



2 Peter

A Verse-By-Verse Commentary

By Pastor Charlie Garrett

Copyright 2022, Emlen S. "Charlie" Garrett. All Rights reserved
SuperiorWord.org

(Rev 2)

CONTENTS

(Clicking the title will take you to that location)

The book of 2 Peter; an Introduction.	3
Chapter 1	7
Chapter 2	53
Chapter 3	103

*Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us,
But to Your name give glory,
Because of Your mercy,
Because of Your truth. Psalm 115:1*

THE BOOK OF 2 PETER; AN INTRODUCTION.

The book of 2 Peter is the 61st book of the Bible, and it is comprised of 3 chapters, coincidentally of 61 verses. Therefore, it is considerably shorter than the previous book, 1 Peter, which was 105 verses. A verse-per-day evaluation of 2 Peter will take just two months to complete.

Peter is the Apostle Peter who was personally called by Jesus. Matthew 4:18 and John 1:40 note that he is Andrew's brother (another Apostle of the Lord as is seen in Matthew 10:2), and John 1:44 says that Peter and Andrew came from the city of Bethsaida.

Peter is also known as Simon at times. This is known from the time of his first meeting with the Lord which occurred in John 1. In John 1:40, where Andrew was introduced, it is as "Simon Peter's brother." In the next verse, it notes that Andrew "found his own brother Simon." But Peter is also known at times as Cephas (kay-fas). On his initial meeting with Jesus, it says –

"Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, 'You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas' (which is translated, A Stone)." John 1:42

The name Cephas is the Aramaic word for rock. The word "Stone" in that verse is Petros; hence, the name Peter (Cephas) is a name given by the Lord to Simon. He is at times called any of these names, or a combination of them, such as "Simon Peter." Further, the name Simon may have a variant spelling at times, Symeon.

Interestingly, it is Paul who uses the Aramaic name Cephas eight of the nine times that it is seen in Scripture. Those are noted four times in 1 Corinthians and four times in Galatians. When Paul uses that name, it is to highlight the Jewishness of Peter in order to make theological points about things. Paul also writes of him using the Greek name Petros two times in Galatians as well. The more common name Peter is used over 150 times in the New Testament.

The combined name Simon Peter is used over 30 times, mostly by John in his gospel, but it is how Peter refers to himself in the first verse of his second epistle. However, there it is spelled with the variant spelling, Symeon, as mentioned above. Paying attention to the various ways Peter is addressed will often help the reader understand the surrounding context better.

Though the initial meeting of Jesus and Andrew and Peter is recorded in John 1, the calling of these two brothers to follow Christ is found in Matthew 4 while they were fishing in the Galilee.

Peter is known as the apostle to the circumcision, meaning the Jews. This is noted in Galatians 2:7, 8, where Paul says that “they saw that *the gospel* for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter ⁸ (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles).” This does not mean there are two gospels, one for the Jew and one for the Gentile, but that these men were given their main audience for the one gospel – to the Jew (Peter), and to the Gentile (Paul).

The canonicity of the book of 2 Peter has long been questioned. From early times, there were doubters concerning whether it was truly a letter from Peter. However, a majority opinion was that it was, in fact, written by him. This includes writings from early church fathers, and also the inclusion of it in various early canons.

There are various reasons for it not being accepted by some, including a variation in style from that of 1 Peter, the language used appears to be less of that of a Galilean fisherman and more of a Greek speaker, and so on. But such variances could simply be because Peter used a different scribe to pen this second epistle. Sylvanus is mentioned in 1 Peter 5:12, but he is not mentioned in the second letter.

Another reason is because Peter refers to Paul’s writings in Chapter 3 of the letter. As these were not all compiled until later, it is argued that Peter could not be the author of this epistle. That is a baseless argument considering that Paul refers specifically to Peter in Galatians, and Peter would have been fully aware of this. Further, Paul is most certainly the author of Hebrews (see Hebrews commentary), a letter written to the same Jewish believers as Peter would have addressed. Peter did not have to be aware of all of Paul’s letters, but he could have been. Paul could have sent him a copy of each letter as a witness to his faithful adherence to the gospel which he was proclaiming to the Gentiles while Peter was proclaiming that same gospel to the Jews. Using Peter’s mentioning of Paul and his writings as a reason to dismiss the authenticity of this epistle is an argument from silence that has no weight at all. Eventually, the church reasoned such things through, and 2 Peter was fully accepted into the final canon of Scripture.

2 Peter was probably penned not long before Peter was martyred. It is assumed that it was written somewhere between AD 64 and AD 68. As 2 Peter refers to 1 Peter (2 Peter

3:1), it was obviously written after 1 Peter. The dating of 2 Peter is estimated to be in the mid to late 60s, and therefore this would follow in the same general timeframe.

The Apostle Paul states in 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 that “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” So, in a real sense, the letter is – like all of Scripture – written to the people of the world. However, 1 Peter is written specifically to a Hebrew audience, and Peter refers to this again by saying that this is his second epistle to them (again, see 2 Peter 3:1). The opening salutation, however, is more general, and could certainly include Gentiles (“To those who have obtained like precious faith with us”).

Due to its placement after Paul’s letters, and then after the books of Hebrews and James, it is evident – based on an evaluation of the structure of the Bible – that the Lord intends for this second epistle, like Hebrews and James, to be a letter directed to the Hebrew people of the end times as much as it was directed to the early Jewish believers in the Lord. The very structure of the Bible gives us this hint of redemptive history.

The main theme of 2 Peter is “Perseverance in the Truth of Christ, and the necessity of being knowledgeable in order to mature in Christ to avoid practical and doctrinal errors of false teachers.” Thus, the main purpose of the epistle is to “Remind followers of doctrine and warn about false teachers.”

The main presentation of Christ in the epistle is “Jesus Christ, Our Hope.”

The location where Peter wrote the letter is not given, but one might assume that it was, like his first epistle, from Rome (which Peter calls “Babylon” in 1 Peter 5:13). Though there are various ideas about “which” Babylon is being referred to, the obvious and most likely answer is that he is speaking of Rome in a symbolic way, equating it with Babylon of past Jewish history. Babylon held sway over Israel before, but at the time that 1 Peter was written, Rome had assumed that role.

Extra-biblical tradition places Peter in Rome in his later life, and there is no reason to assume that he was not referring to Rome in this figurative sense, just as Revelation does in Revelation 17 (and elsewhere). A study of Daniel 9 also indicates that Rome would be the center of focus again in the end times, corresponding to the theme of Rome as Babylon.

As a short summary of the intent and purpose of the book, we should remember these points:

- *Author:* Simon Peter (Cephas), the Apostle to the Lord Jesus;
- *Date:* Mid to late 60s;
- *Theme:* Perseverance in the Truth of Christ, and the necessity of being knowledgeable in order to mature in Christ to avoid practical and doctrinal errors of false teachers;
- *Purpose:* Remind followers of doctrine and warn about false teachers; and
- *Presentation of Christ:* Jesus Christ; Our Hope.

Further, there is a main thought of each chapter –

Perseverance in Christ through faith and Scriptural adherence.

Warning against apostasy and false teachers.

Expectation of the coming Day of the Lord.

Life application: We hope that you will spend the next 61 days of your life learning the book of 2 Peter, one verse at a time. From there, we hope you will apply its truths to your life, molding yourself more each day into being a faithful and wholehearted follower of Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

Lord God, help us to be faithful in studying Your word, accepting its truths in the context in which they are given, and then applying those truths to our walk with You. There is an abundance of false doctrine concerning Your word which is intended to draw us away from You. Help us to not get caught up in such things, but to hold fast to the sure, reliable, and wholly understandable word which You have given to us. Amen.

CHAPTER 1

**Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ,
To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our
God and Savior Jesus Christ: 2 Peter 1:1**

The epistle begins with an introduction by the apostle. In Greek, it reads Symeon Peter. The only other time the name Symeon is applied to Peter is in Acts 15:14 when being spoken of by James. The introduction of the epistle with the Hebraized form of his name is probably intended to have the Jewish recipients more fully identify with him. The name is derived from the Hebrew Shimon, or “He Who Hears.”

After stating his name, he then says, “a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ.” This is a unique phrase for an apostolic introduction, but it is close to that of Paul’s salutation to Titus where he said, “Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ.”

A *doulos*, or “bondservant,” is an individual who is the property of another; having no ownership rights of his own. This would seem to be a position lacking dignity, but in ironic fashion, it is that of the highest dignity when applied to a person in the New Testament as being in such a relation to God and Jesus Christ. For Peter, he gladly states this position in relation to Jesus Christ, meaning the Messiah.

It should be noted that every time the word “Christ” is used in this epistle by Peter, it is always in connection with “Jesus.” Further, it is also accompanied by another descriptor, such as “Lord,” “Lord and Savior,” etc. In this verse, it is accompanied by the word “God.”

The second half of the identification says, “and apostle of Jesus Christ.” He is a messenger of the Lord, having been called by Him personally to perform this weighty duty. This is his claim to the authority of writing a letter of doctrine, and it is with this authority that he thus writes.

Peter’s words here, combined with those of Paul in Titus, give a reference to the deity of Christ. Paul claimed to be a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. Peter claims to be a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ. This will not be the only hint of deity in this opening verse.

Peter next says, “To those who have obtained.” The Greek literally reads, “To those who have obtained by lot.” It is the same phrase used by Peter when spoken of Judas in Acts

1:17. The word is also used when speaking of the lots in Luke 1:9 and in John 19:24. It signifies the providence of God in obtaining a thing. This is seen in Proverbs 16 –

“The lot is cast into the lap,
But its every decision *is* from the Lord.” Proverbs 16:33

Peter then explains what it is that has been obtained. It is “like precious faith.” Here is a word found nowhere else in Scripture. It signifies “equally privileged.” It is not an indication of measure, but in honor. Some have more faith, but all such faith is equally valued because of where it is directed.

This equally precious faith is, as Peter says, “with us.” This could be understood as meaning “those who first believed,” such as the apostles. Or, it could be understood as those Gentiles who are among the Jews being addressed, and who are included in their gatherings. Thus, “with us,” would be an all-inclusive statement of Gentile inclusion in the faith directed toward Jesus Christ. As the epistle is included in Scripture, and as there is only one gospel to both Jew and Gentile, regardless of Peter’s original intent, it is now an all-inclusive statement of any person who has placed his faith in Jesus Christ.

Next, he says, “by the righteousness.” The Greek reads, “in *the* righteousness.” It is faith which is possessed in the sphere of righteousness of the One he will next name. It is a way of saying that the faith is what brings the believer into a state of righteousness which belongs to that One. Peter then says who possesses that righteousness with the words “of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Some translations say, “our God and our Savior Jesus Christ,” showing a distinction between the two. Others unite the two as “our God and Savior Jesus Christ.” The construction of the Greek will allow either, and Greek scholars choose one or another, usually based on a presupposition as to what they believe is on Peter’s mind, but that answer is plain and simple because, the same general phrase, with the same Greek construction, is used five times.

This one time it says, “God.” The other four it says, “Lord.” There is no doubt that Peter was making an absolute claim to deity in this introductory statement, and then ascribing that deity to the Old Testament “Lord,” meaning “Jehovah” –

“of our God and Savior Jesus Christ” 2 Peter 1:1

“of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” 2 Peter 1:11

“of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” 2 Peter 2:20

“of the Lord and Savior” 2 Peter 3:2

“of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” 2 Peter 3:18

Further, the next verse makes a distinction between the two, showing that this verse is a purposeful uniting of the two. There is Jesus, there is God, and Jesus is God. Another point is that each time that “Savior” is used by Peter in this epistle, it is either directly or implicitly applied to Jesus. Oddly, the term was never used in his first epistle. Thus, one can see the heavy stress of this thought by Peter here. That idea will be a support for the weighty contents of this letter.

Life application: An apostle is a “sent one.” The position of being an apostle of Jesus Christ is one which ended with the closing of the New Testament canon. Today there are no true apostles even though some people claim the title in ministry. If one has the “like precious faith” of these men of God, then bearing titles is of far less importance than demonstrating that faith, and also helping others to come to that same precious faith. Let us direct our lives and hearts to this end.

O God, help us to look with both delight and care at the verses which make up the book we call “the Holy Bible.” May we be found to properly handle Your word and to come to reasonable conclusions which honor You as we study. In the end, may You receive the glory for our attention to this wonderful book. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,
2 Peter 1:2

After identifying himself and his audience, Peter now sends a personal wish for well-being and growth in the Lord. He begins with, “Grace and peace be multiplied to you.” It is the same words that ended the final clause of 1 Peter 1:2.

Grace is unmerited favor; it cannot be earned. This is a common greeting among the Greek people. Peace, however, is a common greeting among the Hebrew people. In their language, the word is *shalom*. The idea of *shalom* is more than a greeting for calm or quiet, but is rather a state of wholeness and completion in all ways.

Peter unites the two terms. The audience, as was seen in 1 Peter, is the same audience now (see 2 Peter 3:1). It is comprised of those of the Dispersion, and they would be fully aware of both terms and how they were applied in the common language spoken where they were. This extending of grace and peace is seen in Paul’s epistles as well. In their

words, the common order is “grace” and then “peace.” Grace precedes peace because only after receiving the grace of God can a person experience the peace of God.

Peter then expands on this thought by saying, “in the knowledge of God.” The words “in the knowledge” are often used by Paul in his epistles. It is the sphere in which Peter anticipates that the grace and peace will be multiplied. As they grow in the knowledge of God, the multiplication of the blessing will also grow. It is a sentiment which is more fully fleshed out by him in Chapter 2.

He then adds in “and of Jesus our Lord.” In the previous verse, the two were combined (see commentary to understand this) as “our God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Here, Peter separately notes them by saying, “of God and of Jesus our Lord.” Despite separating them, it must be noted that the word translated as “Lord” in this second letter is always used of God specifically, unless the words “Christ” or “Savior” are added.

The change then seems purposeful. God is Lord, and Jesus is God, therefore Jesus is Lord. They are One, and yet Jesus is one member of the Godhead. Each time Peter writes one of the names or titles, he is being careful to make a theological point concerning the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter desires that the sphere of knowledge in which the grace and peace are multiplied is properly understood through his words.

One can grow in the knowledge of God, but it is an incomplete knowledge unless one grows in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God.

Life application: Today we are normally not as formal in our salutations as the writers of the New Testament letters. It is a shame too because there is something lost when we skip over a heartfelt greeting and just jump into the purpose of our notes.

Likewise, when people greet each other, we have gotten to the point where our words have been cut to the absolute minimum... instead of “Good morning Rebecca” we find it difficult to simply utter “Mornin’...” Going back to the book of Ruth, we see how Boaz greeted his employees in the field as they worked –

“Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, ‘The LORD *be* with you!’

And they answered him, ‘The LORD bless you!’” Ruth 2:4

This wonderful exchange shows us several things.

- The Lord is on the minds of the people not just on the Sabbath, but as they work during the week.
- The presence of the Lord should be considered a special blessing for those we greet.
- The people – both the boss and the employees – took the additional time to recognize each other and not just mumble over a weak greeting.

Imagine especially the workers in the field. They were busy with their reaping. But instead of just raising a hand of acknowledgment, they took due care to recognize Boaz. The encounter is a touching look into the lives of people who have gone before us, but who have something valuable to teach us. Remember this lesson and determine in yourself that you will take time to greet others in a pleasant and heartfelt manner.

Lord, we are often a bit too careless in our greeting of others. But passages in the Bible show us something we really need to work on – tenderly greeting others in Your name. Please remind us of this. Help us be attentive to those around us in a way that makes them realize we truly are concerned about them. By doing so, may they see faithful, caring followers of You in us! Amen.

...as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 2 Peter 1:3

The words of this verse depend heavily upon the previous verse in order to be understood. Taken together, they read, “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, ³as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.”

Peter begins the verse with, “His divine power.” One must ask, “Is this speaking of ‘God?’ or of “Jesus our Lord?” Jesus is the nearest antecedent, but God seems more appropriate. It is God from whom Jesus, the second member of the Godhead, is sent. The coming words, “through the knowledge of Him,” would then speak of Jesus.

It is God’s divine power which Paul refers to in Romans 1:16, 17, which would then be in accord with the word of Peter now –

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷ For

in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"

Paul says that the gospel of Christ is the power of God, and it is how the righteousness of God is revealed. Peter, in agreement with that, says that "His divine power has given." Here the word *dóreomai* is used. It signifies to give freely or to give as a gift. One might say "bestow." As a note of authenticity concerning the epistle, Vincent's Word Studies notes –

"This is the only word which Peter and Mark alone have in common in the New Testament; a somewhat singular fact in view of their intimate relations, and of the impress of Peter upon Mark's gospel: yet it tells very strongly against the theory of a forgery of this epistle. Compare Mark 15:45."

From there, Peter says that He "has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness." This corresponds directly to Paul saying that the gospel "is the power of God to salvation." As salvation is what both provides life and imparts and instructs in godliness, the two apostles are speaking on the same level. Through acceptance of the gospel by faith, one is granted life. Further, he is brought, in God's mind, to a state of godliness. The knowledge of how to make that actual in this life is also then available. Peter will speak of this process in verses 5-8.

This word, translated here as "godliness," is spoken by Peter in Acts 3:12. It is only found elsewhere in the epistles – ten times by Paul and four times by Peter. All of the uses by Paul are in the pastoral epistles, and Peter's four uses are only in this letter. It is a compound word which signifies "well" and "worship." The idea is reverence, respect, and piety towards God.

Peter then says that this "life and godliness" is given "through the knowledge of Him." Again, this is speaking of God, but it is God who has conveyed His knowledge through the giving of Christ Jesus that this is made possible, as noted in the words of Paul. The gospel brings about the understanding of what God has done. It is the giving of this particular knowledge to the people of the world.

This is then seen in Peter's next words, "who called us." The word translated as "called" is a common word. But in the context of Peter's words here, it is used in the same manner by Paul in Romans 8:38-30 –

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

The calling by the gospel is then said by Peter to be “by glory and virtue.” The word translated as “by” is literally translated as “through.” Here, there is a variation in manuscripts. Some say, “by his own glory and virtue,” while others say, “through glory and virtue.” The meaning, especially when rightly translated as “through,” instead of “by,” is much the same.

It is through God’s glory and virtue that the knowledge of Him is made available. The two are inseparable. The glory speaks of the presentation of God in His natural state – how man would perceive Him when beholding Him. The virtue speaks of God in His moral state – how we perceive His workings. Both speak of what God inherently possesses. In understanding this, we then see how those attributes are conveyed to us through the gospel. In the giving of Christ, we can literally behold the magnificence of God and respond to that.

In other words, the calling of God is one which says, “Here is My glory and my virtue. I am calling to you to participate in this by accepting what I have done for you.” In the call, a response is necessary. The response may be a rejection of what is presented, or it may be a step into His revealed light, but the calling anticipates some sort of response. The gospel is forced on no one, but when it is received, it leads to justification and glorification.

Life application: The moment we accept what God has done in Jesus Christ, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who provides and illuminates the Scriptures to us and leads us into the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Despite this, it is not a complete action. Only the ability to receive these things is granted, but it is up to us to pursue the knowledge which is now available. And this is a lifetime pursuit. As we study the Bible and contemplate the work of Jesus, we grow in that which pertains to life and godliness. This is why we have so many denominations and why so many people within Christianity disagree on both the minor and even the major precepts of the Bible.

Believers accept Jesus and are saved at that moment. They are also sealed as a “deposit” or “guarantee” of eternal life. The problem arises, though, when people who are untrained in proper doctrine are appointed (or appoint themselves) as teachers and pastors. When this happens, bad doctrine is inevitable. As they teach that which is incorrect, entire groups of people are raised up believing things not based on sound reasoning or proper interpretation.

Yes, we have been granted all things that pertain to life and godliness through the reception of the gospel, but we must be careful to cultivate these in the proper way as we grow in the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.

Lord God, may You fill us with Your Spirit of wisdom and knowledge. Give us proper understanding in all things which pertain to life and godliness so that we may become acceptable and responsible followers of You. In this, we can then properly instruct others concerning the majesty of Your splendor and grace. Amen.

...by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust. 2 Peter 1:4

Peter just spoke of “all things that *pertain* to life and godliness.” He then noted that this was “through the knowledge of Him who called us.” Continuing with that, he says, “by which.” The Greek reads “through which.” He is using the word “through” to continue this idea from verse 3. It is through the knowledge of Him that these promises “have been given to us.”

The knowledge is the medium in which these things are obtained. Without the knowledge, they are not available. This is important, because in the coming verses, he will explain the process of growing in this manner in order to obtain these “exceedingly great and precious promises.”

There is an article which is missing in the translation. It should say, “the exceedingly great and precious,” or maybe “His exceedingly great and precious.” In this, Peter uses a word for “promises” which is only found here, and then once again in verse 3:13. There is a difference between promises which are voluntarily made and promises which are given in response to a petition. The former promises are what Peter is referring to here. These promises focus on the result of God’s promises. Peter says that these are “exceedingly great and precious.”

He is heaping up superlatives because of the greatness of what God has promised His children. The word Peter chooses, translated as “precious,” was used by him in his first epistle to describe the blood of Christ which was shed.

With this understanding, Peter says that these magnificent promises are made “that through these you may be.” He again uses the word “through” to show that it is the medium by which these things come about. One travels through space to reach another planet. One moves through the hope of these promises in order to come to the realization of them.

His words, translated from the Greek verb which is in the subjunctive mood as “may be,” are better translated as “may become.” There is a process of growth which is being highlighted. However, there is no doubt in the end result of the matter. Saying “may become” doesn’t mean it may or may not happen. It is a way of saying that it will, in fact, happen. What Peter is referring to in this process of growth is found in verses 5-8. The end result of this is to be “partakers.”

Here the word Peter uses is defined by HELPS Word Studies. They say it is “properly, a participant who mutually belongs and shares fellowship; a ‘joint-participant.’” What is promised is something that will be realized in the believer in Christ. It is not something they will partake of in the sense of seeing, but in the sense of personally experiencing. And that partaking is “of the divine nature.”

Hebrews 12:10 says that believers will be “partakers of His holiness.” The outcome of what Peter speaks of is geared completely towards this end. Instead of being fleshly and earthly, we will be holy and partake of God’s divine nature. Paul says this also in 1 Corinthians 15:47-49 –

“The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven. ⁴⁸ As *was* the *man* of dust, so also *are* those *who are made* of dust; and as *is* the heavenly *Man*, so also *are* those *who are* heavenly. ⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*.”

Peter continues with, “having escaped the corruption.” This is the great hope of the redeemed. We live in a world of corruption, death, pain, sorrow, tears, and so on. God promises us something far better. We shall partake of His divine nature, and in the process, we will cast off this world of corruption. The escape is made possible because of what God has done in Christ. By fleeing to Christ, the soul’s escape is made possible.

To emphasize the state of the world, and what brings that state about, he finishes with, “*that is* in the world through lust.” The Greek rather reads “in lust.” Lust is where the root of corruption feeds from. The believer anticipates glory and perfection, whereas those in the world feed off of lust and produce corruption.

However, believers are not immune from the effects of this world, and they can be swallowed up by it once again. For this reason, Peter will next begin a set of verses which will instruct on how to avoid this happening.

Life application: According to Paul, the process of what Peter speaks about here comes in different stages as we mature. God *predestined* us for salvation even before creation. He knew those who would believe in the message of Jesus from eternity past. Those whom He predestined, He *called*. When we were called, we began a glorious process.

After being called, we were *justified*. This is where we are declared “not guilty” of the offenses we have committed. Jesus took the punishment that we deserve at the cross. As God judged our sin in Him, it can never be judged again; hence, we are justified before God.

Once justified, we hopefully go through *sanctification*. It is both an immediate thing in God’s mind (we are sanctified – for example, see 1 Corinthians 6:11), but it is also an ongoing process in this life. As we grow in the wisdom and knowledge of Scripture, learn to live our lives in the Spirit, and are molded into the image of Jesus, we grow in sanctification.

Eventually, we will be *glorified*. This is the final state of the believer when we will be like Christ. This is what Peter means when he says we will be “partakers in the divine nature.” Although glorification is not something we can attain in this life, Paul speaks of it as already accomplished in the mind of God. We have every assurance that we will be carried through to this state.

If you are struggling in sanctification, ask the Lord to help you grow into His likeness. Make sure to study your Bible regularly and also to pray for guidance and wisdom as a faithful believer. These things will help you grow in Christ and will be added to the list of heavenly rewards you will receive when you face the Lord.

Lord God, sometimes we may not feel as if we are growing into Your likeness. In fact, we often feel we are slipping backwards. We know that You have saved us and that we are eternally Yours, but how unworthy of Your favor we feel! Help us to grow in You, give us

wisdom as we study Your word, and may we be filled with Your Spirit as we open ourselves to You through our actions which are directed to You. May we become more and more like You. Amen.

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 2 Peter 1:5

The context of what Peter will now say must be considered. He will give a list of reasons for why a believer should grow in maturity, taking one step to the next, as he pursues the higher calling found in Jesus Christ. He will do this in order for the reader to avoid the embarrassing pitfall found in verse 9. However, the context of these verses is found in what he has just said.

He has spoken of the knowledge of God being the sphere in which we have “all things that *pertain* to life and godliness.” Further, this was based on the “knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.” It is these, then, by which believers have been given “exceedingly great and precious promises,” and Peter says, “that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.”

Peter’s words of verses 1:2-1:4, as referred to, are the logical reason why he will now exhort his reader to take certain actions. Everything Peter has said is complete for the believer, as is evidenced by the use of perfect tense and aorist verbs. These things are past, and they are assured – “He has given,” “you may be partakers (aorist verb in the subjunctive mood),” “having escaped” – because of the work of Christ.

In Peter’s words is a reflection of what Paul says in Romans –

“Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” Romans 8:30

The things are accomplished in God’s mind, and are, therefore, done and behind in the believer, even if they have not yet been realized in the stream of time. With this understanding, Peter now says, “But for this very reason.”

It is for the reason that believers will obtain these things that we are not to squander our time in useless pursuits now. Rather, because these things are assured, a wise person will take advantage of this knowledge and use it for God’s glory and for his own

personal attainment of a life which is holy before God. In order for this to be realized, he says, “giving all diligence.”

The Greek word signifies “quickly obeying.” One should quickly and with diligence give his very best effort to do those things which Peter will now lay out before us. There may be a path one could take which is good, but no matter how good it is, the one that Peter will lay out is the better. Therefore, the wise person will choose this better over whatever is merely good.

Peter next begins the movement of thought which will allow this to come about. He says, “add to your faith virtue.” This takes the reader back to his opening verse. There he said, “To those who have obtained like precious faith.” Since then, he brought in the things referred to in the intervening verses. But now, he returns to this principle tenet once again. However, the word “add” is not appropriate. There is not an additive force to the words, but rather an increase by growth. Each subsequent grace perfects the previous one. The word “supply” is appropriate. One should supply virtue to the faith he possesses.

Peter turns back to verse 3 here. Just as God “called us by His glory and virtue,” believers are to also exhibit virtue as well during their walk in faith. This walk, then, will be a walk which is fully supplied with virtue. In such a walk, Peter then says, “to virtue knowledge.”

Again, the knowledge is not additive, but supplied so that all of these will be become one continues action. One can display virtue in faith, but he may be lacking in knowledge while doing so. In such a case, his virtue may be misdirected. One could think of a zealot who runs ahead in the wrong direction. His goodness in sharing his faith is notable, but it is not explained properly. In other words, sound doctrine is lacking. Therefore, in order to perfect his virtuous walk of faith, he supplies knowledge. He reads his Bible, obtains proper training in theology, and is thus increased in proper conduct before the Lord.

Peter will continue with this list of qualities which are to be supplied, one to another, until they abound in the believer. He will then show what the results of being negligent in this will be.

Life application: Believers need an orderly development of their faith and practice so that they might become fruitful as believers in Jesus Christ. *Faith* is merely the beginning of our walk with the Lord. As the author of Hebrews says –

“But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

-Hebrews 11:6

We can't please God without faith. But equally as important is the fact that misdirected faith is wasted faith. Yes, Muslims and Buddhists, etc. have faith, but their faith is misdirected. What the Bible makes clear is that faith in Jesus Christ alone is what pleases God. From this launching point, *virtue* is to be supplied.

We are to strive for holy excellence with moral power as we progress in our faith. Next, *knowledge* is to be supplied. The Greek word signifies awareness or intelligent insight. In obtaining knowledge, we can then see biblical truths properly; the lens will come into focus for our doctrine and our lives.

Heavenly Father, though our faith be as small as a mustard seed, we ask that You increase it. And, O God, help us to exercise it in a way which is proper and honoring to You. May we increase this faith with virtue, and from there may our virtuous faith lead to a proper knowledge and understanding of Your word and Your great character. Amen.

...to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,
2 Peter 1:6

Peter continues to provide instruction for the believer who has been called by God. This calling holds the promises he outlined in the preceding verses. To ensure those promises are not forgotten, he continues his list with supplying “to knowledge self-control.”

Through reading and studying the Bible, through proper theological training, and through other such endeavors, knowledge is increased. From there, Peter says to supply to that reservoir “self-control.” The Greek word signifies dominion within. HELPS Word Studies says it is “proceeding out from *within* oneself, but *not by oneself*.” Thus, it is that which comes by the power of the Lord. Charles Ellicott says of this, “In other words, your discerning between good and evil must lead to avoiding the evil and choosing the good.”

Just because one obtains knowledge, it does not mean that he will rightly apply it. A person may be a great theologian, and yet he may be a pervert. Therefore, one must supply to his knowledge this self-control. And then to that, he is to supply “perseverance.”

The thought is obvious. We all have fallen inclinations. If we have a tendency to overdrink, and we have knowledge from the word that this is wrong, then we must display self-control in that area. But it is not a one-time thing. Rather, it is to be an ongoing process. We are to persevere in our state of self-control. Vincent's Word Studies says it is "the heroic, brave patience with which a Christian not only bears but contends." A believer is to effect the necessary changes in his life, and then to remain in that state.

At this point of development, Peter then says that we are to supply "godliness." This is a piety towards God. The particular Greek word is never ascribed to God, but rather to people who would emulate Him. It is piety or directing one's attention toward God in reverence. It is the word used by Peter in verse 1:3 when he said that "His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness."

