

## **Serving God Faithfully To The End**

### **2 Peter 3**

Scripture quotations taken from the HOLY BIBLE,  
NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION.

Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible  
Society.

Used by permission.

### **Preface**

This third booklet in our series on 2 Peter deals with the final chapter of Peter's short letter. An expression that you will find occurring many times in these pages is 'the day of the Lord' as this is Peter's overall theme. The return of Christ to earth is promised on so many occasions in the rest of the New Testament that its certainty is not in doubt at all, but in Peter's day as in ours there were those who were denying this. Peter helpfully deals with this problem giving much teaching to encourage the believer's perseverance, while at the same time outlining the great danger that exists for those who refuse to believe that the day of the Lord will come. His call to all genuine followers of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be ready for that great day because it will usher in tremendous blessing for all who have trusted in Christ. Our prayer is that the reading of these pages will help you to be prepared for this momentous day which God will bring about in his own good time. Failure to do so will be eternally disastrous, but

careful application of Peter's exhortations will prove eternally profitable.

Derek French  
April 2010

---

---

## **Chapter 1: The Return Of Christ, 2 Peter 3:1-4**

### **Introduction**

Following on from the theme of salvation for the believer and judgement for the ungodly in chapters 1 and 2, in chapter 3 Peter directs our attention to the coming day of the Lord (see verse 10). This is the day of Christ's return when these things will take place. It will be a momentous day, and for the believer a day to long for and prepare for because it will be a day of great glory when Christ will be seen and acknowledged by all as King of kings and Lord of lords. But sadly even this great day had come under attack from the enemies of the Gospel and it is still attacked today by those who refuse to accept the clear teaching of the Bible that Jesus will return. With this background in mind, Peter writes to remind, encourage, strengthen and instruct the church. His purpose is to establish our faith in the Lord's promise to come again so we can refute and stand against those who deny it.

## 1. Peter's purpose, verses 1-2

He begins to tell us why he has written not only on this present subject, which he is about to unfold, but his whole letter.

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

In these verses Peter indicates three important points.

### a. His relationship with his readers, verse 1a

He describes his readers as ‘*Dear Friends...*’ The word Peter uses means ‘beloved’ or ‘divinely loved ones.’ He is telling us that he has written to them as those who are very dear both to Christ and himself. He has a deep love for them that is displayed in his care and concern over their present difficulties. It is a lovely description indicating his affection and confidence in them. It is as if Peter knew the things he had already written in the previous chapter, which were hard and unpleasant, would have made some think he had ceased to care for them. His description of them as such valued people indicates the very opposite was the case.

### b. His aim in writing to them, verse 1b

He wanted to stimulate them to think in a way that was wholesome. He tells us this was not something they had never heard about for he was reminding them of what they had received previously. He was therefore reinforcing and keeping before them a central truth of the Gospel of Christ. Repetition can of course be a vain thing but used in the right way it is also a most beneficial matter. Indeed it is essential that we are regularly reminded of some things because we so easily forget. The word translated ‘*stimulate*’ comes from the word to raise, and was used of thoroughly waking up someone who was asleep or drowsy, and hence to stimulate, to stir up, to make you think and not neglect this. And what was it Peter wanted to stimulate in them? To encourage them to wholesome thinking. That is thinking which was sincere, unmixed, free from impurity or falsehood. It referred to something that was viewed in the sunshine and could be seen as clear and pure, such as water from a stream. So the idea is that of being spotless, sincere and genuine. Peter's aim is to produce a people who are absolutely true, genuine, sincere and pure in their thinking about Christ and his Word; believers who hold firm to sound doctrine and do not alter it nor deny it, nor give in to those who do.

### c. His means for achieving his aim, verse 2

How does Peter achieve his aim? By the Word of God, described here as the words spoken by the Lord's prophets

and apostles. They were regularly to recall the precious truths that the Word of God is so clear about. This can really only be achieved by regular reading, studying, discussing and listening to God's Word. When we do this it stimulates our thinking and instructs us with the result that it produces purity and sincerity of thought because it tells us what to believe. So the Bible gives a solid foundation for our faith that is sure. If you believe what Scripture reveals your faith will be unshakeable.

Peter writes of the prophets and apostles because of their unique God given authority. They were inspired by the Holy Spirit (see 1:21). Further, they repeatedly called the people back to God and righteousness and to sincere, pure, faithful devotion to God. Theirs is a call to solid loyalty to the Lord which is free from hypocrisy, pretence and falsehood in spiritual matters. The false teachers who were troubling the church had questioned the authority of Scripture and their inspiration by the Holy Spirit. Sadly we still have such unfaithful people today so things have not changed! Peter brings them and us back to the Bible, God's Word. That is what will help us to remain true to the Lord by hearing and obeying Scriptures.

## **2. Peter's prophecy, verses 3-4**

He begins to prepare us for some of the things we will face for holding faithfully to the truths of the Lord's Word. He starts in a broad general way, then narrows it down to one particular item.

### **a) The general situation, verse 3**

*“First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.”*

Peter is writing of something that characterises the whole period described in the Bible as the last days, which the New Testament teaches as that time which began with the Lord's first coming to earth and which will end with his return (see Acts 2:17 and Hebrews 1:2). In this period *“scoffers will come”* and cynicism will be the attitude of many concerning the things of God. Many will scorn belief in God; will ridicule Christians and Biblical truths. They will call into question, criticise, laugh at, dismiss and accuse the teaching of the Bible of being untrue. The faith once for all delivered to the saints will be blatantly attacked! Peter tells us this will be a growing and increasing tendency of this period, and we have to say this sadly is something we see today as many discount the teaching of the Bible as worthless. But we need to remember as Peter instructs us that those who speak and act and think in this destructive way are not governed by righteousness but by their own evil desires. Those who attack the teaching of Scripture are living for self and living without restriction. Theirs is living that rejects and discards the claims of Christ and wants to indulge in every kind of sin without restraint. Peter warns us this is something we must expect and be prepared for it will come! But this very criticism of Scripture by some will

itself be a reminder to us of the truth of the Bible and in fact help to strengthen our confidence in God's Word because it is fulfilling the very Scriptures these cynics are attempting to deny.

