

2 Peter 3:10-18
November 5, 2017

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: When you're given a heads up that the CEO of your company is coming to your field office, what sorts of things would you do to prepare for that visit? [Office made tidy, perhaps be prepared to give a briefing of goals accomplished in your department, look your best, etc.]

Q: Let's change the scenario. What if the only thing you were told is that the CEO will make a surprise visit sometime this year. How would you prepare? [Let people engage]

T or F: It's harder to stay "expectant" of the CEO's visit the longer he/she delays.

Q: So what kind of employee do you need to be so that your confident that the CEO is pleased in meeting with you? [Quit worrying about when he will arrive and be the best EE on a daily basis. If you're committed to giving your very best every day, the CEO would be very pleased.]

Transition: Through our previous study in the first half of chapter 3, we saw Peter encouraging his readers that the Lord will return. He's not "slow," but rather long-suffering or patient, because he wants to give everyone an opportunity to gain salvation. BUT, unlike a CEO who at least says he/she will show up "sometime this year," Peter is going to ground his disciples in reality as to how Jesus will return and give them some ADMONITIONS that we need to hear.

It is my prayer that all of us CAN maintain a high level of expectancy of Christ's return BY practicing these ADMONITIONS. Let's begin.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.10:

- But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens (the atmospheric heavens around the earth, the universe as we know it) will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

V.11:

- Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives

V.12:

- as you look forward ("to await eagerly, to be expectant") to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.

V.13:

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

V.14:

- So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.

V.15:

- Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

V.16:

- 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.

V.17:

- 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.

V.18:

- But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.10: We do not know *when* the Day of the Lord will happen, but we are told *what* will happen. What do you see? [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.]

Q: Where will believers be when the Day of the Lord arrives? [We (the church) will Raptured to heaven before the Lord destroys the heavens and the earth as we know it.]

Q V.11-12: Peter raises an important question and then immediately offers an answer. What's the question? ["Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought we be?"]

Q: How does he answer his own rhetorical question? [You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the Day of God.]

Q: Let's look at the first part of his answer. He first says "live holy lives." What does he mean by that? [The word *holy* means "to separate, to cut off." Israel was a "holy nation" because God called the Jews out from among the Gentiles and kept them separated. Christians are called out from the godless world around them and are set apart for God alone.]

Q: Let's look at the second part of his answer. He says "live godly lives." What does he mean by that? [The word *godliness* could be translated "piety." It is the same word we met in 2 Peter 1:6-7, "to worship well." It describes a person whose life is devoted to pleasing God.]

Q: Peter suggests that because we don't know the day or hour of our Lord's return, we must be expectant, as in "eagerly awaiting." What's the risk of not being expectant of the Lord's return? [We can develop a cold heart, a worldly attitude, and become lukewarm in His kingdom.]

Q V.13: According to v.13, how do we *maintain* this eager expectancy that leads to holy living? [By keeping the promise of Jesus in our hearts – not just head knowledge.]

Point of Interest: When the new heavens and earth are in place, Peter gives it a name: the home of the righteous. Of course, it's the home of righteousness because the Lord will be in this home, and HE is righteousness. So when we're asked for the address where we live, we will just say, "I live at the home of righteousness."

Q V.14: Peter makes the big assumption that his readers are (or at least should be) "looking forward" to Christ's coming. He spells out specifics of holy and godly living. What do you see? [Make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him]

Q: How do we become spotless and blameless?! [Peter is suggesting that we make it our business to be morally clean like Christ the spotless One.]

Q V.15-16: As a reminder, why is the Lord being patient? [Because of His desire that all people would come to salvation. X-ref 2 Peter 3:9]

Observation: The fact that Peter referred to Paul's letters and then to "the other Scriptures" indicates that Paul's writings were then considered authoritative Scripture.

Q V.17-18: Peter acknowledges that everything he's shared up to this point is *already known by them*. So he has two admonitions. What are they? [be on your guard, and grow spiritually]

Q: Let's look at the first admonition. "Be on your guard" for what? [don't be carried away by the errors of lawless men and fall from a secure position.]

Q: What do you think he means by "carried away?" [led astray]

Q: When he references "errors of lawless men," who is he really talking about? [The false teachers who want to sweep large groups of people away from the correct doctrine of Christ.]

Q: What does he mean by guarding against "falling from a secure position?" [Those who heed Peter's warning can maintain their secure position in the truth.]

Q: Let's look at the second admonition. How do we "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ?" [The key is deepening our relationship to Jesus. This is not about getting puffed up with knowledge.]