Because God has given us His divine power, then we are to appropriate that power to supply it to those characteristics which will cause us to increase in a proper way before God as we continue our lives before Him.

Peter will finish his list of these things in the next verse. After this, in verse 8, he will explain quite clearly why this must occur.

Life application: Self-control, restraining one's temper, and guarding all of one's physical appetites is basically the opposite of self-indulgence.

If we have knowledge without self-control, our knowledge would be useless. To understand it is wrong to over-indulge, but to do it anyway is to reject the knowledge. Then, as we exercise self-control, we supply to it *perseverance*.

This is a logical progression of thought. We have knowledge so let us use it to control ourselves; we have self-control, so let us exercise it continuously – with perseverance. Let us not falter from our self-control and step backwards, but rather we should heroically press on despite opposition of the world and of our own weak flesh. As we persevere, we work towards *godliness*.

Godliness is a condition of living a pious, devout, and holy existence. It would make no sense to desire this if we had no self-control. And even if we did at one point, unless we persevered in restraining our desires, we could never expect to live in a godly fashion.

As you can see, each step that Peter mentions must logically precede the following step as we march on toward living as God would have us live. Live for Christ; be filled with the Spirit of God; and press on in this attitude all the days of your lives!

O precious Savior, how hard it is to persevere in right conduct and self-control. You know, O Lord, our weaknesses both in temptation and in endurance. Strengthen us as we walk through this life of trial and testing. Grant us the supernatural ability to live as You would have us live. We ask this so that You will be glorified in us. Amen.

...to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 2 Peter 1:7

Peter continues with his three-verse instruction for the believer who has been called by God. As a reminder, this calling holds the promises he outlined in the preceding verses. To ensure those promises are not forgotten, he continues his list with the thought of supplying “to godliness brotherly kindness.”

A more literal translation would be, “the love of the brethren.” The state of reverence of the previous verse is logically and rightly then supplied with this next trait. If it were the other way around, a hint of perversion could easily be introduced into the conduct of the person. Without the trait of godliness, a love for the brethren could easily turn into an inappropriate relationship.

Even if the perverse sin of homosexuality did not arise, the term “the brethren” is inclusive of women, because the masculine stands for both genders when addressing an audience with both sexes. A person lacking godliness is prone to error by allowing a fraternal love to turn into an emotional love. This obviously means other than with the intent to marry. When this occurs, restraint is weakened, and temptations arise. Peter’s words are carefully following a proper path of conduct which is set to avoid such things. Now, with that path laid out in an appropriate manner, Peter finally finishes with, “and to brotherly kindness love.”

The love Peter speaks of here is *agape*, or the love which is centered on moral preference. It is the love that God prefers and can be, at times, termed divine love. It is a love of goodwill and benevolence. It is the love carefully explained by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 which says that “Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

With such love, a love that Paul also says “never fails,” there will be nothing inappropriate introduced into a relationship, and there will only be goodwill and pure intent. It is the highest aspect of the path which Peter has laid out for the believer because if it is properly set forth, it will perfectly emulate God who John says “is love” in 1 John 4:8.

With these virtues properly aligned and supplied one to another, Peter will next explain the benefits the believer will possess.

Life application: When godliness is pursued first, then our inter-personal affections will be rooted in Christ and demonstrate Christ-like attitudes, including kindness. This doesn't mean that the unconverted world can't show a similar kindness, but it will naturally be based on a misdirected attitude unless it bears the resemblance of Jesus.

From there, if we have a Christ-like brotherly kindness towards each other, then we can properly love without hindrance or pretense. The love Peter speaks of transcends brotherly kindness and enables a person to love volitionally, rather than emotionally. A deliberate choice is made in this type of love which says, “I will love my enemies and even put them ahead of myself.” In other words, we are to put others in the same position in our attitudes as God put us when He sent Jesus to die for us.

We were once enemies of, and towards, God, but He – in His great love for us – sent Jesus to reconcile us to Himself. This is the goal to which we should aspire as well, and it is something we need to work towards as we follow the steps Peter has laid out for us. May we endeavor to faithfully reach this high and favorable state!

Lord, help each of us to become the faithfully loving person You intend for us to be. You know the depths of our hearts and souls, and the limits we have that are placed there. Break down these barriers and give us the supernatural ability to overcome these limitations so that others, even our enemies, may see You there. To Your honor and glory we pray. Amen.

For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:8

Peter now sums up the words of verses 6 & 7. He has been noting specific traits, in order, so that believers will grow and be effective in their walk with the Lord. To do so, he begins with, “For if these things.” It is the eight traits he has named: faith, virtue,

knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. It is these things he is referring to by saying, “if these things are yours and abound.”

The word he uses, which is translated as “are yours,” speaks of possession. If you, as a believer, possess them, not just in a fleeting way, but as permanent belongings, and if they abound in you as an individual, Peter says that “*you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful.”

The word “barren” does not convey Peter’s intent. It is a word, *ergon* – meaning “work” – which is preceded by a negative particle. This then indicates the opposite thought. Thus, it signifies being idle. Peter has been speaking of actively supplying one thing to another and so “barren” fails to convey the meaning. Instead of supplying one trait to the next to be a sound, vibrant, and active believer, he is idle. Hence, he will be unproductive and “unfruitful.” But if he does what Peter suggests, he will not be idle or “unfruitful.”

Unfruitful means exactly that, “without fruit.” To fail to apply Peter’s admonitions means that there will be nothing of value to show for the grace which has been bestowed upon the believer. With that in mind, Peter reveals what the benefit of paying heed to his words is by finishing the verse with, “in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The Greek rather reads, “unto the knowledge.” As Vincent’s Word Studies says, “The idea is not idleness in the knowledge, but idleness in pressing on and developing toward and finally reaching the knowledge.” Each virtue which is supplied to the previous one is given by Peter with the intent that the individual will move forward in his walk, becoming more and more knowledgeable as he goes. It is Christ who has saved, and it is Christ who is to be emulated. But for those who fail to do as Peter instructs, their walk in their salvation will stagnate. This is so much the case that Peter will tell what the ultimate effects of such a stagnation will be as he continues into verse 9.

Life application: A review of the “things” Peter has mentioned and which, when they abound, bring about fruitfulness are –

- *Faith* – The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
- *Virtue* – The quality of possessing valor, holy excellence, moral power, and fortitude.
- *Knowledge* – Awareness, intelligent insight – seeing the truthfulness of things in the proper perspective.

- *Self-Control* – Maintaining mastery over your temper, lusts, and other emotional and physical appetites.
- *Perseverance* – Withstanding opposition to the gospel, and living faithfully and strongly in Christ even against the surging tides of antagonism.
- *Godliness* – Having a pious, holy, and devote attitude in all ways and in all circumstances.
- *Brotherly kindness* – Maintaining fraternal affection toward other believers in the Body of Christ and demonstrating that affection with one’s actions.
- *Love* – Having a volitional rather than an emotional love, regardless of lesser feelings which war against the soul. This means to love and demonstrate that love deliberately.

If we exercise these qualities properly and in increasing measure, we will be “neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Isn’t this the goal that we should each aspire to as we live our lives in the presence of God?

Gracious and infinitely wise Creator, You certainly know our proclivities to falling short of the admonitions found in Your word. Be with us, sustain us, and help us to grow in all virtuous ways so that we will be sound and faithful followers of Jesus. Thank You for hearing our prayer and responding according to Your great wisdom. Amen.

For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. 2 Peter 1:9

Over the past four verses, Peter has developed a case concerning proper growth in Christ. In the previous verse, he gave positive reasons for this (being neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord). He now he presents a negative reason which will result if what he has instructed is not adhered to. To set the stage for that, he says, “For he who lacks these things.” The Greek literally reads, “To whom these things are not present.” Vincent’s Word Studies explains –

“Note that a different word is used here from that in 2 Peter 1:8, are yours, to convey the idea of possession. Instead of speaking of the gifts as belonging to the Christian by habitual, settled possession, he denotes them now as merely present with him.”

In other words, the things that Peter recommend being done were viewed as actual possessions of the wise person who followed his instruction. However, the person who fails to do so, not only does he not possess them, they are not even available to him. Their presence, for him, is nonexistent. It is reflective of the opening chapters of

Proverbs where wisdom calls out. The one who listens will benefit, the one who fails to listen will suffer.

Peter now says what the state of such a person is when his recommended course of action was not heeded, beginning with the thought that he “is shortsighted.” The Greek word, found only here in Scripture, is *muópazó*. It is the basis for our modern word “myopic.” It is a compound word which comes from the Greek words *musterion* (a mystery) and *ops* (the face – which is the root of *optanomai* – appearing). Thus, it means that the person cannot see far off. This is then used in a spiritual sense by Peter. He is unperceiving of his own spiritual state.

Peter then says, “even to blindness.” The word is commonly used, and it can mean both literal blindness, such as in Matthew 20:30, or spiritual blindness, such as in Matthew 23:16. In this case, Peter is equating the person in a spiritual sense to someone who is so myopic that he is – for all intents and purposes – blind. Peter is emphasizing sight as a metaphor for the instruction which he gave in the previous verses. The instruction was ignored, and his sight now fails. Of these words, shortsighted and blind, Vincent’s Word Studies explains –

“The participle being short-sighted is added to the adjective blind, defining it; as if he had said, is blind, that is, short-sighted spiritually; seeing only things present and not heavenly things.”

Thus, this person sees only what is worldly and near, but not that which is of the highest importance. His spiritual sense is completely fogged over and, as Peter says, he “has forgotten.”

The words, “has forgotten,” fail to convey the Greek. It is a noun. More literally, it is translated as “having taken forgetfulness.” It is as this person has voluntarily picked up the state of forgetfulness and now carries it with him. Because he voluntarily failed to do what Peter says, and because his hands were empty and needed to be filled with something, he picked up this trait and now carries it around with him. And that by which he has taken up forgetfulness is “that he was cleansed.”

Again, the translation is lacking. Peter again uses a noun to describe the state, saying, “the cleansing.” The person has taken up forgetfulness that he had “the cleansing.” The Greek word speaks of purification, and most directly from moral impurity, meaning sin. For example, it is the same word used in Hebrews 1:3 –

“...who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,”

And this is exactly what is on Peter’s mind as he finishes the thought with, “from his old sins.” In other words, this person, who failed to pay heed to the words Peter lays out for instruction, has forgotten that He was saved by Jesus and was forgiven his sin through Christ’s atoning sacrifice. It has been argued that “past sins” means that only his past sins were forgiven, but not his future sins. The stupidity of that shows a bias against the doctrine of eternal salvation, which Peter has already argued for. It further speaks against the efficacy of the cross of Christ to forgive all sin.

And more, Paul states that in Christ, believers are no longer under law, but under grace. Because of this, and because it is by law that there is a knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20), and thus sin is imputed through law, then believers are no longer imputed sin (Romans 5:13 and 2 Corinthians 5:19).

What Peter says here is not an argument for temporary salvation, but for eternal salvation. A person who is forgiven by Christ and saved can actually forget that he was once saved, but God has not forgotten. The individual has been saved, and he remains saved – despite his own shortsightedness. Praise God for His infinite mercy.

Life application: All believers should remember the substance of 2 Peter 1:9, and they should remember where the verse is.

Peter went through a list of eight things we should apply to our lives in order to grow so that we will be “neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Those eight things are faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. By growing in these attributes, we are molded into Christ’s likeness as we are sanctified by the Spirit of God.

Peter’s words acknowledge, quite clearly, that believers are saved, washed, and clean. The blood of Jesus has covered, and will cover, every failing they have. It is fully capable of both saving and keeping the believer safe – despite his own blindness.

Lord God, Your word says that we can go so far away from you that we forget we have even been saved by Christ Jesus and washed in His purification from sin. But You do not forget. Once a person has come to You in faith, a new state is seen where sin is no longer counted against us. Thank You, O God, that we have the surety of eternal salvation,

despite our own shortcomings, even to blindness of our forgiven state! Thank You for the work of Jesus on our behalf. Amen.

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 2 Peter 1:10

Peter now says, “Therefore,” to highlight what he has just said in verses 5-9. He wants them to pay heed to his exhortation to ensure that his readers will live up to that which he has stated. In order to let them know that this can happen to anyone, he then says, “brethren.” This is the only time he uses this particular word in the epistle. Elsewhere, he says “beloved” or speaks of the “brotherhood.” In this instance, he certainly uses this more common form of address to show that all are on the same level and all are susceptible to straying if they do not pay heed.

Next, he admonishes the reader to “be even more diligent to make your call and election sure.” Here, Peter uses the same word for “call” that Paul does concerning Israel in Romans 11, the Gentiles in 1 Corinthians 1, and etc. It speaks of God’s invitation to all people to receive – by faith – His gift of salvation. This gift includes all of the blessings which accompany it.

Peter further uses the word for “election” which is the same that Paul uses when speaking of Israel in Romans 9 & 11, but also for Gentiles in 1 Thessalonians 1:4. It signifies being selected out of, and to, a given outcome. The calling and the election are like two sides of the same coin. The call is made, and those who respond are elected. Thus, when it is accomplished, one can speak of the calling and the election in the same sense – one leads to the next. Here, it is evident that both Jews and Gentiles are called with the same calling, and both are elected out of their respective people groups by the one gospel.

In saying to make the call and election “sure,” he uses a word which signifies solidity, and thus that which is fully dependable. This does not mean that a believer must do something to retain his calling and election. The context of his words in verse 9 speaks of a person who “has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.” The surety, then, is not to keep the call and election, but to remember it so that there is no waffling in the certainty of the calling and election. In other words, it is surety of mind in position, not surety of position before the Lord.

Peter then says, “for if you do these things.” This is referring to each point that he mentioned in verses 5-7 where the virtues are named and are instructed to be supplied,

one to another, from faith through to love. If the believer follows Peter's words of instruction there, he says "you will never stumble." The Greek is more emphatic, saying something like, "never not shall you stumble at any time."

The word translated as "stumble" is used just five times, by Paul once, James three times, and finally this last time by Peter. It does not signify a loss of salvation, and such an idea cannot even be hinted at. James says that "we all stumble in many things" in James 3:2. But even more, Paul asks whether Israel had "stumbled that they should fall" in Romans 11:11. His answer in that verse is "Certainly not!"

Peter's words are given to show that by following his exhortation, the walk of the believer will be sound and sure to him because he is already secured in his salvation by the Lord. To fail to do as he has recommended will cause anxiety in the believer who has forgotten the very calling and election by which he was saved. Peter desires that they not stumble in such a manner.

Life application: As there is no change in God, we can know with all certainty that our calling and election for salvation are guaranteed and certain from God's perspective. His decrees, of which our election is one, are unconditional in nature.

However, if we have called on the name of Jesus, and if we are truly saved by His work, then we should have the internal desire to reflect what occurred by our fruitful deeds. If we fail to act this way then it is we, not God, who are actually unsure if we are saved or not. The unfaithful but saved Christian goes through life ever questioning the salvation he was granted.

Every time something bad happens, he will wonder, "What did I do to deserve this? Maybe God doesn't really love me." Every time he does something inappropriate, he will also mentally ask himself, "I wonder if God will be able to forgive me?" Such an individual is like a small boat tossed about on a raging sea. He has no sense of direction and no sense of security in his own life.

If we are diligent in reading and understanding the Bible, we will have every surety of our call and our election. We will understand the nature of God, and that what occurred is complete and eternal. When the flock fails to dig deeply and often into Scripture...they must be bombarded by a continuous stream of self-doubt! It is the individuals, and in turn the congregation, who know and trust their Bibles that understand the great nature of the salvation given by Jesus.

Lord God, thank You for Your eternal and unchanging nature. By understanding who You are, we can understand our position in You – eternally saved and free from condemnation. Give us wisdom to diligently evaluate and understand difficult verses that can be easily twisted or misconstrued. Thank You for our eternal salvation; thank You for Jesus! Amen.

...for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:11

Peter now completes the thought he introduced in the previous verse. He had admonished his audience to be “diligent to make your call and election sure.” This was to ensure they never stumbled. Now he says, “for so an entrance will be supplied to you.” The words “for so” mean “in this way.” By doing one thing, the next will result.

From that, Peter then uses a word, *epichorégeó*, which means “to supply.” It is the same word he used in verse 5 when noting the supplying of one virtue to another. The prefix *epi* signifies “upon” or “on,” and it is used to intensify the next part of the word which is the word *chorégeó*. It speaks of leading a group of performers. One can see the root of our modern word choreography. Peter then further intensifies the thought by saying “abundantly.”

There is a rich and abundant benefit for following Peter’s admonition. Instead of being shortsighted, even to blindness, and then stumbling on the walk to glory, there will be a richness to the walk which is supplied to the individual even as he proceeds “into the everlasting kingdom.”

The word translated as “everlasting” speaks of an age. But it is not just an age of time. Rather it also speaks of the quality of life. As this is referring to believers, even now, HELPS Word Studies gives a sound explanation –

“Eternal (166 /*aiónios*) life operates simultaneously *outside* of time, *inside* of time, and beyond time – i.e. what gives time its everlasting meaning for the believer through faith, yet is also time-independent.”

The word is, therefore, better translated as “eternal” instead of “everlasting.” It deals with more than just time, but the better life in that time which is experienced by those who possess it.

Understanding this, and taken together with the thought of the previous verse which did not speak of a loss of salvation, but simply stumbling on the way to glory, Professor

Salmond notes that Peter's words here speak of exactly the opposite of what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:15, where the believer is "saved, yet so as through fire."

The one who fails to heed Peter's words of exhortation will stumble, he may forget he was even saved, but he will remain saved but possess few or no rewards for his walk. But the one who heeds his words will not only be saved, but he will be richly supplied in his walk and when he enters "into the [eternal] kingdom."

The kingdom is exactly the same thing that Paul speaks about fourteen times in his epistles. It is mentioned three times in Hebrews – a book certainly written by Paul, and then it is mentioned once by James, and once by Peter (in this verse) in their epistles. What is obvious is that the same kingdom is referred to by all three – Paul, James, and Peter. A kingdom is a dominion ruled by a king. In this case, it is that of "our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

The words are the same construction as the words of verse 1 where Peter said "our God and Savior Jesus Christ." God is our Savior, and Jesus is our Savior. Therefore, Peter is noting quite clearly that Jesus is God. He is the Ruler of the kingdom, and thus He is our King.

Life application: Access to the eternal kingdom of Jesus is obtained by faith in Jesus. This was stated by Jesus and is repeated again and again by the apostles in the New Testament. Cherubim were placed at the entrance to the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve were expelled from there. They guarded the entrance, ensuring that there was no access, thus keeping man from the Tree of Life. This was likewise pictured on the veil in front of the Ark of the Testimony –

"You shall make a veil woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen. It shall be woven with an artistic design of cherubim." Exodus 26:31

When Christ Jesus died on the cross, the veil was torn in two. This symbolized that access was restored to the Tree of Life through His torn body. The book of Hebrews explicitly says the veil symbolized His flesh (Hebrews 10:20). The book of John shows us that the ark was a picture of His sacrifice as well. Every detail of the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Jesus. It is through Him that we obtain entrance into His everlasting kingdom. Therefore, we are wise to increase our knowledge of Him and His word now, so that we will be supplied "abundantly" with access into His eternal dwelling. What we put off today will affect what we receive in the time to come.

O God! Give us more of Jesus. Fill us with an ever-increasing desire to know Him and His mighty works. Open our understanding concerning the pictures and symbols of the Old Testament and how they relate to, and are fulfilled in, the New. May our eyes be opened to the marvelous fulfillment of these things in Jesus our Lord! Amen.

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. 2 Peter 1:12

Peter has exhorted his audience, and then he explained why he gave the exhortation. Now he builds upon that with promised encouragement beginning with, “For this reason.” If they fail in heeding his exhortation, they will be shortsighted and unfruitful. If they pay heed, they will not stumble, and they will be rewarded abundantly. Like a father wanting the best for his children, he desires the latter, and so he next says, “I will not be negligent to remind you always.”

He has reminded them, and he will continue to do so. They could thus expect personal visits or more letters from him. Or maybe Peter would send along others with his approval to continue to instruct them in the proper way of the Lord. And more, his continued words of the epistle will also be a further reminder of what to do or what to be wary of. He then says, “of these things.” That then comprises all of what he has said from verse 5 until 11. They are the things which will keep them sound and walking properly.

At this point, Peter carefully remarks, “though you know.” The Greek is a perfect participle, active. It is therefore literally “knowing.” They received the knowledge and it is ongoing in their minds. However, how easy it is to forget instruction. As he noted in verse 9, a person can know something, and come to the point where he completely forgets the matter. He desired not only that they know, but that they continue to do so into the future.

As Peter is long dead and gone, it is a note to each person that hearing something once in a church is not enough to ground him in the truth. Nor is reading the Bible once. The word must be continually referred to, in order to know and to be knowing. This is the force of Peter’s words, even though they “are established in the present truth.”

The wording here, though not incorrect, can be misconstrued. Some versions say something better like, “...and are firmly established in the truth you now possess.” Truth is fixed and immutable.

Today people say, “all things are relative” or “what’s true for you isn’t necessarily true for me.” This is often done in an attempt to justify their stand on something which is otherwise unjustifiable. But this thinking is amiss. When Peter says, “the present truth,” he is speaking of that which has been revealed, not that which was untrue but has now become true. He has presented his words, they contain truth, and his reader’s minds are now in accord with what was presented. He desires that this will continue on into the future.

Life application: Peter desires to drum into the heads of his recipients (meaning us too) the things he has already taught them. Should he fail to do so, he would be negligent in his responsibilities. Learning often involves and is enhanced by repetition. To hear something once leaves the possibility of forgetting. Hearing it twice or three times helps solidify what has been relayed. It is for this reason that Peter repeats what he’s previously taught.

Likewise, the Bible itself reinforces precepts throughout its pages. What the Old Testament proclaims is reiterated or fulfilled in the New; what Matthew teaches is repeated in Mark, Luke, and even John at times. What Acts tells us occurred is repeated at the pen of Paul. What Paul states as prescriptive for the church is reconfirmed by Peter and the other apostles. All of this repetition is given so that we will be firm, fixed, and established in sound biblical truth.

And yet, how often do we see huge disparities in doctrine between one pastor and the next; between one teacher and the next; between one denomination and the next! Such differences result because we fail to spend due time and reflection in the pages of the Bible. Let us take heed to Peter’s word today and get ourselves “established in the present truth.”

Heavenly Father, keep me from wrong considerations of modern thought which teach that “all things are relative.” Your word teaches that there is one truth concerning proper theology, and that leads to only one way to be saved. Despite varying opinions on the matter, You don’t waiver on it, and so neither should we. Keep us sound in our doctrine and faithful in our allegiance to Jesus the Lord. Amen.

Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you,
2 Peter 1:13

Peter had just said in the previous verse that he “will not be negligent to remind you always of these things.” As an added statement of the necessity of this, he says, “Yes, I

think it is right.” Despite the fact that, as he also said in the previous verse, they “know and are established in the present truth,” he knew that it was right and proper to continue to remind them of what was expected of them, as he next says, “as long as I am in this tent.”

Here, Peter goes to the Old Testament symbolism of the Feast of Tabernacles which was one of the three pilgrim feasts for the people. The feasts are “Feasts of the Lord,” but three of them were specifically to be observed by the men of Israel in Jerusalem – Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. At Tabernacles, the people would dwell in temporary shelters they erected. These pointed to the life of a believer after coming to Christ.

Peter is acknowledging that he is not yet glorified, and that his current walk was only a temporary one, which would eventually come to an end. For each believer, the typology of the Feast of Tabernacles is to show that just as Christ came and dwelt among us in a temporary tent, so we too continue to live in a temporary tent, awaiting our final heavenly body. The things which the tent was to be constructed of (as mandated in the law) speak of the life of the believer after coming to Christ.

Peter is showing that the Feast of Tabernacles is fulfilled in Christ, and that he is participating in his true pilgrim feast until his death. Until that time, he says that he will not fail to fulfill his duties, but he will write – as he says – “to stir you up by reminding *you*.” The intent is to move his reader to action through constant reminder of right conduct and attitude. The reminding is to be the cause of the stirring up. He will continue his explanation of why he feels the urgency of this in the coming verse.

Life application: When you haven’t studied math in a long time, you tend to forget the way to do calculations (long division anyone?). When you don’t study a foreign language you once knew, you tend to forget its proper construction, and eventually you forget even the words to speak. Likewise, if we distance ourselves from studying the Bible and what it reveals, when we neglect church and the fellowship it provides, when we skip over sharing in the Lord’s Supper, etc., we grow cold and forgetful about the very things which brought us to Jesus in the first place.

As Peter said four verses ago – “For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.” Yes, there can even be a point where we forget we had even called on Jesus at all. What an immense shame it will be for such a person to face Jesus, not for condemnation, but a salvation that

brings no rewards. Such a life is one wasted on fruitlessness and a complete lack of appreciation for the great salvation wrought on his behalf.

Because of our short-sightedness in life, Peter wants to stir us up by reminding us not to fall away. He says that he would do this “as long as I am in this tent.” The tent, as noted above, is speaking of his body. He uses the term to indicate that it is only a temporary dwelling place and not his permanent home. His wording is used to remind us that we should feel the same. We are merely pilgrims passing through this life, and we should be ever expecting a greater dwelling place, an eternal abode where we will be in the presence of the Lord who saved us.

Lord, give us hearts and minds that look like the faithful who have gone before us, with the expectation of a better home and a permanent dwelling. As we abide in our current tents, may we continue to refresh our memories concerning the great truths which the Bible proclaims concerning Jesus and His glorious gospel. Amen.

... knowing that shortly I *must* put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. 2 Peter 1:14

Peter now explains why he will not be negligent in reminding his reader about the things he has presented. He had been given advanced notice of something that would occur, and he explains that to the reader by saying, “knowing that shortly I must put off my tent.”

The translation gives an incorrect idea of what Peter is saying. He is not speaking about something that will occur soon, but something that will occur quickly. The words are literally, “swift is the putting off of my tabernacle.” In other words, what lies ahead for Peter is known to him, and when it comes, it will happen without notice and it will be over with suddenness. Therefore, he must take every opportunity to convey his words of exhortation, not knowing when his last chance to do so will occur.

This coming event is the putting off of his tent, meaning death. He is dwelling in a temporary tent, and that tent will be put off, as a garment. This is the same metaphor Paul uses in 2 Corinthians –

“For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, ³ if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. ⁴ For we who are in

this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.” 2 Corinthians 5:1-4

Peter’s putting off of his tent in death means that his soul will be naked until the day he is raised again along with all of the saints at the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Peter then says, “just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.” This was revealed to Peter after the resurrection and prior to the ascension. It is recorded in John 21 –

“‘Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry *you* where you do not wish.’ ¹⁹ This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’” John 21:18, 19

Life application: As is recorded in all four Gospels, Peter denied Jesus three times on the night of His crucifixion. Peter then confirmed his love for Jesus three times in John 21. The discourse between Jesus and Peter, there in John 21, follows a similar pattern to his earlier denials of Christ, and it serves as a link between the two occurrences. It is the basis for the complete restoration of Peter in his apostolic position. But there would be a cost for serving Jesus. He would die a martyr’s death.

Tradition has it that he was crucified, but that he asked for it to be upside down because he felt unworthy of being crucified in the same manner as his Lord. Are you willing to face whatever the Lord hands you with confidence and obedience? Like the apostles, we may be expected to give more than Sunday morning offerings. Let us determine now that we will follow our Lord with unwavering commitment.

Lord Jesus, just as Peter was willing to go to his death for the sake of the gospel, give us the same desire – whatever the cost. May we be willing to faithfully follow You all the days of our lives. And Lord, may You receive the glory You are due as we live our lives in these temporary tents. Help us to be responsible to the calling which You have called us to! Amen.

Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease. 2 Peter 1:15

Peter just said that at some point he will “put off” his tent, meaning die. Based on that, he now says, “Moreover I will be careful.” The word translated as “careful” is the same word he used in verse 1:10 where he told the brethren to “be even more diligent.” Just

as he exhorted them to be diligent in making their call and election sure, so he would also be diligent, as he says, “to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things.”

He was not leaving it solely up to them to hear once and then have to remember all that they were told, but rather, he was tending to them as a flock and carefully promising to lead them as long as he was able to do so. But more, his words being penned were their own continued guidance for them. As long as the epistle was maintained, copied for others, and transmitted to those who needed the reminder, his work would continue to have lasting effects.

And because Peter’s letter was maintained, eventually becoming a part of the canon of Scripture, his words here are literally true even for believers today. For any who open Scripture and come to his epistles, they have the same reminder.

The Greek word *mnémé*, translated as “reminder,” is found only here in Scripture. It signifies a lasting memory, or something worthy of recollection. Peter wants his exhortation to them remembered because, in doing so, they will avoid the pitfalls which he explained in verse 9 concerning actually forgetting the fact that they were cleansed from their old sins. He wanted this to remain so, as he says, “after my decease.”

The Greek word translated as “decease” is *exodus*. It is a going out, or departure, and thus it signifies death. It is only used two other times in the New Testament. The first is in Luke 9:31 when speaking of the exodus, or death, of Christ. The second is in Hebrews 11 when speaking of the exodus of Israel from Egypt. In the first use, Jesus, Peter, John, and James were together on the Mount of Transfiguration. At that time, it said –

“Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe *became* white *and* glistening. ³⁰ And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³² But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. ³³ Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, *that* Peter said to Jesus, ‘Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah’—not knowing what he said.” Luke 9:28-31

It should not be missed that Peter is the one who spoke, and while speaking he mentions making tabernacles (meaning tents) for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Now, when

speaking of his own *exodus*, he mentions putting off his own tent. He is clearly calling to mind what he had seen, and he is now using that memory to impart wisdom concerning the faith to those he has been charged to lead.

Life application: There are still thousands of unique languages without a copy of the Bible. Christian churches spend a great deal of money sending missionaries overseas to evangelize the lost. This is most noteworthy, but without a strong follow-up, only the people who originally hear the word will benefit. Therefore, it is important to not only tell of Jesus, but also to put in place safeguards so that the message will continue to be told. One way of doing this is schooling, raising up elders, and establishing churches. However, without a copy of the Bible, bad doctrine can easily creep in.