#### **b) A particular application, verse 4**

*“They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.’”*

The precise error that these scoffers will be guilty of is that they will deny the return of Christ! This is a subject Peter is going to deal with at some length, but he introduces it in this negative way. These individuals will reason in this way: because things have gone on the same for centuries, they conclude Christ will never return and there will never be a judgement! They claim God's promise and the Lord's own words are unreliable and untrue! So this is a double sin, the sin of unbelief and of attributing deceit in God. In their brazenness they will deny openly the clear promises of Scripture and say it will never happen. Verses such as Acts 1:11,

*“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”*

They will dismiss all thoughts of judgement and deny any possibility of everlasting separation of the righteous from the wicked. And tragically they will live accordingly, devoid of any fear of the Lord. Astonishingly today we even have so-called ministers who deny the Saviour's return! This is all an indication that time is drawing to its conclusion.

#### **Conclusion**

Peter has more to say about those who deny the Lord's return and we shall turn to that in the next chapter of this book, but positively as believers, we need to live conscious of the reality of Christ's return. We should be quite different from those who scoff at such Biblical teaching. This means there should be a zeal about our daily conduct, and there should be an urgency about our bringing the Gospel to the lost. Peter is calling us to a burning, wholehearted, devotion and loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ. This means we need to know his Word, to be sure of what we believe, to be ready to face these scoffers, and most important of all to be ready to face the Lord when he comes.

## Chapter 2: The Powerful Word of God, 2 Peter 3:5-7

### Introduction

Peter has introduced us to those individuals who scoff and ridicule two important biblical doctrines, namely the Lord's return and the judgement. He also gives the reason that such people give for their stance in verse 4,

*"...everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."*

This claim is extremely short-sighted and untrue as Peter is about to demonstrate, but before he does so he gives a stunning exposé of the stubbornness of the unbelieving heart in the opening of verse 5,

*"But they deliberately forget..."*

It is not simply that their reasoning is wrong but that they know the truth is the opposite to their own position and so they deliberately choose to forget and conceal it. They refuse to face up to the facts and they choose to ignore and reject them and their implications. The folly of the sinner's heart is brought out into the open fully by Peter here. They are self deceived. The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah gave a very accurate description of the human heart in Jeremiah 17:9,

*"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"*

These scoffers deliberately forget that God's Word is mighty and powerful and that God both means what he says and does what he says he will do. God's Word cannot fail and is utterly irresistible. And here lies the problem because apart from God's grace men do not like to think they are under another's control. They like to have it their own way and the thought that someone else is going to have his way with them is something they dislike intensely and reject out of hand. But this is God's world and he will have his way with it. He always has and always will and he has declared what will come in the future and it will come.

### 1. The power of God's Word in the past, verses 5-6

#### a) In creation, verse 5

*"But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's Word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water."*

The whole of creation, from the farthest reaches of space to the tiniest particle of an atom have their origin in the Word of God. God spoke and it came into being. We read in Genesis 1:3,

*"God said, 'Let there be light and there was light.'"*

The whole of creation exists today because of the mighty creative Word of God. He called things into existence that did not exist before. The writer puts it like this in Hebrews 11:3,

*“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”*

The Lord created it out of nothing. What a powerful Word is God’s Word! No one else can do this. The greatest minds in the world combined together could not create even a speck of dust out of nothing! Any creation of man’s making has to use existing materials, but God created the materials by simply calling them into being. So God is able to have his way and the universe is his giant visual aid of this truth and it stares us in the eye every day. Then Peter adds,

*“...was formed out of water and by water.”*

That is he brought order out of chaos. From the water the dry land appeared and it is sustained by water (rain). The world exists now because of the Command of the Word of God. He sustains it, it is not self existent nor unchangeable. It is here only because God keeps it here. He is in control. He governs the world. He is its creator and judge.

### c) In destruction, verse 6

*“By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed.”*

God has judged the world before. It is recorded in Scripture, but these scoffers turn away from the Scriptures deliberately. Peter is referring here to the flood of Noah’s day again as he did in chapter 2 verse 5. We read in Genesis 7:4 that God said to Noah,

*“Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made.”*

Then in Genesis 7:11-12, when the Lord commanded, the heavens opened,

*“...the springs of the great deep burst forth.”*

There was terrific devastation and destruction. Peter tells us there was a deluge. The Greek word Peter uses means ‘being inundated’ and the English word cataclysmic is from this word. Peter adds that the world was destroyed, and the term he uses here means to perish, indicating all human life perished, except Noah and his family. This is a very frightening scene that Peter describes, but Peter does not dilute the scene because of that. He is concerned that we know, recognise and take to heart the truth of the situation and then act wisely as a result. Things have not

always gone on the same, as these scoffers were maintaining. Sin will not be allowed to go on for ever unpunished. That thought is frighteningly unpleasant, but we are utter fools if we ignore its reality and do not seek the Lord urgently. Peter may well have had some words Jesus spoke in his mind when he wrote these words. We are told he said in Matthew 24:37 and following,

*“As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”*

The lesson here is powerful. What God has done in the past, he is able to do again. He who created the world by his word is able to conclude it, as Peter goes on to say! Scoffers be warned and be ready.

## **2. The power of God’s Word in the future, verse 7**

*“By the same Word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.”*

By the same mighty powerful Word of God, already demonstrated in creation and the flood, this world is being kept or stored up or reserved by God to be destroyed again,

the difference being that this time it will be by fire not by flood. Scripture repeatedly reveals God as a consuming fire. See Deuteronomy 4:24, Hebrews 12:29, Exodus 15:7, 19:18, and Malachi 4:1. And it is a terrible thing to fall into his hands. God has said that his purpose is to bring devastation again. God has said there is to be a final day, a day of judgement and destruction. His solemn judgement will fall on all ungodly men. This includes the impious, the wicked, the sinful, those destitute of reverential awe towards God, those who refuse to acknowledge him as Lord, those who refuse to come to Christ for cleansing and salvation, those who refuse to love him, and those who rebelliously do not submit their lives to him and serve him. Everyone from the blatant and outspoken atheist to the nominal church attendee who has not come to trust Christ as Lord and Saviour – all unbelievers will end in eternal misery and suffer total loss!

## **Conclusion**

Peter shows us the folly and delusion of those who deny the Saviour’s return and the judgement to come. Three important points need to be made.

- i. This is a great challenge and rebuke to the unbeliever. Reader, if you have not trusted in Christ you ought to be the most terrified person on earth. How important for you to come to God through Christ for forgiveness now. Now is the day of salvation, now is the accepted

hour, so call upon the Lord while he is near, seek him while he may be found.

- ii. This ought to be a cause for great thankfulness in the believer. That we should have been delivered from the wrath to come and all by the mercy of Almighty God to us in Christ is such a cause for praising God. How much we owe to our Saviour, for he suffered his Father's wrath for us that we might never have to suffer it. It is by that same Word of God that we are being kept secure, as a bride for her bridegroom and Jesus will come again for us.
- iii. This brings a great challenge before the Christian - how believers need to point the ungodly to Christ, how we ought to do all we can to reach the perishing with the life saving Gospel of Christ, and how we need to do so with great urgency, for time is getting shorter by the minute.