LOOK:

Because we don't know the day or the hour of our Lord's return, we must constantly be ready. We need to be diligent to live godly lives, win the lost, and grow spiritually.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 465–471). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Having refuted their false claims, Peter then reaffirmed the certainty of the coming of the Day of the Lord. When will it come? Nobody knows when, because it will come to the world “as a thief in the night.” Our Lord used this phrase (Matt. 24:43; Luke 12:39) and so did the Apostle Paul (1 Thes. 5:2ff). When the world is feeling secure, then God’s judgment will fall. The thief does not warn his victims that he is coming! “For when they shall say, ‘Peace and safety’; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (1 Thes. 5:3).

We do not know *when* it will happen, but we are told *what* will happen. Kenneth Wuest gives an accurate and graphic translation of these words: “In which the heavens with a rushing noise will be dissolved, and the elements being scorched will be dissolved, and the earth also and the works in it will be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10).

Many Bible students believe that Peter here described the action of atomic energy being released by God. The word translated *a great noise* in the *King James Version* means “with a hissing and a crackling sound.” When the atomic bomb was tested in the Nevada desert, more than one reporter said that the explosion gave forth “a whirring sound,” or a “crackling sound.” The Greek word Peter used was commonly used by the people for the whirring of a bird’s wings or the hissing of a snake.

The word *melt* in 2 Peter 3:10 means “to disintegrate, to be dissolved.” It carries the idea of something being broken down into its basic elements, and that is what happens when atomic energy is released. “Heaven and earth shall pass away,” said our Lord (Matt. 24:35), and it appears that this may happen by the release of the atomic power stored in the elements that make up the world. The heavens and earth are “stored with fire” (2 Peter 3:7, WUEST), and only God can release it.

For this reason, I do not personally believe that God will permit sinful men to engage in an earth-destroying atomic war. He will, I believe, overrule the ignorance and foolishness of men including well-meaning but unbelieving diplomats and politicians, so that He alone will have the privilege of “pushing the button” and dissolving the elements to make way for a new heaven and a new earth. Peter no doubt had in mind Old Testament passages such as Isaiah 13:10–11; 24:19; 34:4; and 64:1–4 when he wrote these words. The first passage is especially emphatic that *God* will bring judgment and not sinful man. “And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity,” says the Lord. It does not sound as though He will give this task to some nervous military leader or some angry politician.

Of course, this great explosion and conflagration will not touch the “heaven of heavens” where God dwells. It will destroy the earth and the atmospheric heavens around it, the universe as we know it; this will make room for the new heavens and earth (2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1ff).

Man’s great works will also be burned up! All of the things that man boasts about—his great cities, his great buildings, his inventions, his achievements—will be destroyed in a moment of time. When sinners stand before the throne of God, they will have nothing to point to as evidence of their greatness. It will all be gone.

This is certainly a solemn truth, and we dare not study it in cavalier fashion. In the remaining verses of this letter, Peter will apply this truth to our daily living. But it would be wise for us to pause now and consider: where will I be when God destroys the world? Is what I am living for

only destined to go up in an atomic cloud, to vanish forever? Or am I doing the will of God so that my works will glorify Him forever?

Make your decision now—before it is too late.

BE DILIGENT!

2 Peter 3:11–18

The purpose of prophetic truth is not speculation but motivation; thus Peter concluded his letter with the kind of practical admonitions that all of us must heed. It is unfortunate when people run from one prophetic conference to another, filling their notebooks, marking their Bibles, drawing their charts, and yet not living their lives to the glory of God. In fact, some of the saints battle each other more over prophetic interpretation than perhaps any other subject.

All true Christians believe that Jesus Christ is coming again. They may differ in their views of when certain promised events will occur, but they all agree that He is returning as He promised. Furthermore, all Christians agree that this faith in future glory ought to motivate the church. As one pastor said to me, “I have moved off the Planning Committee and joined the Welcoming Committee!” This does not mean that we should stop studying prophecy, or that every opposing viewpoint is correct, which is an impossibility. But it does mean that, whatever views we hold, they ought to make a difference in our lives.

“Be diligent!” is the admonition that best summarizes what Peter wrote in this closing paragraph. He used this word before in 2 Peter 1: “Giving all diligence, add to your faith” (2 Peter 1:5); “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10); “Moreover I will endeavor [be diligent] that ye may be able” (2 Peter 1:15). If we are going to be successful Christians, we must learn to be diligent.

