

Study/Devotional Notes on the Second Letter of Peter

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These notes may be used in whatever way the reader finds profitable, in part or in full. I pray they will be edifying to the people of God in Christ and draw new people into His kingdom by faith.

Note: this document is searchable by chapter, verse, or word.

For those using a PC, press Control+F. For those using a Mac, press Command+F.

2 Peter 1:1-4

Getting Started

As we get started today, we'll do a very brief introduction to 2 Peter and then move directly into the text, which is immediate in its power and impact! Our focus: All things for life and godliness!

2 Peter 1:1-4

1Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: 2Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. 3His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

My son is nine years old, and because he is nine and because he is a boy interested in robots and space and wild creatures of all kinds, he is inclined to a somewhat fanciful imagination. Very often he begins his conversations with me in the form of a question: "Dad, if you could create any machine in the world that could do anything you wanted it to, what would it be?" Or "Dad, if you could have any power in the universe, what would it be and how would you use it?" The talks that follow are usually very entertaining, and I enjoy having them because it stretches my own mind and forces me to think beyond the regular, everyday trappings of life.

When I read the opening verses of 2 Peter, I am reminded of those conversations with my son, and why? Because we are told here very clearly that in our lives as God's children, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, equipped and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we have been given everything we need pertaining to life and godliness! Everything! It's the greatest machine and the best superpower ever combined into one, but more than the creation of a fanciful imagination, it is real, and it has been given to you and me.

Verses 1-2: Starting off his letter in a typical fashion, Peter identifies himself as the author and identifies his chosen recipients as well: those who through the righteousness of God and Jesus Christ the Savior have received a faith as precious as his own. This is a general letter, just as Peter's first letter was, and though we can say it is certainly addressed to the church at-large,

the primary audience here is the same group which received epistle number one: God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. This is the scattered, persecuted church of Asia Minor, the area of modern day Turkey. Finishing his greeting, he pronounces grace and peace to his readers through the knowledge of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Knowledge here is a reference to the fact that our faith is based on the objective, historical revelation of God in Christ, something which can be readily tested and shown to be true. This point will prove to be foundational to the rest of Peter's letter, so it's something that we want to make note of right up front.

Verse 3: Following his greeting, Peter expands on the truth he has just espoused: that it is the divine power of Jesus Christ which has given us everything we need for life and godliness – through what means? Once more, through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Here again, the issue of the concrete, verifiable facts concerning our Lord's life, His death, and His resurrection come to the forefront of Peter's presentation, and they are inseparably linked to the fact that we have been called by Christ's glory and goodness, which is a reference to our salvation. So now let's consider the ramifications of what he has said: if in Christ we have truly been given everything we need for life and godliness, to do anything less than learn all we can about our Lord Jesus and to know Him more and more is to throw away a phenomenal blessing of power and love and indeed, the very key to the life God desires for us!

Verse 4: Peter will talk more about this as he moves through the teaching points of his letter, but he gives us a great start by beginning to explain things in verse 4. It is through the gracious call of Jesus on our lives that He has given us His very great and precious promises, and when we talk about God's promises in Scripture, they're always linked directly to His grace and His mercy; His undying love for us which, paradoxically, drove Him to die on our behalf. So when we talk about life and godliness, we can boil it down to one thing, really: it is not us, but Jesus Christ in us where we find all that we need and all that has been prepared for us as God's children. In fact, it's how we participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. Participating in the divine nature doesn't mean that we become little gods; it refers to the fact that in Christ we have now become new creations and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Through the gracious act of saving us from our sin, Jesus has provided us escape from condemnation that comes from the corruption of the world.

Wrapping Up

Well, as we wrap up for the day, you can see that we've jumped in and bitten off some important spiritual concepts right from the start here in 2 Peter. As I mentioned a bit earlier in the study, we'll be developing these concepts as we go, so you'll want to be sure and join us each day as we travel verse by verse through the text. Until we meet next time, it's my sincere prayer that you'll spend some time pondering the magnificence of what you've received through the saving love of Christ our Savior...salvation, yes, of course! But also all that you need for life and godliness now, wrapped up in His very great and precious promises. As you learn to know God's Word more and more, you'll also come to know and love and embrace those promises more and more. God grant you that for Jesus' sake! We'll see you next time.

2 Peter 1:5-11

Getting Started

As we get started today, Peter calls us to add several things to our lives as God's people, not in order to be saved, but because we are saved by the wonderful grace of God. Our focus: fruitful growth in the faith.

2 Peter 1:5-11

5For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. 10 Therefore, my brothers, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

My daughter likes to paint, and her preferred medium is the use of watercolors. When she first started out several years ago, she would start with bright, clean, beautiful hues, but after a bit she would become frustrated, because in trying to blend various colors to make new ones, she would inevitably end up with a muddled palette of browns and grays as everything bled together. These days, though, she is more experienced, more accomplished, and she has developed the skill to blend as well as the skill to keep her colors distinct so that they all show their brilliance in just the way that she intends them to.

In our reading today, Peter takes the foundation of our faith and calls us to add things to it, resulting not in a muddied up palette of browns and grays, but a beautiful rainbow of colors that are distinct, yet complementary, contributing to one beautiful, unified picture. Let's talk about it in the few minutes that we have together.

Verse 5: Continuing from where we left off last time, you'll remember that Peter has just talked to us about the richness of the gift of our faith; that because of who we are in Christ through His sacrifice for us at Calvary, we have all that we need for life and godliness, which can be both discovered and demonstrated in His very great and precious promises to us. Because of that rich demonstration of God's grace, Peter now says to us that we are to make every effort to add certain qualities and characteristics to our faith – not to make our faith better or more valid, but to increase our fruitfulness for the kingdom of God. In fact, when Peter tells us to add to our faith, he is painting a picture of his own for us: the Greek word for “add” means to give lavishly, and one of the ways it was used in Peter's time was in reference to a choirmaster supplying everything his choir needed for a grand performance. This phrase doesn't mean to equip something sparingly, but to go to great lengths to supply all that is needed and more for a noble performance. With that in mind, we can start to look at those very special things we are to add to – or lavishly supply for - our faith.

Here in verse 5, Peter first mentions goodness, or virtue. This is the God-given ability to perform something heroic, or in the more generic sense, to stand out as a person of excellence. This isn't an ivory tower kind of idea; rather, this kind of goodness is something that shows up through principled, practical living.

To goodness we are to add – here's that word again – knowledge. Knowledge means understanding, insight, and truth that is properly applied to life situations. Specifically, Peter's reference to adding knowledge to our faith involves the diligent study of God's Word, which is the source for all truth.

