

THE EPISTLE OF SECOND PETER
“The Calling, Combat, and Coronation of the Christian Warrior”

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Introduction

The mind of the Apostle Peter was fixed on the call of God. He mentions it nine times in both his epistles (1 Pet. 1:2 [actually, verse 1 in the Greek], 15; 2:6, 9, 21; 3:6, 9; 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:10). The same root word is translated “*elect*,” “*called*,” “*calling*,” which is confusing unless we consider that they all have the same essential meaning.

When we reflect on Peter’s great failure, in denying his Lord three times, what a comfort it must have been to Peter in his advancing age to consider that “*the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable*” (Rom. 11:29). It is not failure that keeps the believer from accomplishing the plan of God, but rather it is quitting. After his own failure (and all of the other disciples failed in like manner, Matt. 26:31), the Lord Jesus confirmed His plan for Peter (John 21:15–18).

Overcoming spiritual failure is part and parcel of the battle every believer must face and overcome. When we fail, however greatly, the key is to rise up in confession and repentance, and continue in the path that the Lord has set before us. As surely as we do this, we will overcome and win the victor’s crown (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10). The epistle of Second Peter is a testament to the faithfulness of God, and the wisdom of God in giving to each and every believer a gift to exercise, a plan to follow, and a high and holy calling to fulfill.

2 PETER CHAPTER 1

The Calling of the Christian

Every believer is “*elect*” (a chosen one) in Christ (Eph. 1:4). This election includes spiritual resources (Eph. 1:3), a spiritual gift (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:7; 1 Pet. 4:10), and a personal “calling” or purpose to fulfill. In this chapter, Peter outlines our calling in three areas.

The Inward Calling

2 Peter 1:1–4

The first calling is to enter into eternal life by faith in Jesus Christ. This call is clearly illustrated by Jesus in the parable of the wedding invitation in Matthew 22:1–14. In spite of all the confusion and false teaching about election, here, Jesus shows that the invitation goes out to all, but only those who respond to the invitation are the “chosen” (elect).

1. The inward calling comes through delegated authority (v. 1a).

- a. **The Call:** “*Bondservant and apostle.*” The highest office of delegated authority in the church is combined with the lowliest servant (Matt. 20:28; 23:11; Mark 9:35). In 1 Peter 5:1–4, Peter identifies as an elder, shepherd, and overseer. Paul, also an apostle, calls us to follow him as he follows Christ (1 Cor. 11:1).
- b. **The Caller:** “*Of Jesus Christ*” He is the ultimate authority; the Living Word speaks to us through the written Word (Matt. 7:24–29).

2. It is an offer of free grace, received by faith, from the Father and the Son, involving position, power, and potential (v. 1b).

- a. A gracious gift: “*Obtained.*” This is *lagchano* and speaks of the receiving of a free gift.
- b. A rich treasure: “*Like precious.*” The word *isotimos* speaks of a faith that carries equal provisions and privileges for all who receive it (1 Cor. 12:7, 13; Eph. 1:3, 11–14; 2:4; 4:4–6; Phil. 3:20).

3. The gift of eternal life contains the power for spiritual growth (v. 2).

- a. The opportunity of our faith: “*Be multiplied.*” This expresses Peter’s wish or desire for his readers (and for us). The verb (*plethuno*) is passive, something we continue to receive as we keep on growing in our faith.
- b. The occupation of our faith: “*In the knowledge of.*” The word for knowledge here is *epignosis*, that which goes beyond mere intellectual understanding. It includes that knowledge which is applied to experience (Col. 1:9–14).
- c. The object of our faith: “*Of God and of Jesus our Lord.*” We grow in knowledge of God through the study and application of His Word to life. In 1 Peter 1:2, we see the Father, the Son, and the Spirit all engaged in our growth.

Note: God is a great mathematician. First, when we believe, He “subtracts” all our sins (Col. 2:13–14). Then He “adds” to us the righteousness of Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:22–25; 5:17–18). Finally, He “multiplies” His grace and peace to us as we grow in Christ Jesus (1 Pet. 1:2b; 2 Pet. 1:2).

4. Spiritual growth lays hold of God’s power through His Word (v. 3).

- a. The limitless resource: “*His divine power*” reveals the source of all spiritual gifts and growth.
- b. The love bestowed: “*Has given to us all things*” reminds us that 1) God is the ultimate source of all our spiritual blessings, and 2) that every believer shares equally in His grace provisions (Eph. 1:3).
- c. The life intended: “*Life and godliness*” reveals to us the goal of these provisions, as will be explained further in v. 4.
- d. The learning curve: “*Through the knowledge of Him who called us.*” The means by which we lay hold of the endless treasures of God’s grace is the ever-increasing experiential “knowing” of Him through His Word. This is the meaning behind John’s use of “knowing Him” in 1 John 2:3–6, his use being consistent with that of Jesus in John 14:7–9. The issue here is not salvation, but fellowship and maturity. The “call” here is to growth into the likeness of Christ, as revealed in v. 4.
- e. The light of life: “*By glory and virtue.*” The word “*glory*” speaks of the invisible essence and nature of God revealed visibly, and “*virtue*” speaks of divine power at work. The little word “*by*” could also be translated “*to,*” indicating the goal of the call, which aligns with vv. 4–11.

5. The goal of spiritual growth is conformity to Jesus Christ (v. 4).

The “*glory and virtue*” of God is fully revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- a. Our spiritual resources: “*Exceedingly great and precious promises*” reveals the source of power for a transformed life that reflects Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:1–2). This idea is reinforced by the phrases “*by which ... through these.*”
- b. The goal of our calling: “*You may become partakers of the divine nature.*” The word “*become*” (*ginomai*) speaks of becoming what we were not before. “*Partakers*” comes from the word for “fellowship” and indicates both the means and the end of a life lived in

fellowship with God (1 John 1:7, 9; 2:6). The main idea is growing in conformity to Christ (Rom. 8:28–30; 12:1–2; 1 Pet. 2:21–25; 1 John 3:1–3).

- c. The essential prerequisite: **“Having escaped.”** Here, *apopheugo* looks back to our past life, from which Jesus Christ has delivered us. The act of escaping (salvation by faith) is the first step in becoming partakers of the nature of God. It has the same meaning in 2 Peter 2:18–20, which is critical to the interpretation there.

Doctrine of the Ladder of Life

This simple illustration explains the difference between two believers such as Abraham and Lot, or Saul and David.