## **Chapter 3: The Patient Mercy Of God, 2 Peter 3:8-9**

### **Introduction**

Having shown us that those who dismiss Christ's return and the judgement are wrong (v4f), the question still arises as to why is there such a delay in these events actually taking place? After all, it is some 2,000 years since the Saviour promised he would come again and the angels

confirmed it at his ascension! Further, this seeming delay has led the unbeliever into the delusion of thinking these events will never occur. Why does the Lord keep us and the world waiting? Indeed it could be argued that people are growing worse and worse. They often persecute God's people and increase in their wickedness. So 'Why does God allow it?' is a question many have asked.

The reason is because of God's merciful patience. This is a time during which the Lord will save yet more sinners.

### **1. God's perspective of time, verse 8**

*"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."*

Peter calls us to remember one of the essential things about the character of God, that God is eternal. We read in Psalm 90:1 and following,

*"Lord, you have been our dwelling-place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God."*

With God time is quite different from what it is to us. For God, everything is present before him all at once. That is a difficult concept for us to grasp and this illustration might help you. Imagine time was like a long procession passing

in front of you. Where you stood you would see only a small part that was passing in front of you, and that is like us and time for we can only see a small part of it at once. But imagine you were able to ride in a helicopter and fly high above the procession. From that perspective you could see the whole of the procession from beginning to end. Well, it is a bit like that with the Lord our God because he can see all of time from beginning to end. It helps when we remember that God created time and is outside of it and is not affected by it as we are. For example, he does not grow old, or weary, nor forgetful. He does not change with the years as we do, not in his character or his purposes. Peter is able to say that what for us is a long time, is to God but an instant. He uses the span of a thousand years to make his point. For us that is an extremely long time. None has ever lived so long, but for God it is just like a day and vice versa. The Psalmist put it like this in Psalm 90:4,

*“For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night.”*

‘A day’ is soon gone and ‘a watch’ was just three hours and goes even more rapidly. The context of Psalm 90:4 is a contrast with the brevity of life as we know it and the eternity of God. We come and go in a very short time, but the Lord remains the same. The passage of time in no way alters or effects what God is going to do. His eternal purposes are unaffected by the years. So we must be careful that we do not judge the time appointed by God by

human standards. God has a purpose in waiting as we shall see, therefore wait patiently with him. It is also true that the end may come at any moment and we ought always to be ready for it. The day will come.

## **2. God’s patience with sinners, verse 9**

There is a deliberate purpose in God’s mind for his delay and two matters are now brought to our attention.

### **a) A mistake we must avoid making, verse 9a**

We are to avoid ever concluding or even suggesting that the Lord is lethargic in his actions as if he were forgetful or worse neglectful,

*“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness.”*

We must realise there is no such thing as God being indifferent to the wickedness of men, neither is there such a thing as God being slow to keep his Word. He is not like a train that arrives late. He has a plan and a purpose by which he is working and nothing will disrupt, postpone or cause any delay in its fulfilment. God always keeps his promises – ALWAYS. He always keeps to schedule perfectly and is never a second too soon nor too late. This is important because it teaches us to be patient and to continue trusting in him when it seems to us that things are dragging on. This is a principle that applies even with

personal needs that the Lord has promised to supply. We must not be impatient nor over anxious. This waiting time does not mean that the Lord has overlooked us. It is a reminder that God's will is best and his timing perfect. Any apparent delay means he has an all wise reason for it. Remember that Romans 8:28 applies even when God says, 'Wait!' This information is a great help to interpreting events correctly. The unbeliever interprets them wrongly concluding that the delay means God will never act. Believers know that this is never true and waits patiently knowing with complete assurance that whatever others may say to the contrary, he will keep his word. This stimulates us to persevere patiently, prayerfully waiting and not giving up. For the Lord will answer. This is particularly helpful with reference to the Lord's return. This prevents us from speculating the date and shields us from disappointment when nothing happens on that date. It encourages our hope and anticipation for the glory yet to be revealed.

### **b) A purpose we must recognise, verse 9b**

The Lord's purpose in waiting is for the good of sinners,

*"He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."*

He mercifully stays his hand from bringing final judgement so that sinners will come to repentance and be saved. When Peter wrote *"He is patient with you..."* he was

reminding us that God is longsuffering. The word means 'to put up with' or 'to be long enduring'. In Scripture patience is used in the context of enduring provocation. In James 1 the Christian is to patiently endure trials or persecution. Here it is the Lord who exercises it because he is provoked. The sinfulness of man provokes the Lord to anger, but *"He is patient with you..."* We read in Nehemiah 9:17,

*"But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them,"*

Every sinner should consider the fact that God does not cut him down in his sins, not as proof that God will never punish the wicked, but a demonstration that God is giving him ample opportunity to repent and obtain eternal life. Peter shows us something of the lovely heart of God. He is,

*"...not wanting anyone to perish..."*

Even though eventually his judgement will fall it is not something the Lord God does with delight. He never views the destruction of the wicked with pleasure. The Old Testament prophet put it like this in Ezekiel 18:32 and 33:11,

*"For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!"*

*“As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live.”*

We see a clear glimpse of the heart of God, God who is love, God who is grieved at the wickedness of man, God who is pained at their destruction. It was his love which constrained him to send Christ to be the Saviour (see John 3:16). It is his love that patiently puts up with men and delays the judgement. But we must also remember that though God is always willing to save sinners, sinners are not always willing to be saved. The lawmakers in our governments desire no one to break the law and suffer, but some do and suffer the consequences. God’s patience does not mean there will be no judgement, but he does have a purpose in delaying because he would prefer,

*“...everyone to come to repentance.”*

This is the Lord’s purpose. Repentance means turning from sinful ways to God’s ways. It means forsaking and hating all that grieves God in their own lives. So we learn that God’s love is not some soft and meaningless sentimentality. He desires a real change in the hearts of sinners. He looks for a response, patiently waiting for sinners to turn to him. He waits for all who will come to repentance. Paul takes up this same theme in Romans 2:4,

*“... God’s kindness leads you towards repentance ...”*

## **Conclusion**

God is incredibly merciful. He spares you and me that we might turn to him before it is too late. Dear reader, the door of salvation in Christ is open, then if you have not done so already enter without delay, for the end is drawing near.