Peter gave three admonitions to encourage the readers in Christian diligence in the light of our Lord’s return.

Be Diligent to Live Godly Lives (2 Peter 3:11–14)

The key word in this paragraph is *look*. It means “to await eagerly, to be expectant.” You find it in Luke 3:15 (“And as the people were in expectation”) and Acts 3:5 (“expecting to receive something of them”). It describes an attitude of excitement and expectation as we wait for the Lord’s return. Because we realize that the world and its works will be dissolved, and that even the very elements will be disintegrated, we fix our hope, not on anything in this world, but only on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because we do not know the day or the hour of our Lord’s return, we must constantly be ready. The believer who starts to neglect the “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13) will gradually develop a cold heart, a worldly attitude, and an unfaithful life (Luke 12:35–48). If he is not careful, he may even become like the scoffers and laugh at the promise of Christ’s coming.

This expectant attitude ought to make a difference in our *personal conduct* (2 Peter 3:11). The word translated “manner” literally means “exotic, out of this world, foreign.” Because we have “escaped the corruption that is in the world” (2 Peter 1:4), we must live differently from the people in the world. To them, we should behave like “foreigners.” Why? Because this world is not our home! We are “strangers and pilgrims” (1 Peter 2:11) headed for a better world, the eternal city of God. Christians should be different, not odd. When you are different, you attract people; when you are odd, you repel them.

Our conduct should be characterized by holiness and godliness. “But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [behavior]; because it is written, ‘Be ye holy; for I am holy’ ” (1 Peter 1:15–16). The word *holy* means “to separate, to cut off.” Israel was a “holy nation” because God called the Jews out from among the Gentiles and kept them separated. Christians are called out from the godless world around them and are set apart for God alone.

The word *godliness* could be translated “piety.” It is the same word we met in 2 Peter 1:6–7, “to worship well.” It describes a person whose life is devoted to pleasing God. It is possible to be separated from sin positionally and yet not enjoy living for God personally. In the Greek world, the word translated *godliness* meant “respect and awe for the gods and the world they made.” It is that attitude of reverence that says with John the Baptist, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

Other New Testament writers also teach that an eager expectancy of the Lord’s return ought to motivate us to live pure lives (see Rom. 13:11–14; 2 Cor. 5:1–11; Phil. 3:17–21; 1 Thes. 5:1–11; Titus 2:11–15; 1 John 2:28–3:3). However, it is not simply knowing the doctrine *in the mind* that motivates the life; it is having it *in the heart*, loving His appearing (2 Tim. 4:8).

Not only should this expectant attitude make a difference in our conduct, but it should also make a difference in our *witness*. The phrase *looking for and hastening unto* can be translated “looking for and hastening the coming of the Day of God.” Peter affirms that it is possible for us to hasten the return of Jesus Christ.

The word translated “hasten unto” means “hasten” in the other five places where it is used in the New Testament. The shepherds “came with haste” (Luke 2:16). Jesus told Zaccheus to “make haste and come down” and “he made haste and came down” (Luke 19:5–6). Paul “hasted ... to be at Jerusalem” (Acts 20:16); and the Lord told Paul to “make haste and get ... out of Jerusalem” (Acts 22:18). To make this word a synonym for “eager anticipation” is to have Peter repeat himself in 2 Peter 2:12, for that is what the word *looking* means.

There are two extremes in ministry that we must avoid. One is the attitude that we are “locked into” God’s sovereign plan in such a way that nothing we do will make any difference. The other extreme is to think that God cannot get anything done unless we do it! While God’s sovereign decrees must never become an excuse for laziness, neither must our plans and activities try to take their place.

Perhaps two illustrations from Old Testament history will help us better understand the relationship between God’s plans and man’s service. God delivered Israel from Egypt and told the people He wanted to put them into their inheritance, the land of Canaan. But at Kadesh-Barnea all except Moses, Joshua, and Caleb rebelled against God and refused to enter the land (Num. 13–14). Did God force them to go in? No. Instead, He had them wander in the wilderness for the next forty years while the older generation died off. He adjusted His plan to their response.

When Jonah preached to the people of Nineveh, his message was clear: “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (Jonah 3:4) It was God’s plan to destroy the wicked city, but when the people repented, from the king on down, God adjusted His plan and spared the city. Neither God nor His basic principles changed, but His application of those principles changed. God responds when men repent.