1. **Attitude**: According to 1 Peter 5:5, there are two fundamental attitudes: arrogance or humility. Whereas humility is self-sacrificing, arrogance is self-centered. This is best illustrated by A.W. Tozer’s statement that in every believer’s soul there is a cross and a throne. Each day we decide which we will take (Luke 9:23). If we choose the throne (arrogance), then we put Jesus back on the cross (Heb. 6:6).
2. **Priorities**: In 1 Corinthians 3:1–2, Paul identifies two sets of priorities: spiritual or carnal. Which we choose will be determined by our attitude. Arrogant people are not spiritual, and carnal people are not humble.
3. **Decisions**: In Ephesians 5:15, the apostle challenges us to make wise rather than foolish decisions. Spiritual priorities result in wise decisions, whereas carnal priorities lead to foolish decisions.
4. **Actions**: Decisions lead to actions. These actions, according to Hebrews 5:14 are either good or evil. Wise decisions produce good actions, but foolish decisions lead to evil actions.
5. **Results**: Ultimately, life will come down to consequences. Why do some, like Abraham or David, always rise to the top, but others, like Saul and Lot, keep sinking to the bottom? It is not our heritage or environment that determines what our life is like. It is the consequence of the above four points. In Hebrews 6:7–8, the author uses the illustration of the same soil, which produces two kinds of plants: useful “*herbs*”/vegetables or “*thorns and briers.*” The one he calls “*blessed,*” the other is “*cursed,*” and fit only for burning. Since this passage is dealing with believers’ lives, the issue is not eternal condemnation, but the kind of end met by Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, or that of Demas in 2 Timothy 4:10. The secret to a blessed and fulfilling life is not what we have without, but what we have within, in the treasure chest of our soul.

The Outward Calling

2 Peter 1:5–9

The genuine inner transformation of the soul cannot help but also change the outward life (see Rom. 12:2). In these verses, Peter takes us from the internal to the external. In vv. 5–9, he leads us from phase one salvation (justification) to phase two salvation (sanctification in life), and finally, to phase three salvation (glorification, vv. 10–11).

1. The essential element of growth (v. 5a)

- a. An expression of gratitude: **“For this very reason,”** summarizes all the blessings included in vv. 1–4, and the goal of conformity to Christ.
- b. The essence of discipleship: **“Giving all diligence.”** The word translated “diligence” is often translated “study” in 2 Timothy 2:15. “giving all” comes from *pareisphero*, which means to “bring in alongside of” our faith and implies intense determination and effort.

- c. Utilizing our spiritual bank account: “**Add to your faith.**” The word “add” is *epichoregeo*, a word used in the ancient world for how rich benefactors would supply an entire chorus, or drama group, with costumes, instruments, and a venue. It speaks of using one’s wealth to supply abundantly (2 Cor. 9:10; Gal. 3:5; Col. 2:19). Note that it is used again in v. 11 for the rewards that are potential in eternity.

2. Walking on the glory road (vv. 5b–7)

The Lord Jesus interpreted Jacob’s dream (Gen. 28:10–14) as referring to Himself (John 1:51). Here, we are presented with the seven steps (“Jacob’s ladder”) that result in being conformed to the character of Jesus Christ:

- a. “**Virtue.**” This is the same word as in v. 3. The power of God is available to us only through the filling of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16).
- b. “**Knowledge**” mentioned in vv. 2–3 refers to experiential knowledge that comes from the application of the Word of God to our daily life.
- c. “**Self-control.**” This word literally means “inner rule” or “rule from within.” Look at Galatians 5:22–23 and James 3:1–2 for the obedience involved.
- d. “**Perseverance.**” It is great to start in a race, or on a long journey. However, only those who persist day by day make it to the finish. Consider the Apostle Paul late in his life (Phil. 3:12–14; 2 Tim. 4:6–8).
- e. “**Godliness.**” It is at this stage that we truly begin to reflect the Lord Jesus in our lives (1 Tim. 3:16; Phil. 2:5–9).
- f. “**Brotherly kindness.**” This is a genuine love for fellow believers, based on our unity in Christ (Eph. 4:3–6; 1 Pet. 2:17; 1 John 3:16–19; 4:7–12) and mutual love for Him.
- g. “**Love.**” Here, *agape*, with the definite article, speaks of the love of God produced by the Holy Spirit for all men (Rom. 5:5; 1 Cor. 13:13; 2 Cor. 5:14–21; Gal. 5:22–23). This is the “penthouse” of spiritual growth.

3. The benefits of spiritual consistency (vv. 8–9).

- a. They are potential, but not guaranteed: “**If these things are yours and abound**” indicates both possession of and progress in them. The “*if*” here is an assumed condition, and correlates to the “*if*” idea in v. 10. Literally it reads, “For these things being in you ... (by) doing these things you will never stumble.”
- b. They guarantee fruitfulness: “**Neither barren nor unfruitful**” reminds us of the “tree planted by the water” (Psalm 1:3; Jer. 17:7–8). The life of faith is fruitful and productive regardless of outward circumstances (Hab. 3:17–19; John 15:1–14).
- c. They deliver from ingratitude: In v. 9, “**He who lacks these things**” is in contrast to those who have them. This believer is “**short sighted ... and has forgotten that he was cleansed.**” The word *muopazo* speaks of someone who willfully shuts his eyes against the light. This blindness results from a hardened and ungrateful heart (1 John 2:11; Rev. 3:17), which takes for granted our so-great salvation (Heb. 2:1–4; 5:12–14).

The Upward Calling

2 Peter 1:10–21

The focus in this section shifts to eternity and the potential of reward at the Bema Seat of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11–15; 2 Cor. 5:10). This is the “upward call” spoken of by Paul in Philippians 3:12–14, and which motivated him to extreme efforts in his ministry.

1. It is a calling with promise (vv. 10–11).

“**Be diligent**” reinforces v. 5. “**Make your calling ... sure.**” The word *bebaios* is used again in v. 19 translated “*confirmed.*” In legal terms, it meant to produce evidence of something (1 Cor. 1:6; 1 Thess.

1:3–10). The focus here is not salvation, but sanctification. **“You will never stumble”** does not refer to sinlessness, but rather to ultimate failure in the Christian life. Consider how Peter fell in his denials of the Lord, yet he picked up and carried on to the finish.

“For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” In v. 5, we were told to *“add”* to our initial faith in Jesus Christ. The word Peter used is *epichoregeo*, which speaks of a lavish supply based on abundant resources. This verse tells us that if we supply the elements of spiritual growth to our life in time, God will lavishly supply us with reward upon our entrance into His kingdom. This is what Jesus meant when He told the disciples to *“lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven”* (Matt. 6:20). This is also what Paul is speaking of regarding the contrast between *“gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw”* (1 Cor. 3:12).

