
a ***Grace Notes*** publication

2nd Epistle of Peter

Dr. Grant C. Richison

2 Peter

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Foreword

These lessons in 2 Peter are compiled from the writings of Dr. Grant C. Richison, which were published on the Internet beginning in 1997 in the Campus Crusades (Canada) daily online devotional Today's Word.

Dr. Richison is a highly experienced pastor, lecturer, and Christian servant who is dedicated to a lifetime of studying and teaching God's Word. Almost immediately after his salvation he began to desire to teach the Word, and he set about a lifelong program of preparation and ministry.

Dr. Richison has a diploma from Detroit Bible Institute, a bachelor's degree in religious education from William Tyndale College (Detroit), a Masters in Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, and a doctorate in ministries from Luther Rice Seminary in Jacksonville, Florida.

Dr. Richison has been pastor and senior pastor of Baptist churches from 1965 to 1992. His most recent pastorate was at Grant Memorial Baptist Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba, where, over a 20 year period, he had oversight of a ministry that expanded from about 350 to more than 2500 communicants. During the period of his pastorates, Dr. Richison was also a lecturer at Detroit Bible College and Winnipeg Theological Seminary.

From 1993 to 1995, Dr. Richison was Director of Leadership Ministries for Campus Crusade for Christ (Canada). He currently has a world-wide lecture ministry with Campus Crusade.

Dr. Richison is an experienced writer, and he provides materials for three areas on the Internet: Sermon on the Net; Today's Word, and Pastors' Power Points. He has considerable ability to communicate God's Word verse by verse in a relevant, clear, applicable and insightful manner and to communicate vision and establish a philosophy of ministry in the local assembly. .

Dr. Richison has served on the following boards and conferences:

- Lower Michigan Baptist General Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, board member)
 - Great Lakes Baptist Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, chairman)
 - Central Canada Baptist Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, chairman)
 - Child Evangelism Fellowship (Manitoba)
 - Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
 - International Ministries to Israel (Canada)
 - Chairman of Greater Manitoba Sunday School Convention
 - Chairman of Marney Patterson Evangelistic Crusade (city-wide in Winnipeg)
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- Chairman of Terry Winter Evangelistic Crusade (city-wide in Winnipeg)
 - Chairman of the "Why Campaign" (city-wide evangelistic trust in Winnipeg)
 - Chairman of the Board of Regents of Canadian Baptist Seminary (part of consortium of seminaries on Trinity Western University)
 - Baptist General Conference of Canada (board member)
 - Briarcrest Bible College and Seminary, Moose Jaw, Sask.
 - Electronic Bible Society, Dallas Texas
 - President's Cabinet, Campus Crusade for Christ, Canada

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Warren Doud, Director

1705 Aggie Lane

Austin, Texas 78757

E-Mail: wdoud@bga.com

Introduction

Dr. Grant C. Richison

I. AUTHOR

A. Peter (1:1)

1. Peter's given name was Simon.
2. Jesus gave him the name Cephas (John 1:42). Cephas means stone or rock. The Greek translation of the Aramaic word Cephas is petros, which also means stone or rock. Peter is the only man in the New Testament called by this name.
3. Peter occupied a favored place among the apostles.
4. He occupied a central place in the book of Acts (first 12 chapters).
5. He married and lived in Capernaum.
6. He worked in the fishing business with his brother Andrew.
7. The Lord came to him in a special appearance after the resurrection (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5).
8. God used Peter to win 3,000 souls to Christ on Pentecost.
9. Peter had an important part in the first Church council in Acts, chapter 15 (AD 50; Peter is not mentioned after this in the book of Acts).
10. Paul refers to Peter in Galatians 1:18; 2:11; 1 Corinthians 1-4; 9:5.

B. Peter was literate but unschooled.

1. Called from his trade as a fisherman.
2. Called to be a fisher of men (Luke 5:1-11).

C. Peter's public ministry spanned 30 years and stretched from Jerusalem to Rome.

D. Martyred by Nero (Tertullian, Cyprian, Lactantius, Clement of Rome and Dionysius of Corinth tell us he suffered martyrdom).

1. Origen said he was crucified with his head downwards.
2. He died AD 67-68.

II. DATE

A. Probably just before Peter's death and just after the writing of 1 Peter (1:12-15).

B. Written after a collection of Paul's epistles (3:15-16).

C. Since 3:1 probably refers to 1 Peter, this letter was probably written after AD 62.

D. Eusebius places Peter's martyrdom in Rome during the period of Nero's persecution (AD 64-68).

E. Date: AD 67-68

III. DESTINATION

A. 2 Peter may have been written to the same crowd as 1 Peter (3:1).

B. This epistle is written to believers (2 Peter 1:1).

IV. PURPOSE

A. Knowing that his time on earth is short, he warns God's people of apostasy (1:13-14; 2:1-3).

B. Peter wants them to remember the fundamentals (1:12-21).

C. The main purpose of the epistle is to help believers grow in grace and in knowledge of Christ that they may be established in the faith (3:18).

D. Peter wants Christians to expect the return of the Lord (3:1-14).

E. He wants to stir their minds to remember (3:1).

V. CANONICITY (WHY 2 PETER BELONGS IN THE BIBLE)

More people have challenged 2 Peter as authentic than any other book of the New Testament.

A. External Evidence

1. The Church Fathers: [None of the early Fathers definitely quotes 2 Peter. Eusebius, the great church historian of the fourth century, listed 2 Peter, along with 2 and 3 John and James as

antilegomena (books spoken against as belonging in the Bible)].

Cited or alluded to by Pseudo-Barnabas (c. 70-130)

Cited or alluded to by Clement of Rome (c. 95-96)

Named as disputed by Origen (c. 185-254)

Bodmer papyrus (P72) accepts 2 Peter as canonical Gospel of Truth and the Apocrypha of John contain allusions to 2 Peter

Named as authentic by Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-86)

Named as disputed by Eusebius (c. 325-40)

Named as authentic by Jerome (c. 340-420)

Named as authentic by Augustine (c. 400)

2. Canons:

This epistle is omitted in the Muratorian Canon (AD 200), but this canon also omits 1 Peter and its present text is almost certainly incomplete

Named as authentic by the Codex Barococcio (c. 206)

Named as authentic by Apostolic (c. 300)

Named as disputed by Cheltenham (c. 360)

Named as authentic by Athanasius (c. 367)

3. Translations:

Second Peter was not included in the Tatian Diatessaron (c. 170) Old Latin (c. 200) or the Old Syriac #14 (c. 400) translations

4. Councils:

Named as disputed by the council of Nicea (325-40)

Named as authentic by the council of Hippo (393)

Named as authentic by the council of Carthage (397)

Named as authentic by the council of Carthage (491)

B. Internal Evidence (Best support for 2 Peter)

1. The author calls himself Peter (1:1, 14, 16-18; 3:1, 15)

2. He is acquainted with the life of Christ and his teachings

3. 2 Peter used a different amanuensis than 1 Peter. Thus there is a different style of writing.

4. The book claims to be Peter's second epistle (3:1)

5. The author claims to be Paul's brother in Christ (3:15)

6. The letter gives no hint of influence from the second century

7. Peter was at the transfiguration and 2 Peter refers to the transfiguration in 1:16-18

8. The letter contains no allusions to second century gnosticism

9. 2 Peter's doctrine is consistent with 1 Peter's doctrine

10. The text is similar to Peter's speeches

11. 2 Peter is superior to spurious books

C. B. B. Warfield

"It cannot be denied, therefore, that it was a part of the Church Canon of the early Third Century; and the evidence goes further and proves that it was naturally in the Canon at this time--that the men of the early Third Century did not put it in, but found it in the Canon. It was, therefore, in the Canon of the later years of the Second Century ... but it was commented on by Clement of Alexandria, and has a place in both the Egyptian versions and in the early form of Peshito (Syriac), all of which date from the Second Century--known all over the church at this period and securely fixed in the Canon, we find it quoted here and there back to the very earliest in writers; nay, Justin Martyr, before 147 AD, quotes it in such a way as to prove that he esteemed it authoritative."

VI. PLACE OF WRITING

It is not possible to know the place of writing since Peter did not mention the place and he traveled widely from Palestine to Rome.

VII. OCCASION

A. New outbreak of heresy

B. Design of 2nd Peter 2 fold:

1. To warn against false teachers.
2. To exhort to progress in grace.

C. There is an air of urgency in the epistle. D. Two heresies in particular:

1. Incipient Gnosticism
2. Antinomianism.

VIII. THEME: KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST**IX. KEY VERSE--3:18****X. KEY WORDS****A. "Know" and "knowledge"**

1. 16 times in various cognates
2. six times in intense form

B. Knowledge is the antidote to false teaching

1. It is through Christ that the great promises of God become available to men
2. The best method for combating error is to learn the truth rather than study error

C. Knowledge: 1:2,3,5,6,8; 2:20; 3:18**XI. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS**

Written to the same people as 1 Peter (3:1)

Written just before the death of Peter (1:14)

Epistle deals with apostasy.

No one mentioned with Peter.

Three chapters, 61 verses, 1,559 words

Peter's name occurs 210 times in the New Testament; Paul's name, 162 times; and all other

apostles, 142 times.

Old Testament quotes: 2:22 (Proverbs 26:11); 3:8 (Psalm 90:4); 3:9 (Ezekiel 33:11)

Character: general epistle

2 Peter is Peter's last words

Elliptical Greek because of Peter's passion against false teachers.

XII. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JUDE AND 2 PETER:**A. Similarities:**

1. Nature: Both have the same literary style.
2. Most of 2 Peter and Jude are parallel. 15 of 25 verses in Jude appear in 2nd Peter

B. Differences:

1. The groups of false teachers are similar but not identical.
2. Jude is harsher and 2 Peter more positive.

3. Jude uses apocryphal books and Peter does not.

XIII. DISTINCTIVE: POLEMICAL**XIV. OUTLINE****I. EXHORTATION TO GROW BASED ON TRUE KNOWLEDGE (1:3-11)**

- A. God's provision (1:3-4)
- B. Our responsibility (1:5-11)

II. BASIS FOR GROWTH -- CERTAINTY OF KNOWLEDGE (1:12-21)

- A. Experience of the apostles (1:12-18)
- B. Ground for certainty (1:19-21)

III. WARNING AGAINST FALSE KNOWLEDGE (2:1-22)

- A. Incursion of false teachers (2:1-3)
- B. Judgment of false teachers (2:4-19)
- C. Danger of false teachers (2:20-22)

IV. REMINDER OF THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE (3:1-13)

- A. The mockers (3:1-7)
- B. The character of the day (3:8-13)

V. CONCLUSION (3:14-18)**2 Peter 1:1**

"Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ."

Simon Peter

The authors of New Testament epistles always sign their names at the beginning. In every New Testament Epistle, there are two basic landmarks: the writer and the addressee. First, we come to the writer, Peter. Peter was at once a slave and a follower of the Lord Jesus. This is all he says of himself, just those two things. These two ideas balance one another. Although Peter was an apostle, all he was after all was a slave to Jesus Christ.

"Simon" is the Greek spelling and "Peter" is the Hebrew spelling. Simon is the name given to him at birth. Peter is the name given to him by Jesus. Peter did not use his name "Simon" in the first epistle. "Peter" is the Greek translation of

"Cephas." Jesus gave him the name "Peter." This is the name most commonly used of Peter in the New Testament. The double name may indicate that Peter writes to both Jews and Greeks.

Cephas is an Aramaic word meaning "stone." Stone translated into Greek and then English comes out Peter. Peter then became his new name when he became a Christian. Peter here uses both his names.

"And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, 'You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas' (which is translated, A Stone)" (John 1:42). Peter was Simon the son of Jonah, that would be equivalent to Simon Johnson today!

"So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?'" (John 21:15). We also know that Peter was married for he had a mother-in-law (Mark 1:30)!

Principle

We should not be afraid to identify ourselves with the Lord.

Application

Invariably Peter identifies himself with Jesus Christ. It may make good copy for the news to know where you stand regarding the great leaders of the day. However, this makes no impression on God whatever. What counts in God's eyes is whether we identify with Christ. When you meet those without Christ, are you courageous enough to advertise who you are?

The question of your eternal destiny revolves around the question "What do you think of Christ?" Your answer to that question will determine your eternal destiny. The issue is not whether you are Protestant or Catholic. Denominations have nothing to do with your salvation. The issue of your salvation revolves around your embracing Jesus as your Savior.

"Saying, 'What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?' They said to Him, 'The Son of David'" (Matthew 22:42).

a bondservant

Peter viewed himself first as a slave of Jesus Christ. "Bondservant" is not strong enough translation. The "bondservant" was a slave. Everyone understood this term in the Roman Empire since there were about fifty million slaves in the Empire. In fact, there were more slaves than there were freemen. Slaves numbering four or five times the number of citizens. Numerous wars of conquest had swelled the numbers of the slave class to an enormous extent. Prisoners of war made up a large part of that number. Slaves had few rights. There was no Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Slaves in the Roman Empire of the first century. A man could do anything he wanted with his slaves.

Peter calls himself a slave of Jesus Christ. Slave to Christ is the highest role anyone could possess. This is the way God honors the Christian (John 12:26). The slave ultimately becomes a king (Revelation 1:6). True joy comes from serving the King.

Peter essentially says, "I am a slave of Christ. I have no rights. I give myself lock, stock and barrel to the Lord Jesus. Jesus completely possesses me. Everything else is incidental whether it be my wife, children, career, profession, my health or future. He is my Master and Lord!" No wonder God used Peter in a special way. God uses people like that.

Paul viewed himself as a slave as well (Romans 1:1).

Principle

The slave is totally at his master's disposal.

Application

The slave is at the master's disposal but the master also had total obligation for the well-being of his slave. Have you placed yourself at the service of King Jesus? Can you say with Peter, "I am a slave of Christ. I have no rights. I give myself lock, stock and barrel to the Lord Jesus. Jesus completely possesses me. Everything else is incidental whether it be my wife, children, career, profession, my health or future. He is my Master and Lord." You can be sure that God will bless you if you do.

"For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still

pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10).

"Not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6).

"And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient" (2 Timothy 2:24).

and apostle of Jesus Christ

An "apostle" was a special person in the foundation of Christianity. A person received the gift of apostleship by election from Christ (Romans 1:1). New Testament apostles were appointed by the ascended Christ (Ephesians 4:11). The apostles to Israel were different from the apostles to the church. There were some overlaps between the apostles to Israel and the church.

An apostle was also an eyewitness to the resurrection of Christ (Acts 1:22; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8,9). God endowed apostles with miraculous powers to demonstrate their authority for writing Scripture and founding the church (Acts 5:15; 16:16-18). These powers are no longer extant in the church today.

The word "apostle" comes two words: from and to send. An apostle was a sent one. The New Testament uses this word generally for all Christians as well. God sends us out into the world as His ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). As ambassadors, we represent Him to other people.

Principle

God calls every Christian to be an ambassador for Christ.

Application

Every Christian is an epistle of Christ.

"Clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart" (2 Corinthians 3:3).

Being an epistle means people can read us. "I read you. You come through loud and clear. I get the message." God's design for our lives is that people read both what we are and what we say. Do you say something with your life? People may never read the gospel of John but they will read you.

What kind of book are you? They will read the Epistle of Sue or the Epistle of Sam.

Has God called you to ministry? It is a great vocation but there are great obstacles in ministry. When we enter ministry, our ministry may not end in "And they lived happily ever after." The two greatest missionaries of the first century ended their careers in what man calls tragedy. These intrepid missionaries ended their ministries in jail and in execution. Peter knew he was not going to die in bed (2 Peter 1:14). The Lord told him so. Call to ministry transcends the pleasant and the nice.

to those who have obtained

"Obtained" comes from two words: equal and honor or value. This is an unusual word for the idea of receive. "Obtained" occurs only four times in the New Testament and uses this word for casting lots (Luke 1:9-10; John 19:24).

"Obtained" means to receive, to choose by lot, to decide by gambling, with the implication that the process relates somehow to God's will or favor. The church selected Judas by a decision based on the casting of lots,

"And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, 'Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry'" (Acts 1:15-17).

"Obtained" is not a normal word for the idea of receiving. It means to have an assignment. God assigns us to His plan when we initially believe in Christ. Even if we die within one second after we believe in Christ, we enter God's plan and possess eternal life. God assigned each person who believes to the plan of God.

Believers in Asia Minor came to Christ by process of divine choice. God allots our faith to us. We do not acquire it for ourselves but receive it by divine grace. It comes to us independent from our control. It comes to us as in the casting of lots. God in His sovereignty chose them for His own. No merit of our own deserves such salvation. Our merit comes through Christ.

"For many are called, but few are chosen"
(Matthew 22:14).

"Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began"
(Titus 1:1-2).

Note the word "obtained" is not the word "attained." We obtain faith as a gift not as a work. You cannot attain faith. We cannot work for or earn faith.

Principle

God assigns each Christian to His eternal plan.

Application

Though we may have failed in every possible way as Christians, we are still in the plan of God. God has a purpose for our lives. God's plan for the Christian begins with 1 John 1:9. Exercising that promise frees us to serve the Lord again.

God assigns people to eternal life apart from merit. We cannot work for salvation because Christ already has done all of the work necessary for salvation.

"But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works"
(Romans 4:5-6).

If we win the lottery, it is no credit to us. It was sheer luck. Winning has nothing to do with skill. Winning was the result of the lot falling on us. There is nothing in us to merit salvation. All the merit resides in Christ. Do you believe that? Why not accept His generous offer of salvation free of charge?

like precious faith with us

Peter loves the word "precious" (1 Peter 2:7).

"That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7).

"Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

The phrase "like precious" means equal in value. It comes from two words: equal and honor. What is equal honor faith? Peter says that those to whom he writes have faith that equals his own. Their faith is equal in significance and value.

The Roman world used this word for a person they gave the privilege of equal citizenship with those native to the country. The faith that God gives us is of equal privilege to that of an apostle. Anyone who expresses faith in Christ holds equal honor before God. All believers have equal honor in their salvation. The reason for this is that at the point of faith we received imputed righteousness. This is God's righteousness that He puts into us when we believe.

Principle

Saving faith is exactly the same for every person.

Application

Faith is equally precious in the individual Christian and in the apostle. It produces the same effects in one as in the other. Faith unites the weak believer to Christ as truly as it does the strong one. Every believer is, by his faith, justified in the sight of God (Acts 13:39).

We should hold our faith in equal honor with Peter's faith. Our faith has the same privileges as his. We possess full-fledged membership of the household of faith.

Our faith puts us in good stead with God. There is nothing as valuable as that. This is saving faith. This faith will also stand us in good stead in the hour our baby is dying for it is not only faith to live by but to die by. Do you pin both your eternal future and contingencies of this life to your faith in Christ? If not, receive Christ as the one who fully suffered for your sins and trust Him for everything that comes into your life.

Every believer at the point of salvation receives divine operating assets. These blessings are what we call positional truth. We possess these spiritual

assets at the moment we come to Christ. These blessings come simply by virtue of knowing Christ. We do not possess them because of our spiritual growth.

It is a pity that so few Christians know what they possess before God. They do not realize what they are worth so they do not enjoy full lives as Christians. Though they know they are Christians, they do not realize how well God saved them. But God put the Bible in our hands and His Spirit in our hearts. So that we might learn our position in Christ, and live in power and fullness. Many people have come to Christ but do not have an assurance of salvation. The Devil has short-changed them.

All Christians have the same sized Savior (John 1:12,16). We do not receive Christ on the installment plan. We do not receive a little of Him now and a little later. If we received Christ, we received the complete Christ. The issue is not getting more of Christ; the issue is allowing Him to get more of us.

There is nothing more valuable to us than our faith. No doubt we will realize how valuable our faith is to us when we are dying. Confidence in our doctor will pale in comparison to our faith in the Son of God.

Christ forgives all who come to Him fully. He forgives us totally. Neither are there degrees of forgiveness. Neither are there degrees of salvation from the penalty of sin. Salvation is complete. We need to do nothing further than what Jesus did for our salvation.

Saving faith is exactly the same for all people. A person's skin color, culture or educational background make no difference. The quality of saving faith is the same for everyone who comes to Christ. There are no degrees of saving faith (Titus 1:4; Jude 3). However, there are different degrees of developing faith. The building up of each person's faith is different. The degree to which a person applies principles to experience, is the degree to which that person's faith grows. This differs in each believer.

Little faith in a big Savior will take us to heaven. Great faith in a false Savior will lead us astray. It is not our faith that saves us; it is our Savior. Our faith simply connects us to our Savior. Faith is the coupling that links us to the Lord of Glory. We ride along as the Engineer pulls us to heaven.

by the righteousness

God is perfect and 100% righteous (1 John 1:5). He is so righteous that He does not tolerate sin to the slightest degree (Haggai 1:13). He cannot rationalize sin away. However, God is just in forgiving us our sin because he sent Jesus to pay for our sin (Romans 3:26). The argument of the book of Romans explains how God declares sinners to be as right as Jesus is right in His eyes.

We tend to think that God is just an extension of people like ourselves. We think that He is finite to some degree. But, God is absolute and as an absolute Being, He does not bend or flex to finite standards. He operates according to His own limitless standards. Man is the opposite. Man is finite. We operate on the relative plain and on a system of degrees. That is why our best efforts are obnoxious in God's eyes no matter how righteous they may be in our own eyes. God's righteousness is perfect. Our attempts will not hold up before a perfect God (Romans 3:10, 21-26; Matthew 5:20).

We receive faith by grace. This does not mean that grace did not cost something. Jesus paid a great price for the privilege of exercising our faith. The means of our faith is the righteousness of the God-man, Jesus Christ.

The good news is that God makes available His righteousness (as over against our righteousness) to all of us whenever we accept His Son's righteousness. God's righteousness is accessible to anyone (Romans 3:22). The one qualification is whether we believe in Jesus' death to forgive our sins and give us His righteousness. God reckons our faith for His righteousness (Romans 4:5). God puts to our account His very own righteousness. We go to heaven on the merit of Christ's righteousness. This is a righteousness that can come to us only by faith (Hebrews 11:7). We cannot earn this righteousness; we obtain it as a gift from God (Romans 5:17). As soon as we work for it, it is no longer a gift but a work.

Principle

God's standard for accepting us into His heaven is His own righteousness.

Application

Our good works are obnoxious to God (Isaiah 64:6; Titus 3:5). No matter how righteous, cultured or educated we may be on human standards, we are

not righteous on God's standards. By earthly standards, we may hold character and good habits. Those are areas of personal strength but even our areas of strength do not measure up to God's 100% standards. None of us are absolute in character. That is why we need the righteousness of God given to us by Christ.

None of us wants to be the finest person in hell. Who wants to be the most outstanding person in the Lake of Fire!? What a dubious distinction! We are totally lost in God's eyes even if the areas of strength of our character far exceed our areas of weakness. With all our character, we have no capacity to live up to the standard of who God is. This is why God says none of us are righteous in God's eyes (Romans 3:10).

God imputes His own righteousness to our account the split second we believe in Christ's penalty for our sin (Romans 3:22). There are no degrees of God's imputed righteousness. Each believer has the same perfect position before God. God accepts us because He loves Christ (Ephesians 1:6).

There are no degrees of justification. God justifies each believer fully the moment he becomes a Christian,

"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39).

None of us can say that we are more justified than someone else is because we have been Christians longer than him or her. Length of salvation is inconsequential and irrelevant when it comes to justification. Justification is the same for us all.

God redeems us all equally. None of us can say, "I am more redeemed than you." There are no degrees of redemption (Ephesians 1:7). We all share equally the forgiveness of sin. None of us can say, "Only 50% of your sins are forgiven but 75% of mine are forgiven. I'm more of a Christian than you are because I have more sins forgiven than you." There are no degrees of forgiveness of sin. Each born again person has all sins forgiven the moment he came to Christ. The penalty for our sin has been fully paid by Christ (Acts 10:43).

Each of our names is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. None of us can say, "My name is in indelible ink but your name is written in pencil! Someone may come along and erase it (Revelation 20:15)." Eternal life is the same for everyone. No one can say, "I have 900 billion years of eternal life and you only have 500 billion years." We all have the same amount of eternal life (John 6:47). We all possess the same eternal life by the virtue of what Christ did for us. Each Christian has the blood-bought right for eternal life. We cannot be almost saved. If we are almost saved, we are completely lost. Each born again person is totally in (1 Corinthians 1:13).

God did not almost reconcile us. He totally reconciled us to Himself (Romans 5:10). Therefore, there are no degrees of salvation.

Open your heart and receive God's righteousness. Don't work for it (Romans 10:1-10; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:7-9). Receiving the absolute righteousness of God is the genius of the gospel. We have no righteousness of our own that we can present to God as some form of merit in His eyes. We cannot earn brownie points before God. That is present day fashionable, present day religion. "Do good. Be sincere. Have a good batting average with the Ten Commandments. Live by the golden rule. Be nice to your neighbor. Do these things and you have a fine standing before God." This is the rational but it is a deadly rational. It is the opposite of dealing with God's righteousness. It simply deals with man's righteousness. This is the surest route to hell that we could try to conjure before God. We must come to Christ's righteousness. No human righteousness will impress God. The only righteousness that impresses God is the righteousness of Christ.

of our God

This is one of the greatest verses to prove the deity of Christ. The Greek makes no mistake that God and our Savior Jesus Christ are one person (Matthew 16:16; John 1:1; 20:28; Titus 2:13). The Greek makes the name "God" and "Savior" the same person [Granville Sharp Rule].

Note other great passage that deal with this subject: John 1:1; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:12; Hebrews 1:8; 1 John 5:20.

and Savior Jesus Christ

The New Testament never calls Jesus "Savior and Lord," it always calls him "Lord and Savior." This is the divine order. Experientially, we first come to Christ as Savior then later get to know Him as Lord. The emphasis of the New Testament is upon his Lordship. Savior occurs 16 times in the New Testament but Lord occurs 663 times. All four occurrences of "Lord and Savior" occur in 2 Peter.

"For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11).

"For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning" (2 Peter 2:20).

"That you 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 Savior" (2 Peter 3:2).

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).

The title "Lord" conveys primarily the idea of the deity of Christ but the deity of Christ implies lordship or sovereignty over our lives. He has the right to dominate us. He has the right to rule over every aspect of our lives.

Can you say, "My life belongs to you. You can do anything you desire with me?"

Peter uses the rare title "Savior" of Jesus no less than five times in this brief epistle (1:1, 11; 2:20; 3:2, 18).

"For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

"Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31).

"From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior-- Jesus" (Acts 13:23)

"For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23).

"And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world" (1 John 4:14).

Principle

It is God-in the form of Christ who saved us from our sin.

Application

Did you know that Jesus is God Almighty? He was God incognito who died on the cross. He is the Son of God.

The Savior saves people from sin and hell. He seeks you. Are you hiding from the Savior? You are not reading this study by accident. He brought you here. He brings you here by divine design. Will you at this divine interjection receive Christ as your personal Savior? Has it come as a shock to you that Jesus is the only Savior of the world? It is not until you come into a personal confrontation with Jesus Christ that He becomes your Savior.

2 Peter 1:2

"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."

Most epistles begin with a blessing (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Peter 1:2). The Greek indicates Peter's wish for these Asia Minor Christians.

Grace

Peter wants us to bless believers but that blessing comes in an exclusive form--in the "full-knowledge" of God. God blesses us when we come into intimate, personal relationship with God. This is the means of grace.

Grace is God's favor and provision for us. Peter wants God's favor multiplied in our lives. We do this through knowledge of God (John 17:3). The more knowledge we have of God the more He increases grace in our lives. Jesus is the means of that grace,

"And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:16-17).

Just when we feel that we cannot go on, the Lord provides His grace.

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

God gives grace to help us just in the nick of time. His timing is perfect. We do not earn or deserve grace. We come to the throne of grace and we receive what we need. The reason we receive grace so readily is that God is the "God of all grace" (1 Peter 5:10). God has cornered the market on grace.

God's grace is available to us (Romans 12:3; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Ephesians 3:8). Whatever situation we may face or whatever our predicament, God gives us what we need. His grace will sustain us.

Principle

God commits Himself to provide for us and to sustain us.

Application

Grace emphasizes the character and action of God on our behalf. God's plan for us includes His participation in our lives. He willingly pours out unmerited favor upon His own people. God has a perfect plan whereby imperfect creatures can function. That plan is His grace to us.

When we accept Christ, we join God's team. God has a game plan for his team that cannot fail since execution of the plan rests upon the Coach. The second we commit sin, God's plan of grace goes into action. Jesus lives to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25).

When a Christian steps out of God's plan, God Himself does something to make sure the plan continues. Jesus' blood keeps on cleansing us from all sin (1 John 1:7). No one can ruin His plan. No matter what we do, we cannot exceed God's grace for us. This is grace.

and peace

There are two kinds of peace--a peace with God and a peace of God. First, peace with God is the peace that Jesus won for us. He reconciled us from

living as enemies with God to people who are at peace with Him (Romans 5:10).

Secondly, there is the peace of God. It is the peace that He possesses and which is available to us as Christians. If the Christian does not accept grace, then he will not know peace. Grace always precedes peace. This is the peace of our verse.

"You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3).

We will know "perfect peace" if we keep our minds on God's provision.

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Peace comes through, the person of Christ.

"For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).

A characteristic of the kingdom of God is peace.

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

Peace comes through believing.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness" (Galatians 5:22).

A result of the filling of the Spirit is peace.

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

The peace that God possesses transcends our capacity to understand and guards our hearts.

Principle

Peace is God's peace that comes to us because of grace.

Application

Peace always follows grace. We cannot understand and apprehend God's peace without first understanding and appropriating God's grace. Grace eliminates the wear and tear on our soul.

be multiplied to you

The word "multiplied" comes from the word to fill. God wants grace and peace to fill our lives. It is one thing to have a measure of grace and peace and it is quite another to have an abundance of grace and peace in our lives. Is grace and peace increasing in ever-greater measure in your life? May God's grace increase in extent and measure in your experience.

Grace and peace can sanctify us.

Principle

The multiplication of grace and peace can revolutionize our lives.

Application

Addition is one thing and multiplication another. We get there faster with multiplication than with addition.

When we multiply grace and peace, we ignite spiritual fuel for our Christian journey. We can no more live the Christian life without spiritual fuel than we can operate our car without gas and oil. If we are not going anywhere for the Lord, we will not need much spiritual fuel. However, if we expend a great amount of spiritual energy, we need to increase the volume of our spiritual fuel. The spiritual fuel here is grace and peace. We consume vast amounts of grace in serving the Lord (2 Corinthians 12:9; Hebrews 4:16; James 4:6). We need great peace and settlement of soul while serving Him. The battle will wear us down without replenishment from the Lord.

One of the great benefits to some stock is that it compounds its interest. This is one of the reasons that the rich get richer. Microsoft keeps getting bigger and bigger because its assets keep multiplying. Bill Gates', the founder of Microsoft, is worth \$40.530400 billion as I write. If I had as much money as Gates, I might be inclined to occasionally withdraw some of it to use right now. Some people let their wealth accumulate. God wants us to multiply grace and peace in our lives

so that we will use those blessings in time. Do you draw on your spiritual assets from time to time?

Spiritually, we are all billionaires. We can live on the interest of our capital in Christ. If you had Bill Gates' money, you might withdraw enough to buy an ice cream cone occasionally! You may want to withdraw a few thousand to go on an extensive trip somewhere. No Christian should wait till he or she gets to heaven before withdrawing their spiritual capital. Since your spiritual interest constantly accumulates (multiplies), why not treat yourself to something? We can think in terms of letting our spiritual capital sit or we can think in terms of using it. Draw on your spiritual resources now! You will never run out of spiritual resources. They constantly accumulate.

We often hear stories of people who beg for money yet they are enormously wealthy. As strange that this may seem, this is exactly the problem with many Christians today. The prodigal son ate the slop of pigs while his wealthy father waited for him at home. Why should we live like paupers? Clip your spiritual dividends. Draw on God's unlimited resources. Every time we draw upon the knowledge of God, that opens the bank account of God's grace. There is no way for grace to grow in our lives without knowledge of God. There is no substitute for knowing God's Word.

in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord

Blessings at the beginning of epistles are not mere formalities. We discover blessings in personal knowledge of God.

"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

The word for "knowledge" implies an active relationship with God. We do not know God from hearsay. We know Him personally for ourselves. Knowing Him personally, influences the direction of our lives.

This knowledge edifies us as we participate in it (Romans 15:14; 1 Corinthians 14:6). Knowledge of this sort transcends the theoretical and goes hand in hand with relationship (Philippians 3:10). When we come to grips with the person of Christ we renounce confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:4), confess Christ as Lord (Philippians 3:8) and constantly renew our relationship with him

(Philippians 3:12). We experience the power of His resurrection (Philippians 3:10).

"That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light" (Colossians 1:10-12).

The Colossians passage implies more than knowledge about God. The idea is to experience knowledge of God. That is, we should increase in the experience of knowing God.

The word "knowledge" in this verse is an intense word. It means to know thoroughly. We must know God with discernment and full knowledge.

Knowledge of God is not obscure. We cannot grow in knowledge of God (2 Peter 3:18) with a closed Bible. Rather we increase in the knowledge of God as we increase in the knowledge of God's Word. The more we know the Bible, the more we know God. We cannot know how to live the Christian life without the Bible.

Principle

Extensive, personal knowledge of God is the highest ideal of the Christian life.

Application

Do you know God as a person or is He just a lot of information?

Knowledge of God is the greatest virtue of Christianity. No experience, even a spiritual experience, will validate our relationship with God. Truth validates experience, not the other way around. Thus only the Bible can validate experience. We are incapable of loving Christ without some knowledge of Christ. We cannot love Christ without truth. Experience can only confirm truth; it does not make truth.

Some people have wide emotional swings. They can go to a movie and cry the moment the good guy gets the girl at the end. This is an ecstatic experience for them. Some people can get an ecstatic experience from a bottle. There are many ways to produce an ecstatic experience if you are

easily triggered by emotion. Often, these people are far from true Christian living because they lack the self discipline to get into the Word. They operate on wide emotional swings. They think that they can agonize in the closet and be spiritual. Many people operate by strictly psychologically induced experience. But emotional variations have little to do with true Christian living.

"For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Timothy 1:12).

2 Peter 1:3

"As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue." as His divine power

"As" is a marker of a reason--on the grounds that, because. Because God's power has given us everything we need, we possess well-founded assurance to live the Christian life.

"Divine" means pertaining to God. Peter talks about the power pertaining to God. "Divine" speaks of the attributes of God. This is God seen from the standpoint of His attributes. "Divine" then is all that bears the stamp of God. It is what God is and especially what proceeds from Him. Here Peter sees God especially from the attribute of power. Divine, then, means the manifested presence of God. It is the bloom of His character, His glory (John 1:14, 18).

In the previous verse, Peter summons Christians to gain a "full-knowledge" of God. In this verse, we now come to understand what he means. God is a God of power. That power is available to us. We have the possibility to address our problems beyond operation bootstraps.

The word for "power" here is inherent power and refers to God's potency. We enjoy built-in power to live the Christian life. God guarantees us power to live in God's strength. God makes it possible for us to win. God cannot be defeated.

Principle

There is a relationship between the power of God and the benefits of the Christian life.

Application

The relationship between the believer and God is direct when it comes to living the Christian life. God's power, His omnipotent power, is available to us for whatever we face in life.

From eternity, God thought about us in terms of His limitless power. He knew billions of years ago that you would accept Christ as your Savior. Knowing this, He set up a trust fund for you. This trust fund contains many spiritual assets to operate in life. God provided in eternity past every blessing we require for living the Christian life. God does not wait until you are in a jam and then try to figure out what to do for you.

There is nothing unstable about God. God established this trust fund in eternity past (Ephesians 1:4-5). God provided in such a way as to leave nothing out. He furnished everything we need for time and eternity. He did this in His power. He has the ability to deliver it to us anytime we need it.

The words "has given" mean to bestow, to grant (1 John 3:1; 2 Corinthians 8:1). The idea is that of something freely given. This word "given" is a rare term for giving and is much stronger than the normal word for giving. The idea is to grant or bestow freely without strings attached. Great generosity is the idea. God grants Christians gifts for living. This term always implies the grace of God. God freely gives to us.

Often "given" carries the idea of a promissory note. God wrote a promise to pay on demand what we need to live the Christian life. This is pure grace maintained at the Father's expense.

"Given" means to give with no strings attached. God does not say, "If you do this or that, I will give this or that. If you give a tithe to me, I will bless you. If you witness for me, I will bless you." No, God gives freely, without strings. He does this out of His own perfect character. In other words, He does not benefit personally from what you do. He does not benefit from what He gives us. He gives simply out of His perfectly generous character. He does it no other way.

The words "have given" are in the perfect tense in the Greek. At a point in the past (eternity past) God set up a trust fund with our name on it because He knew we would accept Jesus Christ as our Savior in this century. No lapse of time

diminishes, destroys, removes or negates this trust fund because it rests on the character of God, especially God's power. God gives to us based on what He is and does. God does this Himself (middle voice in the Greek). The middle voice can be translated "He Himself has given without strings." This puts emphasis on the Giver.

What does God give us? "All things." The name of our trust fund is "all things." This trust fund contains a portfolio of thousands of things God planned for you. God does this for each Christian with no exceptions and no limits to His grace for us.

Principle

God gives us a promissory note to live the Christian life freely, out of His grace.

Application

Suppose I say to you, "I'll give you \$200 for installing a hard drive in my computer next Tuesday." You say, "OK, I'll do that." In this case, there is a string. For some reason you did not come Tuesday. You may give a number of excuses for not coming. Whatever the excuse, it makes no difference, you do not get your \$200. There is a string attached to my offer of giving you \$200. God, however, does not have any strings attached to His giving. This is grace.

If we feel sorry for sin in order to seek forgiveness from God, this is not grace. The string in this case is feeling sorry. Feeling sorry is a work on our part to placate God. This insults God for God has already been placated by the death of Christ. We do not beg God to forgive us because we stand forgiven by His cross. We simply accept by faith His promise that He forgave us by Christ's blood (1 John 1:9).

