is used only four times in the NT. Two of them are in this verse. The other two are in Acts 24:25 and Galatians 5:23. Let's turn to those passages and see what they tell us about self-control. First, Acts 24:25 tells us that self-control was a part of Paul's message to Felix concerning the Gospel. This means that Paul spoke to Felix about sin. Self-esteem is just a modern day sophisticated term for the flesh.

The other place where you find "temperance," or self-control, in the Bible, is Galatians 5:23. Where does self-control come from? Does it come from you and me? No, it comes from the Holy Spirit. It is a part of "the fruit," not fruits, "of the Spirit. Go back to verse 16 in Galatians 5 and see how Paul contrasted the flesh, or self, and the Spirit of God. If we are going to be virtuous Christians (and remember what "virtue" means), *we will have to learn what it means to "walk in the Spirit."* What does it mean? It means *to walk in dependence upon the Holy Spirit.* We can't do it ourselves. So the word "self-control" teaches us that we can't be virtuous Christians if we seek to do it by ourselves. And how does the Spirit help us? By the Word of God of which He is the Author. Peter was the writer of 1 and 2 Peter, but the Holy Spirit was the Author. And as the Author He is the best One to teach us what it means. Notice what Peter said about how we got the Word, all sixty-six

books of the Old and New Testaments. You find Peter's description as to how we got the Bible. See and read 1 Peter 1:20-21.

Next we come to the word "patience." This is a very interesting word, and it contains a meaning very different from our English word patience, although my dictionary gives the meaning I am going to give to you as a second meaning of the word.

Those of you who were here at Trinity last Sunday morning, will remember (I hope) that I told you that there are three words in 1 John 2:24 that are all translations of the same Greek verb. It is the verb μένω. This can mean I abide, or I continue, or I remain. Well, the Greeks took the preposition ὑπό, and stick it on the front of the verb μένω, and then they had ὑπομένω which means *I remain under*. The noun form from this verb is ὑπομονή. And this is what is translated "patience." But you can see that literally it means *a remaining under, or an endurance, or perseverance*. Therefore the idea in the Greek word for patience is not just waiting, but to persevere which you wait. So when the Scriptures exhort us to be patient as we wait for the Lord to come, or to be patient under trials, it does not mean that we just sit and wait, but that we continue doing what we were doing even though we might be in the midst of a trial. This is what the disciples did when they were told not to preach in the name of Jesus. They went ahead knowing what the consequences would be. This is what Daniel did when the people were told not to pray to any God except the king for thirty days. The penalty would be that any offender would be cast into a den of lions. The Bible tells us about the patience, or perseverance of Daniel. Listen as I read Daniel 6:10:

10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

That is what Peter was talking about. Did Daniel get punished for what He did? But he persevered in doing what he had always done.

The greatest example of perseverance is our Lord Jesus Christ. We read this in Luke 9:51:

51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem

Remember also our Lord's prayers in Gethsemane. He persevered even though He knew what it would cost Him in suffering.

So we need to be ready to keep on living for the Lord, and preaching the Gospel, regardless of what the consequences might be.

The next word is "godliness."

March 20, 2007

We had this word in verse 3 (which see). In the NT it is more prominent in the Pastoral Epistles than in any other part of the NT. We have this word here in addition to 1:3, and here in 1:6 and 7, but the same idea is in 2:9, and the word itself in 3:11. It is a word which we could very well spell in English with a capital G. This describes the character of one who is always conscious of God, of His presence, and of the need to please Him. So with this word we have an emphasis in what Peter was telling the Lord's people to be and do in their relationship with God, thus including in these words the third Member of the Godhead, the Father. Green said that godliness "is a very practical awareness of God in every area of life. It is the person who recognizes the sovereignty of God in everything in life, the bad as well as the good. He is the kind of a Christian who firmly believes concerning God that "of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things" (Rom. 11:36). A godly person is one whose primary objective in life is to love the Lord, to please Him, and to glorify Him. Paul told

Timothy that “godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6). This is a word which constantly deserves our attention to make sure that it is prominent in all we are, in all we say, and think, and do. A godly person prays, “In the sweet fear of Jesus let me begin each day . . .” But a godly person not only begins each day that way, but he lives all day long that way. However, if you begin the day that way, you will probably live throughout the day that way. Psalm 19:14 also is a godly person’s prayer: “Let the words of my mouth . . .” David was expressing his godliness when Shimei cursed him, and Abishai wanted to go to kill him, and David said,

11 And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him (2 Sam 16:11).

But David also followed that statement with this in verse 12:

12 It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day.

So a godly person submits to the Lord, not in a fatalistic, hopeless way, but with the hope that God will be gracious.

Peter added two more words in verse 8 to complete the list.

1:7 “And to godliness brotherly kindness” – The word that is translated here “brotherly kindness,” is the word from which we get the name, Philadelphia. But the emphasis here is not on other people generally, but upon others who know the Lord in particular. The Apostle John made a big point about this in 1 John where he stressed that love for the brethren is one of the main evidences that a person knows the Lord. See 1 John 3:14. If we are truly godly, it will not only be evident in our relationship with God, and our expectation from Him, but it will be seen in our love and concern for all other people who know the Lord. But this is not always easy. Michael Green in his commentary made this statement on page 79:

The very importance and the difficulty of achieving this *philadelphia* is the reason for the considerable stress on it in the pages of the New Testament (Rom. 12:10; 1 Thess. 4:9; Heb. 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 5:1).

(In this last verse the word for brotherly love was not used by John, but the idea is certainly there in the verse.)

In our KJV text the word for brotherly love is translated, “brotherly kindness.” What exactly is it? It is a unique affection which God has placed in the hearts of His people for each other. It is that fellowship which we enjoy with each other as the children of God. But Peter emphasized that “brotherly kindness,” or *brotherly love*, where we show our special preference for God’s people, is a part of “the love of God [τῆ ἀγάπῃ τοῦ θεοῦ] which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5). The expositors whose works I have consulted seem to agree that this love is a love in the hearts of all believers toward all men, such as the love of Christ was toward us while we were sinners, enemies of God, totally unworthy that God should have saved any of us. In both of these words for love, ἀγάπη and φιλία, there is the idea of seeking another’s good, his or her’s spiritual good. This ἀγάπη for all men is what makes us concerned to see those who are lost come to Christ for salvation.

He refers to these words in verses 5, 6, and 7, as “these things.” See verses 8, 9, 10, 12, and 15, as I have pointed them out to you before.

March 26, 2007

1:8 Now Peter, beginning with verse 8, encourages his readers to do what he has said in verses 5, 6, and 7. But we need to recognize that only a true Christian will be interested in doing what Peter had written in

those three important verses, 5, 6, and 7. So if verses 1 through 4 do not describe you, then you are not going to be interested in verses 5, 6, and 7. A person who does not know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, is not interested in making the kind of a change that Peter was advocating in 5, 6, and 7. But, if you are a Christian, you will have no argument with the verses we have just covered. You will agree that if a person claims to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, his life will be different from what he was before, different in a godly way. As I have said many times before, believing the Gospel, trusting Jesus Christ as our Savior, we cannot remain the same. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (or better, *it is a new creation*): old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (Read 2 Cor. 5: 14-21 to see how reasonable and logical the Apostle Paul was in teaching that salvation results in holiness of character and of life.)

Having said that, from verse 8 and following we see that the Apostle Peter was showing some of the advantages that are produced by a holy life. The first is that "if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

To refer to "these things" as being "in you," Peter meant that if there is evidence in their lives that they were adding "these things" to their faith, really growing in the Lord so that there was visible evidence of "these things," then they could be sure that they would be "neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." And here the Apostle Peter used the word for "knowledge" that means *a full knowledge*.

People who don't know the Lord have no regard for the truth of God's Word. It is utterly repulsive to them. That is the reason we have abortion. That is the reason we defend homosexuals. That is why adultery is so prevalent today, and men shamelessly argue about who is the father of Anna Nicole's baby. The moral standards of the world and the moral standards of the Word are as different as night and day, as separated from each other as the north pole is from the south pole. One is the wisdom of men; the other is the wisdom of God. The wisdom of this world leads to divine and eternal judgment; the wisdom of God leads to divine blessing and the fullness of joy.

"Barren" is translated *useless* in the NASB. James used this word in James 2:20 where he said that "faith without works is dead." But most of the time it is translated "idle." For example, it was used by our Lord in one of His parables when He told about a householder who went to find laborers to work in his vineyard. And in the early morning as well as at the third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hour he found men in the marketplace who were "idle." They weren't doing anything that was productive. Cf. Matthew 20:3 and 6. The word was also used by the Apostle Paul in 1 Tim 5:11-13 where we read,

11 But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry;

12 Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.

13 And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones had this to say about this word which is translated "barren," but can also mean *idle* or *dead*.

The trouble with so many of us Christians is that our Christian life is a very idle one. We say we believe "these things," but what do we do about them? We are very active in connection with other things in which we believe; if it is a club we take our part; if it is a game we enter into it wholeheartedly if it is business we put our energy into it. Yet, here, we claim that God is interested in us, and that Christ has died for us – here we make the biggest claim a man can ever make – but what are we doing about it? Is it leading to any sort of activity? (*Expository Sermons on 2 Peter*, pp. 46, 47).

But what do we find among many professing Christians today? Attendance at church may be once a week, and yet they are not consistent even with that. They don't go to prayer meetings. They don't talk about spiritual

things. Many of them do not practice daily Bible reading and prayer. During the week you probably couldn't much of a difference in the way they live from people who make no profession of being a Christian. You see, if we are going to "add" these qualities or characteristics to your live, whatever you want to call them, it is going to take work. It will require faithful Bible reading and much prayer. You won't be able to do it alone; you are going to need the Lord's help. And you are going to need the encouragement of other believers, the kind of help that you will be able to find in church. Dr. Lloyd-Jones continued:

We sit and listen, we receive, but we do nothing – there is no Christian activity in our lives. Let every man examine himself in the light of this word (*Op. cit.*, p.47).

The child of God who is "idle" will also be unfruitful. There will be a lack of that influence that will influence others for good. The first place to look for fruit is in our own lives. In a very real sense "these things" which Peter has mentioned are fruit. Dawson Trotman used to say that "the fruit of a Christian is another Christian." I was in a meeting of The Navigators year ago when Daws was speaking. He called the named of four or five men who were present. And then Daws mentioned one by name (let me call him, Sam) and said, "I had the privilege of leading Sam to Christ. And then in time Sam led Bill to Christ. And Bill led Joe to Christ. And Joe led Frank to Christ." I have forgotten how many men who were present that day where one had been the fruit of the other.

