

2 Peter Lesson 1
“Am I Really a Christian?”
2 Peter 1.1-15

LOOK IT UP:

■ **REVIEW:** What is the future for those who trust in Christ alone as Savior? (2 Peter 5.10-11)

■ **REFLECT:**

1. What kind of faith do Christians share? (2 Peter 1.1)

2. How much “grace and peace” is given to believers by God? What is the source of this grace and peace? (2 Peter 1.1-3)

3. What promise does a believer have in Christ? (2 Peter 1.4)

4. How then should a believer live? What should they do to live for Christ? (2 Peter 1.5-8)

5. What does having or not having these qualities reveal? (2 Peter 1.9)

■ **REVEAL:** Why is it important for Peter to remind his readers of these things? (1 Peter 2.10-15)

THE LESSON

LEARN IT:

INTRODUCTION: Jerry Bridges, longtime staff member of the Navigators and author of the book, “The Pursuit of Holiness,” wrote another book entitled, “The Bookends of the Christian Life.” In the introduction Bridges asks his readers to think of their lives as a long bookshelf. The books on that shelf represent all the things you do - both spiritual and temporal. The spiritual books represent those activities of your spiritual growth and service. The temporal books represent those activities that include your job performance, how you drive your car, paying bills and etc. This bookshelf he writes, “is a very active place.” Each day pulling one book after another off the shelf and then replacing them back. If not managed well, those books on your life shelf might feel frustrating juggling them simultaneously. Bridges writes, “Without adequate bookends, even if we succeed in getting all our books to remain upright, their stability is precarious at best.” These books, he writes, need “reliable bookends” which can make a difference in holding them in place.

In explaining this illustration, Bridges tells his readers that one bookend in our life needs to be “the righteousness of Christ; the other is the power of the Holy Spirit. Though they’re provided by God, it’s our responsibility to lean our books on them, relying on them to support, stabilize, and secure all our books - everything we do.” (“The Bookends of the Christian Life,” Jerry Bridges, pp. 13-15)

PURPOSE: I believe this is the idea of Peter’s second letter to his readers. The purpose of 2 Peter is to call Christians to spiritual growth so that they can support themselves against Christ’s righteousness and the power of the Holy Spirit to combat apostasy as Christians look forward to the Lord’s return.

ABOUT THE LETTER: Second Peter is obviously written by the apostle Peter as it claims (1.1). Both early church fathers and the internal testimony are evidences of Peter’s authorship. Some of the internal evidences that support this is that the writer claimed to have witnessed Jesus’ transfiguration (1.16-18), and to have received information about his own death from Jesus (1.13-14; cf. John 21.18). The recipients seem to be the same general audience of his first letter. Those saints who reside in Asia Minor (1 Peter 1.1). The background of the readers and the situation they faced, as Peter described these, fit such an audience well. Therefore, this is not a “catholic” (general) epistle that is sent out to all Christians at large.

What is unique about this letter is that Peter mentions his imminent departure from this life (1.13-15). Some have called this letter, Peter’s “Swan Song.” Second Peter bears some of the marks of his last will and testament (cf. 1.3-11; 2.1-3; 3.1-4). The writings of the church fathers placed Peter’s death at A.D. 67-68 in Rome (Eusebius). Thus, the writing of this letter must be somewhere around those dates.

There are some similarities of 2 Peter and the Book of Jude, especially Jude 4-18. This similarity has raised a number of questions, did one borrow from the other, who wrote their letter/book

first? Whether or not this is important is not the question as much as that the end product of both are Divinely inspired for a time as when the church needed encouragement and direction on how to live the Christian life beyond the times of the apostles. Knowing his death is coming soon, Peter pens his final words of instruction to those church's in Asia Minor so that they will support their spiritual and temporal walk with the bookends supported by the righteousness of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Am I Really Saved?” - This is an urgent question that those who call themselves Christians should ask. It is more for clarity and surety than to doubt one's salvation. Milton Vincent wrote in his booklet entitled, *“A Gospel Primer,”* recalls how the apostle Paul's was *“eager to preach the gospel to you who are at Rome”* (Rom. 1.15). Apparently, Paul felt that there was a need for Christians to hear and be reminded continuously of the gospel. To preach to themselves daily the gospel. Mike McKinley's book, *“Am I Really a Christian?”* has a similar idea in that it shows us as Christians the importance to examine our standing before God. You cannot do that unless you preach the true gospel to yourself and examine the books on your shelf of life.

Here are some statements from his book for you to use as you examine your walk as you read and study through Peter's second letter:

1. You are not a Christian just because you say that you are.
2. You are not a Christian if you haven't been born again.
3. You are not a Christian just because you like Jesus.
4. You are not a Christian if you enjoy sin.
5. You are not a Christian if you do not endure to the end.
6. You are not a Christian if you love your stuff.
7. You are not a Christian if you do not love other people.

Can you know if you are a Christian? Sure you can. Peter writes that it is his role to stir up and remind his readers of all these things (2 Peter 1.12-15). *“Therefore, brethren”* he writes, *“be all the more diligent to make certain about His (God's) calling and choosing you...”* (1 Peter 1.10).

THE LETTER'S MESSAGE:

- I. **The Same Kind of Faith (v.1)** - Peter introduces himself as Christ's messenger and bond-servant. He addresses his readers as those who have similar faith as *“ours”* (v.1). This reference *“ours”* may mean he and the other apostles, or those with him in Rome, or Jewish Christians, with whom the Gentiles had been admitted into the same fellowship. Regardless to whom Peter was referencing, he asserts here that every Christian has the same essential faith. That is, it is only *“by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ (v.1b)*. This is the only way for anyone to be genuinely saved. The Christian faith comes to us through Jesus Christ's uprightness. Here Peter claims that Jesus is both God and Savior (cf. Matt. 16.16; John 1.1; 20.28; Tit. 2.13). Salvation becomes a major theme of Peter's letter.

II. The Same Kind of Grace (v.2) - Not only do believers come to faith in Christ the same way, but they are all blessed with the same of kind of “grace and peace” as indicated by Peter’s greeting (v.2). “Grace and Peace” come to all believers through the full knowledge of God and of Jesus. These blessings become ours as we get to know God intimately, by reading His Word and abiding in Him. Later, Peter will write about the false teachers who could offer nothing better than this. Here, Peter shows us how generous our God is in Christ to bestow on His own what they need in this life.

III. The Same Kind of Resource (v.3) - So generous is our God, He outsources His “divine power” which pertains to all life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence” (v.3). Every believer is endowed with God’s power. Peter communicates this to rekindle an appreciation for the resources God had given them in view of their present needs. “Power” is one of the key words in this letter. Barclay reminds us that the love of Christ is backed by the power of Christ, and is, therefore, a victorious love. Because the Lord outsources His divine strength for our walk in Christ, we have the very source of Christ that ultimately cannot be defeated nor frustrated. His Word and Spirit are completely sufficient for what a Christian needs for “life and godliness.” Why would God do this, Peter states, this is by and “for His own glory and excellence.” Amazing when you consider that the creator of the universe elected to call depraved and completely lost individuals to Himself and bestowed on them His divine power, grace, peace and mercy so that by His own excellent way, may glorify Himself. When we acknowledge this as Peter has, then we are most satisfied in Him. As John Piper stated: “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him. Perhaps we are not as satisfied with God because we do not know or rest in His power and strength. We do not completely and sufficiently rely and satisfied in His divine outsourcing of His power and blessings through faith in Christ. Perhaps you need to be reminded of this today. Thomas Watson (1620-1686) wrote “It is a harlot’s love to love the portion more than the person. Hypocrites love God because he gives them corn and wine: we must love God for Himself; for those shining perfections which are in him.” Are you simply satisfied with manna from heaven that God gives or are you simply satisfied with God?

