

## THE RECORD OF OUR HOPE

2 Peter 1:19-21

Intro: Peter was writing to comfort and to encourage Jewish believers who had suffered, and were suffering, for their faith in Christ. They had been driven from their homes. They had lost their homes, their livelihood, and had been greatly humbled by what had happened to them. Many, no doubt, were caused to ask where the Lord was in all of this. Why had He not come to help them? What purpose did He have in seeing His people treated in this way? They were like the old Puritan who is sometimes referred to who, in the midst of his trials, would cry out, "The use, Lord. The use. What is the use, Lord?" He wanted to know the purpose of the sufferings that he was going through. He knew that, if God did not intervene, there must be some purpose which he had not yet discovered.

At this point Peter was explaining to his fellow-believers why he was so concerned that they would be adding "these things" to their faith--and why it was so important to him that he was going to spend his remaining days talking about them, preaching them, and even writing them down (as he did in this Epistle). He was anxious for them to be confirmed in the realization that neither he nor they had "followed cunningly devised fables," but that their faith stood on the strongest possible grounds.

There were two foundation stones for their faith:

- 1) The testimony of the apostles.
- 2) The testimony of the Scriptures--at that point in history it would have been the testimony of the Old Testament Scriptures. The New Testament had not yet been completed.

Last Sunday we considered the first of these two: the testimony of the apostles. And that specifically had to do with the time that Peter and James and John were with the Lord Jesus Christ "in the holy mount," the mount of transfiguration, where the Lord was transfigured before them. They saw Him in His glory. They realized more than ever that He was the Son of God, God manifested in human flesh--the God-man. They had known it before, but their faith was greatly strengthened by the transfiguration of Christ.

Peter wrote of that experience in 2 Peter 1:16-18. As we move on to verse 19, we see that he wrote there (and in vv. 20, 21) of the second great foundation stone of our faith: the testimony of the Old Testament Scriptures. He called it "the word of prophecy" probably because he was thinking especially of the many prophecies in the Old Testament that have to do with the coming of our Lord, His coming in the flesh, His coming to suffer and die for the sins of men.

We have three things in these three verses:

- 1) The confirmation of the Old Testament (v. 19a).
- 2) The use of the Old Testament (v. 19b).
- 3) The origin of the Old Testament (vv. 20, 21).

Let us consider them in this order.

#### I. THE CONFIRMATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (2 Pet. 1:19a).

Peter probably was not saying that the written Word of the Old Testament was more reliable than the transfiguration of Christ which the three Apostles witnessed, but he was saying that the transfiguration confirmed, agreed with, supported the prophecies concerning Christ in the Old Testament.

You see, both of these were revelations from God and revelations of God. And as revelations from God they would be equally reliable. All things which God has revealed are equally reliable. If we were just speaking of the Scriptures alone, we would not say that one book is more inspired of God than another. They are equally inspired, and equally reliable. So that is what we can say about the transfiguration of Christ and the Old Testament Scriptures. One is just as dependable as the other. God's revelations do not differ as to their truth or their dependability.

The writer of Hebrews, speaking of Old Testament times, wrote this:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners  
spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,  
hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son  
(Heb. 1:1, 2a).

This means that God did not always speak in the same way. He spoke by dreams, by visions. He spoke audibly. He spoke through His servants. But in all of them God was speaking, and they were all equally the Word of God, and equally reliable. They did not differ as to their inspiration. But the confirming, reassuring thing about all of the revelations was the fact that they were in agreement with each other. There were no contradictions. There is a unity about the Scriptures that would not be possible if all of the Scriptures were not the Word of God. One of the strongest proofs that we have that the Bible is the Word of God is the unity that exists throughout the Old Testament, and throughout the New Testament, and even the way in which the Old and New Testaments fit together perfectly. That is why we can refer to the sixty-six books of the Bible as one Book.

This is what Peter was saying about the relationship between the transfiguration of Christ and the prophecies

of the Old Testament. Our faith in the Old Testament is strengthened when through the transfiguration we can see that Jesus of Nazareth was just what the Old Testament predicted that He would be.

I have this marginal reading in my Bible: "And we have the word of prophecy confirmed." I believe that that is what Peter was saying here. We can believe that Jesus Christ was truly the Son of God because there is perfect harmony between what they saw at the transfiguration, and what the prophets prophesied in the books of the Old Testament. One confirmed the other. The story of the transfiguration might sound outlandish to some, but Peter was saying that the transfiguration was just what you would expect in the light of the prophecies of the Old Testament.

I hope this strengthens your faith, and mine, as it undoubtedly strengthened the faith of the original readers of this Epistle.

Now we proceed to:

## II. THE USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (2 Pet. 1:19b).

What Peter said here can apply to the transfiguration, but he was speaking now about the "word of prophecy," the Old Testament.

The Bible is not a fable. It is not something that the prophets "cooked up," so to speak. It is the very Word of God! Consequently it is no surprise that Peter said, "Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed."

You see, the reason that people do not pay more attention to the Bible is because they do not understand this about it--THAT IT IS THE VERY WORD OF GOD, ALL OF IT! Once a person understands that, then in their minds and hearts there will be no other book that even begins to compare with it. We have the Word of God. And we need to "take heed" to it. What does this mean?

This is how Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones explained what it means to "take heed":

'To take heed' means, of course, to give careful, earnest, believing attention. Hold on to the prophecies, says the Apostle in effect, study them diligently, spend your time with them, be governed by them, meditate always upon them (Expository Sermons on 2 Peter, p. 112).

(Repeat it.) This is the way we are to use the Scriptures--read them, re-read them, think about them,

believe them, let our lives be changed by them. You see, this is the Word of God, and the person who gives heed to them, and especially to what they have to say about Christ, will find that his heart and life will be changed as he is brought to faith in Christ as Lord and Savior.

The message of Christ is "a light that shineth in a dark place."

What is the darkest spot on the whole earth? What would you say it is? I will tell you what it is: it is the human heart.

Do you know what "darkness" means in Scripture? It means ignorance! Anyone who is ignorant of the truth of the Bible is in darkness. And the Apostle John said of such a person that he "walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" (1 John 2:11b). But the Lord Jesus Christ said,  
 I am the light of the world;  
 he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness,  
 but shall have the light of life (John 8:12).

My heart goes out to people who do not know the truth of the Bible, and who do not know the Lord, because they can't figure things out. They cannot understand why they aren't happy. They can't understand why they often have such terrible results from things that they thought would bring them the greatest pleasure. They do not understand themselves, nor their need. They do not know that God is the One they need, nor do they know that the only way they can know God is through the Lord Jesus Christ. How thankful we should be today if we can say with the Apostle Paul,

But God, who commanded the light  
 to shine out of darkness,  
 hath shined in our hearts,  
 to give the light of the knowledge  
 of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ  
 (2 Cor. 4:6).

If this all sounds strange to you, ask the Lord to let the light of His Word shine into your darkened heart that you might learn the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ.

But does it stop there? Does our interest in the Word of God stop when we are saved, our sins are forgiven, and we know that we are going to heaven?

No! Look at what Peter wrote in the last part of v. 19. We "do well" (and you can do no better) "that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, **until the day dawn, and the day star arise in**

your hearts."

Some teachers of the Word feel that Peter was talking about the coming of the Lord here. But I call your attention to the words, "in your hearts." Peter was not speaking of the time that the Lord would come, but he had in mind that time when the full light of day would be shining in our hearts as the morning star arises and gives more and more light to our needy hearts.

We are not through with the Word when we become the children of God; we are only beginning. And we have not seen all of Christ that we need to see when we come to Him for salvation; there is much more to see. We continue to "take heed" to the Word, learning more of Christ, trusting Him more, worshipping Him more, glorifying Him more. And the more we learn of Him, the more our ignorance is dispelled, and the more the light of the Word floods our hearts and controls our lives. The Psalmist wrote in Psa. 119:130,

The entrance of thy words giveth light;  
it giveth understanding to the simple.

Who is a simple person? It is a person who needs to know more than he knows--AND THAT INCLUDES ALL OF US. The more we learn about Christ, the more we see how much more there is to know. And the more we know, the greater our joy and the greater our peace because joy and peace are only to be found in Him.

Peter was commenting particularly on the Old Testament, but the same truth applies to the New Testament.

"But," someone might say, "why do you attach so much importance to the Bible?" Peter answered that in the last two verses of chapter 1. Here he was teaching . . .

### III. THE ORIGIN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (2 Pet. 1:20, 21).

Let me point out before I comment on these two verses that what I am about to say concerning the Old Testament applies equally to the New Testament.

How did we get the Old Testament, or the New Testament?

It is important to understand what these verses say or we will not appreciate the importance of what Peter was writing.

Somebody says, "But the Old Testament was written by men." And we agree. Moses wrote part of it. David wrote part of it. Isaiah wrote part of it. And I could go on and on mentioning other writers of the Old Testament. The

thirty-nine books of the Old Testament were written by human beings. Well then, how can it be the Word of God?

Look at what Peter wrote,

A. First, negatively (vv. 20, 21a).

Verse 20 has been interpreted many different ways, but if you look at the verses which precede it and the verse which follows, you can see that what Peter was saying was that there is no possibility that the Old Testament could be of human origin. Moses did not originate what he wrote. Neither did David. Nor did Isaiah, nor any of the other Old Testament writers.

The first part of verse 21 confirms this: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man." It may have been written by men, but it did not originate with them. They may have been the writers, but they were not the author.

Peter had said in verse 16 that "we have not followed cunningly devised fables." It would have been impossible for the approximately 40 writers of the 66 books to have collaborated with each other because they lived and wrote over a period of some 1600 years. But, if the Bible were the product of men, telling us what it does, it most certainly would be a Book of "cunningly devised fables."

B. Stated positively (v. 21).

Here is the truth about the origin of the Old Testament, and about the origin of the New Testament as well: "But holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

The Holy Spirit is the Author of the Bible--both the Old and New Testaments. The men who wrote, wrote as they were moved along by the Holy Spirit. So the Book which we call the Bible is rightly called, the Word of God.

We have this word "moved," that is, the same word in the original Greek text, in the account of the shipwreck which Paul experienced in Acts 27. In verse 17 we read how they "were driven" by the storm. That is the same word that Peter used in verse 21. The people who wrote the Bible were "driven," were carried along by the Holy Spirit. The Bible does not explain it more than that, but we know that the Holy Spirit directed every writer of Scripture so that even the

very words they used, were the words of God.

Paul's statement concerning the Scriptures is in  
2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

Concl: I close with just three words of application.

- 1) May the Lord be pleased to put the same conviction in all of our hearts that was in the heart of Peter--that the Bible is, beyond dispute, the very Word of God. If that is not your conviction, plead with God to give you that understanding. There is no other way out of your ignorance and sin.
- 2) If you have never received Christ as your Savior, will you "take heed" to the Scriptures today? Be like the noble Berean of old who, when Paul and Silas preached, "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).
- 3) If you do know the Lord, and you do believe the Bible to be the Word of God, may I ask if you are really giving "heed" to the Word. Are you reading it daily? Are you learning more and more about Christ? Are you faithful in your obedience to the Word? If not, will you get back where you once were, revelling in the truth of God? If you are, pray that more and more your heart may be flooded with the truth, and that the Lord Jesus may more and more be light to your needy heart.