## **Chapter 4: The Day Of The Lord, 2 Peter 3:10**

### **Introduction**

Having shown us the great patience of the Lord, giving time for sinners to repent, Peter is most concerned that we don’t misuse that information. Knowing that God is patient could lead some into thinking, ‘Well, I can put this matter of becoming a Christian off till some later date.’ That is one of the chief ploys of the devil with people who hear the Gospel and its call for thorough repentance and wholehearted trust in Christ. He would lull us into thinking we have plenty of time as if there is no rush to get right with God just yet. He would try and persuade us to put it off for a while as there are many other things to enjoy first! But the devil is a liar and even our own hearts are deceitful. Therefore do not be deceived and if you ever think you do not need to worry about seeking the Lord just yet, then please take note of Peter’s words in this verse. He describes for us in detail the day that he has been considering. The day of Christ’s return, the day of

judgement and destruction of ungodly men, the last day, the day of the Lord, v10. It is given the name *“The day of the Lord”* because it is the day when Jesus will return. He will be centre of that day as the Judge of all, the day in which he will be glorified in his saints. Peter shows us that we simply cannot afford to put off seeking the saving mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ,

*“But 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.”*

We need to note two important points from this verse.

### **1. The unexpectedness of that day, verse 10a**

*“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief.”*

By ‘unexpected’ we do not mean it is a day that we know nothing about or are not aware of, but when it comes it will come suddenly and unannounced. Indeed it will catch millions completely unawares, for when they will least expect it, it will come! That day is more certain than any other day. That is an appointment no one will be able to fail to keep. It is certain, sure, fixed and nothing we nor anyone else can do will stop that day coming. It is the day God’s patience with this evil world will cease, *“...it will come...”* But its certainty also has this un-expectancy about it, *“like a thief.”* A thief comes without warning.

He gives no indications as to when he will strike or where he will strike. The last person he wants to know about his plans is the owner of the property, whether it be a bank, a shop, a building site, an office or a home. He strikes when people least expect. If they knew precisely when he would come they would take steps to stop him, but instead he comes suddenly, unexpectedly, surprisingly! Peter is clearly drawing on the words of Jesus himself in Matthew 24:42 and following,

*“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.”*

It will be just like this with the Lord’s return. There will be no indication, no warning and that day will be much more disastrous for the ungodly than some unexpected thief! Paul follows the same approach in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and following,

*“...for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “Peace and safety”, destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.”*

Things will seem normal, just as before, and many will not be worried or fearful. Indeed, many will not have a

concern about that day at all. But it will come! Peter's emphasis is that sadly many will be totally unprepared for that day, but he does not want us to be unprepared. A biblical example which will help us is the church in the city of Sardis mentioned in Revelation 3. The city of Sardis was situated on a high plateau and was nicknamed impregnable. However, because of a false sense of security and a failure to watch for attack, the city fell in 549/8 BC by soldiers climbing up a fault in the rock. But the lesson of the need to be prepared was soon forgotten and in 218 BC the same thing happened again and the city fell into enemy hands. They were unprepared and caught out and when Jesus sent the letter to the church in that city he drew on these historical events to teach an important truth. We read in Revelation 3:3,

*“Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.”*

So it will be with the day of the Lord.

A number of helpful lessons can be drawn from this verse. First we see the folly of human speculation on the date of this day. Many have foolishly tried to calculate it and failed miserably. We should not speculate about it either. Instead the great need is to be ready to face that day and to meet Christ. The way to be ready is to be sure now that you are saved, that you are a true believer and that you do

belong to the Lord. This is not playing on our emotions, but plain, wise, spiritual commonsense. What surgeon is worth the title who refuses to tell a patient that without an operation they will die. What patient in their right mind, being told that information would then refuse the life saving surgery. The Lord through Peter is teaching us that it is your everlasting well being that is at stake, then act upon it.

## **2. The universality of that day, verse 10b**

*“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.”*

We must note that nothing and no one will escape the effects of this day. Peter is trying to describe the undescribable. This is the climax of all history. It will be a terrifying and devastating event,

*“The heavens will pass away with a roar.”*

There will be a rushing sound. The term was used to describe the roar of flames, the swish of an arrow, the rumbling of thunder, the scream of a lash as it descends, the hissing of a serpent and the rushing of mighty waters. Peter has chosen the word as if to unite many horrors in one,

*“The elements will be destroyed by fire.”*

Literally they will be ‘dissolved’ under the intensity of the heat and become a vapour, perhaps like a nuclear explosion or a volcano, but much greater,

*“The earth and everything in it will be laid bare.”*

All that man has done, the work of his hands, all will perish. All that man has relied on will be gone. All will be laid bare before the Lord. On that day the whole universe will be shaken, nowhere will escape and no one.

Again two important lessons come from this teaching.

1. How foolish to put our trust in things or people or even yourself. Things will vanish. Compare the rich fool in Luke 12:16-21. People will be shown for what they really are. Spiritually self will be exposed to be poverty stricken. It is the Lord we must trust in for he alone will remain on that day and he alone can prepare us for that day, he alone will stand on that day. So we need to be found in Christ.
2. On that day, the day of grace will close with no more opportunity to repent. And if this will happen to the universe what must eternity in hell be like? Jesus described it like this in Mark 9:48,

*“...hell, where ‘their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’”*

So if we are wise we will give heed to this warning. Reader, you can no longer ever say to the Lord, ‘But I never knew.’ Therefore come to the cross, come to the Saviour, trust in the Lord Jesus now. In referring to the Lord’s first coming and the reason for that which will remain right up until this day of the Lord, this is found in John 3:17,

*“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*

Then come to him for pardon before it is too late!

