

II Peter Chapter 2

Lot distressed – though in the midst of wickedness.

1. Lot was not corrupted by it.
2. He did not become indifferent to it.
3. He was daily concerned about it.

Some heresies afloat near end of the first century.

1. The Lord's deity was questioned by some (I John 4:15).
2. The Lord's humanity was questioned by others (I John 4:2).
3. Some denied the threefold personality of the godhead.
4. Others held the body of Christ was not real, only imaginary.
5. Others, by their wicked and corrupt lives, denied Jesus as their Master and used their bodies like they wanted to.

Hell – ~~ta~~^{taros}tarosas – only time in Greek N.T.

Used in “Greek mythology of the place of restraint and punishment for the souls of wicked men after death.” (Woods, p. 166)

V. 15 – Forsaken the right way.

1. “the way of the Lord” (Genesis 18:19)
2. “the way of peace” (Romans 3:17)
3. “the way of wisdom” (Prov. 4:11)
4. “the way of life” (Prov. 10:17)
5. “the way of salvation” (Acts 16:17)

A FALSE TEACHER

II Peter 2

Winfred Clark

INTRODUCTION

1. Peter describes well the nature and method of the false teacher?
2. As one reads II Peter 2, he can see the trial of the serpent's agent.

DISCUSSION

I. PETER STATES THE FACT.

- A. II Peter 2:1. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you."
 1. Now, before going on, stop and take note of the fact of the false teacher.
 2. He will or she will not call himself or herself such.
 3. If this occurred, nobody would listen. A false teacher will never come with a sign of his true colors.
- B. But it is a sad fact now that people deny that there are false teachers in some areas.
 1. Charming personalities overwhelm the unsuspecting.
 2. Sweet and smooth speeches blind many eyes.

II. THEIR APPROACH IS NOTED.

- A. II Peter 2:1. "Who privily shall bring in damnable heresies."
 1. That word privily means: secretly, covertly.
 - a. It just means it is undercover.
 - b. He operates much like the "fifth column" of World War II.
- B. He seeks to do his work without attracting attention.
- C. He will use others, if they will allow it, and he stands in the background.
- D. In this way, the damage is done and he does not have to hear the blame. Judas is a case in point as an agent of the devil.

III. THEY USE ONE FOR UNHOLY PURPOSES.

- A. II Peter 2:3. "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you!"
 1. They will play on emotions and plead for sympathy while going about their destructive work.
 2. They will not hesitate to ally themselves with those with whom they do not agree, if only they can carry a point.

3. As in the case of Pilate and Herod, they were made friends that day.
 4. Neither cared for the other, but they both were opposed to Christ.
- B. You may find those who have little in common, but if they think others are opposed to something going on in the church, they seek to get together. This is not new.
- C. Did not Absalom seek to use the people against David when he "stole their hearts."
1. He could stand in the gate and talk about what he would do if he were judge. II Samuel 15:1-4. Notice how much attention he gave them.
 2. In verse 5, you find him acting as though he wanted to get down on their level. Note carefully verse 6. "So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel."
 3. But how did he do it? Just as men do today. Play both ends against the middle.
- D. May I ask whether you could bring yourself to admire such a person? Does Absalom have your support? Would you be in sympathy with him? You say, no. I ask you why? Your answer would be that he is seeking to overthrow God's appointed king. He is not acting in good faith. If he really wanted to contribute something, let him do so under David his father.

IV. THEY DESPISE AUTHORITY.

- A. II Peter 2:10. Peter says, "They despise government. They are presumptuous and self-willed."
1. You would expect this of a false teacher.
 2. He wants to teach what he wants to without restraint.
 3. When you boil it all down, it comes to the selfishness that dominated such a one. Self must be served at all cost.
- B. We will do well to be on guard against such. Mark and avoid them.

II PETER 3
James Meadows

- I. The purpose of the epistles (v. 1,2).
 - A. "...stir up your pure minds" -- To arouse thoroughly.
 - B. Recognize -- Be mindful.
- II. Scoffers come in last days (v. 3-4).
 - A. Last days refer to the Christian dispensation, Acts 2:16-17; Hebrews 1:1,2; I Timothy 4:1; II Timothy 3:1.
 - B. Scoffers would be those that would mock and jeer at the idea of Christ's coming. (cf. Genesis 19:14). "Mockers...with their mocking." (NASB).
 - C. The erroneous views of some of the first century Christians may have given grounds for their charges since some of them believed in the immediate return. (cf. I Thessalonians 4:13-17).
- III. The apostle's reply to the scoffers' charge that Christ would not return. (v. 5-9).
 - A. They alleged that the unvarying conformity of nature proved this.
 - 1. They had deliberately and willfully ignored the lessons of the flood which demonstrated conclusively that all things have not continued as they were from the beginning (v. 5-6).
 - 2. The same word that brought the flood holds the earth in place today. (v. 7).
 - B. The lapse of time between the promise and the fulfillment is not to be interpreted as meaning God will not fulfill His commitments. (v. 8).
 - 1. The passing of time does not affect God's fulfillment as it does now.
 - 2. The longer the interval between the promise and the fulfillment on man's part, the less likely he will fulfill.
Reasons:
 - a. Man may die.
 - b. He may forget his promise.
 - c. He may violate his word and simply refuse to do what he promised.
 - d. Conditions may arise making it impossible for him to perform it.

up with fire..." (NWT). Revelation 8:7, "...A third of the earth was **burned up**, and a third of the trees was **burned up**, and all the green vegetation was burned up..." (NWT). [All emphasis mine--JLW].

- a. Why would they translate correctly in these four instances and then incorrectly in the only other occurrence of the phrase? Because II Peter 3:10 stands diametrically opposed to Jehovah's Witness' doctrine.
- b. This same place also stands diametrically opposed to the A.D. 70 error.
5. Not only is the NWT inconsistent in its translation (or mistranslation!)-it also contradicts itself on this very matter.
 - a. Consider the wording of Hebrews 1:10 in the NWT: "...You at the beginning, O Lord, laid the foundations of the earth itself, and the heavens are the works of your hands, they themselves **will perish**..." [Emphasis mine--JLW].
 - b. Then, within the context itself, notice II Peter 3:7 in the NWT: "...by the same word the heavens and the earth that are now **stored up for fire**..." [Emphasis mine--JLW]. Shades of contradiction--what shall it be?
 - c. The A.D. 70 errorists are in league with the doctrine of Jehovah's Witnesses.
 - d. Paul warned in I Corinthians 15:33, "BE NOT DECEIVED. EVIL COMPANIONSHIPS CORRUPT GOOD MORALS." (All the points under Letter G. above were written by Jesse Whitlock.)

is made by private interpretation." **A Commentary on the New Testament**, prepared by the Catholic Biblical Association, in 1942 says: "Prophecy comes **not by the will of man**, i.e., by some natural medium whereby man can know the future." (p. 630).

We can depend on the prophetic word, as well as on the New Testament word, for God's word is not the product of man's uninspired efforts to penetrate the mind of God, but is God's revelation by the Spirit through the inspired apostles and prophets. (I Corinthians 2:9-14; Hebrews 2:3-4).

Examining the Evidence

"But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. For if God did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly thereafter; and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds), then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment" (2:1-9).

A careful painter in London exhibited a piece of his work representing a friar in his canonicals. Viewed at a distance you would think the friar to be in a praying attitude. His hands seem clasped together and held horizontally to his breast; his eyes meekly dismissed like those of the publican in the Gospel narrative; and the good man appears to be absorbed in humble adoration and devout recollection. When a nearer survey is taken, the deception vanishes. The book which seems to be before him is really a punch bowl into which he is squeezing a lemon. How lively a

picture of the hypocrite has thus been painted. He appears at a distance to be one thing, but upon closer observation his true character is exactly the opposite.

Hypocrisy is one of the greatest tools in Satan's arsenal. Through deceit the devil captures the hearts of many who were once stalwart believers. In Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, he observed that Satan works with "all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness. . . ." (2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10). Satan is a master at taking a small kernel of truth and weaving a whole system of error around it. The end result is a most believable doctrine with only a small amount of truth, a large amount of error, and a damning fate!

Peter turns his attention to this problem. His friends were being beguiled by people who, like the friar above, appeared to be one thing while in reality they were the opposite. The second chapter is a rebuttal of the false teacher. Peter's words are curt and clear. We cannot mistake what he says. After finishing the reading of this section, the readers would understand the extreme danger that was in their midst and which they were regarding in a light manner.

The problem addressed by Peter is not a novel one confronting the people of God. The old nation of Israel had often been confronted with false prophets who encouraged and actually succeeded in promoting error. Urgent warnings are found before 2 Peter which were written to guard the believers from the pollutions of false doctrine (cf. Matthew 7:15; 24:15; Acts 20:29, 30; 1 Timothy 4:1-7; 2 Timothy 4:2-5; etc.).

that the teachings of the New Testament are sound. They are based upon fact not fiction; they are the commands of God not men. As such, the New Testament is the divine standard by which ruined lives are salvaged, crooked ways are made straight, and salvation is sealed. We must follow it alone to not fall into the unrighteous camp of the cynical believer.

Second, we must come to terms with the deity of Christ. It is unassailable. His divine nature is both sure and solid. This brings hope to the believer and hopelessness to the unbeliever. No passage better illustrates this than Revelation 19:6-21. To the believer, Christ's return will provoke rejoicing and delight that is likened to a wedding festival. To the cynical unbeliever, His return is likened to a dreaded war where all enemies are vanquished.

Third, we are assured that the Scriptures deserve more than a "casual" glance. They make certain not uncertain; they originate from God not man; they enable us to do well not wrong; and they bring light not darkness. The Jews were rebuked because they held the Scriptures yet studied only in a casual manner (cf. Matthew 22:29). Satan will do his best to deceive us with improper study habits, thus blinding us to the truth of light (2 Corinthians 4:4, 6). The ancient believer declared, "I have not departed from the command of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). May we follow the same course in our study habits.

A familiar writing stresses the importance of the Scriptures. Notice how it highlights the beauty of the God-breathed Bible.

The Bible

This book contains—the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions immutable.

Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, good to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, the Christian's character.

Here Paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the gates of Hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should rule the heart, fill the memory, and guide the feet.

Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river

of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, rewards the highest (greatest) labor, and condemns all who trifle with its Holy contents.

Peter tells us to "take heed" (KJV) or "pay attention" to these blessed Scriptures. They deserve our careful attention. Since they are God speaking to us, they deserve our undivided attention. Failure to study will assure us a life of darkness instead of light.

CONCLUSION

When cynicism seems so appealing, let us remember this marvelous section of 2 Peter. Satan wants to cloud our reasoning and veil our eyes to the true light of God's gospel. Satan wishes to cause doubt and questioning over the scriptural truths we have learned so long ago. Whenever he succeeds in planting doubt and cynicism, he is able to conquer our hearts and win our allegiance. The devil delights in nurturing a mindset of cynicism, for that will create an amnesia that leaves you open to error! τ

Endnote

¹Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, Book IV.

Concerns of God's Ministers (2 Peter 1:12-15)

Some concerns of the ministers of the gospel are these:

1. That others remember the basic truths (1:12).
2. That they "refresh" those they labor with (1:13).
3. That their labor bears fruit even after they depart (1:15).



Points for Preachers to Ponder (2 Peter 1:16-21)

1. Beware of cleverly devised tales creeping into the lesson's content. Stand against it (1:16).
2. Be careful that Christ occupies the lesson. Focus on His power, coming, majesty, glory, and on approval from God (1:16b-18).
3. Pay attention to the inspired Scriptures, for they alone will make "sure" (1:19-21).

Now history is repeating itself. The urgent warnings of prophecy were becoming reality. In the new Israel, false teachers had arisen. They portrayed a different character and doctrine than they truly believed. The plague of the false teacher is always with us. People will always be around who love to have their ears tickled and be fed with doctrine that is palatable, demanding no commitment or consecration. Simply stated, we will always have those who love error more than they love truth and are more willing to follow a lie than a fact. Just as it is easy for some to follow error, it is easy for some to be complacent in recognizing this danger. The brethren addressed by Peter seemed to have convinced themselves that the false teacher was someone who was not in their midst. They believed that doctrinal error was far removed from their congregation. In response Peter writes one of the most direct attacks in the New Testament on the dangers of false teachers.

This passage seems to have an emphasis on a courtroom scene. "Judgment" or "sentence" (2:3, 9) is used to describe a judicial pronouncement. The picture we draw is one of a defendant appearing before a court of law to face certain charges against him. We see the evidence presented after the defendant has been identified (2:1-3a); the verdict is then rendered (2:3b); the justification for the harsh punishment is next discussed (2:4-8); and finally, we see Peter making practical application to those who would read this epistle (2:9).

Basically, we find in this section a point often repeated in Scripture. Peter says that as the testimony of the court is taken and the documents examined, the evidence shows the folly of following error. Consequently, as we ponder this evidence we ought to see that diligence must be demonstrated so we will not follow error and suffer condemnation.

THE TRIAL (2:1-3a)

As Peter opens the doors of the courtroom, we observe that the trial is just beginning. The defendant is about to be identified, and the evidence is soon to be presented for examination.

The Defendant

The defendant is clearly identified by two expressions in verse 1. He is identified as a "false prophet" and as a "false teacher." The first iden-

tifies him with his counterpart in the Old Testament, the second with his contemporaries under the new dispensation. We can see the true character of those like this man from other passages of Scripture:

But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage (Galatians 2:4).

Such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:13).

Their true character is black and dark. But when these approach believers they conduct themselves as "angels of light"—sweet, pious, and humble in their acts. These had arrived and had been accepted in the congregation to which Peter wrote. They had been trusted, respected, loved, fellowshipped, and esteemed. But like the unseen reefs that hold disaster (cf. Jude 12), these had begun an evil work. Their teaching was vain, their goals were greedy, and their morals were perverse. They had used the trusting souls in the congregation, playing upon emotions and weaknesses to satisfy their greedy lusts. This then was the true identification of the one who stood in court in 2:1-9.

After the identification had been made, the court turns its attention next to the charges pressed against them. Six charges were made against these false teachers.

The Charges

First, these brethren secretly introduced destructive heresies (2:1). They "secretly introduced" or "privily brought in" (KJV) these errors. "Bring in" literally means to "lay alongside of" another object so it passes unnoticed. Such an expression reveals how the false teachers were able to penetrate the steadfast doctrinal position of Peter's brethren. It was a most clever manner of introducing error. They would teach a fact that was unquestionably true, but in teaching truth they would place alongside it some doctrine that was filled with error. They taught truth, but they did not tell *all* truth. Little by little, they introduced error until their listeners had been indoctrinated with enough error that the truth lost its appeal! These wove their error into the teaching, secretly whispering their doctrines to any who would

listen. The campaign was slow. A few would be selected and won over to error. Then another small group would be selected and concentrated upon until truth had been recanted. The slow process continued until the steadfastness of doctrinal purity had been determined and the error had spread as a poisonous leaven through the whole church. Peter says that this is the first charge which must be answered by the false teachers.

Second, these denied the Master (2:1). This was the practical effect of their false doctrine. To "deny" literally means to contradict, reject, or disavow. It seems hard to believe that brethren who have been firmly rooted and grounded in truth would be swayed by such men to reject basic Bible facts. But such occurred. This will always happen when opinions and dogmas of man are placed equal to or greater than the revelation of Scripture. Those who refuse to follow simple New Testament Scripture will be led to contradict, reject, or disavow Christ.

Third, these encouraged sensuality in daily living (2:2). It seems the problem Paul dealt with in Romans 6 is alluded to here. Evidently, the false teachers had understood liberty in Christ to mean one could do anything and still trust in grace to save him. Thus, they taught that one could live and enjoy the lascivious desires of the flesh and be a holy saint at the same time. The phrase "lascivious doing" refers to a reckless and hardened immorality, a total rejection of restraint and a self-control. These false teachers had come into the church and had covertly drawn away a segment to their error. The next step was to convince these brethren that morality was relative. They pressed the belief of no absolutes of right and wrong in sexual relations. They urged the brethren to be as sensual as they wanted, to allow the pursuit for pleasure to go wild, and passions to go unrestrained. Those who were caught in the fervor of this error failed to realize the tragic consequences of such uncurbed lust.

As I read this charge, I am reminded of King Ahaz and the tragedy he led Israel to find. One verse serves to explain why such tragedy was evident, "Ahaz . . . had brought about a lack of restraint in Judah and was very unfaithful to the Lord" (2 Chronicles 28:19). Peter says the false teachers must give account, for they cause brethren to lose self-control. They led believers away from the "strait" (restricted) path of right-

eousness into the wide (unrestricted) path of evil.

Fourth, these brethren caused the church to have a bad reputation (2:2). "The way" was a common term describing the church. Conduct and ethics of believers are always closely examined by the world. If we fail to live up to the standards of ethics and morality in Christ's church, we can be assured that someone will see us and they will speak evil of the church. Such was the caution of Luke 14:29, 30 as Christ spoke of the man building a tower and stopping only after the foundation was laid. The inconsistency of his commitment and action caused "mocking." This brings into focus the command given just before: "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27). The false teacher had persuaded believers to live lifestyles that would cause the world to mock the church.

Fifth, these brethren exploited believers (2:3). They were using the brethren. They possessed no sincere affection or concern. They "made merchandise" (KJV) of the brethren. This refers to a business deal which gains profit for the seller. The false teachers were willing to "sell out" their brethren if it meant a tidy profit for them. This practice is referred to in 1 Timothy 6:5 and is there condemned quickly. Their motive was simply greed. They wanted more and more for themselves even at the expense of others. Such is all too evident today. Many "media preachers" present a "health-and-wealth" philosophy of religion. They stand ready to sell a product which is guaranteed to cure every imagined ill and distress. Such men "make merchandise" of honest hearts. No genuine concern is evident for anyone but self.

Sixth, these used "false" words (2:3). The term is again one that is interesting. It comes from the Greek *plastos* from which we get the word "plastic." It signifies a molding or forming of something into a suitable state. Peter used the term in connection with the words of these false teachers. They would fashion or form words to appear similar to true doctrine, but they carried another definition suited to their evil purpose. In conversation with brethren they would insert their "new" definition and probably some responded, "Oh, I never really thought of that word meaning that before!" The words looked good and sounded good but really were hollow and use-

less. Phony arguments, twisted words, and invented expressions were used to distort the pure and simple truth (cf. 3:16).

THE VERDICT (2:3b)

After the defendant has been identified and the evidence properly evaluated, the jury deliberates. The jury returns with a clear verdict—guilty on all counts! The word “sentence” is a courtroom word expressing the final pronouncement of the presiding judge on the defendant.

The sentence is consistent with the nature of God. Sin always leads to death. In the Ephesian letter, Paul says that through sins and trespasses we become “dead” (2:1, 12): “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Those who follow the false teachers will experience “swift destruction” (2:1). The sentence is one recorded and illustrated from the beginning. The false teachers of the Old Testament were recipients of a tragic sentence. If such occurred in the Old Testament, believers can be sure that such will befall false teachers in the New Testament.

Two expressions are used by Peter to emphasize the certainty of this harsh verdict. The phrase, “is not idle,” refers to the fact that God is not inactive. He will carry out this sentence. It may appear to some that God will not carry out the penalty (cf. 3:4ff.), but Peter assures them that God is not idle! “Not asleep” also indicated the certainty of the verdict. I like the rendering in the NEB: “Perdition waits for them with unsleeping eyes.” Judgment is certain (cf. 1 Kings 18:28). The evil of the false teacher will be punished. It is coming.

THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE VERDICT (2:4-9)

Why can God be so certain in His condemnation? Why can He say that some will spend an eternity in painfilled torment? Some contend that God would be unloving if he has an eternal hell prepared and consigns souls to that black abode. By what right can such a verdict and penalty be justified? By close investigation of the present text, I believe we are able to discover at least three reasons which justify the reality of hell and the condemnation of souls for eternity in it.

Evil Is Never Able to Hide From God.

First, it is justified because evil is never able to

hide from God. You just cannot hide sin from God. Peter uses three illustrations to verify this fact—fallen angels, the ancient world of Noah’s time, and the two cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah. Each of these reveals the impartial judgment of God and assures the readers that such a judgment would come even if it is far into the future. These three present a fitting summary of evil in the world today. The rebellious angels illustrate the pride and open rebellion of the impenitent sinner. The ancient world illustrates the apathy and disobedience of the sinners’ hardened hearts. The cities of the plain serve well to show us the decay and sensuality of mankind gone mad after pleasure and passion. Just as these three could never hide from God, the traits they reveal can never be hidden from God today. It is absurd for us to deceive ourselves into thinking that sin carries no consequences. If God did not tolerate and spare angels, or an entire world’s population, or even two great cities, why should we think He will allow us to get away with sin today? Those who think they have outgrown God, as these three examples did, will discover their mistake too late! God’s harsh verdict and eternal sentence is quite justified, for it reveals the reality of evil’s deception.

Righteousness Is Always Rewarded

Second, it is justified because righteousness is always rewarded. As he considers Noah and Lot, Peter uses two words that bring comfort to God’s saints: “preserved” (2:5) which literally means to “keep safe” and “rescued” (2:7, 9) which literally means to “drag out of danger.” Those who follow God’s will benefit from a divine protection. This is the meaning of the prayer petition urged upon believers to pray that God would “lead us not into temptation.” When we issue that petition, we are asking God to treat us as He did Noah and Lot. We are asking Him to rescue, preserve, and deliver us. Here then is a tremendous motive to live godly. God always delivers His righteous followers (cf. Psalms 147:3; 2 Corinthians 7:6). Thus the harsh penalty on evil is justified.

Evil Has Terrible Effects Upon Believers

Third, such a verdict is justified because evil has terrible effects upon believers (2:7, 8). Lot is alluded to here, and we discover facts about him which are otherwise unknown in the Bible. He

suffered because of the presence of evil around him. He was "oppressed" which indicates he took an emotional beating from the constant stress and agony of living in an ungodly place. His righteous soul was "tormented" which means he suffered torture because of evil. Every day he lived he witnessed evil, and these sights caused him to suffer much. False teaching always causes suffering, pain, and distress. I would not be surprised that the anxiety Paul suffered daily for the churches was not at least in a small part attributable to false doctrine (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:28). The grief of false teachers was present in the days of Noah, Lot, and Paul, and it is present in our day as well. The pain and grief of evil will be answered in the harsh punishment from God. Such is only just and right. The verdict is more than justified.

THE MESSAGE FOR US (2:9)

Peter now turns and in essence says, "Let's look at how these points apply to you and me." Since these things are certain, Peter urges us to remember that "the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment." Believers must remember this simple point because too often we have misplaced the fact that false teachers and doctrinal error are dangerous! We must remember this danger because the consequences of our choices will arise just as certainly as the consequences of the fallen angels, the cities of the plain, and Noah's neighbors came upon them. We must remember because the righteous will be rescued while the unrighteous will be bound for suffering; the righteous will be preserved, while the unrighteous will face swift destruction!

The message of 2:9 is truly encouraging to the readers of Peter's letter. The *comfort* is extended to them. God will protect. The *assurance* is guaranteed. Whatever the danger, God will deliver. The *justice* is divine. Whatever the evil, God will "keep" and requite!

CONCLUSION

Peter's message is bold—believers had better take careful aim in all spiritual matters. Christians will face many problems, but the most alluring is the teacher or preacher who introduces the "new" doctrine and definitions alongside the trusted and true. But the evidence that is pre-

sented suggests that even though it is alluring, it is not satisfying. It is hollow and inconsistent, leading only to doom and destruction. Peter urges us to ponder the evidence and remain true to God's Word.

In a fable, some pigeons had long lived in fear of a kite. By being always on the alert and keeping their dovecoats, they had escaped the enemy's attacks. Finding his sallies unsuccessful, the kite took to craft. "Why do you prefer this life of anxiety when, if you would only make me your king I would secure you from every attack that could be made upon you," he said. The pigeons, trusting his words, called him to the throne; but no sooner was he crowned than he exercised his prerogative by devouring a pigeon each day. One which awaited his fate said, "It serves us right." This simple fable by Aesop is a fitting conclusion to the lesson. Deceit abounds, but we can unmask it and cast it away. This is only possible when we follow God. Which destiny in eternity awaits you? Is it one with the fallen angels, the ancient world, and the cities on the plain? Or is it one with Noah, Lot, and the godly who have been rescued by God? Make your eternal destiny certain by pondering the evidence! τ

Remembering God Is an Urgent Practice (2 Peter 2:1-9)

Remembering God is an urgent practice . . .

1. Because false teachers will arise and be successful (2:1-3).
2. Because only the righteous will be saved by God (2:4-8).
3. Because God's assurances are eternal (2:9).



Memories and False Doctrine (2 Peter 2:1-9)

1. Remembering God will allow you to "spot" false teachers (2:1).
2. Remembering God will enable you to thwart false teachers (2:1b-3).
3. Remembering God will assure you of correct action in regard to false teachers (2:4-8).
4. Remembering God will lead you to a safe rescue (2:9).

Musings on the "Playboy Philosophy"

"And especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord. But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; forsaking the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but he received a rebuke for his own transgression; for a dumb donkey, speaking with the voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet. These are springs without water, and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved" (2:10-19).

It is in epidemic proportions—everyone is at risk! Simply put, no one is immune to this epidemic. What are we talking about? The epidemic of the 1980s is "Sexually Transmitted Diseases" (STD). In a magazine article of October 1985, the following statement appeared: "STDs have touched the lives of everyone from innocent

spouses to a celibate nun, resulting in birth defects, cancer, sterility, and death among men, women and even children, who never knew they had a disease." The epidemic is so vast that some experts predict that 1 in every 4 Americans of reproductive age will contract a STD in his or her lifetime! The delusion of the Playboy Philosophy is the root of this epidemic. Those who have followed its "piper" and lived its "freedom" by a promiscuous lifestyle have opened Pandora's box, and the effects will never be fully known.

Some may wonder what the connection is between the epidemic of the 1980s and the ancient writing of Peter the fisherman. A closer investigation of 2 Peter 2:10-19 reveals that he, too, addresses the volatile issue of "free" sex and uninhibited morality. Notice Peter's adamant words. His righteous anger burns hot. He has just demonstrated (2:1-9) the disastrous sentence awaiting the false prophets and all who heed their error. Now he turns and speaks in harsh specifics about the false teacher and the system of morality which comes to infect the followers of such a system. We read a clear and vivid description about the character, effects, and fate of those who dare shun God's absolutes in morality. The passage has to be among the most scathing in rebuttal to those who advocate forsaking God's laws of morality.

Why is Peter so upset? Is his indignation justified? Certainly such a response was justified because it struck a telling blow at the philosophy of life that deludes, blinds, and condemns! Peter held a devoted love for those whom he oversaw. He desired that they look at the real truth of the

teaching and see the error for what it really was—a wish-filled philosophy leading to emptiness and destruction. Surely, Peter struggled with heartache and tears as Paul did in Philippians 3:17-19 when he penned his poignant paragraph. Peter was determined to do whatever he could to open the eyes of those he loved.

Peter's marvelous love and concern applies to us today as we read his book. He is still striving to enlighten us regarding the false hopes and empty promises of the Playboy Philosophy permeating our culture. Listen to Peter's words as he urges us to "muse" on the facts about this Playboy Philosophy.