But according to our text the fruit that Peter was talking about was the fruit of a fuller knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Virtue to faith, and knowledge to virtue, and on down the line, leads to greater knowledge, and in this case to a fuller knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. A Christian who obeys the Word of God from the heart not only experiences growth in character, but growth in the knowledge and fellowship with "our Lord Jesus Christ. The full name of our Lord here is very significant. There is a great difference between knowing *about* our Lord, as compared with knowing *Him*. For many years before I went to Dallas Theological Seminary, I had heard *about* Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer and his great Bible teaching. But the day came when I had the privilege of personally meeting Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer. And I was not at all disappointed. It was while I was at Dallas Seminary that I first heard Dr. John G. Mitchell expound the Word as one of the visiting Bible lecturers. But years later while I was teaching at Multnomah School of the Bible that he asked me to be his assistant at Central Bible Church. I don't think that he knew me at Dallas, but I was impressed with him as I listened to him teach. But when I worked with him, that is when I got to know him personally and to love him as we served the Lord together, and as we often prayed together.

All of us here today know the Lord. He has saved us from our sins. We owe everything to Him. But how well do we know Him? That is a question that we all need to ask ourselves. Do I know Him as He is named here, as "the Lord Jesus Christ"? That is His full name and title. I call Him "Lord," but is He really Lord of my life? As Jesus I am reminded of His sevenfold humbling of Himself which is mentioned in Philippians 2, but has knowing Him as "Jesus" humbled my proud heart? As Christ, the Messiah, the Appointed One and the Anointed One, He is the theme of all of Scripture. Do I read my Bible looking for Him, seeking to know Him better?

Before we go on to verse 9 let me remind you that increasing in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ is the way in which we grow more like Him. That is what is being really fruitful.

1:9 Verse 8 tells us a positive result of *adding "these things"* to our own hearts and lives. Verse 9 tells us a very tragic and negative effect if we don't add "virtue" to "faith, and so on.

What a step down it is to move from verse 8 to verse 9. This is the Christian who reads all that we have read up to this point. He probably agrees that what Peter had to say was good, and that it was true. And he even felt that some day he would do it all. *But that time never came. He intended to do it, and was sure that he would*

do it. But he never did.

Consequently spiritual blindness set in. It was not total blindness like he had before he was saved, but it was a blindness which kept him from seeing very far in the future. His interests were centered more in the present than in the future. He had lost sight of the purpose of his salvation. He was so occupied with his present needs and problems that he really had no time to think of what was becoming of him, and certainly not thinking the time when he would not be able to do what he could do now. It will just like the future did not exist as far as he was concerned.

But his blindness had to only affected the future, but it affected the past. He had forgotten the first and most amazing thing that the Lord had done for him. He had “forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” He still knew that he was a sinner, but he hardly ever, if ever, thanked the Lord for cleansing him from those sins which he had sinned before he had been saved. He never talked much about what the Lord had to do to save him from his sins, from all of his sins. He didn’t think very often about those “old sins” which he regretted that he had committed, and which had been cleansed away by the blood of Christ. He was not totally blind, but very shortsighted.

A lot of Christians are like this. They have many good intentions concerning what they want to do some day, but that day never seems to come. They are saved. They are going to heaven. But the pressures of the present have kept them from making any progress spiritually in their relationship with the Lord. They are sometimes pricked by their consciences, but it never is enough for them to change. They have never really learned that without the Lord they can do nothing. They are respectable, good providers for their families, anxious to see that their family gets to church at least once a week, but that is about as far as they go.

I say that such people are Christians, but in some cases they may not be. And so this is the reason for what Peter wrote in verse 10.

March 27, 2007

1:10 “Wherefore” indicates that what Peter was about to write, is in consequence of what he has just said. It amounts to saying, “If you are not living like a true child of God, then you had better make sure that you are. But notice that he addressed them as if they were truly saved: “My brethren.” It was a tender appeal, not a sharp rebuke. If people claim to know the Lord, we need to give them the benefit of the doubt, but exhort them to make sure.

When Peter spoke of their “calling and election,” he was indicating that no one is truly saved but those who are called by God, and that God only calls those who are the elect. So they were to look for the evidence in their lives that a work of grace, which means *a work of God*, had been done in their hearts.

Statements like this make me wonder why some Bible teachers object to the designation that some are carnal Christians. Paul addressed some in the Corinthian church as being in that condition. He did not mean that they were in some permanent condition of being “carnal,” but that it is possible for a true child of God to be living as though he were not a child of God. What did Paul mean when he wrote to the Galatian churches,

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

7 Which is not another: but thee be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. To be removed from God, would seem to indicate that they were not saved. But to say that they had been “called . . . into the grace of Christ” would indicate that they were saved. There is always the possibility that, if

a person is not living like a Christian, even though he or she professes to be, such a person may not be truly saved. That is the reason that everyone needs to be sure that he is saved by making his “calling and election sure.”

What does “sure” (βεβαίαν) mean? It is placed in an emphatic position. So it probably should be translated, *Make sure of your calling and election.* All of us needs to make sure that God has done a work in our hearts.

Probably if you and I had heard Peter himself curse and deny with oaths that he even knew the Lord after the Lord was arrested, we would have said, “Peter couldn’t have done such a thing if he had really been saved.” But if you had followed him out and seen those bitter tears which he wept, what would you have thought of Peter then. And when the Lord met him in John 21, what did He say to him? “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me . . . ?” Is that the way you would have talked to Peter? His actions seemed to indicate that he didn’t know and love the Lord. *But the Lord knew that he did!* So one of the first ways that you can be sure, or unsure, of your salvation, is to ask yourself how you feel about the Lord. Do you love Him? Could you be happy if you could turn away from the Lord, and never have anything more to do with Him? You would never love the Lord if the Father had not called you, and He would never have called you if He had not chosen you. So think about your relationship to God, and the evidence in your heart (maybe not so much in your life) that there has been a change in your attitude toward God and toward Christ that you could never have given to yourself.

So it is not necessarily that you can tell when you were saved, but that you know down in your heart that a change was made.

To make your calling and election sure, go to 1 John and see how you rate as far as the tests he mentioned are concerned – the test of sin, the test of obedience, the test of how you feel about the Lord’s people, the test of your relationship with the world, the test of what you believe about the Lord Jesus Christ. Probably none of us would get an A+ in any of those tests, but, if you pass at all, you can know that God has done a work in your heart.

But as far as the context of verse 10 is concerned, Peter went on to say, “For if ye do these things ye shall never fall.” What things? Adding to your faith, virtue, and knowledge, and self-control, and perseverance, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and love – these are “these things.”

But what did Peter mean when he said, “Ye shall never fall”? Was he talking about falling out of salvation? Of course not! Such a thing is not possible. Probably the best interpretation that we can give to the word which the Apostle Peter used, is the word *stumble*. This is a tremendous promise. Peter used a double negative in the Greek, which is an intensive negative, suggesting that there is not the slightest possibility that we would even stumble. But it all goes back to “these things.” It is no wonder that Peter had taught this over and over, and as he was writing he was putting “these things” into a permanent form, not only for those to whom he was writing, but for all succeeding generations, down to the time when the Lord will return.

We all do a lot of stumbling, stumbling over unanswered prayers, stumbling over circumstances in our lives or in the lives of those we love. But stumbling is a sign of weakness. And the way to keep from stumbling in the Christian life, is by continuing to grow. When a little child is learning to walk, he gets better and better as he continues to grow. That is where his strength comes from. The same is true of us as Christians. If you stop growing, you are going to start stumbling. Stumbling is a sign of weakness.

So we have the first benefit, or blessing, resulting by adding “these things” to our faith, in verse 8. We have the second blessing in verse 10, and now we have the third blessing in verse 11.

1:11 It is important to know that the word “ministered” here in verse 11 is the same word that is translated “add” in verse 5. As by God’s grace we minister to ourselves by adding to our faith, this will lead to the Lord ministering to us “abundantly” as we enter “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Do you see here that this means that spiritually, the person who has not been able to see “afar off,” is having his vision restored, and now is beginning to see clearly into the future, as well as into the past? This is seeing “afar off,” and yet it may not be as far off as we might think. It is a lot closer now than it was when Peter wrote these words. This is our hope, isn’t it? Life is not always going to be like it is here on this earth. It is amazing that we have any joy here, but by God’s grace we do. I am sure that the Apostle Peter was speaking about the eternal state here, the new heaven and the new earth, a new order with no sin, no pain, no sickness, and no death.

Is it any wonder that Peter made this the subject of his preaching so often? And is it any wonder that the Holy Spirit led him to record all of this in a letter so the Lord’s people could read about it after he was gone? I can’t tell you what it means that that “an entrance shall be ministered unto abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” because I don’t know. But Peter was surely saying that what we do, or don’t do, here and now in this present life, will have an effect, a lasting effect, upon the life to come. And so the words in verses 5, 6, and 7 in this first chapter of 1 Peter should have the highest priority in our lives.

Now we can do one of two things with Peter’s message. We can begin today to obey what he has told us to do. OR as much as we agree with him, we will tell ourselves that we want to do what Peter has said “sometime,” but not now. You and I all know that the things that we delay doing, are usually the things that we never do. May the Lord give us the same sense of urgency about “these things” that Peter had when he wrote this epistle. Notice that twice Peter spoke of *giving diligence* in doing “these things” now, and from now on, in verse 5 and again in verse 10. Peter was not speaking about what we ought to do once in a while when we think about it, or when we are going through a time of suffering and difficulty. **He was speaking about how we are to live.** We can’t do it on our own. Only by God and His grace is such a life possible. But it is possible. May we ask the Lord to help us and to enable us to be strengthening our faith by adding to it virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. We would all do well to memorize the first eleven verses of 1 Peter 1, asking the Lord to write it all upon our hearts.

April 9, 2007

We can gather from what Peter has already said, that he was greatly concerned about the spiritual state of those to whom he was writing. But at this point he added other words to show how greatly he was concerned about them. And so, from verse 12 on down to the end of chapter 1 we see how he expressed his great concern for them.

B. The Apostle Peter’s great concern for them (1:12-21).

1:12 It is very apparent from this verse that Peter was not writing to novices. They knew “these things.” He recognized that they were “established in the present truth,” that is, in what he had just written to them. So their problem was not ignorance. Neither does it seem that they had become complacent about their relationship with the Lord like many Christians have. But he knew, and we should know, that we all need to be exhorted to continue to grow in grace, to continue to walk in fellowship with the Lord. The most mature Christians need to hear what the Apostle Peter said in these verses. I need it, and so do you. Peter would say the same things to us if he were with us today. Peter had a rather rough beginning in his walk with the Lord because he had a strong personality and was very self-confident. The Lord has His own ways of humbling us, and so it is important for all of us to take an inventory of our lives to see if we are as devoted to the Lord as we

think we are, and if we are continuing to grow spiritually. That is what Peter wanted the believers to do to whom he was writing. I doubt if there ever have been many congregations about whom you could say that they were “established” in the truth. Peter used the noun from this verb in the next to the last verse of this epistle, 3:17 where it is translated “steadfastness.” He also used the verb in 1 Peter 5:10 where he told them how he was praying for them – that God would “make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. It is the Greek verb, *στηρίζω*. See also how the Apostle Paul used it in Romans 1:11 and 16:25. This was what James was concerned about in James 5:8 where he encouraged the saints to “stablish,” or *establish*, “your hearts.”