The Doctrine of Crowns

The New Testament speaks of five distinct crowns available to believers for living faithful and fruitful lives:

1. The Crown of **Self-control** (1 Cor. 9:24–27). This is the crown for denying self and serving the Lord and others. It correlates to the attitude of humility.
 2. The Crown of **Joy** (Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19). This is the crown given for faithful witness in word and in life. This crown rewards spiritual priorities.
 3. The Crown of **Life** (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10). This is the crown for endurance in testing and overcoming trials. This relates to the wise decisions seen above.
 4. The Crown of **Righteousness** (2 Tim. 4:8). The issue here is not the imputed righteousness of Christ, which all believers share. Here, the idea is practical, righteous deeds—the actions of the dedicated believer.
 5. The Crown of **Glory** (1 Pet. 5:4). The Chief Shepherd will reward faithful under-shepherds as a result of their faithful ministry—the results of their doings.
2. **It is a calling in light of the brevity of life (vv. 12–15).**
- a. **Because the time we have is short: “As long as I am in this tent.”** Peter sees himself as a sojourner, dwelling in the tent of his body (Heb. 11:9). The last words of General Robert E. Lee were “strike the tent!” Truly, our life is a vapor that appears for a moment (James 4:14). **“I must put off my tent ... after my decease”** tells us that Peter believes the end foretold by Jesus is near (John 21:18–19). The word for *“decease”* is *exodus*—the same word used in Luke 9:31 of Jesus’ death. It speaks of a glad deliverance from all bondage into glorious freedom.
 - b. **Because the price of learning is constant repetition: “remind you ... reminding you ... a reminder.”** Again, in 2 Peter 3:1–2, he reminds them that he is reminding them! How important is constant repetition, both in teaching and application of the truths of God’s Word! And this need for repetition was for those who were solid in their faith (v. 12b)!
3. **It is a calling confirmed by reliable witnesses (vv. 16–21).**
- According to Jewish law, every truth was to have at least two or three witnesses (Deut. 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19). In John 5:31–39, Jesus cites five witnesses to His identity. In this section, Peter verifies what he is teaching by introducing multiple, reliable witnesses.
- a. **Peter, James, and John** (v. 16): **“We made known to you”** is a reference to the three with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–7; Mark 9:1–8; Luke 9:27–36). Their report was not **“cunningly devised fables,”** but they were **“eyewitnesses of His majesty.”**
 - b. **God the Father** (vv. 17–18): The heavenly Father gave **“honor and glory”** to Jesus on the Mount when He said, **“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”** These same words were spoken at His baptism by John (Matt. 3:17). **“Excellent glory”** suggests that which is exceedingly majestic and magnificent.

- c. Many prophets (vv. 19–20): ***“The prophetic word confirmed”*** uses the same word we saw in v. 10 translated *“sure.”* Just as Jesus’ transfiguration confirmed all the Old Testament prophets who spoke of His coming glory, so our transformed lives confirm our witness to the truth of the Gospel message. The words ***“to heed”*** literally mean to “keep holding up before your face.” Prophecy is ***“a light that shines in a dark place.”*** The word here suggests a dry, parched, murky and dirty place, which is this present world. But our *“blessed hope”* (Titus 2:13) is when ***“the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,”*** a reference to the Rapture of the Church (Rev. 22:16). Before the day dawns (the Second Coming and Kingdom Age), the Morning Star will rise, and we will be transformed (Dan. 12:3; 1 Thess. 4:13–18).
- d. The Holy Spirit (v. 21): ***“Private interpretation”*** would be better translated “private inspiration.” In other words, prophecy does not originate with the prophet. ***“Holy men of God”*** refers to those chosen by God to fulfill the role of prophet. ***“Spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”*** The word *“moved”* literally means to be “carried along.” It is used of a ship with its sails open to the wind. All Scripture is “God breathed,” the literal translation of 2 Timothy 3:16.

Chapter Summary: The Calling of the Believer

1. We answer the call of God when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior (vv. 1–4; Matt. 22:1–14).
2. We confirm, or give evidence of the call, as we grow in the likeness of Jesus Christ our Lord (vv. 5–9).
3. The calling of God includes our gift, our ministry, and all our outward circumstances (vv. 1–2; Rom. 1:1; 12:6–8; 1 Cor. 12:7; 1 Pet. 4:10–11).
4. Those who pursue their calling will experience “grace and peace multiplied,” conformity to Christ, and effective ministry/service in time (vv. 2, 7, 10).
5. We are called to spiritual growth as our only guarantee of fruitfulness in time, and reward in eternity (vv. 10–11).
6. Our calling requires constant reminders of the truth of God’s Word and of the brevity of life, vv. 12–15.
7. Our calling depends on reliable witnesses of the Person and work of Christ (vv. 16–21), even as we are surrounded by a *“cloud of witnesses”* of the power of *“faith”* (Hebrews 11; 12:1).

2 PETER CHAPTER 2

The Combat of the Christian

As a vital part of our sanctification, we are assured that we will suffer for our faith (2 Tim. 3:12). This is because we live in a combat zone, in the ancient war of Satan and his hosts against God, in which we overcome the devil’s attacks by our faith (Eph. 6:10–18; 1 John 5:4; Rev. 12:1–9). Because the devil was a liar and murderer from the beginning (John 8:44), **his chief weapon of destruction is deception** (2 Cor. 11:3) through false doctrine. It is this arena of biblical truth vs. diabolical lies that Peter now addresses.

The Character and Condemnation of False Teachers

2 Peter 2:1–3

*“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing,
but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”*

Matthew 7:15

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron.”

1 Timothy 4:1–2

1. They sneak in to destroy (v. 1a).

“There were also false prophets ... even as there will be false teachers.” Wherever the truth is being taught, the devil will have his instruments of deception and division (Isa. 28:7–8; Jer. 5:31; 6:14; 23:9–18, 30–32; 28:1–17; Ezek. 13:16; 34:1–10; Micah 3:11–12; Acts 20:28–30; 1 Tim. 3:1–6). *“Who will secretly bring in destructive heresies.”* The word *pareisago* suggests the smuggling in that which cannot be brought in openly (Jude 4). The word *hairesis* speaks of false teaching that divides and destroys local churches. The word *“destructive”* is *apoleia*, used three times in vv. 1 and 3, and is the root word for *“Apollyon,”* the “destroying demon” (Rev. 9:11). This shows the demonic source of their teachings (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1–5).