THE OBVIOUS CHARACTER OF THIS PHILOSOPHY

Our character is developed by basic choices we make each day. If our character is godly, upright, fair, and loving, it is because we have deliberately chosen to follow such in life. But if our character is dark, immoral, and ungodly, it is a telling comment that we have chosen to follow the baser and sordid things of this world. The world's philosophy urges us to make a tragic decision—reject God's authority and accept the authority of feelings (2:10b, 11, 18). Those who do this become so intoxicated with error that they are marked as being bold, arrogant, daring, and headstrong. They possess no respect for those in power. Claiming the "right" to do as they desire, they defy church leaders, teachers, and even those in the spiritual realms. Peter says they become "daring" (2:10), that is, they live a reckless, daring life that defies anything associated with the loving and Almighty God. Such a choice reveals one's hate for God and love for self. These *are* hard words, but Peter wants to emphasize the truth of the matter. Those who follow the Playboy Philosophy will develop such a character because they have *chosen* to do so.

This tragic choice leads the defiant down the path of sensual pleasure (2:10a, 12, 14, 18). The expression in 2:10a refers to a perverted sex act. In God's divine designs, sex has a proper role with limits and restrictions. Thus, it is pure and holy (cf. Hebrews 13:4). God's truth tells us that sex with limits and restriction is the *only way* a human can find enjoyment and happiness that was designed to be found in such intimacy. But the Playboy Philosophy scoffs at any notion of perversion and tosses aside all limits. When you

realize this point, it is not surprising to read that one so-called "expert" has written that there is "no such thing as sex perversion in our enlightened era"! One who follows the pathetic path of sensual pursuit never finds purity but only pollution (cf. 2:20a). The path of sensual pleasure encourages one to become "pleasure mad." You are encouraged to do anything that brings pleasure to you. You are to have no inhibitions whatsoever. In the end, such a person loses not only respect for God but self-respect!

Peter tells us that the greatest danger of following such an alluring philosophy is that one actually becomes addicted to pursuing pleasure. Notice how he speaks of this. Such people possess "eyes full of adultery" (2:14). So perverted and twisted have their minds become, they cannot look upon another person without imagining lascivious acts with them. They crudely stare, assuming that all (especially the object of their fantasy) share their perverted thoughts as well. Such people "never cease from sin" (2:14). Their *will* to resist has been successfully buried. The *sensitivity* to resist has become calloused through repeated sin. Restraint is not even considered! Among the seven abominations to God, the fourth one is "a heart that devises wicked plans" (Proverbs 6:16). Such is a good description of those who cannot "cease to sin." Such people "revel in the daytime." Sin loves darkness because it feels safe from discovery (cf. Job 34:22). But the Playboy Philosophy extinguishes all shame so that even the most blatant sins are committed in open clear light. Such are "self-willed" (2:10a). The word used here by Peter is the Greek *hedone* and refers to "self pleasure." The number one concern of such a person is *self*. The person guided by this will lie, cheat, steal, do anything for the pleasure of the moment. It is from this word that we get "hedonism" which describes the lifestyle of the Playboy Philosophy. It is shocking to see how clearly these four points apply to our modern society. We are surrounded by those who have heeded the urge to "let go and be free." It is highly unusual to see anyone uphold principles contrasting with these four points!

As an illustration of how great a grasp such a philosophy has on modern man, consider the recent trends in mental health counseling. New programs are being offered that deal with a new addiction—not alcohol or some other drug, but sex addiction! Thousands have now been diag-

nosed as addicted to sensuality. Why? Because they have followed the broad path of promised "freedom." They are addicts because they, like some of Peter's readers, have their eyes filled with adultery, cannot cease from sinning, revel in the daytime, and are bent on a course of self-willed pleasure. Believers are just as endangered by this addiction as the unbeliever, and Peter urges Christians to remember the truth of the matter.

Another facet of the character of those who follow this Playboy Philosophy must be discussed (2:14b). Those who have become ensnared have forsaken concern for others. They are motivated by "greed" (cf. 2:3). This causes them to use and manipulate anyone for their selfish pleasure. The word used by Peter, "trained," is important. Literally, it means that such are specially trained for a work. Those who are mastered by the Playboy Philosophy are special experts at getting others to succumb to their wishes.

In a November 1985 letter from Dr. James Dobson, there is an alarming discussion about the practice known as "Dial-a-porn." Through this, telephones are used to deliver the most obscene and profane messages one can imagine. The tapes can be listened to by anyone old enough to dial the number. There has been opposition to this practice, and testimonies were taken by the Presidential Commission on Pornography. At these hearings, Brent Ward, U.S. Attorney, made the following remarks:

We know from our work that these recordings conjure up images in the minds of young people which become powerfully anchored in the memory and which have a powerful, addictive effect. They are like morphine to some children. These listening experiences become vivid memories which the mind continually "replays"—stimulating the child again and again and suggesting the need for even further stimulation by making more calls. . . . They gain such a hold that some parents, teachers, and counselors have found themselves powerless to do anything about it.

Do you see how Peter describes the same thing? The proponents of the Playboy Philosophy have become experts at addicting men, women, and even eight-year-olds to their perverted practices!

This is the real character of one who follows the lascivious philosophy of our modern times. Such a character is laid bare, exposed for all to

see. Such a one has rejected God for self, and the consequences are most tragic!

Before going to the next point, let me briefly notice the results that Peter says will arise in the lives of all who develop this kind of sordid character.

First, they will become foolish (2:12). They may pretend to be wise, but really they are ignorant. They become as Paul described:

For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions (1 Timothy 1:6, 7).

Second, they forsake the "right" way (2:15). Like stubborn Balaam (cf. Numbers 22:1-14), these are bent on self-serving pleasure, and nothing will turn them from their gross objectives. They were once a part of the right way, but now because of their bullheaded position they, like the prophet Beor, follow the wrong course.

Third, they try to encourage others to join with them (2:14, 18). They seek to strengthen their numbers, for that will give them acceptance and lessen their individual responsibility. They look especially for the newer converts or those struggling with sin in their lives. They deliberately lead the innocent and conscientious astray by baiting a snare for the unsuspecting ("entice"). This evidently is a universal practice of this perverted philosophy, for Paul observed the same thing (cf. Romans 1:32).

Fourth, they become slaves of corruption (2:19). They will brag and boast about the "freedom" they enjoy. They will scoff at the notion of "one man for one woman forever." They paint a glowing picture of what "real living" is all about. In reality, they are the sad slaves of their philosophy. Where will they be when disease ravages their physical bodies? What peace will abide when sin's burdens weigh upon them? Nothing in life is free, especially sin, but this realization comes too late.

James II lay on his deathbed and sought to convey lasting words to his son. He remarked, "There is no slavery like sin, and no liberty like God's service." I believe the dethroned monarch was absolutely right. When you consider the chains that indulged lust forges, you realize the slavery that is accepted. The drunkard who can-

not resist the craving for more alcohol is a fitting picture of such slavery. But these are also fitting pictures of those bound to such slavery—the greedy man who works day and night for material possessions, the sensual man, the ambitious man, the worldly man, and those who, in spite of knowledge, cannot break away from their enthrallment with sin. These are all subjects of a stern and degrading tyranny.

Such characters are described by Peter. This is the true picture of one who allows the Playboy Philosophy to become “master.” Such is insulting, revolting, and deceiving. They do not have the least qualm in using someone else for personal gain. It is hard to imagine that believers could be duped by such a philosophy, but they were in Peter’s day and continue to be in our day.

THE AWESOME EFFECTS OF THIS PHILOSOPHY

Contrary to popular notion, Peter says that those who live according to the slavery of sensualism do experience tragic effects in life. Carefully consider each of the following.

~~It Blemishes the Church~~

First, it stains and blemishes some in the church (2:13). The Lord’s church is pure and thus identified with its pure Savior (cf. 1 Peter 1:19; Ephesians 5:27; etc.). But the members who reject God’s morality for self-serving sensuality cause ruin in the church in two ways. Those who accept this philosophy become a “spot,” a moral stain which mars the sinless character of God’s saints. They also become a “blemish,” an insult and a disgrace to the church. In short, the church suffers as the outsiders look at members who are dominated by lust. The world sees church members who live in open rebellion with God, show contempt for other brethren, and are mad pleasure-seekers. When the world sees such church members, it mocks God (cf. Luke 14:27-30).

It Contaminates Fellowship

Second, it contaminates fellowship gatherings (2:13). Our first-century brethren gathered together at times other than worship assemblies. During these times, they would develop and deepen relationships. It was quite common for them to share a fellowship meal when these gatherings were set (cf. Acts 2:46; 20:11; Jude

12). Those who were following the immoral Playboy Philosophy were in attendance at these gatherings. They had wormed their way into the heart of the church’s fellowship. Such positioning enabled them to subvert and draw away others to their vain lifestyle. Thus they caused not only damage from without, as the world scoffed and ridiculed the church, but they also caused great damage from within! The church was drastically affected in every way.

It Destroys Hope

~~Third, it holds false hope (2:17-19). Peter says the fact is plain—the philosophy promises but never delivers!~~ He uses two metaphors to illustrate his point. A weary traveler runs to a spring in hope of finding a cool, refreshing drink but only finds dust. An anxious farmer looks into the darkening sky ready for rain on his parched fields, but the clouds arrive delivering only a few drops of the needed rain. Just like the dry spring or the storm clouds that blew over, the Playboy Philosophy promises relief but never provides it. It is unsteady and unsatisfactory.

A noble ship was near home port after a long voyage. On her deck stood many weather-beaten sailors who thought, “I shall be home tomorrow.” Some were old men who had not seen their childhood home for many years. A mother lifted her son up to look at the far-off land and whispered, “We shall be home tomorrow!” But their tomorrow never came. That night the gentle breeze became a furious gale. The sails were split into ribbons; the rudder was broken. The vessel became unmanageable. All on board perished as the ship drifted upon the outer reefs and wrecked! They had been promised a tomorrow that never came.

Such is true with the philosophy Peter warns about. False hope is extended by the world, for that is the only thing it can offer. But Christ holds forth the opportunity of a hope with substance if we follow His will (cf. John 4:14). Peter urges his readers to muse on the fate of this philosophy. It is grim!

It Corrupts Security

~~Fourth, it leads to great danger. Those who are following the Playboy Philosophy ask, “What is danger? If I’m careful and you are careful, what will it hurt?”~~ Such ignorance is answered by Peter in this paragraph by five specific points.

"You will be captured" (2:12, 19b). A fitting comparison is found in the animals who act from instinct, not from reason. Those who follow instinct will degenerate to the animal's level and face the animal's plight. Without reasoning the dumb animal steps into the set trap and is captured. The deceptive look of the snare served its purpose as it misguided the beast. In reality, Peter says that is what happens when we pursue the philosophy of self-pleasure. "You will be caught." One realizes too late, that he is caught. Unhappiness and despair compound the problem. One begins to realize that he or she is a slave to the polluted passions of lust and are not at all "free." The slave who digs in the mine or labors at the oar can rejoice in the prospect of laying down his burden at the end of his life, but the slave of sin finds no hope arising from death. He is obliged to look forward with constant terror to this most certain of all fates. At death his miseries commence. Peter says to recognize this fact—sin does enslave.

"You will be destroyed" (2:12). Peter could not use stronger words here. A corrupted lifestyle can lead to only one way—destruction! If people cherish the Playboy Philosophy, they must be prepared for this sure destruction. Those who follow this philosophy have destroyed others, and they shall likewise be destroyed.

"You will suffer now, and you will suffer more" (2:13). Wages will be paid. I like the picture John provides, "Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her" (Revelation 18:6; cf. Romans 6:23; Galatians 6:7). Anyone accepting this philosophy will experience pleasure to some extent now, but in the process even the initial pleasure will be lost. In the end, health is ruined, the family is shattered, emotions are distraught, and the mind is tormented. Immorality is never free—it costs a heavy price!

"You will be accursed by God" (2:14). Even though a person was once among the redeemed and beloved of God, by his choice he is now among those receiving God's curses (cf. Matthew 7:21-23). Those who intentionally deceive others and those who live a cursed lifestyle will be eternally cursed in hell's fires.

"You will spend eternity in the blackest dark" (2:17). Having loved the deeds of darkness, a person who decides to follow this philosophy will spend

eternity in darkness (cf. Matthew 25:30; 8:12; 22:13; Jude 13). How some imagine they can live presently in darkness and eternally in light is beyond my comprehension.

CONCLUSION

Peter's words are brutally frank. It is as though he has been sitting in our living rooms, reading our nightly newspapers! Our society is so much like Peter's. The words he used to stir up his brethren in the first century ought to stir us as well. The Playboy Philosophy plagues us, and we must be prepared to help our children meet it in the appropriate manner.

Society today is taking a liberal view of sex. The world is advocating sensuality in every aspect of life. When you mention perversion, you are laughed at by most. We have advocates of the "new" morality that is really not "new" at all. We are bombarded with advertisements that fill our eyes with adultery and fornication. A reckless and daring self-pleasing attitude seeks to invade and conquer the hearts of God's children.

Peter's message is urgent. Muse over the Playboy Philosophy, and remember the truth about it. When we do this, we will be preserved. τ

Attitudes Held by False Teachers (2 Peter 2:10-19)

False teachers have these attitudes:

1. They despise authority (2:10, 11).
2. They follow instinct instead of reason (2:12).
3. They try to grasp all pleasure immediately (2:13-19).



The Utter Failing of Error (2 Peter 2:17-19)

1. Error gives the appearance, but lacks substance (2:17).
2. Error offers escape, but only brings bondage (2:18).
3. Error promises freedom, but only leads to slavery (2:19).

Sin and error always paint a much brighter picture than it really is. When looked at in an honest manner, its deceit is evident.

• 2 Peter 2:20-22 •

Analyzing Apostasy

"For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, 'A dog returns to its own vomit,' and, 'A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire' " (2:20-22).

John Wesley, believing in the possibility of final apostasy, warned all members of his societies to beware of it. In his sermon, "The Loss of the Soul," he related the following:

Some years since, one who had turned back as a dog to his vomit, was struck in his mad career of sin. A friend who prayed with him said, "Lord, have mercy on those who are just stepping out of the body and know not who shall meet them at their entrance into the world once again, an angel or a fiend." The sick man shrieked with a piercing cry, "A fiend! A fiend!" and then expired. Just such an end, unless he die like an ox, may any man expect who loses his own soul.

Our lives have all been touched by brethren we dearly love who have erred from God's truth. Paul was crushed by Demas, Hymenaeus, Alexander, and a host of others who had turned from God to the baited allurements of the world. As Peter wrote chapter 2, his thoughts were burdened with some unnamed brethren who had swallowed Satan's bait and were once again captives of the world. You and I have personally suffered distraught emotions because friends

and family have followed the broad way to apostasy. The hurt, anger, confusion, and shock have left a permanent mark on our hearts. As we consider 2 Peter 2:20-22, these emotions will be stirred anew.

We have already noted the harsh treatment of Peter regarding false teachers. He was acquainted with the brethren to whom he was writing and probably was familiar with those causing the problems. His hurt was as sensitive as yours or mine would be. In this text, Peter presents a bold conclusion to his discussion of the dangers in following error. The words of the text point to the inevitable condemnation awaiting those who spurn God for self. Although in context it deals with the false teachers, it can adequately portend the dark fate awaiting anyone who has turned back to the world after having once been saved. Peter urges us to look at the apostate and remember certain facts about him. If we will consider the apostate's discussion of retrogression, we will be urged to persevere in ardent devotion.

Three "R's" will form an outline of study. We find a review of the apostate's life; we come to understand the attitudes of the apostate by a revelation of his heart; and we are urged to persevere by two reminders.

A REVIEW

Peter's description is plain. The life of the apostate is considered from the new birth to the eternal destiny. It is a sad review. It is filled with the unstated fact that here was potential for great service and unlimited blessings, but such

went unfilled because commitment was not 100 per cent. With each verse, Peter's words gain momentum, and the pitiful plight is fully reviewed at the end. Three facts become clear in a review of the backslider's life.

Why Will Such a Tragic End Await the Apostate? (2:20)

The apostate believer did not fully appreciate his rescue from the world by Christ. Here was one who had been rescued from the doom of the world by God's love and mercy, but now he has turned his back upon God. Earlier, Peter had confirmed that all believers have "become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust" (1:4b). But the ingrate has now forgotten what God had done for him! The rescue of man from Satan's grasp required much from God, but the apostate evidently never comprehended or appreciated what had been done for him through God's grace and mercy. The ungrateful disposition, along with its accompanying actions, is fully described in Hebrews 10:26-31. Nothing is harder to understand than the ungrateful heart's response to God's love. History is replete with illustrations of the hardened hearts of ingrates.

At the battle of Alma, in September 1854, a wounded Russian was calling piteously for water. A certain Captain Eddington, whose heart was kind and charitable, ran up to him and gave him the desired drink. The captain then ran forward to join his regiment when the wretch, who had just been restored by the captain's kindness, fired and shot the one who had been his friend in time of need. How tragic are the lives of ingrates!

~~Because the apostate has never appreciated the love of God, he began a career in Christianity which set at naught the following blessings. He set at naught the grace and mercy of God. It has appeared to all men, equally inviting each to share in the wedding feast, the true contentment, and the abiding peace that passes all understanding (cf. Titus 2:11). He set at naught the willing sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Christ had voluntarily offered Himself. He had emptied Himself of the divine glories of heaven and became man. He suffered and endured shame, the cross, and multiplied abuses to save mankind (cf. Philippians 2:5-11). He set at naught the eternal purpose of the church. God's beautiful church was designed to house the saved saints and to show the omnis-~~

cience of the Creator in saving man (cf. Ephesians 1:3, 4; 3:10). He set at naught the effectual cleansing of sin by Christ's blood. In 2:20-22, we find the word "defilement" which comes from a Greek verb meaning "to stain, color." Sin had stained man, and no remedy except Christ's blood is accepted by heaven. Christ offered sin-stained man the option of having his sins washed away and his soul restored to a pristine beauty (cf. Isaiah 1:18; Acts 22:16). He set at naught the beauties of heaven's promises. Heaven holds all for the true saint of God. It is a promised place of peace and happiness. It is a place of true rest. In this eternal city, no pollution of sin will exist, and only those who hold fast to Christ will be allowed entrance (cf. Revelation 21:27).

This failure to appreciate God's gift of salvation is clearly seen in the parable of the sower (Luke 8:12-14). The first three types of soil were not productive, and the seed did not survive. The seed could germinate and sprout, but lasting nourishment was lacking. Life existed for only the shortest time. Those today who have hearts symbolized by the wayside, rocky, or thorny soils are like the apostate in the text. They are ungrateful and unappreciative of God's grace and mercy. Such will inevitably lead to apostasy.

As verse 20 is further considered, we learn why ingratitude became so prominent in the apostate's life—he had failed to let go of the world! Evidently, he had failed to sever his love with the lusts of life. Many had been let loose, but a few were still cherished deep within the heart. So tightly held, these soon gained the upper hand in actions. They led to him becoming "entangled." Just as a hapless fish is trapped and faces certain doom, so is the apostate believer. The writer of Hebrews urges those Christians to make sure they do not cherish some deep hidden lust: "... lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1b).

The apostate is one who is ignorant of gratitude because he cherishes hidden lust, but he fails to consider the end of apostasy's path! This point is described in verse 20b. The eventual state is frightening—the heathen, ignorant, uncouth, unclean are better off than the wayward saint of God! Apostasy lures with a promise of lively hopes but only leads to great ruin. No greater ruin can be pictured in the life of the

apostate because of at least four points. Often the apostate will sink deeper into sin because there is less restraint. Think of the terrible situation discussed in 1 Corinthians 5:1-8. Why would a believer participate in such immoralities? After he has cast God's counsel to the wind, no restraint is left. According to Paul, even the ignorant heathen would never participate in such immoralities, but the wayward saint does, for he only goes deeper into sin. Often the conscience of the apostate becomes seared so that all sensitivity to sin is gone (cf. 1 Timothy 4:2). Often the inclination to return to God is not present, for the ears have become shut to the gospel, the eyes closed to God's light, and the lips silent in asking God for help! It is this failure to be inclined toward God's will that Hebrews 6:4-6 says is responsible for the wayward believer never being restored! Often, increased guilt results from increased knowledge. The apostate is reckless in abandoning the clear will of God. But increased guilt is a heavy burden to carry for such loose activities (cf. James 4:17; Luke 12:47, 48).

These observations are more than sufficient to show why the tragic fate of eternal damnation awaits the apostate. The point is vividly clear and should be impressed on our minds.

How Repulsive Is Compromised Christianity? (2:21)

These backsliders still professed to "believe in God," but they had yielded no practical fruit of this faith. In fact, they had shown that a devotion to sensual desires was more evident than their devotion to God! They made "knowledge" their chief topic yet in practice they did everything contrary to "knowledge." They called defilement "holy," sin became "good," darkness was "light," and slavery was "freedom." Such a vain philosophy of Christianity is exposed by Isaiah (Isaiah 5:20). But as Peter examines it, its vanity becomes crystal clear. It does not work!

Compromise in Christianity is always exposed as bringing bitter and hard consequences. Of the many texts exposing compromise, one of the clearest is certainly Ezekiel 18:24: "But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that a wicked man does, will he live?" Certainly, here is one who tried to compromise even the basic tenets of God's will. Eze-

kiel asks, "Will such a man get by with compromise?" He answers his own question, "All his righteous deeds which he has done will not be remembered for his treachery which he has committed and his sin which he has committed; for them he will die" (cf. Hebrews 10:26; Isaiah 57:20, 21).

An Arabian named Sabat was converted to Christianity. He apostasized and wrote in favor of Mohammedanism. He was confronted by a preacher who posed some pointed questions. In reply Sabat said, "I am very unhappy. I have a mountain of burning sand in my head. When I go about, I know not what I am doing." It is indeed an evil and bitter thing to "forsake the Lord our God."

God has never accepted disciples who were compromisers of truth. Many have compromised and tried to argue away their defections only to accept some absurd position. Christians are to leave lust in the baptism along with all other sins. If one professes to believe in God yet offers no practical demonstration of this faith in daily life, it is hypocrisy! Secker has said, "None are so black in the eyes of Deity as those who paint spiritual beauty where there is no spirituality."

How Revolting Is the Apostate? (2:22)

The one who falls away from God not only is the basest sort of ingrate, not only does he fail to present a valid case for compromise, but he is repulsive! Two figures are used by Peter to show exactly how revolting he is.

The "dog" was a scavenger that ate anything, without regard for taste. The dog often depicted the ungodly, unclean, and impure. The reference by Peter is also found in Proverbs 26:11. The "sow" was understood to refer to the vilest and most unclean thing on earth. These two animals and their behavior is what Peter focuses on. Peter's point is that the one who goes back on his commitment to God is just as sickening as is the prospect of joining the dog in his revolting meal or the pig in its wallow of mud and dung. Each of these had gotten rid of that which was impure, but after being cleansed each had returned to the putrid! Those who advocate "once saved always saved" like to point out that the dog remained a dog and the sow remained a sow. They fail to note that it is Peter's intention to show that when a man becomes a Christian he is still a man, but that once saved, man can go back to his

putrid manners if he is not careful. The dog and sow were changed, just as man is changed in conversion. The fact that each animal went back does not nullify the fact that change had taken place!

Those who have gotten rid of the putrid (sin) should never return to wallow in it again. Those who have been washed from sin's stains should not become spotted by it again (cf. Romans 6:1, 2).

In this review, Peter has shown the life and actions of the backslider. May we cautiously guard against falling from our saved position with God.

A REVELATION

Basically one attitude is responsible for apostasy in the believer's life—arrogance. The putting of one's self as the supreme governor in life is the attitude responsible for one falling from God's salvation (cf. 2:10, 11).

Arrogance prompts one to totally disregard God's will. Those in 2:20-22 had possessed "knowledge" of God's will. They had known about God's salvation and faith and followed it in the past (cf. 1:2, 3, 8; etc.). They had not always been hypocrites. As time progressed, evidently some began to question God's commands and the necessity of adhering to them. Once the questioning began, apostasy was soon to follow. This demonstration of arrogance is common in our times.

I remember talking with a lady who wanted to remarry after a divorce. We spent a number of hours studying God's teachings to see what He had to say about her right to remarry. After our study, she was convinced that she had no scriptural right to remarry. After a few weeks I received a lengthy letter which contained these disturbing sentences, "... our conference about my wanting to remarry was very enlightening, and I could see that every one of your words came directly from the Bible ... As the weeks passed, I pondered the problem until I finally felt that God would not require me to follow His Word exactly. ..." How sad it is to see arrogance control a person's response to God's commands. The same thing that happened in this woman's reasoning takes place in the minds of those who fall away from God—they believe that God does not mean what He says. Arrogance prompts them to twist Scriptures to suit their purposes.

These apostates were adept at wrangling God's Word until believers thought sin was good and bondage was freedom (cf. 3:16). Only an arrogant interpretation of Scripture could command practice of sin like this. Arrogance causes a rejection of "law" for "love." Concerning the woman in the example, how could she justify remarriage that was contrary to everything God commanded? Look at the brethren Peter addressed. How could they believe the flagrant error that the false teachers advocated? The answer to both situations is easy—they believed that "God's laws do not matter, only His love." They, and many like them today, believe that God's love is so great that it will cancel any responsibility on man's part. They forget that the greatest "love passage" in the Bible, John 3:16, speaks with equal force on the necessity of obedience to God's laws (cf. John 3:16-18).

Thus, Peter has revealed the attitude of arrogance that directs those who have fallen away from God. Such an attitude is disastrous and will bring tragic consequences in the lives of all who follow it.

TWO REMINDERS

As Peter concludes the harshest chapter in the Bible on false doctrine and error, he stresses two pointed reminders.

Apostasy is a real and awful possibility! You cannot read this section without knowing that apostasy can actually happen in any believer's life—even yours! Some wish to deny this simple fact. It is not uncommon to hear objections to Peter's teaching on apostasy. In order to argue that this text does not speak about a saved believer falling from grace and being lost, the following points must be answered. (1) These were said to have "known"—a word used to describe personal acquaintance and relationship. These did more than have the Scriptures in their minds. They were personally acquainted with the way of righteousness (cf. 1:2; 2:20; 3:18). These were Christians! (2) These had "escaped" from sin. If one escapes from sin where does he go? Only to Christ (cf. 1:4; 2:20). You cannot help but be a Christian if you have escaped from sin and the world through Christ. (3) These had turned "again." How could they "turn again" if they had never left? They had left sin and the world, and now they "turned again" from salvation to corruption!

The fact that apostasy is a certainty is seen by even a casual reading of Scripture. Why would God caution us about something that never can take place?¹

Since apostasy is a real possibility, we understand the urgency of Christ's words, "And what I say unto you I say unto all, watch." If we are watching, we will remain true to God and be prepared for His Son's return.

~~Christian discipleship is exacting, discerning, and eventually eternally rewarding. Those who feel they~~ can follow Jesus and dabble in sin are absolutely wrong (cf. Colossians 3:5, 6). We are followers of God. Therefore, we are new creations having been born into the family of God. We must remain as such (cf. Proverbs 3:23; Revelation 3:4, 5; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

CONCLUSION

Disheartened by extraordinary dangers and difficulties of an enterprise, a Roman army lost courage and resolve and was about to turn in retreat. The general tried to reason with them. He tried to appeal to their love of country, honor, and commitment. He tried to revive their fainting hearts, stimulate their courage, and shake their resolve. As much as they trusted, admired, and loved him, his appeals were in vain. They were not moved. Carried away by panic, they turned to retreat. At this point they were facing a mountain pass where the road was but wide enough for a single footpath. As a last resort the general laid himself across the path and said, "If you retreat, it's over my body you go and as you go and you will be trampling me to death." No foot advanced. The retreat was arrested. The soldiers could face the enemy better than mangle underfoot the one who loved them and had often led them to victory. Hesitating no longer to advance, they turned to resume their march.