FALSE TEACHERS

2 Peter 2:1-3

Intro: A change of subject = "Bair"

yr closely related to what Peter had been saying at the end of ch. 1.

The predominance of this subject all through scripture:

- 1) In the OT - Gen 5:31
- 2) In the ministry of Jesus (and James) - Mt. 15:9 - "Hearing but observing the will of man" - 1:5-14 - "Heart of man is deceitful above all things and the son of man is not true" - Mt. 15:10
- 3) In the early Church
- 4) In the writings of Paul - Galatians 2:20
- 5) In the writings of James - 2:14-25 - "we are of the world" - 4:3-5
- 6) In the writings of John - 1 Jn 4:1-3
- 7) In the writings of Jude - Very similar to 2 Peter 2.

And so, the first point Peter made here was that sin is, and always will be - all of 2 Pet 2.

I. A continuing, threatening, urgent, and big problem in the Church to the

note "there were even on" you see, the former illustrate what the latter will be. Peter was saying that we need to expect it, to get ready for it.

Now we see why he spoke so strongly about what he said in ch 1, and about not falling etc.



## II. Their tactics.

Two things need to be said about this:

- A. They initially are secretive about what they are doing - "privily."
- B. They infiltrate the people of God. They "bring in" from the outside. But it will be within the professing church.

## III. Their teaching, their doctrine

Let me point out through these verses what Peter said as being descriptive of the most dangerous false teaching.

### A. "Damnable Heresies"

1. Heresy - a self-chosen doctrine. It is not true to the Word of God.

In most instances <sup>fake teachers</sup> they do the most damage when people have not been taught the Word, or their knowledge is superficial.

2. "Damnable" - because it brings people to hell, not heaven; it ruins them, it does not save them.

We can understand this when we see what follows.

B. They deny "the Lord that bought them."

They speak about God. They speak about Jesus Christ. They may even speak about the Holy Spirit (i.e., in the most dangerous heresies). But...

1. They deny the Lord - the word is despotic -

Today people are heretics if they believe in the sov. of God.

a. His sovereignty - completely, over all men, in all circumstances, even in salvation absolute power

b. His ownership of His people

2. They deny His work on the Cross.

This is always the big issue.

"The Lord that bought them."

An important verse for those who believe in universal redemption.

But Peter was not saying that Christ actually purchased every single person in the world, for all time.

Possible explanations:

1) He was speaking to <sup>the</sup> true believers (+ about)

2) He was using the claim of the false teachers.

He was actually refuting universal redemption, classing it as a heresy.

But let us not miss the point. The false teachers were actually denying the sovereign work of Jesus Christ on the Cross - its sufficiency, that it was effective, + nothing else is needed.

C. They speak evil of "the way of truth," i.e., the true Gospel of the grace of God (v. 2).

<sup>lit.</sup> They bring the way of truth into disrepute. They have a low estimation of it. They dishonor it and they actually dishonor God + Christ + the Holy Spirit.

They dishonor the Word of God. They make it less than it is. They want to complete it. They are not limited by it. The Word loses its high place.

now we see the reason for 1:16-21.

But now let us look at a third point.

III Their effectiveness (v. 2a)

"many" - they can be tremendously successful. Perhaps more people go to hear them than will go to hear a man who preaches the truth.

But we do not judge the truth by the success or failure (apparent) of the leader. We judge it by the Word of God.

"Pernicious" - wanton, bridled, licentious.

False teachers free people from their attachment to the Scriptures, and to Christ. They are not bound to it.

They teach independence, so-called freedom - but the end of the line is more sin and greater sin. But its beginnings are so subtle that people do not really see what is happening until it ruins them.

#### \*V. Their objective (v. 3c)

It is not the glory of God, nor the good of men (their blessing). But it is MONEY. Cf. 1 Tim. 6:10. Note how it leads to denying the faith. They seek their own glory, their own advantage.

This was Judas Iscariot's problem.

"Feigned words" are "cunningly devised fables." They are an invention of their own. It is something which they have imagined, something which they teach as truth, but it is not real; it is not true.

The Gospel of self-worth.

And so they merely use people, they "make merchandise" of them - exploit, cheat, take advantage of them.

Illus: Recent discoveries about prominent TV preachers?

VI. Their end, their ultimate state, the consequences of what they do.

cf. Jas. 3:1. If this is even true of those who teach the Word, what will it mean to those who teach error, claiming that it is?

It often seems that God blesses what the false teacher does, & ignores the man on the church where the Word of God is being taught.

But this is where we can all be deceived.

Notice the words "judgment" and "damnation." They are almost personified. The teacher of the truth teaches judgment, teaches that there is a Hell - and that it is eternal. They teach that "whatsoever a man soweth..." (Gal. 6:7, 8).

But remember: Judgment is coming w/ relentless certainty. The time is coming. They are not idle, nor has "damnation"

gone to sleep as though it no longer exists!

Peter went on to speak of judgments in the past. Cf. 2 P. 2:9, 20-22

In the end the false teacher and all who follow them will pay an awful, an eternal price. They claim superior knowledge now, but it will all be shown to be ~~serious lies~~

Concl: How we need to know this Book, + the Lord Jesus Christ who is its theme?

Pray for discernment.

If you do not know the Lord as Jesus what reason do you have for what you believe. You believe something. If all you do is deny the Gospel, that is what you believe.

Oh, that you would be warned and that you would turn to Christ this very day, trusting Him + Him alone for your salvation.

THE VOICE OF GOD FROM THE PAST  
2 Peter 2:4-9

Intro: Peter's purpose in writing his two Epistles was to encourage and strengthen those people of God, mentioned in 1 Peter 1:1, 2. They had suffered much because of their relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, but we see from 2 Peter that reasons for them to be discouraged continued because of the work of false teachers, and the influence they were having upon people within the Church who claimed to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Obviously that which would always have the greatest priority in each of their lives was spiritual growth. We can see that in chapter 1 of 2 Peter, and we will see it again in chapter 3.

However, as a part of that spiritual growth, and yet somehow always needing to be emphasized, was the importance of having a true conception of God in such times. We all are inclined to wonder why God does not do more than He appears to be doing when there is so much trouble in the lives of the people of God, so much opposition to the Word of God and to Christian holiness inside of the Church as well as outside. Do people who despise God, who despise Christ, and who despise the Word of God, really get away with it? It seems often like they do! But do they?

Peter said in effect, let us look back through history to see what God has done in the past, to see if we can learn from the past that which would help us to remain true and faithful in our day. Peter, in this chapter, took those to whom he was writing back to look at what God did (1) to the angels who sinned (and remember that there was sin among angels before there was sin among men), (2) in the days of Noah, and (3) what He did in the days of Lot.

But before we look at those examples, let me point out a very significant thing about our text.

We are just going as far as verse 9 today, the Lord willing. Next Sunday we may begin with verse 9 and go on because verse 9 really belongs as much to verses 10 and following as it does to our text for today.

But will you notice that from verse 4 down to the middle of verse 10 we have one long sentence? In the NIV verse 4 to the end of verse 9 is one sentence. The NASB follows the KJV, and so the sentence goes to the middle of verse 10.

This fact in itself is not earth-shaking in and of itself except it does help us to see that there is really just one

thought from the beginning of verse 4 down through the end of verse 9 (or the middle of verse 10). But the important thing about this is to see that Peter was not talking as much about angels, and Noah, and Lot, as he was about GOD! Peter was telling his readers something about GOD which is evident in His dealings with the angels, with Noah, and with Lot. It all had to do with GOD!

Let me read these verses emphasizing that important feature about these verses. (Read vv. 4-10a.)

You see, we are not made to wonder at what the angels did, nor at what Noah did, nor at what Lot did, BUT AT WHAT GOD DID THEN, AND WHAT HE HAS CONTINUED TO DO RIGHT ON DOWN THROUGH HISTORY--ESPECIALLY THE HISTORY OF HIS DEALINGS WITH HIS PEOPLE. We can be thankful for Noah and Lot, but the One we really need to be thankful for is GOD!

But now let us look at the text. Obviously we have THE VOICE OF GOD FROM THE PAST. What is He saying to us? What was He saying to the people to whom Peter was writing? What is the message here for His people in every generation?

I am following some suggestions made by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his book of messages on 2 Peter. He did not state them exactly as I am going to do, but I am indebted to him for some of the points that I want to make.

#### I. THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE ALWAYS GOING TO HAVE TROUBLE IN THIS WORLD.

We do not warn the people of God about this as much as we should. If we are really Christians and living for the Lord, we are going to have trouble in the world.

When Paul and Barnabas went back to Lystra and Iconium and Antioch as they were completing their first missionary journey, they not only gave them more teaching, but they warned them that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22b). Notice especially the words "must" and "much."

When Paul wrote his last letter to Timothy, one of the things that he said was that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). Here notice the words "all" and "live godly" and "shall suffer persecution."

But what do we see today?

We see a church trying to make friends with the world. We see a church trying to imitate the world. We are telling



the world that we are, after all, just like it is. As Dr. Lloyd-Jones said, one of the great tragedies of our day is that it is very difficult in some instances to tell the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian.

Let us not be surprised if the world hates us. In fact, let us ask what is wrong if we are having an easy time in the world.

But here is a second point:

## II. WE NEED TO BE PREPARED TO STAND FOR THE LORD ALONE, IF NECESSARY.

It is wonderful when you are in school if you have a Christian friend who will stand with you, but you need to be prepared to stand alone if that is what it takes. On the job, it is wonderful to find other Christians, but you stand alone for the Lord if there is no one to stand with you. It is hard to be a Christian in a family where there are no other Christians, but that does not relieve you of your responsibility to stand alone if there is no one else to stand with you.

What is doubly hard is to find a Christian who will not stand with you--who would rather be popular than to be faithful to the Lord.

But in this connection, think of Noah and of Lot.

Think of their families. Did they get much encouragement from them?

On Noah, cf. Gen. 6:5-9.

Peter tells us that Noah was "a preacher of righteousness." Think how popular such preaching was in that day. And notice that Peter did not say one word about results. He preached for 120 years without a convert--unless some of his family members shared his faith.

And then think of Lot. Read Genesis 18 and 19 if you want to learn what a sordid story that was. How did it affect Lot? Peter says that he was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked." And then read v. 8.

What does "vexed" mean? Peter used two different words in vv. 7, 8. The one in v. 7 means that he was worn out by it. The one in v. 8 means that he was hurt deeply by it. We can understand that, can we not? Lot never got used to it. It grieved him deeply in his soul. We might have a hard time seeing from Genesis 18 and 19 that he was a

righteous man, but Peter says he was, and Peter has given us the testimony of the Spirit of God. Lot saw sin all around him. It was out in the open. The sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah were shameless.