IV. The Same Kind of Promises (v.4) - The Lord has not only granted us His divine power, but also “granted to us His precious and magnificent promises” (v.4). This just keeps getting better and better. There is no reason for any Christian to fear or feel as if they are not adequately able to serve God faithfully. Paul writes that God has “blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1.3). The Lord’s promises come to us through Christ’s divine power and true knowledge of Him (v.3). We learn to benefit from these promises when as we get to know Him better (true knowledge), and the God-supplied “divine power” for fulfilling what He has promised comes from Him. The word, “granted” (doreomai) stresses the great worth of what God has given. These “promises” refer to biblical promises (including God’s covenants) that all believers can know about, not secret promises. They are in Scripture. The ones Peter referred to in his first letter deal with our inheritance (1 Pet. 1.3-5) and the Lord’s return (1 Pet. 1.9,13). The promises that Peter refers

to here is to all of God's promises which include the prophetic ones mentioned in this letter (vv. 16-22; 3.4,9,13). What are they like? They are "precious" (*timia*) because of the great worth of the spiritual riches involved (cf. 1 Pet. 1.7, 19; 2.7). Not only are they "precious" but they are also "magnificent" (the greatest). Because they are intrinsically excellent. Christians become "partakers" of God's "divine nature" by faith in His promises. What does that mean? This means that when God saved us by faith in His promise, He indwells us, and we therefore possess the nature of God within us (cf. Jn. 16.7; Acts 2.39). God's nature in us manifests the likeness of God and Christ through us. This gives us power, enabling us to overcome (escape) the temptations of "lust" that result in "corruption" (cf. Gal. 5.16-17). This is called "godliness" or "goodness" (virtue). We are like David who wrote in Psalm 23, "the Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want" (Ps. 23.1). God's provisions for Christians makes them adequate, and in need of nothing that the false teachers, to whom he would refer to later, said they could provide. How do God's blessings and promises compare to those things in your life that you love, you claim satisfy you, or give you purpose? What about the things that become like idols that you worship and place over your worship of the Lord? When we examine the bookends of our Christian walk we can easily observe how we are not like David, a man after God's own heart who is totally satisfied in Him alone for all things in life, both spiritual and temporal. This would include the resting in the sufficiency of His Word and power which brings us peace and strength through the knowledge of Him. So, the question becomes not is my Savior satisfied with me, but am I satisfied in Him alone?

- V. The Same Kind of Needs (vv. 5-9):** - Having established the believer's adequacy through God's power in him and promises to him, Peter, next reminded his readers of their responsibility to cultivate their own Christian growth. Peter lists seven Christian virtues that every Christian should be reminded of. These virtues should be diligently applied in order for the believer to grow in grace. Matthew Henry stated: "Without giving all diligence, there is no gaining any ground in the work of holiness." Hodges adds that "if the Christian fails to add 'virtue' to his faith, his faith will soon become what James described as 'dead faith' (cf. Jms 2.14-26)." Peter states the same thing in verses 8, 9. Therefore, Peter writes that we should "diligently apply":
- A.** "*Moral Excellence (areten)*" (v.5a) - This is the virtue of goodness. Moral purity and uprightness of character cultivated through obedience to God.
 - B.** "*Knowledge (gnosis)*" (v.5b) - This virtue refers to acquired information. In particular, the Christian needs to know all that God has revealed in His Word, not just the gospel (cf. Matt. 28.19-20). "Gnosis" is the wisdom and discernment which the Christian needs for a virtuous life and which is progressively acquired.
 - C.** "*Self-Control (egkrates)*" (v.6a) - This virtue means mastery of self, disciplined moderation, controlling one's desires and passions (cf. Prov. 16.32; 25;28; Acts 24.25; 1 Cor. 9.24-27; Gal, 5.223; Phil. 3.12-16; 1 Tim. 4.7-8); Jms. 4.17). Many of the early Christian heresies taught that since the body was evil (some claimed) or unimportant (others claimed), it was not necessary to curb fleshly lusts, only to think correctly.
 - D.** "*Perseverance (hypomonen)*" (v.6b) - This virtue literally means to remain under something, such as a heavy load. It is the need to keep on keeping on in spite of

adversity. It is patient endurance in holiness when we encounter temptation to give in or to give up.

- E.** “*Godliness (eusebeia)*” (v.6c) - This virtue refers to behavior that reflects the character of God (cf. v. 3; 3.11). It presupposes a desire to please God in all the relationships of life.
- F.** “*Brotherly kindness (philadelphia)*” (v.7a) - This virtue is the thoughtful consideration of fellow believers (cf. 1 Pet. 1.22; 3.8; Rom. 12.10; 1 Thes. 4.9; Heb. 13.1). The characteristic of this virtue is manifested by overt acts of kindness.
- G.** “*Love (agape)*” (v.7b) - This virtue is the highest form of love. It’s God’s kind of love that seeks the welfare of the person loved above its own welfare (Jn. 3.16; 13.35; Gal. 5.22; 1 Pet. 4.8). This love reaches out to all people, not just fellow believers.

We must continue to grow in these “qualities” as well as possessing them, Peter says we will be “useful and fruitful” and the “true knowledge” of Christ will be “evident” in our lives (v.8). “True knowledge” of Christ involves not just intellectual understanding, but knowledge that comes through obedience. This growth should be the goal of every believer (cf. 3.18). The absence of these virtues gives evidence of lack of true knowledge (v.9). Peter describes this condition as spiritual blindness to the realities connected with their relationship with God. Such people show concern mostly about living for the present, with little regard for the future (cf. Esau).

How does this apply to us today? Do you remember me asking you to keep in mind Mike McKinley’s statements from his book “Am I Really a Christian?” Go over those again in light of Peter’s list of seven virtues. This examination of your faith will prayerfully bring clarity of your standing before God. If you find that the bookends of your walk have not been resting against Christ’s righteousness and the power of the Holy Spirit, then either repent and begin living for Christ now by applying diligently these virtues to your walk. If you find you have no clarity of your faith and salvation in Christ, then pray and ask Christ to save you. Repent of your ways, confess and believe that Jesus died and rose again. That He alone is the Christ, the Son of the living God, then begin walking a new in His grace and peace by the power that comes from His divine Spirit (v.10).

When believers are reminded of the gospel in their lives and walk in obedience to Christ, their “entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied” to them (v.11). One of the greatest motivations for pursuing growth in grace, is that, when we go to be with the Lord forever, He will welcome us warmly. The alternative is to get in by the skin of our teeth, “saved so as by fire” (1 Cor., 3.15). Chrysostom says, “virtue is easier than vice; temperance is less burdensome than drunkenness. Some have gone with less pains to heaven, than others to hell.” Thomas Watson supports this by stating, “The commands of sin are burdensome - let a man be under the power of any lust, how he tires himself! What hazards he runs, even to endangering his health and soul, that he may satisfy his lusts!” Be satisfied in Christ and His gospel and love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

VI. The Same Kind of Reminder (vv. 12-15): - Peter returns to God's promises by stating that he "will always be ready to remind you (them) of these things, even though you (they) already know them" (v.12). Peter seeks to remind them because he knows that his time on earth will soon come to an end as Christ "made clear to me (him)" (v.14). Peter was probably at least in his 50s, if not older, when he wrote 2 Peter, and he may have known that he would soon die as a martyr. The word "imminent" implies his death by execution could take place at any time. Perhaps by the time they received this letter, he might already be home with the Lord in paradise. By reminding them of these things, Peter is hopeful that they "will be able to call these things in mind" (v.15).

LIVE IT:

Just like Peter's readers, we too need reminders of what God has revealed. Is your faith a living faith, or as James stated, a dead faith? Do you view Christianity as a religious relic or a living testament of God's divine power and grace on those He calls to Himself? Do you live by the traditions of man or by the living and sufficient Word of God? Is Christianity an intellectual faith or effectual faith that stirs your soul to be not in want of this world, but to be totally and devotedly satisfied in God through Christ?

These are questions that prayerfully will bring clarity to your walk with Christ. It is my prayer as was Peter's that letter and study "will stir you up by reminder" the Lord Jesus Christ and His present and future promises that are yours in abundance now and for all eternity.

2 Peter Lesson 2
“The Gospel is Not a Fairy Tale”
2 Peter 1.16-21

LOOK IT UP:

■ **REVIEW:** How were you reminded this past week concerning God’s Word? What were you reminded of?

■ **REFLECT:**

1. How did Peter compare the source of his message versus others? (2 Peter 1.16)

2. What occasion do you suppose Peter was referencing to in verses 16b-18?

3. How did Jesus please God? How can you please God?

4. Why should we pay attention to the words of the prophets? (2 Peter 1.19)

5. Where does the Word of God originate? Who is the author of Scripture? How did it come to us? (2 Peter 1.20-21)

■ **REVEAL:** How easy is it for Christians to fall into false teaching? How can you protect yourself from being deceived by clever devised tales?