## **Chapter 5: The Kind of People We Ought To Be, 2 Peter 3:11-12**

### **Introduction**

Peter now applies the challenge of the Lord’s return and the end of the world to the Christian believer, those who already know Christ as Lord and Saviour. The great truths Peter has been expounding should have a marked and powerful effect on the Christian now. Indeed if they do not then something is seriously wrong and it may be because you are not a Christian at all, so we all need to examine our hearts to ensure we are trusting in Christ alone for salvation. But for those who genuinely do trust him Peter now directs us to make ready for this great and notable day

of the Lord, that solemn day of judgement and destruction. He refers directly to this in the opening phrase of verse 11,

*“Since everything will be destroyed in this way...”*

Its reality should impress upon the believer a great sense of responsibility. That the believer has been saved from the coming wrath by Christ (see 1 Thessalonians 1:10), does not mean we can afford to sit back, take our ease and live as we like. We need ever to remember what Peter wrote in his first epistle in 1 Peter 4:17,

*“For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”*

Peter’s words are pointed, searching and directed to every Christian. No believer is excluded from this challenge. No believer can say this is for my fellow-Christian, but not for me. No believer can find a way around this one. Peter puts us all on the spot with these personal and penetrating words. The opening phrase we mentioned above from verse 11a, runs into this question,

*“Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?”*

Peter is insisting that it matters very deeply how every follower of Jesus should live. The word translated ‘ought’ is very strong and has the emphasis of something that is

absolutely necessary. It is essential and a must. This is not an optional extra which is only for certain believers and not for others. It is for all believers and always applies. We are to be permanently ready for this great day of the Lord. So this is to be ‘maintained’ in our lives constantly. It is to be an on-going part of the believer’s daily life. You see Peter is aware that unbelief about Christ’s return and the judgement produces indifference and carelessness in behaviour. When people do not believe they become lovers of pleasures, rather than lovers of God. This results in apathy over eternal matters and life beyond the grave. It produces a disregard of the laws and commands of God. For others it breeds despair, for they have nothing to live for, no purpose, no aim, no goal. But the Christian is different. We do have a purpose in life. The believer is to live for the glory of God, with the assured hope of everlasting bliss in the presence of our Saviour when he comes again.

Having asked the question, Peter now gives us the answer to it, and this is the only correct answer. Anything different is insufficient so let us consider Peter’s instruction.

### **1. Live for the Lord, verse 11b**

*“You ought to live holy and godly lives.”*

Peter is simply encouraging us to be what we are, to live the Christian life, to live up to our profession. The only

thing we take out of this world with us is our character. So this leads us to ask what should the Christian's character to be like?

### a) Holy lives

The word 'holy' really means something separate from common condition and use and is dedicated for God's use. It means to be set apart for the service of God. An example of this is seen in the vessels used in the Temple of Old Testament days. They were called the holy vessels of the temple not because they were made from some special holy metals that were different from others, but because they had been set apart for the service of God. So the term came to stand for that which was pure and righteous, and clean. We find this in the word for 'saint' which is used in the Bible to describe every Christian believer and not some select few. It simply means 'holy ones'. So Peter tells the believer that the whole of their lives is to be governed by holiness. This is a theme found throughout the New Testament and one example is found in 1 John 2:28,

*“And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.”*

The way to be prepared for the Lord's return is to be dedicated to him and to live each minute for his praise. A Christian poet has put it like this,

*“Only one life that will soon be past,  
Only what's done for Jesus will last.”*

And what Peter is calling for includes every department of the believer's life. For example, in our home life we are to strive to be governed by God's Word. In our church life we are to be genuine in our worship and praise and expectant of meeting with the Lord and the Lord with us. It includes our personal life so that we have to ensure we walk worthy of the calling with which we have been called. We are to seek to be more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ who is described in Hebrews 7:26 as being,

*“holy, blameless, and pure.”*

In short this means living every moment conscious that God's watchful eye is always upon us.

### b) Godly lives

The second way believers are to live in the light of the day of the Lord is with godliness. This term is very similar to being holy and its meaning overlaps with it. It means to live our lives in reverential fear of the Lord. It means we give our devotion and worship to God each day. Indeed, there should always be a sense of God in our lives seen in our submission to, and a love and reverence for him. Godly fear will characterise us and our response to him should never be flippant or casual, but serious, humble, prayerful and joyful. This means we should live every day

with a sense of the majesty of God, of the privilege of being his child and of the great debt of love we owe to him. It is so appropriate as we know he has rescued us from the coming wrath. Therefore we should not be building lives of wood, hay and stubble which will be burned up, but of precious gold which the fire will only refine (see 1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

## 2. Look for the Lord, verse 12a

*“...as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.”*

This day is called the day of God because the Lord will appear in the full glory of his power and majesty. On that day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord (see Philippians 2).

### a) Look forward

This is a lovely attitude to cultivate because for the believer this coming day will be one of great joy as we see our Saviour face to face. It therefore means to be expectant of, to anticipate, to wait for, to long and be eager for the Lord's coming. In other words the believer is to be consciously and constantly expecting that day to come. This is where the eyes of our hearts are to be, not on this world, but on eternity. Paul writes in a similar way in Colossians 3:1f,

*“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”*

Our great interests are in another world and we should want the day to come when the Lord will take us home. We should want to see our Saviour. We should want to see the end of sin and temptation and wickedness and blasphemy. We should want to see Christ honoured by all. In addition because our citizenship is in heaven we belong there already (see Philippians 3:20f) so this should be the most natural thing for us to do. For students away at college or people away through work or even on holiday, it is always nice to come home. How much more should that be the case for the Christian! If we are alive when the Lord returns we shall not have to endure dying, but even if we have died before that time it will not hinder us enjoying and participating in its glory (see 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16). It will be the day we will meet the dear saints already with Christ, the day of the great marriage supper of the Lamb.

### b) Speed its coming

This is a most unusual phrase. The word ‘speed’ means to urge on, impel and quicken. It includes being be eager for the arrival of and to strive for something. Peter seems to be urging us to be seeking to fulfil the conditions without which that day cannot come. For example, by prayer remembering Jesus himself taught us to pray ‘...your

*kingdom come...*' in Matthew 6 verse 10. Also by exercising true penitence seen in repentance and obedience (see Acts 3:19-21). By preaching the gospel (see Matthew 24:14) as we eagerly evangelise our world knowing that God is patient waiting for all who will come to repentance. So this period of waiting is not to be one of idleness but a time of activity, striving for the salvation of the lost, the ingathering of God's elect for it will not come until all the elect members of the church are saved, (see John 6:39).

### **Conclusion**

Peter returns to the theme of the judgement as destruction by fire which he had mentioned in 2 Peter 3:10. He declares in verse 12b,

*“That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.”*

The amazing thing is this, though that day will be a terrifying day for some, the Christian who is living in touch with the Lord can face that day without dismay and with great joy. Fire, which strikes terror into the lost, is a great incentive to the Christian to live for the Lord and to look for his coming. This is the kind of people we ought to be.