And what was their most grievous sin? Homosexuality! And what was God's message in all of that? Note v. 6 with its "making them and ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." Is God closing His eyes to the homosexual lifestyle of Americans and people throughout the world. He certainly is not!

Noah knew what it was to stand alone. And Lot knew what it was to stand alone. And so there is no excuse for us. We at least have each other. And most of us have family members who are an encouragement to us. And this is what we need to keep in mind.

But there is a third thing that the Lord is still saying to us that is most important for all of us to keep in mind. And we find this in v. 9.

### III. THE LORD CAN KEEP US IN SUCH DAYS AS WE HAVE TODAY.

Verse 9 is the main point of this whole chapter.

How thankful we should be for the omniscience of God! And how thankful we should be for the sovereignty of God!

Sometimes it is impossible for us to see the way out, but it is never a mystery to God! He always knows what to do. He has revealed His ways in His Word.

And when Peter said that He knows "how to deliver the godly out of temptations," out of their trials, out of the hand of their enemies--seen and unseen, he did not simply mean that He knows how to do it, but He cannot do what He would like to do. No, Peter meant that the Lord knows what to do, and He is perfectly capable to doing it, and He will do it!

Cf. 1 Cor. 10:13. Cf. also 2 Cor. 1:8-11.

Think of how God took care of Joseph. Think of how He took care of Moses. Think of how He took care of David. Think of how He took care of Jeremiah. Think of how He took care of Daniel and his three friends. Those are thrilling stories. Think of how God took care of the Lord Jesus until His hour had come. Think of how He took care of Peter and John, and then of Paul. Think of the history of the Church--of the Reformers, of the Puritans. Think of what He has done for you and for me--how many times we

have been delivered from our trials and from temptations.  
What a wonderful God we have!

You may not know what to do, but He does. Or you may know what to do, but you cannot do it. God knows, God can, and God will. Nothing is clearer in all of the Word of God than that.

If you are reading 2 Peter 2 correctly, you do not put your Bible down and say, "What great men Noah and Lot were! No, you say, "What a great God Noah and Lot had. And their God is my God, thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ."

If this truth does not encourage you, nothing else can!

But let me give one final word.

#### IV. GOD IS A GOD OF JUDGMENT WHO EVENTUALLY DEALS WITH ALL SIN.

God is a God of mercy and compassion toward those who know Him and walk with Him, but He is a God of judgment to those who despise His Word and who mistreat His people.

We do not know much about what God did with the angels that sinned, except for what is stated here, and in verses like Jude 6 and Matt. 25:41.

We know what happened to the whole world in Noah's day.

And we are very familiar with the story of God's judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

But I want you to note one special thing about the judgments which Peter mentioned here. He was writing about the way in which the Lord spares and cares for His people. What was God doing in these judgments? He was taking care of His people. He was protecting them from the sins which were all around them. By one single act in all three instances He was delivering His people and judging the unjust, a picture of the judgment that will eventually come to all who reject the Lord, and who despise His Word, and go on living the way they want to live even though their hearts keep telling them that what they are doing is wrong.

Concl: If you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, let me tell you that you will remember this passage for all eternity if you do not turn to Him, asking Him to save you through Jesus Christ, His Son. This is a warning for all who are without Christ. There is no other way of salvation except through the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the

Cross for sinners. Turn to Christ today, believe in Him, and you will be saved.

But let me leave those of us who are Christians with a twofold message this morning--one from what Peter has said about the Lord; the other, from the lives of Noah and Lot.

I hope you realize from what Peter has said that the Lord is sufficient for you in your present trial, whatever it may be. And that He will always be sufficient for any trials we go through in the future. Take those three words with you today, and every day: "The Lord knoweth . . ."

Noah and Lot lived in days as bad or worse than our own days. What is their message to us? Let me take Lot first.

Just as Lot abhorred sin, so we should abhor it. He saw it all around him, but he never got used to it. It plagued his soul. He was worn out by it. It made him long for heaven and God.

But we also see that Lot was grieved by it all. He longed to see people turn to the Lord. This is what Peter meant by the word "vexed" in v. 8.

What about Noah? What did he do?

He preached! He proclaimed the Word of God. He warned people to turn to the Lord, and to turn from their sins. He warned them that judgment was coming. He did not hide his light under a bushel, but set it up where everyone could see it.

Let us be a combination of Lot and Noah--both lived for the Lord. Both knew what was going on in their generation. But both loved the Lord, were grieved with the sin of the day, and warned others to turn to the Lord. May God enable us to be faithful in our generation as they were in theirs.

## THE CERTAINTY OF JUDGMENT

2 Peter 2:9-17

Intro: My text for today is actually a continuation of the subject that I had last Sunday morning: false teachers and their effect upon the Church and the world. Peter likened it to the effect that false prophets had upon Israel in Old Testament times. False teachers have always been around, and they always will be!

One thing that we need to realize about false teachers is that they will not always be those who depart radically from the Word of God. Sometimes their departure is very subtle, so subtle, in fact, that often the people of God do not recognize it as a departure unless they are really grounded in the truth of Scripture. This is undoubtedly the most dangerous kind of false teaching. The false teacher may say that he believes in the great doctrines of Scripture, but his departure is in practical matters. False teachers often say that the Lord has told us what to do, but he leaves it up to every generation as to how it is to be done. The false teacher often is taken up with his methods, but he has little or nothing to say about the need for the power of the Holy Spirit in order to accomplish anything that is for the glory of God.

So when we talk about false teachers, do not just think about the cults and their leaders, but think of ways in which the professing church today has departed doctrinally as well as in practical matters from what is taught in the Word of God.

Needless to say, we have a very confusing picture before us when we look at the church today. It can be very discouraging for those who long for and pray for real blessing.

It is very interesting to see how Peter approached this subject.

He did not say, as many Christians are saying today, that our hope is in good government, or in Christians getting involved in government. You never find that emphasis in the Word of God.

Nor did Peter suggest that the ways of the Lord for his generation needed to be changed from what they had always been.

Nor did he suggest that the moral standards of the church were too rigid for that day, and so the church needed to be prepared to change, and to compromise with the world--perhaps even to adopt some of the ways of the world so that the distinction between the church and the world would not be so glaringly different.

He did not say any of these things.

BUT WHAT DID HE DO?

One preacher of the past generation said that the greatest danger facing the true people of God in his day (and the same is true of the Lord's people today) was the danger of giving away to a feeling of despair--the danger of feeling that there is no point in going on because of the hopelessness of the situation. Perhaps their hopes have been built up by seeing some person elected to office, or in seeing the public rise up in opposition to some moral evil, only to see that supposedly bright prospects disappear into thin air. And the longer you have lived, the more you have experienced the same kind of a feeling. You go up and down so many times that it is finally impossible to get up again because you do not want to be disappointed again.

How can Peter help us? How did he minister to the people of his generation? How can this Epistle minister to us?

The first thing that he did was this:

I. HE SOUGHT TO FOCUS THEIR ATTENTION ON THE LORD.

We see this at the beginning of v. 9. If the Bible teaches us anything it teaches us that the Lord has always cared for His people and for His work. He has controlled the evil and evil men in the past, and He has continued to work out His own sovereign purposes. He is a sovereign God. You now that, don't you?

We saw in the first eight verses of this chapter how that applied to the Lord's people (Noah and Lot); now we are going to see that the same truth of God's sovereign power applies to those who are not the people of God. It is not the teaching of Scripture that God is sovereign over His own people, but that He does not really know what the rest of the world is going to do. The Word teaches that God is sovereign over all--with no exceptions!

I do not know of any truth that produces more peace than the truth of the sovereignty of God. There are other truths that can add to our peace, such as His love and His mercy, BUT WE ALL NEED TO BEGIN WITH HIS SOVEREIGNTY. If you have questions about the sovereignty of God, then you are going to have trouble with things that are going on in the world--the way everything seems to move against God. We hear it in the way people talk. Men, women, and even children take the Lord's Name in vain as though it is the proper way to speak. Our newspapers and magazine and books are full of evidence that man stands against God.

Crime has gotten so great that our authorities admit that they cannot handle it. Here in Oregon we release our prisoners to such an extent that the report is our that criminals from all over the country are headed for Oregon because they know they can get away with crimes here.

And, as I have said before, all of this is going on in a day when the Church is following a course that has wiped out the difference that existed in past days between the Church and the world.

How we need to get back to Scripture, and we need to get our eyes on the Lord, not as men may try to picture Him, but as He is revealed on the pages of the Bible.

What is the second thing that Peter did in this chapter?

II. HE SHOWED WHAT THE ULTIMATE OUTCOME OF ALL OF THIS WILL BE.

He showed that, in the end, righteousness will prevail and that those who give themselves will fall under the judgment of God.

He showed in the verses dealing with Noah and Lot that God often judges sin now--but not always! However, those judgments like the flood, and like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, are warnings of a future and far greater judgment to come.

Note these statements in our text: vv. 9b, 12b, 13, 17b.

Add to these vv. 1b, 3b, 4--followed with what we have already seen in v. 9.

Paul taught the same thing when he wrote to the Thessalonian church in this words:

And to you who are troubled rest with us,  
when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven  
with his mighty angels,  
in flaming fire taking vengeance on them  
that know not God, and that obey not  
the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:7, 8).

There is a day of judgment coming. Everybody is going to spend eternity in one of two places--heaven or hell. And so the people who turn away from God, or who simply ignore Him, may think that they are getting away with what they are doing, but they are getting away with NOTHING! There is only one way to escape the torments of hell and that is to believe in Christ now, before you die, or before that coming of the Lord which is certain to take place.

But Peter did a third thing:

### III. HE TAUGHT THE PEOPLE HOW TO RECOGNIZE FALSE TEACHERS.

This is where we come to examine the passage before us today.

Here are some of the things that we need to expect from false teachers. And remember that the evidences are sometimes so slight that we are inclined to overlook them. But we cannot afford to ignore any of them.

This first is this:

#### A. Rebellion against authority (2 Pet. 2:10, 11).

People often say that the way a person lives has nothing to do with what he teaches. Peter would disagree, and so should we. Notice what Peter said here about the false teachers walk. And from there he went on to speak of REBELLION AGAINST AUTHORITY.

This is rebellion against God because it is God Who has ordained that we live under authority--the authority of government, the authority of parents in the home, the authority of the husband over the wife. Be careful when you hear teaching that throws doubt upon any of these. You cannot despise God-given authority without despising God. And God will judge those who despise Him.

How do we know what God has ordained as authority?

It is all written in this Book. That is the reason that we need to be taught the Word of God. This is what Peter was doing in these verses: teaching the truth of God.

Note the contrast Peter made with the good angels mentioned in v. 11.

#### B. Despisers of the truth of God--that which has been written, is unchanging, and is indestructible (2 Pet. 2:12, 13a).

Note the expression in v. 12: "Speak evil of things that they understand not."