Peter as a servant of the Lord felt, and rightly so, that he had a responsibility in seeing that the believers under his ministry were being established in the truth. And so he said that he did not want to be “negligent.” I think we all know the meaning of that word. He did not want to be delinquent in his duty as an apostle and as a servant of the Lord.

And he went on in verse 13 to say more.

1:13 He believed that what he had said in verse 12, and what he had been doing before that, was the righteous thing for him to do. By this he meant that this was what he was obligated to do as a true servant of the Lord. To put it another way, this was a part of his job description. A true servant of the Lord is going to repeat himself. He will purposely repeat himself, not because he has quit studying, but because this is what the Lord wanted him to do, what he wanted to do, and what the people of God would find profitable.

“As long as I am in this tabernacle,” means *as long as I live*. Peter’s tabernacle was his body. He was distinguishing between himself and his body. When we die we leave this body in which we have lived on earth, but we go to be with the Lord. So Peter considered his ministry a life-long ministry. The people of God always need to be stirred up! I felt greatly stirred up in my soul under the ministry of Paul Felix last week. I am thankful that I didn’t miss a message. And I hope that I will continue to profit from Psalm 119 as he explained it to us. We are stirred up when in our hearts we long for a life of more intimate fellowship with the Lord. We are stirred up when we are turned away from the world and our attention is focused upon God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. To stir people up is to awaken them, to arouse them. This is what the teaching of the Word should do to all of us. The Lord’s people do not necessarily go to sleep in their relationship with the Lord, but they get drowsy, and careless. People who are off and on in their attendance at church need to be stirred up. But in one way or another, we all need to be stirred up. Peter was not talking about the meaningless emotionalism that is often displayed in churches today. He was speaking of a work of the Holy Spirit which needs to accompany the preaching of the Word. So while Peter spoke of the stirring up which he did, he knew that he was only the instrument; it always has to be the Holy Spirit Who actually does the stirring.

1:14 The Lord had revealed to Peter that he did not have long to live, and that made him even more fervent in his desire to minister with real blessing the same vitally important truth that he had taught them before.

When the Apostle Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, he also knew that his ministry was coming to a close. This is why his exhortations to Timothy were presented as *a charge*. Paul was concerned that there be no letup in the teaching of the Word and the proclamation of the truth. I remembering reading a message of a servant of the Lord (and I have forgotten who it was) who said that we should preach every sermon as though it was our last. The same is true of teaching. And it would apply to the contacts which we have with each other. We never know what burden may be weighing down anyone we meet during any day. We need to be ready to give a word in season, and also on the lookout for an encouraging word from others.

But then in verse 15 Peter took his burden a step further, and 1 and 2 Peter were the result.

1:15 Read this verse very carefully. Not only had the Lord revealed to Peter that he did not have long to live, but He had put it in Peter's heart to commit to writing that truth that he had so frequently proclaimed to them. And we can see some evidence in this verse that Peter knew that his writing would be preserved for the spiritual blessing of future generations. The word "always" seems to suggest that. I don't want to read into this passage anything that is not there, but it seems to me that Peter had some knowledge that he was not only writing for that generation, but also for future generations. Whatever the situation may have been, we know that the needs which Peter was seeking to meet in his generation, would be useful for all future generations. And we can say this for two reasons: first, because the needs of God's people in every generation, and in every nation, are basically the same; and second, because the solution of those needs is always the same. We, a little over two thousand years after Peter wrote this epistle, find it just as true, and just as profitable, as the Lord's people in Peter's generation, found his teaching to be. We may have newer translations, but we do not have a new Bible. From the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation, it all is just as true, and just as important, as each book was when it was first written under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Note the words, "I will endeavor." They are future. He was in the process of writing, and he was expressing his intention to finish what he had started so that those believers would have a permanent record of what he had taught them.

How thankful we all should be for the printed page! Most of us started reading the Bible before we had any idea of what had gone into the writing of it. As a child I know I had the idea that the Bible was written in English, and that all who had a part in writing the Bible, wrote it in English. Then I learned that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew (except for part of Daniel [2:4-7:28] which was written in Aramaic), and that the New Testament was written in Greek, so that it all had to be translated into English. How thankful we should be for our English Bibles.

But then think of all of the wonderful Christian literature, true to the Word, which is available to us today. Many of the books that are available today, were not available when I was in Seminary. But they are available today. And many good books are still being written which help us to understand our Bible.

But why did Peter feel that his teaching was so important and worthy of being preserved? He tells us in the remainder of chapter 1, from verse 16 on. Basically there are two reasons: first, his own personal experience with the Lord Jesus Christ; second, what he called, the "sure word of prophecy."

April 10, 2007

1:16 Peter declared here, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables." "Cunningly devised" means *cleverly invented* (Green, p. 91). The word translated "fables" (μῦθος) can mean something that originated with some man. It can mean an allegory and not to be taken literally. It can mean a fictitious prophecy. The Apostle Paul used the word in 1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:14. Trench brings out in his *Synonyms* that this is a word which started out being an equivalent of λόγος, but over time up to the writing of the NT, it came to mean just the opposite: a lie! All teaching that is not consistent with Biblical doctrine falls into this category – a lie! This is why it is so important for us to know the truth. Knowing the truth of God's Word is the only way we can be prepared to detect error. The word μῦθος can be transliterated over into English as a *myth*. And a myth is an imaginary or fictitious person or thing which has no real existence.

Peter had been accused of coming up with a cleverly invented doctrine when he spoke of "the power and

coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” – which most expositors take as a reference to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ when our Lord will come to rule for a millennium, and then ultimately usher in a new heaven and a new earth. Such teaching does seem to be unreal to people who do not know the Lord.

April 16, 2007

Peter concludes his testimony concerning how he saw the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration with the words, “but we were eyewitnesses of his Majesty. The Apostle John who was with Peter testified of it in John 1:18. Furthermore it is confirmed by Matthew (17:1-8), Mark (9:2-10), and Luke (9:28-36). So the testimony is overwhelming that what Peter wrote here was true. They heard the Father’s voice from heaven identifying Who Jesus was. And all of this was given as the reason why Peter had repeatedly spoken to the saints to whom he was writing about “these things.” But he was not finished with his reasons for emphasizing the importance of “these things” as we see in verses 19 through 21 as the word “also” indicates.

These three verses combined give us one of the two major passages of Scripture which speak of the divine origin of the Bible. The other passage is 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

1:19 When Peter wrote these words the NT was in the process of being written, but it was complete as it is now, and has been for many years. But Peter’s reference to the writings of Paul’s epistles in chapter 3, verse 13, shows that some of Paul’s epistles had already been written, and Peter referred to them as being a part of “the other scriptures,” which must have been a reference to the OT Scriptures. Here in verse 19 of chapter 1, Peter was not saying that the scriptures were truer than the experience that he and John and James had on the Mount of Transfiguration, but that it was the Scriptures which God has given us which the ultimate authority of all that we are to believe. The expression, “the word of prophecy,” does not mean just those parts of the Bible which were future when they were written, or those parts which are still future, but he was speaking of the Scriptures as being a revelation from God (as he goes on to explain in the next two verses). And, since it comes from God, a divine revelation, Peter told them, “wherefore ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.” To “take heed” to anything, by definition, is *to pay close attention to* whatever is being referred to, or *to take careful notice of* it.

Now whatever Peter emphasized as far as the OT was concerned, applies today equally to the writings of the NT. You and I will never read anything that will surpass the Bible in importance. And all that Peter said in this expression, “ye do well that ye take heed,” he expressed in the present tense. So this means that when we read the Scriptures, we always do well when we pay the closest attention to what the Word of God says. And this means not just seeking to understand it, but submitting ourselves to it – believing it, and putting it into practice in our lives.

As I listened with Lucille and Pat, her sister, to the report of the terrible tragedy that took place at Virginia Tech University, and heard the President of the University talk about the counsellors that were ready to help, and then heard the father of one of the girls who was killed eight years ago at Columbine High School in Colorado, and when asked he gave his advice about how to help the students at Virginia Tech get through this tragedy, nothing was said by either one of those men about God, or the Bible, or our Lord Jesus Christ. What those students and the families of those whose children were killed, needed to hear, was the truth of this “word of prophecy.” God is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. The Lord Jesus ever lives to intercede for those who are trusting Him. And, as we learned last Sunday, the Lord Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter. But nobody was talking about Them according to what I heard. We are paying a great price in our country by our rejection of God and His Word. Let us be sure that we are not making the same mistake. Read the Bible. Pay close attention to it. It is the light that shines continually in this dark world from which people

are passing into an eternal night.

There is a lot to think about in verse 19 of 1 Peter 1. And what Peter was saying here needs to be said over and over again “until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your (our) hearts.” What does this mean?

This passage is usually interpreted as referring to the time when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. But I wonder if there is not another idea here. Peter did not speak of the day star arising in the world and over the world, but “in your hearts.” He was appealing to all of his readers to pay the closest attention to the light that is shining in a dark place. Solomon said long ago, “The entrance of Thy words (he was speaking to God) giveth light: it giveth understanding to the simple” (Psalm 119:130). And it is through the reading the Word, or hearing the Word proclaimed, that the light goes on for people. But if this leads to the Day Star arising in their hearts, this is what people need.

I believe that “the Day Star” is a reference to our Lord Jesus Christ.

When the Apostle John was finishing the book of the Revelation, you probably will remember that he finished it with an appeal for people to turn to the Lord. And in doing so, He quoted the Lord Jesus Christ as saying this:

16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star (Rev. 22:16).

When you relate this verse to 2 Peter 1:19 I think you can see what the Day Star arriving in your hearts means. It means salvation. The light that is still shining in this dark, dry place, is the Word of God. It tells us of Jesus Christ as the only way to God, and that if we believe in Him we shall be saved. But we must believe in our hearts as Romans 10:9 tells us. If people are going to be saved, they must be born again. And I hope you remember from 1 Peter 1:23 how this takes place. Listen to Peter’s words:

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

Illus: My neighbor who wants me to buy a supply of miniature silver crosses for us to distribute to people in an attempt to lead them to Christ. My response: 1 Peter 1:23.

It is as the Word is given to people that the Spirit of God may use it to cause people to know that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ, and that through the Word they will be brought to trust Him as their Savior. This happens when the Day Star, “the Bright and Morning Star, arises in their hearts, driving out the darkness with the One Who is the Light of the world.

April 17, 2007

1:20 By the words, “Knowing this first,” the Apostle Peter was saying that in our handling of the Word of God, we must always remember what he was about to say. And this is a truth that applies to all of the Word of God, “that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.” Basically this means that no writer of Scripture originated what he had to say. If that had been the case, you would not have the marvelous unity that exists in all of Scripture. Nor would you have the complete reliability that is true of all of Scripture.

Peter was saying that “no prophecy of Scripture,” that is, no part of the Word of God originated, nor was it interpreted, by those who wrote it, that is, *on their own*. The Bible is not the production just of the men who wrote it. And we must always keep this in mind when we are dealing with the Scriptures. As Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:16, “all scripture is given by inspiration of God.” It is God-breathed. God did not just give the

writers of Scripture *the idea* that He wanted to communicate to His people, but He sovereignly led the writers of Scripture in the very words that they used in giving us the Word of God. This is true of all of the books of the OT, and all of the books of the NT.