We must come under conviction about the sin we committed and confess it. We cannot do anything to change God's mind about it. Jesus' death on the cross changed His mind already and permanently at that. He already holds an attitude of forgiveness about our sin. That attitude is forgiveness based on Christ's cross (1 John 2:1-2). That is why we simply place our trust in Christ's death to forgive us for salvation. That is why we also simply place our trust in Christ's death for the individual sins we commit as Christians.

There are no strings attached to our forgiveness as Christians. God has already been placated by the cross. He forgave us when we came to faith in Christ. Our acceptance before God does not rest on who and what we are but on what Jesus did for us on the cross.

that pertain to life

"Life" includes not only eternal life but life as we now live it. God provides for our life now. This is divine life, not life that consists of issues, like food, clothing, and shelter. This is the vitality and animation of life with God.

The New Testament uses "life" to refer to the life of God. He has absolute fullness of life, both the essence of life and the ethics that flow from that life. His is the noble life, the highest and best life. Whatever truly lives does so because sin has not found its place in it. This is life in the absolute sense. It is more than nobility and power. It is life as God has it; it is life in the fullest sense.

God's life is an abiding antithesis to death, a positive, free-from-death living. In other words, this is a life of glory, full of vitality. We can be fulfilled beings with abundant lives. God's life is the furthest thing from mere existence. The vitality of God rules our entire life.

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

There is a corollary between life and holiness. We must have breath before behavior. We cannot live the Christian life without first having spiritual life to live it. We do not get life by goodness. Goodness comes from the life of God.

and godliness

"Godliness" is piety. It comes from two words: well and to worship. Godly people worship well. They direct their worship rightly. They pay their worth to God. We owe this response to God.

Ancient Greeks used this word for the function of polytheism (Greek and Roman religions teaching there are many gods). "Godliness" carries a technical meaning in the New Testament; it has the idea of functioning in God's plan. It is our devotion to God based on His provision for us.

"Godliness" is the opposite of religion. Godliness is having a true spiritual relationship God. Religion relates more to outward acts of religious observance or ceremony. Godliness, on the other hand, cherishes the will of God.

When we put "godliness" with the preposition "that," we get the idea of living the whole Christian life before God. This includes both the Spirit-filled life and growth in the principles and application of the Christian life. In other words, this involves everything God expects of us in the Christian life. This is the entire structure of Christian living. God provided everything that pertains to living on earth.

Principle

"Life" and "godliness" come from a real relationship with God.

Application

When people come to Christ, they receive the highest life possible, eternal life. Eternal life gives us the capacity to live before God. Eternal life is the highest state a creature can have. Eternal life begins at the moment of salvation, not death (John 5:24). Eternal death comes through the sin of Adam and we inherit that death. Eternal life comes through Christ and we inherit His life when we believe in His death as the means of our salvation (Romans 5:12).

The power of God gives us new life (Colossians 2:12-13; Titus 3:4-5) and the ability to live godly lives (Philippians 2:12-13; 4:13).

Do you have a vital spiritual life? Is God real to you? There is no excuse for not living vitally before God because we have His power for "all things."

through the knowledge of Him

Christ is the source of knowledge mentioned in verse two. God the Father is the source of life and godliness in verse three. To know Christ is to know God; to know God is to know Christ. We can use God's power for life and godliness when we know His power.

The emphasis is on "source." By knowing God, we understand all things that pertain to life and godliness. This makes our knowledge firm and solid. We find out what God has provided for us

as we read and study our Bible. The better we know our Bible, the better we know God.

This word for "knowledge" is different from the normal word for knowledge. There is a prefix in front of this word making it an intense term--"full-knowledge." This is more than ordinary knowledge. It is a full-orbed knowledge of God (Colossians 1:10).

Principle

The better we know God's Word the better able we are to apply God's principles for us.

Application

The better we know God, the better able we are to appropriate all operating assets God has put at our disposal. What good is an asset if we do not use it? What good is my computer if I do not use it? What good are the provisions of God if we do not use them?

God catalogues all our assets in the Word of God. The child of God is supposed to read and study the Word so that he may be able to use his assets efficiently. The better we know the manual the better we can use the equipment. Where do you start? Too bad babies do not come with a manual!

We should know God better this year than we did last year. Our spiritual development should be further along than it was last year. Are you going forward or falling behind in your Christian walk? Are your spiritual wheels spinning without any progress?

Go forward, get ahead in your Christian walk. Just because you fall down, do not let that stop you. Don't stay there. Get up. Don't let time go by without confessing your sin. Deal with it immediately and move on.

If we do not confess sin immediately, we may develop attitude sins such as resentment and bitterness. If we do, we may fill our minds with self-pity. Then we will blame others. We will not be honest with ourselves. We will operate with a "hurt-orientation," where everyone and everything hurts us. God may put us on the shelf with this. When we stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ there will be no doubt that the problem lies with us.

Have you lost your spiritual resiliency? Are your spiritual reflexes as quick as they should be? We

need to deal with sin quickly and keep short accounts with God.

Is this stocktaking time for you? What is your spiritual inventory? Do you ever say, "Lord, I have been bitter toward....? I have been mean toward.... What is the matter with me? Why am I so ornery? Why am I wretched? God, I'm ready to blame everyone and anyone. I feel like biting their heads off. What is bothering me, Lord?"

who called us

The word "called" indicates our election. Our election is God's plan in eternity past that sets aside everything we need to live before Him.

God's plan took place before He created man. This is the meaning of predestination. Predestination is pre-design. Logically, God's plan of salvation came before God's creation of man. God's plan for man came from eternity past. A perfect plan came from a perfect God. In this plan, there is no place for man to take the credit. All of it rests upon God because this plan took place in eternity.

God's plan comes from God's decrees. His decrees come from eternity past. In eternity past, God took cognizance of everyone who would ever live. God provided for our salvation in Christ before He decided to create.

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Romans 8:28-30).

"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9).

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6-7).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly

places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the god pleasure of His will" (Ephesians 1:3-5).

Principle

God anticipates every contingency we may face.

Application

Regardless of their shortcomings, all believers have been called by God. We share the election of Christ. There never will be a time when we do not share this election with Christ. God must be perfectly consistent with His plan because He is immutable. He cannot change His election. God cannot change for that would mean He is not absolute.

Billions of years before creation God decided to elect Christ to resolve His own perfect righteousness. The death of Christ satisfied the demands of God's absolute being, His perfect righteousness. Jesus propitiated the Father's righteousness by His death on the cross. This is how God can love us in spite of our sin. God is free to love us because Jesus met the demands of His absolute being. God cannot by pass His absolute righteousness.

No matter how we may fail God, He cannot fail us. He must remain true to what Jesus did on the cross. No matter what we do, God must keep on loving us. Why? Because election describes who and what God is. We change every hour on the hour. God has never changed and will be consistent forever in His character.

We cannot change God's plan. Once in that plan, even God cannot change this plan because He must be true to Himself. There is no sin too great for God to handle. There will never be a problem, catastrophe or disaster too great for the plan of God. God's plan provides for any contingency. No one can commit a sin too great for this plan.

It is the epitome of human pride to believe there is some sin God did not anticipate from eternity past. Do you really think He did not examine every possible contingency for man? This assaults the essence of God and implies He is not perfect in everything He does. God overlooks nothing.

Immutability stabilizes everything. God is not about to change anytime, anywhere under any circumstance. That is hard for many people to swallow especially if we think we have something to offer Him. If we depend on who and what we are to gain God's acceptance, we can never measure up to an absolute being. If we assume we are special because of our righteousness and God is under obligation to love us because we measure up, then we miss the principle. The principle is that we cannot change the love of God by what we do. God's love for us comes from Christ and what He did on the cross.

by glory

"Glory" in this context means heaven. Christians are headed for glory. He called us "to glory" (literally). God will glorify us in eternity because we believed in Christ in our lifetime.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

"Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:10).

"But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 5:10-11).

The Lord Jesus calls us by means of His unique glory and virtue. The word "own" does not occur in this translation but we find it in the Greek text. The word "own" carries the idea of private, unique or peculiar possession. God called us to His "own unique glory."

Glory refers to the ultimate triumph of the plan of God. You may be a loser but you will ultimately triumph in the plan of God. Some are losers because they accept defeat. The loser gives up. Losers usually are ignorant of God's provisions.

Glory is a term of dignity and refers to God's essence but here it means more. Glory is the fact that God designed a perfect plan for us. God designed a plan where He and we cannot lose. and virtue

"Virtue" occurs five times in the New Testament. God calls us to virtue. "Virtue" is excellence, praises (1 Peter 2:9). This word has lost some of its meaning to us today. "Virtue" means excellence in workmanship. The work of Christ is a work of excellence. God calls us by His own merit and workmanship. Virtue is a quality of excellence that belongs to God.

Principle

We will ultimately triumph in God's plan for us.

Application

Glory is the fact that God designed a perfect plan for us. God designed a plan where He cannot lose. You say, "He included me in His plan, doesn't that make Him a loser?" No, God cannot lose because He made provision for any contingency we might face. Stand by for a shock--God's plan is greater than you are! Even at your best, you are at your worst in God's eyes. God is greater than your sin.

God's glory is His perfect character plus the plan that comes from it. It is impossible for a perfect God to come up with an imperfect plan. The plan would indeed be imperfect if it depended on man and what man does. There is no place in God's plan for the energy of the flesh.

Grace depends on who God is and what God has done, never on who we are and what we do. That is why we must function under God's power and God's provision. God's glory takes His perfect plan and relates it to us. God will reveal ultimate glory in eternity. That is where He makes the plan experientially perfect in us. He made it judicially perfect when He sacrificed Christ on the cross.

God calls us to His Excellency. He is building excellent character in us. He called us with a definite purpose in mind. God is in the business of reproducing His Son in me (2 Timothy 1:9). I do not think any of us have been mistaken for the Lord Jesus lately. One of these days we will be like Him. In the meantime, we are supposed to become more and more like Him.

2 Peter 1:4

"By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

By which

"By which" refers to the things God gives us in the previous verse. God's power gives us "exceedingly great and precious promises." "Which" is in the plural. The plural may indicate knowledge of our glory and virtue makes known God's promises to us.

have been given to us

The word "given" is the same word used in the previous verse meaning to bestow or endow. God makes a gift of His promises. "Given" is not the usual word for "give" and carries the idea of grace by the giver. God gives His promises with no strings attached.

The Greek indicates God gave us these promises in the past with the result continuing to the present. All along our spiritual journey, God gives us spiritual equipment for the pilgrim pathway.

Note the word "us." God discriminates to whom He gives His promises. The "us" is not just anyone, it is only those who embrace his Son. Not everyone is a child of God.

Principle

God puts at the disposal of every Christian divine operating assets whether or not we use them, whether or not we are aware of them.

Application

Are you discouraged because people reject you for some sin you committed? You sing the blues that the bird with the broken wing will never fly so high again. You heard in a sermon somewhere that you become a second-class Christian after you "blew it." People ostracized you from certain Christian circles. You feel you do not belong anymore. You sense God has completely set you aside.

How do you know God still has a plan for you after you have blown it? If you still breath, God has a plan for you. It makes no difference how you

feel because your feelings do not determine your spiritual status.

Our fellowship with God does not depend on who we are but on who Jesus is. There are many Horatio Alger stories out there. Someone was flat on his back financially and now he is a millionaire. People say, "That sounds like a good deal, I think I will try God." These people are not truly interested in God, they are interested in making money. They think that if they tithe ten per cent of their income then they will become millionaires. They think they have found a way to rub the genie. They kick in their ten per cent because they want something from God. "I'll go along with His routine so I can get something from God."

exceedingly

This is the only occurrence of the superlative "exceedingly" in the New Testament. This speaks of the magnitude of God's promises. God describes His promises with three outstanding qualifications: exceedingly, great and precious.

First, God's promises exceed any promise you ever heard. We know what it means to "exceed" the speed limit. It means to go beyond. God's promises go past man's promises. His promises are bigger and better than anything man can do.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

"Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation" (2 Corinthians 7:4).

"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power" (Ephesians 1:18-19).

"That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7).

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).

great

The second description of God's promises is they are "great." We abuse this word today. Everything is "great." We have great automobiles and great hotdogs! When everything is great, nothing is great. However, when the Bible uses the word "great" it carries impact.

"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32).

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us" (Ephesians 2:4).

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him?" (Hebrews 2:3).

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Hebrews 13:20).

Principle

God's promises exceed anything we might face.

Application

Whatever problem we might face as a child of God, we can come to the Bible and find God makes commitments to our welfare. We will find a promise that will exceed any problem we might face. God's promises go beyond our problems. Whether we have physical, mental, domestic or financial problems, we will find God's promises exceed any situation we face.

and precious promises

The third description of our promises is they are "precious." "Precious" carries the idea of value or worth. God's promises are valuable. God's promises are extremely important to the believer.

The promises of God are of considerable worth to those who use them. Peter uses "precious" for faith (1 Peter 2:7; 2 Peter 1:1) and for Christ's blood (1 Peter 1:19).

God's promises are His guarantees to us that He will be there for us. That is why when He makes a promise they are valuable.

"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5).

The phrase "never leave" in the Greek is "I will never, ever, ever, ever, ever leave you [five particles]." That is quite an emphatic commitment to us!!

Principle

God makes us guarantees to be with us.

Application

Stake out the Bible and find special promises that fit your situation and then claim those promises. Hold God to those promises. God will make good on His promises to you. He is faithful to Himself and to you.

With His "promises," God makes voluntary and spontaneous commitments to us. A promise from God is His guarantee. We have grounds to expect things from God because He is true to His word. Sometimes employers make promises to their employees that they do not keep. Sometimes they make promises to raise the employees salary then the employees' find they have lost their jobs. We will not get this kind of surprise from God. He is always true to what He says.

We find all God's promises in the Bible. God's promises are not like the promises of a politician. He will make good on His promises. Try some of these promises on for size.

"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do?" (Numbers 23:19).

"But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

"Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

"For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

"Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Philippians 4:19-20).

that through these

"These" are the promises of the previous phrase. As a result of using these promises, we partake of the divine nature.

you may be partakers

"May be" comes from a word meaning to become. Becoming implies the idea of growth. This is not primarily dealing with being but with becoming. The normal word for "be" means to exist. That would imply we possess the divine nature. That is not the point here.

Since "be" here means become, this passage is referring to becoming something we are not right now. We are not like Christ right now. We want to become more like Him. This is not dealing with receiving the nature of God at our spiritual birth but manifesting the nature we share with God. "Becoming" is not absorption into God as the mystics would have us believe but the application of positional truth to experience.

"Partakers" means companions, partners, sharers. This is someone who participates with someone else in some enterprise or joint matter of concern. This is a partner or associate. Christians partake in

the divine nature. We join with God in the common concern of manifesting God's character in our lives.

Principle

We need to join with God in manifesting His character to the world.

Application

We cannot lose our salvation but we can lose a lot if we step out of fellowship with God. When David committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband, catastrophe followed him for the next few years. Sin has a price tag. That price tag is ugly.

We must live the Spirit-filled life or we will revert to type. If we do not allow ourselves to be filled with the Spirit, we will fulfill the lusts of the flesh. The old capacity cannot do anything right. The new capacity cannot do anything wrong. There is a struggle between the old and new capacities.

If we struggle within, then that is an indication we are born again. The non-Christian does not struggle with sin on a regular basis because his conscience does not bother him. His conscience is dead toward God. His conscience is as reliable as a rubber tape measure.

There is nothing within a non-Christian but sin capacity. Their Adamic capacity given to them by their parents completely monopolizes the direction of their lives. They are 100% flesh. Thus, they do anything they want to do. They look at anything they want. They listen to anything without discrimination. They touch anything they desire. They have no restraint or inhibition. To them, there are no restrictions or prohibitions. They are without God and therefore without internal spiritual standards.

**"There is a way that seems right to a man,
But its end is the way of death" (Proverbs
14:12).**

of the divine nature

[Part 1]

"Nature" means disposition. Our "nature" is a disposition or inborn quality that generates and produces power in us. This nature is not the quality that determines whether someone is a human being. In other words, our nature is not

equivalent to our person. The sin nature is a change in capacity or disposition and not a metaphysical change in us (the transfer of God's attributes to us). A nature is the inherent disposition that ultimately affects our conduct and character.

Before Adam's fall, he had a human nature but not a sin nature. He possessed attributes unique to man. When Adam fell, he acquired a sin nature (Romans 5:12). Now he possessed two natures: a human nature and a sin nature. A better term for "nature" in this context might be "capacity." Adam in the fall acquired a capacity for sin. When a person become Christians, they receive a capacity toward God.

The addition of the sin nature in Adam produced a drastic spiritual change but not a metaphysical change in him. He still was the same person he was before the fall. Therefore, his sin nature is a disposition rather than a change of attributes unique to his human nature.

Hypothetically, if the sin nature did change the attributes of the human nature, then man would have been different from the human being God created when He created Adam. The non-Christian possesses a human nature in the sense of the attributes unique to man plus a sin nature. He does not have the new nature in the sense of a new disposition toward God. All he has is a sin capacity. That is why his disposition is dark toward God (John 3:19).

When people become Christians, a radical change in their disposition takes place. They receive a divine nature. They are not a new kind of human being but they have a new orientation toward God. Christians still possess characteristics unique to man but God introduces something new into them, a divine disposition. God reintroduces into the born again person the same orientation toward God that Adam had before the fall. Once we are favorably disposed toward God, He can make us more like Christ.

Christians in their new nature are legally just before God. Therefore, they have certain rights before God.

Principle

In conflict with the sin capacity, Christians can claim their legal right to reject the mastery of the

sin nature because of their identification with Christ's death.

Application

The sin nature or capacity is our inherent disposition toward sin. We received at our physical birth a disposition toward rebellion toward God. We call that disposition the sin nature (Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 6:16-20). The sin nature holds both legal authority and experiential power over the lives of non-Christians. The sin nature only hold experiential power over Christians if do not apply their legal authority in Christ to its power.

Non-Christians only have the sin nature but not the divine nature. The sin nature is totally depraved. This means that by possessing the sin capacity, non-Christians are depraved in reference to God. This does not mean they cannot do right according to human standards. It does mean their morality is worthless, compared to the absolute righteousness of God (Romans 8:7).

Non-Christians have inherent hostility toward God's will (Romans 8:7). This does not mean the old nature will always act as badly as it is capable. Non-Christians do many moral and humanitarian things but they do them apart from God. They operate essentially apart from God and their life revolves around themselves. Their orientation is man-centered rather than God-centered. Their chief end is themselves rather than God (Ephesians 2:3). This is why they must be born again because in their own nature they will not orient to God (John 3:19).

Christians receive a divine nature [capacity] at the point of salvation but they still retain the sin capacity after salvation. Christians, then, have two warring capacities within their bosom. However, in the Christian, Jesus forever legally defeated the sin nature by His death on the cross (Romans 6).

Christians have legal rights over the sin nature but they cannot defeat sin simply by possessing a divine nature. Simple possession of the divine nature does not provide the power necessary to overcome the sin nature. Christians need more than the divine nature for that. Christians can defeat the sin nature by claiming, through experience, their legal rights over the sin capacity in God's eyes. Christians live by the promises of God in Christ.

If we rely on our own strength as the source of power to overcome the sin nature, the sinful disposition will defeat us every time. Neither keeping the commands of God nor self-will are enough to overcome struggle with the sin nature.

Christians need not allow the sin nature to defeat them because they have the indwelling Holy Spirit who can fill them with power. At the point of our salvation, the Holy Spirit set us free from the controlling power of the sin nature in principle and made available His own power to us. If we give Him power over our lives, we will have victory over the sin capacity. The Holy Spirit can produce in us what we cannot produce in ourselves.

The divine nature plays a powerful role in transforming the regenerate man ("new man") more and more into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). This, again, is a process (2 Corinthians 3:18). In eternity, God will make us morally perfect in our experience.

the divine nature

[Part 2]

Remember that the word "divine" from the previous verse means that which is God's, that which ensues from Him. In two verses running, we have "divine power" and "divine nature." Peter uses the word "divine" both of God's power (1:3) and of God's nature (here). In both places, nature is something that proceeds from God Himself.

People often teach we have an old nature and a new nature. That is not quite correct. The "divine nature" is not the same as the "new man" (Colossians 3:10). Our "old man" was our unregenerate disposition. The divine nature then is a new orientation to God.

A massive change toward God occurred in us when we became Christians. We do not get the divine nature through reformation of the old nature. It is not something that grows or develops by a process. Rather, God imparts this new nature instantaneously and supernaturally to us the moment we become Christians. Therefore, only regenerate people possess this nature. It is God's orientation planted within us. It is far more than inherent morality.

There also remains an old capacity in every believer after we accept Christ. That old nature is what produces sin in our lives. It is a disposition

toward sin and it also has an area of strength that produces human good apart from God.

The Christian cannot partake of God's nature in the sense of sharing His deity. That would be heresy. Man can never become God or even deity. Man cannot share infinite attributes. Possessing infinite attributes would annihilate finite man. People who hold that we share God's attributes as over against His disposition are Pantheistic in their thinking (everything is god and we are gods). This confounds the creature with the Creator and is blasphemy.

Partaking of God's disposition is different from partaking of His essence. We can partake of His holiness in the sense of having the same disposition He has.

"For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews 12:10).

Principle

As we lay hold of the promises, we manifest the divine nature.

Application

According to Romans six, the sinful disposition loses its mastery over Christians permanently by our identifying with the death of Christ. We are no longer sin's slaves. The sin nature no longer has legal authority over us any more. Although it no longer holds legal authority over us, it continues with us till we die. It will try to exercise an illegal authority over us if we do not claim our legal rights. We can claim our legal right by Christ's death for any sin we might commit as a Christian. If we try to operate in our own strength, the sin nature will defeat us.

The "divine nature" is not the "new man" of Colossians 3:9-10. The new man is the born-again man (the regenerate person). God gives the new man freedom from slavery of the sin nature by newness of life. The divine nature is in the new man but it is not the new man.

We received a human nature when we were born physically. We received God's nature when we were born spiritually. We cannot reverse that. Once born a human we cannot revert to a horse. Once born spiritually we cannot revert to being a

non-Christian. We cannot lose our sin capacity in time nor can we lose our divine capacity. The same people who talk about losing their old capacity think they can lose their new capacity. They are wrong on both accounts. We can lose neither except when we enter glory. Then we lose the old capacity.

Everyone born again received a divine capacity at the point of salvation. So every Christian has two capacities, a human and a divine capacity. The human capacity can do nothing but sin and the divine capacity cannot sin. Because we Christians still possess the human nature, we still have the potential for any sin.

"Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God" (1 John 3:9).

having escaped

"Escaped" comes from two words: to flee or to be a fugitive and away from. Christians escaped by flight from the corruption in the world when we became Christians. We became fugitives from the sin capacity at the point of our salvation.

The Greek indicates we escaped in principle, not practice. We escaped by positional truth. We are not trying to escape but we escaped.

Principle

God delivered us from the world by our coming to know Christ personally.

Application

In principle, the Holy Spirit indwells us but the filling of the Holy Spirit means He must control our lives. One is principle and the other is experience. How does your experience line up with principle? Some of you have not escaped in practice.

"Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin" (Romans 6:6).

Our sin capacity perpetuates in us through physical birth (Psalm 51:5; 1 Timothy 2:13-14). By being born in the lineage of Adam, we inherit the sin capacity. By spiritual birth, we inherit the lineage of Christ (Romans 5:12). Both the sin

capacity and the divine capacity operate in the Christian until he dies (1 John 1:8; 1 Corinthians 3:1). The sin capacity does not continue in our resurrection body (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:56).

Personal sin is our sin capacity expressing itself in experience. When the sin capacity controls the Christian, the Bible calls this carnality (Romans 7:14; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3). He reverts to living by spiritual death (Romans 5:12)! The source of the sin capacity is spiritual death. Spiritual death is death toward God.

We escaped from the sin capacity in principle when Jesus died on the cross.

"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin" (Romans 7:24-25).

We escape from the sin capacity in practice when we apply the principle to our life. A person goes to medical school then later specializes in surgery. He now has the credentials to operate on human beings. We place confidence in the principle of this training. None of us would want a butcher to take out our appendix even if he previously did take out the appendix of a horse! I have no beef against butchers. They have their place, but I would not want to have a butcher operate on me. We escaped the sin capacity in principle, not practice. We escaped from the capacity in principle by Christ's death. We escape from the sin capacity's power when we live by the power of the Holy Spirit.

"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh [sin capacity]. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish" (Galatians 5:16).

God's plan does not depend on what we do, it depends on what God does. God executed three judgments on the sin capacity:

1. He judged Christ for our sins, 1 Peter 2:24
2. We judge our sin in the light of Christ's judgment for our sin, 1 Corinthians 11:31; 1 John 1:9

3. The sin that we do not judge, Christ will judge at the Judgment Seat of Christ and reward us accordingly, 1 Corinthians 3:11-16.

escaped the corruption

This word "escaped" occurs three times in this epistle and Peter uses it primarily in relation to religion:

"For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning" (1 Peter 2:18-20).

"Corruption" means ruin, destruction, dissolution and deterioration. "Corruption" brings things to a worse state. Here the corruption is the depravity of the sin capacity. Here Peter uses this term of the effect of the depravity of lusts. One of the great benefits of being born again is that God delivers us from the sensuality, smut, vulgarity, blasphemy and profanity that characterize the world.

Later in chapter 2, verse 12, Peter uses "corruption" of the death and decay of beasts (religionists). Religion causes corruption when we try to placate God by what we do. There is a destruction that comes with religion. If we try to change the sin capacity by religion, we only exacerbate the problem because religion does not change the disposition. Religion is man's attempt to placate God. That can only bring a person to a worse condition.

Principle

A by-product of being born again is that God delivers us from sin.

Application

The World loves smut as a pig loves the mud. The dirtier the story, the better. The more racy or suggestive, the more sexy, the more vulgar the movie, the more the public wants it and the more money it grosses. That is what the public wants

and that is what the movie industry gives because the movie industry is driven by money. God's people are different because God has delivered them from this present evil world.

"Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father" (Galatians 1:4).

Many Christians rationalize sin by the phrase "I do not see anything wrong with...." Many Christians see nothing wrong in anything short of murder because they do not read the Bible. That is their problem. They do not study the Bible. They live on their experience and feeling. They are maudlin and sentimental in their thinking but not biblical. Sometimes the pollutions of the world are not coarse but refined and inviting. Some sin is cultured and religious. They do not seem to realize sin took their Savior to the cross. He went to the cross to save us from the corruption in the world.

It is impossible to escape the pollutions of the world unless you are born again with a divine capacity to orient to God's values. We hear much today that people cannot get out from under obsessions and compulsions. The Bible says we can. We can escape those foul habits we accumulated over the years. When God puts in us His divine capacity, we can get victory over them if we appropriate the principle to experience.

that is in the world

The "world" in the Bible is the system of values from Satan that believes something other than God will fill our needs. The world system is Satan's system of values as over against God's system of values. At the point of salvation, God delivered us in Christ from the world.

Principle

Through God's promise of living in our divine capacity, He disables our hankering for the world.

Application

Are you fond of the corruption that is in the world? Do you still have a hankering for the worst kinds of sin? Do the tinsel and baubles of this world still appeal to you? This is contrary to how the apostle Paul lived his life. The Lord Jesus spoiled Paul for living for the world.

"But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14).

God does not want us isolated from the world but He does want us insulated from it. The ship is supposed to be in the sea but not the sea in the ship. The Christian is supposed to be in the world but the world is not supposed to be in the Christian. The Bible does not sponsor the idea of religious recluses. God does not want us become religious hermits who live eccentric lives not connected with people about us.

It is one thing not to be eccentric and it is another thing not to be deceived by the world. Worldly living loses its fascination when we embrace the Lord Jesus. He exposes the facade of this world. When we fall in love with Him, the world loses its grip on us.

"Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4).

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:15-17).

through lust

This particular word for "lust" conveys something that someone greatly desires. It denotes great intensity. This person longs for some object very much. "Lust" almost carries the idea of an obsession. Obsessions control people and they become captive to these lusts.

Lust here is the sphere of lust (Greek). The nature of this word means we direct our being towards something (the intensive part of the word). It is a desire that attaches itself to or upon its object. Lust in this verse corresponds to our depraved capacity. This capacity is the root of our corruption.

"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish" (Galatians 5:16-17).

The Christian has the responsibility to put to death the idolatry of "evil desire."

"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5).

Sexual lust is something every Christian must face,

"Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22).

"For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts" (2 Timothy 3:6).

"For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another" (Titus 3:3).

There is a lust for false doctrine,

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers" (2 Timothy 4:3).

"Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts" (2 Peter 3:3).

"These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage" (Jude 16).

"How they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts" (Jude 18).

Lusts are not necessarily base and immoral, they may be refined in character, but are evil if inconsistent with the will of God.

"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:11-12).

"That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God" (1 Peter 4:2).

Positionally and legally, Jesus crucified our lust pattern on the cross,

"And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24).

Principle

There is an in-born proclivity in each of us to focus on obsessions that are not the will of God.

Application

Do certain lusts control your life? Jesus already defeated those lusts on the cross. Turn to the cross and allow Him defeat those sins that ruin your life.

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:15-17).

2 Peter 1:5

"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge."

We now come to the first main segment of 2 Peter. The first four verses comprise the Introduction. Verse five begins the body of the epistle. Verses 5-11 set before us the characteristics of the Christian life. Just any kind of life is not the Christian life. Certain qualities indicate whether the Christian is living genuine Christianity.

But also for this very reason

"This" refers to the divine disposition of the previous verse.

We can render "for this very reason" as "for this very cause." The antecedent of this phrase is verses three and four, in particular the double gift of "life" and "godliness" bestowed on us by Christ. This double gift should compel us to use our divine nature for God's glory. The idea is this: "Seeing that we have power for life and godliness, we should use our divine nature."

There is a striking advance on the first four verses. The first four verses set forth our status in Christ. Beginning with verse five, we come to other side of the coin. This is the corollary truth to our status in Christ. This truth has to do with our state, not our status. It has to do with our deportment before God. This truth depends on what we do, not what He did.

Principle

God wants us to apply truth to experience.

Application

Our status before God is not changeable but our state is changeable for it is the experience of our status. The order is important. First comes our status then our state. First comes our position before God then follows our responsibility to that position. God first saves us by grace. Now that we have the gift of eternal life, we do something with it.

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called" (Ephesians 4:1).

Our calling is our status quo before God in Christ (Ephesians chapters 1-3). Our "walk" is how we apply that status to experience. We need to do something with the "divine nature [disposition]" God gave us.

giving all diligence

The phrase "giving all diligence" translates a double compound word: 1) along side 2) into 3) to bring. God wants us to bring something along side so that it enters our lives. This is a word of powerful application. We must be eager to bring along side and into our lives the seven virtues that follow. We need to give all our energies to bring these points of character into our lives. If we do, we will escape the corruption in the world (v.3).

"Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord" (Romans 12:11).

"They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do" (Galatians 2:10).

"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

"Diligence" conveys intense effort. "Diligence" means haste, speed, eagerness, earnestness. A diligent person makes every effort to do what God asks. This is a word of zeal. A person of diligence will give serious attention to what he is doing and exert great energy to get it done. The idea is to be eager to do something with the implication of readiness to expend energy and effort.

Principle

God expects Christians to be dead earnest with their Christianity.

Application

God expects us to make an all-out effort to apply truth to experience. He wants us to expend great motivation and effort to live for Him.

Do you leave no stone unturned to make character the passion of your life? Christians cannot look upon their Christianity as a hobby. If we devote the fringe area of our spare time to character, our character will be seen for what it is--weak. The Christian life is far more than a hobby like golfing. It is something to which we should devote our lives. Note how Paul makes Christianity his life,

"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

As people low on the totem pole of an organization are brought up to work under the experience and influence of the President of the company, so Christians are to work under the influence of God's disposition. Those Christians should then live their life with earnestness.

Earnestness requires exertion. We cannot enjoy our possessions unless we use them. The divine disposition is not an automatic machine that will produce Christian character regardless of the our engagement with it. Farmers do not directly grow their crops. They must do certain things to give their crops an environment for growth. Christians must do certain things to give their life an

environment for growth. They must give all diligence to bring God's promises along-side their life so they can grow. God has a role and Christians have a role. Only the Lord can ultimately give the increase.

New Christians usually show a first flush of enthusiasm and spiritual zeal. They can hardly wait to share their faith with their husbands or wives. Every time the church opens its doors, they are there. Somewhere along the line, their fire extinguishes. Some puncture-proof saint gets to them. They call out the bucket brigade and throw water on these new Christians because of their enthusiasm.

The zeal and dynamic of new Christians reveals apathetic Christians' dead spiritual lives. They do not want their state of affairs revealed for what it is. They say, "What a minute, slow down, you can't" New Christians waken sleeping saints. They rub their eyes, yawn, and say, "You lead someone to Christ? Quiet, you are disturbing my sleep. Don't you see that I am worshipping?"

Where is the zeal you had when first you came to Christ? The subsequent virtues will do us no good if we do not deal with this first.

People who design airplanes proved "conclusively" that bumblebees cannot fly. "The fuselage is too large for its wing spread." The bumblebee does not know that, so it goes ahead and flies. New Christians, do not know they cannot do this or that. They just go ahead and do it. They do not find this out until later when other Christians inform them they cannot do it. They go out and win ten people to Christ the first week they know Christ. They are not that concerned about making mistakes. They just mistake their way into winning a number of people to Christ!

add

We come now to the second term of arithmetic. The first word was "multiply" (v. 2). Now we have the word "add."

We get the English words "chorus and choreograph" from the Greek word "add." "Add" comes from three Greek words: chorus; to bring; beside. To "add" is to bring something to the side of the chorus. Metaphorically, it means to make every effort to provide abundantly for someone. This word came to mean to defray the expenses of a chorus. The idea is to supply something more

than that which already exists. "Add" is a term of grace.

The Greek drama used this word by 600 BC The Greeks gave choral performances of dancing and singing at festivals honoring Dionysius (the god of wine and fertility). Generally, a benefactor selected by the state paid the expenses of the chorus of these ancient Greek plays. He defrayed both the expenses of the chorus and the dance group. They called this citizen the "choregus." He provided the money for training and costuming the chorus. This was a duty connected with the state religion.

In ancient Greece, the chorus was a band of singers and dancers who performed on occasions of ceremony. Even during the acting out of comedy or tragedy, the chorus remained in front of the stage singing and dancing to fill in for the pauses.

These tragedies were a series of dramatic episodes separated by choral odes. Three actors generally performed these episodes. These actors wore masks to indicate the nature of the character they represented.

All performances were religious in nature. Almost all surviving tragedies were based on myths. The hero generally confronted a moral choice. His struggle against hostile forces ended in defeat and often in his death because of some tragic flaw in his character. Therefore, the hero is great but not perfect (virtuous). The hero passes from fortune to misfortune. A Greek tragedy never portrayed the bad person going from happiness to misery. This would violate their senses. The hero was always well known and prosperous but not permanently virtuous.

Misfortune is not brought about by vice or depravity. The hero comes to a tragic end by failure or error in judgment. Otherwise, it is not true tragedy. There is no poetic justice whereby the hero gets his comeuppance for some wrong he did. The ideas of the good prospering and the evil suffering were not part of the Greek mindset.

Providing for these great plays meant great expense to the benefactor. "Add" came to mean lavishly supply. The Christian is to copiously or lavishly stock his life with the virtues that follow. Do you incur costs to advance your faith?

By "adding" one character component to another, we develop one quality in the exercise of another. Each new grace vaults out of the other.

"Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness" (2 Corinthians 9:10).

"And not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations" (Colossians 2:19-20).

"Whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord" (2 Peter 1:11).

Since "add" is a term of grace, God wants us to provide for our own character out of grace toward ourselves. We need to make sure we add character to our spiritual lives.

Principle

God provides whatever we need to live the Christian life.

Application

We often judge God by how we do things. We make others pay for what we do for them. God does not make us pay. He gives out of His grace. God wants us to give out of grace as well. In this case, God wants us to give to ourselves out of grace. He wants us to supply for our spiritual need the character He supplies.

Some Christians operate in a sphere of fear. They never know whether they have God's approval or not because they know of no definite standard whereby they gain God's approval. They operate constantly in fear of some bolt of lightning streaking down on them. They have no idea of the finished work of Christ for them.

This is like getting out of a jet plane and trying to help push it along. God does not need any help. God does not bless your business because you give

to Him. He blesses you because He is the God of "all grace" (1 Peter 5:10).

to your faith

"Faith" in this context means the structure that gives bones to the body of the Christian life. Faith is the foundation of all virtues. Like lining up a group of numbers for adding, believers are to line up a group of virtues that will advance their faith.

"But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20).

Faith is the sub-structure to character and is the base to all subsequent characteristics listed from verses 5-7. The building of our character by seven characteristics continues to rise until we crown the edifice of our soul with the sum of the seven.

Principle

Faith is the foundation of all character.

Application

Now that we have come to Christ, we must add to our soul seven characteristics. Peter does not say, "Pick and choose whichever characteristics that might interest you. Add one or two of these characteristics." God builds strength into us when we add these characteristics to our souls.

No matter what our cultural heritage, no matter what personality, disposition, or temperament we might have, God will construct an edifice after His own heart if we apply truth to experience.

virtue

We met the word "virtue" in verse three. "Virtue" occurs five times in the New Testament.

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

"Virtue" carries the idea of excellence. There are two kinds of excellence: 1) Operative excellence. This excellence makes us effective in character. 2) Courage. Faith vaults our life into courage. True faith does not retreat in a refuge but enters the dynamic of life. We may understand by virtue courage. No Christian can advance his life without courage.

**"The wicked flee when no one pursues,
But the righteous are bold as a lion"
(Proverbs 28:1).**

Cowardly Christians are weak and make little impact for Christ.

"Virtue" is something that procures pre-estimation for a person or thing. When Christians acquire "virtue" in their life, they assume an intrinsic prominence in the minds of others. Others view as people of renown or praise those who carry the glory of Christ with them.

Principle

God wants excellence in Christian character.

Application

Excellence is superiority and efficiency in character. Are you an expert in the spiritual character? Have you developed renown in virtue?