Verse 6: As we move into verse 6, the next characteristic that Peter speaks of is self-control. The literal translation from the Greek here means to hold one's self in. The application here would be that of an individual in control of the body and its passions rather than the other way around.

To self-control we add perseverance, which is a reference to having patience or a sense of endurance to do what is right. It means resisting temptation to do what is wrong as well as resisting the temptation to give up or give in when the going gets rough.

To perseverance we next add godliness, which is a term we've already explored a little bit here at the beginning of the letter. What is godliness? Well, it's simply the commitment to live reverently, loyally, and obediently toward God. Simple to define, yes; simple to put into practice, not so simple! We do this, of course, not in our own strength but by the strength given to us by God Himself, who is in the constant state of transforming us by the renewing of our minds through His Word. And incidentally, this whole palette of characteristics is one that is progressive and in process, not something that is a said-and-done reality.

Verse 7: Let's move on to verse 7 and talk about two more added-value characteristics which are to accompany our faith, and then we'll tie things together a little bit as we close out with verse 8. To godliness Peter says that we are to add brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness we are to add love. What do these ideas entail? Affection and mutual sacrifice, considering each other as more important than ourselves, and in the case of love, we are especially talking about the conscious choice to be Christ-like regardless of circumstances or feelings, as well as having an attitude of forgiveness and forbearance.

Verse 8: So, adding all of these things together, what kind of picture do we end up with? We end up with a life of faith that is lived out in a genuine, humble manner, evangelistic by its very nature, marked by authentic, practical consideration for others, and blessed by both the favor of God and the favor of men. Verse 8 tells us that as we commit to and then see these things steadily increasing in our lives, we will not be barren or unfruitful, unproductive or ineffective, but rather, people who produce much fruit for Christ's kingdom.

Wrapping Up

Verses 9-11: As we wrap things up for the day, it would be very easy for us to look at these spiritual graces and come away severely intimidated and perhaps even a bit downhearted as we consider the high standards and lofty concepts being promoted here, especially with Peter's words in verse 9 which speak of the nearsightedness...even blindness...of those who fail to give their cultivation any regard. But instead of having an attitude of defeat when you see these things, I would encourage you today to have an attitude of joy and anticipation instead. Why? Because it is God's will that you possess these things in increasing measure in your life, and it is God's power that will work to cultivate them within you! That's why Peter ends as he does in verses 10-11: encouraging us to pursue them with all that we are, filled with the confidence that in Christ our calling and election is sure and that in Him (through Him, by Him, thanks to Him),

we will remain steady and receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Pray today that you might become conscious of these wonderful virtues, and ask God to begin working them in you in a way that will glorify Him and be a blessing to you. Work to develop one, and then another, and then another, and focus on the small steps that will ultimately yield big results. You will find joy in the journey as you do it, and God's kingdom will be built up in the process! Have a great day, and we'll see you back here tomorrow.

2 Peter 1:12-15

Getting Started

As we get started today, Peter shares the reason for the urgency and intensity of his words in this letter. Our focus: saying things while they can still be said.

2 Peter 1:12-15

12So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. 13I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, 14because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 15And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

Our family recently lost a loved one to an extended illness. Though it was a very difficult time and though she is terribly missed, there was a blessing in the whole thing in that she was able to prepare for her death - or more accurately, prepare us for her death. Diane knew that she was going to die, but Diane also knew that she was going to be with the Lord, and so she had a peace about her that transcended her temporal pain and suffering. Because she had time to put her house in order and to say her good byes, Diane was also able to share what was most important to her with the people she loved: her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. She did this primarily through the writing of personal letters to members of her family and to her friends. There was even one that she wrote to be read at her funeral, and it very pointedly mentioned the all-important need to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in order to be saved from an eternity in hell. As you might imagine, her words were written with love - but they were also tinged with the urgency of a woman who knew her time was short. Diane and the apostle Peter had something in common when it came to the writing of their respective letters: they both knew they were soon to die. This is Peter's focus today as we see him share just why he is writing as he is.

Verse 12: In the four verses before us, Peter makes some very straight-forward, declarative statements, and the best way to examine them is to simply outline what is being said. Verse 12 says this: "So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have." What "things" is Peter referring to? The things we've been studying all this week from the first chapter of his letter. Though his readers already have a firm grasp of the truth, Peter says it is fitting that they be reminded of it, and not just once or twice, but continually. The things of God and of our salvation in Jesus Christ bear repeating

over and over again because they are literally our lifeblood, and in hearing them we are not only reminded of their reality, we are also strengthened through them.

Verses 13-14: In verses 13-14, Peter continues: “I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.” Here we see Peter reveal more of his mindset: He knows that he will soon lay aside his life, and in fact will lay it aside in the manner that Jesus had made clear to him, which, like the Lord’s death, will be through crucifixion (John 21:18-19). Because he knows he has very little time left, his desire is to do what? To refresh the memories of his readers; to ensure that they remain established in the truth. This phrase can also be rendered “It is right for me to stir you up by reminding you” of these things.

Verse 15: Finally, in verse 15 Peter takes things one step further. Not only does he want to continually remind his readers of the truth; not only does he want, with the time he has left, to stir them up so that the Gospel remains on the front burner of their minds; but moreover, Peter wants his words to be so ubiquitous, so ingrained in them, that those words will retain their power and influence and authority long after his departure. That’s why he says, “And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.” When we come back together tomorrow, we’ll look at Peter’s line of reasoning for such strong and confident statements, but for now, suffice it to say that for him, getting things right when it comes to faith in Jesus Christ has become THE ONE THING that drives his life’s work. Nothing else matters.

Wrapping Up

As we wrap up for the day, it’s my prayer that in the midst of your own very busy and often very compartmentalized life, you will stop and consider the urgency and importance of Peter’s message today, and how really, it permeates every part of who you are and supersedes anything of earthly importance in life. When it comes to faith in Jesus Christ for the salvation of your soul, do you have it right? Are you trusting in your good life to get you across the threshold of eternity and into the presence of God, or are you trusting in God Himself to bring you there through the finished work of His Son? Are you clear on the truths of the Gospel and open to being continually reminded of them, continually stirred up by them, and continually strengthened by them, or have you fallen into the trap of trying to do life on your own, having relegated God to nothing more than a Sunday morning religious ceremony? Those are heavy questions, I know... but they’re the most important questions you’ll ever ask yourself. May God guide you by the power of His Spirit to see what you need to see in His Word today. I’ll see you back here tomorrow!