So verse 20 gives us one part of what we must always remember in reading our Bibles. Verse 21 gives us the other part. Verse 20 tells us what the Bible is *not*; verse 21 tells us what the Bible is. So, “knowing this first” (the words with which the Apostle Peter began verse 20, apply equally to verses 20 and 21. And by the way, in verse 21 we have the only mention of the Holy Spirit in this second epistle of Peter. But what an extremely important reference to the Holy Spirit it is! The Scriptures are *not* the product of men.

1:21 What, then, are we to believe about the Scriptures? They are not the product of man’s will. This applies to Moses, to David, to Solomon, to Daniel, and to all of the writers of the OT. But it applies equally to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, and all of the writers of the NT. Every writer of all of the sixty-six books of the Bible, “spoke” (and here the word “spoke” means that they spoke in their writings) “as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

“Were moved” is passive in the Greek as it is in English which emphasizes not what the writers of Scripture did, but what was done to them.

So the Bible, while written by men, originated with the Holy Spirit. The Bible has been given to us *from God*. And we need to remember this when men come to us with teaching that is in addition to Scripture, or which replaces Scripture.

We have largely lost sight of these truths in our society today. We have turned away from the absolute teaching of Scripture concerning what is true and what is false, as well as from what is right and what is wrong. The emphasis today is that there is no absolute truth, there are no absolutes concerning what is right and what is wrong. The main thing today is that people be allowed to do whatever they want to do. Our politicians take their guidance from what people want, and this has led us into the tragic situations with which we are faced in our country. The truth does not change. Morality is still to be defined in terms of Scripture. Truth and morality are determined by God. And we are being judged, and will continue to be judged with greater and greater severity by the God whose Word is truth. The words of the Apostles Peter and Paul regarding the Bible, are just as true today as they ever were in spite of the way we have turned to evolution, to adultery, to abortion, to homosexuality, to pornography, and now to the terrible abuse of children which has become an uncontrollable problem in our day. Peter goes on to warn us from the past in chapter 2, but people aren’t paying attention to the Bible in our day. And we are paying a great price in many, many ways, but our sins have blinded us so completely that we are oblivious to what is really going on. I am talking about our society generally. God always has had, and always will have, His people who believe His Word, and love His Word, and who seek by God’s grace to live by the Word. May God keep us faithful to the Word of God regardless of the way in which the world is going.

Read Romans 1 and 2 Timothy 3. The “perilous times” of 2 Timothy 3 are here! “Perilous” means *difficult* and *dangerous*. We had another example yesterday of how dangerous it can be in the massacre of more than thirty people at Virginia Tech University. Does it mean anything to us that this is the worst massacre of its kind in our history?

We have just had a marvelous Spring Bible Conference with Professor Paul Felix who ministered to us for four days from Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, and a chapter in which every verse has something very important and very good to say about God’s Word. And Professor Felix did a **great** job of reminding us that the

way the Psalmist felt about the Word is God, is the way we should feel about it. The world may be moving farther and farther away from the Bible, and so away from God and away from Christ and away from the Holy Spirit, but we need to be moving closer and closer to God and to Christ and to the Word that God's blessing would be upon us, and His Name glorified in our lives.

2 Peter

2 Peter 2:1-22

April 23, 2007

III. Warnings from THE PAST (2 Peter 2:1-22).

A. False teachers past and present (2:1-3)

2:1 As we move from chapter 1 to chapter 2 we are faced with an entirely different situation. After all that Peter has said for the benefit and strengthening of the Lord's people in chapter 1, encouraging them to pursue holiness in character and life, we come into an entirely different situation in chapter 2. How wonderful it would have been if Peter could have continued with the acceptance of the truth, but instead he reminds his readers that this world has become the scene of warfare and constant conflict against the truth. We can understand more fully why he said what he said in chapter 1. Even though he could say that they were "established in the present truth," yet he strongly reminded them of the need to persevere in the truth.

We can see how he spoke of the ministry of the apostles, beginning with verse 16 of chapter 1, moved on to speak of those OT prophets who were responsible for giving us the Word of God in verses 19 through 21, and with the word "but" introduced chapter 2 to remind us that just as there were true, faithful, godly prophets in OT times, so there were false prophets, and they needed to know that there were false teachers among them who would spread what he called, their "damnable heresies." So this emphasized even more the need to be well grounded in the truth of the Word of God.

"But there were false prophets also among the people" is a statement that is backed up by the OT. The words "false prophets" are the translation of one word in the Greek which can be transliterated into English as *pseudo-prophets*. "The people" were the people of Israel. And the word "among" means that to some degree they had identified themselves with the people of God. This made them even more dangerous. But Peter went on to say that *pseudo-teachers* would be "among them." He did not mean that they were not there already, but that they would continue to come, bringing in "damnable heresies." They would come in almost unnoticed, sometimes acting like they would join the churches, but they were messengers of Satan. Their purpose was not to teach the truth, but to teach heresy and to lead people into apostasy.

What did Peter mean by the word "damnable"? He meant that the teaching of the false prophets would lead people to damnation, to hell, because it would turn people away from the truth.

But the ultimate objective was the denial of the Lord, "the Lord that bought them," not that had bought the false teachers, but who by His death on the Cross had bought the people of God, saving them from their sins. So what Peter was saying here is what the Apostle John said in 1 John. All false teaching is primarily, basically, and ultimately anti-Christ. Do you remember what John wrote about antichrists? In 1 John 2:18 he wrote this:

8 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

And then a few verses later, in 1 John 2:22, the Apostle John wrote this:

22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

False teachers are usually very crafty. They may not come right out and deny that our Lord is God and the only Savior of men. They may not even talk about salvation. But their teaching will lack any statement about our Lord, which amounts to a denying Him. We need to learn to judge those teachers who come to us by what they do not say as well as by what they do say. The denial of Christ in any way leads to hell.

The word that is translated “Lord” is the Greek word from which we get our English word, despot. Thayer says that the word denotes “absolute ownership and uncontrolled power” (p. 130). When used of our Lord, as it is here, it speaks of believers as being bondservants of the Lord. He has bought us. We belong to Him. He holds absolute authority over us. The thrust of false teachers is an attack upon the Lord’s Person, as well as upon His work. This is what is going on today in the attempt of our government and many church authorities to do away with anything that has to do with Christ or the Gospel. But Michael Green says that their rejection of Christ is primarily ethical, not intellectual. It is the teaching that invaded our world long ago, that there are no absolutes. Everything is relative.

Those who do this are bringing upon themselves “swift destruction.” The word “destruction” is the same Greek word that is translated “damnable” earlier in this verse. Wuest says that it means the loss of all that makes living worthwhile. It is “swift” in the sense that it is certain and impending. It means hell, eternal separation and total misery apart from God. So, even though it seems that anti-God, anti-Christ, and anti-Bible forces are winning the battle, they are bringing upon themselves “swift destruction.”

Before we go farther into this chapter I want to remind you of the similarity between 2 Peter 2 and the epistle of Jude. Bible teachers are divided as to which came first. But that problem should not bother us. The point is that the similarity between these chapters emphasizes the tremendous importance of the danger that false teachers are to the church today. For Scripture to say anything more than once, is an indication of its tremendous importance.

2:2 How successful will these false teachers be? “Many shall follow their pernicious ways.” There are just two ways: the way that leads to life, and the way that leads to death. Perhaps you remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 7:13-20. If not, we need to do so. Listen to what He said:

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Wuest says that the word “follow” means that they follow the false teachers to the end. “Ways” speaks of their lifestyle, not just what they believe. It is always the case that the truth of God produces holiness of life, but error leads to sin. See Romans 6:11-23.

Quoting Wuest again, he said that “pernicious” means “unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence” (p. 48). And so he adds, referring to the expression, “pernicious ways,” that it “therefore, does not refer to the heresies of the false teachers, but to their immoral lives” (*Ibid.*). Michael Green says that “pernicious ways” are “shameful ways,” which lead to “reckless and hardened immorality” (p. 107). Those who claim to be free to do whatever they want to do, become bond-slaves of Satan and sin. But, thank God, there is hope. Note what Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2:24-26 about the way of escape, and it is the only way which we as the people of God must remember in seeking to reach those who are following “pernicious ways”:

24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; (Continued on the next page)

26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

The most powerful instrument that we have is the Word of God. Cf. Heb. 4:12, "For the word of God is quick . . ."

However, as Peter went on to say, the false teachers not only promote ways contrary to the ways of God, but they try to make people think that the Word of God is what is responsible for the troubles that we have in the world. And so their attacks are directed against the Bible. This is very apparent in our society today. Our light has become darkness, and it is all the darker because as a nation we have turned from the truth which has had the major part in our history. Many of us have witnessed the change during our lifetime, but the momentum has increased in the last few years.

As you can readily see, the Apostle Peter, in the first three verses of chapter 2 is seeking to expose the character and work of the false prophets in the OT and the false teachers in the NT. They are really one and the same in what they sought, or are seeking, to do in the spread of their heresies and the ways to which they lead.

2:3 In this verse the Apostle Peter goes on to point out one great objective of the false teachers: money!

The Gospel has to do with "the gift of God." Heresy does not seek to give to us but to take from us. False teachers are motivated by "the love of money" which, as the Bible tells us, is "the root of all evil" (1 Tim.6:10). Somewhere, in all sin, money is involved. The huge casinos that have been built in our day, seek to attract people with their pleasures, but their purpose is to get as much money as they can possibly get from the people who go to them. But people always think that they can beat the system. They might win here and there, but ultimately they lose, and lose in a big way.

Contrast what the Apostle Paul said about his ministry to the believers in Thessalonica:

3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:

6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ (1 Thess. 2:3-6).

Two expositors, quoted by Vincent, have the following to say about this third verse, as well as what follows:

There is a graphic picture in [this] sentence (referring to verse 3). The judgment is not *idle*. It is represented as a living thing, awake and expectant. Long ago that judgment started on its destroying path, and the fate of sinning angels, and the deluge, and the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah were but incidental illustrations of its power; nor has it ever since lingered. . . It advances still, strong and vigilant as when it sprang from the bosom of God, and will not fail to reach the mark to which it was pointed from of old (Wuest, pp. 48, 49).

This means that God is not, nor has He ever been, silent where opposition to the truth of His Word has been concerned. OT history shows this to be the case, as well as the NT. False prophets came and went; the same is true of false teachers today. We can see even in our own day how false teachers come and go. God is very jealous for His Word, and those who contradict it and oppose it, are doomed from their very beginnings. The final judgment is yet to come, but history shows, on the one hand, that God is always actively defending His

truth with acts of judgment against those who spread “damnable heresies,” which, if believed, lead people directly to hell. If this had not been true, the truth would never have survived to reach us. But it has survived, and it will continue to survive because God will not allow it to fail. God continues to send forth His Word to accomplish what He pleases, and all the demons of hell and the false teachers on earth, will not prevail in their efforts to do away with the Word of God. This great fact ought to be a great encouragement to all who believe the truth and are seeking to spread the truth. The Lord Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matt. 24:35).