How, then, can we as Christians hasten the coming of the Day of God? For one thing, we can pray as Jesus taught us, “Thy kingdom come” (Matt. 6:10). It would appear from Revelation 5:8

and 8:3–4 that the prayers of God’s people are related in some way to the pouring out of God’s wrath on the nations.

If God’s work today is calling out a people for His name (Acts 15:14), then the sooner the church is completed, the sooner our Lord will return. There is a suggestion of this truth in Acts 3:19–21. While Matthew 24:14 relates primarily to the Tribulation, the principle is the same: man’s ministry cooperates with God’s program so that promised events can take place.

There are mysteries here that our minds cannot fully understand or explain, but the basic lesson is clear: the same God who ordains the end also ordains the means to the end, and we are a part of that means. Our task is not to speculate but to serve.

Finally, this expectant attitude will make a difference *when we meet Jesus Christ* (2 Peter 3:14). It will mean that He will greet us “in peace” and have no charges against us so that we are “ashamed before Him at His coming” (1 John 2:28). The Judgment Seat of Christ will be a serious event (2 Cor. 5:8–11) as we give an account of our service to Him (Rom. 14:10–13). It is better to meet Him “in peace” than for Him to fight against us with His Word! (Rev. 2:16)

If we are diligent to watch for His return, and to live holy and godly lives, then we will not be afraid or ashamed. We will meet Him “without spot and blameless.” Jesus Christ is “a Lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19), and we should be careful to follow His example. Peter had warned his readers against the defilement that the apostates bring: “Spots they are and blemishes” (2 Peter 2:13). The separated Christian will not permit himself to be “spotted and blemished” by the false teachers! He wants to meet his Lord wearing pure garments.

How do we maintain this eager expectancy that leads to holy living? By keeping “His promise” before our hearts (2 Peter 3:13). The promise of His coming is the light that shines in this dark world (2 Peter 1:19), and we must be sure that “the day star” is aglow in our hearts because we love His appearing.

Be Diligent to Win the Lost (2 Peter 3:15–16)

Second Peter 3:15 ties in with verse 9, where Peter explained why the Lord had delayed fulfilling His promise. God had every reason long ago to judge the world and burn up its works, but in His mercy, He is long-suffering with us, “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” This is the day of salvation, not the day of judgment.

Peter made reference to Paul’s writings, because it is Paul, more than any other New Testament writer, who explained God’s plan for mankind during this present age. Especially in Romans and Ephesians, Paul explained the relationship between Israel and the church. He pointed out that God used the nation Israel to prepare the way for the coming of the Saviour. But Israel rejected its King and asked to have Him crucified. Did this destroy God’s plan? Of course not! Today, Israel is set aside nationally, but God is doing a wonderful new thing: He is saving Jews and Gentiles, and making them one in Christ in the church!

For centuries, if a Gentile wanted to be saved, he had to come by way of Israel. This same attitude persisted even in the early church (Acts 15). Paul made it clear that *both* Jews and Gentiles stand condemned before God and that both must be saved by faith in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, saved Jews and Gentiles belong to the one body, the church. The church is a “mystery” that was hidden in God’s counsels and later revealed through the New Testament prophets and Apostles (see Eph. 3).

The Jewish nation was God’s great testimony to Law, but the church is His witness for grace (see Eph. 1–2). Law prepared the way for grace, and grace enables us to fulfill the righteousness

of the Law (Rom. 8:1–5). This does not mean that there was no grace under the Old Covenant, or that New Covenant believers are lawless! Anyone who was saved under the administration of Law was saved by grace, through faith, as Romans 4 and Hebrews 11 make clear.

Now, unlearned and unstable people have a difficult time understanding Paul's teachings. Even some learned and stable people who have spiritual discernment can find themselves floundering in great passages like Romans 9–11! Some Bible students, in their attempt to "harmonize" seeming contradictions (Law and grace, Israel and the church, faith and works) twist the Scriptures and try to make them teach what is really not there. The Greek word translated "wrest" means "to torture on the rack, to distort and pervert."

Even in Paul's day, there were those who twisted his words and tried to defend their ignorance. They accused Paul of teaching that, since we are saved by grace, it makes no difference how we live! It was "slanderingly reported" that Paul taught, "Let us do evil that good may come" (Rom. 3:8; cf. Rom. 6:1ff). Others accused Paul of being against the Law because he taught the equality of Jews and Gentiles in the church (Gal. 3:28) and their liberty in Christ.