Likewise, missionaries from non-conforming sects, such as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, can come in and steal away the truth. To provide copies of the Bible in English is arrogant and presumptuous when it isn't the native language of the people. Therefore, it has been the practice of faithful Christians throughout the ages to translate the Bible into the language of the natives.

Today, that strong desire and goal is being accomplished by the Wycliffe Bible Translators and other groups. Wycliffe is a world-wide organization that is steadily making progress in the translation of the Bible into every known language on earth. If you have the desire to be a part of this team, contact them. Likewise, if you feel so moved, help them out by a charitable gift. The word is eternal, but it needs to be understood. Whether through Wycliffe, or through other local missionaries who are translating the Bible, let us get the recorded word out to the people who so desperately need it.

Lord Jesus, we pray for each of the men and women who are serving around the world in the field of Bible translation. Whether they are overseas in difficult conditions or filling a support role in the office of a big city, be with them and guide them. May Your Holy Spirit move in a splendid way and bring about the knowledge of Your majesty through Your precious word – just as the waters cover the sea. Amen.

For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.
2 Peter 1:16

Peter has been speaking about “the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” since verse 2. He has explained how to live in an appropriate manner and why we should do

so. In verse 4, he mentioned the “exceedingly great and precious promises” of Christ, and that those who follow Him “may be partakers of the divine nature.” He now returns to that after explaining for many verses about the “how” of living for Christ. And so, he begins with, “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables.”

Peter has said that those who follow Christ will partake of His divine nature. That is a great reason to want to emulate Him now. But what if it is all the ravings of a mad man? People throughout history have made great and exalted claims about having heard from God, about having seen heaven, about having the authority to speak for God, and so on. The list is long. What if what Peter is saying is no different? His words now, and continuing on through the end of the chapter, are given to ensure the reader that what he says is not only sound and reasonable, but it is verifiable – in several ways.

In the coming chapter, Peter will even defend against false prophets. But first, he must establish the parameters for what is reasonable concerning the claims which relate to faith in Christ as presented by him. Only then will it make any true sense to want to be obedient to Christ. Only then will those assurances that we will “be partakers of the divine nature” be fully established in hearts and minds.

The word Peter uses, translated by the words “did follow,” signifies closely emulating someone, and thus pursuing closely. Peter is saying that they in no way pursued the use of “cunningly devised fables.” The word translated as “cunningly devised” is based on the idea of wisdom. Paul uses it in 2 Timothy 3:15 concerning the Scriptures which make a person “wise for salvation.”

In this case, however, any such supposed wisdom would be false, and would rather be based on fables. Peter is certainly thinking of the myths of his own Jewish people as much as those of the Gentiles. Jewish history is filled with false prophets, some of which are highlighted right in Scripture, such as the false prophet Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah who is seen in 1 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 18.

Along with people like him, there are innumerable writings of Jews which describe false visions and supposed revelations from God. Add in such fables and myths from the Gentiles, and there is an almost never-ending stream of these things in recorded history.

Unlike these types of people, Peter has not followed such things. Rather, he will provide substantiation for his words as he continues. For now, he notes that his warning about those who devise cunning fables does not apply to the true apostles. Including them

along with himself, he says, “when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The message of Peter and the other apostles is one which is both reliable and consistent in how it is presented. Each spoke of Him and yet their words unite as a unified message, adding another level of surety that the message is true. If a group of people had sat down and made up such a thing (a cunningly devised fable), there would always be gaps or obviously forged overlaps in what one said in relation to another. Eventually, those things would be exposed.

However, though each story may have been relayed from a personal perspective, it was always consistently in line with the personal perspectives of the others who had participated in seeing his power which was displayed in His Person. The word Peter uses for “coming” is “used in the east as a technical expression for the *royal visit* of a *king*, or *emperor*. The word means literally ‘the being beside,’ thus, ‘the personal presence’” (HELPS Word Studies). In such a personal coming, the apostles “were eyewitnesses.”

Here, Peter uses a word found only this once in Scripture. It signifies an onlooker or a spectator. It was as if they beheld an event which captured their eyes, and which was filled with “His majesty.” The glory they beheld was of surpassing greatness, glory, and splendor. Peter’s words are given to ensure those he is writing to that what had been beheld in Jesus was truly going to be shared in by them. He is writing to bolster their confidence, and to give them a sound and justifiable reason 1) for their own sure hope, and 2) as a sound reason for wanting to live in the holy manner which he has already exhorted them to live.

Life application: Peter’s words of his personal eyewitness, and that of the other apostles, are confirmed throughout the gospels and epistles. The accounts all line up properly, without contradiction, and yet each normally confirms some other aspect of what is recorded elsewhere. Thus, the believer in Christ has a reasonable and sound basis for his faith in what is recorded.

Even outside of the Bible, history records that many of these people were martyred for what they state they saw. Unlike modern suicide bombers who believe what they have been told, and who are even willing to die for what they haven’t seen, the apostles and followers of Jesus were willing to die for what they had seen. The gulf between these two concepts is vast.

People die all the time for lies they believe to be true, but no one of sound mind would die for what they knew to be false. They would simply deny the lie and be granted life. Instead, though, these apostles willingly died for the truth. We have a sound faith in Jesus Christ. Never doubt that where you have placed your faith is worthy of eternal reward!

Lord, when our faith is weak, we are so grateful to be reminded of the faithful apostles who proved Your coming by their own martyrdom. When we think on this, we can have a renewed confidence that our faith is sound and properly directed. Thank You for these faithful men who gave their lives so that we may be strengthened in times of doubt. Amen.

For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

2 Peter 1:17

Three corrections need to be made to understand Peter’s words here – “Having received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice was borne to Him by the Excellent Glory.”

“Having received” is an aorist participle, active. It finishes the thought from the previous verse. The phrase “was borne to Him” is unique in Scripture. And finally, the word “by,” rather than “from,” indicates that this is referring to God, the Holy Spirit.

Peter is referring to the Transfiguration which is recorded in all three synoptic gospels –

“While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!’” Matthew 17:5

“And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’” Mark 19:7

“And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’”
-Luke 9:35

Looking at the three accounts in the gospels, and comparing them to Peter’s words, it is evident that what is said in the epistle is not directly copied from one of the gospels. He was remembering the account and wrote the substance of what occurred. However, if

this epistle was a forgery, the forger would surely have copied one of the gospels directly. It is a note of the authenticity of the epistle.

It is Jesus who “received from God the Father honor and glory.” What this means is to be taken with what the gospels relay concerning Peter’s words. When he and the other two with him saw Moses and Elijah, he said, “Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” (Luke 9:33). As Peter spoke, a cloud overshadowed them, and the voice of God the Father spoke the words which Peter now repeats. “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

The Father was revealing to these men that the time to “hear the Law and the Prophets” was ending. It was time to now receive the final and full revelation of God in the Person of His Son. Moses served his time, the prophets served their time, but both spoke of Christ to come. A New Covenant was on its way, and it would come through Jesus (see Hebrews 9:15 and 12:24).

The glory that He received is the glory which far surpasses that of the Old Covenant. That is spoken of by Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:7-18. Paul says that the glory of the Old “was passing away” and does not compare to “the glory that excels.” It is this which God the Father was referring to when His voice was borne by the Excellent Glory.

Though the word translated as “borne” is a commonly used word. It is of note that it is the same word used in Acts 2:2 and which is translated as “a rushing mighty wind.” In other words, the Excellent Glory refers to the Holy Spirit who transmits the word of God from God the Father. He does it in written form through men of God (2 Peter 1:21 – where the same word is also used there), and He does it in open displays of glory, such as on the Mount of Transfiguration and when He came to the people of Israel on Pentecost.

At this time, it is seen that all three of the members of the Godhead were present. Peter says the Source is God the Father. The Excellent Glory is the Holy Spirit conveying the word, and Jesus, the beloved Son, is the recipient of the honor conveyed in that word. It is a rather marvelous display of the workings of the Trinity – harmoniously interacting for us to more fully understand God’s nature.

Life application: This same proclamation was made upon Jesus twice during His ministry. The first time was at His baptism and is recorded in Matthew 3:16, 17 (also in Mark and Luke) –

“When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. ¹⁷ And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”

As noted, it was also made on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter’s words now confirm what he said earlier – that he and the others were eyewitnesses of the glory of Jesus Christ. Jesus had previously told his apostles, “Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom” (Matthew 16:28).

In each of the three gospel accounts, the transfiguration immediately followed this statement, indicating that this is what Jesus was speaking of. The event was like a note of deposit for the apostles to reflect on, and stand by when times would get tough. Peter uses this to assure us that what he says is both true and reasonable.

If you are having doubts about the love of God, the power of God, or the presence of God in your life, take time to consider how He has woven His word together to show you that He is always and intimately with you at all times because of Jesus. The fullness of the Godhead is available to you because of your belief in Christ. Those things which seem to be hindering your walk with Him are actually a part of that walk. Once you realize this, you can truly cast your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

Lord, because of the testimony of the apostles and because of the reliability of Your word, we have every confidence that our faith is properly placed in Jesus. In Your word we find comfort, hope, strength, and encouragement enough for every doubt and every trial. Thank You for this wonderful testimony! Amen.

And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 2 Peter 1:18

Like verse 16, Peter again uses the word “we” to confirm that what was heard wasn’t limited to him alone, but to two others, James and John, who were with him. The fact that he doesn’t even bother to mention them by name demonstrates how well known the account had become. Any forger would have added in some note of explanation, such as “we apostles,” or “the three of us.” However, he simply relays what happened by saying, “And we heard this voice.”

This is referring to the voice which “came to Him from the Excellent Glory.” As noted in that verse, the word “came” is better translated as “borne.” Likewise, he again uses the same Greek word again in this verse. Peter and the other two “heard this voice which was borne from heaven.” As noted, this is an obvious connection to the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost, and thus it is a note that all three members of the Godhead were present at this event.

The voice concerned Jesus, but it was for the benefit of those who heard, in order to convince them that the presence of God was being made manifest. There is a voice, it comes without a visible speaker, and it is spoken to alert the surrounding hearers that God in heaven is presenting revelation for them to hear and understand. This is confirmed by Peter saying, “when we were with Him.”

The Jews who heard the events at Pentecost could make the same claim later – “We were there at Pentecost, with the apostles and disciples of Christ, when there came the sound of a mighty rushing wind. Tongues of fire alighted upon them, and they began to speak in other languages. We were with them when it happened!” In both instances, there was an immediate recipient of the sound, but there are also secondary recipients.

Peter then says that these things occurred “on the holy mountain.” The term is applied after the event, not before. At the time this occurred, the gospels simply say that Jesus led the three “up on a high mountain.” It was just one of many mountains in Israel, and there was no specific holiness attached to it. However, Peter now calls it “the holy mountain.”

The purpose of this is obvious. It is to show that the presence of God sanctified the mountain. The event is what brought the idea of consecration to it. Likewise, the term “holy mountain” is used in the Old Testament to point to the place where the Lord, Jehovah, dwelt. It is His presence which makes the mountain holy, and therefore Peter is establishing that the presence of the triune God, highlighted by the transfiguration of Christ, is that which so sanctified the Mount of Transfiguration.

Life application: On the Mount of Transfiguration, the attendance of Moses represents the Law, and Elijah represents the Prophets – Jesus being the fulfillment of each. Further, Moses’ death is recorded in the Bible, while Elijah was taken to heaven alive. Therefore, these two reflect God’s control over both the living and the dead who are in Christ. A later realization of this will be at the rapture when the dead will rise first followed by those who are alive at the Lord’s coming. We will be gathered together!

Peter's eyes were directed at the splendid arrival of these two heroes of his past, but God's response was clear – fix your attention on Jesus. This is what the Bible proclaims from beginning to end. We are to have our thoughts, hopes, aspirations, eyes, and ears fixed on Jesus. Anything else fails to hit the mark.

Lord God, forgive us for directing our attention to lesser things in life. Forgive us for being distracted by fame, notoriety, wealth, or any other fleeting aspect of our human state. Give us the wisdom to look beyond these temporary things to the eternal glory of Jesus our Lord. May He be the focus of all of who we are. To Your glory we pray. Amen.

And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; 2 Peter 1:19

Peter has been speaking of the reliability of the testimony concerning the Person of Jesus Christ. He has reminded his readers of what occurred on the Mount of Transfiguration, and now he states just how reliable these things are, beginning with, "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed."

The Greek literally reads, "And we have more certain the prophetic word." It can actually be interpreted in one of several ways. Vincent's Word Studies provides two views to consider –

"We may explain either (a) as Rev., we have the word of prophecy made more sure, i.e., we are better certified than before as to the prophetic word by reason of this voice; or (b) we have the word of prophecy as a surer confirmation of God's truth than what we ourselves saw, i.e., Old-Testament testimony is more convincing than even the voice heard at the transfiguration. The latter seems to accord better with the words which follow. "To appreciate this we must put ourselves somewhat in the place of those for whom St. Peter wrote. The New Testament, as we have it, was to them non-existent. Therefore we can readily understand how the long line of prophetic scriptures, fulfilled in so many ways in the life of Jesus, would be a mightier form of evidence than the narrative of one single event in Peter's life" (Lumby). "Peter knew a sounder basis for faith than that of signs and wonders. He had seen our Lord Jesus Christ receive honor and glory from God the Father in the holy mount; he had been dazzled and carried out of himself by visions and voices from heaven; but, nevertheless, even when his memory and heart are throbbing with recollections of that sublime scene, he says, 'we have something surer still in the prophetic word.'...It was not the miracles of Christ by which

he came to know Jesus, but the word of Christ as interpreted by the spirit of Christ" (Samuel Cox)."

What appears to be the case must be taken in light of what Peter says in the next two verses. He speaks of prophecy and the source of prophecy, meaning the Holy Spirit as transmitted through men of God. But Peter has already shown that the Holy Spirit (the Excellent Glory) was there on the Mount of Transfiguration, carrying the word of the Father to confirm the Person of the Son. Both the written word and the voice, which they heard, testify to the same thing. This was seen in Jesus' words of John 5:39 –

"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."

Therefore, what appears to be the case is that as certain as Peter was, concerning what his eyes saw and his ears heard, so certain also is the word of God which was written about Jesus. The Source of the word ensures that the testimony in the word is as trustworthy as anything that one's eyes could behold, and that his ears could hear. When reading the word of God, it should be to the reader as if the voice of God is speaking directly to him.

Because of the absolutely trustworthy nature of "the prophetic word," it is to be given its due respect. In this, Peter says, "which you do well to heed." As noted by Vincent's above, the only Scripture that was considered authoritative at the time was the Old Testament writings. And for Jews today who reject Jesus, or who simply have no idea who Jesus is, there must be an "apples to apples" comparison of Scripture.

One cannot be expected to merely take the New Testament to a Jew and say, "Here, read this, accept it, and you will be saved." It is true that the saving message of Jesus is found there, but to say this to a Jew, without their acceptance of the foundation of their faith – meaning the Old Testament writings which also actually point to Jesus – would be for them to essentially reject what they had been told is inspired all along.

That would be no different than taking the Book of Mormon to a Christian and saying the same thing. There must first be the understanding that what the Old Testament says already points to Jesus. This is what Paul writes about in 2 Corinthians 3. There is a veil over the eyes of the Jews when the law is read. Until they can see that the Old points to Christ and appreciate that fact, the veil remains. This is what Jesus continued to say in John 5:40 –

“But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”

The Old points to Jesus. When the Old is read and understood from that perspective, the Jew can then go to the New Testament to see that Jesus is, in fact, the fulfillment of the Old. Then he can find salvation. Unlike the Book of Mormon, which is completely lacking any coherent message in God’s plan of redemption, because it is not God’s inspired word, the New Testament is completely in line with what the Old says. It complements and completes the revelation began in the Old.

Because Jesus can be found in the Old, and when it is interpreted in the light of Christ, it is “as a light that shines in a dark place.” The word translated as “dark” is only found here in Scripture. It is found in poetical literature to indicate dry and parched. The strong heat of the Mideast produces a condition where dust arises which impedes the vision, and everything is obscure. This is what reading the Old Testament without seeing Christ is like. The stories may be fun, curious, exciting, and so on. But without seeing Jesus in them, a person must say, “Why did God even include this here.”

Without Christ as the focus of the Old, there is this type of veil which conceals the light. But once Jesus is seen as the Subject of the Old, the light shines forth. What is otherwise dark suddenly is illuminated. Jesus speaks of this in John 8:12, and Paul says as much in 2 Timothy 1:10.

Once that light of life concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ is understood and believed, a change takes place. Before that, there was only obscurity and darkness. Peter notes that this remains “until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” In seeing Jesus in the word, the light breaks forth. Clarity of vision comes about, and the mind sees what was previously concealed. The word translated as “morning star” is also only found here in the Bible. It is *phósphoros*. It is a compound word signifying the carrying forth of light.

This is certainly a metaphor which speaks of the light of Christ, because it says that this light “rises in your hearts.” In other words, it is what Paul speaks of in Romans 10:9, 10 –

“...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

The rising of this light of Christ brings about belief in the heart. From what was once a dark and mysterious book of various stories and records that made no real sense, there is suddenly clarity which reveals light. The light rises in the heart and the soul believes the words which now make sense. In belief, the conversion occurs, and salvation comes to the soul.

Life application: Without the writings of the Old Testament, which are now combined with the New Testament, the darkness around us is like that of the hours before the dawn – the darkest of all. Without the Bible as a guide, we can only grope through life blindly and our footing is completely unsure. But with the words which form the sentences, and the sentences which form the pages, and the pages which fill the books of the Bible, we have a light which dispels the great darkness of this world and illuminates the path for us.

The psalmist understood this truth, looking forward to the great revelation of Jesus Christ –

“Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105

Likewise, as we wait on the return of Christ, we have the same surety as the saints of old as we consider Scripture, but with the added benefit of the Holy Spirit. He authored the words of Scripture, and He illuminates the Bible for us as we rely on His leading. Let us continue to trust this marvelous gift of God, allowing it to lead us on our walk until the day when our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ, returns for His people.

O God! We wait with high expectation for the return of our Hope, our Love, our Lord Jesus. Until that glorious day when the skies are illuminated with His splendor, we thank You for the pages of the Bible which give us comfort and hope. We also thank You for Your Holy Spirit Who leads us through this dark world on the path to our final home. Amen.

...knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,
2 Peter 1:20

Peter just spoke of “the prophetic word,” saying that we have it “confirmed.” With that understood, he now speaks of that same prophetic word, beginning with, “knowing this first.”

It is a point which must be first understood before he explains why it must be understood. The explanation will come in the next verse. He then says, “that no prophecy of Scripture is.” The word translated as “is” means to come about, emerge, transition from one point to another, etc. It is not an exact match for the word “is,” and should not be translated this way here. Rather, it should say something like “no prophecy of Scripture comes about.”

With this understood, he then says that such does not come about by “any private interpretation.” There are three possible explanations for this. The first is that it is speaking of the one who issues forth the prophecy. The prophet (Isaiah, for example) is not the sole source of what is penned. The second is that it is speaking of the recipient. The one reading the prophecy (Pastor Imperfect, for example) does not privately make up the meaning for what has been prophesied, claiming his interpretation is the correct one. The third is that it is speaking of the prophecy itself. Therefore, the purpose and meaning of the prophecy comes to be through its own explanation. In other words, a prophecy does not explain itself.

The answer to Peter’s statement comes from both the preceding verse and the verse which follows. Peter has said that the prophetic word is confirmed. The example he gave occurred at the coming of Christ, in His transfiguration. The event explained the prophecies which spoke of Him. Peter will next say that “prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they* were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

Peter has said that the ultimate Source of prophecy is the Holy Spirit. Here he says it “comes about,” meaning there is a transition from one point to another. After this, he speaks of those who receive it. And so, this is referring to the one who issues forth the prophecy – the prophet.

It may be true that the meaning of prophecies is not subject to any interpretation someone wishes to identify it with, but that is a problem not being addressed here. He has shown that what was spoken about was of divine, not human, origin, and that the fulfillment of those prophecies is a specific person, event, time, etc. Those things are concrete and are thus not open to any of various interpretations. It doesn’t mean there might not be incorrect interpretations of the prophecy, but that is not the fault of the prophecy. Rather, it is the fault of the person who is not schooled in how the prophecy was actually fulfilled, or will actually be fulfilled if it is yet future.

The word translated as “interpretation” is an interesting word, only found here in Scripture. It signifies a solution, explanation, or interpretation. It refers to the untying of knots, and thus, there is an unveiling of an issue.

Because of the meaning, one might make the claim that this is then speaking of the person receiving the prophecy, such as Pastor Imperfect. It is not up to his own private interpretation to decide the meaning of the prophecy. There is a knot and it must be untied, but he cannot do it. Rather, it must be the Holy Spirit who does this. This would then add a note of “super spirituality” to anyone who claims they have properly deduced the meaning of the prophecy. “Certainly, Pastor Imperfect is a man filled with the Holy Spirit.” But this is not the intent of the words.

If the event has a concrete fulfillment, then God has revealed its fulfillment already, or He will reveal its fulfillment in the future event itself. A prophecy about Christ on the cross (such as in Psalm 22) is fulfilled in Christ’s crucifixion. There is no need to give Rabbi Ridiculous any credence when he says it is a future prophecy metaphorically speaking of the nation of Israel. The interpretation is fixed in the fulfillment. Rather, this is what Peter spoke about in his first epistle –

“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you, ¹¹ searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. ¹² To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.” 1 Peter 1:10-12

The prophets who received the prophecies could not make the claim upon their own prophecies, stating what its fulfillment would be. They received the word, saw the knot, tried to unravel it, and could not. They, and indeed even angels, desired to know what the prophecies meant. But until God’s timing came about, the meaning of the prophecies remained His alone.

Life application: “Private interpretation” means “own interpretation.” In other words, what is contained in the prophecies of the Bible is of divine origin and not of man or demon. In contrast to this are countless prophecies which come to us from an almost unlimited number of sources.

We have prophecies or predictions from other religions such as Islam, Buddhism, etc. There are also those from Nostradamus, horoscopes, tarot cards, palm readers, and even generated by computers for example. The list is long, and these “prophecies” always lacks one essential element that the Bible contains – divine inspiration.

Not only do they lack divine inspiration, they are forbidden by God. Although part of the Old Testament Law, the same prohibitions apply to us today concerning these types of activities as it did when recorded in Leviticus –

“And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people.”

-Leviticus 20:6

Any prophecy which is not specifically of God is not to be trifled with. The reading of Tarot cards and Ouija boards, for example, relies on a manipulation of the created order in anticipation of helpful clues about one’s personal future.

The same is true with daily horoscopes. To view these as innocuous and fun is akin to taking hot coals and placing them in your own lap – the result is detrimental to one’s well-being. It is shocking that Christians – true believers who have called on Jesus as Lord – participate in these activities. One cannot be held guiltless when they hold Jesus with their right hand and hold out their left to a palm-reader. We need to have single-hearted devotion to the Lord lest we find ourselves subdued and torn away by a lesser master.

Further, as prophecies are things which belong to God, and which then are fulfilled in a concrete way at a set time by God, it is presumptuous and sinful to think that future prophecies can be determined by us. We may know they are going to come about, such as the rapture. This is because it is clearly detailed in Scripture. However, like the prophet who is on the “before” side of the event, we too cannot unravel the knot of “when” the rapture will occur. To attempt to do so is to diminish the very premise which Peter writes about here. Do not be deluded by people who think so highly of themselves that they think they can speak for God about something which He has reserved to Himself until He reveals it to the world.

O God, we pray today that Your face would be turned toward us, not against us. We pray that our hearts and souls would be directed completely and solely toward You and that You would keep us from those prophecies which are not of divine origin. Help our doctrine to be pure and our hearts to be steadfast – directed to You alone. Amen.

... for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.* 2 Peter 1:21

Peter now twice uses the same word that he used in verses 1:17 & 1:18, both of which should have been translated as “borne.” In this case, *pherō* was translated as both “came” and “moved.” Here, that should follow suit. The reason for this is, as was noted, the Holy Spirit was being referred to. The voice was “borne” to Christ from the Excellent Glory (verse 1:17), and the voice was “borne” from heaven, when they were with him on the holy mountain (verse 1:18).

To be consistent in translation here will then help the reader see what is on Peter’s mind as he more literally says, “...for not at any time was prophecy borne by the will of man.” Obviously, Peter is speaking of true prophecy. If it is true, the Source is from God, and the Holy Spirit is the member of the Godhead by which it is brought forth.

Paul alludes to this in Ephesians 6 when he says, “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” He also refers to this process in 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 when he says that “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

God inspired these “holy men of God” in a unique process which is not fully understood. It should be noted that many manuscripts leave off the word “holy” here, simply saying “men of God.” Despite this minor change, these men were chosen by God and were used to convey to us the words that He intended for us to know His will in the stream of human existence. In order to do this through them, it says, “but holy men of God spoke *as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*”

Again, a literal translation will better help understand Peter’s words. It says, “but by Spirit Holy being borne, spoke from God, men.” The origin of the words is God. The third member of the Godhead is the One by which the words are borne, and the men then speak those same words of God. It is an incredible thing to consider.

Though not being fully understood how this occurred, logical assumptions can be made concerning it. The men of God weren’t inspired like artists or poets might be – as if their ideas came from an internal thought process. But at the same time, they weren’t completely controlled in the process either.

A pen or typewriter has no active part in the compilation of a book, but the prophets of the Bible did. Instead of being completely in control of the process, or being completely controlled by the process, the Holy Spirit bore these men along using their individual vocabulary styles, background knowledge, and even personalities. This was a divine process which resulted in exactly what God intended, despite having the unique traits of these men. This is the reason that we can tell differences in authors' styles and yet see God's handiwork in each word, sentence, paragraph, page, and book of the Bible.

As an example, if someone plays the guitar, Eddie Van Halen for example, his personal style shows through. Anyone familiar with how he plays will say, "Hey, that's Eddie Van Halen..." And yet, he may be playing a tune composed by Beethoven. If you're also familiar with Beethoven's style of writing, without ever hearing the song before, you could say, "Hey, Eddie Van Halen is playing a tune composed by Beethoven!" Imagine now an entire orchestra playing this music.

Each person's instrument and his individual style comes through, and is entirely unique. But at the same time, these people were all inspired by the same great master – Beethoven. Divine inspiration does not negate individual style. Rather, it takes it into account and these men of God were moved in a way which reveals that "Every word of God is pure" (Proverbs 30:5).

Life application: We can have complete assurance that the Bible is God's perfect revelation to mankind. It is for this reason, as confirmed by Jesus' own words, that we cannot dismiss any part of the Bible. The Bible is a unified whole. It is authoritative in all it proclaims, teaches, and expects for the conduct of our lives.

Heavenly Father, may we never arrogantly assume that we can dismiss parts of the Bible we disagree with. Give us the wisdom to understand that You are the divine Source of all Scripture and that Your Holy Spirit actively ensured that we have in its pages exactly what we need in order to properly live our lives. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 Peter 2:1

Peter now makes a contrast to the holy men of God who were moved by the Holy Spirit mentioned in the previous verse. Unlike them, he now notes, “But there were also false prophets among the people.” Here, he uses the word *ginomai*. It signifies becoming or coming into being, and so it is more properly translated as, “But there arose false prophets among the people.”

These people grew out of the same congregation, but they did so without any sanction by the Lord. The true prophet of God was called by God. For example, Amos was a sheep breeder in the land of Judah, but the Lord called him to prophesy to the people of Israel.

The calling of a prophet is recorded at various times in the Old Testament, establishing the truth of his prophetic office. However, there are times where false prophets are clearly identified, some by name, others simply by the message they conveyed. The book of Jeremiah extensively deals with both false prophets and the false messages they would proclaim. Peter then notes that nothing will be different in the church. As he says, “even as there will be false teachers among you.”

Peter says this in the future tense, but he is certainly not excluding the fact that there could be false teachers among them even at that time. He is taking the long view of the matter and showing that false prophets will be as common in the church as they were among Israel. Jude, a contemporary of Peter, noted that such people had, in fact, crept into the church (Jude 1:4).

Peter then notes that such people would not normally do this openly. Rather, he says they “will secretly bring in destructive heresies.” The word he uses is found only here in the Bible. It signifies “close beside.” Therefore, these people will slide into their positions as if they are sound and proper. They will seem to be true followers of the Lord, but what they will then introduce will be heresies which only lead to ruin and destruction.

An example of this is the doctrine of “dual covenantalism.” It teaches that Jews are saved by adherence to the Old Covenant, while Christians are saved through the new. John Hagee teaches this, and it is actually the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church

and others. This is a destructive heresy because, instead of bringing salvation to the Jews he speaks to, the aberrant teaching is only leading these Jews to condemnation and hell. No person – Jew or Gentile – can be saved through adherence to the Mosaic Covenant.

However, there are many other heresies out there. The list seems to get longer by the day as people dream up new and aberrant doctrines. Some are so flagrant that they even deny “the Lord who bought them.” The word Peter uses for “Lord” is not the one most commonly seen. It is one which signifies a master who possesses unrestricted power and absolute rule and domination.

The startling aspect to Peter’s words is that he did, in fact, deny the Lord. It is something that everyone knew about, and that everyone continues to know. Peter’s desire is that people watch, pay heed, and turn from any such action – even if it is from the most trusted of sources. No matter who it is, if they begin to deny the Lord, the people around him are to also turn from him. Such a denial will inevitably lead to disaster. As Peter says of them, they will “bring on themselves swift destruction.”

The verb is in the same tense as “denying,” and it should be rendered “bringing.” As Charles Ellicott says of this – “The two participles, ‘denying’ and ‘bringing,’ without any conjunction to connect them, are awkward, and show that the writer’s strong feeling is already beginning to ruffle the smoothness of his language.”

Peter is thoroughly frustrated at the thought of what he knew was coming. Having denied the Lord, he knew how easy it would be for others to do so. What is unclear is whether these are saved people, or if the words, “the Lord who bought them,” are speaking in a general sense, meaning that Christ’s atonement was sufficient for their purchase. Either way, they have departed from the truth.