2. They deny the Lord and Savior (v. 1b).

“Denying the Lord who bought them.” Here, *arneomai* means “to reject, to thrust away.” In the present participle form, it means that they continually do this, both in word and in deed (2 Tim. 3:5, 7; Titus 1:16). Jesus Christ came into the world to ransom, or redeem, us from the slave market of sin (Mark 10:45; Rom. 6:12–13, 17–18; 1 Cor. 7:23; Gal. 3:13; Rev. 5:9). His sacrifice was sufficient to pay for the sins of the whole world, even of those who reject Him (John 3:16–19; 2 Cor. 5:19–21; 1 John 2:2). *“And bring on themselves swift destruction.”* Those who wage war on the truth of God’s Word will always, in the end, destroy themselves (Deut. 13:1–5).

3. They lead many astray, bringing shame on the Gospel (v. 2).

“Many will follow their destructive ways.” This refers to gullible and poorly taught believers, who are easy prey (vv. 18–19; 2 Tim. 3:1–7). *“Because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.”* Those who turn the grace of God into licentiousness (Jude 4), bring shame and disrepute on the true faith. Compare *“way of truth”* here with *“way of righteousness”* in v. 21. The *“way of truth”* will always keep the Lord Jesus Christ as the central focus and guide-stone of one’s life (John 14:6).

4. They deceive for their own gain (v. 3).

“By covetousness they will exploit you.” The word *pleonexia* speaks of an insatiable greed that cannot be satisfied (Rom. 1:29; 2 Cor. 9:5; Eph. 4:18–19; Col. 3:5). The word *“exploit”* literally means “to make merchandise of” you. The same root word is used in James 4:13, meaning “to do business.” *“Their judgment ... destruction does not slumber.”* The idea here is that God sees and passes judgment on them, even as they are leading others astray. One of the great truths of the Scriptures is that those who willingly go astray and then lead others with them, are judged by the very consequences of their actions—long before their final judgment comes (Rom. 1:18–32).

The Doctrine of Basic Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is defined as the science of interpretation, specifically of biblical interpretation. There are many principles and rules of this science, but some of the basic laws are listed here:

1. The Law of Unity implies that Scripture must interpret Scripture. Truth by its very nature is non-contradictory.
2. The Law of Context indicates that the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences is determined by the intent and meaning of the surrounding context.
3. The Law of Logic indicates that all truth must have three characteristics:
 - a. It must be coherent: truth can be comprehended/understood.
 - b. It must be consistent: truth cannot contradict itself (see point one).

- c. It must have correlation: truth must relate to life as we know it.
4. The Law of First Mention: The meaning of words can often be understood by their first mention in Scripture (example: “*grace*” in Gen. 6:8; “*believed*” in Gen. 15:6; and “*worship*” in Gen. 22:5; and “*faith*” used in the positive sense first in Hab. 2:4).
 5. The Law of Repetition: A truth is repeated for the sake of emphasis on its importance (“*And God saw that it was good*” and “*according to its kind*” in Genesis 1, and the word “*blessed*” in Matt. 5:1–12).
 6. The Law of Literal Interpretation: We interpret literally when we take true accounts to be true (the story of Jonah), parables to be parables, and figures of speech to be figurative.
 7. The Law of Progressive Revelation: This recognizes that God’s Word is revealed along a historical timeline, and according to a dispensational approach. Example: we are no longer under the Old Covenant but are under the New Covenant. While salvation is the same in every age—faith in the promised Messiah—the resources for spiritual living are greater for the Church Age believer than for those of Old Testament times.

The Righteous Judgment and Faithful Deliverance of God

2 Peter 2:4–9

Here, we have two great examples of God’s **judgment** on the wicked, and His **deliverance** of the faithful. In each of these, there is an unspoken example of those once delivered who “turned back” and brought condemnation on themselves.

1. As illustrated by the flood generation (vv. 4–5).

“*For if God did not spare the angels who sinned.*” This is a reference to the “*sons of God*” in Genesis 6:2 (see Job 1:6–7; 2:1; 38:7; Psalm 89:6; 1 Pet. 3:19–20; Jude 6–7). “*But cast them down to hell.*” The word translated “*hell*” here is literally *tartarus*, the prison of some fallen angels (compare the abyss/bottomless pit in Rev. 9 :1–2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1–3). “*But saved Noah ... a preacher of righteousness.*” The word *phulasso* means “to guard or protect from danger.” The means of this protection was the Ark.

2. As illustrated by Sodom and Gomorrah (vv. 6–8).

“*The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah ... condemned them to destruction.*” Both here and in Jude 6–7, the sinning angels and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah are connected, because in both cases they “*did not keep their proper domain ... and gone after strange flesh.*” “*Making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly.*” Today, sexual perversion is promoted and protected from any form of honorable rebuke (see Romans 1:18–31). However, God will bring judgment on this world for the evils being promoted. “*And delivered righteous Lot ... oppressed ... tormented his righteous soul.*” Lot, though a believer, chose to live in Sodom (Gen. 13:5–13), where his soul—righteous through faith—was vexed every day. Yet God had mercy on him. We, today, cannot escape the immorality and perversions all around us. Yet, we have the indwelling Spirit of God, and His completed Canon of Scripture, which Lot did not have. God is able to guard and deliver us in our own time (Jude 24–25).

3. The main lesson to be learned (v. 9).

“*The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations.*” In both vv. 7 and 9, the word “*deliver*” is from *ruo/ruomai* and speaks of divine rescue from immediate danger. Noah was obedient to God, but Lot was not. Yet both, being children of God, were delivered. However, in each case there was a failure after the deliverance:

- a. In the case of Noah, his son Ham, and later Canaan, turned to sin, and suffered the consequences (Gen. 9:20–25). Compare Genesis 9:22 with Habakkuk 2:15 for the

implications of Ham's sin. From Canaan came the Canaanites, who followed every form of sexual perversion/idolatry.

- b. In the case of Lot, his wife apparently could not bear to leave Sodom, and was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:15–26). Lot later had children through his daughters (Gen. 19:30–38), resulting in the Moabites and the Ammonites—perpetual enemies of Israel. Jesus said to His disciples, as a warning, “Remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17:32).

Point: These examples become valuable in understanding vv. 20–22.