THE LESSON

LEARN IT:

INTRODUCTION: On June 27, 1819, Adoriram Judson baptized his first convert in Burma. His wife, Ann Hasseltine, described how Mounng Nau had responded to the Scripture: “A few days ago I was reading with him Christ’s Sermon on the Mount. He was deeply impressed and unusually solemn. ‘These words,’ he said, ‘take hold on my liver; they make me tremble.’” God spoke through Isaiah the prophet 2700 years ago and said, “This is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word...Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at his word (Isa. 66.2,5).

OVERVIEW: How do you come to God’s Word? Do you fear it? Do you tremble? Do you see it as the very breath of God? Or do you compare it with other literature, history, or philosophies of the world? In this section Peter makes it clear that the Word of God is no fairy tale that is cleverly devised by men. That what they are receiving from the apostles, such as himself, is on par with the prophetic words of the prophets who were not speaking their own mind or interpreting God’s Words, but speaking the very breath of God. Peter supports this by claiming that he and the other apostles were “eyewitnesses” of Jesus’ ministry. They saw His majestic honor and glory as the Father in heaven affirmed the work of His Son, thus, they were in fact confirming what the prophets spoke and recorded in the Old Testament. Therefore, Peter defends the authority of God’s Word because of the false teachers who were attacking the church and the integrity of God’s Word.

PURPOSE: The gospel we proclaim is true because it is handed down by the eyewitnesses of the apostles, the forth telling of prophets, and the Spirit of God speaking through men.

THE MESSAGE OF THE APOSTLES (2 Peter 1.16-18) - The message of the apostles was essentially that Jesus was the Christ (i.e. God’s promised Messiah; cf. 1 John 5.1). This was Peter’s confession of the pre-crucified and resurrected Christ (Matt. 16.13-16; Mk. 8.27-29; Lk. 9.18-20). In that narrative, Jesus asked His disciples “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” Some of the disciples had various responses from the people such as John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. Then Jesus asked a second question to them personally, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered Jesus by stating that, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16.13-16). John, summarizes the message of his gospel by stating “but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (Jn. 20.31).

The disciples (later, apostles), as Jesus was calling them to Himself in the beginning of His ministry made these statements about Jesus:

- Andrew brought his brother, Simon Peter, to the Lord by proclaiming, “We have found the Messiah” Jn. 1.41.
- Philip made a similar statement to Nathanael by telling him that, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote - Jesus of Nazareth” Jn. 1. 45. Philip was referring to what God commanded the children of Israel in the wilderness when God spoke

through Moses by saying, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him” (Deut. 18.15).

- Nathanael confession is truly amazing in the fact that Jesus’ ministry had just begun when Nathanael confessed: “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel” (Jn. 1.49).

None of these confessions, including yours cannot be made unless it comes from God’s power revealed by His Holy Spirit. Note, Jesus’ response to Peter’s confession: “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 16.18).

Therefore, Peter, as an eyewitness of Jesus’ ministry reminds his readers that the true message concerning Christ does not come from “cleverly devised tales” when they “made known the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Peter. 1.16).

Why would Peter make this distinctive between “devised tales” and being an “eyewitness?” Peter’s use of the term “devised (sophizo) tales (muthos)” points to the type of teaching that was taking place by “sophists” who promoted “false wisdom.” What is a “sophists?” A sophist was a specific kind of teacher in Ancient Greece in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. They specialized in using the tools of philosophy and rhetoric, music, athletics, and math to promote their philosophy. In general they claimed to teach virtue applied to various areas to young statesmen and nobility. These, Peter indicates were “cleverly” taught to lead people away from the truth about Christ. Later, Peter would point them out as “false prophets” (2.1ff).

In contrast, Peter reminds his readers that “we” (he and his fellow apostles) “witnessed” the life and ministry of Christ, more specifically in this case, Christ’s transfiguration, where they were “eyewitnesses of His majesty” when Christ “received honor and glory from God the Father” (v. 16b,17; cf. Matt. 17.1ff; Mk.9.2-8; Lk. 9.28-36). Of this account, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up to a high mountain. While they were praying, Jesus was “transfigured before them” (Matt. 17.2). Matthew describes what they saw by recording, “His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light” (v.2b). This sounds very similar to John’s vision in Revelation where he writes, “I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe...His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze...” (Rev. 1.13b-15). Concerning the Transfiguration scene in Matthew, Peter also mentions that they heard the voice of God utter, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased” (2 Pet. 1.17). This voice, they had heard once before saying the same when Jesus was baptized by John Baptist in the Jordan river (Matt. 3.17).

Much has been written about Christ being our example of suffering, but what gets lost is His obedient desire to please the Father in heaven. Christ gives us a perfect example what the Father desires from us. Though we cannot save ourselves, only the Father, by His mercy and grace, and through His Son can save us from our sin. But, it is in our sanctification, as the Lord calls us, sets us apart to be holy as He is holy that we look to Christ as the example in pleasing the Father. To

please God means to walk in step with His Spirit and not in the flesh. Paul writes, “and those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8.8). The first place to start pleasing God begins by yielding your heart and soul to Christ and earnestly seek Him by faith. The writer of Hebrews states: “and without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Heb. 11.6). To this, the lives we live must be lived by faith. God takes no pleasure in the one who shrinks back into the flesh (Heb. 10. 38; Hab. 2.4). Thus, pleasing God is a matter of living according to His precepts, commandments, through love. We must “present your (our) bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God” (Rom. 12.1). We do this obediently so that we to maybe also “transformed by the renewing of your (our) mind, so that you (we) may prove what the will of God is” (Rom. 12.2). Lord, willing as we walk in this manner we will hear those same words Peter and the rest heard from the Father, “well done, good and faithful servant...” (Matt. 25.21).

Peter’s reminder to his readers concerning how Christ pleased the Father, and being an eyewitness of this account, should embolden them their witness in the midst of those who are hostile to Christ and to fend off false prophets who promote their “cleverly devised tales.”

THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHETS (2 Peter 1.19) Peter had emphasized the witness of the apostles, now he looks to the witness of Scripture. Being that, the witness of Scripture originally came by the prophets through the Spirit of God, not man. He does this to help his readers to see that their choice for authority boiled down to accepting either God’s Word, or the word of men - who disagreed with God’s Word (i.e. false teachers). Notice, Peter first points to the character and integrity of God’s Word (v.19a). “So we have the prophetic word made more sure...”. This reliability is links verses 16-18 and verses 20-21. Peter pictures the present function of biblical prophecy (v.19b) and stresses the origin of prophecy (vv. 20-21).

What Peter means here is what he and his fellow apostles experienced at the Transfiguration (vv. 17-18) confirmed the words of the Old Testament prophets concerning the deity of Christ. Because of this, Peter urges his reader “to pay attention” to this “as a lamp shining in a dark place.” Why, because this means that the words of the prophets are an even surer guarantee of the reality of the second coming than his own experience on the Mount of Transfiguration (Barclay). Peter points out that the surety of God’s Word concerning Christ will be like to them a lamp in a dark room or cave. They will see what others cannot. God’s Word will not only help them to be alert and ready for Christ’s coming, but His Word, as the Psalmist writes, is like a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their paths so that they may not sin against God” (Ps. 119.105).

The second coming reference is found in the final phrase in verse 19. “...until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts” (19b). His point is that until the Lord returns, his readers should give special attention to the Old Testament and to the apostle’s teaching (The New Testament), especially since false teachers were perverting them. The Bible reminds us that “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2

Tim. 3.16). Also, God's Word is not only sufficient and the only authority a Christian needs for life and godliness, it is also eternal. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away" (Matt. 24.35). Christians would do well to dwell and meditate daily in God's Word so that when the time comes and others teach doctrines that are contrary to God's ways, you will with the Spirit's help be able with Godly wisdom to discern a "cleverly devised tales" versus the "Truth." Doing this, will "make us free" (Jn. 8.31-32).

A CLARIFYING POINT CONCERNING THE AUTHOR OF THE WORD OF GOD (2

Peter 1.20-21) Before Peter moves on to write and warn about false prophets, he wants his readers to be clear on the origin of God's Word. By saying, "know this first of all" (v.20). We need to recognized that what Peter said about messianic prophecy, is true concerning all prophecy in general. "Prophecy" is another word for the "Word of God," or "The Word of the Lord." When the Old Testaments prophesied, they were speaking the very "Word of God." They "spoke forth" (prophecy).