False teachers will not allow you to restrict them to the Word of God. They may point to psychology, or to current trends, or to other religious writings. But even when they try to teach the Bible they are not to



be trusted because "the natural man receiveth not the things . . ." (1 Cor. 2:14).

The Devil started doing this in the Garden of Eden, and his emissaries have continued it down to the present day.

- C. Corrupters of the fellowship of the people of God (2 Pet. 2:13b).

This is probably a reference to the love feasts which the people of God observed in those days. The false teachers made them into something else, desecrating that which was holy and good in the eyes of the Lord.

It is impossible to enjoy true fellowship with false teachers and false teaching influencing the lives and the relationship of believers with God and with each other.

- D. A minimizing of the true nature of sin (2 Pet. 2:14a).

Peter touched upon three characteristics of false teaching in this verse, and their attitude toward sin, and their experience of sin, is the first.

It may shock us that such a thing is possible, but whenever you find false teaching, regardless of how respectable it may sound, do not be surprised to find the grossest kind of immorality going right along with it. The Word of God produces holy living. Error leaves men in their sin, and they cannot cease from it!

- E. The purpose of false teaching is to beguile unstable souls (2 Pet. 2:14m).

To beguile is to deceive. And this is done like a trapper puts out bait to catch animals. The animal is unsuspecting that the purpose of the food is not to satisfy his hunger, but that his life is at stake. The victim of the false teacher does not realize that what is set out is only bait, and that his eternal destiny is involved in whether or not he falls for it.

There is something about sinning that makes us want others to sin also. Rarely if ever do we sin alone. Always pay attention to what any teacher has to say about sin. Is he saying what the Bible says?

An "unstable" soul is a person who is not well established in the Word of God. AND THERE ARE A LOT OF

PEOPLE LIKE THAT WHO ARE ATTENDING OUR CHURCHES TODAY!  
That is what Peter was trying to correct in this  
Epistle.

Now we come to a major point, and Peter placed more  
emphasis on this by the space devoted to it, and again he  
took his readers back to the Old Testament.

F. Covetousness (2 Pet. 2:14b-16).

Do you know what a covetous person is? He is one who  
loves money, and tries to get as much of it as he can.  
And he does not care how he gets it, just so he gets  
it.

This was "the way of Balaam." Read about it in Num.  
22-24. He was so intent on getting what Balak the  
king of Moab wanted to give him for cursing the  
children of Israel that the Lord finally used a donkey  
to teach him.

Be careful of the man who is always talking about  
money. He may have been a respected teacher of the  
Bible in the past, but, if he is obviously after  
money, **BEWARE!** Something is very wrong. Peter called  
it "madness." This means that he has lost his mind.  
He is without understanding. He is a fool instead of  
being wise in the things of God. It is folly to be  
covetous, and it is the root of all other kinds of  
sins. See 1 Tim. 6:10. What a revelation that is!

Finally,

G. Hypocrisy (2 Pet. 2:17).

They claim to be wells of water, but they are empty  
holes. They claim to be clouds with refreshing, life-  
sustaining rain, but they are blown away and amount to  
nothing. They promise much, but deliver nothing.  
They claim to have life, but only have death--eternal  
death.

Concl: This is not all that Peter had to say on this subject,  
but we will conclude the chapter next week, the Lord  
willing. However, what we have is extremely important, and is  
emphasized by what has preceded and what is to follow.

What do we need to remember? There are many things that Peter  
has been teaching us, but let me point out just three of the  
most prominent points:

- 1) Let us keep our eyes on the Lord. Learn of Him, and let  
nothing shake your confidence in Him.

- 2) Remember that false teachers have always been around, and they always will be. So be prepared for them. And we can only be prepared if we know how to recognize them, and are aware from Scripture as to what they are trying to do.
- 3) Be careful to maintain your own fellowship with the Lord, and your fellowship with the Lord's people. Whatever turns you away either from the Lord or His people cannot possibly be of the Lord. And neither will the Lord nor a true servant of Christ ever encourage you to disobey the Word of God.

ENTANGLED AGAIN  
2 Peter 2:18-22

Intro: The subject of 2 Peter 2 is false prophets and their victims.

For the past three Sundays we have been considering together what Peter wrote in this chapter, and, I trust, profiting from what we have been learning. False teachers were a real threat to the Church in that day, and they are a real threat to the Church in our day. All of need to be continually on our guard, especially when it is possible for false teachers to find their way into our homes and into our thoughts through through their personal visits, or through their writings, or through radio and television. These instruments which are so useful in the spread of the Gospel are also instruments that can and are being used against the Church. The work of true pastors has become much more difficult because of what people can see and hear right in their own homes every day. Radio and television can be a great blessing, but they can also be a real curse.

And this has all come upon us in a day when people do very little thinking--unless they get caught in something that does some kind of damage to them. This, coupled with the fact that there is very little teaching going on in our churches, and very little parental instruction taking place in our homes, people are more than ever able to be deceived by those who teach error.

We saw in the first part of this chapter how God wonderfully cares for and protects His own. Noah and Lot were the examples that Peter used.

But we come to another problem in the latter part of this chapter. It is this: the fact that we see so many people within the professing church who turn aside from the truth of the Word of God to embrace some false teaching.

Peter wrote here about people who had been entangled in sin and the pollutions of the world, had been delivered, but then are ENTANGLED AGAIN.

This passage has been interpreted in two different ways:

- 1) There are those who teach that this means that a true Christians can, if he turns away from the truth, be lost again.

But we know that the Word of God does not teach this. Salvation is a work of God. Note again the way Peter wrote about salvation in 1 Pet. 1:3-5. The true believe is one who is "kept" by God, and if we are "kept" by Him, we are secure in our salvation. There are many other passages that bring this

out beyond any question. And so there is another possibility in explaining Peter's words in this passage:

2) It is that it is possible for a person to appear to be a Christian, and yet really be changed in his heart.

This is where a verse from 2 Peter becomes very important.

Note 2 Pet. 1:10a:

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence  
to make your calling and election sure . . .

And this was the reason Peter placed such emphasis on those qualities which are called "these things" in chapter 1. I hope you have not forgotten about them.

We need to hear more teaching about this problem than we do because the danger that Peter was writing about has been greatly increased in our day because of the methods we have used to get people to profess faith in Christ. We have taken upon ourselves the work of the Holy Spirit. We have gotten people to go forward in services, to pray prayers, to sign statements of faith, and a lot of other things, to indicate that they would like to become a Christian. Often this is done under great pressure, great emotional pressure. But it is also true that these methods are often employed when there is very little teaching. We see very little conviction of sin. We see very little repentance. These were methods that got their start in the last century, and, as a result, we have a lot of people in our churches, good people, people who are trying to live like Christians should live, **BUT THEY HAVE NEVER BEEN CHANGED WITHIN BY THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD.** They are not born again. They are not new creatures in Christ. It is very possible that some of them are here at Trinity. Our children can grow up in our families, attend church faithfully, be baptized, live good morally upright lives, and yet not be saved. It is my opinion (for whatever it may be worth) that this is one of the greatest, if not the greatest problem, facing the true Church of Jesus Christ today. It behooves us to be diligent in prayer, to be faithful in our teaching, and to patiently look for those evidences over a period of time that will show that a person has really come to know Jesus Christ as Saviour. This is what Peter was concerned about. It should be very interesting to all of us that so soon after the ascension of the Lord Jesus this should be a problem that would occupy the attention of those who were used by God to give us His Word.

But let us get to our text to note how Peter spoke of the false prophets in those days, and their effect upon professing Christians.

It is very possible that those about whom Peter was writing had themselves at one time professed faith in the true Gospel of the grace of God. Some of them might even have been preachers of that Gospel. But something had happened to

change them, and now they were seeking to change others. Peter had already said many things about them by the time we get down to verse 18, but note what he wrote here:

I. THE CLAIMS AND THE CONDUCT OF THE FALSE TEACHERS  
(2 Pet. 2:18, 19).

Peter was issuing a warning here about the teaching of the false teachers, and even about the persuasive way in which they presented their teaching.

"Great swelling words." That sounds good, doesn't it? But it means that they were teaching in a pompous and boastful way about things which they could not possibly know. What they said may have sounded good, but it had this drawback: it was not true!

We learned in verse 12 that they condemned the things that they did not understand, and here Pete said that they were teaching things that they could not possibly know.

The only reason that the writers of Scripture could speak about the things that they taught was because they were speaking what God had revealed to them. They were speaking the Word of God. These false teachers were speaking their own words, or the words of some other mere man. Remember the distinctive character of the Word as Peter expressed it in chapter 1, verses 20, 21.

And one of the main things of importance about those false teachers was that they did not have anything bad to say about sin. In fact, they "allure" people by such teaching as a fisherman seeks to catch fish with bait.

Now get the picture.

The audience was made up of those who had "clean escaped" from "error." That is, they appeared to have been saved. To be in "error" means to wander from the truth. These people were considered to be Christians, as Matthew Poole has stated, for three reasons:

- 1) They professed to believe in Jesus Christ.
- 2) They claimed to believe the Word of God by which they had been called.
- 3) There was evidence in their lives that they had been changed.

But, as we shall see, while the people may have been sincere, and not aware that all of their professed faith was only outward profession, yet it is possible for all of these things to be in a person's life completely apart from faith in Christ. All of these three things can be in a person's life from the very moment he professes to

become a Christian, but what we need to be looking for is growth, increased learning of the Word, more likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ, greater and greater obedience to the Word, faithfulness in attending the meetings of the Lord's people.

But now look at v. 19.

Now Peter was talking about the lives of the false teachers. "They promise . . . liberty, but they themselves are the servants (bondservants) of corruption," which means being brought into a worse state than before. And Peter's reasoning is true: "For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage."

See the word "corruption" in 1:4, and then, by way of contrast, in 2:12.

The promises of victory are the "great swelling words" of the false prophets, but they lead to greater and greater bondage to sin, not from sin. Christ is the only One Who can deliver us from sin. All false teaching, every departure from the Word, has this in common: it leaves a man or a woman or a child still in his sins.

How we ought to love Christ, and how thankful we should be for the Word of God where we clearly see what the Gospel is!

But now let us see:

## II. THE DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALSE TEACHING.

Peter never wrote words that are more solemn than the last three verses of this chapter.

It is possible for a person to escape "the pollutions of the world" and yet to be "again entangled therein, and overcome." And, whenever, this happens, "the latter end is worse with them than the beginning."

Well, but you say, "Pastor, I thought you believed that once a person is saved, he is always saved. How can you say something like that?"

I do believe that once you are truly saved you are saved forever--eternally! But I also have to say that I do not believe that every person who says that he is saved, is really saved.

Let me explain.