“Feigned words” are carefully crafted words which are designed to give meaning to that which does not exist. False teachers go to great lengths to convince others that error is truth, and that truth is error. There is going to be a final judgment when false teachers and those who believe them will be judged, but Peter says that the Lord is not waiting until then to show His great displeasure with all false teachers and their false teaching. And Scripture gives abundant evidence of the truth of that statement. And so beginning with verse 4 Peter gave some illustrations of God’s judgment against false teaching, against those who spread them, and against those who believe them.

Peter’s first illustration has to do with God’s judgment against sinning angels.

April 30, 2007

B. Old Testament examples of God’s judgment against sin (2:4-16).

1. The angels who sinned (2:4). Cf. Jude 6; Gen. 3:1-5; 6:1-4; Matt. 8:28-29.

2:4 We are not told in Scripture exactly when this happened, but it preceded human sin, according to Genesis 3:1-5. From Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 we have accounts of the rebellion of an angel named Lucifer who led other angels in rebellion against God. He became the archenemy of God, and the angels who fell from their original estate have become the demons that we read so much about in the Gospels. These are fallen angels. But Scripture speaks also of elect angels. See 1 Timothy 5:21. Those who were not elect, have fallen. Those who elect will not fall. So, as far as we know the situation is stable among angels. Among those who have fallen, some are in chains; others are permitted for the present to roam free.

The thought in this verse is that if God did not spare angels, who are creatures superior to men, then we can be assured that He will not spare men who sin. And the Scriptures bears that out. “Hell” in this verse is Tartarus. “Cast down to hell” is the translation of one verb, and aorist participle, in the Greek text. This is the only place that the word is used in the NT, and so we are limited in our understanding of what it means. In Jude’s account he spoke of it as “darkness.” In Greek mythology Tartarus was the place reserved for the most wicked. The KJV is probably right in calling it “hell.” The Lord’s supremacy over these angels, His absolute sovereignty over them, is indicated by the fact that they are “reserved” for judgment, and this has been their permanent place of abode through all of human history.

Note that they have been judged, they are being judged, and they will be judged. Even men (or women) who have been judged for their sins, even though they die, they continue to be judged, and they will experience more judgment at the final judgment. So this verse tells us a great deal about judgment. The lake of fire is the final place for all the wicked, which originally was prepared for the Devil and his angels. See Matthew 25:41.

May 1, 2007

2. The flood in the days of Noah (2:5). Cf. Gen. 6:5-8:22; Matt. 24:37-38.

2:5 See Peter's reference to the flood also in 3:5-6 and also in 1 Peter 3:20.

Both Peter's reference to the flood in the days of Noah here indicate a world-wide judgment in which the old world, the whole world, was destroyed, with only eight people surviving - Noah, his wife, their three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives. See again 1 Peter 3:20. Also Gen. 7:17-23. There were no survivors of any life except for those in the ark. And Peter here described the world as "the world of the ungodly." "Ungodly" means that they had no time for God, nor were there any who were even remotely interested in pleasing God. This is perhaps the greatest illustration of the total depravity of the whole human race that we have any place in Scripture.

And yet we can see that Noah was a preacher of righteousness. This means that he was a preacher of the Gospel. In this dark, dark period in human history God had a witness to his mercy and grace in the free offer of salvation. We get discouraged if a few years go by without much of any of a response to our preaching. Noah seems to have preached one hundred and twenty years (see Gen. 6:3) without any response, except possibly those of his own family. See Hebrews 11:7. There was no record up to that time that there had ever been any rain. Noah must have seemed like an old fool to the people of that generation, but it was "by faith" that he did it, believing God who had spoken to him of the coming judgment. It is very significant that, in all of the judgments of Scripture, they were always as bad as God, through His prophets, said that they would be. As terrible as 9/11 was, it was a solemn warning to the whole world of what is ahead if the world does not listen to the preaching of the Gospel.

In Genesis 6:8 and 9 we have God's testimony to the godliness of Noah. Note the order of what is recorded in these verses. Noah experienced God's grace first, and that was what made him the godly man that he was, and that which caused him to walk with God.

These illustrations that Peter used here in 2 Peter, are evidences that God is a holy God. While He is a God of infinite mercy and grace, yet He is also a God of judgment, a judgment that even the Lord Jesus Christ experienced when He died on the Cross. The story of the flood, while God promised never to repeat it, is a story of the judgment of God that should make the world sit up and take notice.

Next we come to Peter's third illustration: Sodom and Gomorrah.

3. Sodom and Gomorrah (2:6-14). Cf. Gen. 18:16-19:38.

2:6 It appears that the mention of Sodom and Gomorrah was followed by verses 7 through 14 where Peter elaborated on this obnoxious and extremely wicked sin.

The sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was the sin of homosexuality. It is a perversion of God's reason for the creation of the first woman, and the establishment of the family. It is a sin that has continued on in spite of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah where it was concentrated. It is an ungodly lifestyle. And note that Peter said concerning what happened at Sodom and Gomorrah that it was "an ensample [example] unto those that after should live ungodly" (v. 6b). This means that it is just as wicked today as it ever was, and that it always, always, draws judgment from God. It is not evidence of enlightenment, as some would have us believe, but it is evidence of the continuing depravity of the human race. Our nation is courting the judgment of God, not only by tolerating homosexuality, but by legalizing it and supporting it.

The subject of the action taken against homosexuality that Peter mentioned here, is GOD! His is the One Who turned those two cities "into ashes." The Apostle Paul in Romans 1 pointed out that when people in their pride

turn the truth of God into a lie, that God gives them up to the uncleanness of their hearts. See Romans 1:20-25. And in the following verses he showed how the rejection of the truth causes God to turn them over to “vile affections” which is what homosexuality is. This is further proof that departure from the truth of God always brings corruption in living. Homosexuality is evidence of the judgment of God. So it is not a warning that judgment is coming; *it is judgment from God*. And so it is evidence in the case of our own country that we are under judgment, and this leads to the multiplicity of sins such as Paul mentioned in verses 28 to 32 in Romans chapter 1.

Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, when the Apostle Paul gave another list of sins, he used two words which refer to homosexuals at the end of verse 9. The NASB translates “effeminate” and “abusers of themselves with mankind” as “effeminate by perversion” in the margin, and “homosexuals.” The NKJV uses “homosexuals” and “sodomites.” So the idea of a homosexual church is the height of blasphemy, and for our government to force upon churches the acceptance of homosexuals as staff members in churches, is only going to bring greater judgment from God. To let homosexual couples adopt children, or get children in any other way, leads to the situation that it would be better for those who approve such action if they had never been born. When God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah He was declaring His total disapproval and judgment upon a most ungodly and wicked lifestyle. And let us not buy the idea that conditions are different now. They aren’t different. Homosexuality is proof of God’s judgment upon such behavior, and the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah is a warning to all future generations, including our own.

May 7, 2007

2:7 Up to this point in our chapter we have had two tragic stories taken from the OT, two periods of time when conditions in the world were at a very low ebb spiritually. But, in reality most of human history has been characterized by sin rather than by righteousness. Many of us who are older can remember times when it seemed that everyone went to church. That, of course, was not true, but at least it was not something that people tried to hide if they went to church. Even today in many respects church attendance is booming. But what we see is not a surge in righteousness, nor a keen interest in holy living. In fact, the influence of the world has been brought into the church. People are attracted by entertainment and by music that follows the style that is predominant in the world. Bible teaching is hard to find, and so are people, even in our churches, who are concerned about living to the glory of God. It has always been the case that true Christians, people who are, in the words of Peter, “partakers of the divine nature,” are in the minority. The Lord Jesus even said so while He was here on earth. His chief enemies were the Jewish religious leaders of His day. Listen to the words of our Lord which are found in Matthew 7:13-14:

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

The days of Noah and the days of Lot are very much like our own day. In the whole world during Noah’s day there was not another family like Noah and his family. And in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah there was not another family like the family of Lot. We could probably narrow it down even more than that because we wonder about Noah’s family, and we definitely wonder about Lot’s family. So in both instances the righteous may be narrowed down to *one man!*

And yet there was even a great difference between Noah and Lot. We have evidence in the book of Genesis that Noah was a preacher of righteousness, and that he probably preached for a hundred and twenty years while he was, at the same time, building the ark. But things were different with Lot. He parted company with his

uncle, Abraham, and “pitched his tent toward Sodom” (Gen. 13:12). He chose Sodom because it was in beautiful country, but he did not know that the people there “were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly” (Gen. 13:13). In Genesis 14:12 we learn that he was living in Sodom. Then we are told in Genesis 19:1 when the angels went to investigate Sodom, that Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom which probably meant that he was a city official. If all that of the information we have in Scripture about Lot was limited to what is found in the book of Genesis, we could easily think that Lot was not a child of God. And so I am thankful, and you should be too, that Peter called Lot, “just Lot,” meaning that he was righteous before God. Furthermore, we are told in verse 8 of our chapter that Peter described Lot as “that righteous man,” and said that he had a “righteous soul.” So we can be sure of Noah and Lot, but not absolutely certain about their families.

Here in verse 7 we are told that Lot was “vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked.” We have learned that the word “conversation” in Peter’s epistles (and elsewhere in the NT also) means conduct. “Vexed” means that he was oppressed by the way people in Sodom lived and talked. It was a heavy weight upon his heart which was like a heavy burden which he could not get rid of. And Peter described it all as “wicked.” It was *godless*. One lexicon describes it as Godless.

However, God “delivered” Lot when judgment fell upon Sodom, but the Lord kept Lot from being involved in the sin of Sodom. It was a deliverance which God in His sovereignty exercised in Lot’s life. He neither participated voluntarily, nor was he ever raped – which the men of Sodom would do to most men who came within their reach. The Lord protected His child from the lustful behavior of the Sodomites. How gracious God is even when we do not seek His care and His protection. This was really a miracle from the Lord. Lot had no idea of what he was getting into when he moved to Sodom.

This ought to be an encouragement to us. In the worst of times, men can never overrule the almighty power of God. Only eternity will reveal to us how many times the Lord has protected us from our own sinfulness, or from what others would do to us or our loved ones. We need to pray constantly that the Lord will preserve us and our loved ones from evil men who are everywhere around us.

The description about Lot is continued in verse 8.

2:8 Lot was “vexed” by what he saw and heard every day of the week, month after month, of “their unlawful deeds.” It is possible for us to see some very bad thing on television, if that is what we are looking for, but, thank God, such sins are not being committed before our very eyes “day by day.” What the men of Sodom were doing was not “unlawful” according to the laws of Sodom, but they were “unlawful” according to the laws of God. In the Greek text the words “seeing and hearing” are placed at the beginning of this verse to emphasize what really got Lot down.

2:9 When we look at our world, it is easy to feel that our whole society is out of control. And this can be very discouraging to us. We all know what it is to be “vexed” although we may not have known what that word means. We use it often to express the fact that we are irritated. But as we listen to the news, or read in our newspapers what is going on in our cities, the terrible crimes that are being committed, and even the natural disasters which are becoming more and more frequent, it is easy to lose heart, to get depressed. That is why we need a verse like verse 9. (Read it.)