Most heresies are the perversion of some fundamental doctrine of the Bible. False teachers take verses out of context, twist the Scriptures, and manufacture doctrines that are contrary to the Word of God. Peter probably had the false teachers in mind, but the warning is good for all of us. We must accept the teaching of the Scriptures and not try to make them say what we want them to say.

Note that Peter classified Paul's letters as *Scripture*, that is, the inspired Word of God. Not only did the teaching of the Apostles agree with that of the prophets and our Lord (2 Peter 3:2), but the Apostles also agreed with each other. Some liberal scholars try to prove that the Apostles' doctrine was different from that of Jesus Christ, or that Peter and Paul were at variance with each other. The recipients of Peter's second letter had also read some of Paul's epistles, and Peter assured them that there was agreement.

What happens to people who blindly twist the Scriptures? They do it "unto their own destruction." Peter was not writing about Christians who have a difficult time interpreting the Word of God, because nobody understands *all* of the Bible perfectly. He was describing the false teachers who "tortured" the Word of God in order to prove their false doctrines. I once listened to a cultist "explain" why the group's leader was the "new Messiah" by manipulating the "weeks" in Daniel 9:23–27. He twisted the prophecy unmercifully!

The word *destruction* is repeated often in this letter (2 Peter 2:1–3; 3:7, 16). In the *King James Version*, it is translated "damnable," "pernicious," and "perdition," as well as "destruction." It means the rejection of eternal life, which results in eternal death.

Since this is the day of salvation, we must be diligent to do all we can to win the lost. We do not know how long the Lord will be "long-suffering" toward this evil world. We must not presume on His grace. We must understand what the Bible teaches about God's program for this present age, and we must be motivated by a love for the lost (2 Cor. 5:14) and a desire to be pleasing to Him when He returns.

The false teachers are multiplying and their pernicious doctrines are infecting the church. God needs separated men and women who will resist them, live godly lives, and bear witness of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. The time is short!

Be Diligent to Grow Spiritually (2 Peter 3:17–18)

There are four "beloved" statements in 2 Peter 3 which summarize what Peter wanted to get across as he brought his second letter to a close.

“Beloved ... be mindful” (3:1–2).

“Beloved, be not ignorant” (3:8).

“Beloved ... be diligent” (3:14).

“Beloved ... beware” (3:17).

The word translated “beware” means “be constantly guarding yourself.” Peter’s readers knew the truth, but he warned them that knowledge alone was not sufficient protection. They had to be on their guard; they had to be alert. It is easy for people who have a knowledge of the Bible to grow overconfident and to forget the warning, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).

What special danger did Peter see? That the true believers would be “led away together with the error of the wicked” (literal translation). He is warning us against breaking down the walls of separation that must stand between the true believers and the false teachers. There can be no communion between truth and error. The apostates “live in error” (2 Peter 2:18), while true believers live in the sphere of the truth (2 John 1–2).

The word *wicked* (2 Peter 3:17) means “the lawless.” Peter’s description of the apostates in 2 Peter 2 reveals how lawless they are. They even speak evil of the authorities that seek to enforce God’s Law in this world! (2 Peter 2:10–11) They promise their converts freedom (2 Peter 2:19), but that freedom turns out to be lawlessness.

True Christians cannot fall from salvation and be lost, but they can fall from their own “steadfastness.” What was this steadfastness? Being “established in the present truth” (2 Peter 1:12). The stability of the Christian comes from his faith in the Word of God, his knowledge of that Word, and his ability to use that Word in the practical decisions of life.

One of the great tragedies of evangelism is bringing “spiritual babies” into the world and then failing to feed them, nurture them, and help them develop. The apostates prey on young believers who have “very recently escaped” from the ways of error (2 Peter 2:18). New believers need to be taught the basic doctrines of the Word of God; otherwise, they will be in danger of being “led away with the error of the lawless.”

How can we as believers maintain our steadfastness and avoid being among the “unstable souls” who are easily beguiled and led astray? By growing spiritually. “But be constantly growing” is the literal translation. We should not grow “in spurts,” but in a constant experience of development.

We must grow “in grace.” This has to do with Christian character traits, the very things Peter wrote about in 2 Peter 1:5–7, and that Paul wrote about in Galatians 5:22–23. We were saved by grace (Eph. 2:8–9), but grace does not end there! We must also be strengthened by grace (2 Tim. 2:1–4). God’s grace can enable us to endure suffering (2 Cor. 12:7–10). His grace also helps us to give when giving is difficult (2 Cor. 8:1ff) and to sing when singing is difficult (Col. 3:16).