"The pollutions of the world" are lit., to use an English word, THE MIASMAS of the world. Do you know what a miasma is? That word is in your English dictionary: m-i-a-s-m-a. It means a corrupting influence. It means here in our text, the defiling influence that the world has upon us. The world is polluted, and, living in the world, pollutes us. A child born into a Christian home escapes a lot of that, but that does not make him a Christian. A person starts to attend church, and it has a cleansing effect upon his life, but that does not make him a Christian. We are approaching the new year. Most people make some new year's resolutions. One person may decide to quit smoking, another to quit drinking, another to quit running around with a wild crowd. He may decide to attend church, and even become a Christian. But all of those decisions on his part, even if he is baptized and joins a church, do not make him a Christian. He can even start to pray. He may even attend a Bible teaching church where he begins to learn, and learn correctly about the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what our text says. BUT, if he is not truly saved, he can become a prey to the false teacher, he is entangled again in his sin and overcome by it. And we have seen this happen again and again: "the latter end is worse with them than the beginning." That person who pretended to be a Christian, but who was not, will actually go deeper into sin afterwards than ever before!

MT. 12: 45  
L.K. 11: 26

To be "entangled" means to get mixed up with, and it is expressed in such a way here (the middle voice) in such a way to show that the person does it to himself!

And so what can you conclude? Two things: one in v. 21, and the other in v. 22. (Read.)

THE DOG -  
PROV. 26: 11

Let me tell you something which is implied in our text. It is a very, very serious thing to be exposed to the teaching of the Word of God.

Perhaps it would be a good thing to have a sign outside of this building which says,

To hear the Word of God makes you more responsible to God. Do not come in unless you are willing to have that responsibility placed upon you.

The Lord Jesus said it this way concerning the people who had heard Him:

If I had not come and spoken unto them,  
they had not had sin:  
but now they have no cloke (excuse) for their sin  
(John 15:22).

Can you think of anything more sobering than this?



Salvation is not a thing to be played with. It is not something that we dare be mistaken about. It is better never to have heard the Gospel, than to hear it and then turn away. The call to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is a "holy commandment." It comes from a holy God and it has to do with His holy Son, and it produces holy people. The Gospel does not excuse sin, nor permit sin, but it cleanses from sin and delivers from sin. The dog is no longer a dog. The sow is no longer a sow. If you are truly saved, you may still struggle with sin, but you would not go back to your sin and live in it again if you could. You are a new creature in Christ.

Concl: "But," you say, "how can I know that I am really saved?"

Let me ask you some questions as I close this morning. Perhaps this will be of help to you.

The first question is, What is your deep down conviction about the Bible? You heard the Gospel from this Word. Do you believe that it is the Word of God? Do you love to hear the Word taught, or is it boring to you? Would you rather be entertained when you come to church, or do you want to learn about God, and worship God? And let me add this: Do you desire that your life be lived according to this Word? Or do you accept what you like, and reject what you don't like? A true Christian may not always be obedient, but he always wants to be, and he is grieved when he falls short of being what God wants him to be, according to this Book.

My second question is this: Do you love the Lord Jesus? Are you disappointed if you come to church and do not hear about Him? Do you love to learn more about Him? Do you want to be like Him? Why do you want to go to heaven--is it to get out of your troubles here on earth, or is it that you will see Him, and be with Him, and be like Him, forever?

And let me ask you about a third thing: Do you enjoy being with the Lord's people? Can you think of any other place you would rather be than right where you are right now? Are you faithful in meeting with the Lord's people? Remember what John said in 1 John 3:14.

One more question: What has the Gospel done to change your attitude toward yourself? Has salvation humbled you? Can you sing that hymn from the heart which says,

I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene,  
And wonder how He could love me,  
A sinner condemned, unclean.

Or,  
Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,

That saved a wretch like me;  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

All of this talk about self-worth, and increasing your self-image, is teaching that is false. The Gospel humbles man, and exalts God. Anything that exalts man is not of God. And yet what peace there is for our needy hearts in taking a lowly place before God in order to bring the greatest glory to His holy Name, and to the holy Name of His Son.

Oh, may God search our hearts! Let us be assured of our relationship with God. We can be, and God wants us to be.

And a word to you parents. This is not to discourage you, but to warn you that only the Lord can save your children. It is your task to teach them, to pray for them, and to show by your life what it means to know the Lord Jesus. We cannot determine when our children will come to the Lord, but be sure in your own mind that God knows, and that your labor for your children will not be in vain. May God bless you, and use you, in their lives, for His glory.

## "THE LAST DAYS"

2 Peter 3:1-4

Intro: The Apostle Peter certainly makes it clear that the work of the Lord is never going to be easy. There will continue to be troubles from the world as well as troubles arising from within the Church itself, and often from the hearts of believers. The troubles from within were the troubles which were of the greatest concern to the Apostle Peter because they were the troubles which could open the door to troubles from without.

Here in this passage we have examples of both: first, troubles within, in vv. 1, 2; second, troubles without, in vv. 3, 4. The troubles within were the troubles that believers have with themselves. If these are not avoided, or corrected once they arise, then there is no limit to the damage that the false teachers and scoffers can cause.

We have a good illustration of this in the case of the nation of Israel in the OT. The Lord told them more than once that if they would obey His voice, and do His will, they had nothing to fear from their enemies. But if they disobeyed the Lord, and were unconcerned about what the Lord wanted, then there would be nothing that they could do to keep their enemies out.

This all points to one great fact that we need to recognize as the people of God: our greatest defense against our enemies is a godly life. If we break down in our obedience to the Lord then we can expect to be defeated at the hands of our enemies, and before our chief Enemy.

Peter was so greatly exercised about this that he wrote two epistles to the same group of believers. He stated in the first verse of chapter 3 that he really had the same purpose in both of his epistles. AND this is the second time that he mentioned it in this Epistle! We will see more of this as we go on in chapter 3 this morning.

But let us look, first of all, at

## I. THE TROUBLE WITHIN (2 Pet. 3:1, 2).

It was within in two ways:

- 1) It was within the church.
- 2) It was within the hearts of individual believers.

It was affecting the whole fellowship, but it was traceable to the individual believers. After all a church is made up of the believers who are a part of it.

But we need to note concerning this problem that it was

not an unusual problem. It was a problem that is to be found in every church. No church has ever been exempt. It is a problem to us here at Trinity Bible Church. It was such a constant and recurring problem in Peter's day that his whole ministry was geared toward correcting it when it was present, and to preventing it in case it was not there for a time.

Can you tell from the text what it was?

It was this: They needed constantly to be stirred up! Do you remember that Peter had said this in chapter 1, v. 13? It is the same expression there as here.

What does it mean--to stir them up? Does it mean that things had to be in a constant state of excitement, or that Peter had to be continually on the lookout for new things in order to keep them interested? Or was he advocating a charismatic type of ministry where emotionally things would be always stirred up?

No, it does not mean any of those things. It simply means this: Peter knew that his ministry was a ministry of waking up believers who spiritually had gone to sleep, and/or to keep them awake so that they would not go to sleep again!

Perhaps the best illustration from a physical standpoint of what this expression means spiritually is to be seen in what the Lord had to do with Peter, James, and John in the Garden of Gethsemane. Cf. Mark 14:33-42. The Lord was stirring them up.

Now I am not talking about people who go to sleep in church. Sometimes that cannot be helped. A person may not have slept well the night before, or sometimes medicine we take causes us to be sleepy. Often people who work outside have trouble staying awake when they come inside and sit down for any length of time. Sometimes you will find a person who goes to sleep because he or she is bored, and that might be a symptom of this other kind of sleepiness because we are talking about being spiritually asleep.

But let us note another thing about the people Peter was concerned about.

He said that they had "pure minds." To the best of my understanding of this expression it speaks of people who are well-taught in the Scriptures. They understand the truth of the Word. Doctrinally and theologically they have a real grasp of the truth. They are not contaminated

by any false doctrine, nor by the overemphasis of any truth. Biblically they have "pure minds."

But still they are in danger of going to sleep. Doctrine alone, even pure doctrine, does not keep us spiritually awake and alert. What is the problem? From chapter 1 as well as from this chapter we must conclude that there is a failure to apply the truth, and to see the truth lived out in their lives from day to day. They know the truth, but it has not influenced their lives. They are strong on doctrine, but weak in the application of that doctrine.

What happens when we go to sleep?

A number of things happen. We do not pray as we should. We do not read the Word with as much attention as we should. We get careless about our lives. We begin to excuse our sins instead of dealing with them. We get careless about putting ourselves in the way of temptation. We can hear things that other people ought to be noticing, but the Word does not reprove or convict or correct us any more. We might as well be actually asleep because spiritually we are!

We have all seen this in our own lives, and we have seen it in each other's lives. A believer who is spiritually asleep can go from a service like this and talk and act like they had never heard a word--and in reality, they haven't!

What is the cure?

Is it some new program? Does it mean that we have to find some special way to reach a Christian who has gone to sleep? What did Peter say here?

He was going to awaken them "by way of remembrance"! What did he mean by that? Look at v. 2:

That ye may be mindful of the words  
which were spoken before by the holy prophets,  
and of the commandment of us the apostles  
of the Lord and Saviour.

Peter may have been talking about OT prophets, or he may have been talking about NT prophets. I am inclined to think that it was NT prophets. But, whoever they were, the meaning is the same: PETER WAS SAYING THAT HE WOULD CONTINUE TO AROUSE AND PROVOKE BELIEVERS TO GREATER DEVOTION TO THE LORD BY PREACHING AND REPEATING THE TRUTHS WHICH THE PEOPLE OF GOD TO WHOM HE WAS WRITING KNEW SO WELL.

This is what Peter meant by those words in chapter 1,

verses 12-15. You see, one indication that we are awake is that we remember the Word of God. We do not set aside the Word in our daily lives. The Word determines what we do and what we do not do. And it seems that this is accomplished as the most familiar truths of the Word of God are heard over and over and over again.

Whenever you hear some truth mentioned which you have heard before, and perhaps known for a long time, and maybe you have even taught it, DO NOT SHUT YOUR MIND OFF AND GO TO SLEEP. The Lord probably is letting you hear it again because there is some reason why you need to hear it at that particular time.

You can be the best instructed Christian in the city of Portland, but be sound asleep spiritually, if the Word at this very moment does not delight your heart and guide you in all that you do.

So much for now about the trouble within. I hope you have been listening for yourself and hearing what I have been saying. It is more important than most of us realize.

Now what about the other problem:

## II. THE TROUBLE WITHOUT (2 Pet. 3:3, 4).

Notice the expression, "the last days." All that Peter wrote in this third chapter has to do with those "last days." And he was concerned about whether or not the people of God would be awake or asleep in "the last days."

In one sense, all of the days since the ascension of Christ are "the last days." "The last days" are those days which lead up to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul said in writing to Timothy,

This know also, that in the last days  
perilous times shall come (2 Tim. 3:1).

"Perilous" means heavy, hard to bear, difficult "times shall come." Spiritually they are not easy days. And the farther we get into "the last days" the more difficult they will be. Paul described them in detail in 2 Tim. 3.

One thing that is going to happen in "the last days" is that "there shall come . . . scoffers." These are people who will ridicule the Word of God and the God of the Word. They will scorn it. They show contempt for it. They deny its promises, and question its authority and its reliability.