We are not too handy when it comes to excellence. There is little nobility in our Christian lives. What spiritual courage or valor is there in your life? Is there some spiritual enthusiasm? How much strength is there to your Christianity? How much can you press with your character?

What can you do? Can you do anything? Have you exercised your faith to such a degree that you can do things that you could not do otherwise? In other words, are you dynamic rather than static in your Christian life? Are you dynamic or are you a sham in character?

to virtue knowledge

Another item to add to faith is "knowledge." There are certain principles that we must know before we can apply them. We also must add knowledge to our faith.

Knowledge is not wisdom. Knowledge is the accumulation of the facts of God's Word. Wisdom is the application of knowledge to experience. Knowledge here is the experience of knowledge.

In this context, knowledge is personal acquaintance with Jesus Christ.

"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Philippians 3:10).

"That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10).

If we add knowledge to faith, we will know what to do in any predicament we might face. Courage ("diligence") without knowledge is dangerous.

Principle

Knowledge should precede zeal so that our zeal can be effective.

Application

If zeal comes first and knowledge second, our zeal may not be properly directed. Zeal without knowledge is like an empty semi that takes off down the road without its load. There is no purpose to the trip. Zeal for the experience of enthusiasm is not a Christian value.

God wants us to add the knowledge of His Word to our experience. Knowledge of the Word is the only way we can know God truly.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7).

"For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding" (Proverbs 2:6).

We need to balance both zeal and knowledge. Knowledge without zeal is deadness. Zeal without knowledge is emptiness. If we are static, we are stagnate. If we do not go forward, we lose momentum. Fire and water are opposites. Water puts out fire. Fire uncontrolled destroys things in its path. This is the problem with zeal and knowledge. Knowledge puts out zeal. Uncontrollable zeal destroys the development of Christian character.

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you

again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe" (Hebrews 5:12-13).

"But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20).

2 Peter 1:6

"To knowledge, self-control; to self-control, perseverance; to perseverance, godliness;"

To knowledge, self-control;

The fourth building block of Christian character is "self-control." We add self-control to our faith.

The term does not regularly occur in the New Testament. The New Testament uses "self-control" only two other times (Acts 24:25; Galatians 5:23). The New Testament uses "self-control" very infrequently because God does not sponsor autonomous self-mastery. Salvation or spirituality by mastery of the self is not the Christian way of life.

"Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations-- 'Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,' which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh" (Colossians 2:20-23).

The New Testament does not view self-control as legalistic abstinence. Christianity does not de-sex or empty all desires from the person. But the Christian does maintain self-control and mastery over those desires.

We add self-control to knowledge. "Self-control" comes from two words: out of and strength. "Self-control" is power. "Self-control" is mastery over our passions so that we control our desires and actions. God bestows this power upon us.

Idiomatically, "self-control" means to hold oneself in, to command oneself. Self-control then is the mastery of self. We stay in command of our desires and wants. It is the ability to say "no" to self. This is the freedom of self-restraint.

Principle

Self-control frees us.

Application

The Christian life carries certain qualities. Any kind of life is not Christian living. There are certain standards unique to Christianity. It is more than being nice to your neighbors or not breaking the law.

Self-control in God's economy comes from the filling of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Christian self-control is not autonomous self-control.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

Why do people fail in any sphere of life? People fail in athletics, academics and business because of lack of self-discipline. Lazy people fail in athletics and school. Lazy people will fail spiritually in Christian living. This is why people fail especially in the Christian life. They have little internal power that comes from the Holy Spirit.

We live in an undisciplined generation. Young people rebel against all authority. Much of their music revolves around that rebellion. They come from undisciplined homes and schools. They go to university and the theme of thought is rebellion against authority--whether it is the authority of rule or the authority of concepts. Some people never accept authority, even police authority. In fact, the only places where discipline remains today is in sports and the military. Sadly, there is little authority left in the home, the school or even the church.

The Christian who wants to get in shape spiritually must get into the Word. That is where he gets his spiritual muscles. By applying principles to experience, he begins to lose his spiritual flab.

Do you restrain yourself or do you indulge yourself?

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

The believer must go into training for living the Christian life. If you are on the track team, you waive the right to eat certain foods. Others may eat chocolate ice cream two or three times a day but you do not because you are in training. There is nothing wrong with chocolate ice cream in itself but it is poison if you are to run the hundred-yard dash. If you want to win, foregoing chocolate ice cream is a price you must pay. This is self-control for a purpose. Others may eat all the chocolate ice cream they desire because they are not on the track team. We want to win in the Christian life. We do not want to come in last.

to self-control perseverance

The third building block of Christian character is "perseverance." We add "perseverance" to our faith.

"Perseverance" comes from two words: under and remain. This word carries the ideas of endurance, fortitude, stead-fastness. A person with perseverance remains under the situation. He hangs in there through trial and testing.

"Perseverance" carries the idea of endurance especially in trials (Luke 21:19; Romans 12:12; Hebrews 12:7; James 1:12; 1 Peter 2:20).

A person with perseverance stays under the load no matter what adversity may come his way (Romans 5:3-4; 15:4-5; 2 Corinthians 1:6; 6:4; Colossians 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; James 1:3). However, this is not endurance of the inevitable. Jesus could have extricated Himself of His suffering (Hebrews 12:2-3). He not only sustained suffering but He struggled with suffering. On the other hand, he did not maintain stupid insensibility toward the struggle with suffering. He did not approach

suffering with stubborn resolve but faced suffering with apprehension (Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46).

The New Testament never asserts "self-control" of God because God is all-powerful.

Principle

The Christian should be stable under pressure.

Application

The Christian should develop unswerving steadfastness in trial. When disasters come your way, how do you handle them? Do you have an inner order of soul? A person with stability in suffering does not beat his head against the wall. He orients to God's plan for his life. Disaster is part of God's plan for our lives.

The Christian life is not an easy road. However, this road has hope. The Christian does not simply accept whatever may come his way. He transcends endurance. He holds out with because of his hope.

"And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5:3-4).

Tribulation produces patience or endurance. Trouble, well-managed, makes the believer a seasoned veteran. He does not whine about his problems for that is a sign of immaturity. Children whine about their predicaments.

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He

chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.' If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?" (Hebrews 12:1-7).

We do not run with "patience" but with "endurance." Endurance means stick-to-itiveness. Tenacity enables us to say, "I will not quit. It is too soon to quit." This Christian does not throw in the towel.

One of the first things we want to do when someone criticizes us is to quit. Who wants to be known as a quitter? We need to develop the attitude that, "This too shall pass. God will give me the endurance to hang in there." Running from the problem is no solution because you will run into the same problem wherever you go. You are still the same person there as well. You take yourself with you. It will not profit you to run from the problem.

Are you about to quit your education? Are you ready to resign your position? "Oh, what is the use? This situation is too difficult to resolve. I did not do well on my last exam. I might as well give up." One of the presidents of a college I attended gave a message in chapel each year entitled, "Don't quit too soon." Ask the Lord to give you the strength to go on. You will be amazed to find out what you can do when God gives us a "second wind." Press on! God will see you through.

Have you developed unwavering perseverance in the trials of your life?

to perseverance godliness

The fifth building block of Christian character is "godliness." We add "godliness" to our faith.

"Godliness" is reverence toward God. "Godliness" comes from two words: well and devout denoting a piety characterized by a Godward attitude. This person desires to please God (2 Peter 1:3, 6, 7; 3:11).

In ancient Greek, "godliness" meant to shrink from suggesting awe or reverence. The idea was veneration. Later the word developed into the idea of worship. In the New Testament, godliness is our manner of life in relation to God.

Elsewhere "godliness" occurs in

"If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the

words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, ...Now godliness with contentment is great gain....But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness" (1 Timothy 6:3,6,11).

"Christian" is not moralistic for it rests in a relationship with a person (1 Timothy 3:16).

"Godliness" is more than outward worship or a human virtue. The Bible sets "godliness" over against asceticism that regards creation as intrinsically evil. "Godliness" is something that covers everyday conduct that honors God as Creator and Redeemer.

Truth produces godliness in character. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to make the child of God like the Son of God. That is godliness.

"Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness" (Titus 1:1).

Principle

Godliness is living like one who believes in God.

Application

We are what we read. We are what we eat. We are what we believe and practice spiritually. Why read the Word? Because it will do something to your soul. It will do something to your character. It will do something to your disposition.

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Does your life have any indication that God is live and real in your life? Do you live your life with an eye on God, trusting Him for whatever may come your way?

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

A godly person has a reverence, loyalty and fear of God.

2 Peter 1:7

"To godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love"

to godliness, brotherly kindness

The first five foundational elements for building character relate to God, the last two relate to others.

We add "brotherly kindness" to our faith. We take the name "Philadelphia" from the Greek word meaning "brotherly love"--philadelphos. Philadelphia is formed from two Greek words meaning: brother and rapport love. The idea is that we are to have rapport with our brothers in Christ. Friendship is the idea.

The New Testament never uses "brotherly kindness" in a command to love God. It is used of a command to men to love God (1 Corinthians 16:22). When commanded to love God, the next word in our verse for love (agape) is the term of use (Mathew 22:37; Luke 10:27; Romans 8:28; 1 Corinthians 8:3; 1 Peter 1:8; 1 John 4:21).

"Brotherly kindness" means love that is genuine and without hypocrisy (Romans 12:9; 2 Corinthians 6:6; 1 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 1:5; James 3:17; 1 Peter 1:22). Hence, this person lacks pretense or show. There is no prejudice in this love. It is free from bias.

The Bible does not require us to have rapport love for every believer. The opposite is true in some instances. We are to separate ourselves from those who walk in the flesh (1 Corinthians 5:9-13). Christians are to be careful of those who walk in the flesh (Galatians 6:1).

"Brotherly kindness" seeks the highest good for others (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:9-11). This is the love of affection. When Jesus confronted His enemies He expressed agape love towards them. This is a broader term than the word in this verse [philadelphia]. Jesus did not like what they did nor did He sanction what they did. He did not embrace them as friends. He could not call them "friends" [our word]. "Friends" is overt love. This is love that considers others and is gracious to them.

Principle

Rapport love or friendship love is of value to God.

Application

Some of us believe that we can pick and choose who we like and who we do not. It is us if we say, "These are my kind of people but those are not." You may not like the way others say things. You may not like the way they do things. You may not like the fact that they are lazy or ignorant. However, we should seek rapport with them despite our opinion of them.

"A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24).

We may not like the way people comb their hair or wear their clothes. That is incidental.

"Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another" (Romans 12:10).

"But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another" (1 Thessalonians 4:9).

"Let brotherly love continue" (Hebrews 13:1).

"Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous" (1 Peter 3:8).

to godliness, brotherly kindness

In this verse we have two different Greek words for love. "Brotherly kindness" is closer to the idea of rapport love such as the love between husband and wife. This is the love between humans and it carries the idea of kindness. The New Testament uses both words for the love of the Father for the Son (John 3:35; 5:20).

In this verse, there is an obvious distinction between the two Greek words for love. We can see this distinction in John 21. Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him because He wants to commission him for His service.

"So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love [agapao] Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love [phileo] You.' He said to him, 'Feed My lambs.' He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love [agapao] Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord;

You know that I love [phileo] You. He said to him, 'Tend My sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love [Jesus changes his term to phileo] Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love [phileo] Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love [phileo] You.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed My sheep'" (John 21:15-17).

Peter's answer with rapport love to the Lord's third question conveys the idea of cherishing His relationship to the Lord. However, Jesus asks Peter that his love for Him transcend friendship and the problems of human relationships. Jesus wants a love that is manifested by a love characterized by constancy. Peter needs to recognize that this special three-fold commission given to him by the Lord is an issue of a love that transcends human rapport.

Principle

Jesus expects us to love with a love that goes beyond rapport love.

Application

If we desire to serve the Lord, love for the Lord is the major issue we must face. Do you love the Lord sacrificially? Do you serve the Lord out of convenience?

Many of us feel that we will serve the Lord if it is convenient: "If I have enough time from my other priorities, I will serve the Lord. If I can find some spare time on the outer edge of the periphery of my life, I will serve Him." No, if we truly love the Lord, we must give the highest priority to serving Him. Everything else falls into a distant second place.

and to brotherly kindness, love

We come now to the seventh and final characteristic the believer should add to his faith. "Love" is at the apex of the pyramid.

"Brotherly kindness" is love of friendship. The second word for "love" is divine, self-sacrificing, one-way love that is free to relate. We take his definition from a summary of use of this term in the New Testament. We can see God's unconditional love for those who did not love Him

in John 3:16. His love was both unconditional and flowed from His character.

"Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus" (John 11:5).

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 'By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another'" (John 13:34-35).

"Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.... But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:5,8).

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us" (Ephesians 2:4).

When we walk in love we do not hate anyone. We do not allow bitterness, vindictiveness or jealousy to control our thoughts and actions. Thus, we are free to relate to others. We love them on the basis of our own character, not theirs.

Principle

God wants us to make progress in our Christian life.

Application

Now that we have come to the end of the seven characteristics we are to add to our faith, how do you measure up? Grade yourself. Can you go through these seven items and conclude that you pass the test of all seven? Or, would you have to say, "I am deficient in this category. I flunked that course. I have not done well in these areas. I am a spiritual drop out in these categories." The remedy? "Add to your faith...."

God expects us to make progress in the faith, not to remain static in our Christian life. God has not graduated us yet. We need to continue to take courses in God's school of the Christian life. God will give us our final grade at the Judgment Seat of Christ. But we cannot wait till we get there to start

moving. If we do, we will make a poor showing. We might have failed the mid-term but there is still time before the final comes. Some of us may not have much time.

2 Peter 1:8

"For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

For if these things

"These things" are the chorus of seven character qualities of the previous verses. Every time the words "these things" occur they refer to the seven building blocks of Christian character.

When a Christian develops the seven sub-structures of his faith, he will be effective and productive. The necessary consequence of adding one characteristic to another, is fruit and productivity.

These seven qualities will cause the five effects in verses 8 and 9.

are yours

The words "are yours" implies possession and makes the point that the seven characteristics of the previous verses "belong" to Christians who grow. As these qualities increase in measure so does effectiveness.

The word "are" in this verse is a strong word "are." This word "are" means to be identical with, to be in a state, normally with the implication of a particular set of circumstances. It carries the idea to exist, particularly in relation to ownership. This always involves a pre-existent state, prior to the fact referred to, and a continuance of the state after the fact. Thus in Philippians 2:6 the phrase "who being in the form of God" implies Christ's pre-existent deity, previous to His Birth, and His continued deity afterwards.

The word "are" means that which is from the beginning. Something attaches itself to a person and thus belongs to him. The character qualities of verses five through seven are not spasmodic, here one day and gone tomorrow. All these qualities lie resident in every child of God.

Principle

Character belongs to those who grow.

Application

Any Christian can draw upon these resources whenever he chooses to do so. It is one thing to have these qualities "exist" in us and it is another for them to "super-abound" in us.

All these qualities lie resident in the child of God. Most of us have the potential to walk but must take the first few steps. The crawling infant may fear loss of balance and falling. Indeed, he may fall at first, but later when he gains confidence in balancing himself, he will discover the joy of walking and later running. First we have the beginning state ("are"), then we move to "super-abounding."

God makes us fit for heaven. We were fit for hell; now we are fit for heaven. Are you fit for heaven? The only One who can rearrange your life is the One who first saves your soul.

"Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light" (Colossians 1:12).

and abound

It is one thing to have the "these things" of verses 5-7 as ours but it is another to super-abound in them.

The root of the word "abound" is "more." More means greater in quantity. Sometimes this word means super-abound (Romans 5:20; 6:1; 2 Corinthians 4:15; Philippians 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; and in this verse). "Abound" carries the idea to cause an increase in the degree of some experience or state. The increase comes with such considerable extent that the result is abundance

"Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Romans 5:20).

Where sin came more and more, grace abounded more than people could sin.

God's grace extends to more and more people in abundance.

"For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God" (2 Corinthians 4:15).

God provides more than enough to meet our material needs.

"But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack--that there may be equality. As it is written, 'He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack'" (2 Corinthians 8:14-15).

Principle

God expects an abounding life, not a life void of the riches of His grace.

Application

The Spirit-filled life overflows to others (Ephesians 5:18-25). It is like an artesian well whose source is higher than the place of its emergence. The outflow is natural. The source of power for the Christian life is God the Holy Spirit. The Christian life that does not flow over, never blesses others. You cannot overflow until you are full.

"And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:18-21).

Do you have a strong spiritual heartbeat? Are you thrown sideways if someone criticizes you? Are you limping toward heaven? Are you marching your way to heaven?

"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not carnal?" (1 Corinthians 3:1-4).

"And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all,

just as we do to you" (1 Thessalonians 3:12).

you will be neither barren

The New King James Version does not translate an important word in this verse -- the word "appoint." God will "appoint" you so that you will neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ.

The word "appoint" means to set down, set in order or to constitute (Acts 7:10,27,35; Hebrews 7:28; Romans 5:19). God sets up an order for us to bear fruit. God is the cause of whether we bear fruit or not. In this sense we can translate "appoint" as "make." If we follow the prescribed condition we will not be made useless and unfruitful. It is God's grace that makes growth possible. God will constitute in us a change produced by living out the seven qualities of verses 5-7.

"Barren" comes from two words no and work. "Barren" means unemployed, idle, nothing to do, useless, unproductive. Faith multiplied will produce fruit.

Matthew uses "barren" for men standing around in the market place.

"And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?'" (Matthew 20:3-6).

Principle

Every carnal Christian is a barren Christian.

Application

A carnal Christian is an idle Christian.

"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:36-37).

A "barren" or "idle" Christian is an unemployed Christian. He does not realize that God called him into full-time service, 24 hours a day.

Idle people have too much time on their hands so they become tattlers and busybodies.

Troublemakers in church are often those who are idle.

"And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not" (1 Timothy 5:13).

Are you a "slow belly?" Many Christians have a case of arrested spiritual development. They never grew beyond a certain point. They do not go on with the Lord.

"One of them, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons [King James translates this as a 'slow belly']'" (Titus 1:12).

nor unfruitful

"Unfruitful" is a metaphor that comes from trees and fields. Metaphorically, "unfruitful" means works or deeds that produce no fruit (Matthew 13:22; Mark 4:19; 1 Corinthians 14:14; Ephesians 5:11; Timothy 3:14; Jude 12).

Figuratively, "unfruitful" means useless, unproductive.

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them" (Ephesians 5:11).

"Unfruitful" pertains to being useless in the sense of being unproductive. This person has no harvest, no fruit.

"... serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots" (Jude 12).

Principle

We need to recognize the moment of the harvest and seize its opportunity.

Application

Some of us do not seize the season. At the time the fruit is ripe and the harvest is ready, we sleep. People in need of Christ walk into our presence

and we do not recognize the hunger in them. Spiritually-minded people are in tune to that need. As Jude says, we are so busy "serving only" ourselves that we cannot see the need of sharing Christ with someone else.

in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ

"In" means into. If we apply the seven building blocks for the Christian life (vv. 5-7) upon the substructure of faith, we will know the Lord better.

"Knowledge" is full knowledge and carries the idea of discernment. "Knowledge" occurs seven times in 2 Peter and is a key word of the epistle. This is knowledge of the person of Christ (John 17:3; Philippians 3:10; Hosea 6:3). Experiencing setbacks in life such as the valley of deep sorrow help us get to know the Lord better. 2 Peter closes on this same note (3:18).

Principle

Knowledge of the Lord is one thing, insight-knowledge of Him is something beyond; it is intimate knowledge of Him.

Application

When people get married they think that they know one another. After all, they courted for six months! However couples get quite a shock a few weeks into their marriage. Few people fully reveal themselves before marriage. He is a bit more mean than he showed before marriage. He was always so polite and nice before marriage. She never showed her selfishness and pride during the courting period. She always put her best foot forward. People discover that they are married to alligators.

The longer we live with each other, the better we know each other. With time comes the knowledge of what pleases her. You also know what bugs her, what irks her, what irritates her and what exasperates her. Naturally you try to refrain from those things, to enhance your marriage. But everyone has marriage problems. It is only normal that we get to know each other better with time.

When we come to Christ as Savior, we are only introduced to Him. We do not fully know Him until we get to know Him better. None of us have ever known a person like the Lord Jesus. There is

no dark side to His character. He is not proud or selfish. He is always true, His character flawless.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

The more we read the Word the more we will learn the wonder of His character. He becomes more and more precious to us (1 Peter 1:8; 2:7). Eternity is too short for us to plumb the depths of His magnificent person. He is the incomparable Son of God. The longer we fellowship with Him the more we love Him. We will meet Him face to face one day. What a glorious day that will be! In the meantime we get to know Him better and better.

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to make the child of God like the Son of God.

Carnal Christians do not know the Lord very well. They are "unfruitful" in the knowledge of the Lord. They bear marks of spiritual birth defects. They are Christians but they are limited in the extent that they know the Lord. Jesus can change that fact. He can salvage your Christian life so that you can bear fruit.

2 Peter 1:9

"For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins"

Verse 8 sets forth two characteristics of a mature Christian in a positive way: "if these things be in you." In verse nine he conveys the idea negatively: "he who lacks these things."

For he who lacks these things

A Christian who does not manifest the character qualities of verses 5-7 is spiritually blind.

The word "lack" means is not present. We can translate this phrase literally, "to whom these things are not present." Idiomatically this means that the "these things" of verses 5-7 are not "ours." These character qualities are not present in his life. Are the character qualities of verses 5-7 near your heart?

If we possess these things God endows us with spiritual sight.

Principle

God expects that the seven character qualities of verses 5-7 be present in our lives.

Application

With each character quality that we add, we grow spiritually. This is like a telescope where lens after lens extends allowing us to see farther into space. When a believer "adds" to his faith these character qualities, he gains the capacity to see farther spiritually.

is shortsighted

We get our English word myopic from the Greek for "shortsighted." To be "shortsighted" is to be near-sighted. In the spiritual context this term means to be extremely limited in spiritual understanding. Shortsighted people see only what is in front of them; they see only the temporal. They do not have the capacity to discern spiritual things.

Medically, Myopia means that the distant rays of light fall short of the retina of the eye. That light is only a blur. Aristotle used this word for a nearsighted man. He is not stone blind. Spiritually then, a person can have some spiritual sight but he has sin-sick sight.

Principle

The spiritually shortsighted person sees only what is miserly.

Application

Some Christians are spiritually near-sighted. They cannot see anything but their own world of needs. Mature Christians can see eternal values; they see beyond temporal values. They value the seven items of the chorus of verses 5-7.

But the spiritually short-sighted never develop their faith. They never "add to their faith" (1:5) so their faith never increases. They do not move on or up or out. They stay right where they are. They run on a treadmill underdeveloped Christians do not want to share their faith. They find it difficult to walk with God and have a regular devotional life. There is always some excuse. It is either too

hot or too cold. It is too dry or too slippery. It is always too something.

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [those who lived by faith of chapter 11], let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

No Christian should be a babe for ten years. He should get out his spiritual diapers as soon as possible.

But many Christians arrest their spiritual growth. People cater to them because their feelings are hurt so easily. Then they gossip. They will even slander others. Though they would not dare think about adultery they readily put others down. They rely on the strength of others to get them through emergencies, never becoming self-sufficient and always needing someone to nurse them through their next crisis.

Mature Christians come to their aid and nurse them through problems. It is one thing to require such help as a new Christian but it is another if a person has been a Christian for ten years. A child on the bottle after ten years is not a pretty sight.

Are you willing to be weaned from your spiritual immaturity?

even to blindness

A blind person is unable to see. A spiritually blind person is unable to see spiritually. They lack spiritual understanding.

Many people are not able to God's expectations. They cannot see truth.

Principle

Some Christians are spiritually blind.

Application

Some Christians are saved eternally but lack spiritual sight.

In fact, entire churches can be blind.

"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'--and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17).

Christendom is filled with blind churches that are barren and unfruitful. These churches rarely experience someone coming to Christ.

This blindness is similar to people who live in the Rocky Mountains and yet never see the colossal scenery around them. While such people live within sight of majestic peaks, they take them for granted and are not impressed with their grandeur. Similarly after Christians are saved for a few years, the wonder of the Christian life can fade away. They are no longer fresh--and spiritual things become commonplace to them.

This is why Paul had to exhort a young preacher to remember the person of Christ (2 Timothy 2:8). Paul also preached the gospel to Christians (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). We are prone to forget the wonder of our salvation. To see only what is near is a serious spiritual problem. Initial salvation is wonderful but we must move on to more mature things.

and has forgotten

"Forgotten" means forgetfulness. Literally, "forgotten" means to take forgetfulness or receive forgiveness. Someone or something else gives this person amnesia. Others influence him to become dull spiritually. This person cannot recall proper spiritual information and loses sight of the spiritual significance.

We get the English word lethal, lethargy and the mythical river Lethe (which was supposed to cause forgetfulness of the past to those who drank of it) from the root of the Greek word for "forgotten."

There is a progression here. First we grow blind to spiritual things and then we end with forgetting that God forgave us our sins. People in marriage can forget what caused them to love each other in the beginning. The hurts that come between them can distort the memory of first love.

You might be in love and yet forgetful of that fact. Bitterness and antagonism have replaced the knowledge of that love. Such things distort memories. Negative attitudes toward one another create a vacuum that sucks in negative attitudes

and distorts the love of the past. The pleasant memories fade away.

When we became Christians, a great love affair began. We loved God because of his grace and forgiveness to us. We recognized that everything depended on His provision for us. At the point where we tasted grace, the wonder of our love for God was great. But something happened to distort that love. We "took on forgetfulness." We can come to the place where we forget. We are like those who never came to Christ.

Principle

Forgetfulness causes a vacuum in our souls toward God.

Application

Some Christians are Christians so long that they forget that they were once non-Christians. They forget that they had a life BC,--before Christ. This is spiritual complacency and lethargy. These people become Christians and then sleep for the rest of their Christian life. They do not want to be disturbed: "Don't wake me up. Don't bother me. I don't want to get involved. Do not expect anything of me."

Receiving forgetfulness is a process. It begins when one stops studying the Word. They can no longer discern truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

that he was cleansed

"Cleansed" implies purification. This is cleansing in the moral sense from sins. We get our word "catharsis" from the Greek word of this phrase.

"Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3).

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ... And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:14, 22).

"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one

another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin ... If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:7, 9).

God obliterated our sins. They are forever gone, forgiven and forgotten.

from his old sins

"Old" denotes a point of time in the past, long ago. This refers to the cross. Christ did all the work on the cross in forgiving us from our sin.

"Sins" mean to miss the mark.

Principle

To remember our forgiveness is to keep fresh our appreciation for the work of the cross.

Application

Napoleon said, "A mind without a memory is like a fortress without a garrison." Unless we remember the things that we have in Christ, we will develop spiritual blindness to our forgiveness.

While going to seminary in Dallas, I regularly passed the spot where President Kennedy was shot. After the shooting, people milled around the area in great numbers. But as time went on, fewer and fewer people came to the site. The place faded in its wonder. Similarly, unless Christians renew their memory of forgiveness, the reality of Christianity will fade. Long driving on superhighways dulls the sense of speed.

"Indeed it was for my own peace That I had great bitterness; But You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back" (Isaiah 38:17).

"I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, And like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you" (Isaiah 44:22).

"As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12).

"He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19).

"Then He adds, 'Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more'" (Hebrews 10:17).

"I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake" (1 John 2:12).

"And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Revelation 1:5).

2 Peter 1:10

"Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble"

Therefore

"Therefore" means on which account. "Therefore" makes a close connection of thought to verses 5-9. This is the punch line of verses 5-9.

brethren

Peter identifies himself with his readers. These are those who have "obtained like precious faith" with Peter.

be even more

"More" is a word of advance. After the smoke clears, God has a purpose for our lives as long as we are alive. Therefore, we pick ourselves up and move on. The "blind" Christian (v.9) lives in spiritual failure. If we live in carnality, we should "be more diligent" to move ahead our spiritual lives.

diligent

"Diligent" means to make haste, to be zealous. "Make every effort to build character into your lives. Give every atom of energy you can to this task."

"When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there" (Titus 3:12).

"Diligent" means eagerness. This is not the rah, rah approach to life. "Let's all get behind this because we use group psychology." No, this eagerness comes from the motivations previously presented

in this chapter. Eagerness comes from the character qualities of verses 5-7. This person does not allow personal ambition or human drive to get in the picture. He simply rests in God's provisions.

Principle

Christians are to advance their spirituality even in the face of failure.

Application

We have no right to "feel sorry" for ourselves. We have no reason to accept defeat. No matter how we have failed the Lord, we must pick ourselves up by God's grace and move on. God has a plan for every Christian. Get up and fight another round. Don't lie on the canvas. We have no excuse for self-pity. God always has "more" grace for us.

Some may question our walk with God. They question whether it is real to us. Our salvation might be suspect to our wives or husbands. We claim that we are Christians but others cannot see the reality of it. We can claim that we are Alexander the Great as well, but that does not make the statement true. People will examine our walk to see if it measures up to talk.

"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

"Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience" (Hebrews 4:11).

to make your call

"To make" means to exercise application to the truth of your salvation. The Greek indicates that we are to keep on doing this.

The New Testament always uses "call" of the origin, nature and destiny of what we are in God's eyes. It is an invitation by God to accept the benefits of salvation. The New Testament always uses "call" of our heavenly calling.

"Call" always means the successful gospel call. The next word "election" refers to eternal election (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:2). Our "call" is our summons by God and our "election" is our selection by God.

"For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29).

"For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (1 Corinthians 1:26).

"Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began" (2 Timothy 1:9).

Principle

From eternity, God gives us a call to enter His kingdom.

Application

The point in this passage is not God's relation to our calling and election but our relation to them. We need to make our calling sure.

"Election" is selection--a picking out. It is the sum total of God's plan for your life from eternity past to eternity future. God plans our lives from eternity to eternity. He meets every contingency we might face.

"For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14).

"Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies" (Romans 8:33).

"Knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God" (1 Thessalonians 1:4).

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2).

We must make our election real in our lives. If we are to gain stability in our spiritual lives, we cannot do it by the gimmick system. We make our spiritual life real by appropriating to our experience our summons and selection. God's Word makes this real for us.

"Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:10).

"Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of

God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness" (Titus 1:1).

"These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:14).

Principle

We need to make real our election to others and to ourselves.

Application

We make our call and election sure. When we do this, we will know that we are Christians and others will know we are Christians as well. We obtain this assurance upon the naked, unsupported the Word of God.

We cannot convey this to other people by simply quoting verses from the Bible. We have to live in such a way that everyone who comes into contact with us knows that we have a real relationship with God. We live in a day in which talk is cheap. People view Christians as a lot of talk. That is why our lip must be reinforced by our life otherwise people will discount what we say. They will listen but they will not hear. They will pay no attention to our words (Ezekiel 33:22) and we will break through their bias against Christianity this way.

sure

"Sure" means firm, permanent. We need to make our summons and selection sure for ourselves.

"Sure" was a legal term in the first century for a guarantee. It was a legal guarantee obtained by a lawyer from the seller. This is a guarantee lest the third part claim the thing. Stability comes from our summons and selection. Our summons and selection is already present.

"Sure" is emphasized in the Greek sentence. The Christian should stand firm on his feet and be steadfast. The Christian stands on solid ground when he legally validates the confirmation of the "sale" of his salvation. God will make good on His promises. God secures the payment of salvation. There is no "money back" guarantee because we will get the product.

We need to stabilize our salvation. It is not unstable from God's standpoint. It is unstable from our standpoint.

Principle

We prove our salvation by fulfilling the injunctions of verses 5-7.

Application

We cannot make our calling and election more sure than they already are but we can gain assurance that we belong to Him. God has already completed it but we can confirm the call in our mind by fulfilling the character qualities of verses 5-7.

for if you do these things

"These things" are the character qualities of verses 5-7. This phrase occurs five times in following verse seven. They always refer to the qualities listed in verses 5-7.

"Do" means to practice. We must practice our salvation (Joshua 1:8; John 13:17; James 1:22). God expects us to do the things listed in verses 5-7. But it takes work to develop character qualities.

Do you work at those virtues for your life? We must get in shape spiritually. It takes exercise to develop spiritual muscle. Many Christians carry a great amount of spiritual flab. They cannot run the Christian life very well. They cannot gain momentum.

you will never stumble

"Stumble" means literally fall. We will not become a wretched Christian if we keep the character qualities of verses 5-7. The New Testament often uses "stumble" for the carnal Christian. "Stumble" means to "fall" out of fellowship. God makes every provision to keep His children from failing. When we make our salvation real in our lives, God will keep us from stumbling spiritually.

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:12-13).

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen" (Jude 24-25).

Principle

There is no need to constantly stumble in our spiritual lives because God will provide for us if we appropriate His grace.

Application

The "fall" of this verse is not the fall from salvation, for we cannot fall out of salvation. But we can fall from reward and fall into sin. Christians can also fall into disrepute. We can bring criticism upon Christ. We can be a liability to His cause instead of an asset. We can fall out of fellowship. When we do, we invite the chastening of God upon our lives. God may take us to the woodshed and we have no one to blame but ourselves.

Everyone who starts the Christian life will finish in heaven. But how we finish is the true question. Will we finish stronger than we began? We finish well when we get a prize at the end. If we receive no rewards, then we have not finished well. What will your status be in heaven?

Some Christians are spiritually shipwrecked for most of their lives. Though they have not lost their salvation, they have lost effectiveness in their spiritual lives. There is no need to constantly stumble.

However we will surely stumble if we look at other Christians. When we tailgate a car ahead of us, we risk smashing into it. When we follow other Christians too closely, we risk smashing into their weaknesses and following their failures. Inevitably, we will get hurt if we follow other Christians too closely. They may stop suddenly spiritually. Other Christians are frail and fall just like us.

"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent" (Revelation 2:5).

2 Peter 1:11

"For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"

For so an entrance

"Entrance" is literally the road into. Jesus is the road to heaven. John calls Him "the road" (John 14:6).

"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh" (Hebrews 10:19-20).

God will welcome us in heaven. Paul spoke of his welcome as imminent (2 Timothy 4:7-8,18). He will admit us into His heaven. Each Christian will receive a rich welcome when we enter the gates of heaven.

"So" indicates that our entrance into heaven will be victorious. "So" means "in this way." Jesus is the way to heaven. He gives us the authority to enter by what He did on the cross for our sins.

Principle

God will supply for us a grand entrance into heaven.

Application

Our Lord is the road to heaven by virtue of His shed blood for our sins.

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way [literally, the road], the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'" (John 14:6).

will be supplied to you

The word "supplied" means to furnish or provide (at one's own expense, cf. 1:5). "Supplied" in the Greek originally meant to cover the finances for the chorus of the Greek drama. Such a person was likely exceedingly wealthy since the costs of the drama were high. Similarly God will provide whatever is necessary to meet our needs.

Our entrance into heaven will be in an abundant manner. In the passive (as here), it means that God will grant us an entrance into heaven.

abundantly

The word "abundantly" means in large amounts (Ephesians 2:4).

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

The Christian will have a grand entrance into heaven (1 Thessalonians 1:9; 2:1; Hebrews 10:19). God grants us entry into His presence. Every Christian has eternal life but not every Christian has an abundant Christian life.

Principle

God spares no expense in meeting our needs.

Application

We supply the virtue and God supplies our abundant entrance into heaven.

Just there are two ways to live the Christian life, so there are two ways to enter the everlasting kingdom. We enter the kingdom when we receive Jesus as our Savior. However we enter the kingdom abundantly when we live a victorious Christian life. That is a bonus. Not all Christians will have the same status in the eternal kingdom.

into the everlasting kingdom

Jesus challenged his disciples to pray that the kingdom would come and God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven,

"Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

God has not answered this prayer yet but will answer it when Jesus comes back. Then He will set up His kingdom on earth. At that time, God's purpose will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. God will enforce the King's will on earth in time. Jesus has not yet reigned in His kingdom. One day He will. And Christians will reign with Him. This will change our career.

"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Revelation 3:21).

This kingdom will not come through the church; it will come through the coming of Christ. Oh what a day it will be!!

Presently Satan is the god of his world (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; 1 John 5:19). One day Jesus will be King Jesus, King of the World.

"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

"Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth'" (Jeremiah 23:5).

"Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'" (Revelation 11:15).

The day of Christ's kingdom will be a day of divine monarchy, not democracy. Jesus will reign as King Jesus, King of the world. He will not need a Parliament or Congress. He will make unilateral decisions. His headquarters will be in Jerusalem, not Beijing or Washington. Maybe someone should inform the United Nations of this event!

"He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth" (Psalm 72:8).

Principle

Jesus will bring in time and on earth perfect government.

Application

All the crime and distortions of life without a King will be corrected in the kingdom. For the first time history, there will be perfect government. No one will lock his or her car or house.

The rapture will trigger a series of prophetic events beginning with the tribulation and ending in the millennial kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, the millennial kingdom will usher in the "everlasting kingdom."

Have you inherited the kingdom of God?

"For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (Ephesians 5:5).

Only those who have had a second birth, a spiritual birth, will enter the kingdom.

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'" (John 3:3).

We are born again only through belief in the death of Christ for our sins.

"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13-14).

of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Note this title for our Lord. This is His full title. He is both Lord and Savior.

"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

2 Peter is the only book in the New Testament that calls Him "Lord and Savior" and it calls Him that four times (2:20; 3:2,18).

Note the order of His titles. First and foremost, He is Lord. He has the right to be King over our lives. He has right over our family, our career, our business, our sex life and our domestic life. If we have any area of our lives that we do not submit to King Jesus then it is illegitimate. We must submit everything we have and own to Him.

We dare not, say to the Lord, "Here are all the keys of my life, except one. That key is not yours; it's mine. I lock you out of that area of my life." When we crown Him king of our lives, we crown Him Lord of all. We give Him the keys of every room of our lives. He must have access to the kitchen as well as the bedroom. He is Lord.

"And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn

from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18).

Principle

Jesus has the right to be preeminent in our lives.

Application

What is your estimation of Jesus as Lord of your life? Is He worthy to be king of your life? He should be king of our home. He is the divine umpire of our families. It does not do any good to argue with the Umpire. He is the ultimate divine arbitrator between husbands and wives. There is nothing wrong with His calls on our lives. He is not prejudiced toward us. He possesses all the facts and understands unseen components that we do not see.