## **Chapter 6: Our Blessed Hope, 2 Peter 3:13**

### **Introduction**

The Bible is full of descriptions of the glorious hope and future of the believer. It is worth mentioning that the particular word that is translated as 'hope' in our Bibles is quite different from the way that word is used today in normal conversation. Today hope has a measure of uncertainty about it. For example, we might say that we hope tomorrow it will rain, but we cannot be certain of that as there may be no rain at all even if there are clouds in the sky. Or we might say to someone, 'I hope to visit you tomorrow', but you cannot be certain because tomorrow you might be very ill and unable to leave your home. This is quite different from the meaning of the Biblical word 'hope' which speaks of something which is future but which is guaranteed and certain and definite. There is no doubt or uncertainty about it at all. And the Christian's hope is steadfast and sure. Well, what is that hope? Here are a selection of some of the Bible passages which describe it.

Jesus said in John 17:24,

*“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory.”*

Paul declared in Romans 5:2 and 8:30,

*“And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God...those he justified, he also glorified.”*

He told the Philippians in Philippians 3:20,

*“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”*

We find it described like this in 1Thessalonians 4:17,

*“And so we will be with the Lord for ever.”*

To Timothy Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 6:19 of,

*“...the coming age.”*

And he also expressed to Timothy how he thought of this as it applied to himself in 2 Timothy 4:8,

*“Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness.”*

And in a similar way he wrote to Titus in Titus 2:13,

*“...while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.”*

The writer in Hebrews 9:28 spoke of Jesus’ return in this way,

*“...he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”*

And we find it expressed in James 1:12 as,

*“the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.”*

What a blessed hope the genuine Christian has, and Peter brings before us another marvellous description of the glory which is to come.

*“But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.”*

### **1. Its character**

*“A new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.”*

The term ‘new’ is a word that describes the quality of something by contrast to what has gone before. For example we might speak about a new coat to replace a worn and tattered one. Peter is telling us what is yet to be, and that it will be in complete contrast to this present world which is growing old as a garment, and is temporal and

unrighteous. After this world has been destroyed by fire, verses 7 and 12b, this new one will come. The precise details and how this will take place we are not told and it is useless to speculate as some have tried to do, but something of its wonder is revealed. The present heavens and earth, beautiful as they are, are none-the-less under the curse placed on them because of Adam's sin detailed in Genesis 3. But the new will be free from any curse and beautiful beyond description. In fact it will be the permanent residence of righteousness. Peter uses a word here for the permanent dwelling and which is quite different from the word he used in 1 Peter 1:1 which is translated as 'strangers' and means temporary residence of a traveller. At present the believer is travelling through this world and it is not our permanent dwelling place because the Lord has something much better in view for us. The new heavens and new earth will be the permanent, abiding, eternal residence of righteousness. It is something that will never perish, spoil or fade away with the passing of time. Its inhabitants will always remain in this blessed state for ever never to be spoiled. One Bible commentator has put it like this,

*“Paradise lost will be paradise regained and God's will shall eventually be done alike in earth and heaven.”*

Righteousness will pervade the very atmosphere and this means a number of things.

**a) There will be the absence of all unrighteousness and its consequences.**

There will be no sin at all which we are only too familiar with in this world and in our own hearts still. There will be no hatred and war, no jealousy and pride, no impurity or immorality. John describes it like this in Revelation 21:27,

*“Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.”*

There will be no foul language, no blasphemy, no counterfeit Christians or cults and nothing whatsoever that is contrary to God's will, because sin and Satan will be banished for ever. There will be no death, no sorrow, no tears, no pain, no heartbreak nor heartache. There will be no earthquakes, volcanoes, floods, accidents or deaths! Again John describes it in this way in Revelation 21:4,

*“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*

Even the remembrance of all that is iniquitous will be taken away and we will not even call it to mind as Isaiah makes clear in Isaiah 65:17,

*“Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”*

Even the memory of your own sins, which though forgiven still cause us pain at the memory of them, will never do so again.

### **b) It will be perfection – ‘the home of righteousness’**

The perfect presence of the fruit of the Spirit in every believer is outlined in Galatians 5:22 and following,

*“...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”*

Our minds will be constantly captivated by those things we are urged to cultivate now but do so imperfectly. As Paul put it in Philippians 4:8,

*“...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”*

We will serve the Lord perfectly. We will render him complete obedience and not one gram of disobedience will be found either in us or all of our companions. We will serve without hesitation. We will serve without grumbling. We will serve and never grow weary. It will be perfect

joy! We will love and worship God perfectly as the prophet Isaiah declared in Isaiah 66:22f,

*“As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,” declares the LORD, “so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,” says the LORD.”*

It will be a place of perpetual praise of our God who has redeemed us at such tremendous cost through the sufferings of Calvary and Christ crucified. We shall also dwell with each other perfectly, even with those brethren that we find difficult in this life!

Above all we shall dwell with Christ for ever. We will gaze upon his face and be like him as John wrote in 1 John 3:1-2,

*“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”*

## 2. Its certainty

Verse 13 begins with these most reassuring words,

*“In keeping with his promise...”*

Peter is referring to Isaiah 65:17 quoted above (see also Revelation 21:1). That is according to the sure word of prophecy, (see 2 Peter 1:19). Therefore it is guaranteed because it is based on the very character of God. He is holy and it is impossible for him to lie (see Numbers 23:19). In addition we must remember that God perfectly knows the end from the beginning (see Isaiah 46:10), so he cannot be mistaken about the future. Consider for a moment how Isaiah 53 was fulfilled in Christ and therefore we know we can be absolutely assured about the Lord’s promise of a new heaven and a new earth. We can also add that God is Almighty. He has all power and is more than able to bring what he has promised to fulfilment (see Revelation 19:6). Further, God is love and will never deprive his children of what is best for them. He is good and his mercy endures for ever, Psalm 118:1-2. He is also wise and has planned a way to ensure his elect will inherit the earth, through Calvary. And added to all of this he is sovereign and will always have his will done.

There is nothing that can stop his will coming to pass. Already he has perfectly fulfilled many other promises that he has given. God can no more go back on his promise

than deny himself because God is true. We read in Hebrews 10:23 that,

*“... he who has promised is faithful.”*

This is further emphasised in 1 Corinthians 1:9,

*“God, who called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.”*

There are many things we cannot be sure of, but this one is absolutely certain.

## Conclusion

What a consolation this is for every believer. For example, when aware you have foolishly yielded to temptation and feel the shame of that and need to repent and seek the Lord’s forgiveness again, how blessed to know a day will soon come when there will be no temptation nor sin to trouble you ever again. Then when suffering and pain, be it physical, emotional, mental or spiritual afflicts us, how marvellous to know a day will soon come when this will be done away with forever. Even when dying what encouragement this brings to the believer to persevere just a little while more, and what a comfort this glorious future is to the distressed and despairing. Further, what a glorious future to present to lost souls when we share the gospel of Christ with them.