2 Peter 1:16-18

Getting Started

As we get started today, we begin to come into the main theme of Peter's letter to the scattered, persecuted church: a defense of the message of the Gospel in the face of false teachers. Our focus: eyewitness accounts of Jesus and His glory.

2 Peter 1:16-18

16We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." 18We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

I mentioned to you some time ago that we have a pond on our property here in southwest Missouri. It's an old farm pond with a great history as a fishing hole. The thing is, we've never caught anything in it. Lots of people have said there are fish in there; we've seen a lot of activity on the surface of the water at the times of day you'd expect fish to be feeding; but nothing has ever been brought out on the end of our poles but weeds. Recently though, we finally found proof that the rumors were true: after a big rain caused water to flow over the spillway of the dam, we saw one of our dogs proudly carrying a wriggling catfish in her mouth. At first we thought it had come from the creek across the road, but when I went to the pasture below the dam where the water empties from the spillway, imagine my surprise to see some fish flopping about in the grass! We finally saw with our own eyes that what people had been telling us for two years was true: there were fish in that old pond after all!

Verse 16: In today's reading, Peter begins to mount a defense of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and he sets things up by saying that far from being a big fish story, the Gospel message is verifiably, demonstrably true. In verse 16 he starts by distinguishing it from a cleverly invented story. In the Greek, that word refers to a mythical fable about gods and miracles, and Peter says that, quite the contrary, everything that he has made known about the Lord Jesus actually happened and that significantly, he and others were eyewitnesses of His majesty. Now, the reason Peter is speaking like this is because there is already at this time a large contingency of false teachers who are either distorting or trying to entirely discredit the message of salvation in Christ. Not wanting the church to fall prey to these inaccuracies, Peter goes back to the beginning of his affiliation with Jesus and recounts for them how the Lord proved Himself to be the Messiah.

Verse 17: Specifically, Peter harkens back to the event of the Transfiguration of our Lord, where Jesus showed Himself to Peter James and John on the mountain in all of His glory, and the voice of God the Father affirmed His Sonship; the fact that Jesus was one in essence with Him. To refresh our memories about that event, let's read it from the 17th chapter of Matthew: 1After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. 3Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. 4Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." 5While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" 6When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. 7But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he

said. "Don't be afraid." 8When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. 9As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

Verse 18: It would be easy for Peter to give testimony about the authoritative teaching of Jesus or to talk about the many miracles he saw the Lord do over the course of His three- year earthly ministry. But false teachers and magicians could show some semblance of those things themselves. It was the Transfiguration that proved Jesus' deity in His earthly ministry, just as it was His resurrection from the dead and His ascension that proved His deity in the aftermath of His crucifixion. No religious figure and no spurious teacher of false religion could ever make such a claim for themselves. And what we want to notice here is that Peter emphatically states that when this event took place, he and his companions both saw and heard what transpired there. For them it was a confirmation of the prophetic Word of God, and so, says Peter, it is for the rest of us as well. We'll talk more about that together on Monday, but for now we need to close things off for the week.

Wrapping Up

As we wrap up, I pray that you are someone who knows not simply what you believe, but why you believe it. When it comes to the Christian faith, there is more solid evidence to support its reliability than any other world philosophy or belief system yet conceived by man. From manuscript evidence to archaeology, from fulfilled prophecy to the sheer weight of statistical probability, Christianity makes the grade where nothing else can. God has not called you to blind faith, and you were never meant to check your brains at the door. Be thinking about that as you worship this weekend. God bless you, and we'll see you back here on Monday!

2 Peter 1:19-21

Getting Started

As we get started today, Peter talks about the authority of Scripture and the light that it is to us in this sin-darkened world. Our focus: The inspiration of God's Word.

2 Peter 1:19-21

19And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

If you're going to drive at night in my neck of the woods, you have to be especially careful and watch for lights in the darkness - specifically, the lights belonging to my Amish neighbors. They don't use electricity, but for reasons of safety, they do outfit their buggies with either a battery powered flashing yellow light or an oil lamp with a yellow lens. The state has mandated that they do this in order to avoid collisions with motorized vehicles, and the rule is that the lights are to be used from dusk to dawn. Paying attention to those lights has saved me from many a close call over the last several years, and our Amish leaders say that the lights have significantly decreased the number of tragic accidents in the community.

Verse 19: Light is important in the darkness. And in today's reading, Peter speaks to us about the light of God's Word and the all-important role it plays in guiding us through the darkness of this world. When we were last together on Friday, we saw how Peter was defending the truth of the Gospel based not on some cleverly dreamed up story or fable, but on his eyewitness observations of Christ and His ministry – specifically the event of the Transfiguration, where Jesus was revealed in His divine glory to Peter James and John. As fantastic as that might be, however, and as much as the eyewitness account helps Peter verify things for his readers, here in verse 19 he appeals to an even higher authority than personal experience: that of the Scriptures themselves. One thing I want to be very clear in pointing out here is the arrangement of this sentence in the Greek. It's not that the word of the prophets is made more certain because Peter's experience bears them out; it's that, more certain than any personal experience that Peter or anyone else might have at any given time is the fact that the Scriptures are true. That's why Peter tells us to give our attention to them rather than to his experience. And what kind of attention are we to give to them? As to a light shining in a dark place. God's Word is what leads us through. God's Word is what keeps us from stumbling. And God's word will continue to lead us and continue to keep us from stumbling until darkness is no more – until the Day dawns and the Morning Star rises in our hearts, which is a beautiful reference to our Lord's second coming.

Verses 20-21: What Peter has done in saying these things is to establish Scripture as the only rule and norm for us as we live our lives. In matters of life and doctrine, God's Word is it. In the next two verses Peter gives us an additional principle: Scripture, far from coming about by the will or inspiration of man, is divine in its origin – it is inspired by God Himself, or “God-breathed” as Paul says in his second letter to Timothy. Peter explains it to us this way: that holy men of God spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Peter wants to make sure that his readers set the Word of God apart from any source of teaching that is formulated by men, and as we move on through the letter, we'll see just why he does that.

Wrapping Up

As we wrap up for the day, it's my prayer that you will hear God speaking to you today through the power of His divine Word, and that you'll be moved to embrace the light of the Scriptures in a fresh new way and look to them to help you through the darkness. If you're a regular part of the EDiBS family, chances are you already have a desire to know and interact with your Bible on a deep level. Of course, the beauty of God's Word is that we can never exhaust its treasures – there will always be more to learn! May our Lord bless you on that journey, and may He draw you ever closer and to an ever greater confidence in Him as you travel along. Have a terrific day, and we'll see you back here tomorrow!