If they were saved, that will not be lost, but the problem with teaching such heresies is not that it will affect the teacher’s salvation, but rather it will keep those who hear the false message from being saved. However, if they were not saved, and the idea of being bought by the Lord is one which is *potential*, but not *actual*, they will receive their just due for the denial of the Lord. Finally, the destruction that Peter speaks about is not one of occurring swiftly in time, but swiftly in the event. Whenever the Lord’s judgment comes, it will be swift, complete, and permanent.

Life application: The Bible is the only witness to the work of Jesus. It tells of His work from before time all the way through to eternity future. We cannot have a reliable view

of Jesus without the Bible, and the Bible provides everything we need to have a complete and untarnished view of Him. In turn, Jesus reveals the unseen God.

Therefore, we cannot have a competent view of God without a proper view of Jesus. These truths are inseparable. Therefore, to dismiss even a single verse of the Bible tarnishes our view of God.

For example, we cannot hold onto God's love without also proclaiming his wrath. Heresies are any teaching which will keep another from salvation through Christ. This is in contrast to bad doctrine which is something that doesn't necessarily keep another from salvation, but it certainly leads them to misunderstandings of proper life in Christ.

Heretical teachers, though profiting in this world, will receive swift destruction when they face God. Unfortunately, those who follow heretics will be swept away with them. This is why knowing and properly handling your Bible is of eternal value. God doesn't force Himself upon mankind. Rather, He expects us to reasonably and intelligently pursue Him and His expectations for us.

O God, how can we know if what we hear is true? By standing firm on Your word! Keep us filled with the strong and lasting desire to read, study, and remember what the Bible proclaims. For by it, we have an understanding of Jesus. And through Him, we have an understanding of You. Thank You for the gift of the Holy Bible. Amen.

And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. 2 Peter 2:2

There is a dispute between manuscripts in this verse. Some say the plural of the same word used in verse 2:1 (destructive). Others use a different word signifying licentiousness. Either way, the intent is that the false teachers will lead those they teach astray, the number being "many."

This has been true throughout the church age. False teachers leading aberrant sects and cults have taken many down unsound paths of unrighteousness, sexual sin, perversion, bad doctrine, and on and on. This isn't just limited to those who branch off from the mainstream church, but it is also found in a great way among the church itself. Within large mainstream denominations, there is an underlying culture of sexual sin and the covering up of it when it catches public attention.

At times, however, what is shameful becomes an open part of the ways of such people, such as Joseph Smith of the Mormons. Today, that has become a reality in many “mainstream” denominations where such destructive and licentious ways are openly acknowledged and applauded. Several branches of the Presbyterians, the Church of Christ, the Episcopal Church, the Methodists, and many more all applaud sexual perversion, abortion, and other unholy lifestyle choices. In fact, it seems that it has almost become a requirement for the selection and ordination of candidates to hold completely unholy values.

Even the most conservative denominations in the church today are showing signs of cracking and giving way to such avenues. The magnitude of the term “many will follow” probably could not have even been imagined by Peter as he sat and wrote out the words of his epistle. It is because of following such people, and their perverse agendas, that many will be led astray, Peter notes concerning them that “the way of truth will be blasphemed.”

There are at least two ways that this is true. The first is that people would actually believe that this is what the gospel teaches. It is taking something pure and glorious, and turning it into something vile, perverse, and unholy. The second is that people would then accuse the gospel of actually being responsible for what the people did. The first thought leads directly to the next. When it is believed that the gospel is the source of such unholy conduct, then it is also such a distortion of the gospel that will lead people to follow that same path of unholiness.

Consider, for example, that homosexuals are gladly ordained as pastors and priests in such denominations. Then they are eventually elevated to the positions of bishop, it is no wonder that the outside world sees this conduct, believes that it is something acceptable within Christianity, and turns from any desire to participate in the faith at all. The greatest heathen in society is often on a better moral standing than the highest officials within the church. When this is so, woe to those who lead and participate in such halls of unrighteousness.

Life application: Such people are set on their own appetites and how they can manipulate others for their own benefit and glory. Unfortunately, in order to be a false teacher with followers, there must be those who follow.

History is replete with such groups and sects. In the 1800s, there was a huge turning away from the truth, and many heretics flourished in the freedom provided by the US Constitution. The Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and some Adventist groups grew

rapidly in numbers. All of this occurred because people followed a charismatic leader rather than paying heed to the Bible – which admonishes us to follow the Lord, to think on the Lord, and to fix our eyes on the Lord.

Cults continue to spring up in our times, but something much less obvious has arisen in the 20th and early 21st century. Heretics have infiltrated mainstream denominations – both in the seminaries and in the pulpits. Bad doctrine abounds, and there has been a grand shift from reliance on the word of God to the traditions and teachings of these heretical leaders.

What the Bible clearly forbids is heralded as “tolerant,” and they say God is “doing a new thing.” But God is unchanging, and His standards never fluctuate. Sadly, the congregants who sit in these denominations are accountable for their failure to investigate what they are taught, but the majority will fail to do so. As you attend church, please compare what is taught with what the Bible says. If the two contradict each other, the problem rests with the church or the pastor, not with God and His loving intent for you. The problem might also rest with you if you do not leave the congregation.

What He speaks is for the good of His creatures; the Bible is for our well-being and to dismiss it will only bring sadness. Be filled with the joy of the Lord; read, learn, and love His word – the Holy Bible.

Heavenly Father, You are a great and loving God. We know that Your word is meant to lead us down paths of righteousness and safety, and we divert from it at our own peril. Please continue to give us the desire, time, and ability to study and discern Your word and intent for us. All glory to You. Amen.

By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. 2 Peter 2:3

Peter now continues with his words concerning the false teachers he introduced in verse 2:1. He says of them that “By covetousness they will exploit you.” The Greek word *en*, or “in,” is used – “In covetousness.” It is the realm in which they live, move, and operate. In that life sphere, they take advantage of, and exploit, others.

Here, he uses a word – translated as “exploit” – which was only used elsewhere in James 4:13, *emporeuomai*. One can see the basis of the word “emporium” in it. It means to make gain or engage in trade. These false teachers “engage in the trade” of leading

others astray. As an emporium has many articles for sale, the appeal is to the masses. The more deceived followers, the happier these people are.

Nothing is said of the type of covetousness here because each may have his own perverse failing which controls his existence. For some it may be money, for others it may be the wielding of power, for others it may be sexual perversion. Whatever it is that they covet, they know that religion is a way of obtaining the fulfillment of their sick desires, and so they exploit others “with deceptive words.”

Now Peter uses a word which is only found here in Scripture, *plastos*. Here, we can easily see the basis for the word “plastic.” It signifies to mold by using clay or wax. Thus, one forges something which is artificial, contrived, and unrealistic. These false teachers take something which is obviously intended to be presented in one way, and they reform it into something entirely contrary to what it was intended to be.

Generally, there are up to four ways of viewing an Old Testament passage – literal, moral, historical, and prophetic. Each of these may be valid in some measure. For example, the Ark of the Covenant was literally made. It was actually fashioned in the manner given and with the materials provided.

But the Ark also bears a moral lesson for the people. The tablets were placed inside, signifying that though the law was given to the people, it was not actually obtainable to them. Atop the ark was the mercy seat where blood was applied each year on the Day of Atonement. That showed that man required a sacrifice for his transgressions under the law. And so on.

The Ark also carried meaning historically. It was given to Israel only. It was given for the duration of the time of the law, meaning the Mosaic Covenant. Etc.

And the Ark had prophetic significance. Each aspect of it looked to Christ. The type of wood looked to Christ’s human nature – morally incorruptible. The pure gold looked to His deity. The tablets of law, placed inside of it, looked to Him as the embodiment of the law. And so on.

In analyzing Scripture, such things must be reasonable, they must match the rest of Scripture in purpose and intent, and they must be consistent. However, someone may take this pattern and reshape it into something entirely unintended. In doing so, the true meaning of these things is lost, and people are pulled into strange and aberrant doctrines.

For example, some have said that the shape and materials of the ark actually form a transmitter which would be so powerful, it could be used to talk directly to aliens or God. Such nonsense has nothing to do with what is conveyed by God. It is a bucket full of lies, and yet, it is believed by people who want to hear such things. They look to have their ears tickled, and they have no desire to know the truth. For every such sucker, there is someone to lead him along on the road to destruction.

Of such people, Peter says that “for a long time their judgment has not been idle.” The KJV says, “a long time lingereth not,” as if this is speaking of the duration of time in the past, and that the time of waiting is soon to come. Rather, the Greek reads, “from of old their judgment has not been idle.”

The duration of time past is not what is being relayed, but that the coming judgment has been ordained all along. And the amount of future time is not what is being considered as much as what occurs during the time. There is nothing idle in the process. Their judgment is being worked out the whole time that their actions are also being worked out.

While these false teachers are working out evil in their sphere of covetousness, their judgment – or sentence – is also being actively worked out. Nothing of what is due them is missed, and what will come upon them will be appropriate to their level of wicked work. One can look back at the wickedness of man – in Genesis 6, or that of Sodom and Gomorrah – and see that, from of old, such things were not tolerated, and they are not tolerated still. Peter then further says that “their destruction does not slumber.”

There is no time that the destruction which is called for in such cases simply takes a nap. Rather, it is always ready to be poured out on such people. And when it comes, it is because God has determined that it is time for it to be so. The idea is that people see other false teachers profiting off their flocks. They then begin to think, “God doesn’t care. I will take advantage of the situation too.” But at some point, God will judge such things, and their destruction is sure. It will be total in its effects, and it will be final – just as it was at the Flood of Noah, and just as it was for Sodom and Gomorrah.

Life application: The false teachers that Peter has been speaking of have fallen into the same trap of the world as any common criminal – covetousness. Their eyes are full of greed and lust as they look at the pleasures of the world around them and betray the truth of the Bible for dishonest gain. This is accomplished by exploiting their followers with deceptive words where the truth of the Bible is twisted and manipulated for the sake of money.

A perfect place to go in order to witness firsthand such twisted teaching is televangelism. A large portion of these people simply look at the Bible as a tool to get rich. They take something good, turn it to financial gain, and make it appear as if what they are doing is the standard.

This is what happens, for example, on Wall Street. It is also what happens in the ministries of false teachers. People mix what is right with that which is inappropriate. Anytime (anytime!) a pastor, evangelist, preacher, priest, or teacher promises you a financial (or otherworldly) blessing for sending his (or her) ministry money, you should run, not walk, from them. There are no “financial breakthroughs,” “financial harvests,” “miracle healings,” etc. to be found by following this avenue. There is only an exchange of money from your pocket to theirs.

Peter has strong words of condemnation for those who would twist Scripture for gain. These people, seemingly pious and sincere, will receive enormously large and lengthy doses of God’s wrath for perverting what He has given to man in love – His Son.

Jesus hung on a cross to free men’s souls, not to enrich the people of His flock. We shouldn’t kiss the ring of the notable, we shouldn’t look forward to profit by our gifts to them, and we shouldn’t expect a miracle for our faith. Rather, we look to the Lord with gratitude and thanksgiving for having saved us from what we rightfully deserve – judgment and condemnation. Thank You Lord for having mercy on us!

Lord, You have given us more than we could ever imagine – forgiveness and redemption. This came at the highest cost of all, the cross of Jesus our Lord. May we never expect more, and may our souls be satisfied in You alone. Keep us from those who would lead us into covetousness, and keep our hearts, minds, souls, and thoughts on Jesus alone. Amen.

For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; 2 Peter 2:4

Peter has just been referring to false prophets and their ability to sway many away from the truth. In this, they have a pending judgment awaiting them. Peter then shows the surety of this judgment by making a set of comparisons to what has already occurred. In this, he will give three examples to demonstrate that such wicked behavior has not gone unpunished. Using history as a learning tool, one could expect there would be no deviation from this pattern for these false prophets. Here, he begins with, “For if God.”

The words show that he will give examples, and then he will explain – based on the surety of those examples – that what he says about judgment upon the false prophets is assured. This will not be seen until verse 9. Taking these together, it shows this –

“⁴For if God... ⁹*then* the Lord knows how to...”

Understanding this, but before beginning Peter’s explanation, it is important to note that the words of the epistle by Jude follow very closely to those of Peter in this chapter. He speaks of the same types of things, but in the case of the three judgments Peter will now mention – which are chronological in nature – Jude will change the order.

Peter will speak of the angels, then the Flood of Noah, and then Sodom and Gomorrah. Jude will speak of the wilderness generation of Israel who departed from Egypt, the angels, and then Sodom and Gomorrah. Without understanding what Jude is saying in his epistle, many wrongly come to the conclusion that Jude is speaking about tying the sin of the angels to the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah.

From this misguided reading of Jude’s words comes a fanciful and incorrect interpretation of Genesis 6 where the Nephilim are mentioned – saying that angels slept with humans. This poor type of scriptural analysis sells well because it is sensational, but it is based on faulty conclusions which are neither supported by simple logic nor by the rest of Scripture.

For now, Peter says that “if God did not spare the angels who sinned.” What is the sin? Peter does not explicitly state what it is. For sensationalists, their answer is that this is what is referred to in Genesis 6, that angels slept with human women and produced a hybrid mixture of fallen supermen. There is no logical or biblical reason to come to this faulty conclusion.

Angels are spirit beings, and thus they have no matter. They cannot procreate with women. However, they can dwell in humans. The answer to what Jude says, that they “left their own abode,” is found in Matthew 8, Mark 5, and Luke 8 in regard to the demoniac in the country of the Gergesenes (also known as the Gaderenes).

In Matthew 8, it is seen that having left their heavenly abode, they came to earth, not as ministering spirits for God (Hebrews 1:14), but as invaders under Satan. Instead of being servants for the benefit of men, they came as tyrants over men. Matthew 8:29 says –

“And suddenly they cried out, saying, ‘What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?’”

This explains Peter’s use of the present participle, “having sinned.” He had said in the previous verse that the destruction of the false teachers “does not slumber.” The same idea is seen here. There is an impending judgment upon the angels which is ongoing. As noted in the previous verse’s commentary –

“The duration of time past is not what is being relayed, but that the coming judgment has been ordained all along. And the amount of future time is not what is being considered as much as what occurs during the time. There is nothing idle in the process. Their judgment is being worked out the whole time that their actions are also being worked out.”

Peter now shows the state of those angels which have already been set for judgment, that God “cast them down to hell.” This is something which had not yet occurred with those who possessed the man referred to in Matthew. This is certain, because it says (concerning the same incident) in Luke 8:31 –

“And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss.”

The word that Peter uses, which is here translated as “hell,” is *tartaróó*, or Tartaus. This is its only use in Scripture. It is the pagan Greek netherworld. It is a place of punishment set apart specifically for demons. It later came to represent also a place of punishment for wicked people. But at this time, it is specifically speaking of a place set apart for demons, thus explaining the terminology used in the synoptic gospels.

Peter next says, “and delivered *them* into chains of darkness.” Here, there is a slight textual problem. Jude also uses the term “chains” in his epistle, but a different word is used there. The word Peter uses, a word only seen here in Scripture, is actually very close in spelling to a word translated as “pits.” For this reason, some translations say, “pits of darkness.”

Either way, the angels which have been sent to this pit (which obviously all of them have not been, based on the reading of the synoptic gospels) are chained as Jude notes, and they are in a place of gloomy darkness, being kept there and “reserved for judgment.” The Greek is a present participle. They are “being reserved for judgment.” They are in

the gloomy darkness, they are chained there, and they are awaiting their final judgment and assured doom.

Life application: Along with this verse, Peter will spend the next 18 verses of this chapter talking about the punishment of the false prophets. If this doesn't show a person the seriousness of properly handling God's word, and also obediently following it, then one is not taking these passages in the light that God intends.

As God didn't spare those angels who sinned, Peter is intimating how much more should those who know God's word be judged for sinning when they misuse it. Just look at the amount of false teaching in the world – pastors, preachers, and priests who stand in the pulpit and deny or diminish the truth in the Bible. There are evangelists who twist passages in order to profit financially, and there are Bible teachers who aren't qualified to teach because of a lack of knowledge and dedicated time spent learning to reason out the intent of passages, etc. The list is long, and grows daily, concerning those who have turned from sound analysis to a manipulation of what is proper.

As the angels were sent to Tartarus and put in gloomy dungeons as they wait for judgment, just imagine what is prepared for these people. God holds His word out to us as a guide for our life, for our salvation, and for our holiness. God forbid, then, that it would be used in any way which is unintended. The consequences for doing so are horrible in the extreme and eternal in their duration.

Lord God, keep us from misusing and mishandling Your precious word. May we be found worthy as teachers, preachers, and pastors – or as congregants – who follow You and Your word alone. May we not be deceived by the wiles of those who would pervert Your truth. Keep us from false teachers and lead us on the sound path of righteousness. Amen.

...and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; 2 Peter 2:5

Peter now turns to a second example of God's punishment upon the wicked, speaking of it as a completely separate event than that of the previous verse. In this, he says, "and did not spare the ancient world." This is speaking of the world at the time from Adam to the Flood of Noah. At that time, the world was in a completely different state than it is in today. That ancient world, as is learned in Genesis 6, had become completely wicked. There was no longer a remedy for the masses, and so the Lord took action –

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. ⁶ And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. ⁷ So the LORD said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.’ ⁸ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.” Genesis 6:5-8

As it says in Genesis, and as Peter confirms, “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord,” and so God “saved Noah, *one of eight people.*” The word “saved” is not a good translation. The word is *phulassó*, and it signifies to be kept or spared. Someone is saved out of a disaster. Noah was spared from a disaster, having been kept safe by the Lord before it occurred. He was told to build an ark, and when the ark was built, the Lord shut the door. Thus, he was “preserved,” or “spared.”

The eight were Noah and his wife, and his three sons and their wives. But the highlight is on Noah because he was “a preacher of righteousness.” The word used by Peter signifies a herald, which is exactly what a preacher should do. They are to call out as a town-crier words of righteousness.

The amazing thing to consider is that Noah was such a herald, calling out for righteousness, and yet nobody was taken aboard the ship with him. None were found faithful enough to simply admit his defilement and asked to be kept from the judgment which Noah surely proclaimed was coming. But the use of the number eight is a beacon of hope all by itself. In the Bible, the number is consistently used to signify “new beginnings.”

Through this single family, a new world would appear. However, in order for this to occur, there must be judgment upon those left behind. And so, Peter ends with the fact that though Noah was spared, God was also “bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly.” While Noah was spared, those who failed to heed were swept away. The entire earth, everything that had the breath of life, was brought to an end.

It must be considered here that the verse speaks of “the ancient world” as a separate event than the previous verse which spoke of the “angels who sinned.” The two are separate events. To tie them both together into one account in order to justify that Genesis 6 is speaking of angels sleeping with human women is untenable. The implication is that those angels fell before the establishment of the ancient world where man would dwell. And this is exactly what is seen in Genesis 3. The serpent, elsewhere

noted as “Satan” and the “devil,” was already a fallen being. This verse in 2 Peter does not support the angel/human hybrid theory. Rather, it fully speaks against it.

Peter’s words of this verse are given to clearly show that God’s judgment can be expected. If He destroyed the entire world once, there is no reason at all to think that He will somehow tolerate our own unrighteous conduct, and rejection of the gospel which came at the high cost of Calvary’s cross.

Life application: As has been demonstrated several times in the New Testament – including by Jesus’ own words – the Flood of Noah is taken as a literal truth by Peter which we can rely on. It is not a myth which was invented to project a moral lesson. In fact, the entire flood account is considered trustworthy, not only that it occurred, but that there was a real ark, a real man named Noah, and seven people with him.

Nothing anywhere in Scripture or in the geologic record demonstrates that this was a myth. Rather, the evidence for a flood is found throughout the world –in the legends of every major people-group on earth, within the geologic record, within the mitochondrial DNA of humans, and even in the alphabet of the Chinese people – an alphabet which reaches back to antiquity, even to the time of Babel itself.

We have every reason to be sure that God’s judgment occurred exactly as Peter proclaims, and that his previous and coming analysis on the judgment of those who falsely portray the gospel will also be judged. Peter says that despite the righteous preaching of Noah, the people of the world rejected his words. Because of this, there was no remedy, and God destroyed the world of unrighteousness.

Likewise, man is again setting himself up for destruction. The world of today has a testimony far superior to that of Noah – the gift of God’s own Son. Despite this ultimate demonstration of love, the world is rejecting God’s offer and is ripe for His wrath.

O God, may our hearts break for the lost souls of the world. May Your glorious gospel go forth and snatch precious souls from the sure destruction to come. Use us, O God, use us as instruments of Your righteousness and for the sake of Your gospel of peace. May the nations be glad when they hear the good news of Jesus. Amen.

...and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them* to destruction, making *them* an example to those who afterward would live ungodly;

2 Peter 2:6

Peter now moves from the consequences of the Flood of Noah to another great time of God's wrath and judgment being poured out on the wicked, that of Sodom and Gomorrah. In this, he begins with "and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes." This continues the thought first presented in verse 2:4. Peter says, "For if God did not spare..."

He is showing that God is consistent in judgment, not sparing the angels who sinned, and then not sparing the ancient world which was filled with wickedness. Now he will speak of not sparing a city filled with perversion.

The world was destroyed by flood, but the wickedness of man continued on. The sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is noted as that of sexual immorality. More specifically, however, the account looks to the perverse and unnatural sin of homosexuality. The people of the town were deviants who purposed to violently rape the guests who had come under the roof of Lot.

It is assumed by some scholars that Ham, the son of Noah, committed a perverse homosexual act on his own father. The reason for this is that the word used there, and translated as "saw," is also used in Leviticus 20:17 concerning seeing the nakedness of a close family member, but implying a sexual encounter with that person. Whether this is the case or not, it is something that carried on in the post-flood world, and which became so rampant in the area of Sodom that the Lord determined to destroy the city.

When the city of Sodom came against Lot and his guests, the final decision for destruction was made. The Lord made a way for Lot and his family to escape the destruction, and then it came, reducing the city to ashes. In this, He "condemned *them* to destruction." The word Peter uses is *katastrophé*. One can see the source of our modern word catastrophe. In the New Testament, it was used by Paul in 2 Timothy 2:14, and then it is used here. However, it is also used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament in the account of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19:29.

In the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, God was "making *them* an example to those who afterward would live ungodly." It has become fashionable for homosexuals in the modern church to claim that God "is doing a new thing," and that He has accepted their perverse lifestyle. However, they do not speak for God. He has spoken and His word is set. It is a reflection of His own eternal and unchanging nature.

The destruction of Sodom will be played out, once again, on a world scale as the world is destroyed by fire. Peter will explain that in Chapter 3. Until then, he will continue with

his words concerning the false teachers and the consequences which will come upon them because of their unholiness.

The examples of the past have been given, and the warning that those examples set is there for all to see, even into the future. For such perverse people, they will eventually meet with their appointed time, and the reward for their actions will finally be meted out upon them. Though it may seem to tarry, the Lord's judgment will come.

Life application: Sodom and Gomorrah stand as one of the premier examples of judgment in the Bible, mentioned more often than the Flood of Noah. Maybe this is because the sins of Sodom are specifically addressed, whereas the Bible only mentions that the "wickedness of man was great upon the earth" at the time of Noah.

Comparisons to Sodom are made almost 20 times elsewhere in the Old Testament and about 10 times in the New. To this day, a term for a specific type of perversion derives its name from Sodom – a perversion which is condemned as unnatural, unhealthy, and worthy of destruction. Because of this immorality and aberrant behavior, God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah – leveling them to ashes.

The prophet Jeremiah speaks in the same manner as Peter concerning the false prophets of his time –

"Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem:
They commit adultery and walk in lies;
They also strengthen the hands of evildoers,
So that no one turns back from his wickedness.
All of them are like Sodom to Me,
And her inhabitants like Gomorrah." Jeremiah 23:14

The leaders and prophets steered the people away from God and towards their own twisted paths. Eventually, the people of Israel were conquered and exiled.

The same occurred again in Jesus' time. In fact, Jesus said that Sodom and Gomorrah's judgment wouldn't be as severe as for those who rejected His offer of peace. Let us accept Jesus' words, His ministry, and His work – accomplished on our behalf. Otherwise, a terrible fate awaits us too.

Surely You, O God, cannot tolerate sin. Because of our sins, we cannot stand before You. So, Lord, cover us with Jesus' righteousness and grant us His protection from the storm

of judgment which will again surely cover the earth. Purify our hearts and help us to live – from this day forward – lives that are holy and pleasing to You. Amen.

...and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked... 2 Peter 2:7

Peter went from the example of the flood to that of Sodom and Gomorrah, where he noted that it was turned into ashes and the people were condemned to destruction. This was recorded as “an example to those who afterward would live ungodly.” However, the Lord stands watch over all people, and in the case of Sodom, it says He “delivered righteous Lot.”

Lot is set in contrast to those who were condemned to destruction. Instead, he was delivered. Further, it is his conduct which brought that about. He is called here, “righteous.” It is a word Peter will use three times in verses 2:7 and 2:8 when speaking of Lot. Some scholars note this and then qualify the statement by saying that this only applied to his time in Sodom, but later when he lived in the cave with his daughters it was not so. The Bible does not make this leap, and the account of Lot’s time in the cave is recorded for a specific purpose which has less to do with Lot than it has to do with the character and hopes of his two daughters.

Despite this, while in Sodom, Peter says that Lot was “oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked.” The word translated as “oppressed” gives the sense of being overwhelmed by labor or suffering. Lot must have trudged through the streets of Sodom and felt the burden of fallen humanity, seeing their conduct and mourning over it. The question in his mind was probably not unlike the question of many moral Christians today, concerning both the state of the world and the state of the church, “How could we have fallen into such a state of depravity?”

This is then highlighted by the use of the word translated as “conduct.” It signifies something that is not in the proper or acceptable order, meaning it is out of place. Thus, it is conduct which is morally lawless and at variance with the nature of God. Paul speaks of such a state in Romans 1:18-32. As noted, any moral Christian need look no further than the church itself.

There are pedophiles who fill the halls of Roman Catholicism. There are perverts in the pulpits of many major denominations. There are sexually abusive people whose shameless acts are uncovered and then applauded in church after church. If this is the

state of the church, how can the world ever be brought to see their own sin and mourn over it?

Life application: It may seem strange to read the term “righteous Lot” when comparing him with other noted figures in the Bible. Even figures who were fault-filled still seem to exceed Lot in righteousness. However, making comparisons to others is a fundamental flaw of people looking for personal justification rather than that which comes from God.

In other words, if you ask a person, “Why should God accept you into heaven?” the answer quite often is, “Well, I’m a good person...I’m not like Adolph Hitler.” The fact of the matter, though, is that neither Adolph Hitler nor any other person is the subject of the question. To answer in this way is a diversion brought in to move the question away from the main point.

A more direct and appropriate question would be, “Why do you think you deserve eternal life.” The question demands a direct answer, and the answer must be precise – “I have accepted Jesus Christ. He is my Lord and Savior.” Any answer which fails to include the merit of Jesus Christ alone then fails the test of righteousness. One cannot say, “I have led a good life,” “I paid tithes to my church,” “I did this,” or “I did that.” Such answers exclude the righteousness demanded by God – that of appropriately placed faith.

The Bible says, “Abraham believed God and He credited it to him for righteousness.” Taking God at his word is the path to imputed righteousness. The often-veiled truths of the Old Testament are fulfilled, and sealed, in the New Testament. This full revelation of God tells us of the work of Jesus. Lot’s righteousness, like Abraham’s, didn’t come from works or a perfect life. If we try to find that in the telling of his life, we would be left scratching our head about God’s selection. Lot’s greatness isn’t what is important; God’s is. Lot, despite any perceived faults, received God’s imputed righteousness by faith, just as we must.

Lord God, you have made it both very difficult and yet supremely easy to be justified before You. It is so very hard to put away our personal attempts at righteousness and few truly do it. However, once we have left ourselves out of the equation, we have access to the greatest Gift of all – our Lord’s righteousness. And this, through a simple act of faith. Thank You for Jesus! Amen.

(for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds)— 2 Peter 2:8

The Greek here reads, “for the righteous, dwelling among them.” It is showing a complete contrast between Lot and those he dwelt amongst. Despite dwelling among these people who were filled with perversion, he maintained his righteousness. Though chided by some, this is perfectly in line with numerous other verses which imply that there is nothing wrong with this. For example, Paul says –

“I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.
¹⁰ Yet *I* certainly *did* not *mean* with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.” 1 Corinthians 5:9, 10

Jesus was said to eat with tax collectors and sinners. Noah remained a preacher of righteousness in a world full of sin. One cannot be a preacher without someone to preach to. Lot was a human who lived among humans, and he maintained his righteousness as he conducted his daily affairs.

The word used to describe his “dwelling” is found only here in Scripture, and it is rare even in secular writings. It signifies to settle down in a place. It was his home and there is no reason one would expect him to simply pull up and depart. He dwelt among them and yet maintained his character as he did. Despite this, Peter notes that the conduct of those around him “tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day.”

This is now the third time in just two verses that Peter calls him righteous, stressing that he was without fault despite his surroundings. When Peter says “tormented,” he uses a word which signifies torture. It was as if his soul was severely harassed and beaten as he saw the conduct of those around him. What appears to be the case is that he loved where he was, and wanted those with him to see the good, and then have them give God the glory for what they had.

One could think of someone living in a frontier town surrounded by beautiful mountains and large pastures. And yet, the people of the town brawled, drank the night away, and caroused through the streets doing the shameful things humans do. The one who maintained his righteousness would not want to move. Instead, he would want those who were misdirected to see the good, become productive people of the town, and build a better future.

Like such a person, Lot was tortured in his soul either by, or for, those around him “by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds.” The word translated as “seeing” is found only here in the Bible. It signifies “to glance.” Lot didn’t look and keep looking, as if perversely drawn to their wickedness. He simply saw it in a glance, and it tortured him. What they did was lawless, and it demonstrated the high level of their perversion. It is instinctively known – both in human minds and in nature – that there is a proper “law” or order to sexual conduct. But what they did violated those very laws of nature. The perversion took over, and they did what was unnatural.

Life application: Failings of character don’t exclude someone from being known as righteous. If they did, King David and the other noted heroes of the Bible could never be considered as such. We as well, with all of our idiosyncrasies and our propensities to foul up at the drop of a dime, could never possess the righteousness demanded by God.

As Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” What God demands is a righteousness we simply cannot attain on our own. This is the glorious purpose of God’s “imputed righteousness.” Jesus came and fulfilled the Law on our behalf. He then went to the cross and now offers us an exchange – our sins, judged at the cross, for His righteousness. It is – without a doubt – the greatest offer in the world.

All we need is to accept it, by faith, and God is faithful and just to forgive. Thank You, O God, for the cross of Jesus!

Heavenly Father, we know our unworthy state. Without Jesus we could not stand in Your presence. But, Heavenly Father, we thank You for His perfection, given to us by grace. We thank You for the cross, and we thank You for Your perfect plan which has reconciled us to You. Amen.

... *then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, 2 Peter 2:9

The words here tie all the way back to verse 4, For if God...*then* the Lord knows. Everything between the two has been an explanation of the first part. This verse now shows the contrast. God does know how to deal with all things – both sinner and saint included. A logical progression of Peter’s thoughts is –

- * If God didn’t spare the angels which sinned, but rather cast them to hell and delivered them into chains as they await judgment, and

- * If He didn't spare the entire ancient world (the pre-flood world) with the exception of Noah and his family, but instead took away the breath of their lives, and
- * If He didn't spare the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their wickedness, but instead turned them into ashes (ashes to ashes, dust to dust we say...), condemning them to destruction for their ungodliness, but
- * He spared Lot, a righteous man whose soul was tormented by the ungodliness and oppressive wickedness around him as he dwelt among them, then
- * The Lord also knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and
- * The Lord knows how to reserve the unjust under punishment for that great day of judgment.

With this understood, Peter's words which begin the verse are, "*then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations."

It is interesting that he began with "God," and then says, "the Lord." The last time the term "the Lord" was mentioned, it was clearly speaking of Christ Jesus who is said to have "bought them," meaning that He died for their sins. This same Lord, who is God, is fully capable of doing what needs to be done for those who seek after Him, meaning "the godly." The word signifies one who is devout.

Peter was speaking of the ungodly, those who are not devout, and the consequences for their unholy attitude and choices. However, there are those who are devout and who truly desire to pursue God. God knows this and is able to deliver them from the same temptations that those who are not godly pursue with reckless abandon. It is a note of grace in the midst of many verses which speak openly about God's wrath against unholiness in the world in which we live.

For those who are ungodly, of them Peter says that God knows how "to reserve the unjust under punishment." It is a present participle, meaning that they are already under the sentence and punishment. When their lives ended (such as those in the Flood of Noah and those at Sodom and Gomorrah), their punishment was just beginning, and it is ongoing at this time, even as they await "the day of judgment."

The idea of being punished before the day of judgment may seem unfair on the surface, but these people have already been judged. Their wickedness was evident, and they died in their sins. The day of judgment is not something that is necessary for God to determine guilt or innocence, but it is rather something for all to understand God's holiness.

Until they stand before the Source of all goodness, righteousness, and holiness, they only have themselves and their twisted sense of morality by which to evaluate their actions. But someday, all will come before God and will see what the standard of holiness is. At that time, all of the punishment they received, or will ever receive, will be realized as being wholly deserved.

Life application: A good way of looking at Peter's words is to know that we are living in a fallen world and surrounded by moral decay and perversion – even the influence of demons. Despite this, the Lord can keep us from falling into the same pattern as those around us, just as He did for Noah and for Lot. More than that, when we mourn over the perversion of our society, we have the assurance that our faithfulness is not in vain. God will judge the unrighteous and vindicate our steadfast and heartily maintained attitude of righteousness in Christ.

You, O Lord, are a Rescuer of Your people and a Defender of the weak. You look away from the proud, but give grace to the humble. May You be with us as we walk the difficult path of righteousness in this troubled and fallen world. We look to You for guidance, and so be our Guide all the days of our lives. Amen.

... and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, 2 Peter 2:10

Peter had just noted the unjust whom the Lord has reserved “under punishment for the day of judgment.” He now highlights those people saying, “and especially those who walk according to the flesh.” The term “walk” signifies the conduct of life. It is their usual manner of living and acting. Therefore, to “walk according to the flesh” is to walk in a manner which is contrary to a moral and godly life.

Peter then further describes such an immoral and ungodly walk by saying, “in the lust of uncleanness.” The word translated as “uncleanness” is a noun. Thus, it is walking in the lust which causes the uncleanness. Peter then says that these same people “despise authority.”

This is a catchall phrase. Those Peter refer to despise not just one level of authority, but all authority. They despise the governmental authority which they reside under. They despise the authority of their master, or employer. They despise those appointed by law to protect and defend the populace. They despise the authority within the church. They

despise all authority, heavenly or earthly. And this state is reflected in the next words Peter uses. He says, “*They are presumptuous, self-willed.*”

It is obvious that anyone who thinks he is above all authorities will be presumptuous. He will be daring in his conduct, bold in his words against those who he should show humility towards, and he will be impudent when asked to conduct himself in a respectable manner. Further, being self-willed goes hand in hand with that. He will be arrogant, impatient with others, unyielding even when shown to be wrong, and dogmatic about things which he may not even fully understand.

Finally, the verse ends with, “They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries.” This follows naturally with what has already been said. When such people despise authority, and when they are presumptuous and self-willed, they will show contempt for those appointed over them, or those whose responsibility it is to ensure they act in accord with the rules and laws of the land.

However, the word Peter uses literally means “glories.” In other words, though it may be speaking of natural authorities, and though they may be included in the thought, it is probably more intended to describe heavenly beings – angels, Jesus Christ, and God. There is a contempt for any authority which exists in the spiritual realm. Hence, such people will use the name of Christ or the name of God in a reviling manner without batting an eye.

Life application: In this verse, we have the evening news in a nutshell. It appears that little has changed in the 2000 years since Peter wrote this. Instead, they have gotten worse. Not because of the already wicked heart, but because of the availability of access and communication with those who act in the same manner.

Whereas trouble in earlier times was localized and contained, today people in the US can stir up trouble in Egypt. Someone at his computer in France can email whatever perverted thing he has dreamt up to people in 100 countries. Disobedience and the despising of authority are practiced and expanded upon in blogs and at news centers around the globe.

TV shows have gone from wholesome family values to complete perversion of both word and thought in less than two generations. Good is called evil and evil is called good. Israel is condemned for its restraint in combat while those who perpetually attack her are called the victims – and the lie increases with every biased broadcast of the presumptuous and self-willed commentator.

The lawless left challenges the authority of duly elected officials. Those who are in the minority, and who are elected to do their jobs, simply pack up and leave their post when they disagree with the majority – never considering their duty to the people who elected them.

Those who legally bear arms are called criminals, while those who illegally misuse them are said to have been brought up in sad circumstances and should be given light treatment.

Societies promote abortion as if the life conceived has no value, but they forgive murderers who rape and mutilate their victims before killing them.

All of this twisted and unhealthy thinking can be traced back to despising of the ultimate authority – The Lord God. The nations rally now, but He will be vindicated. The time of Christ's reign is approaching where all uncleanness will be removed.

Lord, Your word speaks of hard issues which we often fail to take to heart. We forget that You aren't only a loving and gentle Creator, but that You also are holy, righteous, and just. Better for us to put our hope in You and Your cross now than to attempt to stand on our own state, that of lacking any true righteousness, on the great Day You have prepared. Amen.

...whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. 2 Peter 2:11

Peter just spoke of "dignitaries," noting that those who walk according to the flesh and who despise authority "are not afraid to speak evil" of them. As noted, the word translated as "dignitaries," literally means "glories."

Without being dogmatic over the intent of Peter's wording, he may have been referring to natural authorities, or he may have used the word to describe heavenly beings – angels, Christ, or God. There is a contempt for any authority, most likely that which exists in the spiritual realm. Hence, such people will use the name of Christ or the name of God in a reviling manner without batting an eye.

The book of Jude closely follows this chapter of 2 Peter, and there he uses the same word, speaking in just that manner –

“Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. ⁹Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’” Jude 1:8, 9

Thus, it is a clue that this is also probably what is on Peter’s mind here. With that thought in mind, Peter now says, “whereas angels.” This is in contrast to those people. Angels are a completely different category than men. As he says, they are “greater in power and might.”

There are two possibilities concerning these words. Peter is either referring to the angels being greater in power and might than the false teachers, or he is contrasting the angels to the archangels, who would then next be mentioned.

The first option initially seems more likely based on the contrast being made, but the second option would then set the proper tone for the conduct of the angels before those “dignitaries” to which they were subordinate. In this, it would show an even greater distinction between the false teachers and the object of their evil speaking.

Either way, man is mortal, he ages, he lives within the sphere of the material world, his power and strength are limited, and so on. And yet, despite this lowly state, such arrogant people are willing to speak against these “dignitaries,” or “glories.” As Peter next notes, even angels “do not bring a reviling accusation against them,” meaning these “dignitaries.”

And this type of accusation is noted by Peter as being “before the Lord.” That is expanded on in the quote from Jude mentioned above – “The Lord rebuke you!” Jude places his words in the context of Michael and Satan. However, a comparable thought is found in Zechariah 3 –

“Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. ²And the LORD said to Satan, ‘The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?’” Zechariah 3:1, 2

In the end, the thought Peter is presenting is that of a complete contrast between these earthly, fallen men who speak evil against authorities, while even those who possess much greater power and rank would not do so. Thus, it shows the high level of arrogance and folly exhibited by these people.

Life application: In revealing the utter contempt of these people for the holiness of God, their actions demonstrate that their judgment is more than deserved. They use their tongues to destroy the line of authority God has ordained. They do this despite being mere mortals who have no true power or authority over anything, including the moment of their demise. In this, their words condemn rather than justify them.

The Bible lays out certain precepts. For example, elders and deacons are to be the husband of but one wife. Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormons, chose to disobey this. Likewise, the Bible condemns any sex not within the bounds of marriage between a man and a woman. Despite this, leaders in denominations and churches actively engage in illicit sexual behavior – daring God and reviling the boundaries of authority that He has given. Such examples are what Peter notes as worthy of destruction. Be careful who you follow and why. Know your Bible and know your God!

Lord God, it is You who are to be obeyed. Below You, there is a line of authority which You have established for Your sovereign purposes. May we endeavor to obey the rulers and authorities appointed over us, and may our tongues be careful to not revile them – even when we disagree with the direction they choose. Rather, remind us to pray for them. Amen.

But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption,
2 Peter 2:12

There are two views on how to translate the word “natural” here. The first is to connect it to the words “brute beasts.” The second would be to tie it to the words “caught and destroyed.” The second option seems more likely, so the second view will only be cited here. Charles Ellicott translates it as “born naturally for capture and destruction.”

Either way, Peter continues to speak of those he has been describing. They are people who walk according to the flesh, who despise authority, and so on. He now says that they are “like natural brute beasts.”

Here, he uses the word *alogos*. It is the word *logos*, meaning “reason,” which is prefixed by the negative particle *a*. Therefore, it signifies “unreasoning.” Just as an animal is unable to reason things out, these people have become so degraded in their minds that they live by animal instincts. They are unwilling to simply stop and think things through in a logical, rational way.

Peter notes that such animals are “made to be caught and destroyed.” He is not actually calling for these people to be culled from the pack, but that is the expected lot of the animals which they are like.

In other words, though not calling for them to be caught and destroyed, this is what would otherwise be expected of them because they have reduced themselves to the same state as such animals that do need to be destroyed. They have not only reduced themselves to a state of no value at all, but they are actually harmful to society. Logically then, unless they come to their senses, the Lord will handle them as they deserve in due time.

Peter continues by saying that because they are like such irrational animals, they “speak evil of the things they do not understand.” What God has ordained in the universe, from the movement of the atoms to the movement of the cosmos, is perfectly ordered. Each aspect of the created order works in a harmonious way. This then extends to the thought that God is infinitely wise and what He has done should be considered as such.

And yet, a good example of the type of people Peter speaks of are those who attribute these magnificent workings of God to time and chance. They blaspheme God by saying that order was brought from chaos through an evolutionary process. This is but one of countless examples of how people take what is good and true about God, and what He has done, and they twist it or ignore it, they speak evil of it, and yet they have no true understanding of it. Of them, Peter says that they “will utterly perish in their own corruption.”

The Greek of these words has a play on words which is not seen in the English. By taking the noun and verb forms of a word, Peter says something like “in the destruction of them, *they* will also be destroyed.” The probable meaning of his words is that just as they have reduced themselves to the state of irrational animals, so they will be destroyed as irrational animals are destroyed. Their own moral corruption will be as a sentence against them, and because of it, they will get what they deserve.

Life application: In Revelation 2 and 3, we are given a direct look into the thoughts of how carefully Jesus considers the state of His church. We stray from His precepts at our own peril, and those who add to or detract from His word do so at their own condemnation. The words there carefully reveal the truths that Peter writes about in this epistle.

An example of what Peter is referring to is reflected in the attitude of the Episcopal church. All the way back in 2011, they stated, “On Good Friday, the day we mark the crucifixion of Christ, God in the flesh, might we suggest that when Earth is degraded, when species go extinct, that another part of God’s body experiences yet another sort of crucifixion...” The note goes on to state that it is notable that many religious leaders are celebrating both Good Friday and Earth Day as “holy.”

Equating their perverse climate agenda with the crucifixion of Jesus is not only contemptible, but the theology made in the comparison is severely deficient. The earth is not a “part of God’s body.” Rather it is a part of His creation. Man has been given dominion over the earth, but the earth – its climate, its future, and its existence – is under the complete control of God. Man’s role in earthly matters will be judged based on his relationship with Jesus, not on global warming.

As the years have passed since that Good Friday statement was issued, the levels of depravity within the Episcopal church have increased almost exponentially. Those who teach such corrupt theology, rather than the truth of Christ, will have to face God someday, and they will be treated just as irrational animals, which they are, should be.

Lord God, surely sound doctrine is of great value. When it is lacking, there can only be a departure from the truth of Your word. This, in turn, will lead to separation from You and eventually to destruction. Open our minds to properly reason out our theology so that what we hear and believe will be acceptable in Your glorious eyes. This we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen

...and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, 2 Peter 2:13

Peter continues to speak of the false teachers that he has been referring to throughout the chapter. He states that they “will receive the wages of unrighteousness.” In this life, these false teachers may be profiting handsomely. They may never have trials or troubles, and the money may flow into their coffers like waters rushing in to fill a pond, but these are temporary riches. Eventually, the true wages they deserve shall be paid to them.

The word “wages,” however, is not the same as that which was used by Paul when he speaks of the “wages of sin” in Romans 6:23. It speaks of a reward or recompense which is given as a compensation for an action or decision. It is the same word that will be

used in 2:15 when referring to Balaam who was hired to curse Israel. There is an action which is worth a certain hire, and that is what is then received by the one who was hired. In this case, Peter speaks of the reward for their unrighteous actions. He then further defines the thought by saying of them that they are “as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime.”

The idea is that of being completely unashamed of their actions. Those who carouse, normally do so at night. The dark hides their shame and it conceals their identity. During the day, they put on a different face so that they might be thought of as honorable people. But those Peter speaks of are so bold in their unrighteousness that they openly flaunt what they do. They have no care that their teaching is false. The money pours in, the suckers enrich their coffers, and they feel justified that they are worthy of their ill-gotten gain.

Because of the attitude, Peter further describes them by saying that “*they are spots and blemishes.*” The first word comes from the Greek: *spilos*. One can see the root of our modern word for “spill.” It was only used elsewhere by Paul in Ephesians 5:27 where he noted that Christ will present His church to Himself without “spot or wrinkle.” When one has a beautiful garment that gets a spot on it, nobody notices the garment any longer. Rather, the only thing that is seen is that horrible spot. That is what these false teachers are like. They ruin what is otherwise pure and beautiful.

The word translated as “blemish” is only found here, *mómos*. It is that which causes disgrace. One can see that the “spots” speak of the individuals in the church, whereas the “blemishes” speak of how they affect the church. Of these people, Peter then says that they are “carousing in their own deceptions.”

A different word, translated as “carousing,” is used here than was used in the previous clause. It speaks of self-indulgence and luxurious living. They are so set on living out their dream world of luxury that their deceptions are all they can think of. It is as if they are the center of the universe and everything around them was set in place just for them to live out their own luxurious existence. Peter says this occurs, “while they feast with you.”

In other words, even while joining together with believers, their conduct remains unchanged. They have taken on such an openly self-centered existence that they cannot perceive any need for change when they are around true believers who live holy lives and are truly pious in their actions, including the very meals they partake of.

Life application: God, who is rich in mercy, offers a gift – eternal life through the Lord Jesus. On the other hand, Peter takes this concept and says (still speaking of false teachers) that they will receive their wages. These are the people who actively disobey the gospel of Jesus and yet they are the same people who sit at feasts with believers.

Think on those in Christian circles who fit this description – people who claim to know Jesus, but who deny His authority by the life they lead. They openly flaunt their disobedient lifestyle while wearing garbs of the pious.

There is never a reason to trust someone just because they have on a minister's attire or have a degree from a theological seminary. Rather, an instructor in Christianity is to be evaluated on how he handles the word of God and how he treats the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Lord God, You have stated that judgment begins at Your house. How terrifying it will be for those who have improperly handled Your word, and who have diminished the glorious work of Jesus Christ. They sit in Your church now, but they have never truly been a part of it. Keep us from such teachers that we may be found approved on the Day of Your visitation. Amen.

...having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, *and are* accursed children.

2 Peter 2:14

Peter continues on with his lengthy list as he describes the traits of false teachers. He now says they are “having eyes full of adultery.” The eyes can be used in various ways. Two in particular should be defined. First, they can be used to allow in the objects of lust such as Job spoke of –

“I have made a covenant with my eyes;
Why then should I look upon a young woman?”
They can also be used as objects of lust –
“Do not lust after her beauty in your heart,
Nor let her allure you with her eyelids.” Proverbs 6:25

The heart is where the root of adultery lies, but the eyes are where the adultery is watered. From there, it blossoms and takes over the mind. Therefore, to avert the eyes from that which is enticing will then deprive the condition from what it needs to grow.

What is probably most on Peter's mind is the second example from Proverbs. The reason for this is that he uses a noun. It literally says, "of an adulteress."

Because of this, they "cannot cease from sin." Their eyes reflect their nature, it is a nature which in the Greek literally means "unceasing from sin." Like the whore who flashes her eyes and captures the wandering sheep, taking him to slaughter, so the false teachers do to their unsuspecting victims. Peter says they are "enticing unstable souls."

The thought is comparable to what Paul said to Timothy –

"For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts." 2 Timothy 3:6

Whether a gullible woman or an unstable soul, the false teachers and wicked people of the world know how to control others with their unholy schemes and intents. People who are lacking discernment are ripe pickings for those who know how to mislead others. By saying the right things, things which sound correct, but which are twisted and unscriptural, false teachers lead many astray. And it is so easy for them, because "they have a heart trained in covetous practices."

It speaks of the state of the individual false teacher, but which represents them all. The heart has been conditionally allowed to covet, being left completely unrestrained. Because of this, it has become their very nature to seek after that which the heart covets.

The word Peter uses is *gumnazó*. It is the root of our modern word "gymnastics." It signifies training with full effort, using all of the physical and emotional force one can muster. With such an attitude, the actions follow suit, seducing others to appease the fleshly lusts which arise in them. In this, Peter says they are "accursed children." Here Peter uses two nouns, literally saying, "children of a curse." It reflects the state in which they exist. Just as Paul says those under the law are "under a curse," so these false teachers exist in such a sphere. They have not come to the grace of God in Christ, and thus they remain in the realm of a curse.

Life application: It is shameful to hear about televangelists who preach "prosperity" for those who send money to their ministries, telling them that a "financial breakthrough" will come from their obedient and sacrificial giving. Unfortunately, those who fall for this are often those who are in rough times already. If things were going well, they wouldn't be worried about a financial breakthrough.

Eventually, these supposed ministers are exposed through lavish living – large houses, expensive cars, fashion clothing, etc. There is no sense of decency or morality in their lives. They have profited by enticing unstable souls. Regardless of how they appear to those following them, the Lord reads their thoughts and the motives of their hearts. Destruction and hell will be their reward unless they correct the unholy path they are following.

Take the time to look into the lifestyle of those you intend to follow before, not after, you start giving. What is being taught here isn't unique to Christianity. Rather, even the secular world – both in ancient times and today – understands the attitude addressed here. As Homer said in the Iliad, "Hateful to me as the gates of Hades is that man who hides one thing in his heart and speaks another."

If we simply look at actions, rather than flowery speeches, we can discern the truth. Inspect the politicians you choose, not on what they say, but on what they do. Be discerning in the leaders you look to for your government, your business, and especially your spiritual life.

Lord, keep us from those who are bent on evil gain at our expense. Guide us to sound leaders who properly handle the word of truth. May those who lead our government, our financial institutions, and our churches be held accountable when they covetously strive to prosper at the expense of those who trust in them. Amen.

They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 2 Peter 2:15

It is such a fascinating verse to study. Peter, still speaking of the false teachers, now brings in a real-life example from Israel's past, Balaam the son of Beor. The main story of him is found in Numbers 22-24, though he is mentioned at various times in both the Old and New Testaments. This is the first of three times in the New. Peter says of the false teachers, that "They have forsaken the right way."

The Greek more literally reads, "Having left *the* straight way." They have left, and they continue on that departure. The word "straight" signifies that which is correct or proper. Peter is possibly referring to his words of verse 2:2 where he notes that "many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed." There is the proper way of following Christ as outlined in God's word, and there is that which departs from this path.

In their departure from this proper path, they have “gone astray.” The Greek word signifies roaming into error. Peter spoke of this concerning those he addresses in his first letter, saying, “For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

One can stray intentionally, or one can simply wander off the right path and into error, but either way, that person is no longer walking in accord with what God intends. Of the false teachers, Peter next says that they are “following the way of Balaam.”

What is remarkable is that Peter speaks of “the way of Balaam.” The introductory story of Balaam is found in Numbers 22, in the span of just a few verses. The Hebrew word, also translated as “way,” is found 8 times. Balaam was on a way which was perverse before the Lord. Peter uses this thought, which comes from his own history as is recorded in Scripture, and he applies it to false teachers in the time of the New Covenant. Of this, Charles Ellicott notes –

“Are gone astray. — The main verb of this long sentence. Here parallels with Jude begin again. In the historical incident of Balaam, as in that of Sodom and Gomorrha, our Epistle is more detailed than Jude (see on 2Peter 2:7). The past tenses in this verse are quite in harmony with the view that this chapter is a genuine prediction. (Comp. Genesis 49:9; Genesis 49:15; Genesis 49:23-24.) The future foretold with such confidence as to be spoken of as already past is a common form for prophecy to assume.”

Ellicott says that Peter is using a literary technique which takes past tense verbs and applies them in the sense of future prophecy. There are, and there will continue to be, false teachers who depart from the word. He is referring to them – throughout the age – as assuredly following this contrary path which Balaam had set out on.

Next, he calls Balaam, “the *son* of Beor.” This is an incorrect translation. The text from which the NKJV is translated says, *Βοσόρ*, or Bosor. The translators, thinking they need to help Peter’s words, have changed “Bosor” to read “Beor.” The reason they did this is because Balaam’s father is “Beor.” This is seen, for example, in Numbers 22:5 –

“Then he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor at Pethor, which *is* near the River in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying: ‘Look, a people has come from Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me!’”

Maybe thinking that Peter was sleepy when writing out his epistle, they change his word “Bosor” to “Beor.” But Peter made no error. Here is an example of what Peter is doing –

“And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you.” Luke 10:6

Jesus wasn't saying that the person's father was named "Peace." Rather he was saying that the person emulated the noble trait of PEACE. Peter is doing the same thing here. One Hebrew word which is commonly translated as "flesh" is *basar*. Peter is using that Hebrew word and calling Balaam "son of the flesh," meaning he was a carnal man – exactly how he is describing these false teachers. As he said in verse 2:10, they are "those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority."

In this, Peter is then making a play on words. He knew very well that Balaam's father was Beor, but – as we do all the time – he purposefully mispronounced the name to make a theological point. The Hebrew letter *ayin*, when pronounced in an especially guttural way, would make the name sound like Bosor, and would then correspond to *basar*. In other words, he makes a pun by calling him "Balaam, Son of the Flesh," which speaks of his pursuing the carnal lusts of the flesh in his madness to get rich. As he says to finish out this verse, it was this Son of the Flesh "who loved the wages of unrighteousness."

Peter uses the same term that he just used in verse 2:13, "the wages of unrighteousness," to again tie the false teachers he has been speaking about with that which is improper. The account of Balaam shows that he was highly influenced by the call of profit, and he set about to enrich himself as outlined in the story. The path he followed was a reckless one, but despite that, the Lord used him in order to bless Israel. The story of Balaam is an ongoing story of those who perversely follow after riches, power, sexual domination, or whatever other perverse things they put before their love for God and His word.

Life application: In Revelation 2:14, Jesus speaks of Balaam in this way –

“But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.”

Compare what Peter says here to the false teachers Jesus warned us of. Jesus says they do three things to hinder their followers –

- putting a stumbling block before the congregation

- eating things sacrificed to idols
- committing sexual immorality

When evaluating a supposed religious leader, look for such things in his character. Notable figures of the past that held to such practices are Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, David Koresh of the Branch Davidians, etc. Even a host of televangelists have engaged in unrepentant sexual immorality.

Jesus gives strong warnings that such leaders will take their congregants down paths which lead to condemnation. Pay attention to who you follow. If he is not leading you to Christ, or if he is doing it in a way contrary to Scripture, then flee from him and his wayward teaching.

Heavenly Father, may we never put our trust in man who is fallible. Give us the wisdom to follow Jesus alone and to attend a congregation which is solely devoted to fearing You and adhering to Your word. Keep us from the false teachers who would lead us astray for the sake of money or some other immoral precept. Amen.

... but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. 2 Peter 2:16

Peter now finishes the thought of Balaam which he began in the previous verse. But his words are a continuation of the whole thought so far presented concerning false teachers. In the case of Balaam “who loved the wages of unrighteousness,” Peter now says that “he was rebuked for his iniquity.”

The Greek reads, “he had a rebuke for his transgression.” The word signifies a violation of a law. The Lord gave Balaam a directive, but Balaam went through with his actions intending to violate that directive. Thus, it was a violation of what the Lord had spoken, and the Lord rebuked him as such. In this, the rebuke came through “a dumb donkey.”

Here the idea of a donkey would only be known if one had read the story. The Greek simply says, “a beast of burden.” The Lord took a mute beast and used it to overthrow the supposed wisdom of this soothsayer. In doing so, it was considered a significant rebuke. This is especially so because it was “speaking with a man's voice.”

There are times that animals make sounds that we may perceive as a known word or set of words. One can teach a dog to say, “aww wuv you.” From there, we think the dog is saying, “I love you,” but it is with the voice of a dog. Even donkeys may bray in a way

which shows some hint of supposed intelligence, but the voice, or sound, is always that of a donkey. But this animal spoke with the voice of a man. In this, it “restrained the madness of the prophet.”

The Greek noun, translated as “madness,” is only found here in the New Testament. It comes from two words signifying “beside” and “the mind.” It has a kindred verb, also found only once when used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:23. There Paul says –

“Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as one beside himself)” ... (WEB)

The prophet had lost his senses as he pushed on towards the hope of profit. It consumed him and he had left proper thinking behind. The Lord had spoken to him, and yet he didn’t consider that if the Lord had spoken to him in his own country, that the Lord was not just an isolated “God of the Hebrews,” but the God who knows all and is everywhere. In such a state, disaster loomed. But a brute beast spoke to him in order to bring him back to a state of reason.

Life application: The story of Balaam is not that long and is full of intrigue and special insights into the spiritual realm. If you have never read it, take a few minutes today to look it over. It is found in Numbers 22-24 and is actually a very fun read. From it, countless generations of songs and stories have come about, but it also contains deep truths concerning the sovereign workings of God in the affairs of man. It also reveals God’s eternal love for the people of Israel and how He deals with them and through them. In addition, how God views the nations which come against Israel is also dealt with.

It is important to understand that God’s covenants with Israel are binding and are in effect to this day. When analyzing the different aspects of God’s relationship with Israel, we make a fundamental error when we view the church as having replaced Israel.

Balaam, a diviner, was asked to curse the people of Israel by one of the surrounding nations. At first, he refused, but was eventually given authorization to proceed under certain conditions. On his way, the Angel of the Lord took His stand in the way as an adversary against him. Three times his donkey attempted to avoid the Angel of the Lord who was unseen to Balaam. Each time he beat his donkey for being an obstinate mode of transportation.

Eventually, the Angel of the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey to speak to him. The donkey questioned why he had beaten him. In turn, Balaam stated, “Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you!” (Numbers 22:29).

In time, the Angel of the Lord appeared to Balaam’s eyes as well and stated, “The donkey saw Me and turned aside from Me these three times. If she had not turned aside from Me, surely I would also have killed you by now, and let her live” (Numbers 22:33).

Even conservative scholars will attempt to weasel out of belief that the donkey actually spoke. Rather they claim it brayed in a manner which made Balaam understand something was going on. However, the Bible is clear that the Lord opened the donkey’s mouth in order to speak. God created man; God created donkeys; and God made a way that the two were able to communicate. In real speech, the donkey’s intentions and purposes for its actions were made known to Balaam.

Lord, if You can open the mouth of a donkey in order to speak, then surely You can open our mouths to speak to others about Jesus. Give us that ability, and also give us the strong desire to do so. May we never shy away from those around us who need to hear the good news. With You as the inspiration for our words, we know that we can effectively communicate what they need to hear. Amen.

These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. 2 Peter 2:17

The words of Peter now describe the state of the false teacher in words that would be especially understood by someone living in a dry land, or in a land suffering from extended drought. First, he says that “These are wells without water.”

The word can signify a well or a spring. It signifies something that flows as a source of water, blood, or even enjoyment. A well flows underground, but it is expected that there will be water there when one comes to it. A spring flows out of the ground, and it is expected that when one goes to it, there will be the needed water. However, the false teachers are a source which has no water, signifying no life. Their teaching cannot provide what it claims it has any more than a dry well or a spring can help a weary soul who comes to it to be nourished.