How all of this incites within our hearts the longing for that day to come! How it helps us not to become earthbound, but as instructed in Colossians 3:2f to,

*“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”*

This Scripture is like a breath of spiritual fresh air; it will be glorious perfection. Hallelujah!

---

## **Chapter 7: Preparing For Eternity, 2 Peter 3:14-16**

### **Introduction**

Because all believers will dwell in the new heavens and the new earth in eternal righteousness (v13), Peter reasons that this is to affect us in a particular way.

*“So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom that God gave him. He 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.”*

This is similar to Peter’s approach in verses 11 and 12. The destruction of all ungodliness should result in particular conduct. Having emphasised the positive - everlasting righteousness and blessedness – he reasons this should also have an effect on our conduct now. He begins, “*So then...*” that is on account of or because of what he had just written. Note that Peter describes his readers as “*...dear friends*” which means they were divinely loved ones. That is, loved not only by Peter but more important by the Lord, and Peter’s purpose is to speak words of encouragement to his readers. They were after all being severely tried for their faith battling against persecution, heresy and error. They were seeking to make a stand for the Lord and it was nothing short of a battle for the truth. So to encourage them to continue in this way and not to become weary in well-doing, he lifts their attention from the immediate battle, to the time when the battle will be over,

*“since you are looking forward to this”*

That is to the new heavens and the new earth. And he does this to give them the incentive needed to help them persevere and be as ready as possible for when that day comes.

## 1. Be prepared, verse 14

He tells them to make every effort to be ready for the day of the Lord. That is to be diligent, to do their very best, to take care and to hurry on with this great task. The word speaks of intense effort. If the leader of your country was to visit your home next week, the next few days would consist of frantic effort to make sure the place was just right for such an important visitor. The last thing you would want would be for the leader to think what uncaring people these are. You would make every effort. Peter is doing the same. We are to prepare for heaven with all our might. Each believer should make it a major concern to be ready for when Christ comes, preparing to live permanently in the home of righteousness, indeed, cultivating that spirit in our lives now, because it is only righteousness that will survive in the new heaven and new earth. On that day we shall be confronted with the Lord Jesus Christ so we should ask ourselves a number of questions. How will he find me? What will he think of me? Am I prepared to live in such a holy world? These mean we should be using every second of our lives for this.

### a) We are to be spotless.

This means to be free from stains or marks, free from censure, irreproachable, unblemished and pure. Contrast the blots and blemishes of the false teachers, (see 2 Peter 2:13). They were (2:14) immoral, seductive, greedy and covetous (see Jude 20-23). Our daily desire and effort

should be spent in removing every last stain of sin and pollution from our lives. We should want to be pure (see Ephesians 4:25-32, 5:27).

### b) We are to be blameless.

Peter's word here is again very searching. It means that which cannot be blamed or found fault with and which results in ridicule and disgrace. Paul used a similar expression in Philippians 2:15,

*“...so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe.”*

To help us appreciate what is required of us, these two terms are found in another passage that Peter wrote, this time in 1 Peter 1:19 where he reminds his readers that they were redeemed

*“... with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”*

What Peter is teaching is that we should have as our aim to be like Christ. That is to behave like him, to react like him, to think and speak like him, to obey like him, to be kind and compassionate like him, to be thoughtful like him and to be holy like him. This is an extremely high standard but it must be our greatest aim and godliest ambition. It means

to be as resolute as him in doing his Father's will, to be as resolute as him in resisting Satan's will and to say 'yes' to all that is right and 'no' to all that is wrong. And it is the prospect of heaven which makes this a delight not a burden for the believer. Because we are so glad he has delivered us from the dominion of sin and that one day we shall be delivered from the presence of sin, the true believer will want to be as free from sin as much as is possible. No true Christian will want to do anything that dishonours the Lord, and if in our weakness we do, we shall quickly put matters right with him, seek his forgiveness and strength not to fail again.

### c) **We are to be at peace.**

It seems best to consider this peace, not so much the peace we enjoy because we are justified by faith and have peace with God (Romans 5:1), nor that believers should live in peace with each other, though both of these should be true of us. Rather that the return of Christ should bring a deep sense of peace to our minds. There are very good reasons why the believer should enjoy such peace as we prepare for the day of the Lord. For example, that day will be the day of our vindication. It will be the day when all wrongs will be righted. And that day will be for us the day of unparalleled joy as our Saviour returns for us. These tremendous future prospects we should cultivate and enjoy that peace now however difficult our present circumstances might be or become before that day. The evidence that we have this peace will be seen in our continuing to persevere,

for we know a day is coming when all will be well. Those without this hope cannot enjoy such peace, for they do not know the God of peace nor the Prince of peace but each believer does. Therefore we can rest secure in Christ's keeping.

### **2. Be patient, verses 15-16**

Having whetted our spiritual appetite with the description of eternity some may ask, "Why doesn't the Lord come now and bring in this perfect and eternal age?" Or, "Why doesn't he change us straight away then we won't have to struggle and battle with personal sin and frailty?" But really such questions betray a spirit of selfishness and a failure to grasp the merciful mind of our Saviour. Peter tells us in verse 15,

*"Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation ..."*

It is as if Peter cries, "Pause and think for a minute! Our Saviour's patience means many more will be saved." To drive this point home consider the consequences if the Lord had come when Peter first wrote these words. None of us would have been saved! Well, there are others who are still to be saved and this makes it worth the struggle, because we will see others coming to know Christ.. Further, he will even use us in winning souls for him and give us that unspeakable joy. His patience gives opportunity for the lost to turn to him in repentance and

faith. How wonderful is Christ's love! Therefore we also should be patient and persevere.

Remember the false teachers put the delay in Christ's return down to slackness in him and interpreted that to mean he would not keep his promise and not come ever. But praise God our Lord Jesus Christ has a much higher reason for waiting, namely the salvation of a multitude to enjoy him for ever. Dear reader, if you have never trusted in Christ then realise this, the Lord could have cut you off in your sins and sent you to hell already, but he has not. He has spared you to give you time to repent – do so now! Do not continue in sin and abuse his patience.

Peter then reminds us at the end of verse 15 that Paul teaches the very same things. He speaks of the patience of the Lord (see Romans 2:4, 11:22) and the need for steadfast, patient, holy lives. Then he tells us something very interesting. Paul's letters are Scripture, the Word of God (v16). Peter adds that some of Paul's letters contain difficult things to understand. Those who are not grounded in the truth of the gospel of Christ twist Paul's teaching and pervert the Scriptures. Peter uses a term which literally means to torture, to twist or dislocate limbs. This applies particularly to Paul's teaching on justification by faith which many unscrupulous teachers twisted to mean they could live as they liked and continue in sin that grace may abound. The theologians have a term for this – antinomianism. Peter tells us clearly that those who did

this show that they know nothing of salvation from sin, and solemnly this leads to their destruction.