2 Peter 2:1-3

Getting Started

As we get started today, you'll remember that Peter has just talked about the prophets of old who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Now he recalls for us that there were also false prophets among the people at that time – and just as it was then, so it is now. Our focus: beware of those who come to destroy.

2 Peter 2:1-3

1But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

There's nothing I dislike more than a person with ulterior motives. Back when I was in college, an acquaintance of mine approached me and struck up a conversation. I was a little surprised because we had never really hung out together and we didn't travel in the same circles. But I liked him and I was pleased to be speaking with him, and we clicked to the point that I was even thinking to myself that maybe this would be the beginning of a great friendship. We parted ways by trading phone numbers, and he took my address as well because he said that he and his wife would be having a get-together soon and he wanted to be sure and send me an invite. A few days later I did get a note in the mail from him – but instead of an invitation to a get-together it was an invitation to invest in his multilevel marketing scheme and become part of his down-line. I thought back to our conversation and realized that it was all just a ploy – and I was very disappointed.

Verse 1: “Ploy” is a good term when it comes to describing false teachers in the world, because pretty much everything they're about is a ploy: a ploy to take something from you or gain something over you or put something past you. But more than merely disappointing, false teachers can be dangerous, and that's why Peter takes up the issue here in what will prove to be a lengthy treatment of the matter. Right up front you'll notice that an important point is made: ultimately, false teachers deny the sovereign Lord who loved them and gave Himself for them – and in denying Him, they bring swift destruction upon themselves. Prior to their end, however, they have the potential to do great damage to the church and to the cause of Christ at large. Thus, it is important that we be alert to their tactics. The remainder of the verses before us today helps us in that quest.

Verse 2: In verse 1 we are told that part of the methodology of false teachers is to secretly introduce destructive heresies, and this is a reference to the fact that so many of them masquerade as upstanding pastors and teachers in the church. Blinded from seeing the true nature of who they are because of the mantle of ministry they wear, many people fall headlong into deception before they ever realize what's happening. That's what Peter is referring to in verse 2 when he says that many people will follow the shameful way of these teachers, harming not only themselves, but also bringing the way of truth into disrepute. We see this happen every day in the Christian world, and you'd think that we as God's people would be more wary of it. But especially in today's consumer-driven church culture where people are more prone to listening to what their itching ears want to hear than to rightly discern truth, it's easier than ever to be led down a garden path. That's why so many evangelical leaders today are crying out for a

return to Biblical literacy among the laity, and it's also why they're going back to placing an emphasis on sound doctrine when they teach and preach. We need that in our churches now more than ever!

Verse 3: In verse 3, we learn that another tactic of false teachers is that of exploitation. It is motivated, Peter says, by what? By greed. Whatever it takes to, once again, take something from you, gain something over you, or put something past you, it will be done – and always to the benefit of the false teacher rather than to you. Witness the dumpster full of unread prayer requests behind one ministry's headquarters, the envelopes slit open just enough to empty the checks that accompanied the prayer needs. Or consider the useless miracle cloths that are sent by leaders of another organization, guaranteed to get you your miracle when you sow a generous monetary faith seed in their ministry. There are cults which exercise mind control, religious leaders who demand total, unquestioning submission of their followers, and the list goes on and on. Present in almost every one of them is some form or combination of the unholy trinity: money, sex, and power. And what ever it takes to get you into their clutches, that's the ploy they will offer. The good news, of course, is that the God of truth and justice is able to protect us, even as He will ultimately have His way with those who come to deceive us. And just as they introduce destructive things into the hearts of God's people, they are simultaneously assuring their own eternal destruction.

Wrapping Up

As we wrap up for the day, let me encourage you to be on your guard against false teachers; against those who would deceive you for personal gain. You have a solemn and holy responsibility not to embrace anybody's teaching – including mine, by they way – until you have tested it against the clear light of the Word of God. Be diligent in the pursuit of truth, and take your stand on the Scriptures alone – never on the mere words of men. We'll see you back here tomorrow.

2 Peter 2:4-10

Getting Started

As we get started today, Peter continues to talk about the nature of false prophets and their ultimate judgment by God. Our focus: a warning for all!

2 Peter 2:4-10

4For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; 5if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; 6if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; 7and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men 8(for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)— 9if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. 10This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority.

Sometimes the price you pay for a bad choice is steep. Justice can be swift and the consequences painful. Ask a certain boy I know. Last week during his allotted video game time, he chose to use the computer in the office rather than his game system. "Please be sure to watch your time and stop when time is up," his mother told him. "Okay Mom," he said. The problem was that, unsupervised in the office, once his time expired he made the conscious choice to continue playing - for an additional half-hour. Coming back into the kitchen later, he even called himself on it: "Okay, I know I'm in trouble," he said. And he was! Because his infraction entailed conscious choice and willful disobedience, especially after he had been given an appropriate warning beforehand, he not only forfeited his electronics time for the rest of the week, but he also lost some trust which will take time and effort to regain. We can all relate similar events from our own childhoods, I'm sure! Growing in wisdom and stature comes with its share of growing pains. The good news about growing pains is that there are usually people there to help us through them, and with a healthy dose of grace and mercy, we usually come through them a little stronger and a little wiser on the other side. But that's not always the case; some people become hardened instead, and rather than grow in wisdom, they grow in cunning and deceit.

Verses 4-10: In the verses before us today, what we have is a strong witness to both the justness and righteousness of God. God, though He takes no pleasure in the punishment of the wicked, is bound by His very nature to mete out consequences for sin – He cannot deny His own holiness. To underscore this point, Peter gives us three examples of God's judgment in history: the angels who sinned, sent to hell and imprisoned in gloomy dungeons; the ancient world, condemned by the flood because of their ungodliness; and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, destroyed by fire because of their wickedness. In each case we are told, essentially, that God knew what He was doing, was acting according to His perfect nature, and was absolutely justified in doing what He did. But at the same time, we are also given two examples of God rescuing the righteous even as He judged the unrighteous. He saved Noah and his family from the flood, and likewise brought Lot safely out of Sodom before it and Gomorrah were consumed.

All of this is to say that God's judgment is true; that He rightly condemns and rightly saves. Just as in His holy wrath He condemns those who reject Him, in His tender mercy He knows how to rescue those who belong to Him; and in fact, the pattern we see in the case of Noah and Lot is the same pattern that we see throughout Scripture: salvation for the just prior to the condemnation of the unjust; the rescue of those who belong to God before the destruction of those who have turned away from Him.