But the thing a scoffer hates more than anything else is a person who thinks he ought to live his life in accordance

with this Word of God. In fact, the closer we get to the true grace of God in our teaching AND IN OUR LIVING, the more severe the opposition will become! It is not just our teaching that convicts the scoffer, but the life which backs up the teaching. If people are going to be won by our teaching, we cannot afford to be asleep. We must be stirred up, wide awake, to God and to His Word. But scoffers hate this, and that must be the reason that Peter added the words, describing the scoffers--that they are people who are "walking after their own lusts." They do not want the Word to tell them how to live; they want to live the way they want to live!

But in addition to all of this, there is one big reason why Peter was so exercised in his own heart about the spiritual condition of the people of God.

It was this: The one place where the scoffers are going to try to shake our faith is in connection with the coming of the Lord. Note verse 4.

Cf. what Paul said in 1 Cor. 15:19.

All of the promises of God are important to us, but this is the promise of promises. If there is nothing to this promise, then there is nothing to the rest of the promises of the Lord. Note our Lord's words in John 14:1-3.

You see, the scoffer would destroy our faith. They will say, "The Lord is not here, and there is no evidence that He is on His way. So what makes you Christians so sure that He ever will come, or that there is really anything at all to your professed faith in Jesus Christ?"

We will be dealing more with this next Sunday, the Lord willing, as we go on into v. 5, but just notice the question itself for now. IT INVOLVES ALL OF THE PROMISES OF GOD! WHAT WOULD WE DO WITHOUT GOD'S PROMISES? WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITHOUT THEM?

What is the point that Peter was making up to this verse in the chapter? He was indicating that that which will serve to defend us against all of the attacks of scoffers is the Word of God itself, not just knowing, and knowing accurately, the great doctrines of Scripture, but in showing that we are alive to the truth by lives lived in obedience to the Word of God.

Concl: Yesterday Lucille and I were talking to our daughter Carolyn on the phone, and we were also talking to Allison, our youngest grandchild. She will be 2 next month, and so she is just learning to talk, and most of her sentences

are just one word. Carolyn asked Allison to tell us her motto when she talked to us on the phone. The motto was this: "I will obey." When Allison got on the phone she said just one of those three words: "Obey." It really sounded so sweet as she said over and over, "Obey . . . obey . . . obey," that I would have eaten her up if I had been there. Frank and Carolyn are teaching her to be obedient to them, and it is the prayer of their hearts that Allison will learn from that the importance of obeying the Lord.

Later as Lucille and I were praying together I had to tell the Lord that I wanted Allison's little motto to be mine: "I will obey." That is what Peter wanted--obedient, submissive, wide-awake Christians! Allison doesn't know it now, but she will soon learn, that that is where her greatest battles will be fought--whether or not she will be obedient to her parents, and whether or not she will be obedient to the Lord. We need to enlarge that motto a little and say, "By God's grace, I will obey." Nothing is more important for any of us. Let us pray daily for ourselves, for our families, and for each other, that the Lord will continuously work in us "to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). Then let the scoffers rave and rant, they will not sway us a bit, but we will stand firm in our conviction that the Lord Jesus really is coming, and that our faith is not, and never can be, in vain.



THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD  
2 Peter 3:5-9

Intro: The issue is raised by scoffers in the first four verses of this chapter that the history of the world shows that things have remained unchanged "from the beginning of creation." Therefore, they ridiculed the promise that Christians were depending upon, that the Lord was coming back again.

The coming of the Lord will bring about the greatest changes that have ever been seen. It will usher in, finally, "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (v. 13). Peter was not trying to deal in detail with the return of Christ. He was not including all of the events that the coming of the Lord will include. He was dealing with it as "the promise," and encouraging the saints to keep on believing, and to keep on expecting the fulfillment of all that is included in the promise.

In the verses before us we see:

- I. THE ERROR OF THE SCOFFERS -- in vv. 5-7.
- II. THE SPECIAL ENCOURAGEMENT FOR BELIEVERS -- in vv. 8, 9.

We learned last week that a scoffer is one who ridicules, one who scorns, one who shows contempt, one who rejects something. In the situation we are dealing with the scoffer turns his ridicule against the Word of God (because that is where "the promise of his coming" is), and so it is against the God of the Word. Men cannot ridicule the Word and still honor God. If the Word is rejected in any way, God is rejected, Christ is rejected, the Holy Spirit is rejected. If we reject the truth of God, we are calling God a liar. It is as simple as that.

So let us look, first of all, at what Peter said about the scoffers (and this should be a help to us), and then we will look at the special word to us as believers. We need that help in these days as much as the believers did in the first century church.

- I. THE ERROR OF THE SCOFFERS (2 Pet. 3:5-9).

Notice, first of all, that they are wrong. You young people ought always to remember that when anybody scorns the Bible, and scorns God, he is wrong, or she is wrong. Scorners are not always men; sometimes they are women. Often they are well-educated, influential people. They are looked upon as authorities in their field. But if they ridicule the Bible and God, they are wrong! If you always begin on the basis that the Bible is absolutely true, completely dependable, it will save you a lot of trouble. It is not popular to believe the Bible today,

nor has it ever been popular. That is why the scoffers are always effective in what they do. Man has a natural aversion to God and the Bible. But it is true. It is the Word of God! As Peter taught us in chapter 1 of this Epistle,

For the prophecy came not in old time  
by the will of man,  
but holy men of God spake

as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21).  
That is where we stand. The Bible is God's Book, God's Word. It was given to us by God, and therefore it is true and absolutely dependable.

And so the first mistake that the scoffers make is:

A. Their rejection of the Word of God.

But let me take this another step, and I believe our text teaches both of these points that I am about to make.

1. They do not believe that the Bible is God's Word.

I have already dealt with this.

But here is another point:

2. They deny that this world, as it originally existed, came into being by the spoken word of God.

They rejected that God was the Creator of the heaven and the earth. How ridiculous it is to man to believe that God created the universe, that He did it in six days, and that He did it by merely speaking the Word. Some have not even gone so far as to investigate what the Word says. Peter said that, lit., they will to be ignorant. It can also mean that they willfully forget it. They have heard it, but they put it out of their minds because they do not want to believe it. These great truths escape them because they want it to escape from them--like a guard who intentionally looks the other way while the prisoners go over the wall.

Another thing they reject about creation:

B. They reject the Biblical account of the way God started in His work of creation: with just earth and water.

And that the finished creation was in itself a great

change from the way God started.

This fifth verse of 2 Peter 3 seems to indicate, not a chaos, but that Genesis 1 is really the original creation.

And beyond that there is another point that is brought out in verse 6:

- C. They forget the great change which took place at the time of the flood, and the changes that took place then.

There had been no rain up until that time. The whole population of the earth was destroyed, and Noah and his sons had a new beginning.

Past revelation, and particularly in connection with judgment, is a confirmation of unfulfilled prophecy. And yet those scoffers deliberately were closing their eyes to the predictions of a future judgment.

- D. And so they denied any future change, not by water, but by fire, which would destroy this present earth and lead to the "new heavens and new earth (2 Pet. 3:7).

Now let us go on to . . .

## II. THE SPECIAL ENCOURAGEMENT FOR BELIEVERS (2 Pet. 3:8, 9).

You can tell that the Apostle Peter was thinking about the believers by his use of the word, "Beloved."

If we were to boil down the statements made in vv. 8, 9 so as to summarize them in one statement, we could come up with something like this: The big mistake that the scoffers make is that they do not know God, and so they do not understand God.

Believers are not to make the same mistake, and yet they can!

What are the two things about God that can cause real difficulties for us, if we do not understand them? Here they are:

- A. We need to know how God computes time (v. 8).

Have you ever had trouble trusting the Lord because He did not do what you wanted Him to do **WHEN YOU EXPECTED HIM TO DO IT?**

All of us have. You all must remember the story of the Christian who was greatly agitated, and somebody asked him what was wrong. His answer was, as he expressed it, "Because I'm in a hurry, and God isn't!

Think of these things)

- 1) How long God waited before He destroyed living creatures on the earth with the flood.
- 2) How long Abraham and Sarah had to wait before Isaac was born.
- 3) How long Joseph had to wait before he saw his brothers bow down before him.
- 4) How long God waited before He had Moses ready to deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt.
- 5) How long David had to wait, and the way in which he had to wait, before he became king of Israel.
- 6) How long the people of Israel had to wait until the Messiah came.

Add your own experiences to this list. At the times when we expect God to do something immediately, He does nothing that we can see. Earth's time and heaven's time are not the same. God does not wear a Seiko!

There have been some foolish deductions from the statement of this verse:

- 1) That this proves that each day in Genesis 1 was 1,000 years in length.
- 2) Likewise, that there is no literal millennium because a day and a thousand years are alike to the Lord.
- 3) And equally absurd is the idea that God is not concerned about our time.

It simply means that God's delays do not mean that He will never do what He has promised to do. He is not late just because we think He is late. In God's wisdom He knows far better than we do when a certain thing needs to be done. It also means that God can often accomplish in a day what it would be impossible for us to do in 1,000 years. And, along with everything else, it means that there will always be a lack of understanding as to why God does things when He does them.

We cannot understand the supposed delays of God, but we need to know that His way of counting time, and ours, are different.

But now let us come to the second special encouragement for believers.

## B. The longsuffering of God (v. 9).

"The Lord is not slack" -- He does not delay; He is not tardy; He is never late. He is not careless, nor remiss. He is not inadequate--unable to do what He has promised to do. This may even mean that there is never a time when God is not working. It may seem so to us, but He is always working, always active. He is not what we feel so often that He is.

"But is longsuffering to us-ward," or toward us.

What is the longsuffering of God?

It is the kindness of God when He has every right to be angry with us. It is His goodness when we persist in doing what displeases Him.

Thayer says that longsuffering "is the self-restraint that does not easily retaliate a wrong." It is the opposite of wrath and revenge. See p. 387. Nothing is more amazing of all that has taken place this past week in the USA than that God has not crushed our nation out of existence because of our sins--nationally and personally!

But how long will He wait? Judgment is surely coming!

I used to believe that it was because the Lord wanted as many people to be saved as would possibly turn to Him. But I believe that because I had not read this verse carefully. Toward whom is the Lord especially longsuffering? It is "to us-ward." Who are we? We are the elect of God.

God takes no pleasure in the death of any sinner, but, as Calvin remarked on this passage,

. . . God . . . stretches forth his hand without a difference to all, but lays hold only of those, to lead them to himself, whom has chosen before the foundation of the world (Vol. XXII, pp. 419, 420).

Peter was not concerned here about the doctrine of election except to explain:

- 1) Why the Lord had not come.
- 2) Why not all are saved. When all of the elect are saved, the Lord will come.

Concl: God has a people to reach, and they will be reached. We do not know who they are unless we ourselves are saved. But the important thing for anyone who is not a Christian to know, if concerned about God at all, is

that, when God is working in a human heart, he brings that person under conviction of sin that He might bring them to repentance, and so to salvation.