Peter goes on to explain what he means in the next verse (v.21). What we have in Scripture did not originate in the minds of men ("by an act of human will"), but in the mind "of God." False doctrine comes from the minds of men and women, but truth comes from the heart and mind of the living God. When the prophets spoke, they were not interpreting what God had said, they spoke forth as God's mouth pieces, articulating His thoughts in words that accurately represented those thoughts.

How did God do this in them? Peter explains, "but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (v.21b). The Holy Spirit "moved" the prophets to do so, just as the wind moves a sailboat (cf. Jn. 3.8). The same Greek verb (phero) occurs in Acts 27.15 and 17 to describe that action. From this we learn that God, Himself, is the Author of Scripture (cf. 2 Tim. 3.16). He guided the writers of Scripture to record His words "by (His) Holy Spirit."

LIVE IT:

Why is this discussion important for all Christians?

1. Knowing the Word of God keeps Christians from being deceived and "tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming" (Eph. 4.14).
2. Knowing God's Word shows that we are abiding in Christ and Christ is abiding in us (Jn. 8.31-32).
3. Knowing God's Word sanctifies the believer because God's Word is the truth as Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them by Your truth; Your word is truth" (Jn. 17.17).
4. Knowing God's Word keeps you from falling into sin (Ps. 119.105).
5. Knowing God's Word helps the Christian to know the mind and will of God (2 Tim. 3.16-17; Rom. 12.1-2)

These are just a few reason why we must trust in God's Word and know that the Gospel is not a fairy tale cleverly devised by men, but the truth concerning Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Peter Lesson 3
“Warning: False Prophets are Expected”
2 Peter 2.1-10a

LOOK IT UP:

■ **REVIEW:** How were you challenged this week with false doctrine and encouraged by true doctrine?

■ **REFLECT:**

1. To whom did Peter compare the false teachers of his time to?

2. What kind of teacher did Peter warn we should expect even today?

3. What characteristics does Peter point out concerning the false teachers?

4. Those who listen to false teachers do so why?

5. What will God do to false teachers and those who follow them?

■ **REVEAL:** How can you guard yourself against being led a stray by false teachers? How will you be able to recognize them?

THE LESSON

LEARN IT:

INTRODUCTION: We see warning signs around us mostly everyday. When driving, there are occasional signs that warn drivers about traffic, rocks, slippery roads, and animal crossings. Weather apps on phones occasionally scroll weather advisories prepare you for storms, freeze alerts and bad air quality. There are many other examples that include warnings on medication labels and certain potentially hazard containers. Why do we need these warnings? We need them to protect and prepare us against potentials dangers to us or our loved ones. 2 Peter is kind of like a warning label for the church. Not only should we expect to suffer for the cause of Christ, we should also expect there to be false teachers who will creep into the church to lead many a stray from the truth concerning the gospel and Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior.

It is also equally important not only to heed the warning signs, but also have the correct truth. Without knowing and understanding God’s Word, even warning signs can be deceiving. Take for instance the time I was driving through a neighborhood near my home. As I came to a bend in the road there was a warning sign partially obstructed by some bushes. What I read as I was driving was this: “DRIVE LIKE YOUR KIDS...” If taken literally, this could have some interesting and potentially hazardous results. But, knowing what the rest of the sign says helped me not to drive like a kid. The complete reading of the sign was: “DRIVE LIKE YOUR KIDS LIVE HERE!” Now, we have the full truth that benefits all who are concerned about my driving through their neighborhood.

In our lesson today, Peter warns and identifies the true nature of false teachers so his readers may be aware of their vain and enticing messages. He warns them to be careful not to be seduced and enslaved by their sensual message.

I. Expect False Teachers (2.1-10a)

Written like a true shepherd greatly concerned for his flock, Peter begins to write about the importance to be strong in the faith. David, the shepherd king, wrote about the dangers that might come to the sheep in Psalm 23. That as the Lord, His Shepherd, leads him through the valley of the shadow of death, then along the table lands, His Shepherd, protects them and prepares a place to keep a watchful eye on the sheep and any pending enemies that might try to stealthily make their way among the flock to harm them. Peter is that kind of shepherd to the church.

The comparison between the Old and New Testaments (2.1a): As Peter sets out to warn his readers about the dangers of false teachers among them, he connects this subject by having them to compare what God said and did in the Old Testament concerning false prophets. The “people” Peter speaks of are those who lived during the Old Testament times. As in the New Testament, “false prophets” in Old Testament times sought to lead God’s people away from the revelations of the true prophets (cf. Num. 22-24; Jer. 6.13; Ezek. 13.9). “False teachers” in Peter’s time would try to lead God’s people away from the teaching of the apostles. These men would arise from the believers (“among you”).

The term “false prophets (pseudoprophetai)” may refer to those who falsely claim to be prophets of God, and or those who prophesy falsely. Likewise, “false teachers (pseudodidaskaloi) can refer to those who claim to be teachers of God’s truth, but whom the churches’ leaders do not recognize as teachers, and or those who teach falsehood. This is the only place that this Greek word for false teachers occurs in the New Testament. Prophets in the Old Testament were the prominent communicators of God’s truth, whereas in the church, the apostles and teachers were. Therefore, Peter is saying that, just as there were those who misrepresented God in Israel, so there would be those who misrepresent Him in the church. This is so true today of those who teach heresies that sound like truth, but their message leads people away from the true gospel and exploits them with false words. So, how can we identify false teachers in the church? In the following verses Peter spells out the characteristics and consequences of false teachers in the church.

Characteristics of false teachers (2.1-3):

“*Secret teachings*” (v.1): Peter first points out that false teachers take or add to the orthodox teachings of the faith. To “secretly introduce” means to “bring in alongside.” Meaning this, they unobtrusively change the doctrinal foundation of the church with “destructive heresies” and thereby make it unstable. “Heresies” refers to ideas inconsistent with the revealed truth of God.” The “heresies” being taught by these men, Peter says are “destructive” (apoleia). This word is the name of the Anti-Christ whom the Bible calls “the Son of Perdition” (cf. Jn. 17.12; 2 Thess. 2.3). The word literally means “eternal damnation” or “utter destruction.” It is also a synonym for “hell.” When a person is called “son of perdition,” the connotation is that of a person in an unredeemable state, someone who is already damned while he is still alive. So, what Peter is indicating here is that the “heresies” these men are teaching are so utterly destructive that they and those whom they falsely lead astray will be damned and unredeemable, “bringing swift destruction upon themselves” (v.1b).

One of the main elements of their teaching is “even denying the Master (Jesus) who bought them.” They in their teaching would go as far as to deny repeatedly the teachings and practices associated with Christ. The inconsistency of their position is that, even though, they profess to be followers of Christ, they deny Him and his teachings. Peter knows first hand what it was like to deny Christ. He had denied Him three time. Peter doesn’t want others to follow his example.

What does Peter mean by “the Master who bought them”? Were they saved people by Christ’s work on the cross whom themselves were led astray and now are lost, awaiting their destruction in eternity in hell? If that were true, then that would mean you could lose your salvation, which we know that the Bible promises we can never lose (Jn. 10.27; Rom. 8). What does Peter mean here? William Barclay explains it best when he comments:

“Let us take a human analogy. Suppose a man says that he loves his wife, and then suppose that he is consistently and deliberately unfaithful to her, then by his acts of infidelity he denies, and gives the lie to, his words of love. Or, Suppose a man protests sincere and eternal friendship to someone, and then suppose he is consistently disloyal and consistently unhelpful to

the person he calls his friend, then his actions deny, and give the life to, his protestations of friendship. What these evil men, who were troubling Peter's people, were doing, was that they were saying that they loved and served Christ, and at the same time the things they preached and taught, and the things they did, were a complete denial of Him. One of the most terrible ways to deny Christ is to seek to undo all that he had done by influencing for evil the men for whom He died."

I wanted to spend more time writing on this because this point concerning the heretical teaching of false teachers is active today. The warning by Peter is strong. The "destruction" of these heretics will be "swift" in the sense that when their judgment descends it will be sudden. Their judgment, like our redemption is imminent. Meaning their spiritual rather than their physical judgment. This ruin would come upon them at Jesus Christ's judgment seat (2 Cor. 5.10).