He then says that these false teachers are “clouds carried by a tempest.” The word translated as clouds is not the same in some manuscripts. Some say “clouds” while others say “mists.” Either way, Peter is speaking of a vaporous mass which supposedly will give water, but which fails to provide it. As it approaches, it appears that relief from a state of heat and dry will be replaced with covering and precipitation, and yet... it just blows past without providing anything of value.

This is the state of false teachers who appear to provide something needed, but then who fail to deliver. The hope of spiritual relief passes by, and there is nothing of value which remains. Where salvation is expected, the condemned soul continues in its condemnation.

Peter says of these false teachers that for them “is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” The Greek word translated as “blackness” gives a sense of gloom. It is a murkiness which hangs as a pall for those who are caught in it. Further, the Greek includes an article before “darkness” which should not be ignored by translators. It more properly reads, “the gloom of the darkness forever.”

In this then, it speaks of a darkness which was an understood condition of the regions of hell. There is no light, and the gloom of the place will leave the soul yearning for any hint of relief, but it will never come. Jesus spoke of this darkness three separate times in Matthew, such as in Matthew 8:12 –

“But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

The darkness, then, is a place of separation. As God is the source of light, and the light is called good – even at the very beginning of the Bible – one can see that it is a place where no good exists. The source of all that is good, of light, and of that which provides joy and abundance will be lacking. Such is the place where these false teachers have a forever-home reserved. And, sadly, those who follow after them will be there as well.

Life application: Peter’s words would be clearly understandable to the people who had traveled to Jerusalem for the annual religious feasts of the Jewish society.

The land of Israel has many desert areas; dry and formidable. Like much of the earth, the land is wholly dependent on the rains provided by the Lord for its very survival, but particularly in these more arid areas. Should one be thirsty, the only source of water would be the local well – dug perhaps thousands of years earlier.

Towns were built around these sources of water and they could not exist without them. When the wells dried up, there was nothing to sustain the people. The point of this analogy is that a false teacher is just as useless and just as deadly to the spirit as an empty well is to the body.

Likewise, a cloud carried along by a slow-moving wind has some sense of order, and its purpose can be easily determined – shade, a bit of rain, enjoyment to the eye, etc.

But a cloud carried by a tempest is completely lost amid the chaos around it. It is ever-changing and unreliable as a source of any enjoyment or benefit to those who are near it. In the same manner, false teachers are lost in the chaos of confused theology.

As God is a God of order, doctrine concerning Him can be determined and clearly understood. But the instruction of false prophets is ever-changing and never stable. As a contradiction in theology arises, diversionary tactics are used to hide the error. Teachers who are represented by Peter's analogies have something in store for them from God... "the blackness of darkness forever." The chaos and lack of nourishment they provided in life will be returned to them for eternity.

O God, thank You for the well of instruction You have provided in the pages of the Bible. Likewise, thank You for those who properly handle and clarify Your word to us. You haven't left us without a sure word. Instead, we have one which we can turn to time and again for the filling of our souls. For this we praise You; for this we thank You. Amen.

For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. 2 Peter 2:18

Peter just used a couple of metaphors to describe what false teachers are like. Now, he explains why he chose those metaphors by explaining what their words are like. He begins with, "For when they speak." Peter is tying their speaking in with what he just said about them. They are wells without water, and they are clouds carried by a tempest. It is their words which makes them so. Understanding this, he says of their speech, their words are "great swelling words of emptiness."

The oratory skills of these people may be exceptional. Their presentation may be flawless. And their delivery may be without a stutter or a slur. However, the words they speak are empty. The word Peter uses is found only elsewhere in Romans 8:20 and

Ephesians 4:17. It signifies “vanity” or “futility.” It is an aimless set of words strung together which lacks any sound purpose because they are transitory.

Peter then says that “they allure through the lusts of the flesh.” Rather than “through,” the Greek reads “in.” It is the sphere in which they exist, and they draw others into their realm. They are bent on presenting a message which suits their own personal lusts – be it sexual, for power, for control of others, or maybe even for attaining a perverse political agenda – whatever. Their words are directed to bring those they address into their own warped sphere of influence. Peter then says that this is done “through lewdness.”

The Greek here is much more direct. There is no preposition before “lewdness.” It is a stand-alone noun. It describes the state of the matter as it exists. Their conduct is outrageous and is a stain on public decency. And yet it is the makeup of who they are.

Peter then ties the next words in with the state of those who stalk them by saying, “the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.” In these words, there is a variation between manuscripts based on very similar words. Note the difference between the two based on this variation –

“those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.” (ESV)

“the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.” (NKJV)

Verse 2:14 speaks of those these people are enticing. Therefore, the likely reading is that of the ESV and others. There are some who hear their message and barely escape, and there are those who continue on in the error of the false teachers. The difference between these two seems to come down to whether they were ever truly saved or not. Those who were saved may be enticed and deluded by the false teachers, but their escape is assured, but there are those who never came to saving faith, and they continue on in error.

Life application: In presenting a false message, false teachers set up a conflict in those who have heard the gospel, encouraging them back into the exact same lifestyle that they were previously held captive in. This can be done in any way which promotes the value systems of the world.

Some speak of the gospel in terms of financial profit; some of sexual freedom; some of the blessings of promotion and power – “Yes! You too can have this desire of your heart because God wills your happiness; God wants prosperity for His children; God has

forgiven you in Christ, and so you are free from condemnation, even while living in sexual sin.” There becomes no difference in the carnal desires played out in members of the church from those in the world around it.

Accountability is reduced to catchphrases, and the cross is left alone on the Place of the Skull (Golgotha) as a mere symbol to be admired from a distance – devoid of its true meaning and significance. May we never treat the work of Jesus Christ on that instrument of torture and death with anything less than our complete and undying devotion.

Lord God, our terrible plight and condition is revealed in the words of the Bible. We are, from time to time, pulled away from holy living by the temptations of power, wealth, and impurity. Renew our minds, purge our unhealthy desires, and turn our souls to wholehearted devotion to You. May we look to You and Your glorious work, and in looking, may we never forget what You accomplished for us. Amen.

While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. 2 Peter 2:19

Peter, still speaking of the false teachers, builds upon what he just said in the previous verse concerning those who are allured by them and those who narrowly escape from them. He now shows how this is possible by saying, “While they promise them liberty.”

One example here is that those who are in Christ are free from the law, but they are not free from what is morally sound. However, false teachers might appeal to the flesh stating that because Christ died for sin, and God is glorified through forgiving sin, then there is much more glory for God when we do evil so that good may come. This is what Paul speaks of in Romans 3:5-8.

Using this (or a comparable type of thinking), false teachers will promise liberty. They may say, “You are free to do anything that you wish in regard to sex. We have complete liberty, so live it up!” In such perverse teaching, they show that “they themselves are slaves of corruption.” They are wholly under the power and influence of corruption. Such ideas are perverse, and they are completely at odds with what God would have for those who have been redeemed by Christ.

With this understanding, Peter completes the thought with a point of logic. He says, “for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.” If the false teacher is a slave of corruption, and a person follows in the teaching of such a false

teacher, then he is not brought into liberty at all. He may think he has liberty because he freely does every perverse thing his heart desires, but he is now – in fact – also a slave of corruption.

The very thing which was promised to bring freedom is what brings bondage and slavery. The thought Peter presents here is beautifully expanded on by Paul in Romans 6–

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! ¹⁶ Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness? ¹⁷ But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. ¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading* to *more* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves *of* righteousness for holiness.

²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. ²² But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. ²³ For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:15-23

Life application: There is a truth in Peter's words today which has echoed throughout the history of humanity. The 2nd Psalm begins with these three verses –

“Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
² The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, *saying*,
³ ‘Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us.’” Psalm 2:1-3

One who fights against the Lord and His purposes is already a slave of corruption. However, such a person will rally the people against the Lord saying, “Let us break their bonds...” and thus promise liberty to those he is trying to influence. And yet, the very

people who are being promised liberty find themselves brought into the same bondage they were told they would avoid.

Nazi Germany is a perfect example. In the world of today, we see the same anger and railing in nations as they fight in the streets – promising revolution and a new direction, when in fact the end is already determined. Likewise, false teachers of the gospel act in just the same way.

They promise “freedom from poverty,” “freedom from ailments,” “freedom from fear,” etc. All of this is promised by sending them money. Take time to objectively watch various Christian TV shows for a few hours. For every decent hour of broadcasting, there will be two which teach nothing doctrinally. Instead, there will only be promised blessings of heaven – all at the low cost of sending them an offering. The very bondage one expects to be freed from will be what actually brings that person into bondage. Be attentive to Jesus and His word – the only true source of freedom.

Lord, may we be overcome only by You, because in You there is true freedom. May the chains we wear from a life of sin be exchanged for the glorious promise of being Your slaves – who are the freest of all. May we never be enticed by promises of power, riches, or glory in this world, but rather may we long for a place in the heavenly home that You have prepared for those who love You. Amen.

For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. 2 Peter 2:20

It is debated if Peter now speaks of the state of the false teachers or of those who were enticed by them. Scholars present logical cases for both. He just said that, “for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.” Therefore, it could simply be referring to the state of any who are so overcome – be it false teachers or those who are ensnared by them.

Now, beginning with, “For if,” he presents his case for the state of such a person. “If he has been brought into bondage, then...” Understanding this, he continues with, “after they have escaped the pollutions of the world.” Here Peter uses a word found only this once in Scripture, *miasma*, or pollutions. It is the root of our modern term of the same spelling. At this point, there is no reason to assume that the person actually believed the gospel and received Christ.

Drunks can escape the pollutions of a drunken lifestyle through the 12 Step program. Drug addicts can escape their addictions through various treatment centers. These people apply the principles of the program to their lives and they are cleaned up. However, this does not mean that they have been converted into a new being. Similarly, a person can apply the biblical principles to his life and still not have come to Christ for salvation.

This is more evident by the words, “through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” The translation is misleading. The Greek has no article, and the preposition “in” is used. It reads, “in knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” The escape from the pollution of the word is in knowledge of Christ Jesus. How many people go to churches for a lifetime, having knowledge of Christ and yet are not converted by Christ!

For example, those who attend Roman Catholic churches have an abundance of knowledge concerning Christ – His deity, His atonement, and etc. And yet, their hearts (Romans 10:9, 10) have never believed the gospel. They have never made the profession concerning Christ. What they need is the “14-inch conversion.” The head knowledge needs to be transferred to the heart.

Even if this is referring to saved believers, it does not have to mean that they have lost their salvation. Peter is speaking of the state of the person in this physical life. He did this in verses 1:5-9. There he first spoke of exactly the same premise in verse 1:4 –

“...that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.”

He then gave a logical order of things to do in order to not be swept back into the old ways of life. He finished that with –

“For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.” (1:9)

Whether saved or unsaved, a person can fall back into his old ways and be so ensnared in them that he is bound by this world of corruption. As Peter says, “they are again entangled in them and overcome.” The word translated as “entangled” is the Greek word *emplekó*. It is used concerning the braiding of hair. The evil is simply woven into every facet of the person’s life and it becomes increasingly difficult for such to discern good from evil.

They become caught up in the very pollutions that they had escaped from. A drug user returns to his drugs, an alcoholic returns to the bottle, and so forth. Now, having forsaken the very method of changing his life, the person finds himself back where he was, and in even worse shape than before.

In such a dramatic shift back to their old ways, Peter says that “the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.” This takes the reader back to the words of the Lord from Matthew 12:43-45 (and repeated in Luke 11:24-26) –

“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. ⁴⁴ Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds *it* empty, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.” Matthew 12:45

The lesson Christ made for His audience is that of works, not grace. The person Jesus refers to has cleaned up his own house. He has swept it and put it in order. This would be comparable to the person who went through the 12-Step program. However, with a clean and tidy house, he still left room for the demon (and more demons) to return. He failed to fill it with Christ. This is what Peter is referring to. He is not necessarily speaking of someone who has been filled with the Spirit of God through faith in Christ.

Peter is using that same principle for those who hear the word – saved or unsaved makes less difference than the principle which he is using – and who have not applied it to their lives. For the saved, they will not lose their salvation, but they will have an incredibly rough time in this life. For the unsaved, they will live an existence which is devoid of any hope at all.

Life application: When a person cleans up and gets things right, his house is ready for a good purpose. If it is not filled with what is good, then it becomes more susceptible to evil than it was at the beginning.

Remember this – bad doctrine doesn’t keep a person from being saved, but it may keep the next person from being saved because there is no foundation to help discern what is true and from what is false. Secondly, bad doctrine leads to “drinking the Kool-Aid” syndrome. The words of a false teacher are so seductive that people will simply follow them to their own destruction.

The Rev. Jim Jones, David Koresh, and others all led their congregants down the path to earthly destruction. One should never assume that he is above such brainwashing. Unless you personally study Scripture, you cannot determine what is right from what isn't from a biblical perspective. Watch your lives carefully, lest you be led astray – to your own peril.

Lord, you allow us to follow our own path – even after the salvation of our souls. We can pursue You and a right knowledge of Your word, or we can trust our pastors and priests to properly explain it to us... at our own peril. Give us minds that are willing to seek out Your truth, but also give us teachers who properly handle, and can rightfully explain, proper doctrine. Amen.

For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.

2 Peter 2:21

Peter is referring to those who “have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” of the previous verse. Here, he says of them, “For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness.” This is connected to the words of verse 2 where Peter calls the path of right pursuit of Christ “the way of truth.” Here, that path it is called “the way of righteousness.”

It is certain that if one believes that salvation can be lost, this will be interpreted as meaning the individual was a true believer at one point. Likewise, if a person believes that salvation cannot be lost, it will be argued in the opposite way. From there, logical arguments are made to defend the position. Cambridge ties Peter's words in with actual belief –

“The ‘way of righteousness’ is like the ‘way of truth’ in 2 Peter 2:2, a comprehensive description of the religion of Christ as a whole, regarded here in its bearing on life, as there in its relation to belief.”

However, there is no reason to tie this knowledge in with belief. One can know that Jesus died on a cross, and that Christians believe it was for the sins of man, and yet he can fail to believe that himself. Head knowledge does not necessarily equate to heart knowledge. With this understanding, Peter then says, “than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.”

Such a person, with full head knowledge, can say, “I just cannot accept this premise.” From there, he fails to believe, and he turns from the knowledge he possesses. This is true with people trained in seminaries. Countless masses have been provided all the theology they need to believe the message of Christ, and yet they fail to do so.

Many of them become the finest scholars in biblical languages and even write detailed commentaries on the Bible. And yet, they do not believe the Bible is inspired by God. Nor do they accept that Jesus died for their sins. In this group are those who even comment on whether salvation can be lost or not, as if they believed in one doctrine or another.

Tying the two ideas – the way of righteousness and the state of belief – is a common sentiment of those who accept that Peter’s words are speaking of true believers, and that salvation can thus be lost. But following the progression of the life of Judas – a person who knew both the way of truth and the way of righteousness – one can see the flawed thinking presented in such a stand. First, Judas had all the knowledge he needed to accept Christ’s ministry (the way of truth and that of righteousness), and yet he did not believe –

“‘The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life. ⁶⁴ But there are some of you who do not believe’ For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him.” John 6:63, 64

Secondly, Jesus then says the same type of thing that Peter says in this verse –

“The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.” Matthew 26:24

Peter says it would have been better for them to not have known the way of righteousness, and Jesus says it would be good for that man if he had not been born. The ideas are comparable in intent.

Thirdly, Peter acknowledges that Judas had a part in the ministry, even though he did not believe (as noted by Jesus in John 6) –

“...for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.” Acts 1:17

Finally, using a living parable, Jesus shows that in his unbelief, Judas was also not cleansed (implying “saved” in the typology presented) –

“Jesus said to him, ‘He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.’ ¹¹ For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, ‘You are not all clean.’” John 13:10, 11

Therefore, there is no reason to assume that “knowledge” in this verse equates to “belief.” Taking this in light of the other verses and concepts which speak of eternal salvation, it is clear that those who use this verse as a justification for loss of salvation have improperly used both their logic and Scripture in the process of doing so.

Life application: Peter, speaking of the false prophets, may have been thinking of those who received the Law at Mount Sinai, but who later turned from it at the cost of their lives. They had been delivered from Egypt, taken through the Red Sea, brought safely to Mount Sinai, and received the Ten Commandments as the Lord spoke to them from the awesome display – thundering, lightning, thick clouds, and the trumpet blast. However, after all of this, they turned their hearts away from the Lord and back to Egypt. They rebelled against Moses and began an open insurrection.

In the end, those who rebelled were destroyed and the people were held accountable – their bodies perished in the wilderness. Likewise, the people who have heard and simply not believed may see the gospel as a tool of opportunity to manipulate others. Just because someone preaches the gospel, this is no indication that he really believes it.

The world is full of people who have learned to use Christianity to increase their wealth and position. This is why it is so very important to always fix our eyes on Jesus. When we trust the message of a mere man and follow him, we are setting ourselves up for disappointment. Churches crumble and close around men who appeared godly but who are bent on serving their own appetites. Families have been destroyed by pastors who have manipulated women in the congregation. Life investments have been handed over to ungodly preachers who have taken the money and left the donors disillusioned and penniless.

All of this temporary gaining of wealth, position, sex, or power will lead only to their destruction. What they feel they have gained will be taken from them, and they will perish in their wickedness. It would have been better for them to have never known the truth or the way of righteousness.

Lord Jesus, You have shown us the way which is right and have given us the truth of Your word. Give us wisdom to follow You and not be led astray by manipulative and self-seeking people. Keep us from such people and provide us with godly leaders who have only Your gospel as their chief aim and purpose. Amen.

But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: “A dog returns to his own vomit,” and, “a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.” 2 Peter 2:22

The chapter now finishes with Peter going back to the Old Testament to cite a taste of wisdom from the book of Proverbs to establish the truth of what he has been saying. He is still speaking of those who had known the way of righteousness and turned from it. As he says, “But it has happened to them according to the true proverb.” In other words, just as the wisdom of the proverb proclaims, so man follows the pattern set down in it.

From there, Peter cites Proverbs 26:11, saying –

“As a dog returns to his own vomit,
So a fool repeats his folly.”

Peter next speaks of “a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.” This second example may be from an ancient story about a pig that went to a public bath with people of high status. Later when coming out of the bath, he saw a stinky drain and went and rolled in it. The moral of both of these is that just as a perverse person hears the message of the gospel, maybe even taking it to heart and half-heartedly participating in it, there is no acceptance of it. When he sees what he at first left behind, even though it is disgusting and far less acceptable, he returns to it.

The words of Peter here in no way speak of a person who was saved and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Rather, they speak of a person who follows his unchanged degenerate nature. Albert Barnes gives a long, but insightful, commentary on this –

“This passage is often quoted to prove ‘the possibility of falling from grace, and from a very high degree of it too.’ But it is one of the last passages in the Bible that should be adduced to prove that doctrine. The true point of this passage is to show that the persons referred to never ‘were changed;’ that whatever external reformation might have occurred, their nature remained the same; and that when they apostatized from their outward profession, they merely acted out their nature, and showed that in fact there had been ‘no’ real change. This passage will prove - what there are abundant facts to confirm - that persons may reform externally, and then return again to their former

corrupt habits; it can never be made to prove that one true Christian will fall away and perish. It will also prove that we should rely on no mere external reformation, no outward cleansing, as certain evidence of piety. Thousands who have been externally reformed have ultimately shown that they had no religion, and there is nothing in mere outward reformation that can suit us for heaven. God looks upon the heart; and it is only the religion that has its seat there, that can secure our final salvation.”

It is interesting that Peter takes the two unclean animals, and he places them side by side in a single verse, just as he heard Jesus do many years before –

“Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.” Matthew 7:6

Peter carefully contemplated the words of Jesus and used what he had learned to instruct us in sound theology using examples similar to those Jesus had chosen.

Life application: Dogs often eat excitedly and too quickly. Their system can't handle the load, and so they vomit up what they've eaten. However, this doesn't deter them from going back and reengaging their meal.

Pigs can be bathed, showered with perfume, painted with lipstick, and given a soft pillow to lie on, but a pig is still a pig. If it looks to the left and sees a hole of mud, it will immediately head for it. There is no sense in either of these beasts as to what is clean or unclean – they are merely unreasoning animals.

Peter says the same is true of false teachers. Other animals participate in equally disgusting habits, but by using these two animals in particular, he is showing an additional level of uncleanliness in them. Dogs and pigs are both considered unclean animals under the Law of Moses. By using them as examples, he is implying that false prophets are unclean in their very nature and have no redeeming qualities at all.

When evaluating spiritual leaders, don't look at the soft coat or the fancy perfumed persona. Rather, look at the whole person and evaluate them based on their adherence to God's word.

Lord, please keep us from the false appearances of wayward teachers. May we not be deceived by those who are outwardly showy, but who are inwardly unreasoning and unclean animals bent on the consumption of filth. Also, please direct us to leaders who

Speak the truth in righteousness and who exalt You with their lives, both in public and in private. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in *both of which* I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), 2 Peter 3:1

Here the Greek reads, “This, already, beloved, a second letter to you I write.” The word “now” is an indicator of the short amount of time between the writing of the first and second epistle. His words are going out to basically the same group of people, and there is a sense of urgency in his words which is certainly based on what he said in verses 1:12-15. He could be executed at any time, and he felt it necessary to remind his audience of what was most important while he could.

The words, “this second epistle,” are an interior confirmation that he wrote 1 Peter. And then, adding in words that a forger would certainly fail to include, he says, “in *both of which* I stir up your pure minds.” The word “both” is inserted, but it is implied. A forger wouldn’t bother stating this, thinking that the words “this second epistle” were sufficient. But Peter did include them, showing that the intent of both letters was the same.

Next, he uses the term “stir up.” The Greek word is *diegeiró*. It has the intent of arousing the reader to be fully awake and attentive in his understanding. However, the word “minds” is incorrect. The Greek is a singular noun. Their individual minds may have been impure, as certainly all are, but their collective mind was pure, meaning uncontaminated.

The word he uses is only elsewhere found in Philippians 1:10. It comes from two words which indicate “the shining of the sun,” and “to judge.” Thus, it signifies that which is properly judged because it is seen in the full light. There is a divine clarity which results in true and proper discernment.

Peter wishes to stir up this pure mind as a reminder. The intent of the words is that the reminder is in the mind of the audience. They knew the information already, but to draw that forth to the forefront of their thoughts, the reminder is given. It is the same idea as is expressed in 2 Peter 1:13. A “refreshing” of the memory is the anticipated result.

This is similar to a pastor asking his congregation to continually read their Bibles. The information may be there, but it dulls over time. Eventually, it gets crowded out by all of the other things which creep in and take center stage of the mind. But highlighting that

which is important, and then asking those in the church to solidify that through staying in the word, is the refreshing of the mind which brings about right thinking and right understanding of the word.

Life application: The book of 2 Peter was the last one recognized by the church as canon, meaning that which is meant for inclusion in the Bible. Other books were disputed as well, but eventually the 66 books we know as the Holy Bible were all accepted as received from God as His word to mankind.

This particular book was claimed to have been written by Peter in the first verse of Chapter 1. Then again in Chapter 1, in verses 13-18, he makes claims concerning his time spent with the Lord. Then, in this verse, he claims this to be his second letter. None of this proves it wasn't written by an imposter, but the style of writing and the admonitions it proclaims fit into the overall theme of the Bible. It contains the power of God's written word, and it is written in a manner which edifies the individual and the church overall. Certainly, it is an inspired text.

Peter wanted to stir up the collective mind of his audience. Likewise, we should read the entire Bible with this frame of mind. Rather than reading it in a way which helps us to sleep through our earthly lives, we should read it and take it to heart in a manner which arouses us to be active, watchful, and careful in our life and doctrine.

The previous chapter – dedicated almost exclusively to false teachers – is a clear indication of the importance of sound doctrine, right living, and proper focus. Let us be ever attentive to the words of Scripture and let us keep our minds pure by continuously referring to it in our daily lives. And further, let us return praise and honor to the Lord for so tenderly caring for us that He sent Jesus for our sins, the Holy Spirit for our comfort, and His word to build us up until we meet Him face to face.

Hallelujah Heavenly Father! Thank You for the pages of the Bible which inform us, correct us, instruct us, and lead us to a fuller and more intimate relationship with You. Stir up our minds to be pure, and to help us to be cleared of defilement as we pursue You through its pages. To Your honor and glory we pray. Amen.

... that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior,
2 Peter 3:2

This thought is a continuation from verse 1. Peter wished to stir up the pure mind of his audience so, as he says, “that you may be mindful.” This set of words is translated from a single word in the Greek which simply means “remember” or “call to mind.” It is something that is done actively and purposefully. With this understanding, Peter then says what they are to remember, which is “the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets.”

This means in its most basic sense: “Scripture,” which to them would be – at that time – the Old Testament in particular. The words of the holy prophets are recorded in Scripture, and they had been carefully and meticulously safeguarded by the people of Israel for generations. Peter spoke of this earlier in the epistle, in Chapter 1 –

¹⁹“And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; ²⁰ knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, ²¹ for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.”

The words of these men came through divine inspiration, and they spoke of things which were future, and which would especially direct them to the Person of Jesus Christ, and to the events which surrounded His earthly life. Naturally, these words would also speak of things which would come about after Christ’s ascension and which would comprise the church age, the completion of the time of law (meaning the tribulation), and the millennium.

Peter’s words now focus specifically on the church age and that which will occur there, as well as into the tribulation which will immediately precede Christ’s return. Thus, he then adds in, “and the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior.”

The words in Greek are cumbersome and have to be aligned in a way that the scholar feels Peter is conveying. A literal translation is “and the, the apostles of you, commandment the Lord and Savior.” Charles Ellicott seems to draw out the best sense of this by saying, “the commandment of your Apostles (or rather) of the Lord and Saviour.”

In other words, it is both a commandment of the apostles and of the Lord Jesus. Just as the holy men of God were carried along by the Holy Spirit, so the word of the Lord Jesus is brought forth through the words of the apostles. This will be confirmed as Peter continues on when he refers to Paul’s instructions in verse 3:15.

What was conveyed by the Lord, and what is conveyed by the Lord through the apostles, is given for believers' edification and instruction. Peter is bringing these things to the collective mind of his audience so that they could have that mind stirred up into constant remembrance. In this, they would be actively mindful of that which is necessary for their walk in this life.

Life application: The sentiment in this verse is similar to that given by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16 –

“All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

Both the Old and New Testaments are God's revealed word to man. It was received by the prophets and the apostles, and its words are given to us to be mindful of what God is telling us; the Bible means just what it says, and the words are our commandments.

When Peter says, “the apostles,” he is indicating that this is a privileged office that came only to the early church. There is no rite of “apostolic succession,” nor are there apostles appointed or designated for the church today. When the canon of the Bible was sealed, the apostolic office ended.

This is important to understand because it is the Bible, and not the ongoing dictates of church leaders (or supposed leaders), that governs our affairs. We have everything we need for holy living and right anticipation of salvation, glorification, and rewards and losses, right in the pages of Scripture. Please remember this and take time, each and every day, to read and meditate on the words of the Bible. God has spoken, His word is sealed, and we have no worry that something has been left out for the knowledge of pleasing Him.

Lord, we shall stand on Your word, knowing that we can trust in what it says to lead us to You, and also to lead us before You all of our days. The Bible tells us of Jesus, and Jesus is the One who allows us to know You personally and intimately. Thank You for the choice food which is the Holy Bible. Amen.

...knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, 2 Peter 3:3

Peter said in verse 3:1 that he wanted to stir up the mind of his readers so that they would be aware of what was spoken. This was important so that they wouldn't wind up

on a wrong path, as he now explains by saying, “knowing this first.” This is a phrase also spoken in 2 Peter 1:20. It highlights the importance of what he will next say, calling them to pay heed. From there, he says, “that scoffers will come in the last days.”

The term “last days” isn’t some point where the Christian’s of the world will suddenly realize things have gone from bad to worse. Nor are they a time by which we can say, “See the world has become just like the Bible predicted.”

The context of what the apostles mean for the last days is from the ascension of Christ until the time when He comes for His people – it is of indeterminate length. It reveals people who fit the biblical description of “scoffer” throughout its duration. One will not on a certain day in church history pick up the morning paper and come to the conclusion that things have gotten so bad that we must be in the last days. But this is what many people do.

In particular, 2 Peter 3 and 2 Timothy 3 are used to justify such a stand. 2 Timothy 3:1-5 reads –

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”

It seems as if this is a set point in time that suddenly calls out, “These are the last days.” But the same term is used elsewhere by the apostles, showing clearly that it is a term which speaks of the entire duration of the church age, such as in 1 Peter 1:20 and Hebrews 1:2. The phrase is also used in a passage parallel to Peter’s words now in Jude 1:18.

With this understood, that the things he will describe in the coming verses speaks of an extended period of time, he now finishes this verse with, “walking according to their own lusts.” The word “walking” signifies the conduct of one’s life. One can walk in peace with others, one can walk in harmony with God’s word, etc. The people Peter is warning against are walking in a way which pursues the carnal nature of man. They may be pursuing greed, sexual sin, sports cars, power and control over others, or some other fleshly pursuit.

Life application: If you consider the verses Peter is writing out now, and then compare them against the backdrop of history, you will see that it reflects the heart attitude of people throughout all ages. Likewise, men have been walking according to their own lusts since the time of Adam.

Know then and understand that we have been living in the “last days” since Jesus left. It is our business to be about His business. The world around us needs the knowledge of Jesus, not unsubstantiated predictions about why the world has finally arrived at “the last days.” There are other ways of discerning the timing of prophetic events from the Bible which are revealed in proper context.

Heavenly Father, give us wisdom and prudence as we walk before You, knowing that just as Christ Jesus ascended to heaven, so He will return again to earth. May we be found productively going about His business when He returns rather than sitting idly by waiting for a day which is unknown to us. Amen.

... and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation.” 2 Peter 3:4

Peter is referring to the “scoffers” of the previous verse. These are people who walk “according to their own lusts.” Of them, he notes that they are the type who are saying, “Where is the promise of His coming.” This question implies a non-believer in the truest sense. The words speak of the return of Jesus Christ as is promised. However, instead of saying, “the Lord,” He is referred to in a general sense, as if a denial of His Lordship.