Those today who have named Christ as their Master and are living with sin in their lives are guilty of a great crime. No one can return to the practice and brief pleasures of sin without trampling Christ underfoot as they retreat. "... since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame" (Hebrews 10:29). τ

Endnote

¹See the following texts: Ezekiel 18:24; Hebrews 3:12-18; 6:4ff.; 10:26; Jude 4-6; 1 Corinthians 10:12; etc.

When the Cleansing Is in Vain (2 Peter 2:20-22)

Peter speaks of some who had been saved, whose sins were washed away and whose souls were purified (1 Peter 1:17-22). But they failed to remain pure. Sainthood was not a part of their character. Why?

1. They failed to repent as they allowed old temptations and habits to linger (cf. Colossians 3:5-9). They were "entangled."
2. They failed to exert enough self-control and were "overcome" (cf. Ephesians 6:10-18).
3. They failed to look to the future; the pleasures of the moment appeared more urgent than devotion to the future. In pursuing the immediate, they stood unprepared for the future judgment (2:21).
4. They failed to realize the utter foolishness and reprehensible character of their acts (2:22).



Reminiscences of Failure (2 Peter 2:20-22)

Peter tells of some who failed to persevere. These had turned their backs on Christ (John 6:66) and done so without thought to the calamity which lay ahead. Peter calls for his readers to call from memory the following facts:

1. The apostates failed to appreciate being born again through knowledge (2:20).
 - a. They had escaped (cf. 1:3, 4).
 - b. They had become saints (cf. 1 Peter 1:17-22; Hebrews 6:4ff.).
2. The apostates failed to be committed to Christ (2:20b).
 - a. So cherished were the old lusts, they were never put away (cf. Colossians 3:5-9).
 - b. So intent on serving self rather than God, they were overcome (2 Timothy 2:4).
3. The apostates failed to reason out actions (2:21). No thought was given to the future, only the immediate.
4. The apostates failed to appreciate God giving His Word to help them (2:21b). They ignored the "commands."
5. The apostates failed to learn the lesson that apostasy can come to the believer! (2:22).

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Thoughts From Second Peter

Near the end of the New Testament are two books authored by Peter, the apostle of Christ. Each of these is designed to caution the saints of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Pet. 1:1; cf. 2 Pet. 3:1) of the hardships that would befall them and the fidelity they must exercise under these difficulties. The term “Dispersion” generally refers to the scattering of the Jews beyond their land, especially in the time of Alexander the Great. The first epistle focuses mainly upon attacks that would arise from outside the church, while 2 Peter concentrates on false teachers that would assault the church from within.

It is tragic that there has been such a widespread denial of Peter’s authorship of the second letter. Carl Holladay, a professor at Emory University (a Methodist school), characterizes 2 Peter as “transparent fiction” (2005, 516). Holladay presented his material on “Introducing the New Testament Theologically” at the Harding Graduate School of Religion W. B. West Lectures (Memphis) in 2002, and he regularly teaches Bible classes at the Northlake Church of Christ in Atlanta.

Second Peter begins with the declaration that it is the work of “Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1). It contains the writer’s affirmation that Christ specifically foretold the apostle’s death (1:13-14; cf. Jn. 21:18ff). The author asserts that “we were eyewitnesses of [Jesus] majesty” in the “holy mount” (1:16-18) — a reference to the events of the Transfiguration. The “we” would include Peter, along with James and John—the latter two clearly being excluded as the authors of this book (cf. Mt. 17:1ff).

If one contends that 2 Peter was written in the late first or early second century A.D., as Holladay alleges, then the undeniable conclusion must be that the **real** author **lied** in his initial affirmation, together with the supporting historical allusions, when he attributed the composition to Peter, the apostle. If the book commences with deception, how would one know that **anything** in the document is trustworthy?

There were early pseudo-writings attributed to Peter, e.g., the *Gospel of Peter*, or the *Apocalypse of Peter*, but the character of the spurious documents was vastly inferior to that of 2 Peter (Hillyer 1992, 11).

There have been many able defenses of the genuineness of this work. Gundry confidently contends: “Despite modern doubt, then, we may accept the final verdict of the early Church that shortly after the Apostle Peter wrote his first epistle and shortly before his martyrdom in A.D. 64, he wrote this second epistle which bears his name” (1970, 354). Thiessen firmly stated: “the Christian earnestness, apostolic tone, and autobiographical allusions make it impossible to believe that the Epistle is spurious” (1955, 289). It should be accepted as genuine. For a brief but powerful defense of Peter’s authorship, see McNab (1954, 1143–1144). It is a rather amazing phenomenon that liberal scholars who deny the genuineness of second Peter nonetheless include it in their commentaries. Why do so if the work is a mere forged document by a criminal scribe? Has any modern English translation omitted the book?

There are two major errors addressed by the apostle in this second letter; they pertain

to enemies **without**, and those **within**.

Denying the Master

The following text sets the tone for the warnings that follow.

But there arose false prophets also among the people, among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall secretly bring in destructive heresies, denying even the master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction (2 Pet. 2:1).

Several important points are apparent.

(1) False teachers will import “heresies” into the church. As to the nature of their doctrine, it is false—further characterized as “heresies” (plural). “Heresy” takes its rise from the Greek, *hairesis* (9 times in the New Testament). Originally, the term meant simply “to choose” (Lev. 22:18, 21 – LXX). Then it came to signify a choice, i.e., an opinion — especially a destructive opinion, as in this passage. The term also takes on the sense of a “sect” that adopts an opinion contrary to divine revelation. Both the Pharisees and the Sadducees were “sects” that distorted the Law of Moses (Acts 5:17; 15:5). The early Christians were charged falsely with being a “sect” (Acts 24:14; 28:22) as they were perceived to be but an off-shoot of Judaism. The expression also is used for a factious element (that follows an opinion or dominant leader) within the church (1 Cor. 11:19; Gal. 5:20).

(2) The erroneous teachings would be brought into the church from outside sources. The mode of operation would be covert, “secretly.” False teachers not only disdain gospel

truth, they are duplicitous in their mode of operation; thus, wholly void of honor.

The heresies would be “destructive” (Grk. *apoleia*), indicating “the loss of well-being, not of being” (Vine 1991, 212). It is a ruin that conveys the idea of misery (Thayer 1958, 70-71). There is no extinction of existence implied in the term, as some suppose in their efforts to nullify the doctrine of eternal punishment for the wicked (Smith 2003, 165ff). The doom of these heretics will arrive at the appropriate time with decisive swiftness. The visitation of destruction will be upon both the teachers and those who yield to their fallacious dogma. Listening with discernment is as important as the teaching itself (cf. Lk. 8:18).

The core of the heretical doctrine appears to be a repudiation of Christ as Savior, for the apostle declares that they are “denying even the Master who bought them.” It will not do to depict these as mere “professing Christians” (Robertson 1933, 160), in an effort to avoid the conclusion that these were apostates from the faith who were destined for hell. The text is far too clear to miss the point that they had been “bought” by Christ’s blood at the time of their conversion (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:19-20), but they had abandoned the relationship (cf. Heb. 10:29).

Mocking the Promise of Return

A second major heresy had to do with a sneer at the divine promise that Christ would return to render judgment (Jn. 5:28-29; cf. 2 Cor. 5:10).

[I]n the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of his coming? For, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (3:3-4).

This brief statement contains several facts that warrant examination.

(1) Certain false teachers are characterized as “mockers” (*empaiktes*), i.e., those who add ridicule to the other base traits that blighted their ungodly souls. The term depicts those “who are hostile to revelation and to godliness” (Kittel 1985, 759). The pattern of such conduct is well defined in the Gospel records as used with reference to the hateful treatment of Jesus (cf. Mt. 27:29, 31; Mk. 15:31; Lk. 18:32). Mockers are not an extinct species!

(2) Their wanton lives are a telling index of their true character. They pursue their own “lusts,” and doubtless this indulgence is reflected in their ridicule of that coming day when the Lord Jesus will judge the lives of all (cf. 1 Pet. 4:3; 2 Pet. 2:10).

(3) Arrogantly, they challenge the promise of the Lord’s Second Coming. They appeal to the seeming uniformity of history as support for their proposition. They contend that since the “fathers [i.e., notable ancestors] fell asleep,” the regularity of nature has remained relatively constant “from the beginning of the creation.” [Note: The “sleep” of the fathers is a reference to the disposition of their **bodies** in death (Dan. 12:2); not to a state of post-mortem **non-consciousness**, as alleged by some (cf. Smith 2003, 102ff).

It is important to observe that even these crass advocates of error believed: (a) that there was a “creation,” hence the earth has not existed eternally; and, (b) that humankind had observed the orderliness of the creation since its “beginning.” They did not subscribe to the modern anti-biblical notion that the creation occurred eons before the arrival of man, who by some folks is alleged to be but a “very recent newcomer to the planet” (Clayton 1968, 2). In this matter the first-century heretics were closer to the truth than some members of the modern church!

(4) The apostle counters with a devastating argument, which the lust-laden critics had “willfully” dis-remembered. The same earth that initially had been “compacted” (made to stand) out of water, and in the presence of water, by the “word of God” (cf. Gen. 1:1-2, 9), completely overflowed with water and “perished” (Gen. 6-8). It was a **world-wide** flood.

The term “perished” (*apoleto*) “does not carry with it the sense of utter destruction or annihilation, but rather that of a change, or breaking up, of an existing order” (Plumptre 1893, 192).

Peter’s contrast between the “world that then was” and the implied “world that now is” is significant. The geologic and fossil evidence around the globe is dramatic testimony to the Genesis Flood. Such, however, surely was unknown empirically to any appreciable degree to first-century citizens. The information came to the apostle by **revelation**, not **investigation**!

Peter’s point is this: the terrible interruption of the earth’s ancient features, as revealed

in the testimony of Scripture, should be a sobering reminder of the promised judgment yet to come. The material universe has been “reserved” for a coming “day of judgment” and the horrible punishment of the ungodly. There is no room for a “heaven-on-earth” theory in this context, though this concept appears to be gaining some momentum in the church (see Jackson 2007).

An Appeal For Repentance

The apostle urges his readers not to be swayed by the baseless argument that Christ has **delayed** coming, therefore he is **not** coming. One must remember that God is eternal and his “clock” is not set according to human standards. What spans hundreds of years in earth’s chronology is but a moment to the Eternal One.

I am compelled to comment on the frequent wresting of this text from its context for the purpose of alleging that the chronological references in Scripture are wholly elastic. This has been the ploy of those who have inhaled the fumes of evolutionary propaganda by attempting to stretch the “days” of the creation week into billions of years in order to facilitate the evolutionary timetable. Such is an unco-scionable perversion of biblical truth.

Peter then penned this statement.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all come to repentance (3:9).

Four great truths regarding God here are set forth. Careful consideration should be given to each of them.

(1) God is faithful. The God of the Bible is a “God of truth” (Psa. 31:5; Isa. 65:16). He does not lie (Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18). His word is one of integrity. When he makes a promise, he fulfills it (Dt. 7:8; cf. Psa. 36:5b; Isa. 25:1). When Abraham was promised that through his “seed” all nations of the earth would be blessed, he believed the Lord (Rom. 4:3). He operated upon the premises that God is faithful; he can be trusted, and he is “able also to perform” what he has promised (v. 21).

It must be borne in mind, however, that some of Jehovah’s promises are **absolute**, while others are **conditional**. When a promise is conditional, its fulfillment is dependent upon the **obedience** of those to whom it has

been addressed (cf. Acts 2:38-39). The promise of Christ's return is absolute. He will "come again" (Jn. 14:3), and he will do so according to his own time schedule — of which no man has been apprised (Mt. 24:36).

(2) God is patient. The apostle affirms that the Lord is "longsuffering." The Greek verb is *makrothymeo*, from *makros* ("long" in terms of time), and *thymos* (anger, fury). God's wrath at sin is tempered by his love for pitiful, stupid human beings who, against their own best interests, frequently ignore him and reject his plan for their present lives and eternal welfare.

The pre-Flood world was "corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence" (Gen. 6:11), but the "longsuffering of God waited [more than a century] in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared" (1 Pet. 3:20).

Fifteen centuries before the birth of Christ, God, through Moses, promised the nation of Israel blessings in abundance if the people would obey his voice (Dt. 28:1-14). But if they refused to obey, great punishment would be visited upon the nation in the course of time (28:15ff). Centuries passed, with the people becoming increasingly apostate. A temporal judgment came with the overthrow of northern Israel by the Assyrians (722-21 B.C.); then Judah was taken into Babylonian captivity for seventy years (606-536 B.C.). Eventually, after the Jews crucified their own Messiah, the full wrath of God came in the complete destruction of the nation by the Romans in A.D. 70 (cf. Mt. 22:7; 23:32-36; 24:1-34). Fifteen hundred years of longsuffering was exhausted! God is patient, but his Spirit will not strive with man indefinitely (Gen. 6:3).

(3) God is merciful. Peter declares that God does not "will that anyone perish." Does this mean that no one will? It does not (see v. 7b). Universalism (the notion that everyone will be saved) finds no support in the Bible (Mt. 7:13-14). The text does signify that it was never the **divine ideal** that anyone be lost. Before the foundation of the world the omniscient God knew that humanity would stray from his will, and a plan of salvation was in motion already (Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:20).

As noted above, the Lord does not "will" (KJV) or "wish" (ASV, ESV) anyone to be lost. The Greek term is *boulomenos* (a present, middle participle), which reflects the **ideal** desire of God, but the word leaves open the

door of human choice (Hiebert 1989, 156). The crucifixion of Jesus was according to the will or counsel (*boule*) of God, but the Jews nonetheless were held accountable for their own sinful actions in that event (cf. Acts 2:23; 4:28; see Muller 1971, 1017). The notion that some were "elected" or "predestined" to be lost before the foundation of the world, irrespective of their personal choices, is a false doctrine that is horrible in its implications.

In a time of great danger, when pursued by enemies, David praised "the God of my mercy" for his deliverance (Psa. 59:17). The Lord is described as being "rich in mercy" (Eph. 2:4), and that mercy has been manifest in the offering of Christ as the atonement for sin (Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:3; Jude 21). Divine mercy is an extension of love (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:8). God's mercy is not unconditional, however; it is available only to those who reverence him and submit to his word (Lk. 1:50; cf. Eccl. 12:13).

(4) God is demanding. There appears to be a common view in the world that "God" (whoever he is perceived to be) is a benevolent "fellow" who allows every one to enter heaven eventually. Even the vilest Hollywood sleazes and the most corrupt politicians are said to be "in a better place" after death. All who bravely fight and die in defense of their respective countries are almost guaranteed a home in whatever "heaven" they espouse—be it Islam's "happy bedroom," or "Christendom's" hall of "national valor." True obedience and genuine fidelity appear to be unknown requirements in certain circles. But the apostle declares it is God's will that "all come to repentance."

The expression "come to" derives from *choreo*, "to leave a space (which may be occupied or filled by another), to make room, give place, yield" (Thayer 1958, 674). It implies the exercise of one's personal initiative. It is an attitude of surrender. One must make room in his life for submission to God.

"Repentance" is a change of mind that results in a transformation of state or action. It is a "radical, moral turn of the whole person to God" (Mounce 2006, 580). Here the word is used as a synecdoche (the part stated for the whole; see Jackson 2005, 101-05). By that we mean that "repentance" stands for the full complement of conditions leading to the forgiveness of past sins on the part of the sinner. Other items of the plan of salvation are similarly used as summary terms, e.g., faith (Acts 16:31), confession (1 Tim. 6:12), and

immersion in water (Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). "Repentance" is employed in several other contexts as a summary term for full gospel obedience (Acts 11:18; 17:30; Rom. 2:4). One may not isolate one item of the plan of redemption from the full complement of requirements.

What marvelous two verses are these that contain an abbreviated sketch of the character of our Creator. What an awesome responsibility it is to live before him in humble obedience! WJ

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Do This and You Will Never Stumble

WHEREVER we look today, it seems that we are bombarded by messages trying to persuade us that we need whiter teeth or bigger cars, that we deserve finer clothes or fancier gadgets. Advertisers know that they will sell their products only if they cause consumers to perceive needs in their lives.

In the same way, false teachers influence Christians by first convincing them that they lack some spiritual blessing. When Peter wrote his second letter, many teachers were claiming to have new revelations.

BECOME PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE (1:3-7)

Peter assured his readers that they had received everything they needed "through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence" (1:3). Through the message of Peter and others like him, the Christians of Asia Minor had become heirs to the full blessings of Christ.

Through hearing their original teachers and obeying their message, the Christians whom Peter addressed had been born again to a spiritual life of oneness with God. The Word they had received had given them the resources they needed to resist sin and to live as redeemed and holy people. Had other teachers offered them additional access to God or shown them some new standard of morality? Peter assured his readers that the message they had received from him was God's full revelation. They had been deficient in nothing.

Peter's readers had both received promises and been heirs to promises—in the words of Paul, "... of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He

raised up Jesus, . . ." (Acts 13:32, 33). Before the arrival of the latest teachers, Peter's audience had experienced the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ. They had received the precious promise that on the great day of the Lord they would be saved. No promises made by false teachers could match the greatness of those which Peter's readers already enjoyed.

Christians are spiritually united with God. Paul said, "We have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). God's grace allows participation in the divine nature; the Christian becomes pure and holy because Christ has forgiven his sins. In this way he escapes the corruption that is in the world by lust. Could those who had lately come on the scene offer Christians anything comparable to their participation in the divine? Whenever a Christian hears a teacher who claims to have a new gospel message, a new revelation about the second coming of the Lord, or some interpretation of Scripture that men have never heard before, he must use discretion. He might pause and ask, "Has the gospel message I've heard from the beginning proven to be deficient? Doesn't it promise enough?" Peter made it clear in the next verses that when Christians supply themselves richly with a godly character, they become heirs to all of God's promises. The path to a godly character is described in 1:5-7, the best known and most cited passage of the letter.

Faith is the beginning point of the Christian journey, but in the words of James, "... faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). Therefore, Peter said, "In your faith supply moral excellence [goodness,

NIV]" (1:5). Christians are to add to their faith the qualities that make for moral uprightness and personal integrity. To moral excellence we are to add "knowledge" (1:5). Knowledge, in this context, is "God's wisdom," which Paul mentioned in 1 Corinthians 2:7. It is the knowledge of God's truth and the use of knowledge to God's glory. To knowledge we are to add "self-control" (1:6), a better word than "temperance" (KJV). Paul included self-control in his listing of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). One of the proverbs of Solomon reads, "Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit" (Proverbs 25:28).

To self-control we are to add "perseverance" (1:6). The KJV has "patience," a word which often conveys the idea of passive acceptance. The sense of the Greek word is steadfast endurance in the face of obstacles. To perseverance we are to add "godliness" (1:6). Godliness is the way we act when our lives are in harmony with God, when all that we do is to please and honor Him.

To godliness we are to add "brotherly kindness" (1:7). The same Greek word is used in 1 Peter 1:22, while a similar one is used in 1 Peter 3:8. In the secular world it often meant love for a brother in the flesh. In the New Testament it means love between brothers in Christ.

To brotherly kindness, Peter said, we must add love" (1:7). Like Paul (1 Corinthians 13:13), he saved the prince of virtues until last. This word is one of such lofty dimensions that it cannot be summed up in a sentence.

CONFIRM YOUR CALL AND CHOOSING (1:8-15)

Peter had not wandered from his purpose, to help his readers grow in knowledge so they could deal effectively with false teachers. He said, "For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:8). When a Christian supplies his life generously with the virtues listed in 1:5-7, and when he practices them, the knowledge of Christ is the natural by-product. Peter was talking about practical, not theoretical, knowledge. The two are not the same. One might read about gymnastics, for example, but he only *knows* gymnastics after he has invested much of his life in the practice of gymnastics.

The spiritual realm is the same. One may read about perseverance, but he *knows* perseverance and its capacity for it only when he has persevered. Similarly, he knows self-control when he has exercised self-control. To know perseverance, self-con-

trol, and the other Christian graces is to know Christ. Doing begets knowing. If these abound in us, the apostle assured, we will be effective and productive in the knowledge of our Lord. One who professes Christ and fails to know these practical manifestations of Christian teaching is blind and has forgotten (i.e., he does not know) that he has been cleansed from his past sins (1:9).

God has called, elected, and chosen a people to wear His name and to be His own. It is a concept that stretches deep into the doctrinal core of the Old Testament. After Moses gave the law to God's chosen people, a person was numbered among the chosen by virtue of birth. Since Christ established the new covenant, we are numbered among the elect by means of faith. Peter's concern was that his readers' lack of knowledge would result in their falling from among the elect (1:10). The doctrine that says, "Once you are saved you can never be lost" is not found in the Scriptures. When we make our calling sure, Peter said, we will live faithfully, and we will have a rich welcome into God's eternal kingdom (1:10, 11). Peter made it clear that he was teaching nothing new. His only purpose was to remind them of what they already knew to be true (1:12). We need to be reminded of what we already know more than we need to learn some new teaching. Unstable and immature people are always searching for something more, something new. The Bible will firmly establish us in the truth. Every teaching ought to be carefully compared with its revelation.

Unlike 1 Peter, 2 Peter contains allusions to incidents in Peter's life which could be identified from the Gospels. In 2 Peter 1:14 he referred to the words Jesus had spoken to him:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go." Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God (John 21:18, 19).

Peter understood that the time for the fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy was at hand (1:14).

It was not to a past event that Peter referred in 1:15 but to his plans for the future. He said, "And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you may be able to call these things to mind." He wanted his readers to remember after his death the "things" which Christ had made known to him. It is likely that 1:15 refers to his intention to leave a record of the life of Christ for his

readers. We have no Gospel of Peter, but the testimony of the ancient church is that Peter's authority stands behind the Gospel of Mark. It is possible that in Mark's Gospel we have the result of the effort Peter promised.

BE CONFIDENT IN YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE POWER AND THE COMING OF THE LORD (1:16-21)

Verse 16 says, "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty." Peter made clear the difference between the authority behind his own teaching and the false teachers' lack of authority. Their teaching was the product of "cleverly devised tales." In 1:1-21, Peter gave them two important reasons for choosing the message of the apostles instead of those stories.

First, Peter was an eyewitness. In both 1 Peter 5:1 and 2 Peter 1:16, the apostle appealed to his witness of Christ as a basis for his authority. In 1 Peter he did not refer to a specific incident, but in 2 Peter he did (1:17, 18). The incident which he chose was, no doubt, one that he had rehearsed personally to these Christians. Peter, James, and John had been with the Lord on the mountain of His transfiguration when Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Him. Something even more dramatic had happened. The Majestic Glory had spoken from on high and borne witness to Jesus: "This is My Son with whom I am well-pleased." Matthew 17:1-5, Mark 9:2-7, and Luke 9:28-35 record the incident. In all three passages there was the additional statement from God, "Listen to Him."

Second, Peter's message had the testimony of the prophets. The false teachers had neither eyewitness accounts nor the support of the prophets of God. Peter advised his readers to pay attention to what the prophets had said. The translation of the KJV in 1:20 is somewhat confusing. It says, "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." Peter was not telling us that we should not privately interpret the Scriptures. How can we know what God's Word means for ourselves or for anyone else unless we interpret it? He was saying that prophecy is not a matter of an individual's acting on his own, private initiative. It was God Himself who had inspired the prophets. That is why their message carries the weight and the authority it does. The translation of the NIV in 1:20 expresses the idea more clearly: "...no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation." The NASB says, "No prophecy of Scrip-

ture is a matter of one's own interpretation."

CONCLUSION

In chapter 1, Peter emphasized knowledge. It was no longer the suffering of his readers that concerned the apostle. His concern was with false teachers who had entered the congregations and threatened to take from Christians the life that they had only recently gained. Peter reminded them of the great and precious promises they had inherited. He called on them to grow in knowledge by putting on the Christian graces which would make them fruitful in the knowledge of Christ.

It was important for these Christians to understand that Peter's authority came by virtue of his apostleship. An implicit contrast existed between his witness and the fact that the false teachers had only lately come on the scene. Further, Peter appealed to the prophets for support for his message.

We can learn from Peter's words to: False teachers were not peculiar to the first century. Every generation must search the Scriptures and examine every doctrine. The church today needs the frequent reminder that in His Word the Lord has given us "everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence" (1:3).

AN OUTLINE OF 2 PETER

SALUTATION: Peter to those of like precious faith (1:1, 2)

I. DO THIS AND YOU WILL NEVER STUMBLE (1:3-21).

- A. Become partakers of the divine nature (1:3-7).
- B. Confirm your call and choosing (1:8-15).
- C. Be confident in your knowledge of the power and the coming of the Lord (1:16-21).

II. BEWARE OF FALSE TEACHERS (2:1-22).

- A. False teachers malign the way of the truth (2:1-9).
- B. False teachers are daring and self-willed (2:10-16).
- C. False teachers are slaves of corruption (2:17-22).

III. REMEMBER THE PROMISE OF THE LORD'S COMING (3:1-18).

- A. Mockers deliberately forget (3:1-7).
 - B. The Lord is being patient (3:8-10).
 - C. What kind of people ought you to be? (3:11-18).
-

"AN EXPOSITION OF 2 PETER 3"
2 Peter 3: 1-18

Harry L. Robertson

THESIS: The second coming of Christ will be God's reply to those who ridicule knowing about His Son.

PURPOSE: To explain the meaning of 2 Peter 3 and present some practical applications to Christians today.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Background material of 2 Peter 3

a. 2) Authenticity

- (1) Internal evidence verifying Simon Peter as the author
 - 1-V. 1 - "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle..."
 - 2-VV. 13-14 - describes nature of his death (cf. Jn. 13:36, 21:19)
 - 3-V. 18 - association with Christ at transfiguration (cf. Mt. 17:1-7)
- (2) Doesn't bear characteristics of a forgery
 - 1-Isn't romantic in nature or doesn't express anything new about Peter
 - 2-Autobiographical allusions

b. 1) Date - @ 66-67 A.D.

c. 1) Key Word - "Knowledge" (referred to 14 times)

d. 1) Key Verse - 2 Peter 3:18

e. 1) Outline of 2 Peter

- (1) Receiving the Word of God, 1:1-21
- (2) Rejecting the Word of God, 2:1-22
- (3) Ridiculing the Word of God, 3:1-13
- (4) Return of the Word of God, 3:14-18

2. Basis for Misunderstanding of 2 Peter 3

a. 1) Concerns the "return of Christ"

- (1) In reference to the destruction of Jerusalem?
- (2) In reference to the "rapture"?
- (3) In reference to the beginning of the "millennial kingdom"?

b. 1) Concerns the destruction of the World

- (1) Will there be a new heavens and new earth, i.e., one other than the one presently existing?
- (2) Are the "new heavens and new earth" representative of the present earth, remodeled for the "millennial kingdom"?
- (3) Does the phrase "new heavens and new earth" represent heaven as spoken of in Revelation 21: 1-22:5?