"Sensual teachings" (v.2). - When people abandon God's standard of "truth," they usually adopt a lower standard of morality. Sensuality appeals to the flesh. Many people follow the examples of heretics, believing they are correct in doing so based on the rationalization of their teachers. This type of teaching or religion brings dishonor (or "malign") on the church because unbelievers identify the immoral as professing Christians. We defame the "truth" when we promote that it is ok to live in the flesh.

"Selfish teachings" (v.3). - When people follow the heretical teachings of false teachers they are only encouraging their "greed." False teachers, "in their greed," typically desire to satisfy themselves rather than God. This leads them to take advantage of their audiences (exploit you with false words).

"Synthetic teachings" (v.3b). - I use the word "synthetic" ("false words) to illustrate what kind of words the heretical teachers use. The word for "false" (plastos) in the Greek is where we get our word for "plastic." It means "formed or molded." These evil men use synthetic words to form and mold the hearts and minds of their listeners. Peter would say, do not listen to them. Don't get molded or formed by their way of thinking. This is a "plastic" religion they are promoting. Wiersbe commented by saying, "they use our vocabulary, but they do not use our dictionary." They say the same things about "salvation, inspiration" and other great words of the Christian faith, but they do not mean what we mean. The danger comes when immature or untaught believers listen to their preaching or read their books. Our culture is drawn to "plastic preachers" not knowing of the "destruction" that awaits both the teacher and their followers.

Consequences of false teachers (2.4-6):

Three apostates from the past (vv. 4-6)

We have touched a little concerning the consequences of these evil men, Peter next described the consequences for those who follow false teaching. This section belongs to one complex conditional sentence (vv. 4-8). Verses 9-10a forms the conclusion. In this section Peter gives three examples of apostates (one who renounces their religion) in the past. These, God did not spare because of their evil sin. The first apostate in the past were the angels who sinned (v.4).

This is an example of how the Devil works. The second example is that of the world of Noah's day (v.5). This is an example of the world. The final and third example is the turning of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes (v.6). This is the example of the flesh.

The Angels (v.4) - The "angels" were in many respects superior to humans, yet God judged even some of them for sinning by consigning them to "hell" (tararosas). This is the only reference to "Tartarus" in the Bible. It originated in Greek mythology. This is probably the same angelic rebellion to which Jude referred to (Jude 6). "Tartarus" is evidently a holding place "of darkness" and "bondage." In the end, God will send these angels from "Hell" to the "Lake of Fire" which will be their permanent place of punishment after He pronounces their final judgment (cf. Matt. 25.41).

Noah's world (v.5) - Peter's second example were the sinners in Noah's day when God "did not spare the ancient world." These were "ungodly" men who suffered their fate to the flood that God brought on the earth. Only seven people were saved, Noah and his family because he was found to be right before God. In this not only do we see God being true to His Word concerning the punishment of sinners, but also the preservation of the righteous. This consistency in God's actions shows us hope for those who are made righteous in Christ. Though many will perish and will go into eternity unredeemed without Christ, God will save for Himself some to everlasting life.

"Sodom and Gomorrah" (v.6) - Peter's final example concerns how the Lord not only destroyed the two cities, but also saved Lot and his family. God brought down from heaven on these two cities a fiery judgment (Gen. 19). The primary point made by Peter shows his readers how God deals with unbelievers. If there were some believers among the false teachers, Peter undoubtedly intended that they should take these warnings to heart, even though they would not suffer the same eternal judgment as unbelievers.

Living Faithfully in a Corrupted Culture (2.7-10a):

"God's rescue of Lot" (vv.7-9): The reminder of "Lot" shows that God will not only punish the wicked, but will at the same time extricate the righteous (rescue the godly) from the judgment He sends on the surrounding ungodly. This is to encourage Peter's readers by looking to Lot's example that one can live among depraved heathens and yet escape the flames by trusting in God alone by faith alone in Christ alone. God will not lose His faithful in the mass of sinners whom He will judge.

The current event of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, if this fits in the time period of Peter's letter is a great backdrop to say that even though there were some believing Jews and unbelieving Jews who died when the Roman soldiers demolished this sacred city, Peter indicates that God is able to know how to deliver the righteous. So, even in the midst of their faithfulness, they die in Christ they will not be lost to God forever. He knows exactly who belongs to Him. Recall David's Psalm, "even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me" (Ps 23.4).

LIVE IT:

We cannot always tell who the righteous are, but God knows (cf. Matt. 13.24-30). How a person behaves may be misleading. Not only may some unbelievers appear to be saints, but some believers, such as Lot, appear to be unsaved. The main idea in these verses by Peter tells us that God judges those who obstinately disregard his commands while he protects those who stay faithful to Him.

Ways to know you belong to God in Christ:

1. You confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Believe that He died on the cross and rose again three days later from the dead. (Rom. 10.9-10, 13; 1 Cor. 15.1-3)
2. You delight in meditating on God's Word rather than hanging out with sinners and scoffers (Psalm 1).
3. You conduct your life in such a way as to please the Lord, especially when others are not looking (Rom. 12.1-2; Eph. 5)
4. You demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit in your life rather than the deeds of the flesh (Gal. 5)
5. You proclaim to others how Christ brought you out of darkness and into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2.9-10).
6. You recognize this world is not your home, you are a sojourner (1 Pet. 2.11).
7. You look forward to being with Christ, your hope in glory (Col. 1.27).

2 Peter Lesson 4
“Warning: False Prophets and their Demise”
2 Peter 2.10b-22

LOOK IT UP:

■ **REVIEW:** How serious is God about living ungodly lives? What is your reaction to the ways that some Christians have denied their Master (Christ) to follow their flesh and practice sensual sin? Are you denying your Master (Christ) or are you following your own master (self)?

■ **REFLECT:**

1. List the adjectives that Peter uses in describing the false teachers. 2 Peter 2.10-22

2. What are these false teachers like?

3. Who does Peter compare them to? 2 Peter 2.15-16

4. Read Number 22-24 to get the background on Balaam. How does Peter’s analogy fit Balaam’s story?

5. What is the fate of false teachers?

■ **REVEAL:** What are some ways you can protect yourself from being enticed and deceived by false teachers in the church?

THE LESSON

LEARN IT:

INTRODUCTION: In the letter written by James, the half brother of Jesus, he speaks about the importance and dangers of being a teacher in the church when he writes: “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment” (Jms. 3.1). There are very strong warnings in the Bible directed to leaders who mislead God’s people. These warnings go out to prophets, priests, pastors, and teachers who by their example and doctrine lead the sheep into sinful conduct and destructive ways and beliefs.

One pastor wrote about a church that had recently adopted and condoned same sex union in marriage. When he spoke to one of the pastors from that church, he explained that when it came to salvation, they were now an inclusive church. Meaning this, that people of all religions and life-styles are saved through Jesus, even if they don’t believe in Him, as long as they don’t willfully opt out.

Pastors and Bible study teachers should not play with the lives of those who were purchased by the precious blood of Christ. Pastors are to care for the church (Acts 20.28). The practice of false teaching goes way back in the Old Testament. For an example, prophets of Samaria had been guilty of prophesying in the name of Baal. This misled the nation of Israel. What’s worse is that the prophets of Jerusalem committed adultery before God and they walked in lies and strengthened the hands of evil doers. God said of them, “all of them have become like Sodom to me, and its inhabitants like Gomorrah (Jer. 23.14).

OVERVIEW: Peter just wrote how the Lord God judges those who obstinately disregard His commands while He protects those who stay faithful to Him. He continues with his warning concerning false teachers by emphasizing their conduct and fate, not only for them, but for those who are misled by them and follow their false teachings.

PURPOSE: All saints of God in Christ ought to be alert to those who would audaciously and intentionally lead the saints astray from the gospel truth. Not only did he warn his readers concerning their words and ways, but also their fate. Those whom the Lord punished in the Old Testament should serve as a reminder that the Lord is serious about sin and His Word.

I. THE BOLD AND BLASPHEMOUS WORDS OF FALSE TEACHERS (2.10b-11)

False teachers are audacious (v.10b): Have you ever met a presumptuous person? A presumptuous person is one who fails to observe the limits of what is permitted or appropriate. This is the meaning of the word “daring” in verse 10b. They are bold to the point of being presumptuous.

False teachers are self-pleasing (v.10b): They are in a sense “self-willed and arrogant.” Their only goal in life is to please themselves. People like this are only concerned about doing their own thing as opposed to doing God’s will. Their theme song is “I Did it My Way.”