Where can we have hope? In our politicians? In ourselves? In our fellow believers? No, to them all. They may play a part under the sovereign will of God. But our only security is “the Lord.” Note carefully the wording of this verse. Peter tells us here under the direction of the Holy Spirit that the Lord always knows what to do, and He always has the power to do to carry out His will. The Lord never needs to be advised by angels or

men as to what to do. No one has ever been His counsellor! His knowledge is infinite, eternal, and always true. New situations arise in our lives all of the that confound us, but the Lord is never taken by surprise, never is He at a loss as to what to do. And He doesn't need help from anybody else! The Lord always knows where we are, and what we are going through, and He always what to do, and He has the power to do it. You and I need to let our minds and hearts drink in the truth about God. He knows how to deliver us. This is where we need to remember 1 Corinthians 10:13. (Quote it.) This verse could be a verse out of the Psalms, couldn't it?

But what is a statement of blessing to those of us who are partakers of the divine nature, is a truth that ought to strike the greatest fear in the heart of all of the unjust. The first part of this verse has to do with "the godly," or *the just*; the latter part has to do with "the unjust." There is a day of judgment coming in which the punishment of all sinners who do not know the Lord, are going to face the consequences of having sinning against our holy, sovereign God. The words, "the Lord knoweth," which are given at the beginning of this verse, apply just as much to "the unjust" as to "the godly." The Lord Jesus said that "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19), but what wicked people don't know is what we are told in Psalm 139:12, 12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

"The Lord knoweth how . . . to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." The word "reserve" is the Greek word for *keeping*, and here it means *to keep from escaping*. And it is a present infinite which means that the Lord keeps the unjust, holding them for the final judgment, and there is no escaping from the God of heaven and earth—at least, not after death. The writer of the book of Hebrews asked the question, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Savior for the whole world. And He can save because He died to atone for the sins of all who will ever repent of their sins, and put their trust in Him. And that has to be done in this life. Once a sinner dies, there is absolutely no possibility of escaping the eternal judgment of God.

Adding to the predicament which people face who "walk after the flesh," who seek their satisfaction and pleasure in sins of the flesh, or what Peter called, "the lust of uncleanness." Sinners who live profligate lives need to notice the word "chiefly" in this verse. It points to those who will be singled out for special punishment. It could be translated, *most of all*. In the context of this verse, he probably was speaking about sodomy.. But it would include all forms of adultery and fornication. The "lust of uncleanness" is "the lust of the flesh." Peter in using the verb "walk" is speaking of a lifestyle. It describes their journey through life.

But how else are they described? They "despise government." This is not another category, but another description of those who live in "the lust of uncleanness." In Jude 8 the word that is translated "government" here in 2 Peter 2:10, is translated "dominion." In the lives of people who are given to gross sin, there is a corresponding disregard for the authority of government and the laws of the land, a despising of authority in the home, in the church, any place where people are faced with authority. And most of all and worst of all, it results in a rejection of God's authority and the authority of His Word.

May 8, 2007

As Peter went on to say, "presumptuous . . . selfwilled . . . and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities." Again on this verse Wuest quoted Strachan, speaking of false teachers and their influence on all of society:

Their tendency seems to have been to make light of the Unseen, to foster a sense of the unreality both of sin and of goodness, and to reduce the motives of conduct to a vulgar hedonism, (the doctrine that pleasure is the sole or chief good in life, and that moral duty is fulfilled in the gratification of pleasure-seeking instincts and dispositions) (p. 54).

Michael Green stated it this way:

seeking instincts and dispositions) (p. 54).

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This, then, is the character of the false teachers as set out so far. They are dominated by lust, their passions are given free sway, with the result that they behave like animals, while the mental and spiritual sides of their humanity suffer atrophy. They are headstrong, rebellious against the will of God, and reckless of the consequences. They are contemptuous of other people, be these human or celestial. They are self-willed; the sensual man always is, for in the last analysis self is all that matters to him. His hell is this, that his world contracts until the only thing he has left is the self he has corrupted. Who can say that 2 Peter is irrelevant to our generation? (p. 117).

That bumper sticker which perhaps you have seen, which says, "Question Authority," is expressive of all of this. And the statement of Lincoln, that "the government of the people, and for the people, and by the people, shall not perish from the earth," has been corrupted to mean that whatever people want, that is what they are entitled to have. There is no greater evidence of the total depravity of the human heart than that which is taking place before our very eyes in our own government today. It affects the home. It affects government. It affects the church. It ruins personal lives, and ultimately will lead to anarchy where no one is safe. How thankful we should be that ultimately *God is in charge, not man!*

"To speak evil of dignities" – The word for "dignities" is the plural δόξαι, which is usually translated *glories*. This is Peter's way of speaking of the authorities which God has established – angels, government, the family, and most importantly, the church. Their glory is seen when they fulfill the purposes for which God has established them. When they are lit. *blasphemed*, as the world is doing today, chaos results, and man faces the judgment of God.

2:11 Then Peter mentions by way of revelation that even among the elect angels you do not find the kind of rebellion against God and the authorities which God has established that we can see among men. Angels are "greater in power and might" than men. They know that what men are doing is wrong, but they leave in the hands of God the consequences of man's rebellion in human life which inevitably come.

2:12 "But these" – Here Peter is speaking of the false teachers who begin by rejecting the authority of God and the authority of His Word, thus seeking to destroy all authority which has been established by God, blaspheme things that they do not understand stemming from the sovereign authority of God, are sealing their own corruption and their ultimate judgment at the hand of God. Beginning with verse 12, and continuing on in verses 13 and 14, we have Peter's denunciation of the false teachers in the strongest possible language, but his comments about the false teachers continue to the end of the chapter.

This ought to remind us of what James said about teachers, and be a warning to those of us who seek to teach the Word of God. He said, "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" (James 3:1). The NASB renders this verse, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment." The teaching of God's Word is of the greatest importance to God (or else He would not have revealed it as He has), and so those who corrupt what He has given are going to face the judgment of God, both here and hereafter! They don't know what they are talking about. The truth of Scripture does not center around the pleasure of man, but around the pleasure of God. And so those who put man in God's place are going to pay the consequences in the eternal judgment of God. They "shall utterly perish in their corruption," does not mean annihilation, but eternal judgment, suffering forever, paying the consequences for what they have done to the Word of God.

2:13 The NASB translates the beginning of this verse, "suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong."

There will be rewards for unrighteousness as there will be rewards for righteousness. No false teacher will get away with anything. There are eternal consequences for have tampered with the truth of God so as to attempt to make it say the opposite of what it does say.

Normally sin is reserved for the night time. But false teachers brazenly encourage sin in the daytime, a life devoted totally to sin. The Apostle Paul noted in 1 Thessalonians 5:7 that the normal time for drunkenness and all that goes with it, is the night. He said, "They that be drunken are drunken in the night." But the farther people get away from the Word of God, the true meaning of Scripture, the more they will be given to their sin. Note again that false teaching results in moral declension. The teaching of God's Word is a preventive against sin; false teaching does just exactly the opposite. And sin always have a blinding effect upon those who practice it. So people become more brazen in sin as a result of false teaching.

Peter continued, "Spots they are and blemishes." In the light of what the Apostle Peter said in his first epistle about our Lord being "without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:19), his words here mean that false teaching does not produce a likeness to Christ, but just the opposite: more spots and more blemishes. False teaching does not remove sin; it increases sin. It does make us like Christ (which is the object of salvation), but it makes people more unlike the Lord than they normally would be (which is bad enough).

Peter's mention of the feasts here at the end of verse 13 seems to be a reference to the love feasts which the people of God practiced, expressing their love for God and their love for each other as they feasted together. These were times of special fellowship which the people enjoyed. But even these were corrupted by the false teachers as they dared to invade the most sacred times that the people enjoyed together. In our day this would be similar to false teachers partaking of the Lord's Supper in order to deceive in a further way the people of God.

So false teachers not only bring in the erroneous teaching, but they corrupt that which the people of God do in obedience to the Word of God.

2:14 "Having eyes full of adultery" – It seems amazing that supposedly false teachers could degenerate to such an extent. We have seen before that our eyes often become instruments of sin. What we see often leads to coveting, and eyes that are "full of adultery" tend to look upon every woman as what Michael Green called, "a potential adulteress" (p. 122). "Eyes full of adultery" also seek out those who can satisfy such sexual desires. They "cannot cease from sin." False teaching does not deliver its followers from sin, but it leads to a greater enslavement to sin.

But who are potentially those who can be deceived by false teaching and so led into such depraved actions? Peter said it will always be "unstable souls." "Unstable" means a person who goes back and forth as far as the truth of God's Word is concerned. They are not grounded, not convinced, of the truth of Scripture. They may have been, so to speak, "born in the church," but they only have a very superficial knowledge of God's Word. People not only need to be taught the Scriptures, but the truth needs to be written on their hearts by the ministry of the Spirit of God. People can even sit under good teaching, and yet not be learning much of anything. That is why we need to be very prayerful about the ministry of the Word.

They have hearts that are "exercised with covetous practices." You see, coveting not only has to do with material things, but it has to do with people. "Exercised" speaks, as you might imagine, of a person who goes to a gymnasium to exercise for health. In fact, we get our English word *gymnasium* from the Greek verb which Peter used here. It is possible to exercise, to train ourselves, along either moral or immoral lines. Many people are like this regarding sin. They live in anticipation of it. They plan for it. They look for it. They talk about it.

And they usually find it. But they show that they are not children of God, but “cursed children.” These are children who are under the curse, not saved, religious, but unregenerate.

It seems from all that Peter has to say that we need to be especially prayerful and watchful over all who are identified with the church, and regularly sitting under the ministry of the Word. Every church has people who think that they are saved, and who can act like they are saved, but who are not saved. They are the ones who are especially receptive to anything that comes along, either a doctrinal heresy, or a practical departure from Scripture. Many of them may be sincere, but they are sincerely wrong. Sincerity is a good characteristic only if it is exercised within the truth.

May 14, 2007

2:15 “Who have forsaken the right way” seems to indicate that some of these false teachers, were at one time inclined to accept the truth of Scripture, but they themselves are the victims error and deception and now they are engaged in deceiving others. They have turned from “the way of truth” (see 2:2), and now speak of the truth as though it is error. They have “gone astray” (reminding us of Isa. 53:6). The unregenerate human heart shows more of an inclination always toward error than toward God and His truth even after it has been exposed to the truth and has even professed to follow it at least temporarily. Any departure from Scripture is going astray.