## Conclusion

The true believer makes every conscious effort to be prepared for eternity and exercises patience while we wait for that blessed day of the Lord to arrive.

## Chapter 8: Final Exhortations, 2 Peter 3:17-18

### Introduction

Throughout this letter Peter has mentioned that he was often reminding his readers of things they already knew. His frequent reference to the Old Testament Scriptures is one type of reminder. For example, he wrote of creation, Noah, Lot, Sodom and Gomorrah, and Balaam, which they already knew about. When outlining doctrine or behaviour he openly indicated he was reminding them of things they already knew in 2 Peter 1:12 and 3:1:

*“So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory.”*

*“I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the*

*words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles.”*

Peter, as a wise pastor was very aware of two difficulties we all face. First the forgetfulness of the heart, even a Christian's, and second the subtlety of Satan who would draw us away from the Lord by all sorts of distractions and ploys. The answer to these two dangers is to have the truth of God regularly in the forefront of our minds. Taking a lesson from the need to brush our teeth clean, one Church had these words on its notice board, “To prevent truth decay, brush up on your Bible reading!” That is precisely what Peter teaches us to do. It is evident Peter was painfully aware already of some who looked so promising at first, but had shown themselves not to be true disciples of Christ at all. He knew also that his readers were fully aware of this fact. So knowing they were in the forefront of the battle against sin and Satan which put them in great danger, to help them he reminded them of the truths of Scripture. He wanted to do all in his power to ensure that they remained close to the Lord and went on with him to greater joys and usefulness in his service. Therefore though he ends with this strongly worded challenge, he is careful to remind them of his love again by addressing them as “*dear friends*”, those he loved dearly. It was because he cherished them that he spoke so plainly.

*“Therefore, 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. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen.”*

### **1. Do not fall away, verse 17**

Peter has written about false teachers (chapters 2 and 3) and now speaks strongly against them again. The reason for the strength of his words is that people who tamper with the doctrines of Scripture endanger the eternal wellbeing of their listeners. That is one of the most serious of sins because it is to put a stumbling block in the way of others (see Matthew 18:6). There are many wrong paths to travel on and they all have the same dreadful end, destruction. It is worse for those who have known the Scriptures and then to fall away because they are without excuse (see 2 Peter 2:12). But there is a right path to tread and only one that leads to glory, namely, to trust in Christ, to walk with Christ, to live for Christ and to follow him.

Peter does not want one of his readers to wander from this pathway, he orders them to,

*“...be on your guard”*

This was a military term used of sentry duty, or prison guards, and Peter uses it to stress our responsibility to ensure that we guard our souls. And that raises the

question, “But from what?” And Peter supplies the answer for us, from being

*“...carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.”*

These lawless people are not true believers. Having the law of God written on our hearts is one of the marks of the new covenant (see Jeremiah 31:31-34), but these people live for themselves not for God. So again Peter is urging us to know our Bibles well for ourselves and to live out its teaching. There is no substitute for the Word of God. We must read and study it in private and with others. We must test everything we hear by the Scriptures. Centuries before Peter wrote this second letter the prophet Isaiah declared the same thing in Isaiah 8:20,

*“To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.”*

Failure on our part to get to know the truth of God is to open ourselves to being led astray. Not everyone who uses a Bible is true to its teaching. Not every attractive teacher or teaching is biblical. Remember how Paul warned us to beware of an angel of light that is really the devil (see 2 Corinthians 11:14)! We need to keep frequent company with the people of God, remembering the words of 1 Corinthians 15:33,

*“Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.”*

Peter describes the present spiritual standing of his readers. They have a secure position, a firmness of belief, a settled frame of mind. This term is only used here in the New Testament, but elsewhere the term is used for the fixed position of the stars. It is from the same root as the word Jesus used in Luke 22:32,

*“But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”*

Peter knew of the danger of backsliding. He had done so himself to his own shame and sorrow, and did not want others to make such a grievous fall.

## **2. Do further your spiritual life, verse 18**

Verse 18 begins with the word ‘*But*’ to emphasise what the believer is to do to avoid the danger of falling away, which must be avoided at all costs. He returns to the theme of spiritual growth he had begun to deal with in 1:5. Someone has said that the Christian life is like riding a bicycle, unless you keep moving you fall over. Or using the example of water that stands still, it soon goes stagnant. No true believer thinks like these proud false teachers. They thought they had arrived and there was no more to know of the Lord, and no more holiness to strive for and no

more lessons to learn. The true believer is always aware there is room for more. Like Paul they know the need to press on towards the mark.

The Christian life is a developing life for it consists of getting to know more and more of our inexhaustible Saviour and Lord. It is an ongoing command for us to grow and increase spiritually. Spiritual life in Christ responds to cultivation, feeding, building up, strengthening and this is a continual process. Neglect a child, a plant, or a building and they will decay. The same is the case spiritually.

Peter tells us first we are to grow in grace. Each believer is in a state of grace and we are to grow in it daily. This means growing in likeness to Christ, growing in holiness, growing in Christian graces. Then we are to grow in knowledge. This has to be understood in a twofold sense, both of which are inseparable. First, we are to know more about Christ, his life, teaching, names, atonement and intercession. This knowledge about him will make him more precious to us. Second, we are to know Christ personally. This means personal acquaintance with him, deeper fellowship with him, genuine communion with him. This, of course, can only be realised as we spend more time with him, especially time alone with Christ in addition to our times of corporate prayer and worship. These two together are the great safeguard against heresy and backsliding. We need to know Christ as Saviour and Lord and as friend and companion.

## Conclusion

Peter closes his letter with these words,

*“To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen.”*

Glory belongs to God, and Peter had learned that. We read in John 5:23,

*“...that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father.”*

The false teachers had detracted from Christ's glory by living sinful lives and by denying his return. But our lives should always be lived to that great end, namely, the praise and honour of our blessed, crucified, risen, exalted and returning Lord. May he be praised for ever!

---

**This book is supplied by Grace Baptist Mission and other titles are available in e-mail format at the address below:**

**Grace Baptist Mission**

**12 Abbey Close**

**Abingdon**

**OXON**

**OX14 3JD**

**UK**

**e-mail: [radio@gbm.org.uk](mailto:radio@gbm.org.uk)**