False teachers are blasphemous (v.10b-11): What was “daring” and “arrogant” about the false teachers? Peter states that “they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties” The word “revile” means to “blasphemy.” What are they “blaspheming”? The authorities that the Lord God has placed over them. Some translations render “angelic majesties” as “glorious one” (ESV), “government, dignities”(KJV) and “dignitaries” (NKJV). Remember, Peter earlier in verse 10 stated they “despised authority.” Calvin tells us that the “angelic majesties” refers to the imperial and magisterial powers. He comments, “for though there is no lawful station in life which is not worthy of respect, yet we know that the magisterial office excels every other, because in governing mankind God Himself is represented. Then truly glorious is that power in which God Himself appears.” Thus, Calvin concludes, that those Peter speaks of who are “daring” and “blasphemous” were “frantic men, lovers of tumults and confusion; for no one can introduce anarchy into the world without introducing disorder. Now, these with bold effrontery vomited forth reproaches against magistrates, that they might take away every respect for public rights; and this was openly to fight against God by their blasphemies.”

All this to say, the false teachers were creating anarchy and dragging the church into their cause. They not only despise governing authorities, but “denying the Master” (2.1) promoting their “sensuality,” their “greed” and “exploiting” christians with false words in their “daring” and “self-pleasing” way to promote their own personal cause.

What can we compare this to today? Anytime a group who claims to speak for the church who opposes the governing authorities and laws in the land are not only being audaciously disrespectful to those “glorious ones” given to us by the Lord, but the Lord Himself. The New Testament gives christians broad principles on how we are supposed to respond to government. Romans 13 and other places teaches us that the origin and institution of government is ordained by God. Thus, for His sake we are called to be model citizens. The only time we are to reject or disobey governing authorities is when they require christians to do what God forbids. Our position is to obey God rather than the institution. But in the broad sense, the New Testament teaches christians to quietly submit and obey those in authority over them. We are also given the responsibility to pray for our earthly leaders that they may fulfill the tasks God has given them and so that we may live dignified lives. Thus, the christian’s action is to pray, submit and obey unless being commanded to go against God’s Words and ways.

II. THE BRUTISH AND UNREASONABLE WAYS OF FALSE TEACHERS (2.12-19)

False teachers are unreasonably ignorant (v. 12): Next, Peter reveals what these false teachers were really like. Rather than behaving as good angels do, the coming false teachers would act like “unreasoning animals.” They would follow their lower “instincts,” their “natural” desires, instead of their reasons. Animals live mainly by instinct. Peter therefore believed the false teachers deserved treatment similar to animals. They will perish like beasts, slaughtered animals, or “road-kill.” Peter did not mean they would escape eternal condemnation. That would come later.

False teachers are unashamed of their ways (vv. 13-16): Romans 3.23 tells us that “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 6.23 then tells us what we deserve for our

sin..."For the wages of sin is death..." Peter here states something similar concerning the crimes of these false teachers by writing, "suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong." Rather than concealing their carousing under the cover of darkness, they unashamedly practice immorality in broad daylight. The pagans did this in their worship of false gods. Pagan worship often involved "sacred" prostitution. By these shameful acts of hedonism, they become like "stains" and "blemishes" as they "carouse with you" (v.13). Since these practitioners of sin claimed to be Christians, Peter likened them like a stain on your tie or your blouse. Very noticeable.

I once worked with a brother in a church who had stains on his shirt from meals. You could tell what he had for dinner or lunch by the color of the stain. It was apparent. We could see it. The same for these who were unashamedly practicing sin before others. Their practice was a sore sight and gave the church a black eye in the public view. The worse of it all was that Peter indicates that they "reveled in their deceptions (v.13). They had "eyes full of adultery that never ceased from sin." They "enticed unstable souls" leading them astray (v.14). Their hearts were full of "greed" and behaved like "children" (v.14). Peter states, like Balaam, they themselves have "gone astray" (v.15).

The example of "Balaam" comes from Numbers 31.16. The false prophet Balaam counseled Balak, the king of Moab, to invite the Israelites to participate with his people in a feast to honor Moab's gods. This feast would include sacred prostitution (Num. 25.1-3). Thus, Peter indicates here that Balaam's immoral character is a classic example of the false teacher who leads people astray for his own personal gain. In this illustration, God used a dumb animal (mute donkey) to rebuke Balaam. The ancients regarded animals as mute (dumb) because they did not speak human language. The donkey is proverbially considered to be an obstinate animal and was revealed by God to be more wise than Balaam (cf Jude 11).

Just like the fairy tell of Pinocchio, when his mind strayed from the things the fairy told him to do, Pinocchio seems to get into trouble. This is like Christians do when they are led astray from God's Word to follow other influences that take them to places they have no business being at. If you claim to be a christian and a child of God, trust in Him, follow His Word, and obey.

False teachers are arrogantly corrupt (vv.17-19): Next, Peter tells us how arrogantly vain and empty these false teachers were. They are like "springs" and "mists" that never deliver. These teachers were hypocrites. They are "driven by a storm" of "darkness" which symbolizes separation from Him who is the Light (cf. Matt. 25.30; 1 John 1.6; Jude 13). This is because they turned from the light of God. They promise much with their enticing sensuality and promise freedom, not knowing themselves, they are "slaves of corruption" (v.19). One put it this way, they are like a 300 pound man selling diet books. Slavery occurs whenever one is under the control of some influence, not just some other person. Barclay quotes "Seneca" (the Greek Stoic philosopher) who said, "To be enslaved to oneself is the heaviest of all servitudes." Chrysostom is quoted as saying, "Some have gone with less pains to heaven, than others to hell."

Simply, Peter is pointing out how easily it can be for those who claim to be Christians to be enticed by the flesh. Like we tell our children when someone attempts to abduct them on the street. They should alert an adult, identify suspicious behavior, don't walk away with anyone other than their own parent. You have the right to say no! Say no to false teachers. Say amen to those who preach and teach God's Word.

III. THE BRUTAL AND CONTEMPTIBLE FATE OF FALSE TEACHERS (2.20-22)

False teachers are entangled in the filthy web of their own sin (v.20): Finally, Peter focuses his discussion on the false teacher's final doom to warn his readers of the serious results of following their instruction. The pronoun "they" poses difficulty of whom Peter is speaking of here. The reason being is because it is clear that the pending judgment on those he is speaking of is eternally severe. For if he was speaking of unstable Christians, or unsaved individuals, or even mature believers, verses 20-22 would support the theological idea of one losing their salvation, which we know that Scripture does not support. There are too many promises that there is nothing that can separate one from Christ once they genuinely believe (Jn. 10.27; Rom. 8.38-39) because of God's sovereign choice of His saints, "you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God" (1 Cor. 3.23). So, who is Peter speaking of here. Who is "they"? It is likely Peter is speaking of the false teachers who are unsaved. They had thrown their key to deliverance away, and thereby become "entangled" and "overcome" again by defilements of the world. Their "first state was eternal damnation without having heard the gospel, but their "last" state was "worse" (eternal damnation) because they had heard and rejected the gospel. There lies the greater privilege with greater results when one has had the privilege in hearing the gospel (faith comes by hearing [Rom 10.17], but they have rejected the true gospel.

These evidently had heard the gospel preached, and had fully understood the apostle's teaching that Jesus Christ was both Lord and Savior, but had rejected it. They had "escaped the defilements of the world," in the sense that they had understood the gospel, acceptance of which liberates the sinner. In other words, the gospel is the key to escape. Their escape was possible because they had heard the gospel. This would be like someone saying, "I have the cure for cancer in a pill, and you have cancer. If I give you the pill, one could say that you have escaped your disease - even though you choose not to swallow the pill." These false teachers have thrown their key to deliverance away, and thereby, become "entangled" and "overcome" by the defilements of the world. Their first state was eternal damnation without hearing the gospel, but their last state was worse after hearing the gospel message. Thus, these were those who had heard but were never regenerated because they were never part of the collective kingdom of God in Christ, the church.

False teachers are unreformed and face a contemptible judgement (vv. 21-22): These false teachers' lives were never reformed by the gospel of peace, thus turned away from it and returned to their depraved lifestyle like a "dog returns to its own vomit" (v.22). This is how Peter compares the false teachers to. Dogs and swine (cf. Matt. 7.6; Prov. 26.11). Dogs return to corruption, pigs return to filth that they find outside themselves, even though their handlers may clean them up occasionally.