Let me some verses for you as I close which will help us to know where repentance comes from. Listen to 2 Tim. 2:24-26:

And the servant of the Lord must not strive;  
but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,  
In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves;  
if God **peradventure will give them repentance**  
**to the acknowledging of the truth;**  
And that they may recover themselves  
out of the snare of the devil,  
who are taken captive by him at his will.

Listen to Peter preaching in Acts 5:32. Speaking of Christ He said,

Him hath God exalted with his right hand  
to be a Prince and a Saviour,  
**for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.**

When Peter was explaining to his Jewish brethren why he had gone preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, and how the Gentiles had been baptist with the Holy Spirit, he said (Acts 11:17),

Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift  
as he did unto us,  
who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ;  
what was I, that I could withstand God?

And then we read in v. 18,

When they heard these things,  
they held their peace, and glorified God, saying,  
**Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted**  
**repentance unto life.**

The Lord Jesus Christ once said,

No man can come to me,  
except the Father which hath sent me draw him:  
and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:44).

What is the evidence that He is drawing us? We are convicted of our sins, He grants us the grace to repent of our sins, and then enables us to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, dear friend, do not look to yourself for salvation. Look to God. He will save you, and He will save you now. It is not by our works, but by His mercy extended to us through the Lord Jesus Christ Who died that sinners might be saved.

Welch, whom he described as "the holy and wonderful Scotch preacher." And this is what he said about him:

He "thought a day ill spent if he did not spend eight or ten hours in prayer. He kept a plaid that he might wrap himself when he arose to pray at night. His wife would complain when she found him lying on the ground weeping. He would reply: "O woman, I have the souls of three thousand to answer for, and I know not how it is with many of them'" (Power Through Prayer, p. 40).

Parents, Sunday School teachers, all of us--we need to know what salvation is, not only for ourselves, but so we will know how to guide and to pray for those whom the Lord has entrusted to us.

So I ask the question, WHAT ACTUALLY IS SALVATION? And I trust that you and I both will only be satisfied with what the answer that is given to us in the Word. Tonight we will look at 2 Cor. 5:17. I am not going to deal with the context, but I believe I know the context well enough to be able to say that I am not lifting it out, but am going to explain it in the light of what Paul was saying before and after this verse.

THE PRACTICE OF PROPHECY  
2 Peter 3:10-14

Intro: If we are looking to the Apostle Peter to lay out for us a program of events leading up to the final return of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are going to be disappointed. The Spirit of God did not use him that way. In fact, if we were only to take this third chapter of 2 Peter and try to come up with a program of future events, we would undoubtedly be mistaken. The Lord has given that task in the NT to the Apostles Paul and John.

And so when we come to this final chapter of 2 Peter we should not try to find a place for every detail mentioned elsewhere by Paul and John. The details are not here. What Peter was doing was answering the scoffers who were making light of the promise itself, that the Lord would come again. They were saying that things had been the same from the very beginning, and so we should not expect any kind of a change in the future such as the Apostles were predicting.

We have seen how Peter showed that those scoffers were wrong in saying that things had not changed since creation. At creation itself there were great changes after the Lord brought the heavens and the earth into existence, and then began to fashion creation as we see it today. Cf. 3:5. He mentioned also the flood in 3:6 at which time there were great changes. Peter just mentioned the fact. He did not try to describe what those changes were; he just mentioned that there were changes.

He implied in 3:7 that there could have been many other times in which great, changing judgments could have fallen from the hand of God, but instead He indicated that they had not come because God was reserving things for the final judgment--which, in the light of the past, will most certainly come. The one thing that has been delaying the judgment is the working out of God's purpose in salvation. See 3:9.

My text for today is verses 10-14--five verses. In three of these (vv. 10, 12, 13) we have statements of prophecy. They have to do with the final dissolution of the heavens and the earth that we know today, and the bringing in of "new heavens and a new earth" that will be righteous in character. In the other two verses (vv. 11 and 14) we have practical exhortations for today in the light of the final great change which the scoffers were denying.

Let us look, then, first of all, at . . .

I. THE PROPHETIC STATEMENTS (2 Pet. 3:10, 12, 13).



Although God is longsuffering with respect to salvation, "the day of the Lord **will come**"!

The people of God in the OT were very familiar with this expression. Sometimes it is described as a day of great trouble; in other passages it is described as an era of great peace. Here Peter was dealing with the end of the day of the Lord. It leads up to the new heavens and the new earth, and Peter spoke of that here in v. 12 as "the day of God"--an expression which is used only here in all of the Bible. According to Rev. 20 and 21 that "day of God" will come at the time of the judgment of the "great white throne" (Rev. 20:11), and in that same verse we read of "him that sat on it" (i.e., the great white throne), from whose face **the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.**"

That obviously will be a most dreadful and terrifying time for all who are living on the earth. This is Peter's answer to the scoffers.

- 1) It will come suddenly, without warning, unexpectedly-- "as a thief in the night."
- 2) It will be characterized by:
  - a) The most terrible noise--"a great noise."
  - b) The most intense heat--"fervent heat."

Through this the earth will be "burned up"--"dissolved" (vv. 11, 12). It will be lit. loosed, that is, it will come apart, and be reduced to nothing! All that men have spent hours and years of time in building up will be utterly destroyed. And this will not be through a nuclear holocaust brought on by men, but this will be a judgment from God out of heaven.

The latter part of verse 12 speaks of "the heavens being on fire." This probably refers to the sun, the moon, and the stars, which have been in the heavens since the time of creation. How this can be, we cannot say, but these prophecies are just as much a part of the Word of God, and therefore just as certain to happen, as anything else that the prophetic word has foretold.

None of us can possibly realize what this will mean. It will be terrible beyond words to describe, surpassed only by the fires of eternal hell. Surely these words were given to Peter as a means of warning sinners to flee from the wrath to come.

I personally believe that this will all come after the Church has been taken to heaven--after that time of Great Tribulation, about which our Lord spoke in Matt. 24:21, and after the reign of Christ on earth during the millennium--all of these things leading up to the eternal

state.

And remember that the Bible will be here through all of that, and so it is not unreasonable that Peter would be led to write such warnings.

If you are concerned that these things could not have been fulfilled in the generation of those who first received this Epistle, look carefully to see if you can find where Peter said that it could be. He does say in v. 14 that they were looking for those things, but that meant that they knew that things were going to turn out this way. He was saying what would happen, and saying that the lives of believers should reflect their understanding of the outcome of the present heaven and earth in which we live. Remember that Peter was not speaking of the third heaven where God dwells; he was speaking of the heavens which surround the earth, where the sun and the moon and the stars can be seen.

But now let us go on to . . .

## .II. THE PRACTICE OF PROPHECY (2 Pet. 3:11, 14).

You might have said when you noticed my subject in the Tableau, "What does he mean, THE PRACTICE OF PROPHECY?"

Let me explain that subject for you.

We commonly here it said that a medical doctor is engaged in THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE. Or that a lawyer is engaged in THE PRACTICE OF LAW. We mean by those expressions that a doctor is actively working in his profession as a doctor. He is not trained as a doctor, but working at something else. In the strictest sense it would not mean that he is teaching medicine, but not working with patients. If a doctor is engaged in the practice of medicine he is working with patients in some way. The same is true of a lawyer who is practicing law. He is handling cases that require the legal work of a lawyer. The one is a doctor in the truest sense of the word; the other is a lawyer in the truest sense of the word.

When my brother, M.L., was alive, people often got us mixed up with each other. That always pleased me because I am seven years older than he was. People might meet me in the hospital and start to tell me about their medical problems, and I would have to tell them that I was not M.L. One of my friends told me that people needed to ask us, since many thought that I had a doctor's degree, too, "Are you the doctor who preaches, or are you the doctor who practices?" Now I did not like to be put in the

category of a doctor who preaches, but who does not practice what he preaches.

What is the dictionary definition of the word practice?

This is what it means: It is the "actual performance or application of knowledge." It stands in contrast with one who merely has the theory, who possesses the knowledge, but he does not use it.

Now we all know, or should know, that there is a doctrinal side to the Bible, and there is a practical side. The Bible is full of practical instructions as to how we are to live and to please God. Often you will find people who are interested in knowing the doctrines of the Bible, but are not interested in the practical instructions. Or, if they are interested in the practical part of the Word, they often will adapt what the Word teaches so that it is more to their liking, and will not set them apart so much from the world in which they live.

We all know this to be true. Professing Christians today are guilty of neglecting both the doctrine of Scripture and the practice of the doctrine.

Now having said that, let me point out something that we all should realize about prophecy. Somehow we have lost sight of the fact that every doctrine of Scripture has a practical application--AND THIS INCLUDES PROPHECY. It is perfectly proper to talk about THE PRACTICE OF PROPHECY. This means that the prophetic truth that I know has affected my life. I am different because I know it. In fact, we can say that prophetic truth has not really penetrated our hearts until it has changed our lives.

This is very clear from what Peter has written here.

Look at verse 11. (Read.)

Peter gave one incentive for being holy in 1 Pet. 1:15, 16: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so . . ." The knowledge of how things are going to end is another incentive. In the light of what Peter taught here, note how it should affect our lives: "in all holy conversation and godliness." Let us make sure we understand.

"Holy conversation" means a life which, in its actions, is separated from the world, and separated unto God. And "godliness," as we have previously learned, is a life in which we are more concerned about pleasing God than we are even in pleasing ourselves! That is THE PRACTICE OF PROPHECY! Has prophetic truth had that effect upon you?

It should! It must! And it will--if you really understand what it all means! Prophecy was not given to satisfy our curiosity about the future; prophecy was given to make us live holy lives, lives that are pleasing to God, lives that will glorify God" If you are not holy and godly, and yet you claim to be a Christian, there is something very seriously wrong.

Read verse 14.

"Be diligent" means to waste no time in doing what Peter said. They were to make haste in correcting things that were not right in their lives.

"That ye may be found of him," i.e., of the Lord. Cf. the use of this word in 1 Pet. 1:7. Also Phil. 3:9, And be found in him . . ." This does not just have reference to what the Lord will find us to be when He comes, but it means that we should seek to be this continually in His sight as the result of knowing prophetic truth. Cf. Psa. 139. What we are in His sight is what we really are.

What does He want us to be? Three things:

- 1) "In peace." Such knowledge could be very disturbing to a person who is without Christ. But to be "found of him in peace" is first of all, in Thayer's words, "the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ" (p. 182). Do you have that? Cf. Rom. 5:1.

But it also means to be in fellowship with God, contented with one's earthly lot, whatever that may be (see Thayer, Ibid.). Does that describe you?

- 2) "Without spot." It means to have a life free from sin which we are tolerating, or to hang on to things which would have the disapproval of the Lord. It might be a tarnished relationship, or even something secret which we are holding in our hearts.
- 3) "Blameless." Bishop Moule, in his commentary on this word in Philippians (p. 46) illustrates the meaning of the word from what Daniel's enemies said about him when they were trying to find some accusation that they could bring against him. They said,

We shall not find any occasion  
against this Daniel,  
except we find it against him  
concerning the law of his God (Dan. 6:5).