DISCUSSION:

I. Ridiculing the Word of God, 2 Peter 3:1-13

A. Mockers and the end of the world (vv. 1-7) - In this section, Peter discusses:

1) The purpose of the epistle (1-2)

a. (1) To stir up their sincere minds

b. (2) To encourage the readers to remember:

(1) The words spoken through the holy prophets

(2) The commandment spoken by the Lord and Savior through the apostles

2/ The character of the epistle (3-6)

a (✓) Their nature

(1) Mockers (ἐμπαῖκτοις) - those who ridicule, make fun of; tricksters, cf. Jd. 18

(2) Walk after own lusts - lit., "live for lusting"

b (✓) Their time of appearance

(1) "in the last days" - i.e., from the beginning of the reign of the Messiah to the end of the world (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; Acts 2:16-17; Heb. 1:1-2)

(2) NOTE: Such appear in all generations (cf. Gen. 19:12-14; Acts 17:31-32)

c (✓) Their mockery

(1) "If the world continues as it always has, and Jesus has not yet returned as He promised, then He was not the Son of God, and it isn't essential to know about Him."

(2) The world continues as it always has, and Jesus has not yet returned as He promised.

(3) Therefore, He was not the Son of God, and it isn't essential to know about Him."

d (✓) Their forgetfulness

(1) Forget - to escape the notice of; to purposely allow to pass

(2) God's swift and sudden destruction by the flood was a precedent set by the Creator that the mockers couldn't consistently deny; thus, they chose to forget it.

3/ The punishment of the epistle (?)

a (✓) By the same word (i.e., the authority of God, cf. v. 5), heavens and earth have been stored up

(1) stored up (ἐκκενῶνται) - stored with a view of helping a special case in need (cf. 1 Cor. 16:2) (Vine's)

(2) Earth and heavens are set aside for destruction

b (✓) By same word, heavens and earth have been reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men

(1) reserved (τηρησώ) - to guard, preserve with a retributive issue (Vine's)

(2) Heavens and earth are preserved for the day of judgment

B. The Day of the Lord (vv. 8-13) - In this section, Peter describes the second coming as a time which:

1/ Displays God's long-suffering nature (8-9)

a (✓) The Lord is not bound by a time schedule

(1) God views events from the aspect of eternity - not how much time passes from T₁ to T₂

(2) Not important to God that Christ has not returned during the time prescribed by the mockers

b (✓) The Lord is long-suffering

(1) He is not slack, i.e., his reason for not returning is not because He can't.

(2) He is long-tempered, i.e., "God has a self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate or blaze up in anger." (Trench)

(3) NOTE: Because God desires man to use his free will to choose Him, He allows them many opportunities and much time to repent (1 Pet. 3:20; 1 Tim. 2:3-4)

~~C~~ 2) Demands preparation by man (10-11)

(1) ~~10-11~~ The "day of the Lord" - when will it occur?

(a) ~~10-11~~ In the Old Testament, it depicts a time of judgment

(b) ~~10-11~~ In the New Testament, it generally refers to the day of judgment (cf. 1 Cor. 1:8, 5:5; Phil. 1:6, 10, 2:16; and 1 Thes. 5:2)

(2) ~~10-11~~ The "day of the Lord" - What will happen?

(a) ~~10-11~~ It will come suddenly, i.e., as a thief (cf. 1 Thes. 5:2-4; Mt. 24:43-44)

(b) ~~10-11~~ It will bring destruction - heaven shall pass away with a great noise, and the earth shall be dissolved

~~d~~ 3) Depicts a day of happiness and sorrow (12-13)

(1) A day of happiness for those who desire the Lord's return

(2) A day of happiness for those who look for a new heavens and new earth (most of the following material is taken from Guy N. Woods, Gospel Advocate Commentary on the Epistles of Peter, John and Jude)

(a) ~~10-11~~ "Heaven" is used in reference to : (1) where the birds fly; (2) where the stars are; and (3) where the throne is and where our Lord reigns (ps. 11:4)

(b) ~~10-11~~ The present earth is not the new earth because of:

(1) John 18:36-37; and (2) John 14:1-6 - the place prepared for Jesus' disciples was not this earth

(c) ~~10-11~~ The new heavens and new earth where the righteous will live (cf. Rev. 21:22) is typified by the present heavens and earth where we now live

(3) A day of sorrow for those who:

(a) ~~10-11~~ Have mocked Christ's return and the ensuing destruction of the world

(b) ~~10-11~~ Love this world (cf. 1 Jn. 2:15-17)

II. The Return of the Word of God, 2 Peter 3:14-18

A. Look Diligently (v. 14)

1) That we may be found in peace

2) That we may be "without spot and blameless"

a ~~10-11~~ A perfectly cleansed body (cf. 1 Pet. 1:19; 1 Jn. 1:7)

b ~~10-11~~ Essential to enter the eternal kingdom (2 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 21:27)

B. Look Thankfully (vv. 15-16)

1) Because the longer Christ delays His coming, the more time we have to work and/or repent

2) Because we have the inspired messages of Peter and Paul concerning these matters of eternity

NOTE: A Special Warning

a ~~10-11~~ Don't misunderstand the information you have concerning the return of the Lord

b ~~10-11~~ Don't wrest the Scriptures that are concerned with the Lord's return

(1) ~~10-11~~ wrest (отречение) - to distort or twist, e.g., a victim on the torture rack was "wrested"

(2) ~~10-11~~ This passage would implicitly refer to any passage of inspired Scripture

ex. Look Carefully (vv. 17-18)

- 1) So that you're not carried away:
 - (1) With the wicked
 - (2) From your own steadfastness and hence, the grace of God
- 2) So that you do not fail to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord

3, NOTE: To grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord will be the answer to all the questions raised by those who reject and ridicule a knowledge of the Son of God

CONCLUSION/SOME PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS ON 2 PETER AND 2 PETER 3:

1. For 2 Peter

- a) Through His word, God gives man all the information he needs pertaining to life and godliness
- b) Man can know how to enter the eternal kingdom
- c) Man's plan for salvation comes from God - not from man's private interpretation
- d) Men will reject that very message which can save them

2. For 2 Peter 3

- a) Men will ridicule the concept of Christ's second coming
- b) Men must be prepared for the return of Christ
- c) Those who have prepared for and anxiously anticipate Christ's return will be rewarded
- d) To grow in God's grace and the knowledge of His Son is the key to entrance into the eternal kingdom

— GARY L. ROBERSON

2 PETER 3

- A. The Purpose of the Epistles (v. 1,2). *Greek word epistolas occurs 24 times in N.T. Translated epistle 15 times + letters 9 times.*
1. "...stir up your pure minds"—To arouse thoroughly.
 2. Recognize—Be mindful.
- B. Scoffers come in last days (vv. 3-4).
1. Last days refer to the Christian dispensation, Acts 2:16,17; Heb. 1:1,2. *1 Tim. 4:11; 2 Tim. 3:1 -*
 2. Scoffers would be those that would mock and jeer at the idea of Christ's coming (cf. Gen. 19:14). *"mockers...with their mocking" (NASB)*
 3. The erroneous views of some of the first century Christians may have given grounds for their charges since some of them believed in the immediate return (Cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-17).
- C. The apostle's reply to the scoffers' charge that Christ would not return (vv. 5-9).
1. They alleged that the unvarying conformity of nature proved this.
 - a. They had deliberately and willfully ignored the lessons of the flood which demonstrated conclusively that all things have not continued as they were from the beginning (vv. 5-6).
 - b. The same word that brought the flood holds the earth in place today (v. 7).
 2. The lapse of time between the promise and the fulfillment is not to be interpreted as meaning God will not fulfill his commitments (v. 8).
 - a. The passing of time does not affect God's fulfillment as it does now.
 - b. The longer the interval between the promise and the fulfillment on man's part the less likely he will fulfill. Reasons:
 - (1) Man may die.
 - (2) He may forget his promise.
 - (3) He may violate his word and simply refuse to do what he promised.
 - (4) Conditions may arise making it impossible for him to perform it.
 - c. Since none of these are true of God it's idle for man to infer that the delay means God has forgotten.
 - d. An admonition to recognize that the delay is God's longsuffering because he wants all to be saved (v. 9).
- D. Heavens - 2 Peter 3:10
1. By the words of God "the heavens" were of old, 2 Pet. 3:5.
 2. The heavens and earth which are now kept in store by the same word, 2 Pet. 3:7.
 3. The heavens shall pass away with a great noise.
 4. God will destroy the same heavens he made with his word and holds in place with his word, 2 Pet. 3:10.
 5. Since God is eternal then his dwelling place is eternal and is therefore not included in the heavens that will pass away.
 6. Greek word used is ouranoi, Mt. 3:16; 24:29; Mk. 1:10; Lk. 12:33; Acts 2:34; 7:56.
 7. Judge Rutherford, founder of Jehovah's Witnesses, attempted to explain away 2 Peter 3:10 by saying that ...the apostle is here using symbolic language." The passage states that "...THE EARTH AND THE WORKS THAT ARE THEREIN SHALL BE BURNED UP" (Emphasis mine--JLW).

- a. The New World Translation (NWT) has corrupted the text to read, "Yet Jehovah's day will come as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a hissing noise, but the elements being intensely hot will be dissolved, and the earth and the works in it will be **discovered**" (Emphasis mine--JLW).
- b. Now let me say that there is a world of difference in a thing being **burned up** and a thing being **discovered**! Which had you rather hear: "Our dinner just got **burned up**?" or "Our dinner was just **discovered**!"?
- c. The words "burned up" are taken from the Greek **Katakaio** which means "to burn up, to consume with fire." The Greek for "discovered" is **Katanoeo**. The scholars have stated, "...discovered is strange and improbable" (Thayer). Also, "...discovered obviously makes utter nonsense of the place" (Burgon). The evidence is highly in deference to "burned up."
- d. The NWT, like the current A.D. 70 heresy, is not even consistent. The same Greek phrase is used elsewhere in the Scripture. Matt. 3:12, "...but the chaff he will **burn up** with fire..." (NWT). Revelation 8:7, "...A third of the earth was **burned up**, and a third of the trees was burned up, and all the green vegetation was **burned up**..." (NWT). [All emphasis mine--JLW.]
 - (1) Why would they translate correctly in these four instances and then incorrectly in the only other occurrence of the phrase?--Because 2 Peter 3:10 stands diametrically opposed to Jehovah's Witness' doctrine.
 - (2) This same place also stands diametrically opposed to the A.D. 70 error
- e. Not only is the NWT inconsistent in its translation (or mistranslation!)--it also contradicts itself on this very matter.
 - (1) Consider the wording of Hebrews 1:10 in the NWT: "...You at the beginning, O Lord, laid the foundations of the earth itself, and the heavens are the works of your hands, they themselves **will perish**..." [Emphasis mine--JLW]
 - (2) Then, within the context itself notice 2 Peter 3:7 in the NWT: "...by the same word the heavens and the earth that are now **stored up for fire**..." [Emphasis mine--JLW]. Shades of contradiction--what shall it be?
 - (3) The A.D. 70 errorists are in league with the doctrine of Jehovah's Witnesses.
 - (4) Paul warned in 1 Corinthians 15:33, "BE NOT DECEIVED. EVIL COMPANIONSHIPS CORRUPT GOOD MORALS."
(All the points under number 7 were written by Jesse Whitlock.)

E. Peter pictures dramatically the obligations falling on Christians because of what God will do on that day

1. First, the general exhortation (v. 11)
2. Second, and again, as in 1:5 with the imperative:
"be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (v. 14)
3. Third, the warning (v. 17).

II PETER 3
James Meadows

- I. The purpose of the epistles (v. 1,2).
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 - B. Recognize -- Be mindful.
- II. Scoffers come in last days (v. 3-4).
 - A. Last days refer to the Christian dispensation, Acts 2:16-17; Hebrews 1:1,2; I Timothy 4:1; II Timothy 3:1.
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IV. Heavens. II Peter 3:10.

- A. By the words of God "the heavens" were of old. II Peter 3:5.
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- E. Since God is eternal, then His dwelling place is eternal and is therefore, not included in the heavens that will pass away.
- F. Greek word used is ouranō. Matthew 3:16; 24:29; Mark 1:10; Luke 12:33; Acts 2:34; 7:56.
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Helps

1. Annual Lesson Commentary, 1956, page 318.
2. Albert Barnes, Notes On the New Testament, "James-Jude."
3. J. W. McGarvey, The Eldership.
4. G. C. Brewer, The Model Church, Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 22.
5. Merrill C. Tenney, Philippians: The Gospel at Work.
6. W. E. Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.
7. Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies In the New Testament, Vol. I.
8. Guy N. Woods, Peter, John & Jude, Vol. II, In the Gospel Advocate Series.
9. Some sources noted in the lessons.
10. James Bales, Firm Foundation, "No Prophecy of Scripture Is of Private Interpretation," April 21, 1970, p. 246-247.
11. Winfred Clark, "A False Teacher," notes on II Peter 2 as appeared in the Bremen, GA, bulletin, April 24, 1975.

A FALSE TEACHER

II Peter 2

Winfred Clark

INTRODUCTION

1. Peter describes well the nature and method of the false teacher?
2. As one reads II Peter 2, he can see the trial of the serpent's agent.

DISCUSSION

I. PETER STATES THE FACT.

- A. II Peter 2:1. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you."
 1. Now, before going on, stop and take note of the fact of the false teacher.
 2. He will or she will not call himself or herself such.
 3. If this occurred, nobody would listen. A false teacher will never come with a sign of his true colors.
- B. But it is a sad fact now that people deny that there are false teachers in some areas.
 1. Charming personalities overwhelm the unsuspecting.
 2. Sweet and smooth speeches blind many eyes.

II. THEIR APPROACH IS NOTED.

- A. II Peter 2:1. "Who privily shall bring in damnable heresies."
 1. That word privily means: secretly, covertly.
 - a. It just means it is undercover.
 - b. He operates much like the "fifth column" of World War II:
- B. He seeks to do his work without attracting attention.
- C. He will use others, if they will allow it, and he stands in the background.
- D. In this way, the damage is done and he does not have to hear the blame. Judas is a case in point as an agent of the devil.

III. THEY USE ONE FOR UNHOLY PURPOSES.

- A. II Peter 2:3. "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you!"
 1. They will play on emotions and plead for sympathy while going about their destructive work.
 2. They will not hesitate to ally themselves with those with whom they do not agree, if only they can carry a point.

3. As in the case of Pilate and Herod, they were made friends that day.
 4. Neither cared for the other, but they both were opposed to Christ.
- B. You may find those who have little in common, but if they think others are opposed to something going on in the church, they seek to get together. This is not new.
- C. Did not Absalom seek to use the people against David when he "stole their hearts."
1. He could stand in the gate and talk about what he would do if he were judge. II Samuel 15:1-4. Notice how much attention he gave them.
 2. In verse 5, you find him acting as though he wanted to get down on their level. Note carefully verse 6. "So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel."
 3. But how did he do it? Just as men do today. Play both ends against the middle.
- D. May I ask whether you could bring yourself to admire such a person? Does Absalom have your support? Would you be in sympathy with him? You say, no. I ask you why? Your answer would be that he is seeking to overthrow God's appointed king. He is not acting in good faith. If he really wanted to contribute something, let him do so under David his father.

IV. THEY DESPISE AUTHORITY.

- A. II Peter 2:10. Peter says, "They despise government. They are presumptuous and self-willed."
1. You would expect this of a false teacher.
 2. He wants to teach what he wants to without restraint.
 3. When you boil it all down, it comes to the selfishness that dominated such a one. Self must be served at all cost.
- B. We will do well to be on guard against such. Mark and avoid them.

II Peter Chapter 2

Lot distressed – though in the midst of wickedness.

1. Lot was not corrupted by it.
2. He did not become indifferent to it.
3. He was daily concerned about it

Some heresies afloat near end of the first century.

1. The Lord's deity was questioned by some (I John 4:15).
2. The Lord's humanity was questioned by others (I John 4:2).
3. Some denied the threefold personality of the godhead.
4. Other held the body of Christ was not real, only imaginary.
5. Others, by their wicked and corrupt lives, denied Jesus as their Master and used their bodies like they wanted to.

Hell – tactaros – only time in Greek N.T.

Used in "Greek mythology of the place of restraint and punishment for the souls of wicked men after death" (Woods, p. 166).

V. 15 – Forsaken the right way –

1. "The way of the Lord" (Gen. 18:19).
2. "The way of peace" (Rom. 3:17).
3. "The way of wisdom" (Prov. 4:11).
4. "The way of life" (Prov. 10:17).
5. "The way of salvation" (Acts 16:17).

Playboy Philosophy – Following this philosophy"

1. First, one actually becomes addicted to pursuing pleasure (II Pet. 2:4).
2. Second, they have forsaken concern for others (II Pet. 2:3, 14b).

WILLINGLY IGNORANT #3

Bob Berard

Far from eternal bliss is the prospect of those willingly ignorant persons about whom we have studied in this series. Like that of the infamous scoffers Peter reports, the end of those willingly ignorant of spiritual essentials is perdition (2 Pet. 3:3-7; Mt. 7:21-23). Articles #1 and #2 discussed those who are willingly ignorant of the Bible in general and those who are willingly ignorant of the purpose of Bible preaching. Consider now those who are willingly ignorant of their need to acknowledge past sins even though they have resumed regular attendance.

It is a sometimes a surprising, but nevertheless a delightful thing to see a member who has long been willfully absent from our assemblies walk in the meeting house door. In that moment our love for this erring one's soul causes us to rejoice at what appears to be a certain return of a "prodigal son" and both love and duty demand that we be eager to accept him back as part of the faithful family (Mt. 22:39; Lk 15:20). However, it is a strange thing that such a member sometimes returns to the assemblies and resumes regular attendance with never a comment explaining his sorrow for his unfaithfulness or his intention to again be an active soldier of the cross. Before long his presence in the assemblies becomes an expected thing and both he and the rest of the church behave as if no interruption in his service ever occurred. Is this right? Are we to assume that repentance has occurred? What are we to do?

Could a husband/wife leave his/her mate for several months and return with never a word of explanation or apology about his departure or future intentions? Could an employee not show up for work for all of the month of July and walk in on August 1 and simply take up where he left off, leaving boss and co-workers guessing about the absence?

The prodigal son left no doubt about his change of will when he returned to his father's house. In his determination to return, he resolved to confess his fault and when he met his father he announced, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight..." (Lk. 15:17-19).

Simon, when exposed in his sin, requested the prayer of Peter, thereby implying an acknowledgement of his guilt as charged and his desire to be restored (Acts 8:20-24).

John and James further declare God's will in this matter. We are to confess (acknowledge) our sins to both God and man. In every case, one's sins should be confessed to God; in cases in which our brethren know of the sin, they have need to know of our repentance (1 John 1:9; James 5:17). *More on this next time.*

ABOUNDING MORE AND MORE

Al Macias

To love one another is one of the most important principles of Christianity. We can find passage after passage commanding us to love one another as Christ loved us. If we as Christians would only love one another as we have been commanded, many problems which sometimes occur among ourselves could be completely avoided. The apostle John wrote about how important Christian love really is. We read in I John 3:14, "*We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death.*" What was the apostle John saying in this passage? He was saying that one of the signs indicating that one has passed from death to life is his love for the brethren.

Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, exhorted them not to just love one another but to abound in it more and more. We read in I Thessalonians 4:11,12, "*...and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business and to work with your own hands, as we command you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.*" Paul exhorted the Thessalonian brethren to study to be quiet. This meant that the brethren were to avoid meddling or being busybodies in the lives of others. Paul also wrote to Timothy concerning the kind of life that is expected of all Christians. In I Timothy 2:2b-3 we read, "*...that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our savior.*"

Paul, in writing to the Thessalonian brethren, instructed them and us to do our own business and work with our hands. What did Paul mean by "doing our own business"? It is a commandment from God that Christians attend to their own affairs and not be wanting to interfere in the affairs of other people. Apparently the Thessalonian brethren were having a problem with this. Finally, Paul exhorted the brethren to work with their own hands. Even from the beginning, in the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were told to dress and keep the garden.

What would be accomplished if the Thessalonian brethren followed the instruction given them by the apostle Paul? They would gain the respect of them that were without; those in the world would have no reason to speak against the kind of lives the Christians were living. And so would it be today.

Remember those who are at Hensel Camp this week, as they study God's word and enjoy recreation together. We appreciate those who are teaching, cooking and supervising the activities.

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The Ministry of Reminding

"This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles" (3:1, 2).

A medical missionary once became so discouraged that he was about to quit, pack up, and return to the States. But he had a dream that strengthened him. He dreamed he was working on top of a basaltic rock with a pickax. His muscular arms brought down stroke after stroke for hours, but the rock was not dented. He said to himself, "It's useless. I'm not going to pick any more." Suddenly a stranger of dignified mien stood by his side and asked, "You'll pick no more?" "No." "Weren't you set to this task?" "Yes." "And why abandon it?" "My work is vain; I have made no impression on the rock." Solemnly, the stranger replied, "What's that to you? Your duty is to pick whether the rock yields or not. Work on!" The doctor then awoke and decided that he would continue. Soon his labors bore much fruit.

Many "ministries" are found in the Bible. The word "ministry" simply means a duty, service, or function that one is to perform. So we read of the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18); the ministry of edification (1 Corinthians 16:15); the ministry of preaching the Word of God (2 Corinthians 4:1); and the ministry of sainthood (Colossians 4:17). From 2 Peter 3:1, 2, we discover another ministry—the ministry of reminding. As fellow saints, each shares an obligation to remind others of spiritual matters. This

duty falls upon every saved believer and is mentioned throughout Scripture. One of the clearest references is in Hebrews 3:13: "But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." If the reminding is not performed, many will be discouraged and apt to fall from the ranks of God's dedicated servants!

Peter strongly felt the urgency to perform this ministry. His brethren faced dangers from within as error slowly invaded their fellowship (cf. chapter 2). They also faced danger from without as trials compounded because of their faith (cf. 1 Peter). Temptation urged surrender or retreat. But Peter strongly urged them to persevere. He did this through the ministry of reminding.

We need to share a similar sense of duty in this ministry. Let us focus on three vital considerations found in 3:1, 2 which all believers must understand and apply in everyday living.

THE FORMULA IS GIVEN

Peter reveals a simple formula which all can follow in order to perform this pressing ministry.

Love (3:1)

First, we must establish and maintain a strong love bond with our brethren. Peter's use of the word "beloved" is the key focal point. He uses it three times to refer to his brethren in this chapter (3:1, 14, 17). It is a wonderful word revealing love and endearment. It exposes a genuine concern and affection for another. Peter was able to effectively remind his brethren because he and they shared a love that bound them to one

another.

Affection and devotion are essential if we are to remind one another in an effective manner. If I know that someone loves me and is concerned for only the best in my life, it does not embitter me if he approaches me about a personal failing or irresponsible acts in spiritual matters. It is this affection that all New Testament believers shared, and it was the visible mark of the Savior's followers (cf. John 13:34, 35).

As Paul wrote to the Colossian brethren he made a marvelous remark about the Laodicean believers. He stated that they were "knit together in love" (Colossians 2:1, 2). Peter said this love bond also bound Paul: "... just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, ..." (3:15). Look further as in just a few more verses it is observed that this love bond bound not only Peter but also Paul (3:15). This love bond enabled Peter and Paul to remain true Christian friends even when Paul had to remind Peter of his irresponsible attitudes (cf. Galatians 2:11ff.).

When each Christian understands the other as a "beloved" brother or sister, love will logically lead to the reminding of spiritual duties. Each will only want the very best in the lives of his brethren. This aspect of the ministry of reminding is essential.

Fellowship (3:1)

Second, we must have regular contact and fellowship with one another. Peter states that this was the "second time" he wrote. Literally, the passage reads, "... already a second one I write." This indicates that the two epistles were very close together. Peter was in constant contact with the readers. He knew of their trials and temptations and was aware of their weaknesses and strengths. Because of constant association and intimate knowledge, he could remind them of duties and commitments to God.

Reminders among brethren do little good if contact is sporadic or nonexistent. If we hope to be of service to our brethren in the ministry of reminding, we must be together! Ideally, we should be together not only at *all* assemblies of the church, but we should enjoy fellowship at times outside of the usual assemblies. Contact on a regular basis is needed to gain the maximum benefit of Christian fellowship. Contact is necessary for communion.

Gentle Confrontation (3:1)

Third, we must use meaningful conversation to deepen relationships with our spiritual family. Whenever Peter and the brethren spoke, they discussed vital matters. Their conversation always "stirred up"; it aroused and awakened their minds. Peter was saying, "When we talk we go beyond the weather and the aches and the pains. When we talk we get things stirred up!"

Too often here is where you and I fail in the ministry of reminding. When we see brethren failing in spiritual matters, let us go gently but specifically (cf. 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Galatians 6:1-5).

The Word (3:2)

Fourth, the Holy Scriptures must be emphasized in the ministry of reminding. Peter realized that reminding his beloved brethren must be done with the Holy Scriptures. He said that as he spoke it would be the language of the "oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). The reference in verse 2 to the power and authority of Scripture does not surprise anyone who has studied the frequent mention of inspiration and the authority of Scripture that permeates his two brief letters (cf. 1 Peter 1:10, 12, 23; 2:2-8; 2 Peter 1:19-21; etc.). All that Peter wanted his readers to remember were the commands of God. What more effective means is there to remind us of spiritual duties than the Holy Scriptures?

A ship was in a heavy fog as it neared shore. The very stars were shut out and no longer able to guide the vessel's course. The man at the mast-head hoarsely cried, "Breakers ahead!" The crew furled the sails, and the helmsman stood by the wheel. But where was the captain? The old sailor was pouring over his charts and compass as he sought to steer his ship and keep it clear of rocks and shallows saving both his crew and cargo. At length he reached the harbor's safety. In just the same way the Scriptures stand as our "chart and compass." Only by "searching the Scriptures" can we ever gain safe passage through life's perils. As we involve ourselves in the ministry of reminding, let us hold fast to the truth of the Scriptures. If one should become upset at being reminded, he should be upset only with the Scriptures. No one can ever argue successfully with the Word of God!

Thus Peter has given us a simple formula by which we are able to learn the "how to" of

reminding one another. If you want to be active in reminding your brethren, develop a strong affection that is nurtured by constant contact and deep conversation, and in your reminders emphasize only the oracles of God! But more must be considered. Some may not be sure that they want to be involved in such a ministry. They may not see the reasoning.

THE "WHY" IS ANSWERED

We note four answers in response to the one who would question the necessity of being involved. When you are called upon to go to an erring brother, it is not often a pleasant task. Who enjoys confronting another about sin and irresponsibility? It is very easy to excuse ourselves from being involved in this ministry. But the excuses will pale in consideration of the following:

You must be involved because practicing this ministry will reveal your commitment to God. All Christians should realize that they are accountable to each other and for each other. Cain tried long ago to shirk his duty with the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" When you go to someone and gently remind them of God's expectations, you are revealing love, concern, and tender care for a brother's soul. You are simply being accountable. This accountability springs from a deep sense of God's expectations.

As Paul wrote to the Corinthian brethren, he spoke of a comfort he had received from God. Paul explained that he had passed this comfort along to the Corinthians and they were expected to pass it along to the brethren around them (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4). Basically, Paul was illustrating that he was accountable; he wanted to extend comfort to others because of his dedication and commitment to God.

Brotherly love finds its tap root in our love for God (1 John 4:19). If our commitment to God is strong, we will be active in reminding others of spiritual matters (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:14). Why should we contact absentee members, visit the sick and shut-in members, and be regular in attendance at all services? When we are reminding others of God's love, the brethren's concern, and eternity's destiny we are revealing our true commitment to God!

You must be involved because practicing this ministry will keep your thinking straight. Peter uses the phrase "sincere mind" (3:1). "Sincere" literally

refers to a close and careful examination by sunlight and being found "without wax." If we are involved in reminding others of spiritual truths, our minds will be kept in such a condition that they can be examined and be found clear and flawless (cf. Philippians 4:8). When you are constantly urging another to be mindful of spiritual matters, you will not lose sight of those things either. The best guard for your spiritual life is to be active in the ministry of reminding!