The illustration of what Peter was talking about here, is Balaam. His story is given to us in Numbers 22, 23, and 24. Peter, here in verse 16, called him “a prophet.” Now prophets were men in OT times who spoke from God. Not all prophets were writing prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah, to cite two examples, but, like Elijah and Elisha were spokesmen from God for their generation. So Balaam must have been one like Judas Iscariot, who had been appointed to a prophetic ministry, and he must have had a reputation for being able to bring the curse of God upon people, or Balak, the king of Moab, would never have called him to come to curse Israel. Balaam communed with God about cursing Israel, but each time the Lord refused to let him do it. However, later Balaam encouraged the children of Israel to worship Baal-peor, thus luring them into idolatry, and ultimately bringing the judgment of God upon them. (See Num. 31:16.) And when the Lord sent His people against the kings of Midian, not only did they kill all of the kings of Midian, but Balaam also was killed because he was evidently living among them. But why would he advise the people of Israel to worship Baal? For two reasons: one, because he knew this would bring the judgment of God upon them, and, two, because he was getting pay for doing so. Peter tells us here that Balaam “loved the wages of unrighteousness.”

These are Jude’s words about Balaam and Cain and Korah (Core in the KJV):

11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

13 Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever (Jude 11-13).

In our Lord’s letter to the church at Pergamos we have this further word concerning Balaam:

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate (Rev. 2:14-15).

So by getting the children of Israel to compromise with the worshipers of Baal, he accomplished the same purpose as if God had cursed the children of Israel as Balak wanted him to do. False teachers often get a foothold with the people of God by suggesting a compromise with the truth of God. We must never compromise with the truth nor with the practice of the truth. It always leads to defeat. Our politicians, at least a majority of them, operate on the basis of compromise. And that is one reason our government is corrupt. The truth must always prevail. Right is right, and wrong is wrong. When right compromises with wrong, the wrong always wins. A little step in the wrong direction, leads to another little step. And then the steps get larger and larger until there is a complete departure from the true way. And we need to be particularly suspicious about the desire for money. "The love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:10), not money, but "the love of money." And Paul continued in that verse with these words: "Which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

In opposition to all of this Paul went on to say,

11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

The best defense is a strong offence. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21).

Balaam knew that God would not curse His people just because their enemy wanted them to be cursed. So he did wrong in asking the Lord about it even the first time, but he opened himself up to trouble when he asked the Lord the second time, and then went to talk to Balak. These are important lessons that we all need to learn.

The next verse tells us how the Lord sought to keep Balaam from sin.

2:16 George Mueller used to say, "The steps of the Lord are ordered by the Lord, and the stops are too." The background for this incident is Numbers 22:21-35 which we need to take the time to read.

Notice that what Balaam was doing was both "iniquity" and "madness." It was "iniquity" because it was a transgression of God's will. "Madness" means *foolhardiness*, or *insanity*. Even a child would have been capable of knowing that what Balaam was doing was sinful in God's sight.

The Lord sent the angel of the Lord to stand in Balaam's way, and as you read the account in Numbers 22 you see that this is one of those instances in the OT where the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to Balaam. And we can say that it was the Lord because of what the Apostle John recorded for us in John 1:18. When Balaam got so mad as his donkey that he could have killed him, the Lord gave the donkey the ability to speak to his master.

We don't have experiences like this, but there are times in our lives when the Lord orders our circumstances to restrain us from doing something that is not His will. So here is another lesson for us to take to heart. And then the Apostle Peter has no more to tell us about Balaam. But he continues his expose of the false teachers in verses 17 and following.

May 15, 2007

2:17 Peter shows in the next three verses that false teachers make great promises, and great claims for themselves, but they are all just so many words.

In the commentary which is a combination of Robert Leighton and Griffith Thomas, Alister McGrath and J. I.

Packer have given us this translation:

These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him (p. 278).

Water is very essential for life. This is emphasized by the traveling of the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan. False teachers try to make people believe that they have found springs of living water, but they are empty springs instead. How different were the words of the Lord Jesus Christ to the woman of Samaria! When He asked her for a drink of water while He was waiting for His disciples to return with food from the city, she expressed surprise that He, a Jew, would ask a drink from a woman of Samaria. And then He said to her,

If thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water (John 4:10).

And then, after she asked a couple of more questions, He said to her,

13 . . . Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life (John 4:13b-14).

False teachers make great promises, great claims which they make for themselves, but they mean absolutely nothing. But to show how the Lord considers such teachers, Peter said that for them is reserved, lit., “the blackness of darkness for ever.” This, of course, is a description of hell. The severest of punishments are “reserved” for those who seek to replace the Word of God, either in part or in all of its entirety, with their own doctrines which are not true, but are specifically designed to seduce and deceive people who are led astray by them.

2:18 The false teacher uses “great swelling words,” *boastful words*, *words of pride*, but words which ultimately mean nothing. These are words that deceive and trap people. They are combined with “the lusts of the flesh.” And the word “wantonness” means excessive sins of the flesh, but it is sometimes used to include other sins as well. The last words of this verse speak of those who have just recently been saved. The false teachers target them, or people who have been saved for a time but who are not established in the truth. Dr. Mitchell used to say that false teachers concentrate on those who are primarily ignorant of the truth. This emphasizes the need for pastors and mature Christians to see to it that those young in the faith are taught the Scriptures. One thing that is often said about churches today, is that it is hard to find churches where the Word of God is taught. Most churches that claim to be evangelical use the Bible, but you can sit under such teaching and never really learn anything. It is often mixed with a lot of emotionalism, encouraging people to seek experiences that supposedly will establish them, but these often fall into the category of error because they are a departure from Scripture.

Paul’s words to Timothy at the end of 2 Timothy 3 and the beginning of chapter 4, are words that need to be followed continuously in every generation of believers. Failure to do so will leave even true believers in a state of spiritual infancy.

2:19 In 1 Corinthians 11:1 the Apostle Paul set the pattern, not only for himself, but for all who profess to be true teachers of Scripture. A teacher should be one who people can safely follow because he is following Christ. Peter in this verse was speaking of those who promise delivery from sin while they themselves are “the servants of corruption.” We are frequently exposed to teachers like this even in so-called evangelical churches. In John 8:34 we have these words of the Lord Jesus: “Whosoever commiteth sin (present tense) is the servant of sin,” the bondservant of sin. And just before that, in John 8:32, the Lord said, “And ye shall

know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Error increases man’s bondage to sin. The only true instrument of deliverance is the Word of God. There is absolutely no other way. In that great 119th Psalm, the Psalmist said very clearly, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11). And we need to know that the only person who is going to hide the Word of God in his heart, is the person who has experienced true salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no question but that man’s greatest problem, is sin. The world’s greatest problem is sin. And it is only through the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ Who died not only to save us from the penalty of our sins, but from the power and dominion of our sins, that any person can be delivered from sin’s bondage. *Any other teaching will only tighten the hold that sin has in a person’s life.*

As evidence of this, look at what Peter has written in verse 20 of our chapter.

2:20 Now as you read carefully the last three verses of 2 Peter 2, I think that we have to say that Peter was not speaking of a person who has really trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. He was talking about a person who had professed faith in Christ and to extent had “escaped the pollutions of the world” through what they had learned about the Lord Jesus Christ. But then “they are entangled again therein.” This means that it becomes evident from the way they go that they have not really been saved. Then it usually follows as Peter says here that “the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.”

Judas Iscariot is an example of this. And so is Demas in 2 Timothy 4:10. Children can grow up in a home where they hear the Gospel, and they may even profess faith in Christ themselves, but as time goes on it becomes apparent that their hearts have not been changed. I have seen this happen time and time again in the lives of young people. But it is not limited to young people. I have seen it happen to men who have become church leaders. It sometimes happens to pastors who have gone all through seminary, and then turn away. The Bible makes it very clear that once a person is really born again, they can never lose their salvation. But what Peter was concerned about here was people (and they can be of any age) *who profess, but do not possess. They profess Christ, but they do not possess Christ.* Or to state it another way, *Christ does not profess them.*

This is one thing I don’t like about these large evangelistic campaigns. There is nothing comparable to them in Scripture. The pressure that people are placed under to “go forward.” Time has shown that the majority of people who profess Christ in such circumstances, are not truly saved. They may think that they are, but their lives demonstrate that they are not! And it disturbed me no end when I learned that most of the people who come forward first were those who had been trained to be personal workers. It is deception designed to get people to go forward who are not Christians. It is the Gospel that is the power of God unto salvation, but even a lot of preachers and evangelists don’t believe that. They believe that the preaching of the Gospel is very important, but they also believe that we have to do something to get people to “confess Christ.”

Look at the words in verse 20 “entangled” and “overcome.” To be “entangled” is to be caught in a net like fish. And note the word “again.” They have been “entangled” before (because this is what sin does to people; it is what sin has done to us). “Overcome” means that the hold that sin has in their lives is complete.

Hearing the Gospel places all who hear it under a place of great responsibility to God. So that when a person hears the Gospel, and supposedly accepts it, but not from the heart, then sin “entangles” them once again and they are “overcome” so that “the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.” Peter here was referring to the Lord’s own teaching. Cf. Matthew 12:43-45.

And so to what conclusion did the Apostle Peter come regarding those who have been “entangled” again, and “overcome”? You see it in verse 21.

2:21 Can you think of any more ominous words than those which the Holy Spirit led the Apostle Peter to write here in verse 21? (Read.)

The Gospel has to do with “the way of righteousness.” And there is only one “way of righteousness.” There is only one way to find acceptance with God, to be assured that your sins are forgiven, and that they will never be remembered against you again. They are gone. Forgiveness is yours. You are justified in the sight of a holy God. Peter indicates that they had heard it, that they had understood it, but that they had turned “from the holy commandment delivered unto them.” What is “the holy commandment” which had been delivered unto them? It was the Gospel. They had been commanded by God to believe it.

In our study of 2 Thessalonians 1 last Sunday we learned in connection with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and the final judgment, that our Lord will come:

8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.

How do we *obey* the Gospel? We obey it by believing in it. This is “the way of righteousness,” and the only way of righteousness! As Paul told the Athenians on Mars Hill, “God . . . now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). Not to repent and to believe the Gospel is to disobey the Gospel, and to disobey God.

But how did Peter illustrate what happens to many people? Verse 22 will tell us.

2:22 Peter called his explanation proverbial. We see the first in Proverbs 26:11: “As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returned to his folly.” The second evidently was proverbial also from some source, but Peter in using it was recognizing that it also was true.

Why does a dog return to eat its own vomit? Just because that is what dogs do, by nature. Dress it up. Give it all the comforts of life. But it still will practice this, shall I say, *nauseating*, habit. And clean up a pig as best you can, cover it with power and perfume, but when it comes to a muddy puddle, you will not be able to keep him out. Why? Because that is what pigs do. It is the nature of a pig to want to wallow in mud.

Why does a person who is not really saved, but who has turned away from sin to some extent, go back to his sin? Because that is the nature of a human being. We are sinners by nature, and by choice. A dog returns to his vomit by nature, and by choice. A pig loves to roll around in the mud because that is what he does by nature, and by choice. There is no remedy for a dog. Neither is there any remedy for a pig with respect to these habits. There is a remedy for man, but only one. He is the only remedy. He is the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. But when He does not change the heart of man, that man may be refined in many ways, but he will still go back to his sin.

This is why Peter was so strong in his opposition to false teachers. They were powerless to change any person. Neither can humanistic psychology change people the way they need to be changed. It is still true that “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). Only Christ can deliver sinners from the penalty of their sin; only He can deliver sinners from the enslavement of sin.