Pulling it all together, the application here comes in verse 10: In light of the reality of false teachers peddling their influence among the church and doing damage to His people, God will be faithful to judge those false teachers according to their wickedness and their deceitful and deceiving hearts. As they have rejected Him, giving themselves over to the corrupt desire of their sinful nature and despising the Lordship of Christ, they will reap the consequences of their actions.

Wrapping Up

As we wrap up for the day, if you're anything like me you might be taken aback a bit by these strong words regarding God and His judgment. You might even be thinking of your own sin – and the fact that your sin demands punishment as well. When we see the power of the law at

work and realize our total undoing before a holy God, it can be a terrifying thing. But here is where that good dose of grace and mercy comes in to help us through. Just as Noah and Lot were counted righteous not because of their sinless lives, but because they believed God, the same is true for you and me in the finished work of Jesus at the cross. Our righteousness comes not through a sinless life, but through the fact that our sin was paid for in full by Christ. Christ, in fact, is our righteousness. And because of that, He is also our hope and our peace. As you grow in the wisdom of God's righteous acts of judgment over His creation, rejoice in the fact that in your Savior you have been judged righteous by His blood. God bless you, and we'll see you back here next time.

2 Peter 2:10b-12

Getting Started

As we get started today, we have more before us about false prophets. We've talked about their impending judgment, and now we'll see more about why they will be judged. Our focus: If you play with fire, you're going to get burned.

2 Peter 2:10b-12

Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings; 11yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord. 12But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.

1977. Fifth grade. Teacher: Mr. Chapman. His name all by itself was enough to strike terror into the heart of anyone moving up from the fourth grade. If you got Mr. Chapman as your teacher, you knew it was going to be a strict year. A retired Navy officer, he didn't put up with nonsense, and he also didn't put up with disrespect. One thing you learned very quickly was to never, ever, ever talk back to him! In actuality, Mr. Chapman was probably one of the best teachers I ever had, and once you got to know him, to know him was to love him. But pity the fool who was insolent or inappropriate in his presence. With Mr. Chapman, there was no room for folly in the face of truth.

Verse 10: In today's reading, Peter continues his all-out offensive on false teachers – men who have set themselves up against the truth, men with ulterior motives who have in mind nothing but personal gain, men who have no qualms about destroying others in order to get what they want. In verse 10 we are supplied with yet another character trait of these misrepresenters of God: they are bold and arrogant. Coupled with that arrogance is a misplaced confidence in their ability to engage and cast dispersions on celestial beings in the spiritual realm, which is most likely a reference to demonic spirits. But look at the next verse and see why this is a problem:

Verse 11: "Yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord." Holy, sinless angels, who always behold the face of God and always execute the will of God don't even deign to do what these false teachers so blindly do! When it comes to issues in the heavenly realms, they leave such judgments to Almighty God Himself. A good passage to clarify and expand on this comes from the letter of Jude, our Lord's half-brother. Jude wrote his letter after Peter's letter,

and in fact borrowed from it. Listen to what he says as he talks about the same issue with his audience:

Jude 4-10: *“For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord. 5Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe. 6And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. 7In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire. 8In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings. 9But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”*

It’s not fear or trembling that causes God’s angels to refrain from speaking to demons; it’s their understanding that rebuke and judgment belong to God alone, and because they are creatures who exercise utmost respect for and perfect obedience to the Creator, they defer to the Lord in these matters. The distinction that Peter and Jude are making between the wisdom of angels and the abject foolishness of these false teachers shows us just how lacking in understanding they really are. Thus the reason for the next verse.

Verse 12: Jude goes on to finish in the same manner that Peter finishes in verse 12. Let’s read from Jude and then refer back to Peter’s comments: “10Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals—these are the very things that destroy them.” Peter says this: “12But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.” The meaning of both passages is very plain.

Wrapping Up

As we wrap up for the day, believe it or not we’ll have one more section of verses to cover regarding these false teachers; teachers, by the way, who are really just starting to infiltrate the church and wreak havoc as Peter is writing this letter. Peter writes that they are coming and have already started to arrive, to be sure. Jude, just a little bit later, gives the impression that they have by the time of his writing thoroughly established themselves. A loving reminder to you today is that false teachers continue to pop up among God’s people in every age, including ours. Don’t be afraid; instead, be knowledgeable about the Word of God. Remember, it points you to Jesus, and it will lead you through this dark age! Have a great day and we’ll see you back here tomorrow.

2 Peter 2:13-22

Getting Started

As we get started today, we find that Peter still isn't finished in his condemnation of false prophets. Our focus: more on the methodology of their deception, and more on the end that awaits them.

2 Peter 2:13-22

13They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you. 14With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed—an accursed brood! 15They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. 16But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey—a beast without speech—who spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness. 17These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. 18For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. 19They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. 20If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. 21It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. 22Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud."

If you're a dog person, then you know that, as much as you love your dog, there are times when it's just gross. Your dog will embarrass you in public with inappropriate behavior. It will eat poo. It will bring dead things into the yard, and in the case of an inside-only dog, it will drink out of the toilet and get into the trash and do all kinds of other things that you don't even know about. You may have trained it, and it may behave like an angel in your presence, but it has a secret life that it relishes in your absence! A dog will also return to its vomit, and though it does so for various reasons, that too is simply gross!

In the Word of God today, that very graphic picture is used to demonstrate the deplorable state, the deplorable behavior and the deplorable subject matter of men who are false teachers. They are like dogs, and what they peddle is like vomit, vomit that they return to over and over again. We're looking at several more verses than usual today because in one sense Peter is simply adding emphasis to what he has already made clear for us. But since today is Friday, it's also good and fitting stewardship that we use our time to come to the end of this lengthy topic.

Verses 13 and Following: since there are 10 verses to cover, what I'd like to do is highlight one more time some of the identifying hallmarks of false teachers, things that should raise a red flag for you if you see them occurring. Remember, though one of the tactics of people like this is that they secretly introduce destructive things by posing as upstanding, respectable pastors and teachers, it's never long before the cracks in the façade start to show.

Verse 13 lets us know that they carouse in broad daylight as they feast with us. This is a reference to inappropriate and even immoral behavior stemming from church fellowship events.

Verse 14 talks about adulterous behavior. This is an extension of verse 13, and it refers to the kind of unbridled, barely concealed lust that sees every woman as a potential adulteress. In the first two congregations that I served, I followed pastors who had been involved in affairs with women in the church. I can't begin to tell you the damage that it did to each congregation and the work that it took to begin the healing and trust-building process with the people. Some of them, quite frankly, never came around and were permanently jaded by the experience.