Doctrine of the Will of God vs. the Plan of God

1. The will of God is revealed in the Word of God. It is for all men, and includes:
 - a. Eternal salvation (John 3:16–19; Acts 17:30; 1 Tim. 2:3–6; 2 Pet. 3:9).
 - b. Sanctification/spiritual growth (2 Pet. 3:18).
 - c. Fruitfulness/service to God (2 Cor. 5:14–21; Gal. 5:22–23).
 - d. Three areas of service for the believer:
 - 1) Priesthood—effective prayer (1 Pet. 2:5–9; Heb. 4:14–16),
 - 2) Ambassadorship—witness to the lost (2 Cor. 5:17–21), and
 - 3) Ministry—exercise of spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:7; Rom. 12:3–8; 1 Pet. 4:10–11).
2. The plan of God must be discovered through faith and obedience (John 7:17). God’s individual plan for each believer includes three things:
 - a. His geographic will: Where does He want me to be? (Gen. 12:1; Heb. 11:8–10; 1 Kings 17:2–3, 8–9; Acts 8:26–29; 16:6–10; James 4:13–15)
 - b. His operational will: What does He want me to do? (Jonah 1:1–2; 3:1–2; John 21:15–17; Acts 9:15–16; Phil. 2:12–13).
 - c. His motivational will: Why does He want me to do it? (2 Cor. 5:9–10; 14–15; Rom. 1:14–17).
3. Those who will not study and apply the truths relating to God’s revealed will can never discover what His personal plan for their life is. Noah, Abraham, Elijah, Paul, and others like them sought to obey the will of God, and thus they were led into the personal plan of God for them. Lot is an example of a believer to whom God showed mercy, but he resisted God’s will, and therefore did not discover the plan of God for his life.

The Corruption of False Teachers

2 Peter 2:10–17

The spiritual and moral degeneracy of these false teachers follows a downward spiral in five areas:

1. Their arrogance (vv. 10–11).

As we have seen earlier, everything in life begins with our attitude. The most destructive mental attitude, the source of all sin, is arrogance. “*Those who ... despise authority ... presumptuous, self willed.*” The word *tolmao* speaks of a defiance of God and man. Their arrogance is expressed in the three areas of sinful conduct:

- a. Mental: they despise all authority, because they consider themselves to be the ultimate authority.
- b. Verbal: “*They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries.*” These could include both human and angelic authorities. The reference to angels probably refers to Jude 8–10.

- c. **Overt:** *“Who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness.”* The implications here speak of every form of sexual distortion and perversion. Consider that what was once a cause for shame in this country is now publicly flaunted and celebrated.

2. Their ignorance (v. 12).

Arrogance and ignorance always go hand in hand. *“Like natural brute beasts.”* The word *physika* refers to that which belongs to the natural realm. We do not condemn animals for acting naturally, but for men to act like animals is disgusting. *“These ... will utterly perish in their own corruption.”* There is a play on words here, meaning, “in corrupting themselves they will be corrupted,” most likely a reference to eternal punishment.

3. Their self-indulgence (v. 13).

In this verse, he amplifies the wordplay of v. 12, *“and will receive the wages of unrighteousness.”* The literal idea here is that they will be paid back in harm for the harm they have done to others. *“Who count it a pleasure to carouse in the daytime ... carousing in their own deceptions.”* The word *truphe* spoke of debauchery which, even the pagan Romans considered evil when carried over from the night into the daytime. *“While they feast with you.”* These carousings were apparently taking place during the celebration of the Lord’s Table (1 Cor. 11:20–22, 28–29).

4. Their destructiveness (v. 14).

Those who abandon themselves to degenerate living are not content unless they can drag others down with them (Rom. 1:22–32). *“Having eyes full of adultery ... enticing unstable souls.”* This phrase suggests that they see a potential adulteress in every woman they come into contact with (Matt. 5:28). The word *“enticing”* is *deleazo*, which means “to lure through the use of bait” (see v. 18; James 1:14). They do this because *“They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.”* The word *“trained”* is from *gumnazo*, “to train in a gymnasium.” Literally, they are “children of a curse” or “an accursed brood” (Matt. 12:34; 23:33).

5. Their greed (vv. 15–17).

They have made a clear volitional choice, for they have *“forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam.”* The *“right way”* is *“the way of righteousness”* in v. 21. The *“way of Balaam”* is seen in the story in Numbers chapters 22–25:5; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14), where Balaam’s greed led to his disobedience to the revealed will of God. For the sake of financial gain, he taught the Moabites to use their women to entice the Israelites into the worship of Baal, which included gross sexual perversion. As a result of his disobedience, Balaam was ultimately killed for his betrayal (Num. 31:1–8). What a contrast we see in that, while they conduct themselves like brute beasts, Balaam was *“rebuked for his iniquity; a dumb donkey ... restrained the madness of the prophet.”* For the figure of *“wells without water,”* etc., see Jude vv. 12–13. The idea is of promise without fulfillment, which Peter will now develop in vv. 18–22.

The Claims of the False Teachers

2 Peter 2:18–22

This is the passage considered by many scholars and Bible students to be the most difficult one in the Bible to untangle. The problem is the shift in emphasis from the false teachers to their deceived listeners. There are at least 30 uses of plural pronouns such as “they, their, them” in this chapter. It is very easy to miss the shift in the use of these pronouns in vv. 18–21, from the focus on the false teachers to those who are deceived by them.

Three groups are spoken of through the chapter. It is helpful to review both the promises and the warnings in 1:9–12, which includes both blessings for faithfulness, and the damage done by unfaithfulness.

However, we should also consider the flow of Peter's arguments.

1. In vv. 1–3, he is warning his readers of the dangers posed by the false teachers.
2. In vv. 4–17, the main focus is the false teachers themselves, with emphasis on their final judgment, but including the assurance of God's deliverance of His people.
3. Now, in vv. 18–22, his focus turns to those who choose to follow the false teachers. They will bring judgment upon themselves in time, and at the Bema Seat of Christ.

In this section, Peter concludes his expose on false teachers by presenting **five contrasts** between what they teach and the effects of their teaching. Their lifestyle contradicts everything that they profess and preach, and those deluded believers who follow them will also suffer judgment because of it.

1. They use high speech to promote low living (v. 18).

"They speak great swelling words of emptiness," We would say they are full of hot air. They use linguistic sleight of hand in order to deceive the weak and untaught (2 Tim. 3:1–7). *They allure through lusts.* Their high-sounding words have the lowest of motives. *"The ones who have actually escaped."* The word translated here as *"actually"* is *oligos*, meaning literally, "recently or barely." This would be a reference to new, spiritually immature believers (Rom. 16:18).