You must be involved because practicing this ministry will provide an effective means by which you can "recall" biblical truths. Through reminding, the readers of Peter's letters could recall the words of "the holy prophets" and "the commandment of the Lord and Savior." Most brethren possess ample information, but they forget much of what they learn. If they are busily engaged in reviewing and rehearsing the truths of God with others, they will become firmer in their retention of those facts.

You must be involved because practicing this ministry will keep you prepared for Christ's return. This is the basic thrust of Peter's letter. He wanted the readers to know that the Lord was coming back and that they must be ready. Our early brethren would often pray, "Maranatha," as an expression of their urgent desire for Christ's return.

The Scriptures suggest that this reason is the most important for participating in the ministry of reminding. If "the day" in Hebrews 10:23-25 is understood as the day of the Lord's return, you find there a paragraph that clearly illustrates our point. As we remind others of the Lord's return and the urgency to be properly prepared for it, we will find ourselves prepared to meet Him as well.

These are four excellent reasons why believers must be involved in the ministry of reminding. Each member of the Lord's body does have a responsibility to be involved in this duty.

THE "RECEIVING" IS URGED

Sometimes we will be on the receiving end of the reminders instead of the giving end. It happened to Peter, and it was happening to those who received his letter. It can happen to us as well. It may be that in some future point, or maybe right now, you are not walking in full harmony with the teachings of God's Scriptures. If so, it is time to receive reminders. In order to profit from the ministry of reminding, we should

take a long hard look at the following points.

You must possess a "sincere mind." Our thoughts ought to be such that even subjected to the full test of brilliant sunlight they will be found pure. Our minds must not harbor deceit, sinister motives, hate or any other evil emotion that Satan produces so we can be stimulated by godly reminders. Peter's reminders were sent to the "sincere minds" of his readers and were greeted with warm reception. Such is not always the case. Too often, brethren refuse to guard their minds. When reminders are spoken, they are not received. Take careful watch of your mind. Be sure it is in the condition to receive reminders.

You must appreciate the concern another is showing for you. How will we respond to one who comes in love to remind us that we are amiss in some spiritual duty? Will there be bitterness, ill-will, or antagonism? When Paul wrote to his Galatian brethren, reminding them of duties and responsibilities, his words were not received with appreciation. He asked, "Have I therefore become your enemy by telling you the truth?" (4:16). Peter's reminders were received differently. Those brethren had now received two strong letters filled with reminders, yet they still loved the apostle because of his love for them. No resentment or bitterness was manifested. Let us always appreciate the concern that motivates a brother to come to us with timely reminders.

You must be open to the reminders of others because we all "forget" important facts. In James 1:24, 25, James discusses the "forgetful hearer." Many of us find ourselves in that position too often. The writer to the Hebrews twice urged his readers to "forget not" in the closing chapter (Hebrews 13:2, 16). Because of memory lapses, we all need to be reminded. Maybe you have committed yourself to a particular work, committee, or responsibility, and other things have pushed your promises aside. If so do not become upset or aggravated because someone reminds you of your commitments. In obeying the gospel we made a commitment to God, and we can be sure Satan is busily engaged at persuading us to bypass those commitments. If you have become sidetracked, do not become bitter at the one who tries to remind you of the commitments you have forgotten.

When you are reminded, be stimulated to change! When you see that God's Book commands one thing and you are either failing to do

it or you are doing it in the wrong way, do not be stubborn. Change immediately.

CONCLUSION

I like the way brother Guy N. Woods has commented on the verse in our present section of study:

It is equally important that the Lord's people *today* should have their minds stirred to remembrance of the vital teaching issuing from the apostles and prophets of the Lord. Ceaseless vigilance is the price of a pure faith and a faultless practice, and the obligation of all teachers and preachers in this matter is indeed weighty. Remissness in this respect leads to eventual apostasy.¹

The greatest kindness you can extend a fellow saint is a proper response in the urgent ministry of reminding. T

Endnote

¹Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude* (Nashville, Tenn.: Gospel Advocate Co., 1959), p. 180.

Qualities of a Faithful Teacher (2 Peter 3:1, 2)

1. Tender love and affection toward those taught ("Beloved").
2. A personal involvement ("I write"; "I stir").
3. A desire to stimulate response to God ("Remember the words and commands").
4. A respect for the Scriptures ("Holy prophets").



Why Should I Remember? (2 Peter 3:1, 2)

The clear command to remember expresses an obligation upon the readers. They are obligated to remember. Why? The following reasons are more than adequate to justify such an explanation:

1. Because of the loving devotion of the teachers to "stir" them up.
2. Because they possessed "sincere minds."
3. Because the prophet's message was recorded long ago.
4. Because of the accuracy of the apostles' teaching.

Fostering Forgetfulness

"Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.' For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (3:3-7).

John Bunyan's classic, *Pilgrim's Progress*, speaks of a certain place named "Forgetful Green." According to Greatheart, it is a most dreadful place, for there the Christian pilgrim meets with great calamity. The cause for the calamity is this: he forgets the greatness of God's grace and love. Many battles have been fought on the plains of "Forgetful Green," and often Satan is the victor because believers have fostered forgetfulness instead of godly memories.

In 2 Peter 3:3-7, you read of certain brethren who had lost valor and faith on the plains of "Forgetful Green." These had become "mockers" who could not hold to their former conviction regarding the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith. They had been found guilty of rejecting many things, but their crowning rejection, and that which summarizes the entire Christian system, was a total repudiation of the second coming of Christ.

The forgetfulness regarding this basic doctrine was both convenient and practical. Why?

Ask yourself: "If I wanted to be free to do whatever I desired—to live a pure libertine lifestyle, to nullify every restricting command of God—what would I do?" The most logical course would be to discard the doctrine of the second coming. If you succeeded in believing that the second coming was false, then three results would follow. *You would see restrictions as vain. Why restrict yourself when all that comes after life is death? You would view God's Word as unstable and false. Why believe in anything He says if He was wrong about the second coming? And, if you could toss aside God's commands and convince yourself that godly conduct was useless, you could then live according to the ungodly principles discussed in chapter 2!* This is the point Paul speaks of in his great chapter on the resurrection. How succinctly he exposes such a false position! "If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1 Corinthians 15:32).

The scoffing at the second coming was a well planned attack by the false teachers which had to be answered. If it went without appropriate response, believers would continue to be in a real dilemma. To help understand the pressure that such an attack posed to the brethren, consider these comments which were likely made. "Whatever happened to Jesus? He promised He would return 'quickly.' Wouldn't you be better off to just forget this silly stuff and enjoy life?" To a believer who was constantly battling false doctrine, this argument would present tremendous pressure. Evidently, some brethren were unable to stand the pressure and were on the verge of joining the doubters. It was to this desperate

predicament that 3:3-7 was addressed.

Let us observe the overall significance of the second coming in Scripture. Even a casual investigation with available Bible dictionaries, concordances, encyclopedias, and topical lists will verify that it is a most important doctrine.

In the New Testament, the second coming occupies a place of importance second only to faith. Believers are encouraged to be ready for the second coming over fifty times. Inspiration has devoted entire chapters to a discussion of the details of the second coming. Even with this weight of evidence scoffers continue to forget! With the facts clearly set before them, they refuse to accept them. They are guilty of fostering forgetfulness instead of godly memories. Their forgetfulness brings a harvest of disaster.

Peter's words now bring the advocates of this erroneous position face-to-face with their failings. By his efforts Peter hoped not only to turn the false teachers from their error but to shore up the faith of his beleaguered brethren. Peter does an excellent job. Notice how he accomplishes his objective.

THE FAILINGS OF FORGETFULNESS

First, *forgetfulness leads one to mockery* (3:3a). The word "mockery" literally means to be a "derider, skeptic, or scoffer." When it is used as a verb, it means "to play with." These mockers had been faithful believers, but now they had turned away from Christ. They had become so hardened that they were playing with the idea of the second coming. They had actually reached a point of laughing at and ridiculing the notion of its validity.

This mockery of God's Word was not a new reaction. Peter's brethren were not suffering anything that had not already been expressed many times before. Long before any of the brethren who received 2 Peter were born, this mocking reception of God's Word was present. Isaiah was told to condemn the ten northern tribes because they demonstrated this mockery toward God. In Isaiah 28:14-22, the pride and arrogance of the ten tribes is described. The rulers are described as "scoffing" at the idea of death, exile, and the Assyrian invasion. These rulers fostered the same forgetfulness that those in the present text did—they refused to believe the truth of God. They actually laughed at Isaiah's teachings as well as the other prophets. In

John 3:19, we find reference once again to the attitude of mockery that refuses to accept the teachings of Christ, for "men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil."

It is terribly sad to remember that those addressed by Peter had once confessed and glorified the very one they now ridiculed! The sad predicament of these brethren is illustrated by those in the letter to the Hebrews. They had "once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come" (Hebrews 6:4, 5). Again, we find a fitting description in Hebrews 10:29. These are like those who trod underfoot the Son of God and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing and have done despite unto the Spirit of grace. Can you think of a sadder ending to the life of one who had begun to run the Christian race?

We have already noticed how these mockers defied God by cynically questioning the deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the apostles' authority, and God's morality (cf. 1:19-21). The sad state of the believer who becomes a "mockery" is alluded to by Paul in Philippians 3:18, 19. They have become enemies of the cross, and the very thought of them brings weeping and sorrow to the saint of God.

Oh, how tragic is this failing in the life of one fostering forgetfulness—he becomes a mockery. What a tragic toll is taken on the plains of "Forgetful Green"!

Second, *forgetfulness encourages the pursuit of immediate lusts instead of respect for God's eternal commands* (3:3b). Again, we are called to deal with the urgency of an absolute moral standard in life. Here is the sole reason that the second coming was denied: The people had become so enamored with fleshly desires that they had neither respect, the desire to obey, or serious reflection on spiritual truths. They had become intent on living for the moment. They wanted to grab the "gusto" in life and could care less about tomorrow. This pursuit for the immediate is condemned by Isaiah: "The Lord God of hosts, called you to weeping, to wailing, to shaving the head, and to wearing sackcloth. Instead, there is gaiety and gladness, killing of cattle and slaughtering of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine: 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die' " (Isaiah 22:12, 13).

By supposing that they had made a sound case for rejecting the second coming, these people believed that a total freedom was allowed in morality. The words "their own" are emphatic and underscore their rejection of God's standards for self-direction. Forgetfulness is quite suited to the one who wants to live for self. One who is determined to set up his own pattern and plan of morality will always refuse God's will. He prefers to live life for the immediate gratification, enjoying selfish desires! Perhaps the following quote from a well-known author will help illustrate why some choose to foster forgetfulness.

I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning . . . and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption . . . the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation—sexual and political.¹

Do you now understand this great failing of forgetfulness? The scoffers attacked and ridiculed the second coming because they wanted to live differently than how the Scriptures commanded! Their accountability to God was such a bitter pill that they refused to take it! As the proverb says, "Fools mock at sin" (Proverbs 14:9a). The fool will ridicule the notion that any act is "sin." He will laugh at anyone who advocates restrictions in morality. This is a simple explanation for the response of the taunts and ridicule of the godless upon all who fear God and strive to obey His will.

Third, *forgetfulness replaces faith, respect, and reverence with ridicule and arrogance* (3:4). Peter gives the basic argument of the mockers. The argument strongly implied that God's promise of the second coming was a bold-faced lie. They suggested that it was far-fetched and without any real substance. The same caustic arrogance confronted Jeremiah. For years, the lonely prophet had been foretelling doom and disaster that would fall upon Israel, but it had not yet arrived. When Jeremiah spoke of the coming exile and destruction, his listeners would snicker and say, "Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now!" (Jeremiah 17:15). The same taunting and chuckling ridicule was being heard by Peter: "All right. If Christ is really coming back—let it happen right now!"

When the forgetful believers denied the reality of the second coming, they were placing a dubi-

ous question mark over all who spoke of its reality in Scripture. We have already seen how prominent such a doctrine is in the New Testament. By claiming the second coming was a delusion, the readers were called to question the teachings of Christ, Paul, Peter, and a host of other inspired writers. The forgetful brethren called for others to follow them as they walked by sight. They had seen the seasons come and go; they had witnessed the persecutions and deaths of the righteous, and nothing dramatic had happened—no dramatic change had taken place. "Why worry about the future? It will be just as it always has been! The earth is stable and will remain as such!" These disrespectful and irreligious words were surely uttered with a sarcastic smirk.

Fourth, *forgetfulness maintains a dangerous course* (3:5-7). Peter turns his attention to answering these cynical claims. As he begins, he exposes the true attitude behind the mockers. They have "willfully" forgotten. This phrase refers to an attitude which deliberately refused to see the gross inconsistencies of their position and refused to know the truth. It was an act of their will—they chose such!

In his discussion of this willful ignorance, Peter reveals two points which clearly reveal the danger of fostering this kind of forgetfulness. In his first point, he shows that such is dangerous because it leads one to uphold and attempt to sustain unreasonable positions (3:5, 6). Once these had denied God, they were forced to "forget" that God had created all things. Now they had to explain how the world and all that is in it exists—a most undesirable predicament. Having eliminated God, how could they explain the world? Those who follow their course in our modern time have attempted to explain this unreasonable position with the theory of evolution. But those who fondly uphold evolution quickly encounter more problems than they explain. Another unreasonable position which has to be taken by these denying the second coming was that the earth has always remained stable and unchanging. But Peter points out that the world *has not* always remained the same. He points to the Genesis flood (Genesis 6—9) as evidence of his proof. Once again the advocates of the "No Second Coming" theory found themselves in a most uncomfortable position. It is interesting to note that even though centuries apart from those in Peter's day, these two

dilemmas still face all who wish to deny the validity of the Bible. The question as to the origin of the universe and the preponderance of evidence for the Genesis flood befuddle all who seek to deny God. These two points stand just as firm today as they did when the ink from Peter's pen was still wet! One can rest assured that these two points will remain as a bulwark against any who desire to hinder God's Word. Those in Peter's day could not explain away the predicament resulting from their unreasonable positions, such is true in our day, and such will remain forever true!

The second point discussed by Peter, as he shows the dangerous course of forgetfulness, is found in verse 7. It prepares one for eternal tragedy. The very God who created this world by a word has stored up fire by which it is to be forever destroyed by the same word! (Cf. Matthew 24:38, 39; Isaiah 29:6; 30:30; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Hebrews 1:10, 11.) In our modern age we are often reminded of the destructive force contained in a single nuclear warhead. We are reminded that the "superpowers" possess hundreds of these destructive warheads—enough to blow our frail world into oblivion! Whether this earth is destroyed by a bomb or by the "word" of God, it is destined to perish. Those who remain on it will suffer destruction for eternity. Peter reminds his readers that this is the tragic destiny ahead for those who foster forgetfulness in spiritual matters.

The dangerous course maintained by all who foster forgetfulness in spiritual matters is well illustrated with a conversation between the recognized skeptic Robert Owen and Alexander Campbell. Mr. Owen was visiting Alexander Campbell at Bethany, West Virginia, and went to view the family cemetery. Mr. Owen remarked, "There is one advantage I have over the Christian. I am not afraid to die. Most Christians have fear in death, but if some few items of my business were settled, I should be perfectly willing to die at any moment." Mr. Campbell responded, "You say you have no fear in death. Have you any hope?" After a solemn pause, he answered, "No." "Then," rejoined Campbell, pointing to an ox standing at a distance, "you are on a level with that brute. He has fed until he is satisfied, and stands in the shade, whisking off the flies, and has neither hope nor fear in death."

For the fourth time, we are able to see that a

tragic failing is evident in the life of one fostering forgetfulness. He maintains a dangerous course that leads to destruction and eternal misery! Is there a greater toll ever exacted on the stern plains of "Forgetful Green"?

THE PRACTICAL POINTS

Although our study has focused on four vital points, several more considerations arise from studying the text. These present some practical devotional thoughts that should stir our minds to the responsibility of fostering memories instead of forgetfulness.

First, *one may try to forget spiritual matters, and may even succeed to some degree, but such forgetfulness does not void the reality of spiritual matters!* Those addressed by Peter had convinced themselves that the second coming was a myth. But Peter forcefully challenged their position and assured them of the certainty of Christ's return. Sinners today may convince themselves that certain spiritual truths are not realities (i.e., the existence of God; the brevity of life; the urgency of baptism; the wrath of God; etc.), but their willful forgetfulness of these matters does not eliminate their certainty!

Charles Spurgeon tried to illustrate this fact with the following account. We must not be like the foolish drunk who, staggering home one night, saw his candle lit for him. "Two candles!" he exclaimed, for his drunkenness made him see double. "I will blow one out," he said, and as he blew it out, he was in the dark. Many a man sees double through the drunkenness of sin. He has but one life, but he expects another life in which he can turn to God. Like a fool, he blows out the only candle he has, and in the dark he will have to lie down forever! He has convinced himself that he really has two lives, but he is deceived. The reality of spiritual truths persists in the face of self-deception.

Second, *one can be assured of God's interest in mankind.* At key times in history, God has directly intervened for the good of man—the creation, the flood, the virgin birth, etc. These interventions of God are certain. This being the case, who can deny His interest in our well-being now? Who can honestly doubt that He will act again and with the resounding trumpet come to gather His saints and punish the sinners? (Cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-12.)

Third, *those who rest in Christ can gain tremendous*

comfort from this (cf. James 5:8). Imagine the joy that abides in the heart of the believer resting in the assurances of the second coming (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:18). Let each reader be certain that he has this abiding joy. Be ready to meet the returning Lord in the air. Do not allow the modern scoffers to move you from this resolve!

Fourth, if the wayward believer finds comfort in this paragraph, then the unbeliever and wayward child of God ought to find terror. The "last days" are here. Christ's return is immediate (cf. Matthew 24:44). God has revealed Himself so that you can believe in Him and be saved. It is tragic to witness multitudes blindly live in the greatness of God and never come to appreciate the great God Himself.

Years ago, I heard a story about Sir Isaac Newton that remains etched in my memory. As a great scientist, Newton was associated with others of renown in that field. Newton had one close friend who was an avowed infidel while Newton was a firm believer. In conversation, the two would often become involved in heated discussions regarding the existence of God. Newton contracted a designer to put together an exact replica of our solar system. It was so fashioned that when a lever was turned each planet would revolve around the sun in perfect harmony. After the project was finished, Newton placed it on a table in his study. When the friend saw it the first time, he walked carefully around it, turning the crank, and admiring the intricate details of design. He then asked, "Who made it?" Newton simply responded, "Nobody." The friend turned, thinking his question had been misunderstood. "No, I mean who designed and constructed this marvelous thing?" Newton responded again in a casual tone that no one had made it, it just "happened." The friend replied, "You must think I am a fool. Of course someone made it, and he is a genius. I would like to know just who he is." Newton's response was classic. "This thing is but a puny imitation of a much greater system whose laws you know. I am not able to convince you that this mere toy is without a designer and maker. Yet you profess to believe that the great original from which the design was taken has come into being without either design or maker. Now tell me, by what logic of reasoning have you reached such incongruous conclusions?" It is reported that the infidel was convinced and became a firm believer.

I believe Peter's point is just as shocking to

unbelievers and wayward saints today—if you have succeeded in rationalizing God's commands so they do not restrict your life, how can you explain the contradictions that arise? All who are unprepared for the Lord's return should find Peter's passage a shocking lesson!

CONCLUSION

Do you see the danger Greatheart warned us about regarding "Forgetful Green"? It is indeed a terrible place where Christians meet great harm. If you have fallen prey to Satan on the "Forgetful Green," you have paid a heavy toll.

Peter's words urge each reader to remember. Do not forsake godly memories by fostering forgetfulness. When forgetfulness reigns, we suffer at least four devastating calamities: We become mockers; we follow the desires and dictates of the immediate; we ridicule God's promises; and we maintain a disastrous course.

"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, . . ." (John 14:2, 3).

"This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven. . . ." (Acts 1:11).

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. . . . (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

So Christ also . . . shall appear a second time, not to bear sin, to those who eagerly await Him. . . . (Hebrews 9:28).

"Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour" (Matthew 25:13). τ

Endnote

¹Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1937).

There Is a Great Day Coming (2 Peter 3:7)

1. It is a day appointed by God when the earth and heaven will be destroyed by fire.
2. It is a day of judgment for the ungodly.
3. It is a day of destruction for the ungodly.

The Deliberate Kind of Forgetfulness **(2 Peter 3:7)**

1. Who demonstrates deliberate forgetfulness? "Mockers" (3:3).
2. What is deliberately forgotten? The manner of God's working (3:5-7).
3. What causes this forgetfulness? Basic attitude problems.
 - They are full of "mockings" (3:4). They ridicule God's Word.
 - They follow a self-serving discipline rather than a God-serving one (3:3b).
 - They focus on the immediate, not the future (3:4b).
 - They fail to "remember" (3:5), thus becoming servants of a foolish direction in life which identifies them with the "ungodly."
4. What is the destination of one who deliberately forgets these things?
 - They will live self-deluded about their eternal fate (2 Thessalonians 2:11).
 - They will stand before the harsh judgment of God (3:7).
 - They will experience destruction with all others who are ungodly (3:7).

A Fact, a Philosophy, and a Destiny **(2 Peter 3:3-7)**

1. *A Fact to Remember.* The second coming will come but only after mockers arise (3:3).
2. *A Philosophy to Shun.* Remain firm in hope. Do not fall into the trap of thinking that because He has not come He is not coming. Some will not remain firm and will lose sight of the promise (3:4-6).
3. *A Destiny to Avoid.* Those who fail to remember the blessed hope of the second coming will face a tragic eternity (3:7).

Forgetting One Thing **(2 Peter 3:3-7)**

Those described by Peter are guilty of forgetting one obvious fact: God is in control. Once this fact is forgotten, the following tragedies occur:

1. Instead of praise and obedience, one displays "mocking" (3:3).
2. Instead of looking for the blessed hope of Christ's return, one ridicules the notion (3:4a; cf. Titus 2:13).
3. Instead of acknowledging God as the Sovereign Governor of all the world, one accepts the foolish position of deism (3:4b-6).
4. Instead of living to be among the godly eternally, one lives to suffer among the godless eternally (3:7).

What Do Scoffers Want to Forget? **(2 Peter 3:3-7)**

1. The fact that Christ will "come" again (3:4).
2. The fact that God has demonstrated His presence on earth (3:4b-6).
3. The fact that this earth is destined for destruction (3:7a).
4. The fact that since there is a God, there is a judgment and an eternity (3:7b).

The Power of God's Word **(2 Peter 3:5-7)**

1. It had the power to create the heavens and the earth (3:5).
2. It had the power to destroy the earth by the flood (3:6).
3. It has the power to destroy the earth and the heavens with fire (3:7a).
4. It has the power to sentence a soul to eternal destruction (3:7b).

The Mighty Power of God **(2 Peter 3:5-7)**

1. God has the power to intervene in the affairs of this world—He has done so by a flood and will do so when the world ends. He sent His Son and still works providentially to guide, guard, and assure His children.
2. God has the power to create. Through Him and by Him all things exist.
3. God has the power to absolutely judge. Some He will comfort with eternal peace; others will suffer His wrath in eternal hell.

Remember the Promise Of the Lord's Coming

THE DISCIPLES of Jesus had little idea of what to expect when they met with Him on the Mount of Olives after His resurrection. During the forty days since the crucifixion, they had witnessed happenings they had never dreamed possible. The Lord was talking to them about the coming of the Holy Spirit and the building of His kingdom. They were trying to understand, but they were by no means sure what their risen Lord was talking about. Just when they thought it was question-and-answer time, it happened—the event that people would talk about as long the earth would stand. The Lord began ascending toward the heavens.

While the disciples watched in amazement, Luke recorded that two men dressed in white stood beside them. They said, "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Since the men in white made that promise, few subjects have stirred more interest or controversy than the time and the manner of the Lord's return. It was true even while the New Testament was being written, as Paul's letters to the Thessalonians illustrate. In the Thessalonian church speculation on the time of His return had led some to stop working and to idle away their time until He should appear (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3; 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2; 3:6-12).

Speculation and controversy over the time and the consequences of his second appearance have continued to the present. Over the last century, variations of premillennialism have been taught in many churches. With complex timetables in hand, experts discuss the Rapture, the battle of Armageddon, the rebuilding of the temple, and similar topics. Just when one of these men thinks he has it all

figured out, another expert appears with different calculations. Best-selling books, films, and lectures on the last times testify to the intense interest that exists in the Lord's return—an interest that has continued for nearly two thousand years.

Like 1 Peter, the last chapter of 2 Peter focused predominantly on the return of the Lord, but the approach differed. The return of the Lord hovered over 1 Peter. Rather than being a topic for instruction, it was woven into the warp and woof of the epistle. In 2 Peter the apostle taught his readers about Christ's second coming. Some doubted that He would return at all. Peter closed his second letter with an affirmation that the Lord would appear suddenly, when least expected by scoffers, to bring judgment on the ungodly.

MOCKERS DELIBERATELY FORGET (3:1-7)

Twice in his second letter Peter set forth his intention of stirring his readers to remembrance (1:12, 13; 3:1). In a general sense, both letters had been to stir up each Christian's "sincere mind by way of reminder" (3:1), but there was a particular matter the prophets and apostles had spoken of that he wanted his readers to recall (3:2). Because some had raised questions and doubts, they needed a reminder that the promised return of the Lord was fundamental to Christian doctrine. Disciples of Christ are to live in expectation that the Lord will appear soon; they are to expect it, not demand it. If He should delay His coming for a thousand years, they have not been disappointed. They have lived as if He would appear today.

Between the parable that ends Matthew 24 and the one that opens Matthew 25, we see a subtle but

important shift of thought. The wicked slave in Matthew 24:45-51 expected his master to delay his return. While he was in the midst of his revelry and high life, his master had returned and appointed him a place with the hypocrites, where there would be "weeping . . . and the gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:51). The Parable of the Ten Virgins is just the opposite. The five foolish virgins had expected the bridegroom to come soon, but he came later than expected. A similar change in emphasis occurs between 1 and 2 Peter. In 1 Peter the prospect of the Lord's imminent return was a comfort for suffering Christians; in 2 Peter doubt plagued the church because their expectation of an immediate return had failed to materialize.

Probably, the false teachers Peter described in 2 Peter 2 were among those who scoffed, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (3:4). Peter reminded them that the God who had called the world into being was capable of calling it into judgment (3:5). He had already called it into judgment once. The deluge had washed the ancient world clean. The Word of God had warned Noah's generation. They had refused to listen, and judgment had come (3:6). Peter said that the same God who judged the antediluvian world had reserved the present world for fire (3:7). His Word is keeping the heavens and earth "for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (3:7).

THE LORD IS BEING PATIENT (3:8-10)

Sometimes I am discouraged by the impact, or the lack of impact, that the Lord's church is having on the world. Few people seem to pay attention to the message of Christ. For many men and women the commitment to marital fidelity is meaningless. In America marriage is not permanent, and the home is not stable. We are told that nearly half of the marriages currently contracted will end in divorce. Millions simply forego marriage and live together. Nearly one-half of school-age children live either with a single parent or with a stepparent.

Satan appears to be winning the battle for people's minds and souls. Public gambling helps to support state governments. Millions live in the shadowy world of alcohol and drugs. Pornography and abortion are rampant, while crime and corruption grow yearly. What more do we need to say? The church is small in number. What can Christians do? Perhaps we should simply build walls about ourselves and let the world go its way, but we cannot do that. Sin even reaches its tentacles into the church. The sinfulness of the world lures us and

our children. Even Christians follow the siren songs. It is not an encouraging scene.