The Second Epistle of Peter

2 Peter 3:1-18

May 21, 2007

Intro: We come to the last class of this school year, and we are down to the third and last chapter of 2 Peter.

Rather than just finish part of this chapter, and wait until the Fall to finish the rest of it, I am going to try, with the Lord's help and blessing, to expound the whole chapter in our class hour today. I won't be able to expand on many thoughts which the Apostle Peter has given us in this chapter, but perhaps we can get the main emphasis, or emphases, which are to be found in this sobering, and yet encouraging, chapter.

Let me remind you of the outline I have given you of the entire epistle, and then give you the divisions of this chapter, and then pick up some of the detail in the chapter in the time that we have.

First of all, the outline.

I have pointed out that in chapter 1 the Apostle Peter was pointing out the present need, the spiritual need, of the people to whom he wrote this epistle. And I am sure that before we got very far into chapter 1 all of us began to feel that their need was our need, too. Just the other day I was looking at the website of Hillcrest Chapel and I came across an eight-message series by Pastor Gary Custis on 2 Peter 1:4-7 on "Adding to Your Faith. I have just listened to the first message, but I intend to listen to all of them. You might find them very profitable also. We all have this present and continuing need – to add to our faith.

Then in chapter 2 the Apostle Peter took a look at past, OT history, citing examples of God's judgment upon the wicked, and giving an extended description of the damaging and damning influence of false teachers and their false teaching.

In chapter 3 we are looking at the future and answering the scoffers who ridicule the teaching of Scripture which has to do with the return of Christ.

In the first two verses Peter stated again his purpose in writing this epistle.

In verses 3 and 4 Peter mentioned again that there will be scoffers who will ridicule the promise of the Lord's return.

In verses 5 through 10 Peter answered the scoffers, explaining why the Lord had not (and we can say, "has not) come, be confidently declaring that He will come, and that His coming will certainly bring in a judgment which the put an end to the heavens and the earth as we know them now.\

Then from verse 11 on to the end of the chapter Peter wrote specifically to the people of God as to how all of this should affect their lives. And we need to make the application to our lives. Believing in the return of Christ always is meant to be a strong encouragement for us to be holy and to be at peace. The chapter closes with an even stronger appeal for the Lord's people to beware of how the attitude of false teachers and scoffers can affect them away from God, and what is the best way to assure that they will fail in their evil purposes.

2 Peter 3 is a very, very important chapter. It is one that we should come back to (along with chapters 1 and 2) frequently in the days ahead.

In the outline I have given you I have divided chapter 3 into two major points in the outline:

IV. Assurance regarding the future (2 Peter 3:1-16). And then in the last two verses,

V. The Conclusion (2 Peter 3:17-18). But you will notice that he just not say, “Good by,” but he gives them to concluding exhortations: the first, a warning; the second, a positive exhortation.

But now following the divisions that I have just given you for this chapter, let’s start with the first two verses where we have:

Verses 1 and 2: A restatement of his original purpose in the epistle. He wanted to *stir them up* – to “*stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.*” See the word “remembrance” in 2 Peter 1:12, 13, 15. In 1:13 we also have the words, “stir you up.” This is why he was writing to them, not to tell them new things, but to stir them up to remember what he had told them before. To stir up a person is what you do when you wake up your children or your spouse from a sleep. It is what we do when we remind someone of something very important which we have told them before, but which they have forgotten. This is a common fault among us as believers. We are inclined to be “asleep at the switch,” as the saying goes.

What did he want them to remember? He wanted them to remember what the OT prophets said about the coming of the Lord, and what the NT apostles said about the coming of the Lord. For us today it means for us to wake up to what the Bible teaches about the coming of the Lord. We may be taken with what the world is trying to do, to repair itself, but it is never going to happen, especially when they ignore the only way that people are ever going to be changed.

We need to ask ourselves if we are really awake, or are we sleeping as others do. Cf. what the Apostle Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:6, “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

1 Thess 5:6

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

Verses 3 and 4: What was Peter concerned about? Well, after chapter 2 there should be no question in our minds: “scoffers.” This is just another word describing false prophets or false teachers. A scoffer is one who mocks the Word of God, and who belittles those who believe it. Notice that they are not motivated by a desire to know the truth, but by “their lusts.”

PROV.
22:10

What in particular were they attacking? The promise of God. And while it is true even today, that the Lord has not yet returned, the scoffers were dead wrong when they said, “all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” The truth is that nothing continued the same very long after the creation of man. But what did Peter point out in the verses that follow?

Verses 5 through 10: Don’t you like that expression, “willingly ignorant,” in verse 5. With all of the evidence that is given to us in Scripture, and even with the evidence in our hearts that there is a God, people believe the most ridiculous things because they deliberately choose to be ignorant. So that is true about the scoffer who says that everything continues as it has been since the beginning of creation. The truth is that everything changes. The Bible tells us how the world came into existence. It was “by the Word of God.” “He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psa. 33:9). Expositors differ about what it means “the standing out of the water and in the water” means, but it seems that Peter was saying that the Lord brought the earth out of the water, and then He destroyed all of the people on the earth by covering the earth by water again in the days of Noah and the flood. That is the meaning of the sixth verse when he said that “the world . . . perished.” God did not destroy the world then, but he destroyed the people who were living on the earth.

And just as all of that (creation and the flood) took place by God’s Word, so it is by that same all-powerful

word, “the same word” that created the heavens and the earth, and which destroyed all people on the earth in the days of Noah, it is by that “same word, according to verse 7, that the universe is “kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” The final judgment on the universe as we know it today, will not be a judgment of water (we have God’s promise that there will never again be a flood that will cover the earth), but it will be a judgment of fire, and it will mark perdition, eternal judgment, for all of the ungodly of the world.

But when we come to verse 8, the Apostle Peter deals with the question of *time*. The world says that if the destruction of the world has not taken place after all of the time that has passed since creation, then it is not going to happen. That is one reason why the people in our generation feel so smug and so free to go on living their lives to please themselves instead of living lives to please God (which is the idea in the word “godly”).

Peter accused the scoffers of being “willingly ignorant” in verse 5; here he informed believers that God dwells in a timeless eternity. A thousand years to God are like a day to us. So from heaven’s timing, it is only two days since the Lord Jesus left, *and there is no reason to be concerned about the fulfillment of a promise that is only two days old!*

But as Peter went on in verse 10, he went back on man’s point-of-view regarding time. And he said that “the Lord is not slack concerning His promise,” that is, His promise to return and every other promise that He has given us in His Word. “Nor slack” means that He hasn’t forgotten that He made this promise, nor did something come up which made forget that He made it. And this applies to all of God’s promises. He doesn’t need a secretary to remind Him of what He needs to do today. God doesn’t even need an appointment book or a Palm Pilot (to be up-to-date) to remind Him of what He has promised to do. And when Peter said that the Lord is “not slack,” he meant that the Lord is *never* slack! He is always on time every time. Now it doesn’t always seem that way to us, but we need to understand this about God. You see, the mistake that scoffers and all people who don’t know the Lord, make when they think about God, is that they think that the Lord is like they are. They don’t know that God is GOD, a sovereign God, Who is in charge and control of all things so that time does not rule Him like it rules us, but He controls all things. There is nothing in all the universe that is not under His control.

But is the real explanation that the Lord Jesus Christ has not returned? It is because He is “longsuffering.” This is one of the Greek verbs for patience. Paul said that this is a characteristics of God’s love. “Love suffereth long . . .” This is one of the most amazing of God’s attributes. But Peter said that “the Lord is long-suffering to us-ward,” as the KJV translates it. We would say today, *the Lord is longsuffering toward us.*” But to whom was he speaking? Well, when we go back to verse 8, we see that Peter was speaking to the “beloved,” the Lord’s people. What did he say about them? That God was not willing that any of them should perish! Who are the “them”?

If you go back to chapter 1, and verse 10, you will see that he exhorted his readers “to make their calling and election sure.” Calling to what? Election to what? *Peter was speaking of their calling and election to salvation.* You see, the people of the world know nothing about this. They do not know that before creation God made a choice of all who would ever be saved. And He has not destroyed this universe by fire yet because not all of His elect have been saved. You see, the salvation of certain sinners is the most important thing that is going on in the world today. It is the one most important thing that has ever gone on. And when that last one has been saved, then what is described in verse 10 will take place. He is waiting for “all” of them “to come to repentance.” And they are the ones He is calling to Himself.

What does verse 10 tell us? “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.” We don’t know what a thief will strike us, nor do we know when the Lord will eventually come. And when He comes, what will

happen? (Read the rest of verse 10.) Peter is not concerned here with the order of events which will take place in the last days, but He is thinking of that which will ultimately lead up to the new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness will dwell. In the book of The Revelation, this takes place between chapters 20 and 21.

But now we come to the last part of this epistle.

Verses 11 through 18: Verses 17 and 18 form the conclusion of the epistle, but they give us two extremely important exhortations.

The Apostle Peter has answered the scoffers. Now at this point he turned again to his readers, the people of God in his day, and we know that it has to do with us as it has had to do with all believers since the day that Peter wrote this epistle.

Do you remember that in our study of 1 John, when the Apostle John was speaking of the world, he made this statement in chapter 2, verse 17: "And the world passeth away [is passing away], but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." In the light of all that the Apostle Peter had been saying here in 2Peter 2, this is what we need to hear and obey: "Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved . . ." (Read verses 11-13.) Note carefully the words at the end of verse 11, "in all holy conduct and godliness."

Our world today is characterized by wickedness and ungodliness. What will it be like to be in a new order where sin is a thing of the past, and everybody is primarily concerned about pleasing God. The word that Peter used here suggests both that which never existed before as well as that which is better than before. And we know it will be infinitely better, and so implied also in the expression is that which has such newness will bring a new note of praise such as we have never uttered before.

Now look at verse 14. Here is another practical exhortation. Since this is what we look for, and since the time between now and then may be very difficult, we need to seek from God His peace, and strive by God's grace to be 'without spot, and blameless.' These words suggest Christ-likeness. Remember the longsuffering of God, and why we still wait. It is all for salvation. And Paul brings the Apostle Paul in as his co-witness to our present need and the glorious prospect that awaits us all. Cf. verses 15 and 16.

Verses 17 and 18: These give us a very special conclusion to this epistle.

Verse 17 gives us a warning. Knowledge of God's Word gives us a greater responsibility to "beware" lest we be led astray by the false teachers, and "fall from your own steadfastness." Those who are the strongest in the Lord need to carefully beware lest they be turned aside. But what is the best way to maintain our strength in the Lord? Verse 18 tells us.

There is no more important verse for every Christian to know and to act upon, that 2 Peter 3:18. It applies to the most mature saint, and it applies to a babe in Christ, and to everyone in between. How do we do this? By God's grace, and by our knowledge and fellowship with "our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." We need to feed daily upon God's Word. We need to seek the Lord in prayer. We need to seek God's grace in being obedient to His will, and yielded to Him.

See Peter's concluding prayer to his first epistle in 1 Peter 5:10-11.