Notice that there is a strong emphasis in all three of these words concerning what we are in God's sight: "THAT YE MAY BE FOUND OF HIM IN PEACE, WITHOUT SPOT, AND BLAMELESS."

Hanani the prophet told Asa king of Judah after Asa had

put his trust in the king of Syria instead of in the Lord,  
The eyes of the Lord run to and fro  
throughout the whole earth,  
to shew himself strong in the behalf of them  
**whose heart is perfect toward him** (2 Chron. 16:9).

Do these words describe what we want to be, and what we  
are making haste to be? If so, then we know THE PRACTICE  
OF PROPHECY.

Concl: As I close let me ask you to turn to a passage written  
by the Apostle Paul where he wrote essentially what  
Peter did about THE PRACTICE OF PROPHECY: Titus 2:11-15.

## PETER'S SWAN SONG

2 Peter 3:15-18

Intro: In chapter 1 of this Epistle, and verse 14, Peter said that the Lord had shown him that "shortly" he "must put off this my tabernacle." And then he spoke in the following verse of his "decease." The Lord had shown him that his ministry was coming to a close. "Shortly" means that it was impending, near at hand. Tradition tells us that Peter was martyred, and that he may have been crucified upside down because he did not feel worthy to be crucified as the Lord was.

How long after this it was that he died, we do not know. But we do know that he was in the same position when he wrote this Epistle that Paul was when he wrote his second Epistle to Timothy. That was Paul's swan song; this was PETER'S SWAN SONG. This expression has come from an ancient fable in which a dying swan is supposed to have sung a song. It is an expression which has come to mean the last act, or the final work of a person.

Not everyone gets to give a final message because we do not always know when we are going to die. But last words can often be very important words when a person knows that they are his last words, and that would be especially true of a man like Peter who was writing under the direct influence and supervision of the Holy Spirit. I do not mean to say that these last four verses make up his swan song; the whole Epistle is a swan song. But the last of his last Epistle would obviously be especially important.

If we were going to summarize the main emphases of this Epistle, we would have to say that Peter was concerned that the believers to whom he was writing would be faithful and fruitful. He warned them against the false prophets who were sure to come. And he wanted them to persevere in their relationship with the Lord even though there would be those who would scoff at the promise of the Lord's return. These points of emphasis are stressed again in the last two verses of the Epistle. (Read.)

In the two preceding verses (15 and 16) we have a brief reference to the writings of the Apostle Paul.

And so it is easy to see that we have a twofold division for these last four verses:

- I. THE WRITINGS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL (vv. 15, 16).
- II. PETER'S CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS (vv. 17, 18).

Let us look, then, at what he had to say about Paul's writings and why he referred to them here.

## I. THE WRITINGS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL (2 Pet. 3:15, 16).

Peter began this last part by repeating what he had said in v. 9, in answer to the scoffers' words in v. 4. But his point in repeating it was to remind them that Paul had written to them saying the same things that he, Peter, had said.

If you will consult the places mentioned by Peter in his first Epistle (1:1), you will see that included in that area were the Galatian churches, the churches of Ephesus and Colosse. And, if Paul wrote Hebrews, as many of us believe that he did, that Epistle could be included since it was primarily written for Jews. Peter was writing to Jews of the Dispersion, those who had been exiled from their original homes because of their faith in Christ.

Now, as we saw in considering 2 Pet. 3:9, Peter was not saying that the Lord delays His return because he wants to see as many people saved as possible--as though that number were unknown to God. But he was saying that God has a foreordained plan and purpose in salvation. God has an elect people that must be reached, and the Lord Jesus will not return until all of the elect of this present time have been brought to the Lord.

This is the same thing that Paul taught. Paul did not believe that the Lord was in doubt as to who was going to be saved. Paul did not believe in an impotent God Who had left Himself and the outcome of His salvation subject to man's will. Charles Bridges, a servant of the Lord who lived in the last century, said in his commentary on Proverbs 8:18-21 that entrance into salvation was not by man's free will (so-called), but by God's free grace! That is what Paul believed. That is what Peter believed. God is finishing His work. And so what men might call slackness on God's part is not slackness, but SOVEREIGNTY! How wonderful it would be if we all understood this about salvation.

Notice that in v. 16 Peter said that Paul taught these things "in all his epistles." Isn't it true that when people begin to understand the sovereignty of God in salvation that they will soon say something like this: "You see it everywhere in the Bible! How could I have missed it for so long?"

Now look again at v. 15.

Paul did not write this because of any special brilliance on his part (even though he had a very keen and well-trained mind). No, he wrote "according to the wisdom

given unto him"--BY GOD! Cf. 2 Pet. 1:21.

Consequently, when we go on to v. 16 it is not surprising that Peter would say that there are "some things hard to be understood." This means that we can all expect that there will be problems, things that we cannot fully explain to our own satisfaction or anyone else's satisfaction. And what we understand about the grace of God in salvation will come after much searching of the Scriptures, and much prayer. But there will still be problems. However, will you name a doctrine of Scripture that does not have some problems connected with it, that does not have some verses which contradict it?

Illus: Laura Lee's little 3-year old Seth who could not believe that Jesus was God because "there is only one God." She had told him that Jesus was a baby, that he grew to be a boy, and then a man. And then He died on the Cross, was raised from the dead, and then went back to heaven because He was God! That is where Seth objected. Finally his mother told him that when he got older he would understand. And Seth responded, "Do you mean that I will understand that there are two Gods?"

There are problems with every doctrine, but that does not mean that they are not true. That is further confirmation that they are the truths of God, divinely revealed, and we can only understand what we are capable of understanding when we are taught by the Holy Spirit.

But how did Peter describe those who would argue with the doctrines of God's sovereign grace in salvation? He said that they were "unlearned and unstable," and that they "wrest" Paul's Epistles, and Peter's Epistles, and all of the rest of Scripture "unto their own destruction." What a solemn thing it is, what a dangerous thing it is, how eternally destructive it is, for us to tamper with the Word of God and reject those parts of Scripture which we cannot understand!

"Unlearned" means untaught, not necessarily untaught in human wisdom, but untaught in the things of God--in the Bible! And what a lot of that there is today when there is so little real teaching going on in our churches.

"Unstable" means not firmly grounded. They are people who have been exposed to teaching, and they know a lot of different things about the Bible, but they have never put it all together. This is the most dangerous kind of a teacher.

And so they "wrest" the Scriptures. This means that they



will twist and distort that which is perfectly straight. There is nothing wrong with the Word of God. It is perfectly true. The problem is with us, not the Word. The Word is never just partially right. It is absolutely trustworthy. It is infallible and inerrant. Take it as it is, or leave it alone. There are the most serious penalties that will come to a person who tries to add to, or to take away from the Word of God.

Listen to what John wrote about the book of The Revelation of Jesus Christ--the last book of the Bible. Cf. Rev. 22: 18, 19. And the same applies to all of Scripture:

For I testify under every man that heareth the words  
of the book of this prophecy,  
If any man shall add unto these things,  
God shall add unto him the plagues that are written  
in this book:  
And if any man shall take away from the words  
of the book of this prophecy,  
God shall take away his part out of the book of life,  
and out of the holy city,  
and from the things which are written in this book

May the Lord help each of us this morning to accept the Word of God as it is written.

But now let us go on to the second point.

## II. PETER'S CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS (2 Pet. 3:17, 18).

If you were writing words to another Christian, or to a group of Christians, and you knew that they would never hear from you again, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

Let us notice what Peter said, and then we will have an idea of what we ought to be concerned about.

There are three things here:

### A. PETER'S WARNING (v. 17).

The problem facing these believers to whom Peter was writing, was not that they did not know the truth, but that, knowing the truth, they might be led away and cease to be steadfast. "Beware lest ye also . . . fall from your own steadfastness."

How could this happen?

By "being led away with the error of the wicked."  
False teachers can be very convincing, and the child of God needs to be on his guard lest he fall for their

teaching, and "fall from their own stedfastness."  
This is falling from grace (cf. Gal. 5:4).

Paul used the verb of this word "stedfastness" in  
1 Pet. 5:10 where it is translated, "stablish."

No one is immune to false teaching. It is especially tragic when we see someone who has been well-taught falling for error. How can it be avoided? That brings us to the next point that Peter made:

B. PETER'S COMMAND (2 Pet. 3:18a).

I find myself trying to shy away from that word command, but that is what it is, and that is the way we need to consider it.

There never comes a time in our lives when we do not need to GROW--to grow "in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." When we stop growing, we open the door for all kinds of spiritual problems.

Hear PETER'S SWAN SONG: "Grow . . . grow . . . grow . . . grow . . ." This is an absolute necessity for me, and it is the same for you. We need to keep on growing. You and I do not know as much about the grace of God as we need to know, and what we do know we do not know as well as we should.

But it is "in grace" that we need to grow.

You know, most of the Christians I know are not willing to let grace mean grace. They accept the grace of God up to a point, but they want to draw a line at some point, and let man get into the picture. Grace excludes merit. Grace excludes works. Grace does not let man have any of the credit at all. Even when we believe, it is because of God's grace that we believe. Written over everything that has to do with salvation is this wonderful word, GRACE!

And how do we grow in grace?

In particular it means growing in our knowledge of the our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The better I know the Lord, the more I will understand about the grace of God. Does the Lord know what He is doing? Does He have the power to accomplish it? Can He be taken by surprise?

If you want to experience the blessing of God upon

your life as a Christian, and if you want to be kept from error, then make it the greatest priority of your life to learn as much as you can about the Lord Jesus, and to walk with Him in the most intimate fellowship. That is what we need, and what we will always need. Grow . . . grow . . . grow . . . grow!

Finally, the last point:

B. PETER'S PRAYER (2 Pet. 3:18b).

What was the great burden upon Peter's heart--the burden which led him to write this Epistle, and to say all of the things that he said.

It was a consuming desire for the glory of God--"both now and for ever. Amen." That is, while I am here, and after I am gone, and on throughout all eternity!

You see, God has designed salvation for His glory, and for the glory of His Son. And it is grace that gives Him that glory. When we forget grace, we rob God of glory which rightfully belongs to Him. There is nothing that will give you a greater desire for the glory of God than to understand that salvation is all of grace. You and I are so depraved by sin that we do not deserve to be saved. And we are so ruined by sin that we cannot come to God, and we would not if we could--and so we have to be drawn by grace. When Christ died on the Cross He provided salvation for all those whom the Father had given to Him, the ones He had appointed for salvation. So the work on the Cross was not just a provision; it was an accomplishment. And the evidence that we are saved eternally is that we can never go back and be like we were before. If we can go back, then we were never saved.

Concl: Oh, may God stir our hearts with these last words from the Apostle Peter. And may we heed his words. May we obey from the heart--taking the Word as it is, watching our step when we hear things that do not ring true according to the Word, and then devoting our lives to spiritual growth through coming to a great knowledge of our blessed Lord. Let us pray, too, that God, and only God, will continually be glorified in our lives as we praise and exalt His grace.