In the face of this dreary landscape the message of chapter 3 is important. The strength and power of Satan over this world are only illusions. The world belongs to God, and the ultimate victory is His. Those who long for and expect His return will reign with Him for eternity. The world and all that is in it will be judged and consumed by fire (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10). In comparison to that event, the present world scene is like a skirmish preceding a battle. What if He should delay His coming? Long before Peter's time, Moses had said, "For a thousand years in Thy sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night" (Psalm 90:4; cf. 2 Peter 3:8). Men cannot hold God to a schedule. If God said Christ will return and judge the earth, we may be sure that He will. If the Judgment Day delays, it is because His patient kindness is giving His world time for repentance (3:9).

Peter was recalling the Old Testament prophets when he wrote, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief" (3:10). Isaiah had written, "For the Lord of hosts will have a day of reckoning against everyone who is proud and lofty" (Isaiah 2:12), and "Men will go into caves of the rocks, and into holes of the ground before the terror of the Lord, and before the splendor of His majesty" (Isaiah 2:19). Isaiah 13 speaks of the day of the Lord as a day of judgment against Babylon; Isaiah 34:8 speaks against Edom. Jeremiah 46:10 says that Egypt will face God's wrath on the day of the Lord. Amos 5:18 and Zephaniah 1:7 say that God will be avenged against Israel on the day of the Lord. For the prophets, the day of the Lord was any day when God mightily vindicated Himself by executing judgment. In 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and 2 Peter 3:10, it is the day of God's ultimate judgment, when all people will appear before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 2:6-8).

Jesus and Paul had also said that the day of the Lord will come like a thief (Matthew 24:42-44; 1 Thessalonians 5:2). There is little difference between the expectation of the Lord's immediate return (1 Peter 4:7; James 5:8) and the expectation that He will return as a thief. In either case, the Lord's people are to be prepared and to live expectantly. When He comes again, His mighty judgment will be final and absolute. The earth, the sky, the seas, and all the elements of nature will be destroyed.

The final words in 3:10 are difficult. The NASB translates, "Its works will be burned up," but the NIV says, "Everything in it will be laid bare."

Behind the two translations lie two different Greek words. Some ancient copies of 2 Peter have the word which means “burned up,” while others have a word that means “will be found.” Which word Peter actually wrote is difficult to determine, but if he used “will be found,” the NIV has understood it correctly. The Greek word is used in the sense of 1 Corinthians 3:13, which says that in the last day each man’s work “will become evident” and “will be revealed with fire.” “To be found” can mean to be found out, revealed, or laid bare. Other translators have rendered the final clause as a rhetorical question: “And the earth and the works it contains—will they be found?”

Some have attempted to use this passage to support the teaching that the earth will not be destroyed but simply renovated in the last day. The context will not bear that interpretation. Peter was saying that the earth and the universe as we now know them will be no more when the Lord returns. There is no other way to understand the statement “The heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat.”

WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE OUGHT YOU TO BE? (3:11-18)

Peter did not intend to strike terror in the hearts of the Christians by reminding them of the end of time. Only the unbeliever and the ungodly have cause for fear. For Peter and his readers, knowing that the present world order would end only strengthened their resolve to live holy and godly lives. “What sort of people ought you to be, . . . looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God?” Peter asked (3:11, 12). When Paul wrote about Christ’s return, he had a similar exhortation in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-5. By living godly lives, Christians are ready for the Lord if He comes unexpectedly, and they hasten the time of His appearing (i.e., they look forward to it with anticipation.)

Some ask, “With the heavens and the earth destroyed, where will God’s people live?” Peter attempted to give no detailed explanation. The answer is hidden in the omniscience and power of God. It is enough to know that God will provide a new heaven and a new earth, of a wholly different kind than this one. In that heaven and earth, righteousness will dwell. Peter’s imagery was clear, if not as picturesque and dramatic as John’s in Revelation:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of

heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, . . .” (Revelation 21:1-4).

Peter’s closing remarks repeated his exhortation to holy living. Christians needed to prepare themselves for life with Him, when all things are renewed and the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne (Matthew 19:28). As the Lord Himself was “a lamb unblemished and spotless” (1 Peter 1:19), Peter urged Christians to be “spotless and blameless” (2:14). The words may be a purposeful contrast to the false teachers who were “stains and blemishes.” While anxiously awaiting His return, the faithful were to remember that the delay would allow others to hear the gospel, be saved, and join the elect.

A singular witness to the authority and inspiration of other New Testament writings appears in 3:15. Paul wrote the first letter that came down to us, 1 Thessalonians, around A.D. 51, approximately fifteen years before the writing of 2 Peter. Further, if Peter was in Rome when he wrote, which we suppose he was, Paul had written his letter to the church in that city approximately eight years before. We do not know when, how, or by whom Paul’s letters were gathered together, but even as early as the writing of 2 Peter, Peter and his readers could have been acquainted with Paul’s letters.

Peter’s statement that the ignorant and unstable distort what Paul had written likely indicates that the false teachers described in chapter 2 had attempted to use statements in Paul’s letters to support their false teaching. Peter made it clear that he and Paul were brothers together in a common cause. Paul “according to the wisdom given him” had also written of the day of the Lord and of the consequent need for holy and righteous living (3:15, 16).

Which passages, or even which epistles of Paul, Peter alluded to in 3:15, 16 is difficult to say. Colossians, Ephesians, and Galatians were addressed to churches of Asia Minor. The churches of Asia could easily have known the letters to Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth. Further, Timothy was at Ephesus in Asia when Paul wrote to him, and Titus was on the nearby island of Crete. The significant thing is that Peter and his readers knew at least some of Paul’s letters and recognized them to be as authoritative as “the rest of the Scripture.” Of course, Paul himself affirmed that his words had authority because they were given by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:13; Ephesians 3:5).

Unfortunately, Christians in every period of time must be on guard not to be "carried away by the error of unprincipled men" (3:17). The basic truths, commandments, and way of life commended to Christians are in the New Testament for any who care to read them, but more than one Christian has been led away from his secure position by those who specialize in the "things hard to understand" (3:16) written by Paul and other New Testament authors. Christians need to beware of teachers who set aside clear, commonly understood teachings of the Scriptures in favor of their own peculiar interpretations of difficult and little understood passages. Many Christians have fallen and been crushed on the rocks of the seventy weeks of Daniel, the night visions of Zechariah, and the figurative language of Revelation.

CONCLUSION

The last chapter of 2 Peter contains one of the New Testament's most graphic descriptions of the second coming of the Lord. Modern Christians have trouble understanding the eager yearning which the first-century church had for the return of the Lord. From their first hearing of the gospel, Christians had learned that the Lord was coming back. They expected Him any time, and when a few years passed and He had not come, they began to wonder. Their detractors and enemies found the expectation to be a convenient object for ridicule and mockery.

Peter kept alive the hope of Christ's second coming in a context that helped Christians deal with the delay, however long it might be. He did not suggest that they should give up hope of His immediate return. The only way to expect the return of the Lord is to expect it shortly. To expect Him shortly is not the same as demanding that the Lord fit Himself into a human time frame. The Christian's faith is that the Lord will return.

(BEWARE continued from page 42)

freedom to have a clear head and good health excludes the freedom for alcoholic indulgence. The freedom for an honest man or woman to have self-respect excludes the freedom to lie, steal, and cheat. Every individual must choose which freedoms are more important to him. Peter said that the false teachers in the churches of Asia Minor who promised freedom were themselves slaves. Then he added the pungent statement, "... for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved" (2:19). The inspired men who wrote the New Testament did not view Christian freedom as license for self-in-

dulgence. James spoke of the gospel as "the perfect law, the law of liberty" (James 1:25; 2:12). Paul wrote, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death" (Romans 8:2).

The great tragedy of the false teachers was that when they enticed newly-won converts to follow them, they effectively sealed them out of the kingdom of God forever. Peter said, "It would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them" (2:21). For a recent convert to Christ to be drawn into bickering among those who claim the Lord's name is perhaps the most destructive thing that can happen to him. To illustrate the state of the recent convert who turns with disgust back to the world, Peter drew a proverb from Solomon (Proverbs 26:11) and another from his contemporary world. The one who turns back to the world after having known Christ, he said, is like a dog that returns to his vomit or a sow that returns to her wallowing (2:22).

CONCLUSION

Peter's purpose in his first letter was to strengthen and build up Christians who were suffering from outside forces. In comparison to the problems confronted in 2 Peter, it had been a fairly joyful task. The church has always borne up well in the face of persecutions from without; it has not fared as well from destructive forces arising from within. If the church of Christ is to influence the world for the Lord, Christians must have the courage to face problems that arise from within.

While tragedies lie behind the writing of this letter, it had to be written to avoid the greater tragedy of compromising the message of Christ. It is beautiful when brothers and sisters dwell together in peace and unity and carry out the mission Christ has given His church; but Christians should not be surprised when they occasionally must deal with internal dissension. Satan uses all the weapons of his arsenal to discourage and defeat Christians, and one of his most powerful tools is the perversion of the gospel by false teachers who claim to speak the truth.

Almost True

"Whatever is only almost true is quite false, and among the most dangerous of errors, because being so near truth, it is the more likely to lead astray."

Henry Ward Beecher

2 Peter 3 - David Pham

Intro.

1. Don't with context
2. Can't preach everything in one sermon.
3. Good preaching has to be condensed

Discussion

I. Attitude of the Scoffers.

- A. Waiting after their own lusts (v. 3)
- B. Where is the promise of his coming - intended to express doubt.
- C. All things continue as they have always been
- D. They are willingly ignorant - don't want to know
- E. By the word of God
 1. All things created by the word of God
 2. Present order held in place by the word of God (cf. Heb. 1:3).
 3. Being flood on the ungodly.

II. Why Have we not Seen it Happen?

- A. God doesn't operate on our schedule (v. 8)
- B. God's long-suffering is why the delay of the Lord has not come (v. 9)

III. But The Day of the Lord Will Come (v. 10)

- A. All be destroyed.
- B. In view of this what kind of people should one be (v. 10-11).

2 PETER 3

- A. The Purpose of the Epistles (v. 1,2). *Greek word epistle occurs 24 times in N.T., translated epistle 15 times + letters 9 times.*
1. "...stir up your pure minds"—To arouse thoroughly.
 2. Recognize—Be mindful.
- B. Scoffers come in last days (vv. 3-4).
1. Last days refer to the Christian dispensation, Acts 2:16,17; Heb. 1:1,2. *Tim. 4:1, 2 Tim. 3:1 -*
 2. Scoffers would be those that would mock and jeer at the idea of Christ's coming (cf. Gen. 19:14). *"mockers...with their mocking" (NASB)*
 3. The erroneous views of some of the first century Christians may have given grounds for their charges since some of them believed in the immediate return (Cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-17).
- C. The apostle's reply to the scoffers' charge that Christ would not return (vv. 5-9).
1. They alleged that the unvarying conformity of nature proved this.
 - a. They had deliberately and willfully ignored the lessons of the flood which demonstrated conclusively that all things have not continued as they were from the beginning (vv. 5-6).
 - b. The same word that brought the flood holds the earth in place today (v. 7).
 2. The lapse of time between the promise and the fulfillment is not to be interpreted as meaning God will not fulfill his commitments (v. 8).
 - a. The passing of time does not affect God's fulfillment as it does now.
 - b. The longer the interval between the promise and the fulfillment on man's part the less likely he will fulfill. Reasons:
 - (1) Man may die.
 - (2) He may forget his promise.
 - (3) He may violate his word and simply refuse to do what he promised.
 - (4) Conditions may arise making it impossible for him to perform it.
 - c. Since none of these are true of God it's idle for man to infer that the delay means God has forgotten.
 - d. An admonition to recognize that the delay is God's longsuffering because he wants all to be saved (v. 9).
- D. Heavens - 2 Peter 3:10
1. By the words of God "the heavens" were of old, 2 Pet. 3:5.
 2. The heavens and earth which are now kept in store by the same word, 2 Pet. 3:7.
 3. The heavens shall pass away with a great noise.
 4. God will destroy the same heavens he made with his word and holds in place with his word, 2 Pet. 3:10.
 5. Since God is eternal then his dwelling place is eternal and is therefore not included in the heavens that will pass away.
 6. Greek word used is ouranoi, Mt. 3:16; 24:29; Mk. 1:10; Lk. 12:33; Acts 2:34; 7:56.
 7. Judge Rutherford, founder of Jehovah's Witnesses, attempted to explain away 2 Peter 3:10 by saying that ...the apostle is here using symbolic language." The passage states that "...THE EARTH AND THE WORKS THAT ARE THEREIN SHALL BE BURNED UP" (Emphasis mine--JLW).

- a. The New World Translation (NWT) has corrupted the text to read, "Yet Jehovah's day will come as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a hissing noise, but the elements being intensely hot will be dissolved, and the earth and the works in it will be **discovered**" (Emphasis mine--JLW).
- b. Now let me say that there is a world of difference in a thing being **burned up** and a thing being **discovered**! Which had you rather hear: "Our dinner just got **burned up**?" or "Our dinner was just **discovered**!"?
- c. The words "burned up" are taken from the Greek **Katakaio** which means "to burn up, to consume with fire." The Greek for "discovered" is **Katanoeo**. The scholars have stated, "...discovered is strange and improbable" (Thayer). Also, "...discovered obviously makes utter nonsense of the place" (Burgon). The evidence is highly in deference to "burned up."
- d. The NWT, like the current A.D. 70 heresy, is not even consistent. The same Greek phrase is used elsewhere in the Scripture. Matt. 3:12, "...but the chaff he will **burn up** with fire..." (NWT). Revelation 8:7, "...A third of the earth was **burned up**, and a third of the trees was burned up, and all the green vegetation was **burned up**..." (NWT). [All emphasis mine--JLW.]
 - (1) Why would they translate correctly in these four instances and then incorrectly in the only other occurrence of the phrase?--Because 2 Peter 3:10 stands diametrically opposed to Jehovah's Witness' doctrine.
 - (2) This same place also stands diametrically opposed to the A.D. 70 error
- e. Not only is the NWT inconsistent in its translation (or mistranslation!)--it also contradicts itself on this very matter.
 - (1) Consider the wording of Hebrews 1:10 in the NWT: "...You at the beginning, O Lord, laid the foundations of the earth itself, and the heavens are the works of your hands, they themselves **will perish**..." [Emphasis mine--JLW]
 - (2) Then, within the context itself notice 2 Peter 3:7 in the NWT: "...by the same word the heavens and the earth that are now **stored up for fire**..." [Emphasis mine--JLW]. Shades of contradiction--what shall it be?
 - (3) The A.D. 70 errorists are in league with the doctrine of Jehovah's Witnesses.
 - (4) Paul warned in 1 Corinthians 15:33, "BE NOT DECEIVED. EVIL COMPANIONSHIPS CORRUPT GOOD MORALS."

(All the points under number 7 were written by Jesse Whitlock.)

E. Peter pictures dramatically the obligations falling on Christians because of what God will do in that day

1. First, the general exhortation (v. 11)
2. Second, and again, as in 1:5 with the imperative: "be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (v. 14)
3. Third, the warning (v. 17).

"AN EXPOSITION OF 2 PETER 3"

2 Peter 3: 1-18

Harry L. Robertson

THESIS: The second coming of Christ will be God's reply to those who ridicule knowing about His Son.

PURPOSE: To explain the meaning of 2 Peter 3 and present some practical applications to Christians today.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Background material of 2 Peter 3

a. 2 Authenticity

(1) Internal evidence verifying Simon Peter as the author

1-V, 1 - "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle..."

2-IV, 13-14 - describes nature of his death (cf. Jn. 13:36, 21:19)

3-V, 16 - association with Christ at transfiguration (cf. Mt. 17:1-7)

(2) Doesn't bear characteristics of a forgery

1-Isn't romantic in nature or doesn't express anything new about Peter

2-Autobiographical allusions

b. 2 Date - @ 66-67 A.D.

c. 3 Key Word - "Knowledge" (referred to 14 times)

d. 4 Key Verse - 2 Peter 3:18

e. 5 Outline of 2 Peter

(1) Receiving the Word of God, 1:1-21

(2) Rejecting the Word of God, 2:1-22

(3) Ridiculing the Word of God, 3:1-13

(4) Return of the Word of God, 3:14-18

2. Basis for Misunderstanding of 2 Peter 3

a. 1 Concerns the "return of Christ"

(1) In reference to the destruction of Jerusalem?

(2) In reference to the "rapture"?

(3) In reference to the beginning of the "millennial kingdom"?

b. 2 Concerns the destruction of the World

(1) Will there be a new heavens and new earth, i.e., one other than the one presently existing?

(2) Are the "new heavens and new earth" representative of the present earth, remodeled for the "millennial kingdom"?

(3) Does the phrase "new heavens and new earth" represent heaven as spoken of in Revelation 21: 1-22:5?

DISCUSSION:

I. Ridiculing the Word of God, 2 Peter 3:1-13

A. Mockers and the end of the world (vv. 1-7) - In this section, Peter discusses:

1 The purpose of the epistle (1-2)

a. (1) To stir up their sincere minds

b. (2) To encourage the readers to remember:

(1) The words spoken through the holy prophets

(2) The commandment spoken by the Lord and Savior through the apostles

2/ The character of the epistle (3-6)

a (✓) Their nature

(1) Mockers (*ἐκτρεφόμενοι*) - those who ridicule, make fun of; tricksters, cf. Jd. 18

(2) Walk after own lusts - lit., "live for lusting"

b (✓) Their time of appearance

(1) "in the last days" - i.e., from the beginning of the reign of the Messiah to the end of the world

(cf. Isa. 2:2-4; Acts 2:16-17; Heb. 1:1-2)

(2) NOTE: Such appear in all generations (cf. Gen. 19:12-14; Acts 17:31-32)

c (✓) Their mockery

(1) "If the world continues as it always has, and Jesus has not yet returned as He promised, then He was not the Son of God, and it isn't essential to know about Him.

(2) The world continues as it always has, and Jesus has not yet returned as He promised.

(3) Therefore, He was not the Son of God, and it isn't essential to know about Him."

d (✓) Their forgetfulness

(1) Forget - to escape the notice of; to purposely allow to pass

(2) God's swift and sudden destruction by the flood was a precedent set by the Creator that the mockers couldn't consistently deny; thus, they chose to forget it.

3/ The punishment of the epistle (7)

a (✓) By the same word (i.e., the authority of God, cf. v. 5), heavens and earth have been stored up

(1) stored up (*ἐκκεκρυπται*) - stored with a view of helping a special case in need (cf. 1 Cor. 16:2) (Vine's)

(2) Earth and heavens are set aside for destruction

b (✓) By same word, heavens and earth have been reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men

(1) reserved (*ὑψηλὰ*) - to guard, preserve with a retributive issue (Vine's)

(2) Heavens and earth are preserved for the day of judgment

B. The Day of the Lord (vv. 8-13) - In this section, Peter describes the second coming as a time which:

1/ Displays God's long-suffering nature (8-9)

a (✓) The Lord is not bound by a time schedule

(1) God views events from the aspect of eternity - not how much time passes from T₁ to T₂

(2) Not important to God that Christ has not returned during the time prescribed by the mockers

b (✓) The Lord is long-suffering

(1) He is not slack, i.e., his reason for not returning is not because He can't.

(2) He is long-tempered, i.e., "God has a self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate or blaze up in anger." (Trench)

(3) NOTE: Because God desires man to use his free will to choose Him, He allows them many opportunities and much time to repent (1 Pet. 3:20; 1 Tim. 2:3-4)

~~C~~ 2) Demands preparation by man (10-11)

~~(1)~~ The "day of the Lord" - when will it occur?

~~(a)~~ In the Old Testament, it depicts a time of judgment

~~(b)~~ In the New Testament, it generally refers to the day of judgment (cf. 1 Cor. 1:8, 5:5; Phil. 1:6,10, 2:16; and 1 Thes. 5:2)

~~(2)~~ 2) The "day of the Lord" - What will happen?

~~(a)~~ It will come suddenly, i.e., as a thief (cf. 1 Thes. 5:2-4; Mt. 24:43-44)

~~(b)~~ It will bring destruction - heaven shall pass away with a great noise, and the earth shall be dissolved

~~d~~ 3) Depicts a day of happiness and sorrow (12-13)

~~(1)~~ A day of happiness for those who desire the Lord's return

~~(2)~~ A day of happiness for those who look for a new heavens and new earth (most of the following material is taken from Guy N. Woods, Gospel Advocate Commentary on the Epistles of Peter, John and Jude)

~~(a)~~ "Heaven" is used in reference to : (1) where the birds fly; (2) where the stars are; and (3) where the throne is and where our Lord reigns (ps. 11:4)

~~(b)~~ The present earth is not the new earth because of:

(1) John 18:36-37; and (2) John 14:1-6- the place prepared for Jesus' disciples was not this earth

~~(c)~~ The new heavens and new earth where the righteous will live (cf. Rev. 21,22) is typified by the present heavens and earth where we now live

(3) A day of sorrow for those who:

~~(a)~~ Have mocked Christ's return and the ensuing destruction of the world

~~(b)~~ Love this world (cf. 1 Jn. 2:15-17)

II. The Return of the Word of God, 2 Peter 3:14-18

~~A.~~ Look Diligently (v. 14)

~~1)~~ That we may be found in peace

~~2)~~ That we may be "without spot and blameless"

~~a~~ ~~(1)~~ A perfectly cleansed body (cf. 1 Pet. 1:19; 1 Jn. 1:7)

~~b~~ ~~(2)~~ Essential to enter the eternal kingdom (2 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 21:27)

~~B.~~ Look Thankfully (vv. 15-16)

~~1)~~ Because the longer Christ delays His coming, the more time we have to work and/or repent

~~2)~~ Because we have the inspired messages of Peter and Paul concerning these matters of eternity

NOTE: A Special Warning

~~a~~ ~~(1)~~ Don't misunderstand the information you have concerning the return of the Lord

~~b~~ ~~(2)~~ Don't wrest the Scriptures that are concerned with the Lord's return

~~(1)~~ wrest (CTPEAKA) - to distort or twist, e.g., a victim on the torture rack was "wrested"

~~(2)~~ This passage would implicitly refer to any passage of inspired Scripture

ex. Look Carefully (vv. 17-18)

- 1) So that you're not carried away:
 - (1) With the wicked
 - (2) From your own steadfastness and hence, the grace of God
- 2) So that you do not fail to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord
- 3, NOTE: To grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord will be the answer to all the questions raised by those who reject and ridicule a knowledge of the Son of God

CONCLUSION/SOME PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS ON 2 PETER AND 2 PETER 3:

1. For 2 Peter

- ~~a~~ 1) Through His word, God gives man all the information he needs pertaining to life and godliness
- ~~b~~ 2) Man can know how to enter the eternal kingdom
- ~~c~~ 3) Man's plan for salvation comes from God - not from man's private interpretation
- ~~d~~ 4) Men will reject that very message which can save them

2. For 2 Peter 3

- ~~a~~ 1) Men will ridicule the concept of Christ's second coming
- ~~b~~ 2) Men must be prepared for the return of Christ
- ~~c~~ 3) Those who have prepared for and anxiously anticipate Christ's return will be rewarded
- ~~d~~ 4) To grow in God's grace and the knowledge of His Son is the key to entrance into the eternal kingdom

— GARY L. ROBERTSON

WILLINGLY IGNORANT #3

Bob Berard

Far from eternal bliss is the prospect of those willingly ignorant persons about whom we have studied in this series. Like that of the infamous scoffers Peter reports, the end of those willingly ignorant of spiritual essentials is perdition (2 Pet. 3:3-7; Mt. 7:21-23). Articles #1 and #2 discussed **those who are willingly ignorant of the Bible in general and those who are willingly ignorant of the purpose of Bible preaching.** Consider now **those who are willingly ignorant of their need to acknowledge past sins** even though they have resumed regular attendance.

It is a sometimes a surprising, but nevertheless a delightful thing to see a member who has long been willfully absent from our assemblies walk in the meeting house door. In that moment our love for this erring one's soul causes us to rejoice at what appears to be a certain return of a "prodigal son" and both love and duty demand that we be eager to accept him back as part of the faithful family (Mt. 22:39; Lk 15:20). However, it is a strange thing that such a member sometimes returns to the assemblies and resumes regular attendance with never a comment explaining his sorrow for his unfaithfulness or his intention to again be an active soldier of the cross. Before long his presence in the assemblies becomes an expected thing and both he and the rest of the church behave as if no interruption in his service ever occurred. Is this right? Are we to assume that repentance has occurred? What are we to do?

Could a husband/wife leave his/her mate for several months and return with never a word of explanation or apology about his departure or future intentions? Could an employee not show up for work for all of the month of July and walk in on August 1 and simply take up where he left off, leaving boss and co-workers guessing about the absence?

The prodigal son left no doubt about his change of will when he returned to his father's house. In his determination to return, he resolved to confess his fault and when he met his father he announced, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight..." (Lk. 15:17-19).

Simon, when exposed in his sin, requested the prayer of Peter, thereby implying an acknowledgement of his guilt as charged and his desire to be restored (Acts 8:20-24).

John and James further declare God's will in this matter. We are to confess (acknowledge) our sins to both God and man. In every case, one's sins should be confessed to God; in cases in which our brethren know of the sin, they have need to know of our repentance (1 John 1:9; James 5:17). *More on this next time.*

ABOUNDING MORE AND MORE

Al Macias

To love one another is one of the most important principles of Christianity. We can find passage after passage commanding us to love one another as Christ loved us. If we as Christians would only love one another as we have been commanded, many problems which sometimes occur among ourselves could be completely avoided. The apostle John wrote about how important Christian love really is. We read in I John 3:14, "*We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death.*" What was the apostle John saying in this passage? He was saying that one of the signs indicating that one has passed from death to life is his love for the brethren.

Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, exhorted them not to just love one another but to abound in it more and more. We read in I Thessalonians 4:11,12, "*...and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business and to work with your own hands, as we command you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.*" Paul exhorted the Thessalonian brethren to study to be quiet. This meant that the brethren were to avoid meddling or being busybodies in the lives of others. Paul also wrote to Timothy concerning the kind of life that is expected of all Christians. In I Timothy 2:2b-3 we read, "*...that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our savior.*"

Paul, in writing to the Thessalonian brethren, instructed them and us to do our own business and work with our hands. What did Paul mean by "doing our own business"? It is a commandment from God that Christians attend to their own affairs and not be wanting to interfere in the affairs of other people. Apparently the Thessalonian brethren were having a problem with this. Finally, Paul exhorted the brethren to work with their own hands. Even from the beginning, in the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were told to dress and keep the garden.

What would be accomplished if the Thessalonian brethren followed the instruction given them by the apostle Paul? They would gain the respect of them that were without; those in the world would have no reason to speak against the kind of lives the Christians were living. And so would it be today.

Remember those who are at Hensel Camp this week, as they study God's word and enjoy recreation together. We appreciate those who are teaching, cooking and supervising the activities.