Secondly, it is a denial of His promised return. It doesn’t matter if it is 2 months or 2000 years. The Lord has promised He would return and, therefore, they are making a mockery of His return. Depending on the context of the question, it could even include a denial of the resurrection of Christ. This is because all of Christian theology is centered on the truth of a literal, bodily resurrection. Only in the resurrection are the creeds and rites of the faith of any merit. To say that “Jesus is Lord” is to say that Jesus resurrected, because nobody would follow a dead Lord.

Further, in taking the Lord’s Supper, the very purpose of the rite is described by Paul in his words, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Proclaiming the Lord’s death is an acknowledgment that He died for sin, but the proclamation is tied up in His resurrection which proves that He overcame death. One

cannot “come” unless He is alive to do so. Therefore, to mock the return of Christ is to implicitly mock everything that encompasses the Person and work of Christ. As God cannot lie, and as Jesus has promised to return, then if He isn’t coming again, then He must not be God.

In this then will come a denial of the very thing that man attempts to get away from – judgment. If the resurrection of Jesus isn’t true, then the return of Jesus isn’t true. If these things are untrue, then Jesus isn’t God. And if Jesus isn’t God, then Jesus is not going to judge the world as the Bible proclaims. If this is so, then the words of the Bible concerning judgment are not true. And if those things are not true, then man is free to act in any unholy and perverse manner he wishes. One thing leads to the next, and in the end, it is all brought forth as a perverse way of man being able to do what he wants without the fear of being held accountable for his actions looming over him.

Peter then continues citing the words of such mockers by saying, “For since the fathers fell asleep.” The meaning of the words, “the fathers,” is debated. Some say it refers to the patriarchs of Israel, some say those who were of faith even from the earliest humans who anticipated a Messiah, others say it refers to early Christians, and so on.

As Peter is speaking, and because his words deal with the Christian faith, this is then certainly dealing with the return of Christ (His coming, which implies He has left and promised to return). Because of this, “the fathers” are speaking of something long in the future from Peter’s time, and it is a note that Christ’s return – even if delayed by an extremely long period – will come about. But as that time continues to get longer, the scoffers will use the extended gap as a tool to claim that the words concerning Jesus are untrue. Thus, “the fathers” are those at the beginning of the faith, meaning the apostles and early believers.

The words, “fell asleep” are then used in a mocking sense. The very word “cemetery” comes from the Greek *koiman* which means “put to sleep.” Thus, the word *koimeterion* means “sleeping place.” To sleep implies that one will wake up. It is the hope of those who trust in Christ. As He arose, so will believers. But in their scoffing, they are mocking this. “The fathers ‘fell asleep,’ and they ain’t waking up again!”

This is why Peter then continues citing them with, “all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation.” This is a general statement which probably covers many thoughts in one.

* People die and stay dead.

- * The sun rises, and it sets. Time goes from day to day without change. The words of the prophets speak of cataclysms and end-times judgments, and yet the world continues on.
- * Jesus supposedly rose and said He will return, but Jesus keeps on not returning.
- * Judgment is supposedly to fall on the wicked, but people who do wicked things are the only ones who really prosper and get ahead in life.

All of this has gone on since “the beginning of creation,” and yet nothing of the message of God in Messiah comes about as was spoken of by men who died and returned to the dust of the earth thousands of years ago.

But the very words spoken by these lugheads shows a fault in their thinking. If there is a “creation,” there must logically be a “Creator.” Peter will speak about this next as he continues.

Life application: Peter’s words speak of one of the most common sentiments among those who would undermine the teaching of a literal return of Christ... “Where is the promise of His coming?” This isn’t reserved only for atheists or adherents to other religions, but it is, rather, a common method of dismissing the truth of the Bible among supposed “Christian” theologians as well.

The book of Revelation says several times, “Behold, I am coming quickly...” The argument is that this was written 2000 years ago and yet Jesus still hasn’t come. The “fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning...” However, the term “quickly” (also translated “soon” in some Bibles) is not speaking of *when* Jesus is coming, but rather the *speed at which* He comes. In other words, “rapidly.”

When Jesus returns, it will be in a moment; in a flash. The heavens will open, and the victorious Lord will return in full view of the peoples of the world. Likewise, before this awesome day there will be a secret return, specifically for those who have trusted in His promises. This moment is known as the rapture and will be sudden and final. As it says in the book of 1 Thessalonians –

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord.”

-1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17

It is no less reasonable to believe in the rapture of the church than it is to believe that God truly united with human flesh in the Person of Jesus, that He died on a cross, and that He was resurrected to eternal life. If such things are true, then the doctrine of the rapture is no less difficult to believe and accept. The promise of Jesus' return will be fulfilled literally. This is as sure as the ground under your feet. Don't become disheartened by those who would attempt to undermine the truth of this event!

Glorious Lord Jesus! Nothing will ever sway our faith and hope in the promise of Your return. We look for, and wait upon, that Day with great anticipation. Our hope is in that glorious moment when we will be taken to Your presence... there to rejoice in Your glory forever. May it be soon! Amen.

For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, 2 Peter 3:5

Peter, still referring to the "scoffers" of verse 3, and who dismiss the coming of the Lord as noted in verse 4, now says of them, "For this they willfully forget." The idea here is that these people know something to be true, because it has been revealed to them, and yet they purposefully push that truth out of their minds. Instead, they forge ahead with what they know to be false rather than acknowledge the evidence which lies before them (such as evolution does concerning creation).

With this understood, Peter next continues with the thought from verse 3:4. There, he cited the scoffers. They said, "all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation." The act of creation is the subject. To expand on that, he cites the Genesis creation account with the words, "that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water."

The translation here lacks the intent of the Greek. Four articles, not in the original, have been added. Rather, it says –

"that heavens existed long ago, and earth, formed out of water and through water – by the word of God."

The water is the focus of the words. The earth obtained its consistency, or material substance, from the water. And it was by means of the water that it came about. With this understanding, the words can be more properly evaluated. Peter says that these things occurred "by the word of God."

In the Genesis account, it says, “Then God said.” There is the spoken word, and it is followed by an action in the creation itself. This is also repeated in Psalm 33 –

“By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.
⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap;
He lays up the deep in storehouses.
⁸ Let all the earth fear the LORD;
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.
⁹ For He spoke, and it was *done*;
He commanded, and it stood fast.” Psalm 33:6-9

The Psalmist read the word of God, accepted it at face value, and repeated what God (the Lord) had done. However, these scoffers willingly and purposefully forget what the word says, denying the evidences around them as they speak of the creation. They deny the truth, and because of this, God’s judgment is ready to destroy them. This will be seen as Peter continues.

Life application: Those who scoff at the second coming of Christ fail to reason out the truthfulness and power of God. It is so much easier to bury one’s head in the sand than to acknowledge that there really is a God, that He really did create, and that all creation therefore is within His purview. If this is so, then the same God who did these things will fulfill His promises, including the return of Christ.

Peter’s return to the first chapter of Genesis is to remind us that God created the heavens and the earth. There was a time when these things didn’t exist in any form; there was nothing. God spoke these things into existence and then actively worked to form them into the universe and world we know.

One only needs to look at a tree to think the process through. “There is a tree; the tree didn’t create itself; the tree is connected to the ground; the ground is part of the earth; the earth didn’t create itself; the earth is in the universe; the universe didn’t create itself; all of this order came from somewhere; the universe didn’t always exist, but now it does; there must be a God; this God must be intelligent because the tree (along with all the universe) has order and beauty; I can perceive the tree and contemplate it; I must have reason and intellect; my reason and intellect must have come from somewhere; order cannot come from chaos; therefore God must be actively involved in the entire process – from the tree to me.”

As we continue to think on these lines, we can make reasonable deductions about God. These deductions will inevitably lead to understanding His nature. He must, by the very nature of who He is, be truthful. If He has said Jesus will come again, then this must be true. Naturally, a multitude of deductions which lead us to this point have been skipped, but the end result is that we are without excuse when we fail to acknowledge both the sovereignty and also the truthfulness of God. Think it through and have faith that God will fulfill every promise, just as His word states.

O God, surely You are in control. The splendor of a mere bumblebee tells us that You are wise and loving. How much more should we be able to trust You when we look to the rest of creation and see Your majesty displayed in it. May we never doubt that You are competent to fulfill every promise You have made...including the promised return of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

...by which the world *that* then existed perished, being flooded with water.

2 Peter 3:6

Here, the Greek presents a difficulty. The words “by which” are *di hon*, or literally “through which *things*.” The pronoun is plural. This then must cause the reader to ask, “Which things?” Peter has mentioned creation, the word of God, the heavens, the earth, and the waters. Therefore, it could be any or all combined.

It was the word of God which spoke these things into existence, and it is – as Peter will say in the next verse – “the same word” which preserves the heavens and the earth. But Peter has just spoken twice of the waters as well, showing that the earth stood out of them. It is also the waters which are the focus of the flood narrative (see Genesis 7:24). Further, the focus here is on destruction by water, whereas the next destructive cataclysm will be by fire – as Peter will next note. However, it is the earth that was broken up and let forth the waters, and the windows of the heavens which were opened (see Genesis 7:11). A case could be made for any of these.

In the end, nothing happens apart from God. It is His word which spoke all things into existence, and it is His word which holds all things together. He is the principle cause of all things, and through His word comes the instrumental cause of all lesser things – such as the heavens and the earth, or the waters, bringing about destruction.

With this in mind, he says, “the world.” This is speaking of the state of the world before the flood. It speaks of its inhabitants – man, animal, and plant life. It speaks of the state of the world as well – long life, a canopy above, and etc. The word is *kosmos*, and it

speaks of the order or arrangement of the system which existed at that time. That world existed, and then it “perished.”

The Greek word signifies violently and completely perishing. There was a world that existed, and then it was wiped out. Because of this, what the scoffers say is obviously untrue. In verse 4, they had said, “...all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” But that very thought is proven false. There was creation and from it was an ordered system which existed. But then there was a complete end to that ordered system. And so, their logic in denying the coming of Christ is based on a faulty premise.

Peter then says that “the then world” (as the Greek reads) was utterly destroyed, “being flooded with water.” Here, Peter uses a word found only this one time in Scripture, *katakluzó*. It is a verb which forms the root of our modern “cataclysm.” There was an overwhelming inundation which wiped out the entire planet.

From these words, a few points can be determined. First, Peter speaks of the flood as an absolutely true narrative. To deny a literal reading of the Genesis account of the flood is to then deny the inspiration of Scripture, the words of Peter (which cite the word of God – the heavens, the earth, the water, and the destruction – both in occurrence and scope), and to then deny the accuracy of all of Scripture – because Peter will, in this very chapter, refer to Paul’s letters. Paul is referred to by Luke in Acts, and Luke is referred to by Paul in Colossians. Mark is spoken of by Paul and Peter. Luke’s account refers to the other apostles, including Matthew and John. And all of them cite and refer to the Old Testament Scriptures, and all of them speak of Jesus. And Jesus likewise speaks of a real Noah, a real flood, and the actual consequences of that flood.

On and on, each point brings in another point, unifying the entire body of Scripture as one inspired work of God. Thus, to deny the account of the Flood of Noah leads to an implicit denial of all of Scripture. The word, then, becomes a pick and choose body of words and sentences without any true cohesion, and certainly lacking any divine inspiration.

Secondly, regardless as to the flood narrative – for those who deny the truth of Scripture – there is still the truth that the world has obviously been destroyed before. Whether by a flood, or by an asteroid, the evidence of a previous world that once existed, and which no longer exists, is testified to by all. And so, the failed logic of those who say that everything continues on as it has since creation is completely false. In the end, only the Bible adequately and accurately explains what happened, when it

happened, why it came about, what the results of it were, and what it means for the future of man.

Life application: Peter's point in what is written is that, just as obvious as it is that the world was created, men have no excuse when they deny the truth of God's written word, even when it says Jesus will return. God spoke the world into existence with a word, and God's promises in the Bible are just as sound as the very act of creation.

The ancient pre-flood world was destroyed because of its wickedness. Certainly, a lack of faith in the Creator embodies this wickedness. Were they to have had faith in His sovereignty, they would have acknowledged Him and honored Him. Instead, they turned to ever-increasing moral depravity until there was no remedy. Thus, God destroyed the world with water.

The very waters from which the earth stood out became the tool of destruction of the earth. Just as the ancient world was destroyed for its unbelief, so false prophets and scoffers who deny the authority, miraculous working, and promised return of Jesus will likewise be destroyed.

God isn't a cosmic pushover who can be flagrantly denied and held in contempt. Rather, He is the sovereign Creator who holds in His grasp the fate of all men. If you hear conflicting accounts about the surety of the flood narrative, the lordship of Jesus, the truth of the Gospel, or the promised return of Christ, you would fare well to trust God's word rather than the naysayers. God. He who assures us of these things cannot lie. So, stand firm in His word and have faith!

Creator God, you gave us breath so that we could and should praise You. Your name is great and matchless, and so may our lives be as a continual offering of praise to You. Also, may our lives shout out to You, and may our mouths sing forth to You – in the greatness of Your marvelous majesty. You are God, and we offer ourselves to You in humble and awestruck adoration. Amen.

But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 2 Peter 3:7

Peter just relayed sacred history by saying that, "the world *that* then existed perished, being flooded with water." Now, he speaks of the present world and what its fate will be. In this, he begins with, "But the heavens and the earth which are now." The construction of the words is similar to the previous verse. There, the Greek said, "the

then world.” Here, it says, “the now heavens and the earth.” It is the ordered structure which now exists. Of them, Peter says they are “preserved by the same word.”

Compare these passages in verses 5 & 7 –

“by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth...”

“But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word.”

All things were created by the word of God, and the word sustains all things. It is God’s word that keeps all things as He determines. In the case of the heavens and earth which are now, Peter says that they “are reserved for fire.”

There was first a destruction of the world by flood. God promised to never again destroy the earth by a flood (Genesis 9:11). However, He did not promise the earth would not be destroyed again. Rather, it is assuredly going to happen. But next time it will be by fire.

The reason for the destruction is obvious. In Genesis 6:5, it says, “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.” Peter’s words, and indeed the words of Scripture elsewhere, point to the same condition being found among humanity in the future. There is a time coming when the world will be so wicked that the only remedy will be an almost complete annihilation of man once again. The world as it is now is being prepared for that day, preserved, as Peter states, “until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

This is the period known as “the tribulation” which is spoken of in both testaments of Scripture. Judgment is coming upon the world because of the wickedness of man. Isaiah, quoting the Lord, says of that time that, “I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, A man more than the golden wedge of Ophir” (Isaiah 13:12).

Again, Jesus speaks of this time as well –

“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²² And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.” Matthew 24:21, 22

Very few humans will survive through the fiery trial which is coming. For those who do, there will still be a judgment upon them after Christ's return. The world will be purified and prepared for the millennial reign of Christ. What is interesting is that fire is to be the instrument of destruction, and it is the modern store of weapons, both conventional and nuclear, which appear to be the very things that will cause this prophecy to come about. This is something that was not possible in previous generations of humanity.

Life application: After the Flood of Noah, God made a promise that He would never again destroy the earth by a flood. This doesn't mean there won't be large floods on the earth, but rather not a flood to completely destroy the earth. However, God didn't promise that He wouldn't again destroy the earth in a different way – and this is the subject of the next few verses.

The same God who spoke the universe into existence and who continues to hold all things together by the power of His word, has reserved the earth for a different type of judgment. Such judgment comes because we as humans continuously fail to learn lessons from the past.

God created Adam and Adam rebelled. Despite knowing this, his son – the first person ever born – killed his own brother. When wickedness abounded to such an extent that there was no remedy for man, God destroyed the world by flood. Later, man's continued rebellion led to the dispersion of the peoples of the world, dividing them into various groups and languages.

After that came the redemption of the people of Israel and their own stubborn rebellion. Twice they were exiled for disobedience. The church has continuously fallen away from the truth of the Bible, one denomination after another apostatizing. Eventually, man will stray so far from God's purposes that the world will face the tribulation minutely detailed in the book of Revelation.

These things happen because we simply don't acknowledge and properly respect the Creator. Individually, we are responsible for our actions, and we will receive judgment based on them. Likewise, mankind will also be collectively judged with fire on the Day of Judgment. Call now on Jesus and be saved from the wrath to come.

Heavenly Father, You have been more than patient with us as we continuously stray from Your intent and purposes for us. In wrath, remember mercy and look tenderly upon those who have called on Your offer of peace which comes through Jesus our Lord. Amen.

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 2 Peter 3:8

The words here take us back to verse 3:4 where the scoffers ask, “Where is the promise of His coming?” Peter gave an answer to the question in the next two verses. He now gives a second reply, directly from Scripture, where he cites the substance of Psalm 90:4. This is a Psalm written by Moses, and thus it is the oldest psalm in the Bible –

“For a thousand years in Your sight
Are like yesterday when it is past,
And *like* a watch in the night.”

Following this general thought, Peter writes, “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing.” Peter is asking his audience to not “willfully forget” as the scoffers were said to do. Rather, he asks them to actively remember what he will say.

Whereas the scoffers willfully forgot the acts of creation that Peter spoke of; they then willfully forgot that if there is a creation, there is a Creator. If there is a Creator, He is before His creation. If this is so – and if time, space, and matter are all a part of the creation – then God is outside of time.

Therefore, time has no bearing on God’s plan, except as He has set that plan into motion within the stream of time. But to Him the amount of time something takes to occur is irrelevant.

The scoffers, like all people, are bound by time, and thus the reference to time is important. Everything that we do is set within a definite boundary – a span – which we cannot exceed. And further, that boundary is unknown to us. We live our lives not knowing what will occur, or when will it occur. This is especially true in regard to death.

As death is the final boundary of our reference to the world, and as we have an understanding that there is a generally set maximum span for each human to live, we naturally expect that a promise which has been made will be fulfilled in our lifetime.

For example, since the Bible was written (even within the Bible), people have expected the Lord to return. Writings throughout Christian history reveal that people expected that their generation would be the one to see Christ’s return. How much, then, would those who deny the Creator’s hand in His creation also want to deny the return of the

Lord – simply because of the vast amount of time which has elapsed without it coming about.

But Peter next says, “that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” Because God created time, He is outside of time. Therefore, the difference between a second and a million years is irrelevant. God sees all of time, and all that occurs within time, as one simultaneous event.

If a train leaves New York on the way to San Francisco, God sees the beginning, all of the journey, and the arrival without any hindrance to a time reference. The entire journey – and indeed the ages of ages – are laid out before Him.

Because of this, a promised return of Christ could happen at any time – be it one generation or a thousand – and it will be considered a promise kept. We cannot limit God, and what He is doing in the stream of history, to our own limited span of time and expect to find fault in Him. But this is what the scoffers are doing. They imply that because the Lord hasn’t yet returned, He is not trustworthy to return. It is small-minded, shallow thinking.

Life application: The biblical pattern is that God’s plan for man is laid out on a 7000-year timeframe. Jesus came right around the 4000th year, directly in the middle of the timeline. Based on this, and based on a literal 1000-year millennial reign of Christ (as is clearly indicated in the book of Revelation), we can estimate a return of Christ sometime around 2000 years from His ascension. Before the millennial reign, the book of Revelation first tells us of a 7-year period known as the Great Tribulation which focuses on the Jewish people.

Knowing this, we can look to the book of Hosea for a pattern based on Peter’s words –

“After two days He will revive us;
On the third day He will raise us up,
That we may live in His sight.” Hosea 6:2

If a thousand years is like a day to the Lord, then we could expect that Israel would be revived after 2000 years of dispersion – exactly what has happened.

Likewise, we can expect that at the dawning of the “third day,” the Jewish nation – with Christ as its Head – will be raised up to rule the nations, just as is promised in the Old Testament.

Likewise, they will “live in His sight” as He rules from a literal throne in Jerusalem. This isn’t idle speculation, but a sound analysis of what God is doing in human history. Jesus Christ really will return, and He really will rule the nations from Jerusalem. The time is coming, and may it be soon!

Lord, we long for the day of Your glorious return. There is nothing in heaven or on earth that we would rather see than the beauty of Your countenance. We look to You now in faith, but we long for that faith to be turned to sight! It is our great hope and our greatest desire. Come Lord Jesus. Amen.

The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9

In the previous verse, Peter, refuting the scoffers, noted that to the Lord, a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day. That was provided to show that “The Lord is not slack.” The word here is *bradunó*. It signifies, “to loiter” or “to be unduly slow.” There is the sense of being late in regard to an appointment.

Peter is saying that this is not the case with the Lord. Rather, He has His appointed time for all things, and He will meet those appointments perfectly. This includes the timing “concerning *His* promise.” That is speaking of the return of Christ which Peter said the scoffers bring up as a way of mocking His truthfulness. In verse 3:4, he cited them as saying, “Where is the promise of His coming?”

But Peter shows that the promise has been made, and that even if it seems like an inordinate amount of time has gone by, and that the Lord is tardy to His appointment, this is not the case, especially “as some count slackness.”

In the previous verse, it was noted that we as humans look at time, and the events in time, from our own personal perspective. This is why there have been prognosticators in every generation who have claimed that the Lord was coming during their own lifetime. When it doesn’t come about, there is the accusation that the Lord is unnecessarily tarrying, or that He is actually slack. These scoffers then use that as a pretext to deny the truth of Scripture.

But what they believe is a delay which allows them to sin, and to live in lives of sin, is actually a delay which has come about for their own possible good. It is the Lord’s way of showing mercy, even on them. As Peter says, the Lord “is longsuffering toward us.”

This is one of the main attributes of the Lord. In Exodus, Moses asked to see the Lord's glory. When the Lord passed before Him, He made a proclamation concerning Himself to explain His very nature. When He did, He said –

“The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth.” Exodus 34:6

The Lord is merciful even to those who scoff at Him. He is gracious in giving them time to consider their errant ways, and He is longsuffering in His attitude toward them, not immediately giving them exactly what they deserve. He is also “abounding in goodness and truth.” He has made sure and reliable promises to His people, and He will fulfill them exactly. Peter then precisely explains this by saying that the Lord is “not willing that any should perish.”

Man is made in His image. The value of man is not in who he is, however, when in Adam. In Adam, man is fallen and is already condemned. However, the Lord Jesus came to remedy that. He entered into the stream of human existence to specifically correct that defect in man – giving him a value which he was originally intended to possess. After His coming, He gave instruction to those who have come to Him to continue teaching about Him – even to the ends of the earth.

If Christ came back immediately, or after a short time, the world would not be fully evangelized. But when we set our priorities correctly, we will desire to have others come to Him, and we will set our budgets, our actions, and our lives to work in accord with that. All of this is because the Lord truly desires “that all should come to repentance.”

These words are specifically spoken concerning even the scoffers. To repent simply means “to change one's mind.” One cannot repent about Jesus if he has never heard of Jesus. However, scoffers have obviously heard of the Lord. They have heard of His promised return, and they have scoffed at it. This indicates that they are not saved, and they therefore need to repent, or change their minds, about who Jesus is and about the state of their relationship with Him.

The words of this verse, as much as any others in Scripture, show definitively and without any ambiguity, that the doctrine of free will is correct. It utterly refutes the Calvinistic concept of the Lord first regenerating a person to believe, who then believes and is born again, and who then chooses Christ and is saved. If this was so, then what Peter says here would also indicate that God has failed.

If he desires that none should perish – but that people do perish – then God is the one who failed to regenerate the people that He desired to not perish. Rather, man has been given free will, and man must come to his own conclusions about the Lord, calling out to Him for salvation.

Life application: Peter reveals here what he has been leading up to for the past eight verses. Those who laugh at or argue against the Lord's return, because of the many intervening years, have failed to understand the reason for the delay. It is for our personal benefit that the Lord is waiting, and for the sake of all who will be a part of His heavenly temple. As Paul says in Ephesians 2:19-22 –

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

The Lord is building a holy temple and is using the saved of the ages as living stones to form it. What we may perceive as “slackness” is the Lord's longsuffering. As wickedness abounds in the world, He is holding out His hands to those who would call on His name. He is doing it as a master Architect. No builder would start a project without considering the materials needed to complete it. God knows the exact number of souls that it will take to build His temple, and when the last person who is needed to finish the next phase of that project calls on Jesus, then the next event in His time schedule will come to pass.

The Lord is not willing that any should perish in the process, but that all will call on Him. Those who actually do will receive their reward; those who fail to do so will be condemned. The process is completely just and is perfect in its scope and execution. What a great God!

O God! How precious it is to be one of the elect – a living stone in Your glorious temple. Thank you for having been patient and longsuffering, and that those who have called on Jesus have been given the chance to do so. Now, please give us patience as we watch You work in other lives, bringing them to the same state of salvation which we now stand in. To Your praise alone! Amen.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 2 Peter 3:10

Peter has been speaking of the coming of the Lord, something denied by the scoffers due to the lengthy time which is said to elapse between the promise and the occurrence. The very fact that Peter penned this, after such a short time from Christ's ascension, should clue these scoffers in that it would be a really long time. He went on to say that one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Reading his words, then taking the rest of Scripture in that light, it should be obvious to anyone willing to heed the word that a great time interval of millennia could be expected to pass before the return of the Lord. Obviously, hindsight is 20/20, but for the scoffers of today, it should be as plain as the noses on their faces. Regardless of this, Peter now continues the thought by saying, "But the day of the Lord..."

This is a phrase used rather sparsely in the New Testament. He spoke of it in Acts 2:20 –

"The sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD."

What is obvious from Peter's words here in 2 Peter, is that the prophecy of Acts 2:20 was not fulfilled at that time. He was not speaking of the events surrounding him and his audience as being fulfilled, but that they were anticipatory of a later date when they would be. The same term, "the day of the Lord," is seen again in 1 Thessalonians 5:2. An allusion to this is also seen in 1 Corinthians 1:8 and in 2 Corinthians 1:14. The one from 1 Thessalonians 5 says –

"For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night."

This is exactly what Peter next says, that it "will come as a thief in the night." The question is, "Was Peter making a generally known statement, or was he citing Paul?" It is true that Jesus spoke with similar terms in Matthew 24:43, where He spoke of a thief coming, but it is not as specific. Further, John will quote Jesus with the same "thief" terminology in Revelation twice. And finally, some manuscripts only say, "like a thief." Thus, many translations follow in that. Therefore, it is hard to be dogmatic about Peter's words.

However, Peter will, in just five more verses, speak of Paul's letters. The fact that he does this, and the fact that Paul had said to those at Thessalonica, "For you yourselves know perfectly," it seems to show that this was a common teaching of Paul's, and possibly one commonly taught by the other apostles as well. Their message was consistent that the coming of the Lord Jesus would occur, and then there would be a time of great cataclysm which would come upon the earth. Peter begins to describe that with "in which the heavens will pass away with great noise."

Peter now uses a word found only here in Scripture, *rhoizédon*. It is an onomatopoeic expression where the sound of the word expresses the meaning. It comes from *rhoizos*, the whistling of an arrow. Thus, there will be a rushing noise which fills the heavens as the atmosphere is sucked up and out of the areas where the events occur. This is a perfect expression to describe modern thermobaric weapons that use oxygen from the surrounding air to generate extremely high-temperature explosions. In such explosions, there is a blast wave which is normally significantly longer in duration than that produced by conventional explosives.

This follows with what Peter had just said in verse 3:7 which also spoke of the heavens and the earth coming under judgment. It also is what Jesus referred to in Matthew 24:35 with the words, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." What Peter is referring to here is a passage from Isaiah 34 which speaks of a great heavenly cataclysm –

"All the host of heaven shall be dissolved,
And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll;
All their host shall fall down
As the leaf falls from the vine,
And as *fruit* falling from a fig tree." Isaiah 34:4

Peter then continues with, "and the elements will melt with fervent heat." In our modern times, we can see how this is easily possible – thermonuclear war. Before this age, it would not have been imaginable how such things could take place. Now, it is hard to imagine how, eventually, they will not take place. The world is becoming more and more fractured in ideology, and the greed of the human heart will, at some point, bring about the fulfillment of these ancient prophecies. At that time, Peter says that "both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up."

These words used by Peter are greatly expanded on in Isaiah 24. It is a passage which speaks of judgment upon the earth on a global scale. The entire passage is worth reading to get the sense of what is coming, but verse 6 is rather clear –

“Therefore the curse has devoured the earth,
And those who dwell in it are desolate.
Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned,
And few men *are* left.” Isaiah 24:6

Life application: Someday, the world will rejoice at the thought of “peace and safety” brought about by a treaty between Israel and the surrounding nations. But the very thing they believe will bring peace is what will bring about destruction.

The dividing of the Land of Israel as prophesied in Joel 3 will lead to judgment. The land belongs to God and He has given it to Israel as a heritage. But the world is now working to divide it. This will come about as prophesied, and the nations will be judged because of it. The book is written, and the prophecies have been spoken. The question isn’t whether these things will come to pass, but when.

Lord Jesus, when You come for Your faithful at the rapture, we certainly want to be counted among that number. Just as important, though, is that many around us will hear and accept the good news of the gospel now, so that they too will be saved from the Day of Judgment to come. May we be bold to open our hearts and our mouths so that we may proclaim this good news while there is still time! Amen.

Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 2 Peter 3:11

Peter now gives a practical application for what he has just said. The word “therefore” is not found in the Greek, even if it is implied. Rather, it reads more simply, “These things, in this way, all being dissolved.” It is a way of asking them to consider the importance of their ties to materialistic things. “If all of this stuff is going to be dissolved, then of what true importance is it?”

Man builds empires which seem as if they will last forever, and yet, within a very short time, there is nothing left but rubble. The great Assyrian kingdom was so completely destroyed that Bible naysayers claimed it was only a myth. Eventually, the ruins of Nineveh were discovered, proving the biblical account, but what was once great and

imposing eventually became nothing but a curiosity for archaeologists to dig through for clues about the past.

The same is true with all that is around us today. The empires of the world are all set to be dissolved in the heat of the end-times destruction. None of the things that are so highly valued by man will be of any value at all.