Verses 15 and 16 tell us once more that false teachers have wandered from the straight path and have gone after the wages of wickedness. Balaam was essentially a prophet for hire to whoever would pay him, and he was more interested in acquiring wealth than being faithful to speak God's Word. You can read about the incident of Balaam's donkey in Numbers 22-24.

In verse 17 Peter again speaks of their impending judgment by God, and for more reasons as to why we need simply to move on in the passage.

Verses 18 and 19 say that false teachers speak boastfully, appeal to our sinful, fleshly desires, and that they will especially prey on those who are just escaping from the old way of life and trying for the first time to walk in the truth. How will they do that? By promising freedom, when in actuality they will enslave them all over again – just as they themselves are slaves to what has mastered them. Peter closes off this section by saying that it would have been better for these teachers to have never known the way of truth in Christ at all than to have known it, corrupted it, and ultimately rejected it. Likening them in the final verses to a wallowing pig or again, to a dog doing what turns the stomach, Peter uses two very derogatory analogies to label them as being beyond hope.

Wrapping Up

As we wrap things up for the day, so we wrap up our look at the danger, the destructiveness, and the ultimate destruction of false prophets who would lead God's people astray. It's my prayer that you've gained some important insight and equipping through what Peter has shared with us in the second chapter of his letter. On Monday, we'll shift gears a little bit and move into some material that I think you'll find equally helpful for you as you endeavor to grow in your walk with Christ. Have a super weekend, and God-willing, we'll see you here again on Monday. Take care!

2 Peter 3:1-2

Getting Started

As we get started today, we come to a transition point in Peter's letter at the beginning of chapter 3. We'll only be looking at two verses, but taken together they are rich in their instruction. Our focus: the purpose and power of God's Word.

2 Peter 3:1-2

1Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. 2I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

My mom makes the best burritos in the world. It's one of those recipes that just can't be improved on no matter what you do, and it's also one of those recipes that, if not followed to the letter, will yield less than pleasing results. Because I love burritos and because I aspire to follow in my mother's burrito-making footsteps, I have in my possession, written in her own hand, the sacred instructions that will lead me to burrito heaven every time. Whenever I set out to make them, that recipe sits on the counter and I refer to it often to ensure success.

In our reading today, we have before us a seemingly simple personal note on Peter's part: his stated reason for writing not just this letter but also the one before it, and his desire that his readers continually recall the whole counsel of God through the prophets of the past as well as through the apostles. Actually, there are several things here that we really want to seize on, because through these few simple words, Peter lays down a foundational principle for our lives as followers of Christ.

Verse 1: It can be dangerous to refer to God's Word as a document that will ensure your way to success. It's not like my Mom's burrito recipe; not a formula that, if followed, will yield pleasing results. An attitude like that lowers our Lord Jesus from the God with whom we have a personal, saving relationship to a prescription or a procedure. It also eliminates grace as the means of our salvation and places us squarely within the framework of a works-righteous theology. "Do this and you'll get that." Having said that, however, what we want to remember at the same time is that the Word of God is living and active, and that it has both the power and the promise of God to accomplish its purpose in our lives. And when we remember that we have been saved by grace, bought with the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and raised to new life in Him, we will also come to see God's Word as the transforming thing that it is. It's in that vein that Peter is speaking to us, and the first stated purpose that he gives for writing each of his letters is that we will be stimulated to wholesome thinking.

On what basis are we to be thus stimulated? Well, go through the outline of each letter. Remember the trials and tribulations that Peter's readers were going through when he wrote to them and remember the doctrinal truths and the divine promises by which he comforted them and encouraged them. It's those precious truths that we are to recall, and as we see that God is with us, that He has promised us an eternal inheritance, that none of what we are going through now is going to last but will pass and boy how it will pass and just look at what it's going to pass into...see, when we remember these things we are strengthened and stimulated to focus on them and focused on them, our eyes are going to be fixed on the things of God rather than on the corruptive, destructive, damning things of this world.

Verse 2: Peter explains this further in the next verse, doesn't he. It's not just his letters that he wants the church to recall, but the whole of Scripture; the holy prophets of old as well as the commands of Jesus given through the apostles. Now, there are two things here of importance: number one is the recall. If we are to recall the things that have been given to us by God in His Word, we need to be familiar with it in order to do that! Peter here is presupposing the fact that his readers are schooled in the Scriptures, and he is putting forth the clear expectation that they continue in the Scriptures so that the Scriptures can continue to have the transforming impact on their lives that God intended. This is excellent encouragement for you and me to be ever growing in our biblical knowledge, ever giving ourselves over to study so that we can grow in our relationship with our Lord Jesus.

The second important point is a doctrinal one, and it is this: notice that Peter equates, puts on the same level of authority, Christ's teaching through the apostles and the words of the prophets of old. In other words, Peter is saying that the teaching of the apostles is directly from God just as the Old Testament writers' words were, and as such they are to be read as divinely inspired Scripture. The authority is not in the apostles themselves; it is in the authority of Christ, who has spoken through them.

Wrapping Up

As we wrap up for the day, my prayer for you would be that in reading this encouragement from God's Word, you will take it to heart in your own life; that God will use our time today to birth a new hunger in your heart for increased time with Him in the Scriptures, and that as a result, you'll find yourself growing in knowledge, growing in amazement at Christ's love for you, and growing in your desire to be with Him throughout each day like never before. May our Lord Jesus bless you and lead you in that endeavor – and if there's a way I can help you along, do let me know. Take care, everyone! We'll see you next time.

2 Peter 3:3-7

Getting Started

As we get started today, Peter now begins to address the issue of those who disregard the teaching of God's Word. Our focus: the importance of going the distance.

2 Peter 3:3-7

3First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." 5But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

When I left home for college, my dad had few words for me, but the words he did speak were words of wisdom. "Those guys always playing pool in the student union? You watch them – because as the year goes on, there will be fewer and fewer of them there." He left it at that, and I was puzzled at first; but in time it began to make sense. His point was that people who were in school without a game plan, without a vision, and without any sense that their education was a means to an end, were going to fail. And he was right: a lot of people in the party crowd and a lot of the class-skippers and a lot of the do-nothings didn't last very long. They didn't see the benefits of delayed gratification, and they didn't have the vision to go the distance. As a result, they faded out and disappeared.

Verse 3: In today's reading, Peter, having spent a considerable amount of time on false teachers and their impending doom, now moves on to tackle another group of people, a group that will grow in numbers as the last days move steadily toward the Final Day. Who are they? Scoffers – people whose hearts have been hardened, whose faith has grown cold, and who have given themselves over to a life of sin because their capacity to embrace the eternal has faded away.