Completed
10/4/11

JUDE OR JUDAS IN THE BIBLE

- A. Two apostles wore the same name Judas.
 - 1. Judas, the apostle, Luke 16:16. >
 - > One of these two.
 - 2. Judas, not Iscariot, John 14. >
- B. Judas, brother of James and Lord, Mark 6:3; Matt. 13:55.
- C. Judas of Galilee, Acts 5:37.
- D. Judas, surnamed Barsabas, Acts 15:22.
- E. Judas, of Damascus, Acts 9:11.
- F. Thaddaeus, sometimes thought to be Judas, Matt. 10:3.
- G. Time of writing--Date 64 determined by similarity of material to 2 Peter 2.
 - 1. Some say must have been written a good deal before or after the fall of Jerusalem.
 - 2. Can't tell for sure when written.
- H. Written for this reason?
 - 1. Contend for faith.
 - 2. Warning against false teachers.

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I. AUTHORSHIP:

A. Jude, the half-brother of Jesus:

1. Internal Evidence: Jude 1---Don't know much about this Jude
 - a. Matt. 13:55
 - b. Mark 6:3
2. External Evidence:
 - a. Athenagoras (177) shows definite knowledge of Jude. 1st to mention Jude.
 - b. Muratorian Canon (180)
 - c. Tertullian (180-200)
 - d. Clement of Alexandria
 - e. Origen---Said that some doubted it.
 - f. Not weighty---Brevity---Cites apocryphal book.

B. Another Jude---No manuscript evidence.

C. Pseudonymous work: If so, question: Why would the writer choose a man who is not well known?

II. DATE:

A. 60-140.

B. Argument For late date:

1. "Our common salvation"---This doesn't prove late date--
2. "Faith once delivered"---But Paul used faith as a body of truth earlier:
 - a. Acts 6:7
 - b. Rom. 1:5
 - c. Gal. 1:23--
3. v. 17---Doesn't necessarily imply author lived at later date.

III. RELATIONSHIP TO 2 PETER:

A. Most believe author of 2 Peter copied Jude, or

B. Jude copied 2 Peter, or

C. Both copied common source.

D. In favor of 2 Peter copying Jude:

1. Longer copied shorter.
2. Jude is harsher so Peter toned it down.
3. Jude used apocryphal book and 2 Peter author rejected them.

E. In Favor of Jude copying 2 Peter:

1. It is more likely a big name apostle would be copied.
2. Strongest argument, but no guarantee.

IV. PURPOSE:

A. Polemic

B. Heresy involves: All such condemned

1. Faulty Christology (v. 4).
2. Misuse of grace (Libertines)--vv. 7, 16.
3. Product of imagination rather than revelation (v. 8).

V. DESTINATION:

A. Palestine or Antioch.

B. The readers seems to have known the writer personally (v. 17-18).

VI. JUDE'S USE OF NON-CANONICAL SOURCES:

A. Jude copies 1 Enoch 1:9:

1. Only one we know for sure in the N.T. Apocryphal book
2. 1 Enoch dated 150-50 B.C.

B. Other Bible Writers quoted other sources to illustrate, but not to claim inspiration for the writer they quoted.

1. Heb. 11:37---"sawn asunder"
2. Titus 1:12---Epimenedes--Paul calls him a prophet.
3. Acts 17:28---Paul cites non-canonical source.
4. 2 Tim. 3:8---Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses

C. V. 9---Jude seems to have cited from "Assumption of Moses"

1. Clement of Alexander, Origen and Didymus say that Jude referred to it.
2. Until more evidence can be brought forth they probably told the truth about Jude.

ARTICLE:

Carroll Osborn---"The Christological Use of 1 Enoch 1:9 in Jude 14,15."
In New Testament Studies---1977--pp. 334-341.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Jude 1-4

JAMES MEADOWS

Introduction

1. This great text is the battle cry of the church. The great truths set forth in this text are demanding and challenging to our nature. It eliminates the idea of our contending for anything that is not "the faith." It demands that we allow nothing to cause us to give less than all diligence in contending for the faith. It summons every member of the church for loyalty to the conflict between truth and error.
2. Jude gave all diligence to write about the "common salvation." Just think how important that subject is.
 - a. It is the "common salvation" because it is available to all, both Jew and Gentile who will comply with the conditions thereof.
 - (1) John the Baptist came to turn Israel back to God, Lk. 1:16.
 - (2) The twelve, during our Lord's personal ministry, were to "go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," Mt. 10:6.
 - (3) But the great commission says "go teach all nations," Mt. 28:19.
 - (4) The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men," Tit. 2:11.
 - (5) It is the "so great salvation," Heb. 2:1-4.
 - (6) Paul refers to the "common faith," Tit. 1:4.
 - (7) Peter addressed one of his epistles to those that "have obtained like precious faith," 2 Pet. 1:1.
3. But, great as the theme was on which he purposed to write, Jude, upon learning that special dangers threatened "the faith," suspended his purposed treatise and wrote without delay to exhort his brethren to "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered for all to the saints."
4. The present study purposes to ask and answer several questions about "the faith" in order that each may be better prepared to "earnestly contend for the faith."

Discussion

I. WHAT IS THE FAITH?

- A. Faith is used several ways in the Bible.
 1. It is used in the subjective sense which is simply the act of believing a thing, Rom. 10:17.
 2. It sometimes means the conviction that a thing is right or wrong, Rom. 14:22,23.
 3. It sometimes, as in our text, means that which is believed. "The faith for which Jude's readers were thus earnestly to contend, put objectively here for the gospel, is the sum of all that which Christians are to believe and obey."
- B. The faith means the gospel, the doctrine, the truth, the word of God, the whole of Christianity.
 1. "...and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith," Acts 6:7.

- a. The apostles preached the gospel on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:1-40.
- b. The high priest accused them of filling "Jerusalem with your doctrine," Acts 5:28.
- c. "Daily in the temple, and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ," Acts 5:42.
- d. They gave themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word," Acts 6:4.
- e. The word of God increased in Jerusalem, Acts 6:7.
- f. The priests were obedient to the faith, Acts 6:7.
- g. Surely the gospel, doctrine, teaching and preaching Jesus Christ, the word, and the faith all refer to the same thing.
2. Elymas the sorcerer sought "to turn away the deputy from the faith," Acts 13:8.
 - a. When Sergius Paulus called for Barnabas and Saul "he desired to hear the word of God," Acts 13:7.
 - b. They were preaching the word of God, Acts 13:5.
 - c. Paul accused Elymas of perverting the "right ways of the Lord," Acts 13:8.
 - d. When the deputy saw what happened to Elymas he "believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord," Acts 13:12.
 - e. The word of God, the faith, the right ways of the Lord, and the doctrine of the Lord all refer to the same body of truth.
3. On the return part of his first missionary journey Paul and his company stopped at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith," Acts 14:22.
 - a. They preached the "word of God" or "the word of the Lord" when they first came to Antioch, Acts 13:44-49.
 - b. They preached the gospel at Lystra and Derbe, Acts 14:6,7.
 - c. In admonishing them to continue in the faith Paul was admonishing them to continue in that which they had heard and believed, namely, the gospel, the word of God.
4. The faith is come, Gal. 3:22-27.
 - a. In this instance, the word "faith" is made to stand for the full Christian system of salvation.
 - b. In the context the word "faith" occurs five times and in each instance, in the original text, it is preceded by the article "the" which means that the word faith in all these passages, is used in a specific and technical sense.

II. WHAT DOES "ONCE DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS" MEAN?

- A. Thayer says "once for all" means "like, Lat, Semel, used of what is so done as to be of perpetual validity and never needs repetition, once for all: Heb. 6:4; 10:2; 1 Pet. 3:18.
 1. Christ "was once offered to bear the sins of many..." Heb. 9:28.
 2. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins..." 1 Pet. 3:18.

3. Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth, Jn. 16:13. Jude is affirming he kept his promise.
 4. Paul declared the scriptures are able to furnish man completely, 2 Tim. 3:16,17.
 5. Peter says God has given us all that pertains to life and godliness, 2 Pet. 1:3.
 6. "The meaning is that the truth is delivered for all time: it is a permanent deposit, it will never be superseded, amended, or modified. As it now stands, it is a perfect, adequate, completely inviolable deposit of truth, providing the means with which to confute the gainsayer, and resist the advocate of false doctrine."
 7. This passage clearly refutes all claims to modern revelation.
 - a. It "refutes the claim of the Catholic Church that the voice of the pope is the voice of God and that God continues to speak through any living representative."
 - b. It refutes such pretended revelators as Joseph Smith, Mrs. Ellen G. White, etc.
 - c. One must deny the truthfulness of what Jude says or cease to advocate the idea of later revelations.
- B. How was the faith delivered?
1. The ~~mean~~ of old spake as they were guided by the Holy Spirit, 2 Pet. 1:20,21.
 2. The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all truth, Jn. 3:16.
 - a. They were to remain in Jerusalem until they received power, Lk. 24:49.
 - b. They would receive power when the Holy Spirit came, Acts 1:8.
 - c. The Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, Acts 2:1-4.
 3. The apostle Paul claimed that he was guided by the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 2:6-13.
 - a. He spoke the wisdom of God, v. 7.
 - b. He spoke those things which had not been previously revealed, vv. 8,9.
 - c. He spoke these things as they were revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, v. 10a.
 - d. He declares that just as the spirit of man knows man so the Spirit of God knew God and they received the Spirit of God, vv. 10b,11.
 - e. He declares that the Holy Spirit help choose the words with which to express that revealed, v. 13.
 4. Paul claimed that what he preached was a direct revelation from God, Gal. 1:11,12.
 5. Peter said the apostles preached the gospel by the Holy Spirit, 1 Pet. 1:12.
 6. The apostles "were the inspired and miraculously empowered agents to whom the faith was committed and through whom it has been given once for all to God's children."
- C. The faith was "once delivered unto the saints."

1. The word "saints" applies to God's children.
2. It is applied to God's children 30 times in the Old Testament and 50 times in the New Testament.
3. Paul said the faith (mystery) is "made manifest to the saints," Col. 1:26.

III. WHY MUST THE FAITH BE PROCLAIMED?

- A. The faith must be preached if sinners are to believe and be saved, Acts 6:7; 24:25; Rom. 10:17.
- B. The faith must be obeyed if sinners are to be freed from their sins, Rom. 6:17,18.
 1. That form of doctrine refers to the gospel of Christ, 1 Cor. 15:1-4.
 2. The Romans, as do all, obey it when they believe and are baptized into Christ, Rom. 6:3,4.
- C. The faith must be proclaimed in order for the church to be edified and to grow.
 1. The churches established by Paul were established in the faith by hearing the decrees preached by Paul, Acts 16:4,5.
 2. Paul told the elders from Ephesus that the word is able to build up, Acts 20:32.
 3. The truth was revealed that the church might be edified, Eph. 4:11-16.
 4. We are to desire the sincere milk of God's word that we may grow, 1 Pet. 2:2.
- D. The faith must be proclaimed because only those that "continue in the faith" will be saved eternally.
 1. The Christians at Lystra, Iconium and Antioch were to "continue in the faith," Acts 14:21,22.
 2. The Corinthians were to "stand fast in the faith," 1 Cor. 16:13.
 3. We are admonished to examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, 2 Cor. 13:5.
 4. We will be presented holy, unblamable, unprovable if we continue in the faith, Col. 1:22,23.
 5. Great effort will be needed to continue in the faith because:
 - a. One can depart, 1 Tim. 4:1.
 - b. One can deny the faith, 1 Tim. 5:8.
 - c. One can err from the faith, 1 Tim. 6:10.

IV. WHY MUST CHRISTIANS CONTEND FOR THE FAITH?

- A. What does it mean to "earnestly contend"?
 1. The original word for "earnestly contend" or "contend earnestly" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament and it literally means to fight.
 2. It is here figurative used to "denote extreme efforts which are to characterize the faithful in their defense of the truth, however formidable and numerous its enemies may be.
 3. The word properly signifies to strive as in the Olympic game; that is, with their whole force.
 - a. "dialegomai"

- (1) Is translated "preach" (Acts 20:7), "reason with" (Acts 17:2), "dispute" (Mk. 9:34).
 - (2) Basic meaning: to argue, discourse, debate, discuss, contend.
 - b. "Apologia"
 - (1) Is translated "answer" (Acts 25:16), "clearing of one's self" (2 Cor. 7:11), "defense" (Acts 22:1).
 - (2) Basic meaning: a defense, to make good one's cause, to set forth evidence which defends one's position.
 - c. "agonidzomai"
 - (1) Is translated "strive" (Lk. 13:24), "fight" (Jn. 18:36), "laboring fervently" (Col. 4:12).
 - (2) Basic meaning: to be a combatant, to fight, strive earnestly, to endeavor with strenuous zeal, to contend with adversaries.
- B. Christians must earnestly contend for the faith because it is commanded by God and upheld by example.
1. Put on the armor of God and use it, Eph. 6:10-18.
 2. Timothy instructed, 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:3; 1 Tim. 6:12.
 3. Peter says, 1 Pet. 3:15.
 4. Jesus engaged in public debate with the scribes (Mk. 9:14ff, the Sadducees (Mk. 12:18-28) and the Pharisees (Mt. 22:41-46).
 5. Paul said he was set for the defense and confirmation of the gospel, Phil. 1:7,17.
 - a. The word "defense" here means a "verbal defense," a speech in defense.
 - b. The defence (apologia) of the gospel means the defence of the gospel against the attacks which come from outside; it is the defence of the gospel against the arguments and assaults of the enemies of Christianity. The Christian has to be ready to be a defender of the faith, and to give a reason for the hope that is in him."
- C. Christians must earnestly contend for the faith because many false prophets are gone out into the world, 1 Jn. 4:1.
1. There will be false teachers within the church.
 - a. It was the appearance of such teachers that caused Jude's concern and immediate reason for writing the epistle.
 - b. Jude reveals the characteristics of these early opponents of the faith and the same qualities are displayed today.
 - (1) They creep in alongside, craftily infiltrating the saints while pretending to be something they are not, v. 4.
 - (2) They are men of unholy, impure motives, v. 4.
 - (3) They are most indignant in the presence of proper authority, vv. 8-10.
 - (4) They are destructive and willing to compromise, v. 11.
 - (5) They are hidden dangers, making progress by false promises, vv. 12,13.
 - (6) They use others for their advantage, v. 16.
 - c. Paul warned the elders from Ephesus of false teachers among them,

Acts 20:30.

- d. Paul had to contend for the faith because of false brethren, Gal. 2:4.
- e. Peter said there would be false teachers among you, 2 Pet. 2:1,2.
- 2. There will be opponents to the faith outside of the church.
 - a. Some will hold the truth in unrighteousness, Rom. 1:18.
 - b. Some change the truth of God into a lie, Rom. 1:25.
 - c. Some will have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof, 2 Tim. 3:5,7,8.
 - d. Some will have no love for the truth, 2 Thess. 2:10.
- 3. Christians must carefully note and follow Jude's instructions to successfully meet and overcome those in error.
 - a. The saints must be aware of, and dedicated to, their spiritual standing with God, vv. 1,2.
 - b. Christians must recognize the need to stand earnestly for the truth, v. 3.
 - c. They are to remember that God has dealt with error many times and is competent to deal with it again, vv 5-7.
 - d. They are to remember the promise of God to be with those who uphold his will, vv. 14,15.
 - e. They must hold fast the words of Jesus, vv. 17-19.
 - f. They are to assist, if possible, those in error to return to the truth, vv. 22, 23.
 - g. They are to commit themselves in fullness to the care of God, vv. 24,25.
- 4. Every Christian must be involved in this fight.
 - a. Preachers must preach the word, 2 Tim. 4:1-5.
 - b. Elders must hold fast the faithful word, Tit. 1:9-14.
 - c. The church must mark those that cause division, Rom. 16:17,18.
- D. In contending for the faith Christians will:
 - 1. Speak against immorality, Jude 4. There have always been those that made Christian liberty an excuse for ungodly living.
 - 2. Speak against atheism, liberalism, and all other "isms" contrary to the faith, Jude 4, 1 John 2:22.
 - 3. Make doctrine or "the faith" a test of fellowship.
 - a. In a new book entitled "The protest of a Troubled Protestant" (study).
 - b. The apostles and the early church definitely made doctrine a test of fellowship, 2 Jn. 9-11.
 - (1) Jews tried to make circumcision a test of being saved, Acts 15:1; Gal. 2:1-5.
 - (2) The apostles did not accept just any baptism, Acts 19:1-3, 4,5.
 - (3) The apostles did not accept just any kind of worship, 1 Cor. 10:14-22.
 - (4) Paul made the doctrine of the resurrection a test of fellowship, 2 Tim. 2:16-18.
 - 4. Teach there is such a thing as absolute truth and that we can know that

truth. There are those who contend "there is such a thing as absolute truth, but we can never know it, thus we must ever view it as a goal which demands unflagging efforts to attain it."

- a. "How long can New Testament Christianity survive in an atmosphere where its teachers question everything, are tentative in all things, are non-militant in all their positions, who must view all as in the same tentative quest, and to whom it is said that a healthy respect for the tentative finds of others would become mandatory."
 - b. "If we cannot learn the truth, then the Bible is not even a meaningful revelation from God to man. What difference would it make (if the Bible is not God's truth) if none of us can possibly learn the truth. This is false because:
 - (1) We are to study the truth, 2 Tim. 2:15.
 - (2) Learn the truth, 2 Tim. 3:7.
 - (3) Live the truth, Phil. 1:27.
 - (4) Preach the truth, Mk. 16:15,16.
5. Teach that apart from Christ and his church there is no salvation, Lk. 19:10; Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; Mk. 16:16; Eph. 5:23; Eph. 1:22,23; 1 Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:4.

Charles Pledge
Contending for the Faith
Jude 1-4

Introduction

1. Read the text.
2. Attitudes are certainly different from those in times past about the truth.
3. Our attitude must be right but we must contend for the truth.
4. "We ought not to make people feel guilty." How can a sinner be made to turn from his sins unless he feels guilty.
 - I. What We Are To Do? Contend.
 - II. What We Are To Contend For? The Faith.
 - III. Why? Certain men crept in unawares.
 - IV. The two-pronged attack?
 - A. On life - "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness."
 - B. Doctrine - "denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."
 - V. "You can't have an inspired word of God without an authoritative word of God and it is foolish to talk of an authoritative word of God without an inspired word of God."

What the Bible Teaches About Contending for the Faith

James Meadows

"Jude, The servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: Mercy unto you, and peace and love be multiplied. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." (Jude 1-4.)

This great test is the battle cry of the church. The great truths set forth in this text are demanding and challenging to our nature. It eliminates the idea of us contending for anything that is not "the faith." It demands that we allow nothing to cause us to give less than all diligence in contending for "the faith." It summons every member of the church for loyalty to the conflict between truth and error.

Jude gave all diligence to write about the "common salvation." Just think how important that subject is. It is the "common salvation" because it is available to all, both Jew and Gentile, who will comply with the conditions thereof. John the Baptist came to turn the hearts of the children of Israel back to God. (Luke 1:16.) The twelve, during our Lord's personal ministry, were to go "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt. 10:6.) But the great commission says "go teach all nations." (Matt 28:19.) The "grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." (Tit. 2:11.) It is the "so great salvation" (Heb. 2:1-4), which, if neglected will result in eternal damnation. Paul refers to "the common faith" (Tit. 1:4), and Peter addressed one of his epistles to those "that have obtained like precious faith" (2 Pet. 1:1). But, great as the theme was on which he purposed to write, Jude, upon learning that special dangers threatened "the faith," "suspended his proposed treatise and wrote without delay to exhort his brethren to 'earnestly contend for the faith' once for all delivered to the saints."¹

The present study purposes to ask and answer several questions about "the faith" in order that each of us may be better prepared to "earnestly contend for the faith."

I. What is the Faith?

A. Faith is used several ways in the Bible.

1. It is used in the subjective sense which is simply the act of believing a thing. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17.)

2. Faith, sometimes means the conviction of the right or wrong of something. Paul clearly pointed out to the Romans that the eating of meats was not wrong in itself, but if one believed it to be wrong, then it would not be "of faith" to go ahead and eat it. "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. 14:22, 23.)

3. Faith is used in our text, and in many other verses, to mean that which is believed. "The 'faith' for which Jude's readers were thus earnestly to contend, put objectively here for the gospel, is the sum of all that which Christians are to believe and obey."²

B. The faith means the gospel, the doctrine, the truth, the word of God, the whole of Christianity.

1. "...And a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:7.) The apostles preached the *gospel* on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:1-40.) The high priest accused them of filling "Jerusalem with your *doctrine*." (Acts 5:28.) "Daily in the temple, and in every house they ceased not to *teach and preach Jesus Christ*." (Acts 5:42.) They said we will "give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the *word*." (Acts 6:4.) "The *word of God* increased in Jerusalem..." (Acts 6:7a.) The priests were "obedient to the *faith*." Since the apostles were preaching the gospel, doctrine, Jesus Christ, and the word, then the faith must be the same.

these passages, is used in a specific and technical sense."³

II. What Does "Once Delivered Unto the Saints" Mean?

A. The words "once delivered" in the King James Version are "which was once for all delivered" in the American Standard Edition. Thayer says "once for all" means "like, *Lat*, *Semel*, used of what is so done as to be of perpetual validity and never needs repetition, once for all: Hebrews 6:4; 10:2; 1 Peter 3:18; Jude 3, 5." ⁴

Observing the use of the word "once" in other verses will help us to more fully grasp its meaning here.

1. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." (Heb. 9:28.) "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins." (1 Pet. 3:18.) By one sacrifice Christ did everything necessary to the removal of man's sins. Just as his sacrifice was complete, perfect, and never needs to be done again, so "the faith" that has been "once for all delivered" is perfect, complete and never needs to be repeated.

2. Christ promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." (John 16:13.) Jude is affirming that Christ kept his promise.

3. Paul declared that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17.)

4. Peter wrote "according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." (2 Pet. 1:3.)

5. "The meaning is that the truth is delivered for all time: it is a permanent deposit, it will never be superceded, emended, or modified. As it now stands, it is a perfect, adequate, complete and inviolable deposit of truth, providing the means with which to confute the gainsayer, and resist the advocate of false doctrine."⁵

This passage clearly refutes all claims to modern revelations. It "refutes the claim of the Catholic Church that the voice of God and that God continues to speak through any such living representative."⁶ It also refutes such pretended revelators as Joseph Smith, Mrs. Ellen G. White, or any other person who claims to speak by inspiration or revelation today. One must deny the truthfulness of what Jude states or cease to advocate the idea of a latter-day revelation from God.

B. How was "the faith" delivered?

1. The men of God in the old time spake by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. 1:20, 21.)

2. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth. (John 16:13.) They were to remain in Jerusalem until they received power from on high. "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father unto you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:49.) They would receive power when the Holy Spirit came on them. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8.) The Holy Spirit came on the apostles on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of our Lord. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4.)

3. The apostle Paul claimed that he was guided by the Holy Spirit in his message. "Howbeit we speak wisdom among they that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known

it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." (1 Cor. 2:6-13.) Paul make several claims:

- a. He spoke the wisdom of God. (Verse 7.)
- b. He spoke the things which had not been previously revealed unto man. (Verses 8,9.)
- c. He spoke these things as they were revealed unto him by the Spirit. (Verse 10a.)
- d. He declares that just as the spirit in a man is the only one that really knows him (unless he reveals his heart), so the only one that knew the mind of God was the Spirit of God. (Verses 10b, 11.)
- e. Since the apostles received the Spirit of God who knew the mind of God, then the apostles knew the mind of God. (Verse 12.)
- f. He also declared that the Holy Spirit not only revealed *these things* to them, but chose *the words* with which to express them. (Verse 13.)

4. Paul also claimed that the gospel he preached was a direct revelation from Jesus Christ. "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1:11, 12.)

5. Peter said they (the apostles) "preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." (1 Pet. 1:12.)

6. The apostles "were the inspired and miraculously empowered agents to whom the faith was committed and through whom it has been given once for all to God's children."⁷

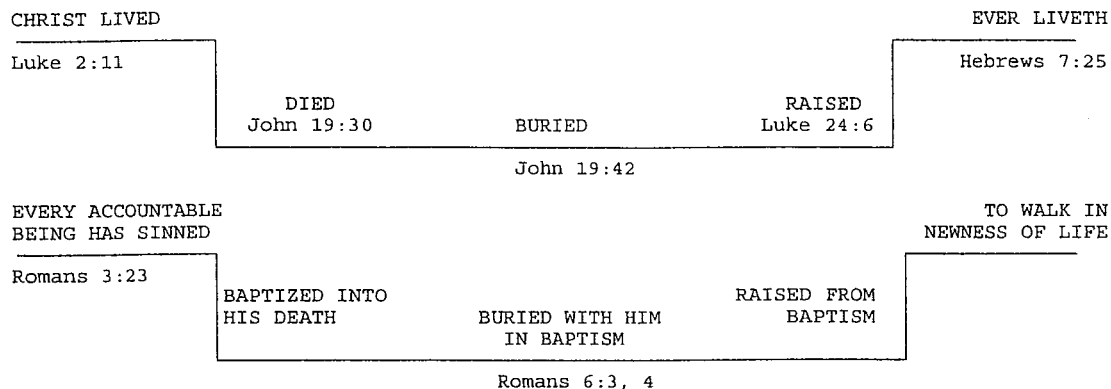
C. "The faith" was "once delivered unto the saints." The word "saints" applies to God's children. It is applied to God's children thirty times in the Old Testament and fifty times in the New Testament. In Colossians 1:26, Paul refers to "the faith" as the "mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made *manifest to the saints*."

III. Why Must the Faith Be Proclaimed?

A. "The faith" must be preached if sinners are to believe and be saved. The apostles preached "the faith" in Jerusalem. (Acts 6:7.) Felix heard Paul "concerning the faith in Christ." (Acts 24:25.) Faith comes by hearing "the faith" and it comes in no other way. (Rom. 10:17.)

B. "The faith" must be obeyed if sinners are to be freed from their sins. The Romans were freed from their sins when they obeyed "that form of doctrine." "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." (Rom. 6:17, 18.) "The faith" and "that form of doctrine," as already shown, refer to the same body of truth. That form of doctrine which the Romans obeyed was the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:1-4.) They had obeyed it through belief and baptism into Christ. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness

of life." (Rom. 6:3, 4.) Notice:



C. "The faith must be proclaimed in order for the church to be edified and to grow. At the beginning of Paul's second missionary journey, Paul and his company went through the cities and "delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily." (Acts 16:4, 5.) Paul commended the elders from Ephesus "to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (Acts 20:28.) Again, Paul wrote that Christ gave some "apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. 4:11-16.) We are to desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow. (1 Pet. 2:2.)

D. "The faith" must be proclaimed because only those that "continue in the faith" will be saved eternally. Paul exhorted the Christians at Lystra, Iconium and Antioch to "continue in the faith." (Acts 14:21, 22.) The Corinthians were told to "stand fast in the faith" (1 Cor. 16:13), and to "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Cor. 13:5a). Paul told the Colossians that the Lord would be able to present them holy, unblamable, and unreprouvable "if you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." (Col. 1:22, 23.) Great effort will be needed to continue in the faith because, (1) one can "depart from the faith" (1 Tim. 4:1); (2) one can "deny the faith" (1 Tim. 5:8); and, (3) one can "err from the faith" (1 Tim. 6:10). Christians are to resist the devil "steadfast in the faith." (1 Pet. 5:8.)