Peter's warning here is not only derogatory towards the false teachers, but his strong words serve as a clear warning to steer clear and avoid these men like a bad habit.

LIVE IT:

Peter's concern was the characteristics, consequences, conduct, and condemnation of false teachers, not their unsaved condition. Most false teachers are unsaved. Our biggest concern is not whether a person is saved or not, but what they are saying period. Is what they are saying in agreement with Scripture or is it contrary. This is why it is important that we know the truth so that we can live free lives by the truth. The only way to know the truth is by abiding in the Words of Christ (Jn. 8.31-32). When we abide in the Words of Christ, Christ abides in us (Jn 15.5). When Christ is at the center of our lives then His Words, our prayers, our service, our fellowship, our witness will be Christ centered. When we live outside the Words of Christ, we not only deny the Master as the false teachers do, but we condone the teachings and ways to false teachers, and possibly prove ourselves as genuinely not being saved.

Prove your salvation in Christ by submitting yourself to Him alone and His Word. Flee from youthful desires and lust, point out heretical teachings and persevere obediently to the end when Christ call you home.

2 Peter Lesson 5
“The Purpose of Peter’s Letters”
2 Peter 2.3.1-18

LOOK IT UP:

■ **REVIEW:** Can you list ways today how people are being deceived by false teachers? What is their message? What is their method? Why do some follow them?

■ **REFLECT:**

6. What is the purpose of Peter’s letter? What is it that we should remember and why? (2 Peter 3.1-2)

7. What does Peter warn his readers of especially concerning the “Day of the Lord?” (2 Peter 3.3-4)

8. What statements did the “mockers” make and how did Peter teach his readers how to respond to them? (2 Peter 3.4-9)

9. What will be the fate of the false teachers, mockers and the ungodly, along with the heavens and the earth? (2 Peter 3.7)

10. What is the hopeful promise of the believers in Christ? What is it that believers ought to look forward to? (2 Peter 3.10-14)

■ **REVEAL:** Since God’s wrath will come on the ungodly and the universe, how then, as we wait for Christ return should believers behave and act? (2 Peter 3.11-15)

THE LESSON

LEARN IT:

INTRODUCTION: Hachiko was a dog born on a farm in Japan. He is remembered for his remarkable loyalty to his owner, for whom he continued to wait for over nine years following his death. During his lifetime, the dog was held up in Japanese culture as an example of loyalty and fidelity. Even, after his death, Hachiko is still remembered through books, movies, and statues. Peter's encouragement to his readers is for them to have remarkable loyalty to Christ and enduring patience as they await His return, just as Hachiko was for his master.

OVERVIEW: In the conclusion of his second letter, Peter turns from the negative warning against false teachers, to making a positive declaration of the apostle's message to help his readers understand why he wrote this letter. Peter's tone goes from strong confrontational to love and encouragement. In this final chapter, Peter states his purpose for writing this second letter to his readers, most of which concerns responding to those who will mock the second coming of Christ. Peter not only prepares his readers how to respond, but also offers them a prophetic glimpse of hope with a warning to be on guard not to be carried away by the error of unprincipled men.

PURPOSE: Christian need to be patiently ready for Christ's return and give a defense for the hope they have in Christ, especially concerning His second coming while not falling into the trap laid by unprincipled men.

I. TO STIR UP YOUR SINCERE MINDS (3.1-2)

The importance of repetitive instructions (v.1): "...the second letter I am writing to you..."

Peter's first letter was most likely "1 Peter." It is not assumed that 1 & 2 Peter were the only two letters Peter wrote, but his mention of writing a previous letter, implies or we may assume was to the same audience in 1 Peter. Scholars seem to think that this is the same audience since Peter is stirring his readers to remember the things he has previously written to them (1.13). Of course, if this is true, then the recipients are from Asia minor (1 Peter. 1.1).

What is the purpose of Peter's second letter? To arouse his readers. To awaken them so that they do not fall into the trap and get carried away by the errors of "unprincipled men" (3.17). He reminds his readers that they have "sincere minds" unflawed by evil. Thus, he gives credit to his readers that they have not yet embraced the teaching of the heretics. The English word for "sincere" is from the Latin words "sine cera" which is translated, "without wax."

In ancient times some pottery salesmen would use wax to cover up cracks and weak places in pottery. Such a cover-up could be detected only by holding the jug up to the sun to see if any weaknesses were visible. Such a vase was "sun-judged" (the literal meaning of the Greek word for 'sincere' [eilikrines]). What this implies is that God wants His people to have sun-judged minds, not those in which their sin spots have been covered over. (Kenneth Gangel)

The importance of reminders concerning the source of God's Word (v.2): To aid his readers to continue with sincere minds, Peter reminds them of the true source of authority in their walk, the words of the Apostles which come from Christ, the prophets, and the Spirit of God. What Peter is saying is that the words of the Apostles are on a level of authority equal with the writings of the Old Testament “prophets” and “Christ” (cf. 1.12-21; 3.16; Acts 1.16; Rom. 9.29; Heb. 4.7).

Christians have the assurance and responsibility to abide in the Words of Christ and to build one another up through the Word of God so that they do not get side track by every wind of doctrine that would easily entangle them (cf. Jn. 8.31-32; Jn. 15.5; 2 Tim. 3.16-17; Heb. 1.1). The apostle John wrote in his letter, *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that is coming, and now it is already in the world” (1 Jn. 4.1-3).*

What John is saying and agrees with Peter, along with the apostle Paul is that we need to listen to their instruction, because they are fulfilling the command of Christ to teach disciples *“to observe all that I (Jesus) commanded you” (Matt. 28.20a)*. So, in (1.13) Peter tells his readers he does not mind repeating the Words of Christ. As a fact, Peter stated, *“I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder...”*. Paul wrote the same when he stated, *“But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again...” (Rom. 15.15).*

Disciples of Christ need to be reminded constantly these things:

1. Remember the sin that enslaved you
2. Remember the work of Christ on the cross that delivered you
3. Remember the grace of God that saved you
4. Remember the hope you walk in
5. Remember your future in Christ that awaits you

Most of all, keep abiding in Christ all the days of your life. Keep Christ and His cross central in your life until He calls you home to be with Him for eternity. The only way to abide in Christ is by remembering to abide in His Word. God's Word is like a rudder for our soul. Our lives can be compared to a voyage and we need help in navigating our walk. God's Word directs our steps and gives us a discerning spirit to test all things and to show us how not to sin against Him. Be like the Psalm writer who wrote, *“Establish my footsteps in Your word, and do not let any iniquity have dominion over me.” (Ps. 119.133).*

II. TO SILENCE THE SCOFFERS (3.3-9)

The mocking questions of scoffers in the last days (vv. 3-4): In this next section, Peter warns his readers about the activity of “mockers” preceding the Lord's return in order to enable them to deal with this test of their faith. Peter begins by stating the great importance of this warning. “First of all” means of primary importance. The “last days” Peter refers to are the days before

Jesus Christ's return. This is the same way other writers of Scripture used the phrase "last days" (cf. 2 Tim. 3.1-5; 1 Jn. 2.18-19). What would the "mockers" (false teachers) be "mocking" follows in verse 4. Here Peter is emphasizing their attitude of intellectual superiority and disdain of scriptural revelation. This attitude led them to "following after their own lusts." The argument then is very much the same now when we face contemporary scoffers. A scoffer, as Wiersbe defines, is one who treats lightly that which ought to be taken seriously. What scoffers do not take seriously is God's sovereign plan both for the natural and spiritual realms. Those who scoff at God's word cannot not see with spiritual eyes the promises of God according to His Word. Even Paul writes that that "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1.18). Paul then quotes Isaiah 29.14 by writing, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside."

Scoffers consider themselves clever in the flesh thinking that they, according to the natural way of things, have a superior understanding, yet they do not know how foolish they are. Because of this Paul also writes, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them" (Rom. 1.18-19). What Paul seems to indicate here is that though scoffers and mockers claim to be wise, they are naturally fools who according to their own unrighteousness, even though the evidence is before them, are unable to comprehend the mind and will of God. Thus, in their ignorance and self-will will themselves experience the wrath of God to come.