If you do not know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, He can recognize that not only save your soul, but salvage your life. He will call the shots. If we quarterback and coach our own lives, we will lose the spiritual way.

2 Peter 1:12

"For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth"

With verse 12 we begin a new section dealing with the Christian's nourishment in the Word of God (1:12-21). The focus turns from the work of God in of individual Christians, to the Word of God as the instrument of nurture.

For this reason

Since Asia Minor Christians possess a faith that sustains godliness, Peter now insists that they live by truth.

Peter reminded his audience three times to retain the contents of this epistle (1:12,13,15; cf. 3:1).

"I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; They shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the Lord, do not keep silent, And give Him no rest till He establishes And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isaiah 62:6-7).

Principle

Christian leaders (who are sharp) review crucial doctrines regularly for their people.

Application

We need to be reminded of what we already know to prevent dullness toward it or worse still, our forgetting it.

Evangelicals need stability in doctrine. If Christians are not aware of the peculiar trends of our day, we will become unstable.

I will not be negligent

Peter is about to present a proposal with a purpose. "Will" means be about to, be on the point of. Peter will ever be ready to remind Christians of God's Word. Peter will die but truth will continue. Even though Peter is about to die, this passage will live into centuries to come.

Second Peter still speaks to us as we stand at the door of the twenty-first century. No pastor can afford to build his ministry on personality, some human system or gimmick. He must build his ministry on the eternal Word of God.

Peter's purpose is to remind the Asia Minor Christians of "truth." Every pastor must come to this point sooner or later.

Principle

Leaders must be diligent in leading their group find truth.

Application

Many of us operate under the delusion that anything is good enough for the Savior. We preach and sing without preparation. Anything is good enough for the Lord "as long as it is sincere." The idea is that you don't have to be good as long as you are earnest--that you do not need to be properly equipped to serve the Lord. How would you like your surgeon to remove your appendix with that attitude? God's work should not be a hobby whereby we give Him only our spare time.

to remind you always of these things

Peter knew his days were numbered. He now speaks of important components of Christianity because so little time on earth remains for him. At

the point of death, we speak of the things that are of most importance to us.

God's purpose for the believer is to know the importance of God's Word. This is a daily challenge for every leader.

The "these things" are seven items listed in verses 5-7. "These things" have to do with the Christian life. When we get sloppy with Christian living, we become a distinct liability to the cause of Christ. We are not an asset. We are not a good advertisement of Christ. We are not a help, but a hindrance.

though you know

"You already know these matters, but nevertheless I will always remind you of them." It is one thing to know these things in our minds and it is another to know them in our hearts.

Principle

We need to familiarize ourselves with the familiar.

Application

A good minister always reminds his congregation of foundational truths. The pastor who does not his congregation of truth is a bad minister of Jesus Christ. We do not have to hear new and novel things. Dr. Harry Ironside used us say, "If it's new, it's not true, and if it's true, it's not new." Many leaders today try to be sensational and spectacular to gain the attraction of their followers. A "good minister" is someone who nourishes his followers in the faith.

"If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed" (1 Timothy 4:6).

We cannot drive a 100 miles an hour through the countryside and enjoy the beauty of the landscape around us. Neither can we speed through the Christian life and appreciate what the Lord has done for us. We need to spend time in the Word and thus in truth.

and are established

"Established" means to fix, make fast, to set. "Established" means to put or place something firmly in a location -- to cause to be fixed, to

establish in a place. The idea is stabilizing someone in truth.

The Lord called upon Peter to stabilize his brethren (Luke 22:32). Paul wanted to visit Rome to establish them (Romans 1:11) and Timothy at Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 3:2). It is the work of God to stabilize the saints (1 Thessalonians 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:17). We are to stabilize our own hearts (James 5:8).

"Established" carries the idea of strengthening, to cause someone to become stronger or more firm and unchanging in attitude or belief. Asia Minor saints became stabilized in the truth and were being set fast in truth. Peter's purpose is to set cardinal truth of their faith in their thinking.

"But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:32).

"Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22).

"So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily" (Acts 16:5).

We gain stability by knowing. We first gain knowledge-then stability. We cannot reverse this process. Stability does not precede knowledge.

We do not gain stability by reading "How to Win Friends and Influence People" or "How to Succeed in Selling?"

Principle

If the believer needs stability.

Application

A shock absorber on a car gives stability to the car. Likewise, if we cannot take the shocks of life, we will lack stability in life. All Christians need equilibrium. What gives us equilibrium in our lives? Truth, God's truth. Equilibrium is a state of balance produced by two or more forces. There needs to be a balance between what we believe and what God says in His Word.

"But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To

Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 5:10).

in the present truth

"In the present truth" is the truth present within us through instruction from our pastors and teachers. This is not truth at present under consideration.

"Truth" is the reality behind appearance; the manifested, veritable essence of the matter (Romans 9:1; 2 Corinthians 11:10; Galatians 2:5).

"O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?" (Galatians 3:1).

"Truth" here is the deposit of faith (Jude 3).

"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

Truth is something we can always possess and never lose. Truth goes with us everywhere we go. Moreover, we spend time with what we love. If we love the truth, we will spend time with the Word.

Stability here is not strong character or human security. The stabilizer is the Word of God. Some people try to find stability in a bank account. But we can have a lot of money and still be unstable. Success is not the stabilizer of life either. Friends or a wonderful social life will not give us stability. Neither will health, sex, material things, or status symbols stabilize us. Only the Bible gives us that stability (Matthew 4:4).

If you depend on a loved one to give you stability, you make a major mistake. You may think that you have the most wonderful romance in the world. You have the love of the century. But people can change every hour, on the hour. We kid ourselves if we think that people can give us stability. We will wind up unhappy.

Some people think that "all I have to do is get married and my troubles will be over." No, that is when your troubles begin! That is when you start to find out what adult troubles are like. If you want perpetual youth, don't get married!! This is not to say that marriage is a horrible institution. It is not. I am not as cynical as that. No, the point is

that stability comes from the Word of God and not from people. Why? Stability comes from the Author of the Word of God. He designed everything. He designed you. He designed your marriage.

Instability is the norm in our day. The things of life are here today and gone tomorrow. Our relationships are here one day and gone another. We laugh one moment and cry the next.

Principle

There is no way to live the Christian life apart from Scripture.

Application

The means to effect confirmation in our souls is the Word of God.

We cannot live the Christian life without the Bible. The Word of God is our chart, our compass, our bill of rights and our only infallible rule of faith and practice.

Just any kind of life that is gentle, kind and even loving is not the Christian life. Any thing less than what the Bible describes as the Christian life is not Christian. We may have a good life, a nice life or even a beautiful life but it may not be the Christian life. The Christian life begins with Christ. When Christ comes into our lives, we become Christians. There is no Christian life without Christ. He lives His life within us.

The difference between Christians is the extent to which they yield control of their lives to Christ. Some of us are very stubborn. We do not give up easily. We want to handle our lives and not allow Him to control us. Some things are beneath the dignity of the child of God although they may not be sinful.

Life is mutable. Immutability only comes from the immutable One. God's Word gives stability in an unstable world. Only truth is eternal and only truth can sanctify.

"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

2 Peter 1:13

"Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you"

Yes, I think it is right

"I think" is an accounting term. It originally referred to leading, to lead the way, to preside. Later it came to mean to consider or to lead before the mind, account (Philippians 2:3,6,25; 3:7,8; 2 Thessalonians 3:15; 1 Timothy 1:12; 6:1; Hebrews 10:29; 11:11; James 1:2; 2 Peter 3:9). This word came to mean to think in principles. "Yes, I think it is right to think in principles." "Think" then means to lead principles out before the mind. Character forms from what we think about God's Word.

"Right" means "fitting" here. Peter is thinking in terms of a right principle. It means to do the right thing. "It is fitting that I write to remind you because I am about to die." Peter developed a sense of responsibility to give Asia Minor Christians vital truth before he died.

Principle

Character comes from the application of the principles of God's Word to our experience.

Application

When young people grow up in homes where they are not taught principle, they grow up lacking responsibility. Responsibility does not come through discipline. Discipline gives training as to what is wrong. All children need this. However, a parent must go beyond discipline since discipline merely keeps children in line.

The only way a parent can endow a child with a sense of responsibility is to communicate principles to them. Young people die for their country, not because of discipline, but because they know the principles for which their country stands. They understand the principle of fighting for freedom.

The philosophy of liberalism does not teach principle. It teaches freedom. Freedom without principle is vacuous. Liberalism promotes lack of initiative. It teaches dependence on the state, not upon operating principles that transcend the state. This philosophy has helped produce a generation without a sense of responsibility because it does not operate on principle.

We cannot have a true sense of responsibility without operating principles in deep within our person. These principles need to be taught and derived from the Word of God.

A man has a woman out on a date. They may be in some secluded place. There is just the two of them. If he has a sense of responsibility developed from principle, he will hold back. If he is simply looking to fulfil his own pleasure, he is devoid of principle. He will pursue the lusts of the flesh. Taboos will not prevent them from having sex.

In marriage, he will carry that same sense of responsibility. He will be true to his wife. She will have security because she knows he carries principles with him that will not yield to temptation. He has a sense of responsibility both to himself and to his wife.

A girl goes to college and faces the choice of joining a sorority. She thinks she can have an adequate social life without a sorority. A Christian, who thinks in terms of principles, can live independent from the idea they need friends or social life structured for them. People who join an organization like this live a life without character, without principle. Character does not come from what we do; it comes from what we think in terms of principles.

as long as I am in this tent

This section of 2nd Peter is intensely personal because it uses the personal pronouns "I" and "me" many times. Peter alludes to his imminent death. He lived many years knowing that he was not going to die a natural death. Jesus told Peter in advance about Peter's coming death (John 21:18-19).

"Tent" refers to Peter's body. It conveys the idea of a pilgrimage in our earthly body. Peter is about to end his earthly pilgrimage and go to his permanent home in heaven. He is ready to take off his body and go to Glory. That is a description of Christian death.

You are not your body. You are more than your body. Non-Christians think that when they die that they are just plopped into the grave. That is the end of them. They place them into the casket where there is nothing but a blackout. They place both body and soul there. However, Christian teaching is that you are your soul and you have a body. Your body is where your soul lives.

to stir you up

"Stir" means to awake, excite, arouse, and animate. Peter is in the business of turning people on to

right principle. Peter wants to activate their minds. Peter proposes to activate their minds by reminding them of things they were previously taught. He arouses their minds by reminding them of truth from God's Word.

by reminding you

"Reminding" means with remind with authority. When we communicate truth, we inculcate authoritative principles for life.

Peter is in the course of explaining his approach to death. He now gives them his perspective on death. Repetition of principles is a key to leadership.

Principle

Good leadership rouses people to spiritual realities.

Application

Peter is in the business of stirring people towards spirituality. "I am going to move you, if I can, into a body of information crucial to your Christianity." Peter is in the process of awaking or rousing the Christians of his day. He sounds an alert. He blasts a warning trumpet to rise people out of their lethargy.

That is the idea of "revival." We do not revive something that is dead. We revive the living. Non-Christians cannot be revived, only Christians. Revival is a movement of the Holy Spirit within the hearts of God's people.

2 Peter 1:14

"Knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me"

Knowing

This is the second occurrence of "knowing." Knowing is how we form principles. As long as Peter is in his body, he is going to teach the Asia Minor Christians principles about eternal perspectives.

that shortly

"Shortly" means impending, near at hand. Death is near at hand for Peter.

I must put off my tent,

"Put off" is a metaphor of taking off a garment (2 Corinthians 5:3,4). "Put off my tent" means put off my body as a garment. Our "tent" or body is simply the cocoon or shell that surrounds the person. Physical death is impending for Peter. Peter says he is going to die. When he dies, that will be his liberation, his emancipation. "They will bury the remains of my body but my soul will continue in heaven."

To put off our tent (our bodies) is death for a believer. Every Christian has three components, a body, a soul and a spirit.

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

The above verse lists the three components of the Christian in order of importance: spirit, soul and body. The "spirit" and "soul" are intangible. We cannot see or smell them. We can see, smell and touch the "body." Our "spirit" and "soul" are not resident in our arm. If we lose our arm, we do not lose our personality.

We are not our body. When it is time for us to move out of our body, they bury the body but our two intangible parts continue. They only bury the physical "remains." God will eventually resurrect even the body (1 Corinthians 15). Some bodies will be resurrected to eternal life and other will be resurrected to condemnation (Revelation 20:5,6).

"and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:29).

The body and the spirit are not the same.

"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26).

On the cross, Jesus said to one of the thieves who were dying with him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise (Luke 23:43)." He did not say, "Today you will be with me in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea."

Principle

Every Christian has the expectation of eternal life.

Application

No matter how sorry a life we might have lived as a Christian, we each have the prospect of eternity before us. No Christian will ever face condemnation.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

The non-Christian will face judgment.

"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

In the eternal state there is no more suffering (Revelation 21:4). Every believer receives an eternal inheritance (1 Peter 1:4,5) and a new home (John 14:1-6). One day we will receive a resurrection body (1 John 3:1,2; Philippians 3:21).

At the point of belief in Christ's death to forgive our sins, every Christian receives eternal life (1 John 5:11,12). We possess eternal life from the moment we believe in the death of Christ for our sins (John 5:24).

I must put off my tent,

If God were to destroy our "tent"--that is, destroy our earthly body--He will give us another body ("a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"). That is our permanent body that we receive at the first resurrection. The tent in which we now live is temporal and subject to death. When our present bodies drop into the grave, they will go back to dust.

Principle

When a Christian dies, he or she goes immediately into the presence of God in heaven.

Application

When we go out to the cemetery, we should not go under the delusion that we buried our loved one there in that cold, icy grave. If you have a religion like that, trade it in. Find the truth as it is in Scripture. Your body goes to the grave but your soul and spirit goes to be with the Lord. When non-Christians die, they go to a Christless eternity. When Christians die, they go immediately and instantaneously into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8).

The moment death strikes the believer goes immediately into the presence of the Lord Jesus. We say, "Good night" here and "Good morning" there. No Christian should be apprehensive of death.

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14).

just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me

Peter ministered over thirty years knowing he was not going to die a natural death. He knew he was not going to die in bed. The Lord Jesus revealed this to him in the gospel of John.

"Most assuredly, I say to you [Peter], when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.' This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me'" (John 21:18-19).

Peter's death hung over his head for thirty years. All of us know we will die eventually if we are not raptured first, but most of us think we will die a natural death. Peter knew he was to die a violent death. Most of us think we will die of natural causes. That is a comforting thought to some extent.

Peter now writes Second Peter in the face of his imminent death. He knew that this would be the last time he would write them. Paul knew when he wrote Second Timothy that epistle would be his last letter as well.

"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure [death] is at hand" (2 Timothy 4:6).

Paul gives his perspective on death in Philippians,

"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you" (Philippians 1:21-24).

Paul could not help the folks at Philippi if he had died and gone to heaven. This statement gives a lie to spiritism (contacting of the spirits of the dead in the other world).

A great section of Scripture that deals with the body and death is 2 Corinthians, chapter 5. The word "tent" occurs twice in the opening verses.

"For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life" (2 Corinthians 5:1-4).

Paul talked of being in the body and out of the body.

"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago – whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows – such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Corinthians 12:2-4).

The only part of the human being that "sleeps" when death occurs is the body. The soul does not sleep. "Soul-sleep" is not Scriptural. The word "cemetery" means "sleeping place" but it is only a "sleeping place" for the body.

Principle

Death causes us to take stock of eternal things.

Application

When death approaches, it makes us all take stock. Peter's death was coming near; therefore, he was taking stock of himself and those to whom he was writing. The burden upon his heart is truth. He wanted them to remember certain truths or doctrines about going to heaven.

Peter saw clearly the body is not the soul. It merely houses the soul. The body is destructible but the soul is not. Except for the time of the rapture, all of us will put off our bodies. Our bodies will lie in the grave until their resurrection.

Does Psalm 116:15 sound strange to you?

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Psalm 116:15).

If using the word "precious" in terms of death is strange to you it is because you are earth-bound. You are chained to the values of this life. You are earth-oriented rather than heaven-oriented.

2 Peter 1:15

"Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease"

Moreover

Peter repeats himself for emphasis. In spite of his approaching death, he will leave a legacy that cannot be destroyed--Second Peter.

I will be careful to ensure

"Be careful," means to be eager. "Careful" carries the idea of striving earnestly, to bend every effort to do one's best. We have had this word twice in this chapter already (1:5,10). Peter will leave no stone unturned until these believers come to grips with truths about eternity.

Many people have a lot of enthusiasm but they are enthusiastic in a vacuum. Peter's enthusiasm comes from God's Word, not from hype. Peter gets his drive from the content of biblical truth.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

that you always

"Always" refers to a series of occasions. On any occasion that you read Second Peter, you will know apostolic teaching [the New Testament]. Once you get this truth, you will not want to be without it. We need the Bible on any occasion where the need may arise.

have a reminder of these things

The word "have" means to possess the capacity to do something. "Have" means to have and hold, implying lasting possession. Here, Asia Minor Christians and all successive generations of Christians will have a lasting capacity to remember apostolic teaching. Peter's goal is to establish autonomous Christians, not autonomous from God but autonomous from depending on any given leader.

"Remind" means to recall information from memory, but without necessarily implying we have actually forgotten what we know. It carries the idea of to recall, to think about again (1 Thessalonians 2:9; Hebrews 13:7; 2 Peter 3:2). This entire book of Second Peter reminds them of truths so they can think about it again and again. Here we are nearly 2000 years after the writing of this book and we are still reminded of "these things." As one of the eight or nine writers of the New Testament, Peter writes two of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

Peter wants to guarantee his readers will "always" remember what he taught. That guarantee comes from the Holy Spirit who enables him to write Scripture (1 and 2 Peter). Our guarantee of remembering Peter's teaching comes from the written legacy of these two books. Thus, First and Second Peter are permanent reminders of apostolic teaching.

Principle

Our only accurate source of information about eternity comes from the Bible.

Application

We cannot know anything accurate about death apart from the Bible. Everyone must die (Hebrews 9:27). The only way we can prepare for death and eternity is to accept forgiveness from God by Christ's death for our sins. If we die without Christ, we will be worse off. I plead with you, flee

from the wrath to come. We cannot over-emphasize the importance of the Bible for declaring doctrines about eternity.

after my decease

"Decease" is a term for death. Sometime the New Testament translates this term "departure" (Luke 9:31). Other times "decease" translates by the word "exodus." The Greek term comes from two words: road and out. Death is the road out. Here death is the road out of this life and the road into God's kingdom. Death is the departure of the soul and spirit from the body (2 Corinthians 5:8).

"For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart [different Greek word] and be with Christ, which is far better" (Philippians 1:23).

"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure [different Greek word] is at hand" (2 Timothy 4:6).

Peter here leaves his last will and testament. The doctrines of Second Peter go on as a legacy for all Christians after Peter's death. Truth does not rest in any great leader or pastor. Truth lasts forever (1 Peter 1:23). It is not the man but the message that is important. Men will come and go but the Word of God abides forever.

The great thing a pastor can do for his congregation is to teach them the Word [this is the point of the pastorals: 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus]. Other pastoral functions fall into diminishing priority in light of the communication of God's Word. The pastor's real legacy is people who know the Word. No Christian should depend on some scintillating or pleasing personality. We must depend on the Word for the Word lasts forever.

Principle

Our only assurance about eternity comes from the Bible.

Application

Many Christians are apprehensive about eternity. We have faith enough to believe Jesus died for our sins but we do not have faith enough to trust God with our future. We think death is a monster but it is the greatest event to ever happen to a Christian.

When we die we meet Jesus and other loved ones who have gone on before us.

We only bury the cocoon. Our body is simply the shell of our person. The person goes on to be with the Lord. We so identify the corpse with the person that we distort the reality of what happens at death. There is nothing in the casket but so many chemicals.

2 Peter 1:16

"For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty"

For we did not follow

Christians do not base their faith on clever stories as the false teachers did (whom Peter attacks in chapter 2). Rather, the Christian faith rests on the historicity of God's revelation.

The Greek word "follow" comes from two words: to follow and out. This intense term conveys the idea of conforming as a follower in a dependent manner. The behavior of this person closely imitates their leader. It carries the idea of following someone personally to the end (2:2,15). The implication is to comply with some authority. Peter does not follow "fables." "Fables" are not the authority of the New Testament church.

Christians follow their Lord and the Word. The Word of God will protect us and give us inner strength if we learn its principles and apply them to experience.

cunningly devised fables

"Cunningly devised fables" are clever or skillful special knowledge created shrewdly and expertly. We get our English word "sophistication" from the verb "cunningly devised."

We get our English word "myth" from the Greek word for "fable" here. A fable is legendary story about supernatural beings, events or cultural heroes. A fable is a fabrication, a concocted tale to subtly mislead.

These people have special knowledge involving capacity to produce cleverly contrived myths. Peter did not contrive his message. Christianity does not come from human invention.

The Greek tense of "devised" means these tales were formed in the past with the result continuing to the present. These are long standing myths.

Principle

The Bible is based on historical fact, not myths.

Application

Christianity is no myth. It is not a fairy story for children or folklore for adults. Christianity operates on fact, not fiction. It is no religious fairy tale. Neither is Christianity the work of someone's imagination that has no basis in fact. The truth of the Christian faith is closely bound with the historicity of the New Testament.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, under the influence of the Age of Reason (which assumed rationalism as the essential source for truth), a belief system arose to attack Christianity. Some of its methods claimed the Bible was myth. These claims were based more on subjective theological presuppositions than on historical fact. The question of historical fact of Scripture is of little importance to those who deny the truth of Christianity. It is of immense importance to those who believe in its credibility for the truth of Jesus Christ can only be known from New Testament records. The influence of the New Testament records is tantamount to the influence of His character.

The New Testament is the most trustworthy piece of writing that ever persevered from antiquity. There are greater resources for reconstructing its text than for any document of the classic age. Some papyri go back to the time of the writings of the apostles themselves. By contrast, the dialogues of Plato, the works of the Greek dramatists and the poems of Virgil have come down to us from copies few in number. Some of their manuscripts separate by as much as 1400 years. The oldest manuscript for the Gallic Wars is 900 years after Caesar's time. The two oldest copies of Tacitus' work are dated eight and 10 centuries after his original writings.

The heyday of liberal criticism has passed. With this, many of its advocates face a dilemma in squaring to the demands of objective evidence. Many of them ignore modern archaeological and other evidence. They hang on to their speculative assumptions in the face of facts.

How do we know the authors of Scripture were genuine authors? The Iliad has only 643 manuscripts. Caesar's Gallic Wars has but 10 good manuscripts. However, there are 5,366 Greek New Testament manuscripts; plus 45,000 copies of New Testament texts in papyri, lexicons, dictionaries and the church fathers' writings.

In the New Testament, there are fewer than fifty variant readings of any importance. There is no case where an article of faith is left in question. The Bible is the most reliable historical document in the history of the world. It obviously is not myth!!

God speaks through the Bible (Luke 1:70; Acts 3:31; Romans 1:1,2; Hebrews 1:1,2; 2:3,4). Therefore, it is of highest importance that we recognize that the Bible we possess is true and reliable.

when we made known to you

Peter "made known" two things about the Lord Jesus Christ: first, his "power" and secondly, his Second Coming. He made known this information by revelation, by Scripture, when he first came to teach his readers.

the power

"Power" is inherent power. The Devil is mighty but the Lord Jesus is almighty. The Devil is potent but the Lord Jesus is Omnipotent.

and coming

"Coming" is a technical term for the visit or arrival of a king or some important official. When "power" is associated with the coming of Christ, it connotes the idea of a powerful coming. Jesus will come by virtue of His own power.

Peter views the coming of Christ as important. Many evangelicals today sadly diminish the doctrine of the coming of Christ.

Note this word for "power" in other New Testament passages:

"Jesus answered and said to them, 'You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God'" (Matthew 22:29).

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The Holy Spirit is the internal dynamic who enables us to dynamically share Christ. He is the dynamo of the Christian life who enables the child of God to have victory over sin and live a life that is a credit to Christ.

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

"And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:19-20).

"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:10-11).

Peter is using the doctrine of the Second Coming as the basis for establishing true criteria for truth. Since the Second Coming did not happen during Peter's day, this makes Peter's point more dramatic. Peter is going beyond personal experience. Truth is more real to him than experience. If there is a conflict between your experience and the Word, the Word should be the deciding factor for determining truth. If there is a conflict between your experience and God's Word, your experience is wrong.

Principle

The Word of God is the only true basis for the evaluation of our experience.

Application

Some people do not have the ability to evaluate their experiences. They cannot do it because they do not have principles of Scripture to measure their experiences. We all have a tendency to over-estimate our personal experience and under-estimate the principles of God's Word. We will

never know whether we are right or wrong without something to measure whether we are or not. We must have criteria to measure our experiences. God gives us an absolute criterion in His Word.

How do we determine what six inches is? First, we must know what an inch is. You say, "Well, someone says it is 'so' long and someone else says it is 'that' long." Which person is right? If I say six inches is equivalent to three feet and am dogmatic that it is, how are you going to prove me wrong? I have made up my mind. Don't confuse me with the facts. How do you know that an inch is an inch? We must find a ruler, an established and commonly accepted standard [worldwide] for determining how long an inch is. In biblical parlance, our ruler is God's Word. God's Word is from eternity and operates on eternal and absolute norms.

After we decide to use the ruler, we have to know how to use it. We cannot measure an inch by the end of the ruler. We must turn it sideways and use it as it was designed to be used. Many people distort the Bible by fallacies such as pretexting [taking a verse out of its context]. These people have the right standard but they do not know how to use it. The best way to understand the Bible is to examine it verse by verse in its historical, grammatical, cultural and contextual context. If we do this, we will not scramble Scripture. Another distortion in understanding the Bible is the error of interpolation [imposing one's own view on a passage of Scripture].

of our Lord Jesus Christ

This is the seventh time Peter mentions Jesus' name in this chapter. The Holy Spirit loves to exalt the Lord Jesus. The

Holy Spirit says more about the Lord Jesus than He does about Himself.

Principle

We should exalt the Lord Jesus with our lives.

Application

We should take a lesson from the Holy Spirit's exaltation of the Lord Jesus. The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to magnify the Lord Jesus.

We cannot make too much of the Lord Jesus. The better we know Him, the more we love Him. The

more we love a person the more we will do for him or her. If you don't love them very much then you will not do much for them. People can tell what we think of them by what we do for them. We can talk about loving the Lord Jesus but until we show it in what we do for Him, it is just talk. When we do something for someone because we love him or her, we do not count it a chore. We count it a blessing.

but were eyewitnesses

The "but" here is a term of strong contrast. There is a contrast between some subjective observation and exposure to the facts. Peter, James and John actually observed Jesus transfigured on the Mount of Olives.

The word "were" means to become something that you were not before. They were not eyewitnesses before the transfiguration but the three observers of the transfiguration became eyewitnesses. They looked on at the transfiguration of Jesus into His millennial glory. Peter, James and John had a foretaste of the coming of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 16:28-17:2).

An "eyewitness" is one who watches or observes as an overseer. These are people who have personally seen an event and thus have first-hand knowledge and can attest to the occurrence of an event.

This is the only occurrence of "eyewitness" in the New Testament. The Christian faith is credible because of historical facts, not stories. The Christian faith requires "eyewitnesses" who can corroborate those facts. Peter defends the doctrine of future things on the historicity of the Mount of Transfiguration.

of His majesty

"Majesty" is a state of greatness or importance. Jesus was prominent and important to Peter's thinking. "Majesty" means far more than "Majesty." This word carries the idea of magnificent glory.

"Majesty" can mean the manifestation of great or, mighty power. Here "majesty" refers to the splendor and magnificence of Jesus' transfiguration of great grandeur and sublimity. Peter, James and John witnessed Jesus' majestic appearance. Jesus is His majesty, King Jesus.

"His majesty" could never be used of Isaiah or John. We only use the term "majesty" of the Lord Jesus. We never say, "His majesty Peter or Paul." We do say, "His majesty, King Jesus, King of the world to come and the Sovereign King of the Universe."

"And they were all amazed at the majesty of God. But while everyone marveled at all the things which Jesus did...." (Luke 9:43).

They were all amazed at the majesty of God as Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit. Jesus is the magnificent Son of God. No one compares to God's precious Son.

Peter, James and John at the Mount of Transfiguration [Mount Olivet] saw with their own eyes as the Lord was transfigured before them into a foretaste of His millennial glory. The experience on the mount then was a sneak preview of the Second Coming (Mark 8:34-9:13). This was a bona fide experience of historical fact. What a thrill it would have been to be there! It was a great privilege for Peter, James and John to see the future millennium unveil before their eyes. Thirty-two years later Peter spoke of it in this Second epistle. He now declares that the event has to do with Christ's coming again.

The trio on the Mount said in effect, "You can't fool us. This was no hallucination or optical illusion. This was real. We actually saw Jesus transfigured before our eyes."

Who had the temerity to break into the scene between the Father and Son on the Mount of Transfiguration? Not James. Not John. But Peter, the author of this epistle. He was a person with a lot of nerve. Peter even offered a plan when Moses and Elijah arrived on the scene. He wanted to build three tents for the guests! He wanted to make a permanent home on the Mount of Olives!

Peter did not get a chance to finish his plan. Rather God broke in. The cross must come before the crown. Peter was out of line. Jesus and Old Testament prophets taught many times that the cross must come before the crown.

Peter interrupted God; then God interrupted Peter. In fact, Peter probably would still be talking if God did not interrupt him! God made the point that Jesus is part of the course for fulfilling His plan. He must die for the sins of the world.

Principle

The Christian regards Jesus Christ as His Majesty, King Jesus.

Application

One day Jesus will be King Jesus, King of the World. Do you give Jesus that distinction in your life? Is He King over your values?

2 Peter 1:17

"For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'"

Peter's desire is for his readers to see beyond the first coming of Christ to His Second Coming. He gives a running commentary on the Mount of Olives transfiguration experience. The Transfiguration was a foretaste of Christ's coming.

For He received from God the Father

The name "God the Father" is important for it distinguishes God the Father from God the Son. God the Son is as much God as God the Father.

"Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him" (John 6:27).

"Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)" (Galatians 1:1).

"And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11).

"Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love" (2 John 3).

All three members of the Trinity are equally God. They are one in essence. There are not three Gods but three persons in one being. There is only one being that is everywhere present, all knowing and all-powerful.

honor and glory

"Honor" means highest value. God highly values Jesus in his humanity. "Glory" means to manifest

excellence. Jesus' body was transfigured right before the eyes of Peter, James and John and they saw his manifest excellence.

God gives honor and glory to His Son. That is who God honors. God the Father loves to honor God the Son.

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone" (Hebrews 2:9).

when such a voice came to Him

The "when" here is the Mount of Transfiguration experience on the Mount of Olives.

from the Excellent Glory:

"Excellent glory" is a greater glory. This excellent glory reflects greater glory on Jesus Christ.

'This is My beloved Son'

"Beloved" means one who is loved. Jesus, the Son, is the object of God's special affection. He is the object of God's particular love and cherishing. He is the only one of this class (Matthew 3:17).

"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Colossians 1:13).

'in whom I am well pleased.'

God the Father made this statement that he was "well pleased" of God the Son twice, once when he was baptized (Matthew 3:17) and once when he was transfigured (Matthew 17:2).

When God the Father thinks of Jesus Christ, He is pleased. He takes pleasure in Jesus Christ. He has good thoughts about Jesus for He is pleased with Him. He is pleased with the Son because His Son became a foreign missionary to a tiny planet called earth in time and space. He came from a place of peace and blessedness to a place of crime, treachery, sin and devastation.

"He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has

appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

Because of His coming, forgiveness is possible. That forgiveness extends "... as far as the curse is found" as the Christmas carol says.

Principle

God the Father has special love for and is pleased with His Son.

Application

The Father never had any trouble with His Son. No parent on earth can say that. We often hear someone say, "I never had a minute's trouble with my child." But we take that statement with a grain of salt. We all have had trouble with our children. There was a time when I felt I knew more than my father did. As I grew older, I began to realize he was smarter than I'd thought he was.

2 Peter 1:18

"And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain"

And we heard this voice

Peter appeals to the transfiguration to give testimony that he, James and John were "eyewitnesses" of Jesus' future coming and that He possesses "honor and glory" from God to claim His Kingdom. They caught a "preview" of Christ's coming.

God's voice was "heard." Tie hearing of this verse with "eyewitnesses" of verse 16. Peter, James and John both heard and saw. People have every reason to receive the testimony of Scripture because the Bible is based on facts and true history. These three actually and personally experienced the Mount of Transfiguration incident.

"But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:27).

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life--the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life

which was with the Father and was manifested to us--that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full" (1 John 1:1-4).

which came from heaven

Heaven is the seat of God's presence. But we know precious little about heaven. The Bible presents heaven as a celestial abode.

In common language, "heaven" simply meant the sky, the space above the earth. The word "heaven" may simply mean the vault of heaven, the sky. Ancient people viewed heaven in this sense as a concave hemisphere resting on the verge of earth. The stars were fixed on this. This was also the seat of the gods, "Heavengate," which the Hours lifted and put down like a trapdoor.

The Bible uses "heaven" for both the "sky" (Acts 2:5; Hebrews 11:12; Matthew 24:31) and the abode of God. Primarily though, heaven is where God lives and governs. Paul talks about "the third heaven." This is also the abode of God (2 Corinthians 12:2).

"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago – whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows – such a one was caught up to the third heaven" (2 Corinthians 12:2).

when we were with Him on the holy mountain

The "holy mountain" is the Mount of Olives where Peter, James and John saw Jesus transfigured before them. Peter, James and John there saw the ultimate fulfillment of Jesus' Messiahship.

"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.' Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun,

and His clothes became as white as the light" (Matthew 16:27-28; 17:1-2).

Principle

Christians meet the great hope of heaven in Jesus Christ.

Application

Are you interested in heaven? The Bible offers only two alternatives where people go after death: heaven or hell. Would you like to go to heaven?

Going to heaven has nothing to do with church membership. You cannot go to heaven by joining a church. Neither can you go to heaven by good works (Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 3:5).

Whether we go to heaven depends on our relationship to Jesus Christ. If we trust that He died for our personal sins, that He did all of the suffering that was necessary to suffer for our sins. If you come to Christ you will be heaven-born and heaven-bound.

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'" (John 3:3).

2 Peter 1:19

"And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts"

And so

Peter now continues to explain the implication of his Mount of Transfiguration experience. He draws an even more convincing documentation of truth than the transfiguration.

we have the prophetic word confirmed

The Word of God is surer than an apostolic witness of the account of Mount of Transfiguration. Our faith primarily rests in what God says, not what we experience.

The "prophetic word" pertains to inspired utterances – prophetic meaning, "of the prophets." In other words, this is Old Testament Scripture.

"But now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the

commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith – to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen" (Romans 16:26-27).

"Confirmed" means firm, permanent. "Confirmed" also comes to mean reliable, dependable, certain. These are people with a firm faith because what they believe in is altogether reliable. We can rely and depend upon the Scriptures because they are trustworthy.

Principle

We can trust God's Word more than we can trust our own senses.

Application

We can trust the empirical evidence of the trio seeing the transfiguration. We can trust even more the message of the prophets: the Word of God. The issue here is certainty. Scriptures are known to be true by the apostles; they are certain (Hebrews 2:2). There has been a process of verification by the apostles and they confirmed the Bible to be true.

which you do well to heed

"Heed" has to do with the Christian's seriousness toward Scripture. Search the Scripture so you can apply principle to experience. We want to mold and fashion our lives according to the Bible.

"To heed" means literally to turn one's mind to. It can mean to hold to, to be in a continuous state of readiness to learn of any future danger, need, or error, and to respond appropriately. We need to pay attention to, to keep on the lookout for, to be alert for, to be on one's guard against neglecting God's Word for our souls.

Principle

We need to guard our souls against neglecting God's Word.

Application

Since "heed" conveys the idea of paying attention to something or someone so as to be alert or on notice, God too wants us to pay close attention to the Word of God. If we do not occupy ourselves with and apply ourselves to God's Word, it will not have the desired effect on our lives. Do we have devotion to the Word (1 Timothy 4:13)?

"Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14).

as a light that shines

"Shines" means to give light. The Word is a bright light in the darkness of this world. It brings everything to light and makes it appear as it truly is.

Light dispels darkness. When Jesus comes, He will dispel the darkness of our world. This world is a place of moral squalor. Jesus enlightens darkened minds.

The Christian is in the process of growing his knowledge.

"But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18).

in a dark place

"Dark" pertains not only to darkness itself, but it also carries the idea of being dirty and miserable. Light shines in miserable places, in degraded places.

We can do more than shout against the darkness. We can shine a light in it. Our light shines wonderfully in dark places. People can see by contrast. The more our society becomes morally depraved, the clearer the contrast to the light. Someone who is dressed in a clean clothes stands out among those whose clothes are stained with filth and dirt.

until the day dawns

"Dawns" means to shine through.

and the morning star

We get the English word "phosphorus" from the Greek term for "morning star." Literally, "morning star" means light-bringer or light-bearer. The "morning star" bears and gives light. The eye gives light to the mind. The morning star is conspicuous and thus illumines our minds. Until Jesus comes again, darkness will prevail.

rises in your hearts

"Rises" comes from two Greek words: through and shine. Thus, "rises" means to shine through with

special reference to the dawn. This is the breaking of daylight upon the darkness of the night. When Jesus comes, He will break into the darkness of this world. He will break through time and space. It will be light when Jesus comes.

Principle

We have enough of God's Word to thoroughly love the Lord Jesus.

Application

Peter lived with Jesus for three years. Jesus rebuked, corrected and commended Peter during that period. Yet, Jesus became more real to Peter because of Peter's personal experience with Him.

But do not say "If I lived when Jesus lived I would love Him better. I would not have done some of the dumb things spiritually that I have done." Because you would not be any different than you are right now. You have enough of the Word to love Him thoroughly. You would be no different than you are right now.