Verse 4: How are we to know them? Well, in fact each of us probably does know someone in this category. They know the Word, or at least have a cursory knowledge of what it says, but for some reason they have come to disbelieve it. They look at what they perceive as evidence of God's absence on the scene and say, in effect, "Things were what they were, are what they are, and will be what they will be. Nothing has changed, nothing will change; God may have promised a glorious return, but it's obvious that if He hasn't come by now He's not going to come. Ergo, the Christian Worldview is invalid and I'll go my own way, thank you very much." It's easier and easier today to slide into that defeatist, existential philosophy. Not because God's Word and promises are flagging, but because modern culture has brought an all-out assault on faith and the things which faith grasps. The preponderance of pseudo-intellectuals in our colleges and universities, the failure of the academic world to understand and embrace the reality of evidence-based theological truth, and the outright rejection of the existence and authority of a Higher Power who created, redeemed, and sustains the universe have all contributed to a spiritual stupor in today's society that is only growing as time goes on.

Verses 5-7: But here's the truth of the matter: In verses 5-7 Peter says that people who take this point of view have deliberately forgotten something, namely that God has created and destroyed everything once, and He will most certainly do it again – only this time in reverse order! By God's Word things came into existence and by His Word they will cease to exist. The first time the earth was destroyed by water, but in the last day it will be destroyed by fire; and by that terrible act He will judge and destroy the ungodly.

What grieves my heart when I read this passage is not the severity of God's judgment. He is perfect, His righteousness is absolute, and He is right in all of His ways. No, what grieves me is that if people would only seek with all of their hearts the things of God like they seek wealth and prosperity and happiness and pleasure; if they would utilize their intellectual capacity to consider the claims of Christ and the truths of the Scriptures like they pursue the theory of evolution and look for the missing link; if they would embrace Christianity with the same fervor that they embrace the huge smorgasbord of every other conceivable belief system devised by man, then they would see things differently than they do. But because it is Christ, they reject Him out of hand before even considering Him as a possibility. They are tolerant of everything as long as it doesn't mean being tolerant of Christian orthodoxy. And because that is what is currently – and for the foreseeable future will be – in vogue as the dominant ideological paradigm framing our education system and our government and our social institutions and even some of our religious establishments, there are people of faith who will grow hard. They won't go the distance. They will become scoffers, and they will fade away into a Christless eternity, forever judged along side those who helped to lead them there. And all I can say to that is that in the face of such opposition, we must not give up the fight.

Wrapping Up

As we wrap things up, think on these things. Ask God how He would use you to counteract the effects of a growing antichristian element in our culture. Consider your level of willingness to equip yourself to be an ambassador of light in a dark world that desperately needs your influence. And finally, for those you know who have so tragically become scoffers, tell them and show them that there is a better way in Christ. You may be their only link to the gospel; the one person who can by the power of the Holy Spirit bring them back from the brink of rejecting God. The battle is serious, and it is a growing one, but remember: victory is ours, because the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church of Jesus Christ. Don't give up.

2 Peter 3:8-10

Getting Started

As we get started today, we are given a glimpse into the mind of God - but also into the heart of God! Our focus: what God wants.

2 Peter 3:8-10

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 10But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

There's a great scene at the beginning of C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Lucy has just been through the wardrobe and into Narnia for the first time, and she stays there for a period of many hours. When she finally makes it back into the large old house where her journey began, she runs into the room and shouts, "It's okay everybody, I'm alright!" But no one in the story understands what she's talking about. Lucy thinks she's been gone for hours and hours, but to her brothers and sister, she's been gone but an instant. It takes awhile for everyone to come up to speed in the book, but the reader understands immediately that time in Narnia is measured much differently than time on earth!

In today's reading, we capture, I think, a glimpse of what C. S. Lewis in his writing was wanting us to know about God and one of His attributes: namely, that He exists outside the boundaries of time and space.

Verse 8: Peter, we'll remember, has been talking about the end, the last day, when the world will be destroyed by fire and when the ungodly will be judged. He's been very clear about the fact that we are in the last days, and equally clear that God's people are to be looking for the imminent return of the Messiah. And yet it is also evident by the words before us that God's idea of time is much different than our own. For us Jesus may seem a long time in coming, but in the eyes of the Father, it will not be long at all. And as it turns out, God's perfect sense of time and timing is for a specific reason, as we see in the next verse.

Verse 9: It's not that the Lord is slow to keep His promise to us or slack in getting around to the details; rather, it's in His mercy that He is exercising patience toward us, and why? Because rather than seeing anyone perish, He longs to see all people come to repentance. Will all people repent? No, they won't. Many will reject Christ and choose to go their own way and they will perish as a result, but in the end when they are judged and see the eternal punishment that awaits them, none will be able to claim that they had no opportunity to respond to the Gospel message. God in His loving longsuffering toward us took the time, reached out, and gave every chance that could be given.

Verse 10: Finally, verse 10 reminds us of the fact that the time to be ready for Christ's return is now. Not tomorrow, not next week, not when we get old and have done everything we want to do in life and are finally ready to put our house in order. The time is now because we don't know the day or the hour of the Lord's coming; it will come as a thief in the night, and as we can see from the description of that event, once it is upon us there really won't be time to make any kind of declarative statement about where our allegiance rests. It will be too late.

Wrapping Up

As we wrap up for the day, I have a question for you: should we see Peter's words as words of warning, or should we see them as words of blessing? They're both, of course. They show the comfort and assurance of what it means to be in Christ and remind us that when these things happen, we will have no need to fear. For those who are not in Christ, these words are still words of blessing, because they are a loving call to repentance and an invitation to be made right with God through faith in the finished work of His Son. Remember, God is not slow in keeping His promises as some count slowness, but He is patient, not wanting anyone to perish. But finally, they are indeed words of warning - warning to those who scoff at the precious promises of God; words of condemnation for those who have set themselves up as enemies of the cross of Christ. I would imagine that you know people in each group. Is there something that God would have you to do about that fact? Think about that, and know that I'm doing the same. Take care, and we'll see you back here tomorrow.

2 Peter 3:11-13

Getting Started

As we get started today, Peter continues to talk about our lives in light of the end times. Our focus: holy, godly, and looking forward!