2. They promise liberty, but are slaves of evil (v. 19).

We have seen that social movements that are aimed at enslaving a people, always come under the banner of "liberation." *"They promise them liberty"* all the while being *"themselves slaves of corruption."* Their way to enslave someone morally, is to proclaim "sexual freedom." But corruption, degeneracy, and perversion, are always the most destructive forms of slavery. To be *"overcome"* by anything, is to be in *"bondage"* (John 8:34–36; Rom. 6:16; 1 Cor. 6:12b).

3. Their teachings lead to an end that is worse than the beginning (v. 20).

"After they have escaped" is speaking of the new and untrained believer (v. 18), who is the easiest prey for false teachers. This escape came about *"through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."* The word *"knowledge"* is the same as found in chapter 1:2–3 and speaks of full and experiential knowledge. Remember that the idea of "escape" was first seen in chapter 1:4, where it obviously speaks of eternal salvation. Peter says here that if *"they are again entangled ... and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning."* Here, *"they"* is a reference to deceived believers. If we take this as speaking of one's eternal condition, this would contradict our understanding of eternal security in Christ. However, Peter is speaking of realities in the here and now. But if we consider the beginning of one's Christian life, as compared to the end, of how many could these words be true?

- a. Remember that after being delivered from divine judgment in the flood, Ham reverted to the conduct of the pre-flood civilization and brought cursing on the lineage of Canaan (compare Gen. 9:20–25 with Hab. 2:15–16).
- b. After the angels delivered Lot, his wife, and daughters, his wife, who had "barely escaped" from Sodom, turned back, and paid the penalty of disobedience. Remember that the delivering angels told them, *"Escape for your life! Do not look behind you ..."* (Gen. 19:17). Lot then drunkenly has sex with his own daughters, and the offspring become two of Israel's greatest enemies (Moab and Ammon).
- c. Peter's instructions here appear to have been taken from Jesus' story in Matthew 12:43–45 (Luke 11:24–26), which ends with the phrase, *"the last state of that man is worse than the first."* Most commentators say this can only apply to a non-believer, or a professing believer. Paul would beg to differ.

- d. In Galatians 3:1, Paul says to wavering Galatian believers, “*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?*” The word “bewitched” means “to cast an evil spell upon one.” Then, later in 5:7, he says, “*You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?*” They had started well but were finishing poorly.
- e. In his message to the Ephesian believers (Rev. 2:1–7), Jesus clearly rebukes them for starting well, and the end being worse than the beginning of their faith. We could also use the example of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter five.
- f. In Heb.10:26–31 the author warns erring believers of the danger of suffering the same judgment as God’s adversaries with whom they have aligned themselves.

Point: The greater one’s knowledge and privileges, the greater, by far, is their accountability (Luke 12:48b). In all these examples, we see believers who started well on their spiritual journey, only to end up far worse.

4. The greater one’s spiritual light, the more disastrous their fall (v. 21).

“*For it would have been better ... not to have known the way of righteousness.*” The word “known,” used here twice, is again from *epignosis*, which in 1:2, 3, 8 and 2:20 is clearly used for those who have believed in Jesus Christ. Peter is again not speaking of their eternal destination, but of their present condition (see Luke 12:48). “*Than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.*” The phrase “to turn from” is from *hupostrepho*, used 35 times in the New Testament, with all but three uses indicating a return from or to a place. But in three uses, it involves a spiritual significance.

- a. In Luke 8:37, it is used of Jesus’ departure from the region of the Gadarenes, after He had healed a demon-possessed man, and the “*whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. And He got into the boat and returned.*” They had more affinity with demon-possessed men than with the Lord Jesus Christ!
- b. In Luke 11:24, it speaks of the unclean spirit returning to a once-cleansed life, saying, “*I will return to my house ...*” and bringing with him “*seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.*” (v. 26).
- c. Finally, in Acts 13:13, it is used of John Mark’s desertion from the work of Paul’s first missionary journey (compare Acts 15:38).

These three unique examples of the use of this word can shed a great deal of light on our passage if we carefully consider them in the light of this context:

- 1. First, there is a denial of the Lord (cf. Luke 8:37 with 2 Pet. 2:1),
- 2. there is a turning back from one’s calling (cf. Acts 13:13 with 2 Pet. 2:2 and 20), and
- 3. there is an end worse than the beginning (cf. Luke 11:26 with v. 20b).

Paul declares in Ephesians 4:17–19 that it is possible for a believer to turn from walking by the Spirit and to “*walk ... as the rest of the Gentiles walk.*” Those who take the “Lordship salvation” view of the Scriptures, say that such a thing is impossible for a “true believer.” However, both Scripture and experience show us that it is not only possible, but all too common among Christians who turn aside from following the Lord.

5. They preach purity but promote degenerate lifestyles (v. 22).

It is easy to see how this would apply to the false teachers, for they are unsaved and unchanged. They feed on their own vomit, and they wallow in their own mire. However, Peter refers here to Proverbs 26:10–12 which says:

“The great God who formed everything gives the fool his hire and the transgressor his wages. As a dog returns to his own vomit, so a fool repeats his folly. Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”

This can certainly apply to many believers! Both dogs and pigs were considered unclean animals in Israel. These unregenerate false teachers aim to lead unsuspecting new believers back into the lifestyle they lived before they were saved. However, whether we call it backsliding, or reversion, or falling away, the truth is that having come into the light and life of Christ, and then having turned back, the end condition will be far worse than in the beginning. Consider Lot’s end (Gen. 19:30–38), whom Peter calls “*righteous*” three times in vv. 7–8, and then tell me it can’t happen to a believer!

The Doctrine of Eternal Security

“That whoever believes in Him should never perish but have eternal life.”
John 3:15.

“The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”
John 6:37b

1. Eternal life is a free gift of God to all who believe in Jesus Christ (John 3:16; Rom. 3:24; 4:4; 6:23).
2. On the cross, Jesus paid the penalty for all sins of all time—past, present, and future (Isa. 53:4–6, 11–12; 2 Cor. 5:21; John 19:30).
3. Eternal life is eternal, it can never end (John 3:16, 36; 5:24; Heb. 5:9; 1 John 5:11–13).
4. At the moment of salvation, the believer is imputed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ Himself. The word “impute” means “to place to one’s account,” in this case, our account before God (Rom. 4:3, 22–24; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21).
5. At the same time, all our sins were blotted out and forgotten (Psalm 103:3; Isa. 1:18; Col. 2:13–14; Heb. 10:17).
6. When anyone believes in Jesus Christ as Savior, he is born from above/born again, and is a “new spiritual creature” (John 3:6–7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Titus 3:5).
7. Every believer is held in the mighty hands of both the Lord Jesus and of the heavenly Father.