2 Peter 1:20

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation"

This section of Second Peter deals with Scripture itself. No book in the world is as valuable as the Bible. God's Word is indispensable because it only tells us the truth about God, Christ, sin and eternity.

Knowing this first

Invariably, what God asks us to know, we do not know. God wants us to know the subject of this verse "first." God wants us to know something about divine inspiration above everything else. When we interpret Scripture, we need to begin with the principle that God inspired the Bible, not men. This is paramount.

Peter's opponents denied the divine origin of Scripture. They claimed that their writings came from visions, signs and dreams. These prophecies came from themselves, from their own origin. But Peter says that the apostolic writings came from God, not a human author.

that no prophecy of Scripture

"Prophecy" here is the message of a prophet.

"Scripture" means writing. Peter here refers to the Old Testament and the writings of the New Testament written to this point.

"Scripture" is singular. The Word of God is one single unit. It does not contradict itself. Some verses are difficult to understand. We must interpret these verses in light of other passages dealing with that subject.

Also, we should interpret unclear passages of Scripture in the light of clear passages. If a passage is crystal-clear, that portion of the Bible will help us interpret the unclear portions. God is the Author of all of Scripture and He makes no mistakes. He used human authors to write His Book and they wrote in different times and different places. Many lived centuries apart from one another yet all sixty-six books fit together as one.

Principle

The Bible is one in its teaching.

Application

It is a dangerous practice to pick certain verses out of their context to establish a doctrine. We understand each verse in the light of its context. Otherwise, we risk distorting the meaning of that passage and then operating on incorrect information. This is much like misleading advertising. Misleading advertising misrepresents its product.

Verse-by-verse Bible exposition saves us from this problem. By taking each verse successively and all of its words, we can come to a true meaning of Scripture. This also presumes that we interpret the Bible in the time in which it was written and to whom and on what occasion it was written. It is also of great advantage to know the original languages in which the Bible was written. This is the way to discover what God truly says. We must always be careful not to make the Bible say what we want it to mean.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

is of any private interpretation

The word "private" means one's own. A prophet cannot speak his own message. Scripture does not

come from the prophet himself. The Scriptures did not come from human origin. Scripture is not the human author's "own thing." The Bible is reliable because of its source. Scripture is reliable because God is reliable.

The word "interpretation" means unloosing, solving or explanation. Metaphorically, it means "interpretation." The word can mean the conveying or uttering of a divine proclamation and therefore carries the idea of "produce" or "bring forth." Scripture does not come from the human author's explanation of things. It is not a concoction of their own thinking.

The word "is" means to become something that it was not previously. This probably means that the prophets did not originate Scripture. The Holy Spirit originates Scripture, not human authors. He gives the Bible by revelation. This passage is not talking about the interpretation of the Bible but the origin of the Bible. God used human authors to write the Bible but it does not teach their human ideas.

Human authors of Scripture did not put their own spin on Scriptures. The Bible is not man's ideas about God.

"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39).

The word "any" means "no" -- not even one. Every single Scripture came from God and not men. No Scripture springs from the mind of the human author. No single passage of Scripture stands by itself. It must be understood in its context. The Bible also needs to be understood as a whole. We must understand doctrine in light of all of Scripture's teaching. We call this "theology." We cannot take passages we do not like and ignore them. We must include the entire body of truth from God to form a proper theology. This will deliver us from error.

Every passage of Scripture has one interpretation but many applications. If we give the idea that an application is an interpretation, we misrepresent what God says.

Principle

The source of Scripture is God.

Application

Our senses deceive us at times. "I thought I saw Sue. It looked like her but it was a look-a-like." "I thought I heard a burglar but it was a mouse. I could have sworn that there was someone in the kitchen. I came downstairs with my baseball bat." Our senses can fool us but the Word of God does not fool us if we interpret it in its context.

No single church has the right to possess the exclusive right to interpret the Bible. If a single church had this right, then individuals would not have responsibility to understand Scripture. If we accept what a given church teaches blindly, then we place ourselves at risk.

Each of us must take responsibility to understand the Word for ourselves. Every Christian has the Scripture and the Holy Spirit to help him understand the Bible for himself. The issue is not what your church or pastor teaches, but what the Word teaches. What does the Bible teach?

2 Peter 1:21

"For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"

For prophecy never came by the will of man

Note that this verse begins with a word of explanation - "for." The previous verse explained that Scriptures did not come from a human source but a divine source.

Scripture does not originate with man. He does not originate the Bible. The human author received God's ideas. Scripture comes by divine inspiration. The Bible is not man's idea. The Bible originates with God. Revelation comes from God to man.

Religion is man's ideas about God. That is why religion does not have the answer.

but holy men of God

If the Bible did not come by man's will, how did it come? By "holy men of God." Approximately thirty different men wrote the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. About eight men wrote the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. God used holy [set apart] men to write Scripture.

These men were not automatons or robots. They used their own personality and vocabulary to write Scripture. The Holy Spirit, however,

guarded them from error as they wrote Scripture. He superintended each word they wrote. Therefore, the authors of Scripture made no mistakes. We have the Bible exactly as God intended for us to have it. We can place our confidence in Scripture.

"Holy men of God" are Old and New Testament authors like Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John and Paul. God picked certain men to communicate the Bible.

spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit

"But" implies a strong contrast. In contrast to human beings originating Scripture, the Holy Spirit superintended the writing of Scripture.

"Moved" means to carry. The book of Acts uses "moved" for wind carrying a ship (27:15, 17). The Holy Spirit so guided the human author that he wrote without error. That is why Scripture is certain. Therefore, we can trust Scripture because it is the very words of God.

This word "moved" translates "upholds" and "bearing" in Hebrews:

"Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3).

"Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:13).

The idea is to carry. The Holy Spirit upholds or bears the writers of Scripture as they write Scripture. The writers of Scripture wrote better than they knew. That is why the Bible is not full of fables.

The Holy Spirit governed the human author as he was in the process of writing Scripture (2 Peter 3:16). The human author was aware of the content that he wrote, but the Holy Spirit "carried" him. The Holy Spirit originates Scripture.

The Holy Spirit so supernaturally superintended Scripture writers that without circumventing their intelligence, their personal literary style or personality, He enabled them to record Scripture with perfect accuracy. Human authors were not automatons or robots who acted like a computer when they wrote Scripture.

Principle

We have a trustworthy Bible because of the Holy Spirit superintended the writing of Scripture.

Application

The Bible is the unabridged revelation of the thoughts of an omniscient God.

God put everything that we need to know about Him in writing. Scripture is the only inspired book on earth. Other books may be profound and insightful but God did not inspire these writings. Only the Bible is inspired because the Holy Spirit wrote Scripture.

No single church has the exclusive right to interpret the Bible. If a single church had this right, then no single individual would have responsibility to understand Scripture for himself. If we blindly accept what a given church teaches we place ourselves at risk. Each of us must take responsibility to understand the Word for ourselves.

Every Christian has the Scripture and the Holy Spirit to help him understand the Bible for himself. The issue is not what your church teaches but what the Word teaches. It is not what your preacher teaches but what the Bible teaches. What does the Bible teach? We place our explicit faith in the Bible.

2 Peter 2:1

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction."

We now turn to the minor key of 2 Peter. A drastic change in tone in Peter's writing occurs here. Chapter two deals with those who deny the truth as it is in the Bible, the devil's leaders. These leaders are religious. They are family men (2:9) and their progeny follow them (2:10). They focus on wealth (2:11). They often become famous (2:13).

The first three verses give a general description of these false prophets and teachers. They are religious people, teachers in the organized church. We should not take incursion into Christianity lightly because it means the very survival of Christianity.

But there were also false prophets among the people

"But" is an about-face word and contrasts the authors of Scripture in chapter one (1:21) to the false teachers of chapter two. Scripture is the absolute criterion for determining truth. False prophets attack Scripture in this passage.

"Were" means came into being. These false prophets appointed themselves as leaders of the church.

"Also" - the church as well as Israel. Israel executed false prophets (Deuteronomy 13:1-5). The church is to deal decisively with false teaching.

Peter identifies the devil's leaders as "false prophets." The term "prophet" is a religious term. "False" indicates that they were counterfeit religious leaders. Peter uses harsh, blunt and straightforward language to describe these leaders. He minces no words and spares no feelings because of the grave nature of their teaching.

In our society we give serious concern to shyster lawyers and quack doctors. Why should we not concern ourselves with shyster religious leaders and quack preachers (Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:29-30; 1 Timothy 4:1; 1 John 2:18,19)?

"False teachers" here may be false teachers among Israel (Jeremiah 28). The "false prophets" of the next phrase are heretics of New Testament times.

"Among the people" may refer to the church. "False prophets" came from inside the church. Where we find wheat, we find tears. Where we find the genuine, we will find the imitation. Where we find the real thing, we will find the counterfeit. In no area is this truer than in Christianity. God's people are so gullible that they believe almost anything they hear.

Principle

Fakers will invade Christendom.

Application

We find counterfeits throughout Christendom. This does not mean that true Christianity is a hoax. It means that there are phonies within Christendom, not Christianity. As there are shyster lawyers, so there are phony preachers. Just because there are shyster lawyers does not mean

all lawyers are shysters (all current jokes notwithstanding).

Attacking Christianity from without is not nearly as dangerous as attacking from within (Acts 20:29,30; 1 John 2:18,19). Apostates were already in the church in the first century.

"Even as" draws an analogy to Israel. "As" sets up an analogy between Israel and the church. "False teachers" will come to the church just like in Israel. First Peter says that these religious leaders are "false prophets." Now he calls them "false teachers."

"There will be" indicates that the church will always be plagued with false teaching. We can expect false teachers in any generation of the church. Christians who do not expect false teaching to come to the church are naive.

who will secretly bring in destructive heresies

"Who" is indefinite and means representatives of a category or class. "False teachers" are a category or class that the church needs to identify.

False prophets and teachers carry a "nice" facade. They teach content that tickles the ears of those who listen. They adjust what they teach to accommodate what their listeners want to hear.

"Secretly bring in" is one word in the Greek and means bring in along side. It comes from three words: to lead, into, and along aside. This word carries the idea of a secret agent. These false teachers lead people to their side to teach false doctrine. The idea is to "covertly interpose" false teaching into the church (Galatians 2:4). These heretics infiltrate the church of that day. They create smoke screens whereby we cannot distinguish truth from error.

False teachers do not simply hide what they teach; they also distort the truth of the Bible. They do not set themselves up as opponents of Christianity. Far from it. They insidiously, imperceptibly and gradually bring their teaching to the church. They lure people from God's truth to their private notions.

"And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage)" (Galatians 2:4).

False teachers came to the church at Galatia. They came in unaware. No one knew it. None detected it until after they fell for false teaching. Now false teachers are difficult to unseat from leadership. They are in the saddle and run the show.

"Destructive heresies" are teachings contrary to the New Testament (Acts 24:14; Galatians 5:20). A heresy is an opinion contrary to Scripture. These "heresies" are "destructive" for they lead people astray and into spiritual devastation. "Heresies" is the content of teaching that is not true. This brings in teaching that destroys the soul.

False teachers must teach some truth or they could not bring in their false teaching secretly. They do not deny biblical truth outright. They change the emphasis to something other than what the Bible says.

Principle

All religion comes from Satan.

Application

No Christian can be demon possessed. The only way Satan can reach the believer is through deception. Satan's ideas gain momentum through religion. All religion has its origin in Satan. Religion is the worst deception to come into the world and is responsible for many evils in the world.

This particular passage warns us against those who communicate religion. For us to understand this, we must remember that Christianity is not a religion. Religion gains God's favor through attempting to get God's approbation through works. Christianity is the antithesis of religion. In Christianity, God is the giver and man is the receiver.

Some religious teachers are smart operators. They do not want us to know what they actually believe so they create smoke screens. Hypothetically speaking if Al is in love with Betty. Al does not want anyone to know that he is in love with Betty so he dates Cindy. Cindy is a smoke screen for Betty. That is what "bring in along side" means. If Cindy gets smart, she will drop Al like a hot potato. Cindy will destroy herself if she hangs around with Al. Cindy, is just a smoke screen.

Much of what is taught in religion is straight out of the mouth of the devil. Few people stand up and say, "No to religion!! I do not want to have any

part of this." Religion is a smoke screen for Satanic doctrine. People can be so nice and sincere but they secretly bring in false doctrine. Most people who accept false doctrine are not aware of its source.

Many false teachers manipulate people into believing things contrary to the Bible. They do not come out and say, "Frankly, I do not believe the Bible. I do not believe that the blood of Christ is the only way of salvation. I do not believe in the deity of Christ." They are too smart for that. They omit essential truth like heaven and hell, the gospel and the integrity of Scripture. They devote themselves to religious shadowboxing. As a result, many churches fall for their phony teaching. These churches leave their historical teaching. These false teachers insidiously betray what is true to Scripture.

even denying

"Denying" is a term of disdain. False teachers say "no" to the One who paid for their sins. They refuse His payment for sin. They renounce the cross of Christ.

"For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4).

These false teachers develop negative thinking toward God when they first encounter exposure to the Bible. This negative volition draws religion into their souls. People who are suckers for religion are people with negative volition toward God's Word. This is cosmos diabolicus (the Devil's cosmology).

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1).

If you want to get a reputable doctor's blood to boil, talk to him about phony doctors who put the health of people into jeopardy.

These false teachers deny the deity of Christ. They also deny Him a place in the Trinity.

the Lord who bought them,

The word "Lord" here means Master, the absolute Lord. These religious leaders repudiate Jesus as

absolute Lord. This term refers to the deity of Christ.

These heretics deny both the person ("Lord" – Master) and work of Christ ("bought" – paid for our sins on the cross). Their heresy is two-fold: First, they deny Jesus as Lord God Almighty. Secondly, they deny the fact Jesus' suffering on the cross was sufficient payment for sin. Thus, these false prophets and teachers are unbelievers for they reject the essential way of salvation.

The word "bought" means redeem. "Bought" means to purchase out of a slave market and refers to Jesus' unlimited atonement for our sin (Mark 10:45; Galatians 3:13; Revelation 5:9). There seems to be a conflict in some minds that if Jesus paid for the sins of these heretics, why are they not Christians? Did they lose their salvation? John teaches that the moment a person believes, they enter into eternal life, not temporal life.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

The obvious meaning is that Jesus paid for their sins in principle but they never exercised faith in the finished work of Christ. This passage teaches that Jesus died for everyone, not just the "elect" (1 Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 2:9; 1 John 2:2).

Principle

Jesus suffered all that is necessary to suffer for our sins.

Application

Jesus has done it all. He paid for all our sins.

It is our sin that recommends us to Jesus. Jesus is our only hope. From God's viewpoint, there can be no neutrality toward His death for our sins.

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 10:45).

"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for

it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')" (Galatians 3:13).

"Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Timothy 2:6).

and bring on themselves swift destruction

"Bring" means to bring something upon, make answerable. False teachers bring destruction upon themselves.

"Swift" here means these false teachers will face immanent ruin. It is coming soon.

Their self-deception led to their spiritual ruin (2:3; 3:16). They will eventually be condemned to hell for all eternity. They will bring a state of ruin upon their souls.

Apostates bring upon themselves damnation. They destroy themselves by their teaching. God does not send us to hell without the co-operation of our wills. When you land in hell, you will know that you sent yourself there. Do not blame it on the church or others. Blame it on yourself.

Principle

Ultimately, it is we ourselves who choose hell.

Application

Destruction comes on souls not because they behave badly but because they straight-arm the Lord Jesus' death for their sins.

We do not say, "I will go to the doctor as soon as I feel better." If we do, we are a nut. Our pain recommends us to our physician. We do not say, "As soon as I straighten out my life, then I will come to Christ." No, we go to the Physician who forgives our sin. We do not make a moral life and then become a Christian; we become Christian and then Christ changes our lives.

Come to Christ. What do you have to lose? You tried everything else and it did not work. Everything else is secondary and peripheral.

2 Peter 2:2

"And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed"

And many

Now we see the effect of the teaching of the false teachers of verse one.

The sad reality is that "many" follow false teaching (Matthew 24:11). The "many" are unbelievers. Many will fall victims for this false teaching. Religion is the way Satan deceives people into believing a lie (2 Corinthians 11:3-4).

Principle

Religion is the devil's trump card.

Application

The devil's trump card is religion. The way he leads people away from Christ is to get them involved in religion.

Most people go for religion. False teaching is very popular with most people. A case in point is the doctrine of hell. Religious liberals and cults both reject this Bible teaching. They either eliminate it or air-condition it. People love to hear that there is no hell. Denying a doctrine of the Bible does not negate it.

It is easier to believe a lie than to believe the truth. This explains why "many" believe error and why it is so popular. Error appeals to the fallen minds of the unbelievers. There are hundreds of false religions in North America alone. To many, God's statement in the book of Acts is very embarrassing:

"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Jesus is the only way. That statement is a difficult pill to swallow in a society that believes in pluralism. God says there are not five ways to heaven but that there is only one way. If we reject Jesus Christ there is no "outside chance" to go to heaven. He is the only way.

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'" (John 14:6).

Do you believe God's Word that Jesus is the only way to heaven?

will follow

"Follow" means to follow out to the end. These people imitate the teaching and behavior of these false teachers very closely. They will follow the false teachers to the end (2 Peter 1:16; 2:15; Job 31:9; Isaiah 56:11; Jeremiah 2:2; Amos 2:4). They follow in a detailed and dependent manner. These

people conform to false teaching and life-style. These are all out followers.

In war, some soldiers will follow their squad leader into death. Converts of false teachers will follow their teaches into hell.

their destructive ways

The Greek word for "destructive" occurs four times in the first three verses.

"Destructive" means debauchery, filthy. This is unbridled lust and also acting upon that lust. Often, this word refers to debased sexual routine. People who enter debauchery pass the stage of concealing their sin. These people place no value on their reputation. They do not care what other people think of their sin.

Principle

People who reach the stage of debauchery no longer care about their reputation.

Application

People in debauchery do not bridle their behavior. They enter orgies. They are reckless. They live as they please. They do not care what other people think about them.

An example of "debauchery" today would be the homosexual and lesbian community. With pride, they "come out of the closet." They love to flaunt their depravity.

We live in a day of latitude and permissiveness. Everyone is broad-minded now. No one believes anything for sure. We would not want surgeons to operate on us who had that attitude. They might say, "Well, we've never been trained in this operation but we will do as best as we can." I don't know about you, but I would not want those surgeons operating on me. Yet, millions of people buy into fuzzy pluralism and relativism without understanding that those doctrines themselves are presuppositions about truth.

We have lost our sense of the outrage today. We no longer have a sense of the temperate. Satellite, cable television and the Internet bring limitless choices of pornography right into the home. People who would never go to places of pornography now imbibe this destruction daily into their lives. Our society in general and Christians in particular have lost their sense of shame. We take what we want when we want it.

because of whom

"Whom" are these false teachers. The blight of false doctrine bedevils Christendom throughout the world. For every true teacher such as Paul or Peter, there are many false counterparts. Sometimes phonies who disseminate diabolical doctrine are more impressive and charismatic than genuine teachers of the Word.

the way of truth

Note the term "way" in other texts:

"These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation" (Acts 16:17).

"So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26).

"And the way of peace they have not known" (Romans 3:17).

Principle

There is only one truth and Christianity is that truth and the way to heaven.

Application

People do not want to hear there is only one way to heaven. That sounds too dogmatic and exclusive to them. However, the Bible teaches plainly that Jesus is the only way to heaven.

You may say, "That sounds like discrimination to me." If we do not accept God's way of salvation, this is discrimination against God. God's character demands that all sin be paid by Jesus' death on the cross. He must do this because this is the only way He can be true to His character and yet accept us into His heaven. If we reject this, we discriminate against Him!

Have you bought into the propaganda that there are many ways to God?

will be blasphemed

False teachers lead many into debauchery and this brings Christendom into disrepute. Satan spawns these false teachers to malign the truth of the Word of God.

We can tell whether teachers are true to the truth by what they think of the person and work of

Christ. In the first verse they "deny the Lord that bought them." Tell me what you think of Christ and His work, and I will tell you whether you are true to the truth of Scripture. If you say simply that "He is a wonderful teacher, a profound scholar or the greatest philosopher the world has ever seen," you miss the point. Affirming the ethics of Jesus, the greatest code of ethics the world has ever seen, is fine, but it is not to the point.

If Jesus is not God Almighty, He is the biggest faker on earth. If He is not who He claimed to be, we cannot believe anything He ever said. No, the Lord Jesus, the Lord of Glory, is a member of the Trinity. He is not one of three gods. He is God who exists in one essence. He is God and in His humanity He died for our sins.

Principle

We learn the way of truth from the Word of God.

Application

We learn the way of truth from the Word of God. We would not know anything about salvation if it were not for the Bible. People do not want a salvation that excludes other religions. They want a salvation that includes everyone and tolerates all beliefs, so they invent new religions and say, "We'll take our chances with our religious invention."

Christianity is under attack from both the outside and the inside. It is under attack from secularists, atheists and false religionists from the outside. These groups undermine the truth of Christianity. Those who hoist their flag of false teaching and make their teaching clearly known are not nearly as dangerous as those who hide what they believe.

The second attack upon Christianity is from within. These are spiritual termites within Christendom. These people still want to be called "Christian," yet they deny the essentials of Christianity.

2 Peter 2:3

"By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber"

By covetousness

"Covetousness" literally means a desire to have more. "Covetousness" is a desire to have more in a bad sense (Romans 1:29; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 2:5). It is a strong desire to acquire more and more material possessions or possess more things that other people possess. This is irrespective of need.

Covetous false teachers want to possess financial gain for themselves. A covetous person always wants a larger portion of the pie. Religious con men grab the attention of religious people by offering them more than they now have. This is how false teachers extort others and satisfy their own greed.

Principle

False religionists make money out of their suckers.

Application

We can tell a charlatan by whether they are oriented towards greed. They exploit people for their own mercenary purposes. They turn their ministry into an exploitative marketplace.

they will exploit you

"Exploit" means to commercialize, buy, sell, trade. We get our English word "import" from the Greek term. False teachers import false doctrine. Then this word came to mean exploit, to exploit by deception or cheating. These people take advantage of others by implying that what they offer is better than what it actually is.

Principle

False teachers are in the business of manipulating and marketing souls.

Application

The sad reality is that some religious leaders give people the business. They swindle their followers.

Every generation has its religious con men who come to exploit religious people for financial gain. They use religion for profit. They will buy your soul and then sell it down the river.

These people take the wonderful things of Christ and take advantage of people with them. Today these people blatantly go on TV to make their wares known. Those who have biblical discernment can see the corruption in these

religious con men immediately. They can tell who true preachers are as well.

with deceptive words

The Greek word for "deceptive" occurs only here in the Bible. We get our English word "plastic" from this word. Plastic is easy to forge.

"Deceptive" means to fabricate. Like plastic, people can fabricate and fashion words so that they are so well turned that they appear real. Some people are good at making up words to fit the situation.

"Deceptive" was used to mold clay or wax. False teachers manipulate their suckers by molding words to suit the situation. They make up stories to mislead people. They are clever in the way they construct words and arrange words so that they can mislead people (Colossians 2:4). We can easily recognize a lie when a lie is set forth as a lie. However, when false teachers mask a lie as truth, the lie is much more deadly.

"Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:17-18).

"For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error" (2 Peter 2:18).

Principle

False teachers can sound scriptural, but they deceive by distorting truth.

Application

Most people are so biblically illiterate that they cannot discern phony religious leaders from true preachers of the gospel. They are so maudlin that they could not possibly believe that someone in religion could deceive them. They seem to be totally ignorant of the fact that great sections of the Bible warn against religious deceivers.

False teachers can turn their words well. They make their religious wares very attractive to sell. By this they mislead, delude and cheat their

followers. Their religious inventions have mere surface attraction.

for a long time their judgment has not been idle

Peter now turns to the future of religious swindlers.

The "long time" is about to be explained as an event in the Old Testament.

"Idle" means linger. God's judgment will not linger. Judgment is still functional in God's economy even though these false teachers may not think so. God's judgment is still in force.

and their destruction does not slumber

"Slumber" means to sleep. God plans doom for these deceivers. Their ultimate end is at hand. God is not sleeping and His judgment is not dozing.

Peter uses the term "destruction" four times from verse one. It also occurs in 3:7 where it is translated "perdition" and 3:16 where it is translated "destruction." These words describe what happens to false teachers -- perdition.

"What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction" (Romans 9:22).

"But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul" (Hebrews 10:9).

Principle

The mills of God grind exceedingly slow but they grind exceedingly fine on false teachers.

Application

Judgment on false teachers will come. He gives them plenty time to repent but His judgment will come apace.

The reason God judges false teachers is that their teaching has serious implications on the lives of people. If you undermine biblical truth, you undermine biblical ethics. No wonder there is so much immorality in our society! This is the result of a relentless attack upon the authority of Scripture that has gone on for centuries.

Our generation is left without absolutes. There are few standards left anymore with the exception of murder. With abortion, even the latter standard is

in the process of being undermined. With each successive generation, standards lower further and further.

Collectively, our society is losing its soul. The erosion of its absolutes lessens the impact of the Judeo-Christian value system. The things that shocked us a generation ago no longer shock us.

God, help our generation. God, deliver us from judgment.

2 Peter 2:4

"For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment"

Chapter two is in the minor key. It tells the dark tale of apostasy. The Bible warns that the church will go into apostasy in the latter years.

For if God

In previous verses, Peter talks of false teachers. Now he gives a number of examples of apostasy. First, he turns to fallen angels (Ezekiel 28:15; Jude 6).

The "if" here assumes the reality of Peter's proposition. It is true that God did not spare angels who sinned. Peter now compares the false teachers of his day with beings who apostatized centuries ago. This is the first of three historical comparisons with the past. The other two judgments are the flood (v.6) and Sodom and Gomorrah (v.6).

If God punishes angels who commit apostasy, surely He will punish people in Peter's day who apostatize. God will not "spare" fallen angels. God will inflict retribution upon angels.

It is interesting that the "if" clause begins here in verse four and ends with a "then" clause in verse nine. That is all one sentence. If we do not take note of this, we will lose contact with Peter's argument.

did not spare the angels who sinned

"Spare" carries the idea of refrain, abstain. God did not refrain with these people. God cannot refrain from His justice. God cannot abstain from justice. God cannot hold back His essence and abandon His standards. He must act according to His own character for He is immutable. There is no latitude

in God, so God cannot be lenient toward sin. He must judge sin or the sinner who will not accept His judgment of sin.

The sin of these angels was fornication with human beings. God must judge sin no matter how high the creature might be. If God does not spare a higher order of beings, He surely will not spare human beings.

Who are these angels that "sinned?" These angels may be the angels of Genesis 6:1-9. This may have been a strategy of Satan to mix angelic and human natures so that when Christ came, He could not represent humanity in His death for their sin. Their sin was a sin of sex perversion. The next term for hell may support the idea that the Genesis six situation was co-mingling of humans and angels.

There are two kinds of angels: good and bad;

"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Matthew 25:41).

Principle

God must be consistent with His own character.

Application

I have never seen a liberal who could not mouth sloppy sentimentalism towards God's character a dozen different ways. Let us look at the character of God. Some of God's attributes are absolute, sovereign, purely just, absolutely righteous and perfectly loving.

God is immutable in all these attributes. He does not bend His character to fit a situation. Can He get tough? You bet He can. We cannot read the Old Testament or the New Testament without getting this point.

If we think we can get away with things with God, we fool ourselves. We need to flag ourselves down in time. We need to alert ourselves to our folly as quickly as possible. If we detect cancer early enough, our lives may be spared. It is the same with the gospel. If you discover early enough, you still have a chance to receive Christ. If you come to Christ, you will never come to judgment. The gospel is the good news that we are forgiven in full and free.

"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

but cast them down to hell

"But" is a term of strong contrast. Instead of abstaining from judgment, He judged these angels. He had to judge them. He could not overlook their rebellion.

There are a number of terms for hell in the Bible. Hades and Sheol are temporary hells. Gehenna (12 times in the Bible) is the "Lake of Fire" found in Revelation 20 (five times). The "Second Death" is another term for hell and occurs four times in Revelation. Revelation tells us of the "bottomless pit" seven times.

We now come to yet another word for hell -- Tartarus. The normal word for hell is Gehenna. Gehenna is what we normally think of as hell and is the permanent hell. Tartarus is a temporary place of torture or torment for angels (Jude 6). It is a temporary hell. The Greeks thought of Tartarus as a subterranean place where divine judgment was meted out. It was the nether world. Evidently, this was a place of punishment for fallen angels.

Tartarus is not Sheol or Hades where men go at death. Nor is this where God will place the wicked permanently which is permanent hell (Gehenna). Nor is this the place where people go for punishment. This is a temporary place of punishment for angels.

Principle

God's character demands that there be a hell.

Application

The important thing about a highway is the destination. The Bible tells of two highways, one to heaven and the other to hell. "I am on a wonderful road but where does it lead me? I am on an interstate but it is not taking me in the right direction." The road to hell seems like a nice road but it takes me in the wrong direction. The road to hell is all downhill.

Where do you want to go? Biblically, there are only two roads, one to heaven and the other to hell. You do not have to go to heaven. That is your choice.

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).

and delivered them

"Delivered" means to give over to something else. God handed these fallen angels over to another place with a view to judgment. God will give them their due. God is consistent with His character. Either God must judge Jesus for our sins or He must judge us for not accepting His payment for our sin.

Principle

God sent Jesus to the cross in order to resolve our acceptance to Him.

Application

There is no judgment for people who receive Jesus as their Savior (Romans 8:1) because Christ died for their sins (1 Corinthians 15:3). Jesus paid in full for any sin we have committed or might commit (1 Peter 2:24). Jesus took our curse (Galatians 3:13). Immediately, at the point one receives Christ's death in payment for one's personal sins, a person passes out from under judgment and enters eternal life.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

into chains of darkness

The word "chains" means pit or deep hole. Secular Greek uses the word "chains" for an underground granary. We get the English word "silo" from this term. This is a place of imprisonment for fallen angels until the time of final judgment.

"Chains of darkness" is a place of intense gloom where it is extremely dark. This is the gloom of the world below, nether darkness, a place of punishment. This is the gloom of the nether world. Feelings of despair and foreboding accompany this place (Hebrews 12:18). This pit of intense "gloom" is extremely dark. False teachers are kept

in Tartarus, a place of intense darkness (I guess intense "darkness" befits their teaching). This is a place of eternal depression.

to be reserved for judgment

These angels are "reserved for judgment." When placed into Tartarus, they are not yet in final judgment. God will haul them out of Tartarus for the final judgment (Matthew 25:4). These angels have been in Tartarus for thousands of years, yet it is still a temporary hell for them. They will be placed in permanent hell in the future. God is protecting His plan of salvation by having these rebels in this hell-jail.

Principle

God is consistent with His own character; therefore, He must judge that which is not consistent with Himself.

Application

It comes as a shock to the "do-gooder," bleeding-heart type of person that God can be a God of judgment. This is the general characteristic of liberal thinking today. Liberalism destroys the toughness and fiber of a national entity and they destroy the toughness of Christianity.

If you walk down a street and someone picks a fight with you, you have no choice but to fight that person (some of you do not know what I am talking about). You have never lived in a situation where you had to fight to survive. You were never in a corner where you could not get out. Some people in the world do not understand how to "communicate." These people do not understand good manners and politeness. That is their way life. We deal with these people differently than civilized people.

It also comes as a great shock to some people that God is consistent with Himself. God is immutable and He cannot change His character. God has a tough side. It is a "fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God." If God were to change His character, He would no longer be absolute. God has a perfect being. How can He change that? He would be stupid to change perfect consistency.

Liberals emphasize God's love to the exclusion of His other attributes. Love is only one of God's characteristics. Judgment is another. We cannot

separate love and judgment when it comes to God. God is not free to give eternal life to everyone.

Only very stupid people love everyone the same way without discretion. We have heard the phrase "fat, dumb and happy." This is an idiom that everything is "wonderful." God has more than one attribute. He is more than love. Love is at His essence, but He has more attributes than love. Just because you love people does not mean that you do not use discernment in business.

Certain attributes call for different situations. If it is necessary for you to be wise and tough, you do it. If it is necessary for you to love, you do it. Liberals latch on only one attribute—love. This is distortion. It is a distortion of God, for God is more than love. God can love, and God can be tough (toughness is also part of His love). God is love, but He is also justice and righteousness.

Some organizations try to sell us on the fact that our relationship with God does not mean anything. These organizations are hard core apostate organizations. These people are often very pleasant and charismatic. They are always self-righteous and very sincere, but much diluted about the Bible. So, they peddle their false doctrine of a distorted God. These people even delude evangelical Christians. Naive sheep drink from muddy water. Sheep who know the Bible do not drink from muddy water but drink from the clear springs of God's Word.

For God to be consistent with Himself, He must judge false teachers. He will always judge false teachers. The goat is the false teacher. Do not look for any horns or red epidermis or forked tail!

There is only one thing worse than injustice and that is justice without her sword in her hands. When right is not might, right is evil. God's justice grinds slow but sure.

2 Peter 2:5

"And did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly"

We come now to the second illustration of God's judgment.

And did not spare the ancient world

The "ancient world" here is the antediluvian (pre-flood) civilization. God did not spare the antediluvian civilization but destroyed it by the flood. He did spare eight people out of the flood. Peter talks of the flood in three places in his Epistles (1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:6).

God will not spare apostates. He did not spare the apostates before the flood and He will not spare apostates after the flood. God did not withhold retribution.

but saved Noah

Noah spoke out against the depravity all about him.

one of eight people

The eight people were Noah, his wife, his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth and their three wives (Genesis 6:10,18).

a preacher of righteousness

Noah preached righteousness. This is judicial--the righteousness of God's salvation.

"Preacher" means herald. A herald was an eminently respected person. This person frequently spoke for the emperor or an ambassador. The verb means to proclaim or announce. Noah announced God's message for 120 years to the antediluvian civilization warning of the coming flood.

Noah preached for 120 years with only his family as converts. This was 120 years of long suffering on God's part.

Principle

God cannot spare societies that compromise the essence of who He is.

Application

God deals with societies that lose their standards and become corrupt. The media condition us to accept filth, profanity and vulgarity. Our educational institutions pass off filth for art. They parade pornography as literature. This we call education!

Nothing shocks us any more. It is going to get worse and worse. Today it very difficult to spare our children from filth and smut.

bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly

The word "bringing" alludes to God's sovereign judgment on the world at that time.

"Flood" means deluge. The flood was worldwide and catastrophic. The Grand Canyon and the Himalayan Mountains testify to this flood (there are thousands of fish fossils on the top of the Himalayan Mountains). This flood was of such magnitude that God promised never to do it again and gave the sign of the rainbow to ratify this promise.

"Ungodly" are those who do not hold reverential awe towards God. They are impious. There were only eight people on the entire earth at that time that held awe toward God. God exterminated everyone else. This catastrophic judgment was of such magnitude that God never duplicated it again. Such an unprecedented result demands an equally unprecedented reason. With an effect of such magnitude, there must have been cause of equal magnitude.

What contributed to such devolution on earth? Why did the pre-flood world become so polluted and corrupt? That generation became so degenerate that God had to exterminate all of civilization except eight people. Genesis six gives four contributing factors for the flood:

1. Perversion of the human race (6:2)
2. Widespread wickedness (6:5)
3. Corruption (6:11)
4. Violence (6:11)

There will be a future day that will be as degenerate as Noah's day. Jesus made the prophecy that His Second Coming will come with judgment like the flood came in judgment.

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:36-39).

Jesus is the speaker in Matthew 24. He believed in the flood. To question the credibility of the flood is

to question the credibility of Jesus. If you deny the flood, you call Jesus a liar.

The antediluvians would have been saved had they turned to God. They heard Noah preach and saw him build the ark. Every nail Noah drove into the ark nailed their judgment. They had plenty of warning and opportunity by the time the flood came.

Principle

Christ died for the ungodly; God sent His Son to die for the non-God crowd.

Application

Do you know that the reason Jesus came to earth was to die for the "ungodly?" Jesus came to die for those who do not have God in their life.

"But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6).

2 Peter 2:6

"and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly"

Peter gives three illustrations of divine judgment, all taken from the Book of Genesis. The first illustration is the angels who fell. The second is the flood generation. The third illustration of God's judgment is that against Sodom and Gomorrah, covering verses six through eight. Peter gives more space to this judgment than the other two. and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes

The word "turning" means to subvert or overthrow one's existence. These cities enter a state of total ruin, complete destruction. "Into ashes" means that God reduced Sodom and Gomorrah into complete ruin.

We get the term "sodomites" from the city of Sodom. Sodomites are people who pervert God's standard for sex.

Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom and eventually moved into Sodom (Genesis 13:12,13). Lot was

Abram's nephew. He knew this city was wicked. Nevertheless, he took his wife and two daughters into this atmosphere. Eventually he became a politician there.

"Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom" (Genesis 19:1).

To sit in the "gate" during this time meant that you were a politician. Lot was an official in the town council of city hall. Imagine a man of God being an official in a city of homosexuals! He advanced his career in Sodom, but he lost his family there. He succeeded materially but lost his family. Money was more important than his family. That is the only thing that counts for some men.

While Lot entertained two messengers, homosexuals came demanding that Lot bring the men out to them.

"Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally'" (Genesis 19:4-5).

The men of the city beat on Lot's door. He went out and tried to placate them (he had power as an official of the city). They would not be appeased but turned on Lot. The messengers reached out and rescued Lot. These messengers smote these men with blindness. Then God rained judgment on the city.

"Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens. So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground" (Genesis 19:24-25).

Lot's wife lived in Sodom a long time. She had become prominent in social circles and women's clubs. God warned them, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed" (Genesis 19:17). She disobeyed God by looking behind to the city. She lost her life. She never made it to the city limits. Lot's daughters lost their morals and by the end of the chapter they were both pregnant by their own father. Although Lot was a carnal believer, God

preserved him from the catastrophe at Sodom and Gomorrah.

Principle

Some of us are more interested in our careers than our family.

Application

Many of us advance our careers by compromising with the society around us. We put priority on business rather than our families and lose our families in the process. We succeed materially but lose our families. That means money is more important to us than our families. That is the only thing that counts for some of us.

Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes

Let us take a survey of how God views sodomy in the Bible. Even today, "Sodom and Gomorrah" is an idiom for degradation. Sodom and Gomorrah were filled with homosexuality (Genesis 19:4-5).

"There shall be no ritual harlot of the daughters of Israel, or a perverted one of the sons of Israel. You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog to the house of the Lord your God for any vowed offering, for both of these are an abomination to the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 23:17).

Biblically, a "sodomite" is a sexual pervert. The sodomite in verse eighteen is the "dog" (with all apologies to the dog). Dogs have no interest in marriage.

"The whole land is brimstone, salt, and burning; it is not sown, nor does it bear, nor does any grass grow there, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in His anger and His wrath" (Deuteronomy 29:23)

God destroyed four cities in anger because of sexual perversion.

"The look on their countenance witnesses against them, And they declare their sin as Sodom; They do not hide it. Woe to their soul!" (Isaiah 3:9).

Isaiah tells of brazen, blatant homosexuals who have no shame. Today homosexuals want to come out of the closet.

"Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent:And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you" (Matthew 11:20,23-24).

The Lord Jesus is the speaker here. He says that homosexuality is a sin of greater degree. It is probably greater in the sense of the social consequences.

"They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:27-30).

Principle

God views homosexuality as perversion.

Application

It is interesting how God thinks about depravity in contrast to how present day evangelicalism thinks about it.

"Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due" (Romans1:27).

condemned them to destruction

"Condemned" means appointed. When a nation rejects Bible doctrine, God appoints ingredients of destruction for that nation. A homosexual society is like a hand grenade with the pin pulled; it looms ready to explode society. When a military accepts homosexuals into its institutions, it incorporates "destruction" into its infrastructures. This will undermine social life as we know it.

We get our English word "catastrophe" from the Greek word for "destruction." Metaphorically, "destruction" comes to mean a state of total ruin, a disaster. God brought disaster on cities of homosexuality.

making them an example

Sodom and Gomorrah are examples of God's hatred toward the sin of homosexuality, a sin of perversion. These cities were filled with male and female perverts. God made their cities an example to those who might live like they did in the future.

An "example" signifies a sign, a representation of a thing (Hebrews 9:23). Here is an example we are to avoid. Homosexuality is something to avoid in God's eyes.

When Lot went to Sodom and Gomorrah, he gradually learned to accept their sin and then live with them. Eventually he came to believe that their lifestyle was acceptable. Lot could have separated himself from these people, but he chose to live there.

God sent two messengers into town. A mob tried to rape the messengers (a society devolves into its maximum depravity when depravity develops into mobs). Lot would not let the mob have these two men. He brought out his daughters to give them to the mob, but they would have none of it. They wanted men.

to those who afterward would live ungodly

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah foreshadow the coming judgment of God (3:7,10).

The idea of this phrase in the Greek is "those who are about to live ungodly." The "ungodly" here are unbelievers. People involved in homosexuality are non-God in their thinking.

Principle

Homosexuality is ungodly in its orientation.

Application

The Bible clearly views homosexuality as sin, not as a disease. It is more than unnatural; it is "ungodly." God's standards are altogether different than our society.

Homosexuality is not only unnatural, it is also a sin. Not only is it a sin, but it is also "ungodly." The Lord Jesus can deliver thieves from their evil. He

can make drunkards sober. He makes immoral people clean. He can deliver sex perverts from obsessions. That is why the gospel is good news.

"As Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh (homosexuality), are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7).

2 Peter 2:7

"And delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked"

and delivered righteous Lot

God "delivered" Noah. Now Peter alludes to another deliverance, the deliverance of Lot from the city of Sodom. "Delivered" means that God rescued Lot from the sins of Sodom.

"Righteous Lot" does not necessarily refer to his moral character. It refers to his judicial standing before God. Lot stood justified before God eternally. We would never suspect this from reading the Book of Genesis.

who was oppressed

"Oppressed" means tormented, distressed with the implication of being worn out by this experience in a homosexual community. The New Testament uses this word two times, here and Acts 7:24. Lot was tormented by the overwhelming degradation all around him. This depravity overcame him and exhausted him.

Homosexuality tortured Lot's soul. Lot was distressed by the lawless sin of Sodom. It's sin wore him down because it exhausted his sense of right and wrong. Homosexuality in Sodom tormented and vexed his soul.

by the filthy conduct of the wicked

These "wicked" people live a life of disgrace. They have little sense of decency. They are "past feeling" (Ephesians 4:19). "Filthy" means sexually debauched (2:2). These people live like dogs morally and have little sense of shame.

"Filthy" means to refuse to be subject to legal requirement. This is a lawless person, unruly. Lot was troubled by the lawlessness of the people of

Sodom. The word "filthy" carries the idea of unprincipled (here and 3:17). Papyri uses this term for a father who breaks off his daughter's engagement because he learned that her fiancé gave himself over to lawlessness. This person refuses to be subjected to legal requirements of society. He was unruly, not complying with the law.

Homosexuality is a state of anarchy toward God. Homosexuality leads to lawlessness. They love to make a law out of their own abnormality. They want to call homosexuality normal. However, homosexuality is outside God's law. Sodom and Gomorrah lived under mob violence as well.

Principle

God sometimes protects the believer from assaults.

Application

Homosexuality is an assault both on God and humanity. Sometimes only God can deliver us from the assault of this society.

2 Peter 2:8

"(for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)"

Verse eight is parenthetic and interprets verse seven. This verse explains the personal torture that Lot went through in Sodom.

(for that righteous man

Lot was a man of God although his life did not manifest this at times.

dwelling among them

"Dwelling" comes from three words (to live, down and in) and means to live down among. The word "dwelling" thus carries the idea of settling down permanently in a community. Lot settled down among homosexuals. He lived there as a fixed dwelling or habitation. He made his home there. He felt at home among homosexuals and enjoyed their company. His social life was with them.

Why did Lot not move from Sodom before he got into so much trouble? "What? And lose his job?" Which would you rather lose, your job or your family?

Principle

When we compromise our standards because we enjoy the company of people, we put people over conviction.

Application

When we develop a process of thinking that lowers our standards we end in trouble. First, we think that people are nice although their sin is perversion. Then eventually we think that the sin is not so bad. The logic goes something like this: "Since they are nice people their sin must not be so bad." Therefore, we go along with the sins of sodomy because we like people.

Are you in an environment of sin and feeling comfortable there? You would rather switch than fight? This thinking puts maudlin thinking over conviction from God's Word.

tormented his righteous soul

Lot took a glance at the sin of Sodom and he was tormented by what he saw. "Tormented" carries the idea of mental torture or torment. He was tormented by the lawless deeds he observed.

A person who is "tormented" experiences mental anxiety and sorrow about what he sees. What Lot saw tormented his heart. The sins of Sodom tormented his righteous (born again) soul. He knew enough truth that this situation tortured his soul.

from day to day

Lot's soul was tortured on a prolonged basis. The sin of Sodom and Gomorrah grieved and vexed Lot's soul. His soul was vexed day in and day out with their sin. Guilt was an ongoing feeling in Lot's soul. Evidently, he constructed a guilt complex in his soul.

by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)

Lot saw and heard too much. The sin of Sodom was blatant. It was out in the open much like it is in our day. When a civilization does not care about blatant sin in its society, that society begins to devolve. This was the testimony of the Greek and Roman civilizations. Those civilizations decayed from within and disappeared as world powers. Will historians in years to come write about the erosion of our society during our watch?

"Lawless" means unprincipled. Their deeds carried no standards. Lawlessness pertains to what is not consecrated or devoted to God--unholy, impious, and godless. Here it refers to people who do not subject themselves to God's law. The idea is not simply doing what is unlawful, but flagrant defiance of the known will of God about homosexuality.

Principle

A principle of victory over sin is not to build a platform for sin. That way, sin can't gain a foothold in our life.

Application

Lot was vexed, but he was not vexed enough to pick up his belongings and leave Sodom. He evidently didn't care enough for his daughters and his wife to leave when he should have. Are you in a situation where you are dwelling too long? Get out of the situation and do not allow a platform of sin to develop in your soul.

There is a valid separation from sin and even sinners (2 Corinthians 6:14). Many young women go into situations thinking that this is an opportunity for some fun but it ends in great pain for them. It would have been better for them to separate from that crowd in the beginning.

2 Peter 2:9

"Then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment"

Now we come to the point of Peter's thesis. God has know how. He knows how to deliver Christians out of trials. This is His punch line.

Then the Lord knows how

Peter formulates a conclusion drawn from the earlier illustrations. God sovereignly delivers the godly from the reversals of life, for He is never at a loss to deliver His people.

to deliver the godly out of temptations

The term "godly" means a person with awe for God. He holds reverence for God (Acts 10:2,7; Timothy 2:2,12; James 1:26). This is more than a godly belief, but a belief that lives out what one believes.

"Temptations" means tests or trials. God knows how to deliver people who revere God.

and to reserve the unjust under punishment

God keeps the wicked under guard, waiting for punishment. God is the cause of this punishment. God holds the ungodly in a holding hell.

God also has the "know how" to reserve the unjust for punishment. There is a "pay day some day" as Vance Havner used to say (Romans 6:23).

for the day of judgment

One day those without Christ must face the Great White Throne Judgment.

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:11-15).

Principle

God has the "know how" to deliver us from trails or temptations.

Application

There is no doubt that the temptations teens face today are more insidious than a few years ago. Most youth today do not have what it takes to say "no" to temptation. They move with the herd and run with the crowd. Thank God that there are some who have the spiritual stuff to say "no" to temptation.

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me" (Psalm 50:15).

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to

man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:12-13).

2 Peter 2:10

"And especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries"

Peter exposes the false teachers of his day. They were rebellious against truth. They brazenly opposed God's truth.

These apostates are not weak types who simply fall into sin; they are people who fly against the truth knowingly with their will.

and especially

"Especially" means chiefly. More than any other group, we need warning of this group more than others. "Above all, look out for these types." Their chief characteristic is that they walk according to the norm of their flesh. This is their outstanding characteristic. This is a special category of false teachers.

"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Ephesians 4:17-19)

those who walk

The word "walk" carries the idea of joining a certain person as an attendant and follower. Some people run after these leaders because of their lust orientation to life. "Lusts" are their norm for living. These types live by lust as their essential belief system. They pledge allegiance to lusts.

according to the flesh

False teachers follow their own hearts. They refuse to bend under the authority of God's revelation. They bring the Bible under their authority. Their

norm for life is their "flesh" which operates in "lust."

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:7-8).

in the lust of uncleanness

This is the motivation for false teaching--lust of uncleanness. These false teachers enter lusts that defile their orientation to truth. They change their standard of truth to fit their own corrupt nature.

The word "uncleanness" means pollution, corruption. It denotes the act of defiling rather than the defiling thing. This person is tainted and stained by evil. These false teachers enter lusts that defile their orientation to life. Their standard is their own corrupt nature.

"For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness" (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

Polluted motivation starts in the heart. Our sin capacity corrupts every part of our soul including our mind. Our mind and heart must find standards of operation outside themselves. We only find absolutes in the Word of God.

Principle

Immorality is at the base of false teaching.

Application

Immorality is always at the base of false religion. Immorality and apostasy marry and live together intimately. Bible perversion and sex perversion go hand in hand.

When people reject biblical authority, they have no absolute to guide them in their conduct. They have no absolute to determine whether premarital sex is wrong. If you believe the Bible, that issue is not open for discussion. It is a closed issue because God declares Himself clearly on the subject. The Bible has the last word on the subject. We might as well start rethinking murder as to rethink premarital sex. No, God has spoken once and these issues are not debatable. Non-Christians have no compass for living, but Christians have a map to guide them through life. That map is the Bible.

Immorality is the motivation behind the rejection of the authority of God's Word in our lives. This is what spawns false teaching.

and despise authority

"Authority" carries the ideas of ruling power, lordship, dominion. These people love to rule over others. False teachers hold the authority of God's Word in contempt. They deny their Lord. They do not want the Lord to have dominion over them.

"Despise" means to make of no account, to regard as nothing. The word "despise" means to think down upon. False teachers despise authority and treat God and His Word with contempt and scorn. Authority has no impact on them. False teachers held authority in contempt because God's Word violates their values.

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

Principle

The authority of God's Word is our only mooring in a society without an anchor for values.

Application

Once we reject the authority of the sovereign Son of God and the Word of God that reveals who He is, then we lose our moorings for truth. We have nothing to which we can anchor our soul.

We spawn a generation that despises authority. People reject the authority of the home, work, government and church. They despise any kind of authority.

Children soon learn when ground rules of the home are not enforced. They know that those rules do not mean anything. They carry that into school and do not respect authorities at university. All this begins with the rejection of the Bible as final authority. A civilization without ultimate authority will result in anarchy.

Religion loves to ridicule the Bible. There is a fundamental attitude problem in great areas of religion today. No wonder people have little respect for God.

They are presumptuous

"Presumptuous" means bold, daring. These people shamelessly dare God's authority. They dare His truth to have any effect on them. These people are "bold" in the sense that they carry no shame. They are audacious people. They are particularly arrogant and dominated by self-interest.

These people so overvalue their own goals that they do not honor the goals of others. They are totally inconsiderate of others. They have no dread of authority. They are so bold as to challenge or even defy danger. They are bold toward God's authority.

Principle

Presumption precludes us from finding God's truth.

Application

Presumptuous people have over-confidence in their own world view without adequate knowledge to make decisions. These people can be brazen or bold in the bad sense. They take undue liberties (not freedoms) with the Word of God. They fly in the face of God's authority. They presume to know more than anyone else does.

A plumber cannot tell a brain surgeon how to remove a tumor from the brain. Today many people give their opinion on how to get to heaven. Their opinion is irrelevant because they are not the ultimate authority on getting to heaven. Television shows are filled with ignorant people giving ignorant answers to things of which they know nothing. If we come to God, we must come to God His way. We must come to the cross and there find forgiveness for our sins. There we will receive pardon and a guarantee of eternal life. We can no more tamper with the gospel than we can tamper with the multiplication table.

Beware of half-truths; you may have gotten hold of the wrong half! It is twice as hard to crush a half-truth as a whole lie.

self-willed

"Self-willed" people are stubborn, contumacious and presumptuous. They are self-pleasing. They delight in themselves. They are dominated by self-interest and do not take others into consideration. They arrogantly assert their own will over others. They so overvalue their own opinion that they do

not consider any other opinion. This is arrogance of self-will. They think that they are so much better than anyone else that they look down on others. This implies that they are better than others.

This self-will is in reference to God. "I know better than God."

Principle

Self-will places itself sovereign over God's will.

Application

All Christians have a titanic tug of war between their divine and human natures. The human nature, however, dominates non-Christians. They do what they please without any restraint except the restraint of the mores of their society. If society can stretch its conscience like a rubber tape measure then individuals can justify any action they want. Christians cannot do this because they have no confidence in the flesh.

"For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh..." (Philippians 3:3).

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find" (Romans 7:18).

The "flesh" has areas of strength whereby it produces acts of religion and morality, but is still raw flesh. God never uses the flesh, converts the flesh, refines the flesh or educates the flesh. He bypasses the flesh.

Religion makes the flesh respectable and passes it off as a substitute for the fruit of the Spirit. The Devil has a thriving business in the area of religion. His emphasis is not to down brothels and bars, but to hold false religion as supreme. He focuses his attention on launching religions.

Religion is his ace trump. If he can deceive by religion, he will lead many astray. He loves nice, cultured, educated, religious people who reject the blood of the cross as the only way of salvation. Religion is the substitute for the real thing.

They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries

These people do not fear dignitaries. They have no respect for authority. The Greek word behind "speak evil" is the word from which we get our

English word "blasphemy." "Speak evil" carries the idea of slander.

False prophets are not afraid to speak evil against God. This has to do with the way they treat the Bible. They leave innuendoes and inferences about the Bible's lack of trustworthiness. They speculate that the Bible came from man, not God. These people are not afraid to blaspheme God.

The point is not that God is a bogeyman who demands people to fall in trepidation before Him. False prophets are so arrogant that they show no respect at all for "glorious beings."

Principle

We should submit our will to God's will.

Application

The Bible tells the truth as it is. The ugly picture in this verse has to do with religious leaders whose lives revolve around themselves. They are "false teachers" (2:1). These false teachers are in Christendom but not in true Christianity. These baptized infidels occupy many pulpits of Christendom. They throw out the authority of the Bible and substitute it with New Age philosophy. Their motivation is for themselves.

To listen to blasphemy about Jesus Christ is like listening to someone calling your mother names. You do not stand for that. That is not open to debate. Blasphemy is not open to debate because it flies in the face of the Word of God. Do you fly in the face of God's Word. Do you disregard His authority at His expense? Are you dominated by self-interest?

Mere religion cannot help human nature. People will do what comes naturally. Are you so bull-headed and stiff-necked that you cannot recognize any authority but your own?

2 Peter 2:11

"Whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord"

whereas angels who are greater in power and might

Angels are greater in "power and might" than men. That means that they are greater than false teachers.

do not bring a reviling accusation against them

Good angels do not revile false teachers. We have a case in point in Jude 8 "Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" (8-9). Michael did not blaspheme the Devil but said "The Lord rebuke you." Yet, these apostates will blaspheme any authority.

The exception to this is the Devil himself. He keeps a file on each one of us (Revelation 12:9-10; Job 1:6-11; Zechariah 3:1-2). He accuses the believer before the throne of God. He finds out our sins by a demonic CIA. Then he mentions our sins before God.

before the Lord

When good angels gather in convocation, they do not bring accusations against these false teachers.

Principle

It is important to respect authority no matter how evil that authority.

Application

Respect of authority is an operating principle of the Word of God. This verse carries that idea to any authority. It is not right to "blaspheme" false teachers. This does not mean that we cannot criticize them. Every second book of the New Testament criticizes false teachers--2 Thessalonians, 2 Timothy or even 2 Peter.

Satan accuses us before the Lord. However, Jesus is our defense attorney (2 John 2:1-2). He defends our case. His case is perfect.

2 Peter 2:12

"But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption..."

Jude and 2 Peter are analogous books. 2 Peter 2:12 is parallel to Jude 10.

"But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know

naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves" (Jude 10).

But these

Having shown that false teachers are inferior to angels, Peter now shows how low they are on the totem pole of human beings.

like natural brute beasts

Peter now illustrates the nature of false teachers with animals that have no reason. They operate on instinct, not their mind. They do what comes naturally. Their instinct is to peddle false doctrine.

False teachers are like animals that function from instinct and do not derive truth from the Word. "Brute beasts" means "belonging to nature." Wild animals follow their appetites. Apostates follow their natural drives. They are like foxes or bears in the wilderness.

made to be caught and destroyed

We treat false teachers like wild animals who we either capture or kill. This is severe language and indicates how serious Peter is about heresy. False teachers need to be hunted down and "destroyed." False teaching is an issue to deal with decisively.

speak evil of the things they do not understand

"Speak evil" here means to malign. They love to malign the truth. They malign salvation by grace.

Ignorance is the cause of much false teaching. God does not divulge His truth to false teachers no matter how brilliant they might be.

"But the natural man (non-Christian) does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

No matter how much university education a person may have, one cannot extract truth from God's Word.

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:7-8).

No matter what mental horsepower people might have, the Bible is a closed book to them. The Bible is a book where knowing the Author is a prerequisite to understanding what it says. Once

we know the Author, the Bible opens up to us no matter how little education we might have. If we are born again, we have a built-in Bible Teacher, the Holy Spirit.

and will utterly perish in their own corruption

"Corruption" here may be the corruption of eternal damnation. Their teaching puts them in jeopardy of God's wrath. They have a terrible future (2:1,3). Their only hope is to embrace Jesus as their Savior.

Principle

We are to think of false teachers as wild animals.

Application

The instinct of false teachers is to bring out false doctrine. They will confuse and distort as best as they can. They have an instinct for religion without the mutual exclusive message of Jesus Christ.

The instinct of false teachers is to bypass the Word of God in favor of their own distorted thinking.

We have the Word of God in our hands and the Spirit of God in our hearts. Therefore, we can both understand and apply the Word of God to our experience. A person who never sees the inside of a university can know more of the Bible than a PhD in religion. Anyone can know how far Jericho is from Jerusalem, but only those who truly know God can know how dark our soul is before God.

2 Peter 2:13

"And will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you..."

We are in a section of Second Peter that describes false teachers (2:10-22). This is a detailed description of false teachers who infiltrated the first century church.

and will receive the wages of unrighteousness

False teachers will face the result of their false teaching one day.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

as those who count it pleasure

These people love pleasure and sensation. They operate in the sphere of sensual pleasures. Pleasure is what gratifies them.

to carouse in the daytime.

Most people use the night-time to live it up. The word "carouse" means a breaking down, especially of the mind and thus to make effeminate. The word comes to mean luxury or indulgence. These people esteem daytime luxury a pleasure. This marks greater degeneracy. They think life should be entirely and totally entertainment. Their mind is so broken down that they live constantly in indulgence. They hold the opinion that people should not have to work. These false teachers are "swingers."

They are spots

A "spot" is a moral blemish. In the first century, people had very poor table manners. They did not use utensils like we do today. They generally used their hands for eating except for a knife. They dropped food on the front of their clothing and carried many stains on their clothes. The movie industry today depicts people of the first century as glamorous, which is not an accurate view of lifestyle in that day. In addition, their clothes carried odors from the spots of food.

Here, the idea is a person who lives a lascivious lifestyle. False teachers have a stain on their character.

and blemishes

A "blemish" is a stain. It carries the idea of blame, shame and disgrace. If we go to a formal gathering with gravy stains on our white shirt, this is a "blemish." This is a moral disgrace. False teachers are a disgrace and shame to society.

carousing in their own deceptions

The word "carousing" carries the idea of revel or sport. These false teachers are caught in the web of their own lies and revel in their own web.

False teachers deceive especially by false statements. They try to get away with their false lifestyles by deception. They break you down by wining and dining you. They love to woo you.

while they feast with you

To "feast" means to entertain sumptuously with. While they advocate false doctrine by wooing you into their system, they laugh up their sleeves. Often people with money go for false teachers because they cater to their depravity.

Principle

People love false teaching because much false teaching justifies sinful lifestyles.

Application

People who go into false teaching to justify their sin ultimately end in misery. They think that they are having a ball, but the results of sin take their toll. To gain greater pleasure they go deeper and deeper into sin. Whether it is gambling, booze or immorality, they need more and more to satisfy themselves. They finally reach a stage where nothing satisfies them. Some commit suicide. They have nothing or no one for which they live.

It is very difficult to distinguish sheep from goats anymore. Saved sheep wear goatskins and unsaved goats wear sheepskins. It is difficult to tell the difference between saints and sinners anymore.

2 Peter 2:14

"Having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children"

having eyes full of adultery

"Having eyes full of adultery" is literally having eyes full of an adulteress. They think only of adultery when they see women.

When these false teachers reject the Bible, they also reject the standards for morality of the Bible. There are no true absolutes outside the Bible. Apostasy and immorality are twins; they journey together hand in hand.

We commit adultery with our "eyes" before we commit adultery with our body (Matthew 5:28; Lamentations 3:51). Men love to ogle women. They leer at them. Some women, knowing this, dress to draw sexual attention to themselves.

This is not overt adultery, but the adultery of the heart. The "eye" is the window to the soul. Some people would never commit physical adultery but they are involved in heavy and extensive mental adultery. The word "having" indicates that this is ongoing mental adultery.

Note that their eyes are "full" of adultery. Their eyes are satiated with mental adultery. Their eyes reach the full measure of mental adultery. They are satiated with adultery but not satisfied sexually.

and that cannot cease from sin

They are inane in their sin. They cannot stop sinning. False teachers cannot stop their orientation to adultery. Their wills are unable to stop. They are inveterate sinners and cannot help but follow their belief systems. Their built-in belief system manifests itself in a lifestyle that matches their beliefs.

Principle

What we believe and what we do are twins.

Application

Some churches smile on immorality. It is sad that even churches will not hold to biblical standards. Some people look for churches that will justify their sin.

Somewhere between the cradle and the grave, these people must be confronted with the gospel. There is no hope for them otherwise. Without the gospel they cannot cease from sin. Their lust patterns are so inveterate and built-in that they cannot stop sinning. Their belief system keeps them from victory over sin.

Christians who allow themselves to become sated with mental adultery are headed for spiritual disaster. God has given Christians the power to overcome sin (Romans 6:14).

enticing unstable souls.

The deception of the false teachers aims at alluring others into their system. The word "enticing" originally meant to catch by using bait. The word "entice" means to lure. False teachers lead people astray because what they say sounds so feasible.

False teachers look for "unstable" people. They look for the naive and gullible. Some people will swallow anything. Apostates get their victims

from untaught or poorly taught Christians. They are susceptible to error. Religion often appeals to them more than truth.

"That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting..." (Ephesians 4:14).

"But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:6-8).

Principle

Stability comes by knowing God's Word.

Application

Do you blow hot then blow cold? Are you enthusiastic about God's will one week and the next week you live in defeat? If you are this way, you're an excellent candidate for false teaching. False teachers look for people like you.

Religious con men will take you into their confidence. By this, they sell you a bill of goods. They never say everything they believe. They make it sound like they are evangelical in belief. You do not find out what they believe until you buy into their system. Superficial types will be swept away by the superficial.

Some people are swept into false doctrine because they are hurt in church. They are unhappy with the leadership or with what someone says about them. Someone will meet them and appeal to their hurts. These people are prime targets for entering into error.

False teachers constantly peddle diabolical propaganda on every hand. The propaganda sounds so feasible. People buy into appearance. The only way to gain stability of soul is to establish ourselves in the Word of God.

2 Peter 2:15

"They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness"

False teachers are predatory (vv. 15,16). Peter gives Balaam as an illustration of someone who used religion for his own greed. He was a prototype of a religious predator.

They have forsaken the right way

These false teachers knew the "right (straight) way" but they, by their own volition, rejected truth right in the face of it. They were at the point of truth, but they left it behind. They abandoned it with finality. They abandoned what they knew to be true.

and gone astray

The words "gone astray" come from one Greek word meaning deceive by leading into error, to seduce (Malachi 24:4,5,11,24). False teachers love to twist truth. They make what is false seem like truth.

following the way of Balaam the son of Beor

Balaam's error was to make merchandise of spiritual gifts. He sold his spiritual services for money. He held out for more money and got it. The story of Balaam is found in Numbers 22-24 and 31. Balaam encouraged the Moabites to trick Israelite men into illicit relationships with Moabite women (Numbers 31:16). As a professional curser, he did his work so well that it put the entire nation of Israel into jeopardy. He placed a hex on Israel by waging psychological warfare on it.

Here is a man who got his name in the Bible as an infamous character. He now would like to get his name out of the Bible but he cannot. No people ever call their new baby "Balaam." This is a man who got into a debate with a jackass and the jackass won the debate (Numbers 22)!! The jackass had more sense than Balaam.

The word "following" means to follow up, or to follow out to the end. The idea is to follow extensively in a dependent manner. People today, following Balaam's example, extensively use religion for their own financial gain.

who loved the wages of unrighteousness

Balaam was in the religion business for a fast buck. There is nothing wrong with legitimate business. As well, there is nothing wrong with ambition. God does not put premium on laziness. Balaam was in business to make a shady dollar out of

religion. He loved the "rewards of divination" (Numbers 22:7,11).

False teachers might get their financial reward in time but they will get another reward in eternity. Inordinate love of money causes some people to distort the truth. This is an issue of money motivation.

Principle

Look out for religious fakers who are in religion for money.

Application

There are more fakers, phonies and unregenerate preachers today than ever before in history. Many churches preach almost anything but the gospel. You can hear New Age philosophy or how to become more successful, but not the gospel. They reject the Bible and the message of the Bible. Today, some television preachers are in it strictly for the money. It is apparent who they are. It is amazing to me how so many evangelicals buy into their sham religion.

2 Peter 2:16

"But he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet"

but he was rebuked for his iniquity:

A jackass rebuked Balaam. The Holy Spirit has a great sense of humor here. He took a jackass to reprimand and blame Balaam.

"Iniquity" is lawlessness. By using his spiritual gift for monetary gain, Balaam entered lawlessness. His lawlessness continued by luring young Israeli men into a situation where young girls paraded in front of them. He said in effect, "Let nature take its course." He led these young Jewish men into immorality.

a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice

Here a jackass is smarter than Balaam.

"Speaking" here is bombastic speaking. He not only spoke but he preached a sermon.

restrained the madness of the prophet

Balaam was cut off at the pass when he heard the jackass speak. Balaam was "mad" because he was blinded by his love for money.

Principle

God can use any vehicle to communicate his truth.

Application

If God can take a jackass and turn it into a preacher, then He can use you and your message. When you think you have arrived as a great communicator, just remember Balaam's ass!

2 Peter 2:17

"These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever"

We now come to the indictment of false teachers.

These are wells without water

When ancient thirsty travelers would see a well far off in the distance, they would anticipate the promise of water. They would hope to quench their thirst. But when they got to the well, they found it dry. A dry well is a great disappointment.

False teachers are like dry wells. We look for spiritual refreshment from these false teachers, but the taste is empty in the end. We anticipate blessing, but we end in cursing. People who teach truth offer the refreshment of the truth of the Word. False teachers are dry because there is no truth in them. False teaching in the end is a big disappointment.

clouds carried by a tempest

There is no stability to a cloud. The wind carries the cloud wherever the wind chooses to take it. Buying into false teaching is like being in a squall. A squall is unstable. Apostates preach one thing and live another.

When we see a cloud coming, we expect a refreshing shower. There is promise of rain, but these clouds surrender no rain. Although they are driven by strong winds ["tempest"] and give a very powerful anticipation of rain, no rain comes. All this "tempest" is a lot of action but no substance. False doctrine often comes with a lot of bluster and high sounding hopes but, in the end, those hopes end in emptiness. These teachers are impressive from a distance.

Like wells that promise refreshing water, these clouds promise rain. All the promises are in vain. There is no water or rain. False teachers always promise more than they can deliver. In the

meantime, people buy into their promise waiting to receive what they will never get.

for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever

God gives the vendors of false systems of belief a special reservation, a reservation in Hell.

"Blackness" is gloominess. Gloom is reserved for these teachers. False teachers teach darkness, but darkness is where they will spend eternity (2:1,3,12). They claim light but their teaching is darkness. They get a judgment like their teaching. Their teaching was dark, so they end in "darkness forever."

"And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30).

Few people on earth do as much eternal damage as a false teacher does. Whenever we talk to authentic physicians about a quack medical doctor their blood rises. Nothing gets under their skin more than a fake physician does. When false teachers tell their people falsehoods, they cause eternal casualties. Nothing should get under the skin of a true preacher more than this. This is why Peter gives such strong descriptions of these false teachers.

Principle

Be warned that false teachers mislead and give false hopes.

Application

The Bible warns us everywhere about getting too close to false teachers. Separation is the order of the day when it comes to them because you cannot tell what they teach by what they say. They sound good at first, but their teaching is vacuous, obscured by religion.

Some man-made religions today claim that there is neither a Heaven nor a Hell. Jesus spoke more about Hell than Heaven. If we reject the idea of Hell, we reject the credibility of Christ.

There are many religious fairy tales out there. People love to believe fiction. They would rather believe fiction than the truth.

Unregenerate false teachers manufacture their own religions and claim to speak with authority but they are not consistent with biblical content. This is the opposite of Jesus who promised water

that springs up into everlasting life (John 4:13,14) and backed up His claims by the authenticity of who He was and what He did.

2 Peter 2:18

"For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error"

For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness

The word "speak" literally means to call out loudly. The focus is on the verbal sound rather than the content of what is said. Peter used this word of Balaam's ass and now he uses it for false teachers. All heresy uses pompous words. False teachers try to impress their followers with pretentious and bombastic words.

"Emptiness" is something futile, purposeless, transitory or worthless. The words of these false teachers are high sounding but empty. They lack true content that comes from God; thus, their teaching is deceptive and pointless. In the Greek tragedies, the gods offered a partial answer to human purpose for life but the plurality and mutability of the gods undermined this answer. All the tragedies' grand oratory is useless for any good purpose. Their teachings were grandiose but without substance. Their verbose speech was futile in that it did not fulfill what it promised. False teaching is futile because it lacks content. All grandiose words do is to allure like bait and lead people into false teaching.

"Give us help from trouble, For the help of man is useless" (Psalms 60: 11).

This verse in Psalms uses the same Greek word in 2 Peter. It states baldly that human help is vain. The one and only true and living God can save us from futility. The reason we must look to God is that human help offers only nothingness.

"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind..." (Ephesians 4: 17).

The New Testament asserts that the thoughts of the wise are empty (1 Corinthians 3:20). The New Testament claims of itself that if the historical fact

of the resurrection is not real, then Christianity itself is a fake. But the truth of the resurrection guarantees that believers no longer have to "walk in futility of their mind."

they allure through the lusts of the flesh through lewdness

False teachers often find their victims among dissatisfied church members who never understood the grace of God in salvation. They could not tell the difference between truth and error. That is why Peter calls them "unstable souls" (2:14). Grandiose words that dazzle the mind are not enough to mislead people. False teachers have to appeal to people's dark side. They take the restraints off the flesh so their followers can run wild. Unstable people can be lured into false doctrine by means of their lust patterns. They want truth to match their desires.

the ones who have actually escaped

"Escape" means to flee away from. New Christians flee to what they think is safety. They think that they can get acquittal from God by means of escape into religion. Their methodology is avoidance. This is the philosophy of sticking your head in the sand and hoping that reality will go away.

from those who live in error

"Those who live in error" were contemporary pagans of that day. A pagan is someone who rejects Christianity. They heard the gospel but they rejected it. Usually they are susceptible to false teaching.

"Error" means literally wandering. Those led astray roam here and there without fixing truth. They operate in delusion (2 Thessalonians 2:11; Jude 11) and wander off the path of truth. False teachers caused them to wander off biblical truth and mislead them to mistaken ideas.

"And Jesus answered and said to them: 'Take heed that no one deceives you'" (Matthew 24: 4).

"But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13).

The Bible never divides doctrine and morals by a sharp line (Matthew 27:64). Distortion in doctrine is often the effect of ill-made morality (Ephesians

4:14; 1 Thessalonians 2:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:11). Chapter three talks of the "error of unprincipled men (3:17)." These men twist thoughts so that immorality looks like morality. What is false seems like it is true. They make a lie appear true. This is perversion of truth.

Principle

False teachers make lies appear true.

Application

Generally false teachers are eloquent or people would probably not listen to them. They are good speakers. People are deceived by false teachers' ability to speak rather than the content of what they say. They use insincere words (2:3) to mislead their followers.

"Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words" (Colossians 2: 4).

Most of what they say sounds so plausible, so feasible. It seems to add up.

"We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1 John 4: 6).

2 Peter 2:19

"While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage"

While they promise them liberty

The liberty that false teachers promised here is freedom from moral constraint. Preaching sensual pleasure must have been popular even in that day.

There is an ever-recurring confusion between liberty and license. Legalistic repression is no biblical value. The Bible asserts the right of individuals to make their own decisions. However, the Bible also asserts that the decisions we make need to be responsible decisions. We need to be responsible for the decisions we make. Freedom must operate under the framework of principle. We make choices based on principle.

False teachers promise liberty but they cannot produce liberty. Politicians cannot produce liberty. Only God can produce true liberty.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5: 1).

God bases true liberty on the principle of grace. Legalism attacks liberty. We cannot bully people into absolutes. Taboos will not produce absolutes. Neither can social action produce spirituality.

Bible freedom also must operate within overarching principles of God such as human government or the family.

they themselves are slaves of corruption

What a contradiction! False teachers promise liberty while they themselves are under slavery to their "corruption." Their slavery was slavery to sin. Sin vanquished their freedom.

No one can promise liberty without dealing with the root of slavery – sin. They are slaves to their own "corruption." This is why politics (liberal or conservative) cannot solve human's problems. Eliminating poverty, establishing a minimum income or raising social security will not resolve the problem of humanity. Legislation cannot deliver us from sin.

for by whom a person is overcome

In the name of political freedom, people are in political bondage all over the world. If we let religious leaders "overcome" or defeat us, we become their slaves!

by him also he is brought into bondage

The very people who say that they are giving us liberty enslave us. The very thing they promise us is the very thing they take from us. False teachers promises liberty, but takes freedoms from the people to whom they promise it.

"Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matthew 15: 14)

Principle

Where we eliminate the absolutes of the Bible, we enslave ourselves to sin.

Application

The false teaching mode of operation is to promise liberty yet enslave their converts in sin. False

teachers say, "We will set you free from your medieval religion. We will emancipate you from Victorian Christianity. We will free you so that you can do what you please. The puritanical morals of the Bible are passe." What they do not tell you is that they are enslaving you to another system.

People eat this up. They love to hear it because it appeals to their lower nature. Little do they realize that this enslaves them to "corruption."

2 Peter 2:20

"For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning"

For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world

The "they" of verse nineteen [false teachers] is the "they" of this verse. These are also the false teachers of verse one.

The word "escaped" occurs three times in the New Testament and all three times in this little book (1:4; 2:18). Those who "escaped" here are people who were at one time positive to Christianity, but never embraced it. They had significant exposure to the gospel, but were never true converts.

The Greeks used the word "pollutions" for the odors that came off a swamp. We get our English word "miasma" from this Greek word. The Greeks used "pollutions" especially for cultic pollution of pagan practices. What is the nature of this sin? Some think that Christians can lose their salvation by reverting into the lifestyle they led before they became Christians. However, both the context and explicit statements (2:22) portray these people as those who completely reject Christ.

through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

For a time, these people were exposed to the truth. The word "knowledge" implies that they had full exposure to the "Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." This unique word for "knowledge" means full and intimate knowledge. Ancient Greek uses "knowledge" in legal contexts referring to careful investigation and interrogation. It is amazing that

these false teachers could gain a full dose of Jesus and His work and still reject Him as their Savior.

they are again entangled in them

The word "entangled" means to weave in. These false teachers relapsed back into false religion. They went back to the pollutions of paganism. They forsook false religion for a while when they came to an exposure of Christ and then became entangled again in it. They left false religion for a time only to return to it again.

and overcome

"Overcome" carries the ideas of subjection and enslavement. Therefore, false teaching controls them. They were enslaved to false religion. False religion defeated them and they were led away into a prison of false teaching.

the latter end is worse for them than the beginning

To hear the truth and revert to false religion it is worse than never hearing it at all (Matthew 12:45).

"Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation" (Matthew 12: 45).

Peter's point is that to receive a "full" exposure to Jesus and His work and to finally reject it, is a worse condition than having never heard of Jesus in the first place. False teachers repudiate the Lord Jesus in the face of knowing fully who He is and what He did.

The "beginning" here is the point of exposure to salvation in Christ. The "latter end" is the corruption of reversion to paganism. To receive a full exposure to Jesus and to reject Him in the end is worse because it flies in the face of truth. The more light we sin against, the more responsibility we carry. It is amazing how much of the Bible you can know and still go to hell.

Principle

Those who rejected God find security in false teaching.

Application

False teachers prey on unstable people. They cannot get away with their deception with anyone but the naïve who were previously described as "unstable" earlier in the chapter.

Not everyone who hears the gospels believes the gospel. You must believe after you hear. If you hear it and do not believe it, it did not do you any good to hear it. In fact, it may do you harm.

"Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized" (Acts 18: 8).

2 Peter 2:21

"For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them"

For

Peter introduces the word "for" to explain verse twenty. These false teachers knew the truth. "They have forsaken the right way and gone astray (2:15)."

it would have been better

The Greek syntax conveys something that we cannot see in the English. This statement ["it would have been better..."] is contrary to the fact. The statement that Peter makes here is not true although he hypothesizes it as a possibility. He states it in simple hypothesis: "It is better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, but it is."

We can render this phrase as "It would be almost better not to have known the way of righteousness than..." By returning to false religion, a false teacher is more culpable to truth. The professed essence of apostasy results in deadly illusion.

for them not to have known the way of righteousness

To receive full exposure to Christ and yet reject him is worse than being fully culpable to that knowledge. Apostasy is worse than ignorance. Apostasy brings others into error.

than having known it,

It is one thing to know the Lord personally and it is another thing to have mental acquiescence toward him as non-Christians do. Proud natural people do not want to yield to God's truth. They know truth, but they reject it.

False teachers are double losers, both in time and eternity. They will know for eternity what they missed in time. They are the prize fools of all history. They were exposed thoroughly to who Jesus is, and yet rejected him.

to turn from the holy commandment

The noble influence of the Bible acted as a deterrent for these false teachers. However, they persisted in the false teaching and reverted to type. Initial exposure to Jesus Christ does not mean that someone fully embraces Him as the Savior.

To reject the message of Jesus Christ is the most tragic mistake anyone could make in life. It would be handy if we could somehow force people to receive Jesus as their Savior. It just does not work that way. Only the Holy Spirit can change hearts and make the facts of the gospel relevant. False teachers fly in the face of the facts of the gospel.

"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you are disqualified" (2 Colossians 13:5).

delivered to them

In the Greek, the action of the word "delivered" precedes the action of the Greek word "to turn from." False teachers were taught the truth, but they turned from it. Some people can be exposed to Christianity all their lives without embracing it for themselves, just as some people can get a doctor's degree in philosophy without being educated.

Principle

It is not enough to know the facts of the gospel; we must embrace the gospel itself.

Application

We must know the gospel before we embrace it. We can know about investing for retirement, but if we do not invest then we may live as paupers in

our retirement. We may know about good nutrition. We may know about vitamins and minerals, but if we do not take them, we will not be as healthy as we might be. It is not enough to know these things; we must do something about them. It is not enough to know the gospel; we must make an act of commitment to believe on Him.

2 Peter 2:22

"But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire'"

This verse clinches the idea that these latter verses deal with non-Christian false teachers. God never calls His own people "dogs" or "sows" anywhere in the Bible. Non-believers are everywhere called dogs, sows, goats, donkeys, foxes and wolves. The latter are unclean animals. God calls His own people sheep, lambs and oxen. God forbids a donkey and an ox to plow together because one is a clean and the other an unclean animal. God never mixes the two.

But it has happened to them according to the true proverb:

Both dogs and pigs in the first century were unclean animals and creatures to be avoided. People did not have dogs for pets.

This verse explains how a person can become thoroughly acquainted with the person and work of Christ and still not accept His message. This verse explains why false teachers are lost.

'A dog returns to his own vomit,'

Peter quotes this phrase from Proverbs 26:11.

Watching a dog eat his vomit is a gross sight. Most of us who have had dogs have watched this spectacle. The vomit here is false religion. The dog reverts to type. He never was anything but a dog. His dog nature determines his eating habit. Dogs eat vomit. False teachers teach false doctrine. They are true to type.

The Bible depicts Gentiles as "dogs." The dog represents Gentile false teachers. A Gentile is an unbeliever. For a dog to behave any differently, you would have to give the dog a different nature. It needs something different than a dog nature.

False teachers need something different than their own natural natures.

and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire'

False prophets are never what they seem to be and they always return to their true nature. We can clean a pig but the pig will return to his pigsty. False teachers will always revert to false teaching. The pigsty is the natural habitat of the pig. False teaching is the natural habitat of the false teacher.

The "sow" represents the Jewish false teachers. They can clean themselves but they will revert to their false teaching. They always goes back to their false teaching. False teachers clean up the outside. They try to reform their overt behavior, but they never came to a place of personal regeneration. Without regeneration, they always revert to false religion.

Peter mentions a return for both the dog and the sow. When religionists go back to their false religion before they came to exposure to Christ, they act like a dog or sow – they always revert to type. If you want the sow to act differently than a sow, you have to give it a nature different from a sow nature. In that case, he would no longer be a sow.

We are naturally born with a proclivity to hate God and love false religion. We are born selfish. We want our own way. Then we become renegades by choice. We revolt against God's truth. That is the way it is unless something intervenes to change our hearts (1:4). The longer we stay in revolt against God, the more difficult it is to change. We cannot change unless God changes us. Otherwise, everything in us will revolt against God.

Both the dog and the sow "return" to their former state. They revert to type. Note what Peter said in his first epistle,

"For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25).

A true sheep returns to his Shepherd. There is a big difference between a reformed false teacher and a true Christian. There is all the difference in the world between a washed sow and dirty sheep! One returns to it's mire and the other to it's Shepherd.

Principle

There is all the difference in the world between a dirty sheep and a washed sow.

Application

It is love's labors lost to clean someone who's nature and desire is to reject Jesus as their Savior. Many ministries are in the business of washing sows and amusing goats, instead of presenting an unvarnished gospel. These ministries also leave true sheep famished for spiritual food. Sheep cannot find green grass or water for their soul. False teachers trod down the grass and pollute the water with distortions of God's Word. All they find is the "vomit" of false teaching.

2 Peter 3:1

"Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder)..."

Chapter three introduces the subject of the Lord's return in the light of false teaching. Three times Peter uses the word for "looking forward." Peter wants his readers to look forward to the rapture of the church to be with Jesus Christ because apostasy will not prevail in the end.

Beloved

Peter employs the word "beloved" four times in this chapter (vv. 8,14,17). Peter loves his readers. We are objects of Peter's love because Peter was the object of God's love (1 John 3:1,2; 4:7). Each and every believer has the same amount of love from God.

Peter calls his readers "beloved" four times in this chapter because he treats a subject that has to do with God's own. That subject is the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some Christians evidently are not aware that Jesus is coming back.

We answer to one name in public but we may answer to another name in private, such as "sweetie" or "honey." Our spouse calls us by different names than our colleagues at work. (I hope that name is not "jerk!") God's term for His own is "beloved (Ephesians 1:6)."

I now write to you this second epistle

Peter now explicitly states his purpose for writing a second epistle. He wants Christians to know that

at the end of this age many apostates will come to deceive Christians. They also need to know that there is hope at the end of the day --

Jesus will return to resolve apostate issues.

Principle

The reality of Jesus' return keeps us on the tiptoe of expectancy.

Application

Jesus may come momentarily. We might meet Jesus at any moment. This should keep us at peak spiritual vigilance moment by moment

in both of which I stir up

The word "stir up" comes from two words: through and stir and came to mean to wake up fully, rouse. In the two following passages, this term is applied to Joseph and to Jesus,

"Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife...." (Matthew 1:24).

"But He [Jesus] was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?'" (Mark 4:38).

Peter wants his readers to wake up to the truth of how the Bible can change our lives.

Principle

God directs Christians to wake up to the reality of God's Word so He can change their lives.

Application

If we know the principles of God's Word, we can apply those principles to experience. Deceiving Christian leaders today use many gimmicks to mislead Christians from operating on the Word of God. The Bible is our only criterion for determining what is true.

Satan loves Christians to fall asleep spiritually. Sometimes he slips them sleeping pills. He wants to sedate Christians into lethargy.

The Devil would love to put us to sleep. If he could slip us a sedative, he has done his job. The Devil aims to lull Christians into spiritual drowsiness, as much as to tempt them with blatant sin.

your pure

"Pure" comes from two words: sun and to judge and means to judge by the sun. We get the English word "heliograph" from the Greek word for "pure." Hel is sun and heli is sunshine. Heliograph is a system of signaling by using mirrors to reflect off the sun. In the early days of the United States, the US military used heliograph to defeat the Apaches. They defeated the Apaches by holding a mirror to the sun.

"Pure" also signifies unalloyed. Greeks also used this term for mixing metals. Metal without mixture is metal without alloy. Alloyed metal is weaker than unalloyed metal.

Again, the Greeks used this word for unmixed substances as wine mixed with water. This would dilute the wine. It was not pure wine.

The word "pure" eventually came to mean genuine, unmixed. Some pottery dealers would sell defective pots by filling the cracks with wax and then painting over the wax filling. This was deception for the pottery would not perform its true purpose. If the person who bought the pot leaves it out in the sun, the wax would melt.

Sharp people would hold the pot up to the sun to see if there were any cracks in the pot. People judged a painted-over pot by putting it up to the sunlight to determine whether there were cracks in the pot. They tested the pot by the sunlight. God's desire is that our lives will stand up to the judgment of the light of God's Word. We test doctrine by the sunlight of truth.

The purpose of both first and second Peter is to remind believers to do pure thinking. Pure or transparent truth is unmixed, unsullied, and free from falsehood. Peter wants Christians to give doctrine the transparency test. Judge everything by God's truth. Pure minds are minds unaffected by seductive evil influences. These minds are uncontaminated by outside influence.

"...that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ..."
(Philippians 1:10).

minds

The word "minds" here is from two words: through and think, thus it carries the idea of to think through. This refers to people who are

mature in their thinking. They think through things based on the Word of God and apply it to their experience. It is the follow through that counts in athletics. It is the follow through of measuring things by God's Word and applying them to our experience that counts in living the Christian life. Do you have the ability to think through things using God's Word as the standard?

God saves our minds as well as our hearts. Some who come to Christ never had a serious thought in their lives before their salvation. They never directed their minds to things that matter most. Those without Christ do not think perpendicularly. They think horizontally, not vertically. They can understand the horizontal but they cannot understand the vertical. They cannot understand anything that has to do with God, Christ, Bible or Christ.

"But the natural man [the man who simply has mind, emotion and will but no spirit] does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

This does not mean that we receive more brains when we become Christians. It means that the orientation of our minds change. The Holy Spirit begins to influence our thinking.

"For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you" (2 Corinthians 1:12).

Principle

God wants us to pass the transparency of truth test.

Application

We live in the day of the non-mind. People operate on their feelings. They live in subjectivity. Some preachers would rather use the gimmicks of subjectivity than truth to build believers. There is no way that we can live our lives unto the Lord without applying the truth of God's Word to experience. That is the way we depend on the Lord. Anything else is gimmick.

God wants us to evaluate things in the light of the Son. He wants us to use the transparency test -- He wants us to use the Word of God to determine whether something is true. He does not want us to use subjective thinking when it comes to truth. He wants us to measure things based on the objective truth of God's Word. Are you a Christian who measures everything on the basis of the teaching of God's Word?

"For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:17).

by way of reminder

Note the emphasis on remembering in this second epistle of Peter: 2 Peter 1:12,13,15. This is the purpose of the epistle.

The phrase "by way of reminder" has to do with the application of truth to our experience. God's Word is worth repeating. All good things in life are worth repeating. If that is true of life in general, how much more is it of God's Word. We cannot get through the Christian life with one shot from God's Word. What we really want to know is what we can apply to any experience of life. We need truth for times of success. We need truth in times of trouble. When we go to sleep at the switch of knowing God's Word, we will enter deep spiritual trouble.

The word "remind" comes from two words: under and remember. The word "under" carries the idea of authority conveying the idea of to remember our true authority [under] which is the Word of God. Christians are to put to mind, bring to remembrance the truth Peter taught them in his epistles. This truth deals with the application of truth to experience.

Repetition is important to teaching God's Word. Truth needs to be inculcated into our way of thinking, our attitudes. One shot at truth will not give us the stability we need against the forces of Satan.

"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little" (Isaiah 28:10).

Principle

We need to know God's Word so thoroughly that we cannot forget it in time of temptation and suffering.

Application

There is a tendency to ignore God's Word in times of success. When we go to sleep at the switch spiritually, then things fall apart and we wonder why. This is the reason we should apply truth consistently to our experience.

Most people apply truth when things go wrong. That is usually too late. We need to be prepared before the crisis comes. God's truth needs implanting into our minds before we enter the pressure cooker. God wants us to use God's Word for more than suffering. He wants us to use it for life. We base our capacity to love God on our knowledge of God, not on subjective thinking.

We cannot recall what we have not learned; we cannot apply what we do not know. Application depends on recalling the right truth at the right moment. The principle is that we need to know God's Word so thoroughly that we cannot forget it. We know more than we ever live. Our primary need is not new truth, but to live out the truth that we have. Harry Ironside speaking of the doctrinal teaching said, "If it's new, it's not true; and if it's true, it's not new." Many people are always on the outlook for something new. They do not appreciate the truth that they possess. They do not appropriate truth that they have. We must remind ourselves of what we know.

It is important to learn biblical truth and to apply it to our experience. Our capacity to love God, love others, enjoy life, operate on a scale of values, all revolve around knowing and applying truth to our experience.

We need to know truth in order to recall truth. Application of truth depends on remembering God's truth at the time we need it in our experience.

2 Peter 3:2

"...that you 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 Savior..."

that you may be mindful

Peter repeatedly reminds his people to remember. His readers need to remind themselves of something important. "Call this to your mind." "Put your mind full of the Old Testament and New Testament." Our thoughts wander. Our imagination tends to run away into territory of temptation. Therefore, we need to focus our mind on the Word of God.

of the words

The Bible is verbally inspired. Inspiration carries more than the thoughts of God, it conveys the very words of God. This means that these words have no errors. There is no book on earth like the Bible.

The word here for "words" is the spoken word, a saying, or speech.

Principle

Storing God's Word in our minds means that we build the Word of God into our lives.

Application

If we memorize Scripture, God will be our divine Ally. One of the most effective means of growth in my life is the memory of Scripture. I memorize Scripture that deals with my temptations and failures. It is not enough to memorize a verse; we must understand the principle behind the verse. When temptation comes, take that principle and apply it to your situation. The right verse will come upon the television of your soul at the right time.

If we attempt to bear testimony to Jesus Christ, a verse will come to mind that is right for the situation. Stock the shelves of your mind with the Word. The Holy Spirit will enable you to do it. Do not fear that you cannot do it. Take God's word seriously. He will bless you for it.

which were spoken before by the holy prophet

"Holy prophets" are Old Testament prophets whose writings the Holy Spirit inspired as the Word of God.

The Bible will do us little good if we do not come to it with a reverent mind. It is a holy [set apart] book delivered by holy prophets. The Bible will do us good if we hold it in reverence. Your attitude towards the Word will determine whether you apply it to your life.

and of the commandment of us

A "commandment" is an injunction, charge or precept. These commands are precepts of the authors of the New Testament.

the apostles of the Lord and Savior

The "apostles of the Lord and Savior" are the authors of the New Testament. Peter links Old and New Testament writers of Scriptures showing the unity of both testaments. The unity of Scripture has a pattern -- "the Lord and Savior."

Principle

Saturate your mind with Scripture.

Application

We never outgrow the tendency of sin until God promotes us to glory. As the hymn says, "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it." However, when we put the Bible in our minds, it deters sin. We will not be sinless, but we will sin less.

**"Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You!" (Psalm
119:11).**

Unless we are one hundred per cent sold on the Bible as the infallible, inerrant, unalterable Word from the living God, it will be of little use to us. We will not use it effectively in our lives. If we have not previously programmed our minds with the Word, nothing will come out. We cannot use what we do not have. Some people wonder why Christianity does not work. No wonder! They do not apply the Bible as God intended.

God gives us the mental furniture to think thoughts after Him. Innumerable benefits come to us when we think God's thoughts. The good is often the enemy of the best. We clutter our minds with things that are good but not with the best. We litter our minds with the mediocre. These things are neither vulgar nor coarse, but they are not the best. The very best is to know God by the Word of God. The greatest deterrent to falling into sin is the knowledge of principles of the Word and the application of them to experience. This is God's mode for safeguarding His own from sliding into sin.

It is not enough to know God's principles, we must apply those principles to our heart.

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart" (Deuteronomy 6:6).

"Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes" (Deuteronomy 11:18).

"Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts" (Jeremiah 15:16).

"But His word was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not" (Jeremiah 20:9).

Meditate on God's Word.

"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success" (Joshua 1:8).

"But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:2).

Let the Word "abide" in you.

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7).

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16).

"I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:14).

2 Peter 3:3

"Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts..."

Peter presents the attack of these scoffers against Christianity in verses three and four.

knowing this first:

Invariably what God commands us to know, we do not know (1:20). We are to put priority on knowing the nature of scoffers in the last days. To protect ourselves against apostasy, we need to know some things.

that scoffers will come in the last days

Scoffers in this context are apostate teachers who deny the Lord Jesus (2:1) and His Second Coming (2:3). The "last days" are the period of time before the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus. These are the "last days" of the church before Jesus comes back for the church.

walking according to their own lusts

"Walking" means to go from one place to another. Evidently these false teachers will be very evangelistic with their false doctrine.

The scoffers of the "last days" will attack Christianity in a special way. They will attack it by drawing the church into immorality. This is a powerful motivation. There is a close connection between their apostasy and their immoral living. This immoral living is generated from their viewpoint.

Principle

False teachers try to intimidate Christians from their convictions.

Application

False teachers will come with ridicule. They will make fun of those who hold to truth and deride the doctrine of the church. By this they hope to intimidate Christians.

2 Peter 3:4

"...and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation'"

and saying,

Mockers make the following claim.

Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep,

These skeptics ridicule the promise of Christ's coming. This word "promise" means a gracious promise, a promise with no strings attached. This promise does not depend on what we do but on what Jesus' did for us.

Skeptics make the argument that since the promise of His coming has not been fulfilled, God does not keep His Word. The return of Christ is at the core of Christianity. If there is no future for Christianity, no heaven, and no presence with God, then what is the point of our faith? Since there are about 345 verses in the Old Testament that set forth the Second Coming, this is quite an attack on the veracity of God's promise.

The argument of these false teachers is that we live in a stable universe. We cannot expect such events as the Second Coming of Christ. Mockers not only ridicule the veracity of God's promise but the graciousness of His promise.

all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation

The word "continue" means to continue throughout, i.e., without interruption. These scoffers maintain that nothing changes. God does not intervene into creation. Creation goes on the same year after year. Deists declare that God made the world and then went off never to connect to it again. They claim that God is not interested in the world. He is so tied up in celestial red tape that He does not have time for us.

Today we call the claim that "all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation" uniformitarianism. Uniformitarianism means that the present cosmos is simply a reflection of the patterns of the past. This philosophy precludes God's incursion into time and space and postulates a universe run by natural laws.

Principle

God cares about the details of our life.

Application

This particular attack on Christianity is an attack on the character of God. It says that God does not keep His promises. He has blind apathy toward His creatures.

Weak minds and wicked motives will seize on the idea that Christianity is a dilution. If there is no future accountability, there is no hope. There is no sense of awe of God or of facing Him in eternity.

God declares that He is a personal God who is so involved in our lives that He counts the hairs upon our heads (with some of us that may not be much of a problem). He knows each tear we shed.

2 Peter 3:5

"For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water..."

Peter now answers the objections of the scoffers. First, he turns to the principle of Catastrophism.

For this they willfully forget:

Scoffers want to deliberately forget that God created the world. They choose to conveniently forget the actions of God. They cannot bear the idea of the reality of who God is and what He has done in their mind. God's truth passes unnoticed by them.

The phrase "this they willfully forget" is literally "this escapes them." These people do not want to know truth because they purposely shut down their volition toward God's truth. They shut their eyes to the facts. The world is not eternally stable. Things are not forever the same. Cataclysms can come.

God's truth is hidden from them due to their own will. Peter's condemnation of evolutionary and uniformitarian cosmology of "latter day" intellectualism centers on the principle of Catastrophism. The evidence of this is so clear to him that to deny it is "willful ignorance" on the part of those who reject it.

Many scoffers shut their eyes to the facts. They cannot face the facts of God's Word. Their ignorance is culpable. Any other idea than uniformitarianism is strange to them. That is why Catastrophism escapes their thinking.

Principle

Negative volition continues to plague people today.

Application

People negative to God are not open to truth about God. They do not know because they do not want to know. This is willful ignorance.

Some people do not want to believe the Bible. They study everything they can find that assaults the validity of Christianity. These people are negative in their volition toward God and His Word. It is one thing to be ignorant of the Bible but it is another thing to be "willingly" ignorant of it.

(This devotional is out of the norm in that we deal here with some scientific and philosophical issues of evolution and creation.)

that by the word of God the heavens were of old

God created by His "word." Ten times in the first chapter of the first book of the Bible we read, "And God said." God created the world by His "word." He did not use the process of evolution but spoke the universe into existence. Creation "by the word" is what we call special creation. God created the world ex nihilo (out of nothing).

"By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Psalm 33:6).

"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible" (Hebrews 11:3).

and the earth standing out of water and in the water

On the third day of creation, the earth emerged from the water (Genesis 1:9-10).

The Bible submits a cosmology of the universe in this passage. Cosmos is order; the opposite of chaos. God is a God of order. He, therefore, made creation a place of order and system.

Biblical cosmology is the opposite of uniformitarianism which attributes the origin and development of all things in the cosmos to innate laws and processes eternally resident therein, with neither beginning nor end. Biblical cosmology presents the destiny of the cosmos in terms of the creating, and sustaining of the universe by a transcendent yet immanent and personal God. God reveals the origin and nature of the universe primarily in the Bible, not in creation itself.

Principle

All present processes of creation are basically processes of conservation and disintegration, not processes of creation and integration

Application

Uniformitarianism will be the philosophy of "latter day" thinking. Without the principle of uniformitarianism there would barely be a science of geology. This flies in the face of special, instantaneous creation.

Catastrophism holds that one or more catastrophes had an influence on shaping geological formations. Catastrophism is a fighting word among present day evolutionists. Geology suffers from great want of scientific data. Some evidence contradicts uniformitarianism such a pollen grains in Pre-Cambrian rock in the Grand Canyon.

Present processes from the viewpoint of Scripture are the process of providence, of sustaining, upholding and preserving (Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3; 2 Peter 3:7) rather than the process of evolution. The basic structure of cosmic law (energy and entropy) supports creation. Energy is the capacity of a system to accomplish something. Entropy is a state of randomness and disorder.

The first law of thermodynamics is the conservation of mass-energy. Nothing is now being created but all things are in the process of preservation. The first law testifies that the beginning of the cosmos could never have been accomplished within present processes, none of which are creative processes.

The second law of thermodynamics is that entropy of a system must increase without the injection of intelligence. This is what we call a "closed system." A closed system is isolated from external sources or ordering energy. The system, however, may be enlarged to any arbitrary size, even to that of the cosmos itself in so far as the actual scientific evidence goes. Systems tend to become disorganized approaching a maximum state of disorder or "death." If the universe was indefinitely old, it would have already reached this state of maximum entropy. Since the cosmos is still far from dead, it must have had a beginning. The present, conservative, processes of the cosmos could not have accomplished that beginning.

Summary: All present processes are basically processes of conservation and disintegration, not processes of creation and integration.

The presupposition of natural science that our universe is an infinitely closed cosmology (all reality is declared to be within this realm of energy and matter) defined its own reality. However, this is not science at all but is philosophy at its core.

To postulate creative processes that scientists cannot prove by the scientific method is just as metaphysical as to postulate a creator. The failure of uniformitarianism to establish its presuppositions scientifically has led to physics making way for metaphysics in science. To postulate creative processes that cannot be proven by the scientific method must now be as metaphysical as to postulate a creator.

2 Peter 3:6

"By which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water"

by which

The word "which" is neuter plural and refers to two sources of flood waters. Water came from the skies and from below ground (Genesis 7:11; 8:2).

world that then existed perished, being flooded with water

The "world" here is the world of people. The Flood destroyed all inhabitants of the world except those on the ark. The whole state of things then existing perished.

We get our English word "catastrophe" from the Greek word for "flooded" (katakluzw). It is not all that clear whether this is the flood of creation or the flood of Noah's day. Whether Peter refers to the judgment of Noah's day or to pre-Adam judgment is conjecture. The important thing is that we realize that there was a catastrophe in the past.

Principle

The stability of the world depends entirely on God's will.

Application

God has sovereignly passed judgment on the world. He is ultimately in control of the universe. Our universe is not random, but God carefully and

providentially manages it. He, at times, chooses to intervene into the universe.

2 Peter 3:7

"But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men"

But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved

We get our word "thesaurus" from the Greek word for "preserved." A thesaurus is a place of treasure. It is a place of storage. God stores the "heavens and earth" like a treasure. He put them on layaway.

The "heavens" here is the universe as we know it. God is in the process of preserving a world of people for judgment.

by the same word

The "same word" that caused creation and the flood will cause the last great conflagration. The latter catastrophe is as certain as the former.

are reserved for fire

Only three verses in the New Testament says that the world will be destroyed by fire (this verse and verses 10 and 12).

"Reserved" means kept. God keeps heaven and earth for a future judgment. God is great at making reservations. He has made a reservation for the unjust unto the Day of Judgment. Peter predicts a future conflagration.

until the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men

God judged the earth in a universal judgment by the flood. He has another cataclysmic and universal judgment coming to the world, a judgment by fire. This will be a conflagration of incredible magnitude. This fire is a fire of cosmological purging.

"Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:14-15).

Principle

God has made a reservation for those who do not come to Christ.

Application

The final termination of the world will be an awful devastation. No one will escape. It will be a universal judgment except for those who come to Christ as their Savior. To see the world as we know it destroyed is not pleasant. No single person will escape; there will be place to flee. This will be most awful judgment yet.

2 Peter 3:8

"But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day"

The paragraph that extends from verse eight through verse thirteen sets before us the outcome of the coming of Christ.

Scoffers say in verse four, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Their idea is that it has not happened so it must not be true.

But

Peter shifts his attention to Christians. Has God forgotten about His plan? It has been many years since this promise has been made. Christians should not get discouraged at God's delay of executing His judgment. He is faithful to His promises even though they may take time. The wheels of God grind exceedingly slow but they grind exceedingly fine.

Beloved

Peter speaks to Christians with tenderness - "beloved."

do not forget

Peter uses the word "forget" for the scoffers in verse five; now he uses the word for Christians. "Forget" means escape notice, to be hidden from, unnoticed. The Greek indicates that Peter's readers are in the process of forgetting. These Christians allow certain skepticism about Christ's return blunt the impact of His return on their lives. This passage says that that "forgetting" is culpable ignorance.

The scoffers "forgot" (v.5) but Christians are not to forget (1:9). Christians have a tendency to forget

how the nature (essence) of God works. We get so caught up in finite way of doing things that we forget that God operates from a completely different viewpoint than we do.

Principle

Forgetfulness has great negative impact on how we apply truth to experience.

Application

Forgetfulness is a term of application. When we forget about who God is we cannot apply who God is to our lives.

How is it that people can learn and forget so quickly? How can people learn truth and proceed to quickly forget what they learned? There are a number of reasons for this. Some people never truly learned the principle in the first place. They are ignorant of the principle. In this case, application is not the issue, but they have not formed clear enough principles to apply truth to their experience.

In another situation people know the principles of God's Word but they operate on false criteria such as emotion as their primary operating principle. We all have emotions but the point here is that we can use our emotions falsely. Emotions should be the result of principle rather than the cause of principle. If we live out principle, pertinent emotions should follow. Emotions get out of whack when we live inherently in emotions without principle.

Some people use emotion as the criterion of their soul. Eventually they base their whole evaluation of the Christian life on how they feel. This leads to psychological hedonism and keeps people from applying God's truth to experience. Some people try to solve their problems by tantrums. They blow their cork and exhibit childish behavior. This is living by manipulation. Emotions rule in this situation. When this happens, we become slaves to emotions. This destroys the Christian life. We cannot absorb and apply God's truth in this environment.

If we stay out of fellowship long enough, this will also destroy our capacity to apply God's truth to experience. We eventually lose conscious awareness of God's principles because we do not think that those principles work anymore. The longer we stay in this situation, the more deprived

we get. This is one problem of "forgetting" in this verse.

Another problem that comes from "forgetting" is displaced orientation. When we fail to categorize God's Word into proper principles for living, we live fragmented lives. We all need standards of conduct. Much Bible preaching today strictly revolves around inspiration and not teaching. No wonder people cannot apply truth to experience--they only see one issue at a time! They respond to one inspiration after another and not to the whole counsel of God. They fail to categorize God's principles in order to structure their entire life around God's philosophy of life.

Failure to orient to God's Word as integral principles for living is like throwing all our clothes into one big pile. When we want to wear a certain combination, we must dig through the pile until we find things that match. By the time we do this spiritually, we may end in spiritual disaster. This is a problem of categorization of God's Word for our lives. If we hang God's principles into categories, we can sort out what we need at the time we need it. We no longer have to say, "I wonder where that principle can be found in the Bible for my life."

Many people do not apply truth to their lives because other things distract them from the principles of the Word. Learning and applying principles to experience requires discipline. It does not come with casual Christianity. If we put learning God's Word on the outer edge of the periphery of our lives, we will not live out the Bible in our lives.

this one thing

Peter asks his readers to focus on one tenet. We need to focus on the principle of God's essence. His essence does not operate on human timetables. He operates on His own timetable. We need to be patient in our understanding of how God operates. We should understand that God will fulfill His promises in His own good time.

Principle

Christians need to learn how to focus on the most important principles of life.

Application

We spread our goals for life in so many directions that we cannot say "this one thing" I do. We are spread so thin that we cannot focus on the most important.

"Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

Christians should be careful not to forget about the essence of God for His essence is the foundation for creation and His purposes in the world.

that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day

The "one thing" that God wants us to know is something about the essence of God. Peter wants us to know something about how God figures time. Someone may say, "The Bible promised Jesus' return two thousand years ago and He has not come. God does not fulfill His promises." However, as far as God is concerned, it has only been two days! One day with the Lord is as a thousand years.

"For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it is past, And like a watch in the night" (Psalm 90:4).

We see time in one dimension and God sees time in another dimension. Man looks at things from a finite perspective. God looks at things from an infinite perspective.

God's computation of time is totally different than our calculation of time. He operates on principles of infinity. God is a timeless and spaceless Being. There is no such thing as time in God's Being. God does not have a past, present or future. He is not sequential. Everything with Him is eternally present.

Principle

Delay does not daunt God's plan.

Application

We cannot judge God like we judge men. God's thoughts are not like our thoughts. His ways are not like our ways. God does not look at the

passage of time like we do. God does not experience time as such. Our time concepts are not the framework in which God works out His purposes, so we cannot judge God by human standards. God does not work in our time framework.

Lapse of time does not impede the promises of God. God has a different view of time than we do. God resides in eternity. We like to reduce God to our dimension. This distorts a true picture of Him. We have lost our sense of our awe of God in this generation of Christians. We think of God as one of us. However, there is an incredible distance between God and us.

We want to reach nirvana now, some present place of completion. That will not take place in time. We have to wait for the eternal state for that. We think that some human standard of success will bring us to that place of nirvana. "I am already twenty-five years of age and I have not made my first million yet."

God is never in a hurry and never makes haste. God's program will move to fruition in spite of any circumstance or situation. There will come a day when the last soul will come to Christ and the body of Christ will be complete; then He will come. Only God knows this time. If anyone tries to pinpoint this date, they are off base. Even angels do not know the time of His coming.

We should never become impatient with God's timetable. God has everything in place. Impatience has a tendency to judge. Impatience rarely gets the facts or waits for the facts. When we find people who are impatient, we find people who will hang us and hold the trial afterwards.

God's promises are as good as if they were made today (Isaiah 41:10). Time is no barrier to the promises or plan of God. Time belongs to God.

The effect of an "any moment" return of Christ keeps us on the tiptoe of expectancy for His return.

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).

This means that we should keep short accounts with the Lord. Have you confessed the sin in your

life? Clear off each day so that you begin everyday with a clean slate. Live each moment with nothing between you and the Savior. Is there any unfinished business you have with anyone? Heal that relationship. Deal with that situation. Live on the tiptoe of expecting the Lord to return at any moment.

The lapse of time is often the nemesis of time oriented beings. Time goes by and you still have not snagged a spouse. We are about to retire and we still have not made our first million. You are twenty-eight and no one recognizes you as a success! "I am on a date with this jerk and this evening feels like it is going on forever!" We are creatures of time, but God is not.

God will fulfill His promises. When we get into a jam, we want out immediately. God may keep you in a process of suffering for His own purposes. God has His own timetable. We cannot pressure God into changing that timetable.

No one knows when Jesus will return. He will return, for He said, "I will come again" (John 14:3). Many irresponsible people set dates of Christ's coming today. This brings disrepute on the Bible. Down across the corridors of church history many groups have set dates only to lose credibility in the end. These groups become the laughing-stock of the community. Their ridiculous predictions cast aspersions on the trustworthiness of Scripture. God has purposely concealed the time of Christ's coming.

2 Peter 3:9

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"

The second reason the Lord delays His coming is to allow more people to come to Himself.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise

The word "slack" means to hesitate, linger, delay and this is the only place it occurs in the New Testament. God is not tardy in keeping His timetable for earth. He does not loiter fulfilling His promises.

Peter here presents a magnificent view of God. The Lord delays not because He cannot or will not

fulfill His promises but because He wants none perish.

Principle

We can hold God to His promises because He is faithful to keep them.

Application

God is not culpable in His dealing with the world. He has His own timetable for dealing with the world. There is an immense difference between God's timetable and man's timetable. We cannot impose our timetable on God. What men count tardiness is something else entirely; it is the incredible patience of God with the world.

None of us like to wait for someone who is late. God, in all His infinite years, has never been tardy one time. Everything comes exactly as He has planned. We need to follow this characteristic of God in our own lives. We need to be faithful in keeping our promises and patient in waiting for God to keep His.

Jesus is not slow in His coming. No one diverted Him to Mars. No, it is simply not the right time for Him to return. If He had returned a few years ago you would not have come to Christ.

"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19).

"He [Abraham] did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform" (Romans 4:20-21).

When we claim God's promises, we need to hold Him to His Word.

as some count slackness

We cannot measure God by our standards. God's delay is a matter of His longsuffering. God has a designated time for dealing with the world. God delay does not originate in His unwillingness or impotence to discharge His promise.

but is longsuffering toward us

"Longsuffering" is forbearance (Exodus 34:6). To have "longsuffering" is to be long-tempered, to bear with. It is a quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation. Longsuffering does not hastily retaliate or quickly punish. It is the opposite of anger. Mercy is often associated with this quality (Exodus 34:6; Romans 2:4; 1 Peter 3:20). Longsuffering does not surrender to situations. It does not fall under trial. A longsuffering person has patience despite difficulties. God executes unfathomable patience toward us.

Principle

God is long-tempered with us.

Application

God has infinite patience with those who reject Him. He does not violate man's will. He created man as a free agent and He respects that agency.

It is wonderful God does not judge us the way we judge others. God deals in facts, not subjective judgments. "I don't have the facts but I have made up my mind. I don't like you so you have had it." Longsuffering is an attitude of love. It does not mean grudgingly holding back, while nursing the urge to. No, God's love takes up the slack.

If we operate like God, we will be long-tempered towards Him. Therefore, it is no longer a question of "Lord, why have you not provided me with the success I want?" When we love the Lord, we do not ask that. We know He is faithful to His promises. Or, we say, "I want it now." The Lord says, "Ten years if you are lucky!" Because we love the Lord, we trust Him to give it in His timing. Patience is the perpetuation of love.

One characteristic of love is longsuffering. We find ourselves tolerating things we would not have otherwise allowed. This does not mean we mindlessly give in to others' whims. We need to exercise discernment.

not willing that any should perish

God is not willing that "any" should perish. God not only desires that none perish eternally but He also desires that all be saved. God will not save us against our will, but holds us responsible for all our choices. You can reject Christ if you want to do so. You will suffer the consequences if you do so.

"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

The word "willing" expresses a strong desire on God's part. Not everyone will come to Christ but this is the will of God's heart. The word "willing" is the stronger of the Greek terms for "will." It carries the idea of a deliberate exercise of the will. God's will has a predisposition that manifests itself in an intentional will.

This term for "will" carries the idea of a plan. God's will is deliberate and intelligent. It is God's carefully thought out will that no one should perish (John 3:14-17;10:27,28). God is always willing to save but man is not always willing to be saved.

To "perish" is the opposite of being delivered from sin. Are you in the predicament of perishing right now? You may say that you do not "feel" like you are perishing. We may not "feel" like our teeth are decaying either. We may not feel like we are in the process of dying but we are dying little by little each day. We will never accept Christ until we see our need of a Savior.

but that all should come to repentance

Repentance is a change in one's way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude with regard to sin and righteousness. The focal factor of repentance is not sorrow or contrition but commitment to total change, both in thought and behavior with respect to how we think and act.