So, in regards to these scoffers that Peter mentions in (3.4), what were they making a mockery of? They were mocking and denying the promise of the Lord Jesus with two statements:

1. Where is the promise of Jesus second coming? (v.4a)
2. Things are still as they were since creation, our fathers are still dead in the ground (v.4b).

They assumed that God is not able intervene in the natural world. They base their argument on what they knew concerning the absence of Christ and their dead forefathers. This same spirit of mockery is similar to that which Paul dealt with in 1 Corinthians 15 where he writes: "*Now if Christ is preached, that he has been raised from the dead, how do some of among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?* (v.12). Again, Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4 by stating, "*But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope*" (v. 13). These scoffers were not only mocking the words of the apostles, but also the very words and promises of Christ and the prophets. Thus, making a mockery of God's Word and will.

Peter's response to the scoffers who mock God's plans (vv. 5-9): How does Peter teach his readers to respond to the scoffers? He proceeds to answer the second statement in verse 5-7 and then responded to the first one in verses 8-10.

1. The second statement concerning the forefathers. Peter points out first, that these scoffers purposely forgot by disregarding information when he writes, "*it escapes their notice*" (v.5).

Peter uses two events in creation of the cosmos that show things have not always been as they are. God did intervene in the world in the past. When God spoke, the universe came into existence and created the heavens and the earth, including men, women and beasts. Not only did God intervene to create the earth, He also intervened to destroy the earth because of the ungodly in Noah's day with water and will destroy it again in the future with His Word and fire because of the ungodly (v.7). Now, the thing is, that if they want to see the second coming of Christ, it has escaped their notice that the judgement to come, by His Word and fire is reserved for them, "ungodly men." For as Psalm 1 states, that "*the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish*" (Ps. 1.6).

2. The first statement concerning the second coming of Christ. Here Peter outlines what will surely happen so his readers would understand what will take place. These are things, once again, as reminders, that have been laid out by the prophets, Christ and the apostles (3.2).
 - First, God has given orders that the present heavens and earth (vv. 5-6) will experience another judgement in the future by fire as he explains in verse 10. This world, universe and the ungodly are presently "reserved" for fire, in the sense that this is their inevitable destiny (cf. Deut. 32.22; Isa. 34.4; Zeph. 1.18; Mal. 4.1).
 - Second, This event will take place after the Great White Throne of judgment, and before the creation of the new heavens and new earth (cf. Rev. 20.11-15; 21.1).
 - Thirdly, in regards to Christ coming and His faithful promises, it does not matter if He gave His promise yesterday or a thousand years ago. He will remain faithful, and will fulfill every promise (cf. Ps. 90.4). The reference to a day and a thousand years by Peter in verses 8-9, simply means that time does not cause God to forget His promises. Many scholars and Bible students try to make much out of this subject concerning "*with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years one day*" (v. 8). Peter is pointing out that God is eternal and does not exist in time. Man is immortal. He has a beginning and has an eternal soul. But God has no beginning nor end. He is the Alpha and Omega. The time that Peter uses here illustrates God's patience and grace. Therefore, God has not forgotten His promises nor is there anything thwarting Christ from returning. The coming day of the Lord will take place when God is ready for it to take place. It is imminent, it will come swiftly, like a thief in the night, and with heavy judgment (v10).
 - Finally, in regards to God "*not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance*" (v.9a). This phrase has caused many debates as to what Peter meant and its relation to God's desired and decreed wills. The key word or pronoun in this verse is "you." Peter had just spoken concerning the destination of the ungodly and how they will experience God's wrath by fire (v.7), here Peter's attention is towards the church. It's an encouraging word to His readers that God will fulfill His promise. He is patient towards His own (as He was with Israel past), and desires His people (Peter's readers) not to fall into sin by listening and following the false teachers and scoffers, but to live a life of repentance with a view to the hope they have in glory with Christ.

III. TO STRENGTHEN YOUR STEADFAST HOPE IN CHRIST (3.10-18)

The imminent day of the Lord (vv. 10-13): What is the day of the Lord? The “day of the Lord” refers to a specific time yet future, or another way, not in a particular day, but time in the future. Here are some basics that Peter gives his readers concerning “the day of the Lord.” Obviously, these are not all the activities, but just some of them.

- The day of the Lord will come like a thief (v.10a). This is Peter’s way to illustrate that no one knows the time or day when Christ will come again. Even Jesus told His disciples that only the Father knows (Matt. 24.36). Needless to say, the day of the Lord will take everyone, especially unbelievers by surprise.
- The heavens and the earth will be violently destroyed (v 10b, 12). Everything in creation will be totally wipe out. All the “elements” including the material blocks of physical things (i.e. the atoms, molecules, and larger masses that are foundational to still larger thing). All will “pass away.” All the “earth and its works.” God will do this with “intense heat” (v. 10, 12)
- God will create a new heavens and earth (v.13). Peter makes a statement that should serve as a vision for all believers when he writes to his readers, “*But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells*” (v.13). While many look to build and become permanent residence here on this earth, including after they pass away, believers as Peter wrote in his first letter are “aliens.” We are sojourners in this world because this world is not our home. Christians ought to have a view to the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21-22). Here on here, even during the millennial reign of Christ (Rev. 20), even though Christ will reign, there will still be unrighteous people living on the earth. But, on the new earth only the righteous in Christ will dwell there and He with us (Rev. 21.22).

The immediate behavior of believers (vv. 14-16): So Peter then proposes the question or statement, that, if these things are to take place, then what sort of people should we be now? Just as he wrote in his first letter, we should be holy people who represent a Holy God (1 Pet. 1.16). Peter exhorts his readers to live and conduct their lives in godliness. Looking forward with eagerness for the ‘day of the Lord.’ That it would come quickly because the new world will accommodate the righteous in Christ and not the unrighteous. Peter then list several things that should be “diligently” found in a believer (v.14)

1. Peace in Christ
2. Spotlessness in Christ
3. Blameless in Christ

All these should mark every believer who are in Christ. Without Christ, there is no peace with God. Without Christ, we cannot come before God spotless and blameless. The blood of Christ from the cross became our peace offering that covered the stain of sin and made us one with the Father through Him. Thus, we are presented by Christ to the Father as blameless. No longer does the Father see our sin, but the righteous and innocent blood of His only begotten Son.

This, Peter writes, we should “*regard the patience of our Lord as salvation*” just as Paul did. Paul simplified what the gospel is when he wrote in 1 Corinthians 15.3-4 “*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to Scriptures.*”

The injunctive instruction by Peter (vv. 17-18): Finally, we come to the close of Peter’s letter with a summary of what he had said, and a doxology.

First, he warns them to be on “guard” (v.17). Christians need to be alert so they are not carried away by doctrinal error by men who handle the Word of God incorrectly. Remember, the threat to the church is not so much from the outside as much as on the inside. False teachers masquerade as good teachers, yet they are not adequately equip to teach God’s Word because they do not regard it as the inherent and sufficient Word of God that it is. They would not agree with Paul when he wrote, “*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work*” (2 Tim. 3.16-17). Therefore, Peter warns His readers to be on guard, know God’s Word, test the Spirits, be steadfast and to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v.18a). This was Paul’s prayer in Ephesians and Philippians, this is also Peters prayer and desire for his readers.

Peter then signs off his letter with a prayer giving glory to the eternal God, “*To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen!*” All that we do or say should be for the glory of God. All that the Lord does is for His own glory. Why would this be any different for His own. We, His own, redeemed by Christ should be beaming lights of His glory shinning for all to see. To remind the world that despite the curse that is laid upon it, there exists a Holy God who is eternal, not just immortal. Who deserves all glory and honor and majesty and power. “To God be the glory for the great things He has done!”

LIVE IT:

As we look back at our study of 2 Peter here are some things to be reminded of:

1. The Lord has not only multiplied to His own His marvelous grace, but also granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness. This renders us useful to Him without excuse to serve Him. (1.1-9)
2. We are to be reminded of the glorious gospel in Christ that saved us and to be diligent in making certain about our calling in Christ because the only way to the entrance of the eternal kingdom of heaven is through Christ Jesus our Lord (1.10-15)
3. We can expect false prophets to seduce believers to follow their sensual teachings that turn people away from the Master (1 Peter 2). These false teachers are devious and selfish. They show no shame to practice their sin during the day in the midst of others. These false teachers are destined for the wrath of God in the lake of fire reserved for them.
4. As believers we have an eternal promise and hope with Christ in a new heaven and earth.