“And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.”
John 10:28–29

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”
1 John 5:13

2 PETER CHAPTER 3 **The Coronation of the Christian**

In our key text for the book (1:10–11), we were challenged to confirm our calling. We were also promised that if we richly supply our faith here and now (1:5–8), God will richly supply us with eternal rewards

(1:11). Here, Peter encourages us to always see our current struggles in the light of eternity and the coming kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Learning from the Past

2 Peter 3:1–6

1. The necessity of repetition (vv. 1–2).

“I stir up your minds by way of reminder, that you may be mindful ...” It is a fundamental principle of Bible teaching that repetition results in ability to recall and remember. The phrase *“stir up”* literally implies an awakening to what has been known and forgotten, to bring it back to mind. *“Words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and ... of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior.”* Here, Peter puts the writings of the apostles on an equal standing with the Old Testament prophets. He will do this specifically in regard to Paul in vv. 15–16 (see also 1:20–21 and Jude 17).

2. The signs of the times (vv. 3–4).

“Scoffers will come in the last days.” The idea here is that mockers will come mocking the Scriptures. *“Walking according to their own lusts”* links them with the false teachers (2:10, 12–14, 18). *“Where is the promise of His coming?”* Since they deny the Lord Jesus (2:1) they also deny His return, along with the judgments that will follow. They imply that there is no final judgment, *“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!”* (1 Cor. 15:32). This kind of denial runs through the Bible (Psalm 42:3; 79:10; Jer. 17:15; Mal. 2:17). *“All things continue as ... from the beginning.”* Aristotle taught that the universe was eternal and unchanging. This was the idea behind the Epicurean saying of First Corinthians quoted above. But Jesus said, *“Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.”* (Matt. 24:42 compare Hab. 2:3).

In these first four verses, we see the 3 classical ways of learning:

- a. First, there is **empiricism**, which is learning by experience. Some call this the scientific method. Since we have not experienced a flood, or Christ’s coming, we deny that it can happen. Today, this is called the “normalcy bias,” the belief that things will always continue as they have been in our experience.
- b. Then, there is **rationalism**, which depends on human intellect to fathom all things. This might be called the Aristotelian or philosophic method. It relies on deductive logic to solve the questions of life and the universe.
- c. Finally, there is the way of **faith**, which depends on divine revelation to tell us things we cannot learn by the other methods. All children begin the learning process using the faith method. They trust what their parents tell them, and so they learn to speak and act accordingly. Because we have the revealed Word of God, this is by far the superior method of learning, and the only way into eternal life.

3. The lessons of history (vv. 5–6).

“They willfully forget.” The word *lanthano* suggests the shutting of one’s eyes to what is obvious. They do this as a determined act of the will. *“By the word of God the heavens ... and the earth.”* God created all things by His Word (Psalm 33:6–12; John 1:1–4; Heb. 1:3). *“Standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.”* In the beginning, God created the land in the midst of the waters (seas/oceans, Gen. 1:9–10). The flood proved that God is in control of the “laws of nature,” and can change conditions at His will. In Genesis 9:8–17, God promised Noah that He would never again bring a flood on the Earth. Instead, the final judgment will come by fire.

Doctrine of the Seven Terminal Generations

The reason I refer to these as terminal generations is because in each case, that specific generation is told by God of some catastrophic change that would bring an end to life as they knew it:

1. The Flood: Noah knew he had 120 years (Gen. 6:3, 13; Matt. 24:37).
2. The Exodus: From Abraham to Moses, they had 400 years (Gen. 15:13, 16; 50:22–26; Heb. 11:22).
3. The Exile: Jeremiah told them they would be in exile for 70 years (Jer. 7:28–29; 25:11–12; 29:10; Dan. 9:1–2).
4. The Birth of Messiah: The prophet Daniel gave the time precisely (Dan. 9:24–27). This is why Simeon knew the time was near (Luke 2:25–35), and why Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for not knowing the time of His coming (Luke 19:44).
5. The 70 A.D. Judgment: Jesus clearly told them what would happen to “*this generation*” because of their rejection of Him (Matt. 23:36; 27:25).
6. The Rapture: If we are right in understanding the fig tree parable, as the re-emergence of the state of Israel, then we are “*this generation*” of Matthew 24:32–34.
7. The Second Coming of Christ: The same logic as in #6 above applies, since only seven years separates the Rapture from the Second Coming.

Looking Forward to the Future

2 Peter 3:7–13

Here, Peter turns from events of the past to consider future events:

1. The certainty of coming judgment (vv. 7, 10).

Peter tells us that the present creation is “*now preserved by the same word ... reserved for fire.*” The Old Testament prophets are full of prophecies concerning the coming judgment by fire (Psalm 50:3; Isa. 29:6; 30:30; 66:15–16; Joel 2:30; Nahum 1:5–6; Mal. 4:1). “*Until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men ... the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.*” There are several critical points that need to be made regarding Peter’s thought here:

- a. Peter is talking about “*the day of the Lord,*” which is an Old Testament designation for the time including the Tribulation, the Millennial Kingdom, and the final judgment (Isa. 2:12; 13:6–10; Ezek. 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1–2, 30–32; 3:14–16; Amos 5:18–20; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1:7–16; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5).
- b. By contrast, the “*day of Christ*” in the New Testament refers to the Rapture and our gathering to the Lord (1 Cor. 1:7; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6, 10. These fit with 1 Thess. 4:13–18 and 2 Thess. 2:1).
- c. The “*day of Christ*” occurs in the blink of an eye (1 Cor. 15:51–52), but the “*day of the Lord*” covers a period of 1,007 years! Those who do not distinguish the two days are doomed to confusion.

2. The longsuffering grace of God (vv. 8–9).

Because the issue at hand is the “*day of the Lord,*” Peter reminds us that “*with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*” We need to see time as God sees it. When Jesus told John “*And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work*” (Rev. 22:12), in God’s timing that was only two days ago! “*The Lord is not slack concerning His promises ... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*” The “*delay*” in the return of Christ is for the sake of the salvation of multitudes. God’s plan always works for the redemption of souls (Psalm 90:4; Isa. 30:18; Ezek. 18:23; Rom. 2:4; 3:25; 11:32; 1 Tim. 2:3–6; Col. 1:20).