The word "come" means to make room (a place) for another, and so to have place, receive. God has room for those who wish to repent. God gives space for this. He makes room for people like this. Figuratively, God opens his heart to a person who repents. He has room in His heart for this person. There is a place in His heart to welcome and receive those who repent.

Repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin. In the process of believing, repentance takes place. When we believe in the person and work of Christ, our mind changes. Our life changes. A transformation takes place.

Principle

Jesus died on the cross for everyone.

Application

Jesus died for "all" (John 1:29; 3:16,17; 2 Corinthians 5:14,15,18,19; 1 John 2:1,2; Hebrews 2:9). There is enough blood shed by Jesus to wash anyone who will come to Him. We do not go to Hell because we are dishonest or immoral; we go to Hell because we reject God's only remedy for sin, the death of Jesus on the cross as a substitute for sin.

Sin is not maladjustment of your genes. It is not a matter of sickness but a matter of sin. That is not very pretty or popular but it is biblical.

"But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Matthew 9:13).

The goodness of God leads us to repent.

"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30).

The Bible does not teach universal salvation.

2 Peter 3:10

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up"

This verse describes how God winds up the affairs of the universe as we know it. It is approaching a catastrophic culmination. God will make good on His word.

But the day of the Lord

We must distinguish between the "day of Christ" and the "day of the Lord." The "day of Christ" is the point where Jesus comes for the church and takes her back to heaven.

"...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ..." (Philippians 1:6).

"...that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ..." (Philippians 1:10).

"...holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain" (Philippians 2:16).

The "day of Christ" is the rapture of the church into heaven and is part of the First Resurrection. This is a signless, timeless and any-moment event. It could happen today, tomorrow, next week or next year. The Bible gives no specifics as to when this event will occur. When Christ comes for the church, the dead will be raised first. Then those who are alive will be caught up with those raised from the dead to meet the Lord in the air. The Old Testament does not mention this day.

The "day of the Lord" refers to the period extending from the Second Advent to the end of the universe as we know it. The Old Testament calls this event the "Day of Jehovah." This is the event of our verse. This "day" is a series of events which covers a period of time including the tribulation period, the millennium and finally the decomposition of the heavens and earth as we know them. In "the day of the Lord," Jesus will come right to earth as opposed to just coming in the air like He will for the church.

"For the day of the LORD of hosts Shall come upon everything proud and lofty, Upon everything lifted up – And it shall be brought low – " (Isaiah 2:12).

"Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty" (Isaiah 13:6).

"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thessalonians 5:1-4).

Another "day" of prophesy is "the day of God" (v.12). We live in the day when man does as he

pleases. These are the days of the silent sky and the hushed heavens. God does not strike down murderers and rapists on the spot. He does not stop wars. We live in man's day. Man is at bat. Man continues to demonstrate what a mess he can make of the world.

Principle

God divides up time into segments ["days"] to execute His will.

Application

Do you think about and place confidence in God's plan for time?

will come as a thief in the night

The day of the Lord will come as a surprise. A thief does not announce his coming. He comes unexpectedly and suddenly. Christ's coming will be sudden and decisive. A thief's coming is unexpected. He does not write a letter announcing when he will come! He would not be in business very long doing that!

"But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Luke 12:39-40).

"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thessalonians 5:1-4).

"Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame" (Revelation 16:15).

The words "will come" mean to be present, be here and carry the idea of arriving.

Principle

We need to be perpetually prepared for the coming of Christ.

Application

Jesus' coming will be unexpected. He will come as a thief comes, at an unexpected time. If we constantly expect His coming, we will be prepared for it. If we expect His coming we will purify ourselves.

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).

in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise

"Pass away" carries the idea of come to an end, disappear. It is the heavens that will disappear. Revelation 20:11 pinpoints the time of this event.

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them" (Revelation 20:11).

The first century Greeks used the word "noise" for the whistling of an arrow. It carries the idea of "rushing sound" as of roaring flames, with a hissing or crackling sound, with a roar, with great suddenness. This would be like a detonation or explosion. The "day of the Lord" will be catastrophic. This takes place at the conclusion of the Millennium.

and the elements

Two possible interpretations are conceivable about the extent of this conflagration of the universe. This may simply be a limited renovation of the Earth or it might be the complete annihilation of the universe.

The word "elements" primarily signifies any first things from which others in a series, or a composite whole, arise. These are the elemental particles of which the universe is constructed. In modern language this might be the word "atom."

The word "element" denotes a first principle in the Greek. The building block of nature is the atom.

This is the basic element from which everything material in the universe is made. The basic element in the universe is the atom. The "a" means not and "tom" means divided. An atom is something that is not divided. We can get down to something in the universe that cannot be divided. However, we know the atom can be divided. When that happens, we have a nuclear explosion.

will melt with fervent heat

The word "melt" means to melt down the elements of creation, i.e., to dissolve. Literally, "melt" carries the ideas to loosen, to loosen what is bound together. "Fervent heat" means to burn intensely. This is the destruction of the physical universe. To keep on burning intensely. The building blocks of nature (atoms) will be consumed by heat. They will "burn down."

Atomic fission, used on the atomic bomb, is energy liberated by changing the nucleus of an atom. As the heavy nucleus splits, there is a loss of mass. Atoms break up into their component parts, unbind. The energy of the atom is released, causing fire. If human beings can cause a nuclear fission, what kind of nuclear fission can God do in the universe? Jesus said that "Heaven and earth shall pass away (Matthew 24:35)." There will be no waste products left at all. Destruction will be complete and total, far greater than any nuclear reaction created by humans.

both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up

In the day of the Lord, the earth will melt. The Greek word for "burned up" means to disappear. The elements of earth will no longer be found. The New Testament uses this term for burning with great heat.

This burning up could be either fusion or fission. This event will be greater than any thermonuclear reaction. The end of the world will finish in catastrophe.

Principle

Virtue comes from a perspective on God's catastrophic world-events planned for the future.

Application

This verse read the same way before we learned to split the atom. We accepted by faith the dissolution of the world by fire before science

proved it possible. Now we can see scientifically how the elements can dissolve by fire.

The works of earth will go up in smoke. The Eiffel Tower, the Pyramids and all the great works of man will burn to ashes. This will end civilization.

God put up with a great deal before the Flood. There was immorality, sex perversion, violence and blasphemy yet God gave the world many years to repent. God is patient with our generation as well. However, the patience of God will run out one day. He will have exhausted His longsuffering. When this happens a day called "the day of the Lord" will come. This is the judgment on a world that turned its back on God.

The only reason this judgment has not come is that God still wants to save some souls. When the last soul is saved, then the end will come. First, Christ will catch His waiting bride away. Following this event, great devastation will fall upon the world. Unparalleled misery will come upon an intransigent world.

2 Peter 3:11

"Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness..."

Perspective on God's plan for creation motivates us to live godly lives. Verses eleven to sixteen are an exhortation to live a life pleasing to God in the light of eternity.

Therefore

Peter now draws a practical conclusion to verse ten.

since all these things will be dissolved

Referring back to the heavens, the elements, the earth and all the works of the earth, Peter says that all these things will be dissolved. This is the termination of the universe as we know it. God has ultimately doomed this creation. He has written it off. The day of the Lord will come. At that time everything terrestrial and everything celestial will dissolve. How much of this world's population believe that this is going to happen? Precious few. Very few politicians or scientists believe it. Sadly, even some preachers don't believe it.

The words "dissolved" here and the word "melt" in verse ten are the same Greek word. The word

literally means loosed. The universe will fly apart and dissolve. Judgment of this world will come. But the door of grace is still ajar. "Whoever will" may come. Flee to the outstretched arms of Jesus.

what manner of persons ought you to be

The phrase "what manner" is not a question but an exclamation. The word "manner" means what kind or sort of person am I supposed to be. "Think about the kind of person you should be since God is going to dissolve the universe."

The word "ought" carries the idea of necessity. There is often a big difference between what we are and what we should be. We need to realize our position in Christ. When we get to glory, our walk and our position will be identical. Meanwhile, our walk should be progressively closer to our position in Christ.

in holy conduct

This section sets forth a fourfold walk for the believer in view of the prophetic events described earlier.

First, we should live our lives "in holy conduct." This phrase qualifies the exclamation of the previous phrase. Two characteristics should characterize people who live their "manner" of life in light of the dissolution of the universe. First, they live their lives in "holy conduct." The word "holy" means they separate their lives unto God. They live devoted to God, not to themselves. "Conduct" means manner of life. This word comes from two Greek words: good and to be devout. Manner of life is made up of actions. We should devote our manner of life to God.

When a young man becomes engaged, he sets aside all other girls. He devotes himself to his fiancée. If he marries her, he exclusively devotes himself to his wife excluding any familiar relationship with another woman. He leaves all his past girlfriends in the past. That is the charge we take when we get married. Similarly God wants us to exclusively devote ourselves to Him.

and godliness

Secondly, people who live in light of the dissolution of the universe live godly lives. "Godliness" is devotion towards God. These people devote themselves to God. This word occurs 15 times in the New Testament.

Our conduct is visible and horizontal but "godliness" vertical. This is what we are before God. We bear a family resemblance to God. Just as sons often resemble their fathers, our Heavenly Father expects us to resemble Him and His values (Ephesians 5:1). When we become children of God we should resemble our Father. We should talk like Him, think like Him and act like Him (Matthew 5:48). If we step out of phase with the Father we become critical, cantankerous and miserable. This mean streak does not come from our Heavenly Father.

Principle

We should live our lives for the exclusive pleasure of the Lord Jesus.

Application

Godly Christians look for a whole new future with new heavens and earth. They live a different kind of life than their non-Christian neighbors. They live their lives for the exclusive pleasure of Jesus Christ. They change their behavior, interests, habits and company. True Christianity makes an impact on the life and behavior of how we live.

2 Peter 3:12

"...looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?"

Peter now comes back to the idea of the expectancy of the believer towards these cataclysmic events.

Christians are to have two attitudes about the "coming day of God:"

1. Look forward for it. 2. Hasten it, anticipate it.

looking for

The third characteristic that a Christian should have toward the coming day of God is to look for it. The day of God is in the future. This speaks of expectancy. We expect the day of God to occur. We look for the advent of Christ and all of its associated events. We wait for the events that God spells out in the Bible. We are on the winning team. The first event of God's prophetic timetable is the Rapture of the church into heaven.

"...looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ..." (Titus 2:13).

The words "looking for" means to await or expect. We are to live expecting the coming "day of God." Are you keenly looking for that day to come? We anticipate the Lord's return. We do not know the time but we know the fact of His coming.

"...so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ..." (1 Corinthians 1:7).

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself" (Philippians 3:20- 21).

"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (Hebrews 9:27-28).

and hastening the coming of the day of God

The fourth ingredient of our fourfold walk before God is "hastening the coming of the day of God." The "day of God" follows the "day of the Lord." This day is the commencement of our place in eternity.

Hastening implies that we can bring the "day of God" more quickly if we live godly lives. We cannot hasten the day of God because it is fixed in His councils. We can, however, be eager and earnest in our anticipation of it. We can translate "hastening" as earnestly desiring. "Earnestly desiring" is a better translation than "hastening." Christians are to hold attitudes of "earnestly desiring" the day of God. Christians are to look forward to the coming day of God. It is not a time of terror for them because this is a time when God will be all in all.

because of which the heavens will be dissolved being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

God will annihilate the "heavens" and earth and we will enter into the eternal state. We studied this event in previous verses.

Principle

We should live a life of expectation of the coming day of God.

Application

Our hope as Christians is not in the United Nations, Washington D.C. or Ottawa. Neither do we place our hope in the universities of the world. Our hope lies in the coming of Christ. We live in expectation of His coming. The Bible teaches that conditions of the world will get worse and worse until He comes back. He will then straighten out the mess that man left here.

Are you keenly expecting Jesus to put this world in its place? Are you excited about being with God?

2 Peter 3:13

"Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells"

Nevertheless we, according to His promise

"According to" means norm or standard. Christians have a promise according to the norm of God's promise. God promised something more than the "day of God" where He will judge the world. He promised something beyond the day of God; He promised a new earth and heaven.

God promised that we will gain a new earth and new heavens. We hold Him to His promises like we would hold an insurance company who makes a promise to pay up when we need it. He will faithfully fulfill His promise to us.

look for new heavens and a new earth

The words "look for" mean to watch toward, to look for, expect. Christians anticipate new heavens and a new earth. This new creation will not be like this creation with all of its corruption, failure, pain and problems.

Christians will experience "new heavens and a new earth." Our present cosmos will evaporate and a new cosmos will be put in its place. The Greek word for "new" here means fresh. It is not yet used and will always remain new. It seems like no one ever bumps our old car. If we buy a new car it seems that someone always puts a dent on it the first week we buy it. In the new place we will

never have a "bump" on our car. There will be no rust, no wear, and no scrapes in heaven. We will never have to buy a new car because it will always be new [the latest and best model as well!].

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind" (Isaiah 65:17).

"For as the new heavens and the new earth Which I will make shall remain before Me,' says the LORD, 'So shall your descendants and your name remain'" (Isaiah 66:22).

"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.' 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away'" (Revelation 21:1-4).

in which righteousness dwells

"Righteousness" does not dwell down here. Anything but! However we look forward to the day when it will. In that day we will not lock our cars or homes. There will be no police or army there. We will not worry about some wild man launching a gas attack or nuclear launch.

The word "dwell" means to permanently dwell. It carries the idea of to live at home. God permanently dwells at home there. Each Christian will live in the eternal state and will be completely at home with God.

"Righteousness" dwells there because God dwells there. Righteousness is there because the personification of righteousness is there. The new heavens and the new earth will be characterized by righteousness that corresponds with who God is. Heaven is going to be one long experience with that which characterizes God, the righteousness of

His essence. God is just, righteous and true. We can count on Him to be true to who He is.

Principle

We believe God will keep His promises according to the norm of His faithfulness to keep those promises.

Application

There is no "righteousness" on earth at this time. This is the Devil's domain (Ephesians 2:1-3). We do not get justice here. We will get our justice there.

Righteousness will pervade every aspect of life in this new home. We can relax completely in the new situation. We will not have any concern about someone undermining us. We can completely relax about people there. No one will carry vindictiveness, implacability, hostility, jealousy, resentment or sour grapes. We will have perfect rapport with people. Our relationships will be full and complete.

Christians have a wonderful future. God made this promise us to it. We hold Him to His promise.

2 Peter 3:14

"Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless..."

The closing verses of 2 Peter set before us the conduct of Christians in view of the coming of Christ (vv.14-18; compare 3:11).

Therefore

The word "therefore" draws the bottom line. Peter adds up all the truth of the previous thirteen verses. He challenges us to reply to all the truth about the Lord's return, the consummation of God's program for the heavens and the earth and the anticipation of a new heavens and earth.

The word "therefore" means on which account. The "therefore" is the bond between belief and behavior. What the apostates destroyed by their denial of the coming of Christ, believers can fix with their anticipation of the coming of Christ. Peter links character to the expectation of the "coming day of God" and the creation of the new heavens and earth. One day there will come a melt

down of the universe as we know it and God will start over with a new one.

Beloved

Peter punctuates this chapter with the word "beloved." He loves his readers even though they almost bought into the lies of the apostates.

looking forward to these things

Peter used the words "looking forward" in the previous verse for anticipating the new heavens and earth thus picking up the argument of the previous verse. In the new heavens and earth we will receive our resurrection bodies.

In general, non-Christians neither know nor care about the things that Christians care about. They may not believe for example, in a coming judgment or they may not believe that God is a God of justice. Meanwhile, the Christian confidently expects great things for the future.

Principle

We should stay expectant and eagerly anticipate Christ's coming.

Application

Spiritual Christians expect the coming of Christ for them. This keeps them at the pinnacle of spiritual performance. They operate at the maximum rather than at the minimum.

Those without Christ have little hope or anticipation of the future. They do not know what the future holds for them. They may be very well educated but spiritually illiterate. Can you call yourself educated if you do not know what will happen to you after death?

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Christians should be not afraid to die. They know their future and take comfort in knowing that their loved one does not lie in the casket. Rather, only their body does. But Non-Christians view death as frightful and horrible because they think of it as the cessation of existence.

be diligent

"Be diligent" means to make effort (2 Peter 1:5,10,15). We make every effort to deal with our lives now because of our anticipation of something new. This is an issue of application.

If we keep short accounts with God, we purify ourselves. If I know that the Lord might come before tonight, I keep myself ready.

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).

to be found by Him in peace

In what kind of condition will God find us on the day of God? What kind of relationship will we have with Him? The word "found" means discovered. How will you be discovered on that day?

"Peace" here is an objective, not subjective, peace. This is the peace that Jesus earned for us before God (Romans 5:1). This is another way of referring to the reconciliation He made on the cross.

Peace in the Bible is not stillness but animation--animation without agitation. A person with "peace" is a person with a well-arranged soul. It is not the absence of problems but the absence of antagonism. The bearings of a person at peace are smooth. Their soul is well greased. Here is harmony of soul that can only break when we get out of accord with God. Harmony depends on cooperation of all the parts. Does your whole being move in harmony with God?

Principle

Christian peace comes from harmony of soul.

Application

When Jesus comes, will He find us in good spiritual health? Although our problem might be as acute as ever, you relax in your soul. You have tranquility in the middle of turbulence. You are at rest.

Some people are so tense that they are about ready to snap. They hold to their problems tenaciously. Why not give them to the Lord?

"...casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Instead many of us risk burnout because we do not let God take our problems. We risk short-circuiting our nervous system. Can you find rest in Him? Make sure there is nothing between you and the Savior or between you and someone else.

without spot

"Without spot" means without defect, without stain, without a mark (1 Timothy 6:14; James 1:27; 1 Peter 1:19). The spot here is unconfessed sin. Make sure that when Jesus comes he will not find you in carnality.

Principle

Expecting the coming of Christ should keep us from unconfessed sin.

Application

God wants us to obey the Word without any infractions of any kind.

"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself from being polluted [unspotted] by the world" (James 1:27).

Are you flirting with the world? God is in the business of removing spots from Christians, the baubles and follies of the world. God's spot-remover is the Word of God.

"How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!" (Psalm 119:9-11).

If we have a spot on a clean shirt, it seems to be all people see. It may be a little drop of salad oil but that is what people focus on. That is the way it is in our lives as well. A little inconsistency, one irregularity, one moment of thoughtlessness, one sentence uttered in haste, and we gain a spot in the eyes of other people and especially God.

and blameless

"Blameless" means without blemish, not open to censure (as in a lamb without blemish--see 2 Peter 2:13). God will not censure us or hold us in

adverse criticism when we keep short accounts with Him. He finds no fault with us when we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us with His power.

One day Jesus will present us blameless, without blemish and not open to censure to the Father.

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen" (Jude 24-25).

Principle

God expects us to be at our best when Jesus comes.

Application

God finds no fault with us when we confess sin. Christians are blameless, not sinless. Many of us have been washed in the blood of Christ but we have not been ironed, so to speak. We still have some spiritual wrinkles. Some of us have more spiritual wrinkles than others. As we become more like Christ, some of the wrinkles begin to go.

Do you have a personal vendetta against someone? This is a wrinkle. This is something about which God will blame you. You are not at your best spiritually.

God takes those wrinkles out of our lives in many ways. At times He blesses us. Other times He disciplines us. He takes out his divine iron but even then some of us will not hold steady while He tries to iron out the wrinkles of our lives. God progressively works on our lives so that we become more like the Lord Jesus every day (2 Corinthians 3:18).

"...that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world..." (Philippians 2:15).

One day we will be sinless. In the mean time, we should sin less. We sin less when we confess our sin and use the Word of God to overcome sin in our lives.

2 Peter 3:15

"...and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation – as also our beloved

brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you..."

and consider

The word "consider" means to think something through to a conclusion. The Greek present tense here means to persist in thinking this through until you come to a conclusion.

that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation –

We understand this phrase better when we remember verse nine.

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

"Longsuffering" means forbearance, patience. Longsuffering is a state of emotional calm in the face of provocation. Though God has much to be provoked about, He holds back His judgment. He is not in the business of vengeance at this time. God does not use revenge tactics. He patiently waits for those who will come to Him through Christ.

Principle

God patiently waits for people to come to Christ.

Application

God gives time for people to come to Him. He is longsuffering. The reason Jesus has not come yet is that there are still people who haven't come to Christ. God is longsuffering because He wants to see those people come to Him. God's longsuffering also leads people to repentance (Romans 2:4).

as also our beloved brother Paul

Peter gives the apostle Paul two characteristics:

1. "Beloved" 2. "Brother"

Notice the respect that Peter gives to Paul even though Paul severely rebuked Peter years earlier in the book of Galatians (2:11-21). Peter had compromised the gospel by accommodating doctrine to please those at Antioch. He showed spiritual timidity. He denied the grace principle and embarrassed himself. So Paul personally and publicly confronted this veteran leader. He did not do this behind Peter's back.

Peter was a leader of the apostles and their spokesman. He evidently sold Paul short. He had not properly estimated the spiritual caliber of the erstwhile Paul of Tarsus. Paul was willing to take a stand for truth even at the cost of risking friendship. Peter had the respect of many throughout the Christian world yet Paul called him a "hypocrite." Still, Peter can still call him "beloved." This is also a statement about the spiritual caliber of Peter.

About fourteen years after Paul rebuked Peter at Antioch, Peter wrote 2 Peter. He calls Paul "our beloved brother." Would you be able to do that? If someone rebuked you publicly, could you say "I love that person?"

We can tell much about the caliber of a man by how he treats his colleagues. Peter calls Paul "our beloved brother Paul." We can imagine how humiliated Peter was when Paul called him a "hypocrite." Yet, he was man enough to admit his mistake and not hold a grudge against Paul. Rather he had a great reputation to uphold, he accepted the rebuke and did not try to justify himself.

Principle

We can tell much about people by the way they treat their colleagues.

Application

Grudge-holding is not right no matter what others have done to us. We cannot afford to harbor an unforgiving spirit in our hearts. We cannot afford to nourish a grudge against someone. It will nullify our spirituality.

What if the Lord came while we were in the middle of grudge match against someone? The Lord might come at any moment. If He should come and find us holding bitterness against someone, He will straighten that out very quickly. Develop a caliber of soul that transcends bitterness.

"Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!" (James 5:9).

according to the wisdom given to him

"According to" means the norm or standard. God gave Paul wisdom for knowing the revelation of

Scripture. In fact, he wrote one half of the New Testament. That is the "wisdom" that God gave him. God chose to give to Paul wisdom in unusual dimension to write much of the New Testament.

This is a significant statement about the canonization of Scripture. Paul is dead at the writing of 2 Peter and his thirteen epistles are complete. Note that Peter recognizes them as part of the canon of Scripture.

has written to you

The church in Peter's day used Paul's writings as Scripture. This is in part how we determine the canon of Scripture. Peter gives the Apostle Paul's writings the credence of Scripture. Paul's letters were known, collected and widely read as the Word of God even in Peter's day.

Peter wrote two books of the Bible while Paul wrote thirteen books. Notice that Peter gives praise to the man who wrote half the New Testament and did not envy Paul. Envy renders us useless for God's service.

Principle

Envy puts leaders on the shelf.

Application

Envy can creep into the heart of any Christian leader. If we permit envy to remain in our heart, it will prevent us from the will of God. God will effectively by-pass us. He will put us on the shelf (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

The shores of Christian work are strewn with spiritual shipwrecks and those God has disqualified. Their envy probably began with a grudge. Then it extended to belittling and slandering other Christian leaders. Finally, it ended in a state of bitterness. But Peter did not have that kind of attitude. He released his anger. He dealt with it.

Have you severed your relationship with someone because she hurt you? Can you still respect people who hurt you? Peter did.

2 Peter 3:16

"...as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own

destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures"

as also in all his epistles

Peter says that Paul wrote about the same things in all his "epistles."

"All his epistles" refers to the collection of the Pauline epistles already placed into the canon by Peter's time. Thus, the collection of canonical Scripture did not begin with the post-apostolic fathers but with the apostles themselves.

speaking in them of these things

Paul spoke about the subject of 2 Peter in his epistles.

in which are some things hard to understand

The Greek word for "hard to understand" occurs this once in the New Testament. Other literature used this word for something obscure. Peter had difficulty in understanding some of Paul's teaching.

This ought to be an encouragement to some of us since we find some things difficult to understand. Keep at it; it will come. Only "some" things are difficult to understand, not most of what Paul wrote. Though Peter did not have a formal education, he understood most of what Paul wrote. Keep in mind that we will never understand everything about God, if we did, we would have to be as smart as He is.

Principle

Most of the Bible is clear and gives instruction for the improvement of our souls.

Application

The Bible is the only book inspired by God. All other books contain the inspiration of men, and therefore, contain error. But because God inspired the Bible, it is inerrant, infallible and unalterable.

We will have to wait until we get to heaven to understand some things in the Bible. However it is not the Scripture passages that I cannot understand that disturb me, but those passages that I do understand. We read Scripture to critique our souls. We may not like this process, but it is crucial to our spiritual growth.

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged

sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

If we allow the Bible to work in our souls, we will be the better for it. If the Bible does not change us, it is because of our unwillingness to listen. We think the poignant passages of the Bible are for someone else: "Oh, that is something that Mrs. Jones needs to hear."

which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction

The Greek word for "untaught" occurs only here in the New Testament. These "untaught" types were neophytes in New Testament truth. Many people are biblically illiterate. But we cannot afford to be ignorant of Scripture if we are going to grow spiritually.

"Unstable" people also have a problem with the Bible. This word occurs twice in the New Testament--both times in 2 Peter (2:14, "unstable souls"). They believe one thing one day, and another thing the next. They have no sure foundation upon which they can rest. Unstable people have difficulty with the Word of God. They constantly waver in their views and attitudes.

The "untaught" and the "unstable" distort Scripture. The word "twist" means to wrench or distort. The Greeks used this term for the ratchet wrench whereby they placed a person on a torture rack. This instrument tore muscles and broke bones. A body that went through this process came out deformed, twisted and gnarled. In this verse, "twist" means to torture Scripture. Often those who know the Bible the least, distort it the most.

"But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Corinthians 4:2).

There are those who "distort" the Word of God by handling it deceitfully. They are not fair to the Bible. They make it say what it does not say. They take the Bible out of context and read their own theology into the passage [eisegesis].

Christians place the entire significance of their souls upon the support of the naked, infallible

Word of the living God. The Bible is the only book that tells us we have eternal life by grace, by the finished work of Christ on the cross for our sins. In it, we learn that man has no character or good works which can impress God in any way.

"...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever..." (1 Peter 1:23).

Principle

People twist Scripture according to their biases.

Application

Do you distort Scriptures for your own purposes? Some people learn a thing or two about Scripture and all of a sudden they become world experts about the Bible.

More people attack the Scriptures than any other book on earth. More Bibles are burned than any other religious book. So-called "religious scholars" twist Scripture to make it teach what they want it to teach. However, the infallibility of Scriptures makes it withstand all these attacks. What other reason could we give for the Bible living today in the hearts and lives of people? The Bible is still the best selling book in the world.

as they do also the rest of the Scriptures

Unstable people not only distort Paul's doctrine, but they distort the works of other Bible writers as well.

Note that Peter regards Paul's writing as "Scriptures." The Bible is the only book that God inspired and it is the only book ever written that does not have even one error within its pages. We build our faith on an infallible book.

Critics of the Bible pit Peter against Paul. They say that Peter was a legalist and Paul preached grace. They say the two apostles hold to different theologies. This verse reveals their error.

Principle

The Bible is the only infallible book on earth.

Application

There are no infallible people. Christian leaders are fallible. But God has preserved the Bible through all of this. That is a miracle in itself.

2 Peter 3:17

"You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked..."

We come now to the conclusion of 2 Peter. The last two verses sum up what Peter wants his readers to know. This is not a formal conclusion like other epistles. Peter does not say "goodbye" to anyone personally.

The last two verses comprise a warning ["beware"] and a directive ["grow"]. First, we come to the warning in verse seventeen.

You therefore, beloved

In his final statement to his readers Peter make another endearing statement to them. This is the fourth time in chapter three that Peter uses the term "beloved." He now draws a conclusion for those he loves.

since you know this beforehand

Peter reminds his readers of something they already know. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. If we know how to handle something before it occurs, we are better prepared to deal with it.

The words "know this beforehand" is one word in the Greek and means know in advance. Peter wants us to anticipate something. He wants us to know something about this subject before it happens.

beware

When we approach a red light, we prepare to stop. We soon learn that if we constantly run red lights, our life on this earth will be short. This passage is the equivalent of a flashing red light. There is danger -- "beware."

The Greeks used "beware" as a military term. In this context, it is a warning to be on the alert against instability in their faith.

Principle

To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

Application

Many Christians are very unstable in their faith. They know little of the Scriptures and are subject

to spiritual seduction. As well, a stable believer today may be an unstable believer tomorrow. Faith without knowledge easily disintegrates.

We should stand guard against a wobbly faith and prevent the erosion of belief. People out there will try to ambush your faith. Christians in the twenty-first century often do not know doctrine and become vulnerable.

Are you running the red lights of the Word? Are you heading toward spiritual destruction?

lest you also fall

The idea of "fall" implies that there was a point of stability in the past. The word "fall" is a term of apostasy. The book of Acts uses "fall" as a nautical term for a ship out of control or drifting off course (Acts 27:17,26,29,32). The Word of God cannot "fall away" from the purpose God gave it (Romans 9:6). There are those who fall from grace (Galatians 5:4).

"You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4).

"Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;..." (Hebrews 3:12).

A person who gets off course spiritually ends in spiritual weakness. "Unprincipled" (wicked) men will attempt to lead people away from confidence in the truth. They will attempt to make us abandon our relationship with God and His Word. This will blow us off course from God and will shipwreck our souls. We will run our spiritual ship aground.

Principle

Instability ends in distortion of truth and spiritual ruin.

Application

It is possible to fall from our soundness in Christ and lose our assurance of salvation. False teaching will water down our faith. We cannot lose our salvation but we can lose the assurance of our salvation (2 Peter 1:10).

A stupid person is an unstable person. Stupid Christians are unstable Christians. Stupid Christians distort Scripture to their own ruin. All this starts with ignorance of the Word and then ultimately leads to spiritual ruin.

If we run into a difficult situation and do not know Scripture, we will distort the truth that we know. We will find ourselves in a jam. Instead of appropriating the principles of God's Word to our experience, we will jump toward some panacea.

On the other hand, if we "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (v.18), we will gain spiritual stability.

from your own steadfastness

There are two dangers Christians might face with false teachers. The first is that they may lose their stability.

Instability will unhinge our souls. Our souls will become like the wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

The word "steadfastness" means to set firmly and carries the idea of fixedness. It is a state of security and safety.

Peter is saying that his readers should get a firm hold on the Word of God.

"For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ" (Colossians 2:5).

This phrase is not referring to falling from salvation but falling from stability in the faith. God is able to keep us from falling.

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen" (Jude 24-25).

Principle

We gain solidity of soul by knowing God's Word.

Application

Some of us neglect our faith. We rarely study the Bible. When a crisis comes, we are great candidates for false teaching and distortions of Christianity. We do not attach the anchor of our souls to anything. Our anchor floats in the water and the boat of our soul tosses furiously with every new religious wind that comes from afar.

The only way to gain stability of soul is to know God's Word.

being led away with the error

"Led away" means carried away (Galatians 2:13). Some people roam about spiritually without direction. They wander about without any fixed idea of truth (2 Thessalonians 2:11).

"Being led away" carries the idea of group psychology. When a group gets going, it can spiritually seduce an individual into frenzy. False teachers always try to get crowd psychology going. People find comfort in the crowd. Peter says this can be deadly. Some people allow themselves to be "carried off" by error. Error enamors them. It is attractive to them.

"Error" is something that deceives. The Bible translates "error" as "deceive" and "delusion." Error can be subtle. It can snare people before they know it. They find themselves in the theological left field before they realize what they bought into (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

"And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie..." (1 Thessalonians 2:11).

"We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1 John 4:6).

"Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah" (Jude 11).

of the wicked

The word "wicked" means lawless, unprincipled people. These people fly in the face of the establishment. They violate established principles. They rebel against principles whether human or divine. Many people fly in the face of the Bible.

Principle

Many people are impressed by the crowd rather than by the Word of God.

Application

Cults love to prey on unhappy, dissatisfied Christians who never learned the Bible for themselves in any solid way. The crowd always impresses these people. They do not think for themselves. They do not root their thinking in solid biblical teaching.

Many people in the first part of this century did not know Bible doctrine. Consequently, when liberals came to their pulpits, either they were enamored with this new teaching or they did not know enough truth to counteract it so they were led away into false doctrine.

Many distorted and unbiblical ideas float about evangelical Christianity today. Few know how to address these ideas biblically.

2 Peter 3:18

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen"

but grow

This verse begins with a contrast to verse seventeen. We need to "beware" (v.17) but we also need to "grow" (v.18). Some Christians never grow. They do not advance much beyond the point of their salvation.

The word "grow" means to increase, to augment. Growth is not an event; it is a process. Salvation is an event, but growth is a process. The word "grow" is a command. It is not an option. The grammar also indicates that we are to keep on growing.

Principle

Growth is a process of becoming more like the Lord Jesus.

Application

After we become Christians, we have a tendency to pick up spiritual childhood diseases. We may even acquire some permanent spiritual scars from those diseases. Some people develop so many scars that they are afraid to make further spiritual advance. Others advance through the troubled teen period spiritually. That is spiritual adolescence. They are half teen, half adult. Finally, a few reach spiritual maturity. This is the point when we become spiritual adults.

The Christian life is like a bicycle; unless we keep moving we fall off. None of us ever arrives at a state of spiritual perfection, but we should grow to be more like Christ every day. This is a lifelong process. The Spirit of God takes the Word of God and makes the child of God like the Son of God (Romans 8:29). This is progressive sanctification.

Some Christians develop much faster than others do. Their rate of growth is rapid and expedient. These people usually have a great desire to change their lives. They hold the Word of God in high regard (1 Peter 2:2). They believe God can change their life. They appropriate truth to their experience daily. They cannot help but change into the same image of Christ from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18).

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Do you have a case of arrested spiritual development? Is your spiritual growth stunted? Are you developing your spiritual muscles? Do you work out physically but rarely work out spiritually? If we are going to grow, it must be our passion. It cannot be something that we give heed to once a week. We need to work at becoming more spiritually mature. It is not something that comes naturally. God supernaturally must change us through His Word.

We never fully arrive at perfection in the Christian life, but if we continue to grow, we will never be static either.

in the grace

There is a category where Peter is especially concerned that we grow--we need to grow in grace.

The word "in" indicates the sphere in which we are to grow. There are two spheres where the Holy Spirit wants us to grow: in grace and in knowledge. First, God wants us to grow in grace. We owe all that we have to what Jesus did for us.

Principle

God wants us to grow in the entire sphere of understanding and application of the grace principle to our lives.

Application

It is not easy to grow in grace because there is the natural tendency to do it on our own. Grace means God does the doing. Works means we do the doing. We do not like to depend on God because we like the idea of being self-sufficient.

"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

and knowledge

Growth in "knowledge" is the second sphere where we are to grow. Grace was the first sphere.

Growth comes from special knowledge--knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The more we know Him, the more we love Him. Knowing Him endears us to Him.

Principle

The more we know the Lord Jesus, the more we will love Him.

Application

We cannot grow apart from knowledge. We often hear the notion that we do not need more "knowledge" but more application. People who make this statement have not paid close attention to the Bible because the Word of God repeatedly challenges us to gain more knowledge.

It is a false dichotomy to place knowledge and experience in tension with each other. God does not ask us to choose between the two. We cannot apply what we do not know. Neither can we allow knowledge to die within our bones and not apply it to our lives. Both of these notions are false.

"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death..." (Philippians 3:10).

Decades after Paul came to Christ, he kept growing in knowledge of his Lord. Paul came to know Jesus as Savior. He spent the rest of his life seeking to know Him as Lord.

Our Lord is of such magnitude that we cannot know everything there is to know about Him in a

short period. It is a process that will go on throughout time and eternity.

We cannot know everything about a person even in an extended engagement. Even marriage takes time to come to a full understanding of our partners. Communication is the process of self-revelation. The more we disclose ourselves, the better we know each other. The more we understand the Lord Jesus, the greater fellowship we will have with Him. The more we know the Lord, the more we love Him.

of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Second Peter is the only book that describes Jesus with the title "Lord and Savior." This title occurs four times (1:11; 2:20; 3:1,2). Peter never reverses these titles -- "Savior and Lord." "Lord" always comes before "Savior."

"Lord" here refers to His deity. This means that He has absolute right over our lives. The New Testament refers to Him as "Lord" 633 times!

Principle

Since Jesus is God, we must capitulate to the Lord of Glory.

Application

Jesus' deity implies that He has authority over our lives. He has rights over our body, our family and our job or business. This explains why there is such a dearth of genuine Christian living. Jesus is never satisfied with just being our "Savior;" He wants to be our "Lord."

Have you capitulated to the Lord of Glory? Have you moved off the throne of your life? Is Jesus the King of your heart? When you come to this place, then your reputation is not very important

(Matthew 10:37,38). You give that to Him. The Lord Jesus demands your all. This is unconditional surrender to Him.

To Him be the glory

Jesus deserves glory because He did the doing. We should glorify Him now in time and in eternity for doing what He has done.

Note other doxologies that glorify Christ (2 Timothy 4:18; Revelation 1:6; 5:13; 7:10).

both now and forever.

It is possible to glorify the Lord in time and in eternity. If we get a good start glorifying Him now, we will establish a pattern for eternity.

Amen

"Amen" means I believe it. Peter lets us know where he stands personally on glorifying Jesus Christ in time and eternity.

Principle

The ultimate purpose of our lives is to glorify God in time and eternity.

Application

We glorify God because of who He is and what He does. We glorify Him because He made every provision we need for time and eternity.

We glorify the Lord because He loves us whether we fail or succeed in the Christian life. What we do does not determine God's love for us. When we attempt to transfer to God human love patterns, we distort who He truly is. God's love for us is constantly at a maximum place. His love never changes, although we may fail Him miserably.