Our God is “the God of all grace” (1 Peter 5:10), who “giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6). As we study His Word, we learn about the various aspects of grace that are available to us as children of God. We are stewards of “the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10). There is grace for every situation and every challenge of life. “But by the grace of God I am what I am” wrote Paul (1 Cor. 15:10), and that should be our testimony as well.

Growing in grace often means experiencing trials and even suffering. We never really experience the grace of God until we are at the end of our own resources. The lessons learned in the “school of grace” are always costly lessons, but they are worth it. To grow in grace means to become more like the Lord Jesus Christ, from whom we receive all the grace that we need (John 1:16).

We must also grow in knowledge. How easy it is to grow in knowledge but not in grace! All of us know far more of the Bible than we really live. Knowledge without grace is a terrible weapon, and grace without knowledge can be very shallow. But when we combine grace and knowledge, we have a marvelous tool for building our lives and for building the church.

But note that we are challenged to grow, not just in knowledge of the Bible, as good as that is, but “in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” It is one thing to “know the Bible,” and quite another thing to know the Son of God, the central theme of the Bible. The better we know Christ through the Word, the more we grow in grace; the more we grow in grace, the better we understand the Word of God.

So, the separated Christian must constantly be *guarding* himself, lest he be led away into error; he also must be constantly *growing* in grace and knowledge. This requires diligence! It demands discipline and priorities. Nobody automatically drifts into spiritual growth and stability, but anybody can drift *out of* dedication and growth. “For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it” (Heb. 2:1). Just as the boat needs the anchor, so the Christian needs the Word of God.

Physical growth and spiritual growth follow pretty much the same pattern. To begin with, we grow from the inside out. “As newborn babes” is the way Peter illustrated it (1 Peter 2:2). The child of God is born with everything he needs for growth and service (2 Peter 1:3). All he needs is the spiritual food and exercise that will enable him to develop. He needs to keep clean. We grow by nutrition, not by addition!

We grow best in a loving family, and this is where the local church comes in. A baby needs a family for protection, provision, and affection. Tests prove that babies who are raised alone, without special love, tend to develop physical and emotional problems very early. The church is God’s “nursery” for the care and feeding of Christians, the God-ordained environment that encourages them to grow.

It is important that we grow in a balanced way. The human body grows in a balanced way with the various limbs working together; likewise the “spiritual man” must grow in a balanced way. We must grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18), for example. We must keep a balance between worship and service, between faith and works. A balanced diet of the whole Word of God helps us to maintain a balanced life.

It is the Holy Spirit of God who empowers and enables us to keep things in balance. Before Peter was filled with the Spirit, he was repeatedly going to extremes. He would bear witness to Christ one minute and then try to argue with the Lord the next! (Matt. 16:13–23) He refused to allow Jesus to wash his feet, and then he wanted to be washed all over! (John 13:6–10) He promised to defend the Lord and even die with Him, yet he did not have the courage to *own* the Lord before a little servant girl! But when he was filled with the Spirit, Peter began to live a balanced life that avoided impulsive extremes.

What is the result of spiritual growth? Glory to God! “To Him be glory both now and forever.” It glorifies Jesus Christ when we keep ourselves separated from sin and error. It glorifies Him when we grow in grace and knowledge, for then we become more like Him (Rom. 8:29). In his life and even in his death, Peter glorified God (John 21:18–19).

As you review this important epistle, you cannot help but be struck by the urgency of the message. The apostates are here! They are busy! They are seducing immature Christians! We must be guarding, growing, and glorifying the Lord, making the most of every opportunity to win the lost and strengthen the saved.

Be diligent! The ministry you save may be your own!

Gangel, K. O. (1985). 1 Peter. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 876-879). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

D. Peter describes it (3:10–13).

3:10. When the Lord does **come**, it will be both surprising and catastrophic: **like a thief**. This simile was used by Jesus (Matt. 24:42–44) and repeated by others (1 Thes. 5:2; Rev. 3:3; 16:15). **The day of the Lord** describes end-time events that begin after the Rapture and culminate with the commencement of eternity. In the middle of the 70th week of Daniel the Antichrist will turn against the people of God in full fury (Dan. 9:24–27; see comments on 1 Thes. 5:2; 2 Thes. 2:2–12).