Living Steadfastly in the Present

2 Peter 3:10–18

From looking back to the past, and then forward into the future, Peter directs us now to live godly lives in the present.

1. Living lives that will last (vv. 10–11).

“The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.” This is true for those who are lost, but not for believers who live expectantly (1 Thess. 5:1–6; Rev. 3:3). Ultimately, ***“the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”*** All of history that is not of God, all the so-called “great men of history,” will be done away with (Psalm 102:25–26; Isa. 13:11–13; Zeph. 1:14–18). ***“What manner of persons you ought to be in holy conduct and godliness.”*** Faith, in both God’s record of past history, and prophecy of future events, should goad us to live different lives. We can only be *“holy ... [godly]”* when we live by faith, in the power of the Spirit of God (2 Cor. 5:7; Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16). This requires that we daily examine ourselves (1 Cor. 11:28, 31), confess our sins as we are convicted of them by the Spirit (John 16:8; 1 John 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:20–21), and live in conformity to the life of Christ (1 Tim. 3:16; 6:3, 6, 11; 2 Tim. 3:12–17). In 1 John 2:6 and 17 we read, *“He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked ... and the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”* Obedience to God brings eternal renown!

2. Hastening the day of His coming (vv. 12–15).

“Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.” The word *“hastening”* is from the same root word as *“diligence”* in 1:5. It contains both the idea of strong motivation, as well as the idea of hastening or accelerating. It was a teaching of ancient Israel that if all Israel would keep the Law for one day, the Messiah would come. Of course, we know this is impossible (Gal. 3:10). How then can Peter say that we can hasten His coming?

Four Ways to Hasten the Lord’s Coming

- a. **By our prayers:** Jesus taught the disciples to pray, *“Your kingdom come. Your will be done.”* (Matt. 6:10). The Bible actually ends with a prayer, *“Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”* (Rev. 22:20).
- b. **By our witness:** Since the plan of God is redemptive, and His delay is for the salvation of souls, leading others to faith in Christ could hasten His coming (1 Pet. 3:15). One day, that last believer will trust in Christ!
- c. **By our lives:** In these verses, Peter challenges us to live expectantly. This alone is a witness to a hopeless world (2 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:13; 1 Pet. 3:15).
- d. **By support and involvement in missions:** This is an extension of our witness to the gospel message to all men (Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 1:8).

“We ... look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” What a future the believer has to look forward to! We look forward to an eternity without pain, sorrow, loneliness, suffering, illness, hatred, loss of loved ones, and on and on. Furthermore, in this kingdom of righteousness, all our faithfulness will be rewarded. ***“Therefore, beloved ... be diligent to be found by Him in peace.”*** Each and every believer will face the Lord in one of two ways. *“And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming”* (1 John 2:28).

And what is it that motivates such diligence? *“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).

3. Learning from the master of end times doctrine (vv. 15–16).

“Consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation.” Even as the world becomes more and more corrupt, God restrains His wrath, that many more souls might enter into His kingdom. **“As also our beloved brother Paul ... has written to you.”** Peter had read many of Paul’s epistles. Paul often stressed the forbearance of God (Rom. 3:25–26; 9:22; 10:20–21; 11:32–36). Since Peter is writing to scattered Jewish believers (1 Pet. 1:1–2; 2 Pet. 3:1), the only other letter by Paul that fits the description here would be the letter to the Hebrews. If we do not believe that Paul wrote Hebrews, then the letter Peter speaks of has been lost, in which case, **we do not have all the Scriptures!**

Since Peter is only speaking in this chapter of Christ’s Second Coming, and of the final judgment of the Earth, he may not yet have known, or understood Paul’s writings concerning the Church as a “mystery” age (1 Cor. 15:51; Eph. 1:9; 3:3–9; Col. 1:26–27). This may have been one of the topics he found “hard to understand.”

“Speaking in them of these things.” Paul’s focus on end times was primarily of the Rapture of the Church (Rom. 11:25; 1 Cor. 15:50–57; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; 2 Thess. 2:1). But his epistles are full of exhortations to Christ-like living. **“In which are some things hard to understand.”** Considering the tangle we found in chapter two of this letter, Peter himself can be a bit difficult to understand sometimes. **“Which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction.”** Too many times weak believers try to find some “hidden, mystical” meaning in difficult passages. It is far easier to do this than to work until the true meaning is understood. The problem is that, by missing the true meaning of the text, they develop a false teaching that has destructive effect on those who follow them. This again goes right back to the meaning of 2:20–21.

4. Don’t fall down, but keep growing up (vv. 17–18).

“Beloved, since you know this beforehand.” This knowledge is due to the diligence of Peter’s repetitive teaching (vv. 1–2). **“Beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.”** To make the claim that a true believer will always persevere to the end is contrary to the clear teachings of Scripture. This point reminds us again of the importance of our key verses (1:10–11), and to his earlier warnings (2:1–3; 2:20–21; 3:8), even as he and the other disciples were warned by Jesus (Matt. 7:15–20; Mark 13:22–23).

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” He ends the letter with a challenge to do what he challenged us to do in 1:5–7. There is no end to spiritual growth. As long as we are alive, there is more to learn, to apply, and to do in the Christian life. And what we do here and now reflects on our Lord and Savior. So let us live so that, **“To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.”**

Conclusion

The great truths of Peter’s second epistle are so relevant to us, living in the ever more corrupt and degenerate world around us. But God’s grace is sufficient, and He will never forsake us. Therefore, let us add that diligence of which he speaks, and press on to the high ground of spiritual maturity and maximum effectiveness in our service to our Redeemer, our Lord, and our soon returning King!

A Puritan Prayer

LORD, HIGH AND HOLY, MEEK AND LOWLY,

Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision, where I live in the depths but see Thee in the heights;
hemmed in by mountains of sin, I behold Thy glory.

Let me learn by paradox
that the way down is the way up,
that to be low is to be high,
that the broken heart is the healed heart,
that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit,
that the repenting soul is the victorious soul,
that to have nothing is to possess all,
that to bear the cross is to wear the crown,
that to give is to receive,
that the valley is the place of vision.

Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells,
and the deeper the wells the brighter Thy stars shine;

Let me find Thy light in my darkness,
Thy life in my death,
Thy joy in my sorrow,
Thy grace in my sin,
Thy riches in my poverty,
Thy glory in my valley.

—Anonymous