2 Peter 3:11-13

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

When was the last time you really, really looked forward to something? I'm not talking "looking forward to my morning coffee" something, but something really big and exciting and momentous. For example, I bought a tractor last week - a New Holland TC30 with a loader, a bush hog, and a 16-foot trailer to pull it on. It's going to be delivered tomorrow, and let me tell you: I'm really, really looking forward to it! So much so, in fact, that I've been preparing for its arrival in every way that I can. I've cleaned out a spot in the machine shed to house it, I've bought a couple of five-gallon gas cans and filled them with diesel fuel, I've read the owner's manual about 14 times, and I've even given the lawn a trim so everything will look neat and tidy for its homecoming! Now, my case of tractor mania may seem a little extreme to you, but to me it's a consuming thing right now, and in my mind, every little thing I do in preparation to receive it serves to heighten my anticipation and quicken its arrival.

Verse 11: I mention my impending tractor delivery today to make a point: just as in this temporal sense I'm excited and greatly looking forward to the time when this piece of equipment will finally be in my possession, so it is to be for you and me as God's people as we look forward to the end of the age! That's what Peter is saying to us in today's reading, isn't it! Since we know that the Day of the Lord is coming, since we know that all things will be destroyed and re-birthed, since we know that we are going to be partakers of the new that is to come, our focused activity in the time leading up to that great Day is to get ready for it!

It's something to really, really look forward to, the biggest, most exciting, most momentous occasion we can ever expect to experience should the Lord come while we are still living. And as such, we want to prepare for its arrival in every way that we can. The clear thrust of Peter's words to us in verse 11 is that the way we do that is through the manner in which we live our lives. What does he say? We are to be holy in conduct and godliness, which means that we are to be set apart, both from sin and to the things of God, having an attitude of reverence in all that we do.

Verse 12: Verse 12 continues the line of thinking. The more I prepare for my tractor's arrival and give myself over to focused thinking about what work I'm going to do with it and how much help it's going to provide in the care of my piece of property, the more I hasten its arrival in my mind. So it is with the things of God and our preparation for His arrival: the more we give our thoughts and our actions and our words over to the sure promise of Jesus' second coming and the more eagerly we look for it, we speed its coming. This doesn't mean that in doing these things we alter our Heavenly Father's appointed time to bring these things to pass. Peter is simply using a euphemism that means we are eagerly desiring something that we know is sure to happen, and that focused on it, we are in one sense enjoying its blessing even before its consummation.

Verse 13: That's why Peter mentions the word promise in verse 13. It's all based on promise. Our expectation for the future, our belief that we will be with Jesus, forever dwelling in His righteousness, His love, and His peace, is promise-driven; all based on the sure hope, the hope void of doubt, that what God has said is true. And it is for that reason that we eagerly look for the new heaven and the new earth; it is for that reason that we eagerly do all that we can do to be ready for when it happens. It is to be something we long for, and something for which we make no apologies.

Wrapping Up

As we wrap up for the day, I hope that these words from the Scriptures give you something to get excited about! They're words of hope and promise; words that remind you of what is to come; words that encourage you to hang on, remembering that what you are experiencing now is not all there is. They're also words that call you to be ready, aren't they. And I don't know about you, but when I think of what awaits us as followers of Jesus Christ and realize that it is a greatness and wonder and beauty beyond our comprehension, I can't think of anything else that I'd rather have occupying my heart and mind in the interim. God give you joy today in His risen Son! We'll see you back here tomorrow as we close out 2 Peter.

2 Peter 3:14-18

Getting Started

As we get started today, Peter ends his second letter to his beloved readers with some parting words of exhortation and encouragement. Our focus: Growing in Christ.

2 Peter 3:14-18

14So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. 15Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. 16He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters

contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. 17Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. 18But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

When we were together yesterday, we ended our session by talking just briefly about the things to come for us as believers in Jesus Christ. Today as we finish up our look at 2 Peter, I'd like us to take a moment and focus on the things that are now; the things that, until we go to be with the Lord, are to occupy our lives. In the final five verses before us, I'm sure you noticed very quickly that Peter is reviewing some of the main points that he has covered earlier in his letter, giving us, as it were, some summary statements about our lives as people belonging to God.

Verse 14: In verse 14, Peter reminds us that, rather than getting bogged down in the temporal issues of our earthly life, we are to be forward-looking in our faith; focused on the promises that are to be fulfilled in us at the Lord's return. This is the attitude that is to drive our living. No fear; just faith. And as we exercise that faith, being diligent to be found in the righteousness of Christ and living in His peace, our lives will reflect more and more the reality of who we are and whose we are, which incidentally is very important to our witness in these last days.

Verses 15-16: In verses 15-16, Peter makes reference to precisely that point as he reminds us that the Lord's patience leads to salvation. The implication here is that, just as God is exercising patience before judgment in order that more people will come to repentance, He is also calling Christians - by their ways and their words - to be agents in spreading that message. Salvation in Christ alone is to be our exhortation and our example to a world sitting in darkness. Paul, says Peter, has written the same thing in his letters, though sometimes they are hard to understand! Don't you love that? I agree - Paul's epistles are sometimes hard to understand, as are other portions of Scripture. I praise God that we have the whole counsel of His Word and the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit to help us through areas where things aren't always immediately clear! But the reason Peter mentions Paul is that it is on the basis of Paul's letters that some of the false teachers are twisting and distorting truth to cause harm to the church. Remember, much of the aim of this letter has been to warn against false teachers, and Peter is taking one more opportunity to drive home a warning against them.

Verse 17: Verse 17 puts it in concrete for us: we are to be on our guard against those who would cause us to fall from our secure position. Their ways are laden with errors, their motives are impure, and if it were possible, they would lead us astray from the truth of the Gospel. What are we to do in order to combat this?

Verse 18: Well, it's summed up for us in verse 18, a verse which is really the driving force behind EDiBS: we are to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. How many times a week do I encourage you with those words? As much as I may do so, there's no way I can ever do it too much! In this case, as in every case, I pray that these brief daily journeys through the Word of God are helping you to do what Peter exhorts us to do in this verse. Because the more you know Jesus and understand His incredible, selfless love for you, the more you learn to understand just how much it cost Him to buy you out of the slavery of sin. The more you learn of His plan for your life, both now and for eternity, the more you will stand in awe of Him and respond to His love with a life of joyful worship and service. Is that happening for you? I pray that it is! To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen!

Wrapping Up

As we wrap up, let me just say a couple of quick things. First, I hope you have a fantastic weekend in the Lord, and that your time of corporate worship with your church family will be a blessing to you and a blessing to Almighty God! Go to Him with your life laid bare and let Him minister His love and forgiveness into your life. Second, when we return on Monday we'll be starting a new study! God bless you in a mighty way in the days ahead, and I'll see you back here soon. Take care!