In the catastrophic conflagration at the end of the Millennium, **the heavens** (the earth's atmosphere and the starry sky, not God's abode) **will disappear with a roar**, which in some way will involve fire (2 Peter 3:7, 12). **The elements** (*stoicheia*, either stars or material elements with which the universe is made) **will be destroyed by fire** (and will melt, v. 12), **and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare** (*eurethēsetai*). This Greek word could mean that everything will be exposed for what it really is. Or it could suggest a question: "The earth and everything in it—will they be found?" Others (on the basis of some Greek messages say the word *eurethēsetai* should be substituted with *katakaēsetai*, "shall be burned up." Perhaps the first of these views is preferable.

3:11. Peter sees all this as a strong motivational expectation which should provoke holy living. The question, **What kind of people ought you to be?** is rhetorical. But in case someone should miss the point, Peter answered it: **You ought to live holy and godly lives**. "Holy lives" (*en hagiais anastrophais*, lit., "in holy conduct") refers to Christian separation and sanctification—apart from the world, apart toward God. "Godly" (*eusebeiais*; also in 1:3, 6–7) refers to piety before God. The word "live" (*hyparchein*) is in the present tense, indicating that these qualities are to be constantly present in light of the Lord's return. Scoffers, questioning the Lord's coming with its ensuing judgment on them, lead ungodly lives (2:7, 10, 12–15, 18–20; 3:3). By contrast, Jesus' followers, anticipating His return, are to be godly (v. 14; cf. Titus 2:12–14; 1 John 3:3).

3:12. Holiness and piety (v. 11) not only cause God's people to **look forward to** (from *prosdokaō*, "expect and anticipate"; cf. vv. 13–14) the Lord's return but also to **speed its coming**. How do believers hasten it? The godly lives of the Lord's people, their praying, and their witnessing help bring others to repentance. Peter then repeated for emphasis the fact that at the commencement of eternity (here called **the day of God**) **the heavens will be destroyed by fire and the elements will melt** (cf. comments on v. 10). That event concludes "the day of the Lord" (v. 10) and commences "the day of God."

3:13. The old cosmic system will then give way to **a new heaven and a new earth** and this is what believers **are looking forward to** (cf. vv. 12, 14), not to the earth's destruction. The new heaven and new earth, given by the **promise** of God, will finally be **the home** or dwelling place **of righteousness** (lit., "in which righteousness dwells permanently"). It will be the home of righteousness because the Righteous One will be there (Jer. 23:5–7; 33:16; Dan. 9:24; Rev. 21:1, 8, 27). What a contrast this will be to the world's unrighteousness!

E. *Behavior is changed by it (3:14–16).*

3:14. To show that one's behavior is linked to his expectation of the Lord's coming, this paragraph begins with **So then** (*Dio*). What kind of people should believers be? They are to be holy and godly (v. 11), and they also are to **make every effort** (*spoudasate*; cf. 1:10, 15; also cf. *spoudēn*, 1:5) **to be ... spotless** (*aspiloi*, also used in 1 Tim. 6:14; James 1:27 ["pure"]; 1 Peter 1:19 ["without ... defect," referring to Christ]), **blameless** (*amōmētoi*, "without [moral] defect" like a sacrificial animal without a blemish; used also in Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:22; Heb. 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19; Jude 24; Rev. 14:5), **and at peace with Him** (cf. Rom. 5:1). The false teachers, Peter said, "are blots (*spiloi*) and blemishes" (*mōmoi*; 2 Peter 2:13), but believers are to make it their business to be morally clean (cf. 1:4) like Christ the spotless One (1 Peter 1:19). This is the practical result of the implantation of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) in the members of God's family; it is the ringing encore to the symphony of grace described in 1:5–7.

3:15. **The Lord's patience** is because of His desire that people come to **salvation** (cf. v. 9). The seeming procrastination of the Second Coming, far from being negative inaction on God the Father's part is rather a demonstration of His *makrothymian* ("long-suffering"). Now the world has time to repent, but this will not be so when "the day of judgment" (2:9; 3:7) comes. The Lord's patience leads toward repentance, which is precisely the point **Paul** made in Romans 2:4, though this may or may not be the passage Peter had in mind (cf. comments on 2 Peter 3:16). Interestingly Peter called Paul **our dear** (*agapētos*, "beloved"; cf. vv. 1, 8, 14, 17) **brother**. Years before Paul had severely rebuked Peter (Gal. 2:11–14), but this did not sever their love and respect for each other.