Considering this, then what is of true value? What is it that man should be pursuing? Peter asks, “what manner *of persons* ought you to be?” The question is a rhetorical device in which the answer itself is stated with the words “in holy conduct and godliness.” If the material world is set to be obliterated, then man should be focusing on something other than that material world. If the creation is a futile place to set one’s desires, then the Creator must be the only place to do so.

In setting one’s desires on the Creator, one will then conduct himself in a manner which is pleasing to the Creator. This is what Peter is relaying. There is no true reward in earthly gain, but there is great reward in conducting one’s affairs in holiness and godliness. Paul makes a similar argument in 1 Timothy 4:8 by saying, “For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.”

Life application: Whether we like the thought of the world being destroyed by fire or not, it will be. And regardless how we feel about everything man has done being wiped out, the fact is that God has spoken, and it will be so. The end of all things is at hand, and so we need to look forward to what God has planned after this age, not during it. This means that our lives in the current age need to be conducted in holiness and godliness.

Is this something you are pursuing? You alone are accountable for what eternity holds in store for you. Make sure you live without the prospect of eternal regret, but instead for rewards from the Lord for your conduct now, during this walk of faith in what lies ahead.

Heavenly Father, may we live our lives without fear of the promised coming destruction upon this earth. But rather, help us to be confident in our hope of a surer foundation in a world without end – a world where we will live in the presence of Jesus. Give us the wisdom to live our lives for Him now so that when that time comes, we will be welcomed into our eternal dwelling with abounding joy and not regret. Amen.

... looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?
2 Peter 3:12

There is an appointed time when the heavens and the earth will go through their cataclysmic changes. Peter just noted that because of this, believers should conduct their affairs in holiness and godliness. In this, they will be “looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God.”

First, the term, “day of God,” is unique in Scripture. It is an event usually associated with Jesus – the day of the Lord, for example. However, the term God is used, probably to show that the entire Godhead is uniquely involved in what shall come to pass. This seems evident because of the use of the Greek word *Parousia*, which signifies actual presence. It is “a technical term with reference to *the visit* of a king or some other official” (HELPS Word Studies). God’s visitation will be the reason for, and evidenced in, what occurs.

For the believer, the term “looking for” signifies more than just looking around to find something, but looking in eager anticipation. It is a state of expectation that something will come to pass. Believers are to always be eager for the events which have been prophesied. This does not mean that they will be participants in that time of destruction, but that their deliverance will come because the timing of those events has also come. This is seen with the word “hastening.”

The idea here is that what believers do will actually affect the timing of these events. Paul says in Romans 11:25 –

“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”

There are a set number of Gentiles that will be brought into the redemptive plan of God before the rapture. When that number is met, the current age will come to its close. Obviously, if nobody evangelized anyone for a year, that number would be delayed. If everyone evangelized everyone they knew, and many converts came about each day, the time would be shortened.

A similar thought is found in Acts 3 –

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” Acts 3:19

Peter knew that when Israel as a nation repented of their crucifixion of Christ, the nation would finally be granted all of the promises which had been made to it. Thus, if the whole nation did so 2000 years ago, the earthly kingdom would have come at that time.

This means that our actions affect the timing of such events. And yet, God already knows what our actions will be, and so the timing has been set and prophesied in advance. Like free will in man, there is a synergistic working out of the timing of redemptive events. Just because God knows what will happen, it does not negate that we must act in order for it come about. Jesus says as much in Matthew 24:14, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

Next, Peter says of this coming “Day of God” which we should look for and hasten, “because of which the heavens will be dissolved.” This returns to the thought of verses 10 and 11 which spoke of this event. At first, it sounds contrary to right thinking that anyone would want the heavens to be dissolved. But if we are to “hasten” that day, then it must be a day with a good purpose.

With that understanding, and before that good purpose is explained, Peter continues with the state of those heavens, which is “being on fire.” One can think of the very oxygen of the atmosphere being ignited. Everything will burn as the fuel is brought into the burning, causing it to continue growing and increasing in fervency. This will be so much the case that “the elements will melt with fervent heat.”

It appears that what man has produced through nuclear science is the very thing God will use to bring about the destruction of the earth. Whether God actively or passively brings about an action, it is still ascribed to God. This is true throughout Scripture. A battle may be won by Israel, but it is said that the Lord brought about the victory. There is no reason to doubt that this will be the case in the end times.

In the next verse, Peter will explain why it is, in fact, appropriate for believers to look for this coming day with expectation, and to even hasten its coming.

Life application: The book of 2 Peter has spent a great deal of time speaking of false prophets and destruction. When analyzing it, it is hard to miss the fact that, unlike Jesus' earthly ministry, there is another side to His expectations.

Jesus came and spoke a gospel of peace to the world. He preached about love and servanthood, and he demonstrated these attributes personally and faithfully. So why do Peter and other apostles write so much about faithlessness and destruction?

The reason is that Jesus' ministry was an example to us of how we should live and conduct our lives now – following His lead. Additionally, it was intended to show us our own state of moral depravity – what He did we could never do.

Finally, He gave His life to reconcile us to God the Father. All of this was accomplished for our benefit and to give us a choice – to accept Him and be saved from what we deserve. Peter is merely showing us what to avoid, how to avoid it, and also the consequences for not paying heed to Jesus and His work. The “day of God” is coming, and we need to choose now what we will do about Jesus Christ.

Peter's words about the coming destruction are not some exaggerated speech intended to scare us into loving God. They are intended to show us the consequences of not loving Him. Peter says we should look forward to and hasten this coming day. No one in his right mind would do this, knowing what it will be like, unless he was already securely protected from that day.

The fact of the matter is that God's justice demands the destruction of the wicked. This is all of us. None of us meet His standards, but in His great mercy, He judged wickedness in His own Son. If we accept the payment rendered at the cross, then we are free. If not, we will meet our Maker in the vast inferno prepared for that horrifying day.

Lord Jesus, what You endured on the cross clearly demonstrates the guilt we as humans bear and the punishment we deserve. Thank You for giving us life through Your death and hope through Your resurrection. We look forward to the day of Your visitation, knowing that through You we are safe from the wrath to come. What a splendid Lord You are! Amen.

Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 2 Peter 3:13

In the Greek, the stress is not on “we,” but on “new.” A direct translation would be, “New, however, heaven and earth new.” And more, the word translated as “new” requires further explanation.

There are two different Greek words translated into English as “new.” The first is *kainos*. It signifies something new in quality. One might say, “It was not seen like this before.” The second is *neos*. That signifies new in age. One might say, “This was not seen before.” The difference is that the first existed but has changed, whereas the second is completely different. The first is what is being referred to by Peter. The heavens and the earth are new in the sense of being the same heavens and earth, but they are completely changed.

This is also the same word used in Revelation 21:1 which speaks of “a new heaven and a new earth.” The universe is not being recreated, but rather it is refreshed to a state which did not previously exist. This is the state that Peter speaks of. And he says that it is “according to His promise.”

Peter’s words now are based on the promise of the Lord from the Old Testament. In the book of Isaiah, this state was prophesied about –

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;
And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.” Isaiah 65:17

He also refers to this in Isaiah 66:22. However, it must be noted that the descriptions of Isaiah and Revelation do not match entirely. For example, Isaiah 65 also says –

“No more shall an infant from there *live but a few days*,
Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days;
For the child shall die one hundred years old,
But the sinner *being* one hundred years old shall be accursed.” Isaiah 65:20

There, Isaiah prophesies of a time when people will live to great ages, but there will be death. However, Revelation goes on to say, “

“Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. ⁴ And God

will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” Revelation 22:3, 4

God slowly and progressively reveals His plan of redemption to man. What Isaiah foresaw was certainly the time of the millennial reign of Christ. What John saw included that time (Revelation 20), but he then goes beyond it to a time of complete renewal.

Peter’s words may (and probably do) only go as far as the millennium as prophesied by Isaiah. This is what Israel had anticipated, and it would be what Peter is speaking of. John’s revelation came later and is the final fulfillment of the plan of the ages. No matter what, the plan of redemption is now laid out in its entirety for us to know what is coming in both the millennium and into the final, eternal state.

Peter’s speaking of this new heaven and new earth, which is based upon his previous words of destruction, only align properly with the change from the current state to that of the millennial reign. There must be a destruction by fire, where things melt in heat (see Zechariah 14:12 and other OT cataclysmic passages to understand this better) in order for that to come about.

Life application: The things we treasure now will be completely burned up. Because of this, we are told time and again in the Bible to not let ourselves become attached to earthly things, nor to let them run our lives. Rather, we live here, use the world while taking care of it, but we should be willing to look beyond what we have now to that which is eternal. And God won’t fail to surprise us!

He promises new heavens and a new earth. And what He has prepared is surely beyond anything we can imagine or hope for. Best of all though, it will be an earth where righteousness dwells. Think on that for a moment... Even the things we cherish most can’t keep us happy. This is because we live in an unrighteous world.

The showy car we spend so much time on is bound to get scratched or dented by a person jealous of what we have. The large house with expensive delights in it is susceptible to robbery, leaving us with a sense of being violated. The whopping bank account we saved diligently for, and which we relied on for our “golden years,” is lost in a moment when some hacker replaces our personal information with his own. Even our unrighteous governments seize what has been earned, taking from the rightful owners and handing it over to those who haven’t worked for it.

The list can go on to everything we have, every person we love, every hope we have stored up for. In the end, this world of unrighteousness will be replaced with a world where contentment reigns, where justice is established, and where peace and joy are the hallmark of our dealings with others.

Best of all though is the prospect of sharing eternity with Jesus – the One who made it all possible. His work destroyed the devil’s work, and it allows us access once again into the paradise lost so long ago. What a great and wonderful Lord!

Yes, Lord Jesus! How wonderfully splendid will be the day when we share in Your eternal kingdom – one established in righteousness and with all the heavenly delights we once had with you at the beginning. May we never become consumed with this temporary and fallen world when that which You have prepared for us is yet future. Amen.

Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; 2 Peter 3:14

Translations of this verse vary widely, but in the end, they all speak of the condition of the believer before the Lord. Peter begins with “Therefore.” In this, he is referring to the key points which he has already addressed –

- 1) The Day of the Lord is coming as a thief in the night. Because of this, we should live our lives in holy conduct and godliness; hastening the coming Day of God.
- 2) This coming time will result in the destruction of the heavens and the earth.
- 3) Despite the first two points, God has promised a new heavens and earth; one where righteousness dwells.

Because of these things, he asks believers to look “forward to these things.” He does so using the term “beloved.” In this, it is a note of reassurance. God has a plan for His people whom he cares for. Peter’s use of this word is to comfort them in this. Instead of fear and trepidation, there should be eager anticipation. The world is heading for bad times, but the Lord has something prepared for His people, the glory of which will far exceed the temporary times of destruction which are to first come.

He next tells them to “be diligent to be found by Him in peace.” Times of turmoil lie ahead because the Lord will judge the wicked. As Isaiah 57:21 says, “‘*There is no peace,*’ says my God, ‘for the wicked.’” However, because believers are beloved of the Lord, there should not be worry about this coming judgment, but rather peace – knowing that

these things must come to pass in order that the world of righteousness can then be ushered in.

With that in mind, Peter finishes his exhortation by noting that believers should be “without spot and blameless.” These words are closely tied to the word he said in his first epistle concerning Christ –

“...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

-1 Peter 1:18, 19

It also is a contrast to what he said of the false teachers in the previous chapter –

“*They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you.*” 2 Peter 2:13

The idea then is that believers are to emulate that which is good and right as seen in Christ, and to shun that which is perverse and unholy as found in the false teachers. Peter’s thoughts are consistent and beautifully laid out to show the proper and orderly way for his reader to conduct his affairs in this temporary, fallen world.

Life application: As believers who live in a world which is set for destruction, we need to actively work towards calmness, not fretting over that which has already been ordained. God’s plan has been recorded and there isn’t a thing we can do about it. So rather than wringing our hands and losing sleep over what is already determined, we should mentally look forward to this time with peaceful hearts. The promises which come after the Day of the Lord should be our heart’s encouragement.

We are also to emulate Jesus at all times. Just as His work was prefigured in the Old covenant Passover lamb; one without spot and wholly fitting for a sacrifice to God, so should we work towards such a state in our own lives.

Should the Lord come today, would He find you secretly having an affair, cheating on finances, or engaging in morally questionable activities? Or will He find you pursuing righteousness and godliness? The Lord is coming...be about His business so that when He arrives you won’t be ashamed of your deeds.

Glorious and Almighty God! How we long for the day of Your coming and the ushering in of that which is eternal, perfect, and satisfying. Give us the wisdom to seek holiness and right living now so that upon Your return we won't be found ashamed of our actions. This we pray, knowing that only You can so direct our steps. Amen.

...and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 2 Peter 3:15

Here Peter reaches back to verse 9 where he stated that the Lord is not slack concerning His promise. Rather, it is His will that all come to repentance. With that in mind, he expands on that thought by saying, “and consider *that* the longsuffering of the Lord is salvation.” In other words, the “come to repentance,” means “salvation.” The people have a change of mind about the Lord, and they go from actively rejecting Him to seeking Him out.

The word “repentance” simply means, “to change one’s mind or purpose.” Therefore, those who have heard the message of Christ, and who have subsequently rejected it, will hopefully repent (change their mind) about their rejection and turn to Him for salvation. This is the longsuffering of the Lord. He awaits those who are at enmity with Him to have a change of heart.

Scholars debate (unnecessarily) over the issue of who is being spoken of here by the term “Lord.” Is it “God,” or is it “Jesus?” The debate is unnecessary. Jesus is God. The members of the Godhead are united in purpose. It is not as if the Father is impatient, while the Son and the Holy Spirit are patient. All have the same purpose and intent concerning such things.

Peter next says, “as also our beloved brother Paul.” This is speaking of the apostle Paul, the author of the thirteen epistles which bear his name, and which were written to the Gentile churches and/or to individual Gentiles. Of Paul, Peter next says, “according to the wisdom given to him.”

In other words, Paul’s wisdom is that of the inspiration of his words by the Holy Spirit, a process which Peter has already explained in this epistle –

“for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they* were moved by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Peter 1:21

Peter is ensuring his audience that what Paul has said is in accord with both what he is writing, and that it is inspired by God. This will be seen further in the next verse. Peter finishes the verse with these words concerning the wisdom that Paul, “has written to you.”

Peter’s audience is “the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,” as noted in 1 Peter 1:1. That is confirmed by 2 Peter 3:1 which says, “Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle.” However, as was just noted by Peter, Paul had written this Hebrew audience a letter which is inspired by God. This is a sure and reliable note that Paul is the author of the book of Hebrews. Along with many other internal evidences of the epistle, this is certain.

In understanding that Paul is that author, it gives a sure and reliable testimony to the fact that Peter and Paul were in complete agreement concerning both the gospel of Christ, and of the unity of the one gospel to provide salvation for both Jew and Gentile. The only difference is the main audience of their ministry, not the content of the message conveyed.

Though the word Peter uses here, and which is translated as “longsuffering,” is used only once in the epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 6:12), the thought of God’s patience with the Hebrew people is conveyed again and again. It is a principle precept found in the epistle, and Peter conveys that to his reader now.

Life application: Despite having a bit of a controversy early on which is described in Galatians 2, Peter and Paul mended their dispute and moved on. As you can see in this verse, Peter holds Paul in high esteem, calling him a “beloved brother.” He also acknowledges the “wisdom given to him.”

Peter’s words about the “longsuffering of the Lord” permeate Paul’s epistles. It is a point that these men of God faithfully proclaimed, but it is not a point which should lead a person to delay a choice for Christ. There is a time when the age will come to an end. It is a time which is unknown to all but God. For now, Paul’s words of 2 Corinthians should be taken to heart –

“Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.”

-2 Corinthians 6:2

God’s goodness and His great patience are manifest in each of us when we finally turn to Him and call on Jesus as Lord. There is a day, however, when this longsuffering will

come to an end. This isn't because God has given up on us, but because we have finally given up on Him to such an extent that no remedy is possible. This, combined with the completion of His temple, built with the living stones which are his people, will bring an end to the current age. This end is the destruction anticipated by Peter in Chapter 3 of this epistle.

Thank You, O God, for Your longsuffering. Were You to mete out what we deserve, we would have been swept away eons ago. But because of Your faithfulness and patience, we are granted life unto salvation through Jesus. Now Lord, grant us the ability to be longsuffering as we patiently explain His work to others who don't see their own great need. May their eyes be opened to the truth of Jesus and the brevity of life. Amen.

... as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures. 2 Peter 3:16

In the previous verse, Peter noted Paul and “the wisdom given to him” by which he wrote to these same people that Peter was writing to. He now says, “as also in all his epistles.” This same wisdom that was conveyed to the Jews through the epistle specifically directed to them (which is certainly the book of Hebrews, as already noted is to be found in all of his epistles. Peter is standing on the surety that Paul's letters carry the very wisdom of God, and that they convey accurate, reliable truth concerning the gospel, proper doctrine, and contextual reliability.

This is especially important to understand, because Paul had personally challenged Peter concerning faulty doctrine at one point. But this isn't something that was lightly brushed over, nor was it something found in a non-apostolic writing. Rather, it is something found in one of the very letters Peter is now referring to, Galatians. The entire account of Peter's departure from the truth is laid out – openly and fully – for any to read. Peter confirms that Paul's doctrine in this is correct, and that what Peter had done was “to be blamed,” as Paul states in Galatians 2:11.

Understanding this, Peter continues with, “speaking in them of these things.” The substance of the letters which Peter presented is the same substance of the letters of Paul. It is a way of saying that the content of their letters, though unique in style, was in complete harmony concerning content. For example, Peter wrote of the return of Christ, and so did Paul. Peter wrote about the gospel, and so did Paul. Peter wrote about the inspiration of Scripture, and so did Paul. These men were not writing two gospels, or

two sets of promises – one to Jew and one to Gentile. Rather, they were writing one message which then fit into the same overall message of the Bible.

Peter then acknowledges concerning Paul's letters, "in which are some things hard to understand." Here, Peter uses a word unique in Scripture. It is a compound word from "difficult" and "understanding." The things Paul wrote about are hard to mentally grasp and process. Capturing their true meaning, and mentally perceiving how what he says then fits into the greater context of the Bible, is a mentally challenging task.

Anyone who has read commentaries on Paul's letters must acknowledge this is true. For example, the idea of the rapture is debated heavily to this day. Will there be a rapture? When will it occur? What is the sequence of events if it is to occur? Something which is written about by Paul, in only a few verses of his writings, cannot be easily agreed upon. How much more his extremely complicated doctrines! Peter acknowledges that what Paul says must be carefully contemplated. However, he next says, "which untaught and unstable *people* twist."

Both words are only found in Peter's writings. The first is only found here. It signifies "unlearned" or "ignorant." The second is found in 2 Peter 2:14 and then here. It signifies "not established." Literally, it is a person who does not have a staff to lean on, and thus he cannot be trusted because he is unsteady.

This statement of Peter, from two thousand years ago, has been proven throughout church history. Further, with the advent of the internet, this has bloomed into a worldwide and daily occurrence. The saying, "everyone is a specialist in the Bible, but almost nobody knows his Bible" is true. People who are both ignorant of the context of the Bible, and those who are completely unstable in their doctrine, make constant claims of spiritual insight into the meaning of various passages, usually completely ripping them out of context.

Unfortunately, these supposed teachers then pass on their uninformed teachings to others who, likewise, don't search out the context of what is being said. From there, entire denominations bloom into large apostasy fests. Eventually, the Bible itself – when shown to contradict what these heretics teach – is dismissed as secondary to the supposed experiential knowledge of these adherents. Sound doctrine, and a right understanding of what is being conveyed, is subordinated to sensationalism. But such teachers twist the meaning and purpose of Scripture "to their own destruction."

Bad doctrine is sin. How much more if it is intentional. People twist Paul's words for profit, for sexual exploitation, for political motives, and on and on. Whatever agenda someone has, even if he dismisses the words of the Bible in every other aspect of his life, will cite Paul's words out of their intended context in order to justify some unholy stand. But this isn't unique to Paul's writings. Peter notes that they do this, "as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures."

To such people, Scripture is a means of satisfying earthly desires, lusts, and agendas. It is one large body of "pick and choose" in order to justify the unjustifiable. Context has no meaning, and the intent of what is said is irrelevant. All that matters is that an agenda can be satisfied with the precious word of God.

And that is exactly what Peter says Paul's letters are. In connecting Paul's letters to "the rest of the Scriptures," he is elevating what Paul has written to the full authority of all other Scripture. Thus, what these untaught and unstable people are doing is manipulating the very words of God. No person can do this and go unpunished. This is why James was so careful to say, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment."

If sincere teachers of the word will be judged for their incorrect analyses and teachings, how much more severe will be the punishment upon those who purposefully twist God's word for their own perverse agendas!

The word Peter used above, which is translated as "twist," is also unique in Scripture. It literally speaks of an instrument of torture. A person would be put on a rack, and his body would be "twisted" or "dislocated." Imagine how these people tear apart and abuse God's precious and sacred word. Now imagine how God will punish them for what they have done. Theirs will be a punishment which we cannot even imagine. But it is as certain to come as is the fact that God is holy, and He cherishes and protects His sacred word.

Life application: Paul's epistles are authoritative for the church – there is no missing this. What Paul writes has the same weight as if Jesus Himself were speaking. This is confirmed in Acts 9:15 –

"Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel."

Jesus said that Paul is His “chosen vessel.” Therefore, what Paul writes is on the same level as all of God’s words breathed out in the pages of the Bible. In his letters, he speaks of the mysteries long hidden by God, but now revealed in Jesus Christ. He provides doctrine for the church which must be taken in proper context and with an understanding of how God is dealing with the world during the church age. Unfortunately, “unstable people” – and also those who haven’t taken time to rightly divide God’s word – twist what is given and confuse those who are seeking the truth.

The lure of profit, fame, and power are strong enticements for the depraved mind. Far too many churches today diminish the authority and power of Paul’s words because they aren’t politically correct, but to reject what He writes is to reject the authority of Jesus Christ who chose Paul to be His messenger.

If your denomination, church, or pastor speaks ill of Paul’s doctrine, or of any part of the word of God, find another place to worship. Such teachings are in no way honoring to the Lord.

Lord God, because the words of the apostles carry the same weight as if You had spoken them directly to us, help us to understand them properly and to follow them obediently. We often find it hard to follow what they intend for us to understand, and we need our spiritual eyes opened. Provide us, Lord, with sound teachers who will properly explain them to us. Amen.

You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;

2 Peter 3:17

Peter has been careful to show that what Paul writes is on the same level as that of all other Scripture, but that there are people who would take Paul’s writings and twist them. He said that they would do this just as they would with the rest of the Scriptures.

Because there are such people out there, Peter now warns them. In this, he says, “You therefore, beloved.” He had just called them beloved in verse 14. He then called Paul the same in verse 15. He now returns to this same word one last time in the epistle. He is using this term of endearment to ensure that they would make the connection between their state as believers and their need to apply their state to right conduct and holy living.

Understanding this, he then says, “since you know *this* beforehand.” In particular, he is speaking of those who would twist Scripture, including Paul’s letters, for their own perverse agenda. They now know this and are to be on guard against it, “lest you also fall from your own steadfastness.”

In other words, by following false teachers, and by listening to their own twisting of Scripture, these who are beloved in the Lord would be led off of the sure and sound course which they had begun on. The thought is similar to what he said earlier in the epistle –

“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; ¹¹ for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 1:10, 11

In his words, Peter does not state, nor does he imply, that in following these people they could lose their salvation. It is simply a statement of fact that if a person isn’t careful to watch his doctrine, he can easily get swept up in the false teachings of others. In this, they will be brought back into bondage – exactly as Paul notes of those who are led astray by false teachers.

The words of Peter here are nothing short of an exhortation to know the word of God. If one does not know the word, then that person cannot tell when the word is being twisted. Only by knowing and constantly remembering the word can a person avoid this pitfall, and thus “being led away with the error of the wicked.”

Here, the word “wicked” should be “lawless.” It is a word used in ancient Greek to signify that which is contrary to a statute. Without the law, a person is lawless. But equally so, when one twists the law, understanding the way to be obedient to that law is confused. As the word is the believer’s way of understanding the right and proper path to follow what God expects, we cannot be obedient to those expectations if our understanding of His word is either lacking or has been twisted. It is a solemn warning that we must know and carefully apply the word of God to our lives.

Life application: The context of Peter’s words here comes from verses 14-16 directly, and 11-13 as a basis for verse 14. Here is a paraphrased breakdown of what Peter is indicating –

- We should look forward to the coming Day of God where the heavens and earth will be destroyed and replaced with a new heavens and earth where righteousness dwells.
- Until that day, be found by the Lord in peace; spot-free and blameless.
- Consider the longsuffering of the Lord which is described so pertinently by Paul in his letters.
- Paul’s letters contain the wisdom given him by the Lord.
- What Paul says is often hard to understand.
- And, his words are manipulated by unstable people to their own destruction.

Because these things have been revealed to us, Peter says that we should therefore beware so that we don’t fall from our own determined outlook in our faith and practice. We should remain steadfast, or we are just as susceptible to being led away with the error of the wicked (those mentioned as “unstable” and who manipulate what Scripture says.) In other words: read and know your Bible!

By Peter stating that Paul’s letters are on the same level as all other Scripture, it implies is that what Paul writes should also be taken in that same light as well. How can one sit in church, or listen to someone on TV, or the radio, and trust what they say blindly? Rather, we need to have at least enough familiarity with our Bible to know when we’re being led down the primrose path.

Be wise, be discerning, and be prepared. Know your Bible.

Lord Jesus, each of us is accountable for our doctrine. Therefore, provide us with the sense to search out Your word now so that we are not led astray by the unstable and wicked. Rather, may we be prepared and know when right doctrine is being proclaimed or when false teachings are being presented to us. To Your honor we pray this. Amen.

...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen. 2 Peter 3:18

We now come to the final verse of this magnificent epistle. Peter gives one final exhortation and finishes with a short doxology in it, beginning with, “but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” It is similar to how he began the epistle. In 2 Peter 1:2, he said –

“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.”

In his words here, there is no article before either “grace” or “knowledge” in the Greek, and so various ways of translating the verse have been suggested –

- In the grace and knowledge
- In grace and in knowledge
- In grace, and *in* the knowledge
- In grace, and in the knowledge
- In grace, and in [the] knowledge
- In the grace and knowledge

These, and other variations, each determine what the translator feels was on the mind of Peter. For example, some make the first subjective and the second objective – Christ is the Giver (subjective) and He is the object of the knowledge. Others are both objective – Christ is the object of the grace and of the knowledge, etc.

Without being dogmatic, it is likely that Peter is saying that the believer is to grow in grace given by Christ, and that they are to grow in the knowledge concerning the Person of Christ. This seems to fit best with the idea of Christian maturity. We have been given grace and should grow in that which has been given. At the same time, we have a knowledge of Jesus from the inception of our walk with Him, but that knowledge can increase forever as we seek Him out (2 Peter 1:5-9).

This would then be in accord with the subject of what he has been saying concerning the false teachers and the twisting of Scripture by them – something he warns us to avoid being swept up in. To avoid this, it would be wise to grow in the knowledge of Christ. It is He who is found throughout Scripture, and it is He who reveals the unseen God to us.

Finally, Peter finishes with, “To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.” In Isaiah, we read –

“I *am* the LORD, that *is* My name;
And My glory I will not give to another.” Isaiah 42:8

This is stated elsewhere as well. For the Lord (Yehovah of the Old Testament Scriptures) to say this, and then for Peter to ascribe that same glory to Jesus in his closing remarks now, shows that either Peter truly believed that Jesus is the incarnate Yehovah, or he was an incompetent blasphemer. It is Jesus Christ who is granted “the glory” and, as the Greek reads, it is “to *the* day of eternity.”

This is a phrase not found anywhere else in the New Testament. Both the word “day” and “eternity” are singular nouns. It is one day, but it is an eternal day. In other words, it is the fulfillment of the thought which was hinted at in the creation account. Each of the six days of creation said, “So the evening and the morning were the xxth day.”

However, on the seventh day, this is not recorded. It is an eternal day, a day where tomorrow (the evening) will never come because the light of God in Christ will radiate forever. Thus, Revelation says –

“They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads. ⁵ There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.” Revelation 22:4, 5

This is what is in store for the saints of God, and it is – literally – a moment away at any time. Indeed, the Lord is not slack concerning His promise. He will, in the moment He has determined from the foundation of the world, bring His people to Himself. It is this marvelous moment that Peter anticipates, and which we can delight in as we continue in the stream of time, awaiting that moment as well.

Life application: Among other points, the epistles of Peter have given us great insights into our heavenly inheritance; life in the presence of God; God’s eternal and enduring word; the work of Jesus as foretold in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New; living as pilgrims in this temporary abode; our need to submit to ruling authorities and others appointed over us; our call to be a blessing as we live our lives; the suffering of Christ which should mark our own willingness to suffer – which is to the glory of God; serving others; instructions for elders; resisting the devil; faithfully growing in Christ; the trustworthiness of the word of prophecy; destructive heresies; the depravity, deception, and doom of false teachers; the faithfulness of God’s promises; the coming Day of the Lord; and finally a note to remain steadfast as we wait on Christ.

Peter’s admonition of the final verse of his second epistle is an amazingly perfect way to end his letters. After all of these instructions and explanations, he sums up the entire body of his thought asking us to continue to grow in Jesus. His grace is that which has been given to us though we didn’t deserve it.

The knowledge of Him can only be obtained from the word written about him. Therefore, we look to the pages of the Bible, including the words of Peter, to grow in our knowledge of the mystery of Christ – now revealed to the saints of the ages.

Peter ends his note in a manner which confirms – as has been done countless times in the New Testament – the deity of Jesus. He does this by stating, “To Him be the glory both now and forevermore.” No God, jealous for His own glory and protective of His name, would allow a created being to be so praised. But God is pleased to receive our praise when it is given through Jesus – the incarnate Word of God; the God/Man. Amen.

Thank You Lord God for the beautiful letters of Your sacred word. Thank you for the selection, protection, and love You bestowed on Your prophets and apostles until they were able to transmit Your word to us. Each of them had faults, trials, temptations, and failings. But through their lives, we see a glimpse of our own great need for an even greater Savior... and You are the One we look to in the Person of Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.