3:16. Peter said that Paul wrote about **the same thing in all his letters**. Though written with God's "wisdom" (v. 15), Paul's **letters contain some things that are hard to understand**. The Greek word for "hard to understand" (*dysnoēta*, only here in the NT) was sometimes applied in secular Greek literature to oracles that were ambiguous and obscure. Peter himself, as well as the **ignorant** (*amatheis*, "unlearned"), who were neophytes in New Testament doctrine, found some of Paul's statements obscure. These difficult passages (which Peter did not specify) had caused the **unstable** (*astēriktoi*; cf. 2:14) to pervert and **distort** (*streplousin*, "twist, torment"; another word occurring only here in the NT) their real meaning. But that was to be expected since that is how they handled **the other Scriptures**.

The fact that Peter referred to Paul's letters and then to "the other Scriptures" indicates that Paul's writings were then considered authoritative Scripture. Such behavior—twisting the Scripture to suit their own purposes—is met with God's judgment which, in this case, the ignorant and unstable bring on themselves in the form of **destruction** (*apōleian*; cf. 2:1, 3). Believers may not fully understand all the Scriptures, but they certainly ought not twist their obvious meanings.

VI. Conclusion (3:17–18).

3:17. In a warm and loving style (**dear friends** occurs here for the fourth time in this chap.; cf. vv. 1, 8, 14) the Apostle Peter closes this public yet personal epistle with a word of warning (v. 17) and a word of encouragement (v. 18). Both are based on an assumption: **You already know this**. These words translate one Greek word (*proginōskontes*), from which comes the English word "prognosis." When a medical prognosis is made, a patient is better able to prepare himself for what is ahead and if possible, to correct himself. When a doctor says, "If you continue to eat as much as you do now, you will have serious heart problems in a few years," the

patient “knows beforehand” and can therefore change his life in accord with the information he has.

Peter then warned, **Be on your guard** (*phylassesthe*). If Peter were writing today, he might say, “Don’t say I didn’t warn you.” If his readers were not careful they could **be carried away by the error of lawless men** (*athesmōn*; cf. 2:7). The verb “carried away” (*synapachthentes*; means “led astray” in Gal. 2:13) emphasizes a group or corporate movement. False teachers are not satisfied with ambushing one or two, now and then, here and there; they want to sweep large groups of people away from the correct doctrine of Christ. Those who keep company with such people are in danger of being led astray (referred to as “falling”; cf. 2 Peter 1:10; Gal. 5:4). This does not refer to losing one’s salvation. On the other hand those who have paid attention to the warnings, carefully heeding the prognosis, can maintain their **secure position** in the truth. “Secure position” translates *stērigmou* (“firm position”; cf. the adjective *astērikτος*, “unstable,” in 2 Peter 2:14; 3:16, and the verb *stērizēi*, “make strong or firm” in 1 Peter 5:10).

3:18. To **grow in ... grace** is not subjective, based merely on experience and emotional happenings. It is objectively related to Peter’s key word **knowledge** (cf. 1:2–3, 5–6, 8, 20 [“understand”]; 2:20–21 [twice in v. 21]; 3:3). This is not just any knowledge; it is knowledge about **our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ** (cf. 1:1–2, 11; 2:20). The verb “grow” is a present imperative, which could be rendered “be continually growing.” Believers are to grow “in grace,” that is, in the sphere of God’s unmerited favor, and in the exercise of spiritual graces which Peter spoke of in 1:5–7. This process of spiritual growth begins by knowing Christ initially in regeneration (cf. John 17:3) and it continues in one’s deepening relationship with Him (Eph. 4:15; Phil. 3:10; 1 Peter 2:2). Both are necessary. Without the initial knowledge there is no opportunity for growth. But if there is only that initial knowledge, the struggling new believer forgets “that he has been cleansed from his past sins” (2 Peter 1:9).

Now the apostle, at one time more comfortable in fishing boats than with the parchments of biblical texts, affirmed the oneness of the Father and the Son in a splendid doxology. The One who is “our Lord” is also “our Savior.” And glory, which belongs only to God (Isa. 42:8), is also the Son’s (cf. 2 Peter 1:17). **To Him be glory** (lit., “the glory”) is Peter’s praise and prayer (cf. 2 Tim. 4:18). The glory of redemption, the glory of spiritual growth, the glory of manifesting the symphony of grace, the glory of escape from the false teachers, and the glory of His ultimate return—*all* glory belongs to Jesus. And He receives that glory **both now and forever**. “Forever” is literally, “to the day of the Age”—from the moment of the Cross, on through the days of the New Testament, throughout the history of the church, to the present hour, and throughout eternity! No wonder Peter concluded with the affirmative word of praise, **Amen!**