IV. Why Must Christians Contend for the Faith?

A. What does it mean to "earnestly contend"? The original word for "earnestly contend" or "contend earnestly" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament and it literally means to fight. It is here figuratively used to denote "the extreme efforts which are to characterize the faithful in their defense of truth, however formidable and numerous its enemies may be."⁸ Vine says, "*Epagonizomai*...signifies to contend about a thing as a combatant (*epi*, upon or about, intensive, *agon*, a contest), to contend earnestly. (Jude 3.) The word 'earnestly' is added to convey the intensive force of the preposition."⁹ "The word...properly signifies to strive as in the Olympic game; that is, with their whole force."¹⁰ There are several words in the New Testament, as shown by Thomas Warren, which emphasize the meaning and responsibility of every Christian earnestly contending for the faith.

1. "*dialegomai*"

a. In KJV, this word is translated:

- (1) "Preach." (Acts 20:7.)
- (2) "Reason with." (Acts 17:2; 18:19.)
- (3) "Dispute." (Mark 9:34; Acts 17:17; 19:8, 9; 24:12, Jude 9.)

b. Basic meaning: to argue, discourse, debate, discuss, contend.

2. "Apologia"...(noun form of "apologeomai")
 - a. In KJV, this word is translated:
 - (1) "Answer." (Acts 25:16; 1 Cor. 9:3; 2 Tim. 4:16; 1 Pet. 3:15.)
 - (2) "Clearing of one's self." (2 Cor. 7:11.)
 - (3) "Defense." (Acts 22:1; Phil. 1:7, 17.)
 - b. Basic meaning: a defense, to make good one's cause, to set forth evidence which defends one's position.
3. "agonidzomai"
 - a. In KJV this word is translated:
 - (1) "Strive." (Luke 13:24; 1 Cor. 9:25; Col. 1:29.)
 - (2) "Fight." (John 18:36; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7.)
 - (3) "Laboring fervently." (Col. 4:12.)
 - b. Basic meaning: to be a combatant, to fight, strive earnestly, to endeavor with strenuous zeal, to contend with adversaries."¹¹

"Everything which he has revealed, we are to defend as true. We are to surrender no part of it whatever, for every part of that system is of value to mankind."¹²

B. Christians must "earnestly contend for the faith" because it is commanded by God and upheld by example.

1. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (Eph. 6:10-18.) Why put on the armor if we don't plan to use it?

2. Timothy was told to "war a good warfare" (1 Tim. 1:18), and to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3). "Fight the good fight of faith." (1 Tim. 6:12.)

3. "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (1 Pet. 3:15.) "This obligation implies sufficient acquaintance with the word of God to substantiate one's hope therewith, and godliness of life consistent with its teaching... The defense is to be made with 'meekness and fear.'" ¹³

4. Jesus engaged in public debate with the scribes (Mark 9:14ff); the Sadducees about the resurrection (Mark 12:18-28); and with the Pharisees about who they thought Christ was (Matt 22:41-46).

5. Paul told the Philippians "even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the *defense and confirmation of the gospel*, ye all are partakers of my grace... But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel." (Phil. 1:7, 17.) The word "defense" here means "a verbal defense, a speech in defense." ¹⁴ "The defense (*apologia*) of the gospel means the defense of the gospel against the attacks which come from outside; it is the defense of the gospel against the arguments and assaults of the enemies of Christianity. The Christian has to be ready to be a defender of the faith, and to give a reason for the hope that is in him." ¹⁵

C. Christians must "earnestly contend for the faith" because "many false prophets are gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1.)

1. There will be false teachers within the church. The appearance of false teachers among the saints was that which caused Jude's chief concern and immediate reason for writing the epistle. He said "there are certain men crept in unawares." (Jude 4.) "They had entered, as it were, by a side door (*pareisedusan*) and without revealing their true motive of seducing the saints." ¹⁶ Jude clearly describes the characteristics of these early opponents of the faith, and the qualities displayed by them are the same characteristics of their present day counterparts. They include: (1) They creep in alongside, craftily infiltrating the saints while pretending to be something they are not (verse 4); (2) they are men of impure, unholy motives (verse 4); (3) they are most indignant in the presence of proper authority (verses 8-10); (4) they are destructive and willing to compromise (verse 11); (5) they are hidden dangers, making progress by false

promises (verses 12, 13); (6) they use others for their own advantage (verse 16).¹⁷ Paul warned the elders from Ephesus that "of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:30.) Paul had to contend for the faith "because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage." (Gal. 2:4.) Peter said "there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways: by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." (2 Pet. 2:1,2.)

2. Opponents to the faith will always abound outside the church. Some will "hold the truth in unrighteousness." (Rom. 1:18.) Others will change "the truth of God into a lie." (Rom. 1:25.) There will be those that have a "form of godliness, but denying the power thereof...ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth...men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (2 Tim. 3:5, 7, 8), who will "resist the truth." Some will receive "not the love of the truth that they might be saved." (2 Thess. 2:10.)

3. To successfully meet and overcome those in error, Christians must carefully note and follow Jude's instructions. These include: "(1) The saints must be aware of, and dedicated to, their spiritual standing with God (verses 1-2), and they must know how to maintain it (verses 20-21); (2) Christians must recognize the need to stand earnestly for the truth (verse 3); (3) they are to remember that God has dealt with error many times and is competent to deal with it again (verses 5-7); (4) they are to remember the promise of God to be with those who uphold his will (verses 14, 15); (5) they must hold fast the words of Jesus (verses 17-19); (6) they are to assist, if possible, those in error to return to the truth (verses 22-23), and (7) they are to commit themselves in fullness to the care of God (verses 24-25)."¹⁸

4. Every Christian must be involved in this fight. Preachers must preach the word. "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For

the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." (2 Tim. 4:1-5.) Elders must hold fast the faithful word that they may be able to stand against and stop the mouths of false teachers. (Tit. 1:9-14.) The church must mark those that cause division. (Rom. 16:17, 18).

D. In contending for the faith, Christians will:

1. Speak against immorality - "ungodly men turning the grace of God into lasciviousness." (Jude 4.) The 'grace' of God is salvation (Eph. 2:8,9), ^uvo~~rs~~chsafed to a man through the gospel; this gospel, these men perverted by interpreting it as actually allowing or supporting the practice of lasciviousness, gross fleshly indulgence.¹⁹ There have always been those, and still are today, who have made the Christian liberty an excuse for ungodly living.

2. * Speak against atheism, liberalism, and all other "isms" contrary to the faith. Jude says the false teachers of his day were denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. (Jude 4.) John said, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ. He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." (1 John 2:22.)

3. Make doctrine or "the faith" a test of fellowship.

a. In a new book entitled *The Protest of a Troubled Protestant*, by Harold O. J. Brown, the author makes the point: "A characteristic of the church in our day - the whole church and of each individual church is the *avoidance of doctrine*. In churches and in church-related schools (both Sunday schools and the regular schools and colleges maintained by churches) there is a growing reluctance to teach anything specific and definite about the Christian faith...Protestant churches...tend to apologize for their doctrines, to push them into the background." The above is a statement about Protestant churches, but, in too many cases, it is the truth about the church.

b. The apostles and the early church definitely made doctrine a test of fellowship. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If

there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 9-11.)

(1) Some of the Jews of the first century taught that the Gentiles must be circumcised in order to be saved. (Acts 15:1.) Paul plainly declared that he would not, and did not, tolerate such doctrine. (Gal. 2:1-5.)

(2) When Paul came to Ephesus he found certain disciples that had been baptized of John's baptism. (Acts 19:1-3.) After hearing the truth they were baptized." After hearing the truth they were baptized in the name of the Lord (Acts 19:4, 5). The apostles did not accept "just any baptism".

(3) Paul made any kind of worship, not according to God's will, a test of fellowship. "...I would not that you should have fellowship with devils...ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils." (1 Cor. 10:14-22.)

(4) Paul made the doctrine of the resurrection a test of fellowship. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker; of whom is Hymenaeus and Philletus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." (2 Tim. 2:16-18.)

4. Teach there is such a thing as absolute truth and that we can know that truth. There are those who contend "there is such a thing as absolute truth but we can never know it, thus we must ever view it as a goal which demands unflagging efforts to attain it."

a. "How long can New Testament Christianity survive in an atmosphere where its teachers question everything, are tentative in all things, are non-militant in all their positions, who must view all as in the same tentative quest, and to whom it is said that a 'healthy respect' for the tentative findings of others would become mandatory."²⁰

b. "If we cannot learn the truth, then the Bible is not even a meaningful revelation from God to man. What difference would it make (if the Bible is not God's truth) if *none* of us can possible *learn* the truth. But, thanks be to God, the

foregoing is false. And God's people are to study the truth (2 Tim. 2:15), learn the truth (2 Tim. 3:7), live the truth (Phil. 1:27), and preach the truth (Mark 16:15, 16)."²¹ Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32.) The Lord's statement should forever settle the matter for all who believe the Bible.

5. Contend that apart from Christ and his church there is no salvation. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10.) "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6.) "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12.) Jesus declared "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16). *There is no other way!* Paul declared that "Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body." (Eph. 5:23.) The body is the church. (Eph. 1:22, 23.) There is but one body. (1 Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:4.)

Conclusion

The challenge is clearly before us. Will we accept the challenge? "It is my firm conviction that we are sinning away our 'days of grace' by the divided condition of our people and the watering-down of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is my fear that we're not hearing enough of the 'old-fashioned gospel of Christ,' that beautiful story of salvation that brought us out of denominationalism to restore the true, yes, the true church of the Lord as we were a generation ago. We have let this permissive age that has captivated the world, especially our precious and lovely young people, make cowards of too many of us. There is entirely too much compromising with this permissive element, both in the world and in the church."²²

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong." (1 Cor. 16:13.) "Error is crouched in countless forms concealed. Christ calls for vigilance - 'watch ye.' But when error has been flushed out of the hiding, and forms into advancing columns against the church, Christ calls for courage - 'stand fast in the faith.' Then when the lines are drawn tight, surging issues of truth and error are locked in the grim struggle for mastery - Christ calls for valour - 'quit ye like men.' Perform like a Christian soldier,

worthy of the name. Finally, when the crisis has come in the conflict of the faith, with the turn of the tide of events affecting the fate and fortune of the church is uncertain, when men are seen to weaken and waver - Christ calls for heroism, the heroism of faith - 'be strong' - 'hold the line!'"²³

ENDNOTES

¹Guy N. Woods, *"Peter, John and Jude," A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1954), p. 384.

²Ibid, p. 385.

³Guy N. Woods, *"Sermons on Salvation"* (Austin: R. B. Sweet Company, 1959), p. 76.

⁴Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 54.

⁵Woods, op. cit., p. 385

⁶G. C. Brewer, *Contending for the Faith* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1955), p. 17.

⁷Ibid, p. 18.

⁸Woods, op. cit. p. 385.

⁹W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (London: Fleming H. Revell Company, Twelfth Impression, 1962), p. 233.

¹⁰James MacKnight, *Apostolic Epistles* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1954), p. 691.

¹¹Thomas Warren, *Sermon Outlines on the Work of the Gospel Preacher* (Henderson: Arnold Office Supply, 1969), p. 5.

¹²Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the New Testament of James, Peter, John, Jude* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), p. 388.

¹³Woods, op. cit., p. 98.

¹⁴Vine, op. cit., p. 60.

¹⁵William Barclay, *"The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians,"* The Daily Bible Study Series (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), p.21.

¹⁶Woods, op. cit., p. 386.

¹⁷William Woods on, *"What Is Liberalism," Freed-Hardeman Lectures* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1970), p. 11.

¹⁸Ibid. p. 11.

¹⁹Woods, op. cit., p. 387.

²⁰James Bales, "The Difference is not Really so Small," *The Spiritual Sword*, Vol. 2, No.1, Oct., 1970, p. 12.

²¹Warren, op. cit., p. 15.

²²E. R. Harper, "Brother Harper Writes," *Gospel Advocate* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, Aug. 31, 1972), p. 549.

²³Foy E. Wallace, Jr., "The Faith Once Delivered," *God's Prophetic Word* (Lufkin: The Roy E. Cogdill Publishing Company, 1946), p. 42.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Jude 1-4

JAMES MEADOWS

Introduction

1. This great text is the battle cry of the church. The great truths set forth in this text are demanding and challenging to our nature. It eliminates the idea of our contending for anything that is not "the faith." It demands that we allow nothing to cause us to give less than all diligence in contending for the faith. It summons every member of the church for loyalty to the conflict between truth and error.
2. Jude gave all diligence to write about the "common salvation." Just think how important that subject is.
 - a. It is the "common salvation" because it is available to all, both Jew and Gentile who will comply with the conditions thereof.
 - (1) John the Baptist came to turn Israel back to God, Lk. 1:16.
 - (2) The twelve, during our Lord's personal ministry, were to "go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," Mt. 10:6.
 - (3) But the great commission says "go teach all nations," Mt. 28:19.
 - (4) The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men," Tit. 2:11.
 - (5) It is the "so great salvation," Heb. 2:1-4.
 - (6) Paul refers to the "common faith," Tit. 1:4.
 - (7) Peter addressed one of his epistles to those that "have obtained like precious faith," 2 Pet. 1:1.
3. But, great as the theme was on which he purposed to write, Jude, upon learning that special dangers threatened "the faith," suspended his purposed treatise and wrote without delay to exhort his brethren to "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered for all to the saints."
4. The present study purposes to ask and answer several questions about "the faith" in order that each may be better prepared to "earnestly contend for the faith."

Discussion

I. WHAT IS THE FAITH?

- A. Faith is used several ways in the Bible.
 1. It is used in the subjective sense which is simply the act of believing a thing, Rom. 10:17.
 2. It sometimes means the conviction that a thing is right or wrong, Rom. 14:22,23.
 3. It sometimes, as in our text, means that which is believed. "The faith for which Jude's readers were thus earnestly to contend, put objectively here for the gospel, is the sum of all that which Christians are to believe and obey."
- B. The faith means the gospel, the doctrine, the truth, the word of God, the whole of Christianity.
 1. "...and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith," Acts 6:7.

3. Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth, Jn. 16:13. Jude is affirming he kept his promise.
 4. Paul declared the scriptures are able to furnish man completely, 2 Tim. 3:16,17.
 5. Peter says God has given us all that pertains to life and godliness, 2 Pet. 1:3.
 6. "The meaning is that the truth is delivered for all time: it is a permanent deposit, it will never be superseded, amended, or modified. As it now stands, it is a perfect, adequate, completely inviolable deposit of truth, providing the means with which to confute the gainsayer, and resist the advocate of false doctrine."
 7. This passage clearly refutes all claims to modern revelation.
 - a. It "refutes the claim of the Catholic Church that the voice of the pope is the voice of God and that God continues to speak through any living representative."
 - b. It refutes such pretended revelators as Joseph Smith, Mrs. Ellen G. White, etc.
 - c. One must deny the truthfulness of what Jude says or cease to advocate the idea of later revelations.
- B. How was the faith delivered?
1. The ~~mean~~ of old spake as they were guided by the Holy Spirit, 2 Pet. 1:20,21.
 2. The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all truth, Jn. 3:16.
 - a. They were to remain in Jerusalem until they received power, Lk. 24:49.
 - b. They would receive power when the Holy Spirit came, Acts 1:8.
 - c. The Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, Acts 2:1-4.
 3. The apostle Paul claimed that he was guided by the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 2:6-13.
 - a. He spoke the wisdom of God, v. 7.
 - b. He spoke those things which had not been previously revealed, vv. 8,9.
 - c. He spoke these things as they were revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, v. 10a.
 - d. He declares that just as the spirit of man knows man so the Spirit of God knew God and they received the Spirit of God, vv. 10b,11.
 - e. He declares that the Holy Spirit help choose the words with which to express that revealed, v. 13.
 4. Paul claimed that what he preached was a direct revelation from God, Gal. 1:11,12.
 5. Peter said the apostles preached the gospel by the Holy Spirit, 1 Pet. 1:12.
 6. The apostles "were the inspired and miraculously empowered agents to whom the faith was committed and through whom it has been given once for all to God's children."
- C. The faith was "once delivered unto the saints."

- (1) Is translated "preach" (Acts 20:7), "reason with" (Acts 17:2), "dispute" (Mk. 9:34).
 - (2) Basic meaning: to argue, discourse, debate, discuss, contend.
 - b. "Apologia"
 - (1) Is translated "answer" (Acts 25:16), "clearing of one's self" (2 Cor. 7:11), "defense" (Acts 22:1).
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 - c. "agonidzomai"
 - (1) Is translated "strive" (Lk. 13:24), "fight" (Jn. 18:36), "laboring fervently" (Col. 4:12).
 - (2) Basic meaning: to be a combatant, to fight, strive earnestly, to endeavor with strenuous zeal, to contend with adversaries.
- B. Christians must earnestly contend for the faith because it is commanded by God and upheld by example.
 - 1. Put on the armor of God and use it, Eph. 6:10-18.
 - 2. Timothy instructed, 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:3; 1 Tim. 6:12.
 - 3. Peter says, 1 Pet. 3:15.
 - 4. Jesus engaged in public debate with the scribes (Mk. 9:14ff, the Sadducees (Mk. 12:18-28) and the Pharisees (Mt. 22:41-46).
 - 5. Paul said he was set for the defense and confirmation of the gospel, Phil. 1:7,17.
 - a. The word "defense" here means a "verbal defense," a speech in defense.
 - b. The defence (apologia) of the gospel means the defence of the gospel against the attacks which come from outside; it is the defence of the gospel against the arguments and assaults of the enemies of Christianity. The Christian has to be ready to be a defender of the faith, and to give a reason for the hope that is in him."
- C. Christians must earnestly contend for the faith because many false prophets are gone out into the world, 1 Jn. 4:1.
 - 1. There will be false teachers within the church.
 - a. It was the appearance of such teachers that caused Jude's concern and immediate reason for writing the epistle.
 - b. Jude reveals the characteristics of these early opponents of the faith and the same qualities are displayed today.
 - (1) They creep in alongside, craftily infiltrating the saints while pretending to be something they are not, v. 4.
 - (2) They are men of unholy, impure motives, v. 4.
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 - (4) They are destructive and willing to compromise, v. 11.
 - (5) They are hidden dangers, making progress by false promises, vv. 12,13.
 - (6) They use others for their advantage, v. 16.
 - c. Paul warned the elders from Ephesus of false teachers among them,

truth. There are those who contend "there is such a thing as absolute truth, but we can never know it, thus we must ever view it as a goal which demands unflagging efforts to attain it."

- a. "How long can New Testament Christianity survive in an atmosphere where its teachers question everything, are tentative in all things, are non-militant in all their positions, who must view all as in the same tentative quest, and to whom it is said that a healthy respect for the tentative finds of others would become mandatory."
 - b. "If we cannot learn the truth, then the Bible is not even a meaningful revelation from God to man. What difference would it make (if the Bible is not God's truth) if none of us can possibly learn the truth. This is false because:
 - (1) We are to study the truth, 2 Tim. 2:15.
 - (2) Learn the truth, 2 Tim. 3:7.
 - (3) Live the truth, Phil. 1:27.
 - (4) Preach the truth, Mk. 16:15,16.
5. Teach that apart from Christ and his church there is no salvation, Lk. 19:10; Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; Mk. 16:16; Eph. 5:23; Eph. 1:22,23; 1 Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:4.

What the Bible Teaches About Contending for the Faith

James Meadows

"Jude, The servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: Mercy unto you, and peace and love be multiplied. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." (Jude 1-4.)

This great test is the battle cry of the church. The great truths set forth in this text are demanding and challenging to our nature. It eliminates the idea of us contending for anything that is not "the faith." It demands that we allow nothing to cause us to give less than all diligence in contending for "the faith." It summons every member of the church for loyalty to the conflict between truth and error.

Jude gave all diligence to write about the "common salvation." Just think how important that subject is. It is the "common salvation" because it is available to all, both Jew and Gentile, who will comply with the conditions thereof. John the Baptist came to turn the hearts of the children of Israel back to God. (Luke 1:16.) The twelve, during our Lord's personal ministry, were to go "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt. 10:6.) But the great commission says "go teach all nations." (Matt 28:19.) The "grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." (Tit. 2:11.) It is the "so great salvation" (Heb. 2:1-4), which, if neglected will result in eternal damnation. Paul refers to "the common faith" (Tit. 1:4), and Peter addressed one of his epistles to those "that have obtained like precious faith" (2 Pet. 1:1). But, great as the theme was on which he purposed to write, Jude, upon learning that special dangers threatened "the faith," "suspended his proposed treatise and wrote without delay to exhort his brethren to 'earnestly contend for the faith' once for all delivered to the saints."¹

these passages, is used in a specific and technical sense."³

II. What Does "Once Delivered Unto the Saints" Mean?

A. The words "once delivered" in the King James Version are "which was once for all delivered" in the American Standard Edition. Thayer says "once for all" means "like, *Lat, Semel*, used of what is so done as to be of perpetual validity and never needs repetition, once for all: Hebrews 6:4; 10:2; 1 Peter 3:18; Jude 3, 5." ⁴

Observing the use of the word "once" in other verses will help us to more fully grasp its meaning here.

1. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." (Heb. 9:28.) "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins." (1 Pet. 3:18.) By one sacrifice Christ did everything necessary to the removal of man's sins. Just as his sacrifice was complete, perfect, and never needs to be done again, so "the faith" that has been "once for all delivered" is perfect, complete and never needs to be repeated.

2. Christ promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." (John 16:13.) Jude is affirming that Christ kept his promise.

3. Paul declared that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17.)

4. Peter wrote "according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." (2 Pet. 1:3.)

5. "The meaning is that the truth is delivered for all time: it is a permanent deposit, it will never be superceded, emended, or modified. As it now stands, it is a perfect, adequate, complete and inviolable deposit of truth, providing the means with which to confute the gainsayer, and resist the advocate of false doctrine."⁵

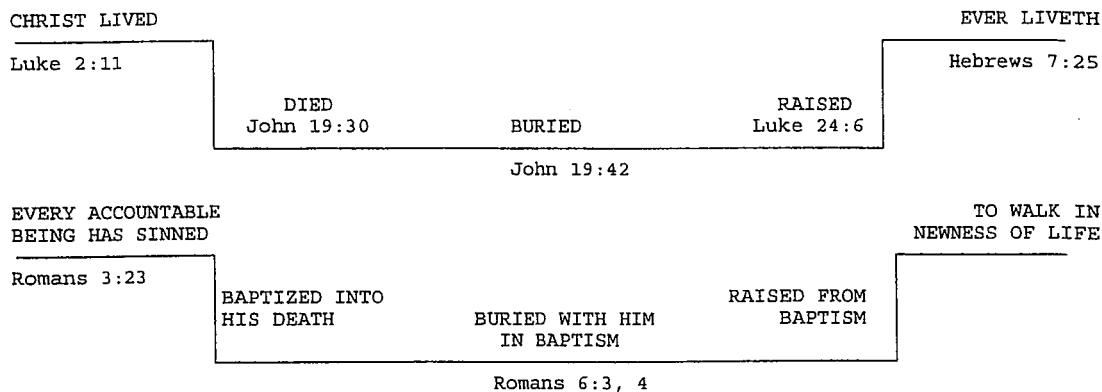
it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." (1 Cor. 2:6-13.) Paul make several claims:

- a. He spoke the wisdom of God. (Verse 7.)
- b. He spoke the things which had not been previously revealed unto man. (Verses 8,9.)
- c. He spoke these things as they were revealed unto him by the Spirit. (Verse 10a.)
- d. He declares that just as the spirit in a man is the only one that really knows him (unless he reveals his heart), so the only one that knew the mind of God was the Spirit of God. (Verses 10b, 11.)
- e. Since the apostles received the Spirit of God who knew the mind of God, then the apostles knew the mind of God. (Verse 12.)
- f. He also declared that the Holy Spirit not only revealed *these things* to them, but chose *the words* with which to express them. (Verse 13.)

4. Paul also claimed that the gospel he preached was a direct revelation from Jesus Christ. "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1:11, 12.)

5. Peter said they (the apostles) "preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." (1 Pet. 1:12.)

of life." (Rom. 6:3, 4.) Notice:



C. "The faith must be proclaimed in order for the church to be edified and to grow. At the beginning of Paul's second missionary journey, Paul and his company went through the cities and "delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily." (Acts 16:4, 5.) Paul commended the elders from Ephesus "to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (Acts 20:28.) Again, Paul wrote that Christ gave some "apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. 4:11-16.) We are to desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow. (1 Pet. 2:2.)

2. "Apologia"...(noun form of "apologeomai")
 - a. In KJV, this word is translated:
 - (1) "Answer." (Acts 25:16; 1 Cor. 9:3; 2 Tim. 4:16; 1 Pet. 3:15.)
 - (2) "Clearing of one's self." (2 Cor. 7:11.)
 - (3) "Defense." (Acts 22:1; Phil. 1:7, 17.)
 - b. Basic meaning: a defense, to make good one's cause, to set forth evidence which defends one's position.
3. "agonidzomai"
 - a. In KJV this word is translated:
 - (1) "Strive." (Luke 13:24; 1 Cor. 9:25; Col. 1:29.)
 - (2) "Fight." (John 18:36; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7.)
 - (3) "Laboring fervently." (Col. 4:12.)
 - b. Basic meaning: to be a combatant, to fight, strive earnestly, to endeavor with strenuous zeal, to contend with adversaries."¹¹

"Everything which he has revealed, we are to defend as true. We are to surrender no part of it whatever, for every part of that system is of value to mankind."¹²

B. Christians must "earnestly contend for the faith" because it is commanded by God and upheld by example.

1. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (Eph. 6:10-18.) Why put on the armor if we don't plan to use it?

2. Timothy was told to "war a good warfare" (1 Tim. 1:18), and to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3). "Fight the good fight of faith." (1 Tim. 6:12.)

promises (verses 12, 13); (6) they use others for their own advantage (verse 16).¹⁷ Paul warned the elders from Ephesus that "of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:30.) Paul had to contend for the faith "because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage." (Gal. 2:4.) Peter said "there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways: by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." (2 Pet. 2:1,2.)

2. Opponents to the faith will always abound outside the church. Some will "hold the truth in unrighteousness." (Rom. 1:18.) Others will change "the truth of God into a lie." (Rom. 1:25.) There will be those that have a "form of godliness, but denying the power thereof...ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth...men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (2 Tim. 3:5, 7, 8), who will "resist the truth." Some will receive "not the love of the truth that they might be saved." (2 Thess. 2:10.)

3. To successfully meet and overcome those in error, Christians must carefully note and follow Jude's instructions. These include: "(1) The saints must be aware of, and dedicated to, their spiritual standing with God (verses 1-2), and they must know how to maintain it (verses 20-21); (2) Christians must recognize the need to stand earnestly for the truth (verse 3); (3) they are to remember that God has dealt with error many times and is competent to deal with it again (verses 5-7); (4) they are to remember the promise of God to be with those who uphold his will (verses 14, 15); (5) they must hold fast the words of Jesus (verses 17-19); (6) they are to assist, if possible, those in error to return to the truth (verses 22-23), and (7) they are to commit themselves in fullness to the care of God (verses 24-25)."¹⁸

4. Every Christian must be involved in this fight. Preachers must preach the word. "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For

there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 9-11.)

(1) Some of the Jews of the first century taught that the Gentiles must be circumcised in order to be saved. (Acts 15:1.) Paul plainly declared that he would not, and did not, tolerate such doctrine. (Gal. 2:1-5.)

(2) When Paul came to Ephesus he found certain disciples that had been baptized of John's baptism. (Acts 19:1-3.) After hearing the truth they were baptized." After hearing the truth they were baptized in the name of the Lord (Acts 19:4, 5). The apostles did not accept "just any baptism".

(3) Paul made any kind of worship, not according to God's will, a test of fellowship. "...I would not that you should have fellowship with devils...ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils." (1 Cor. 10:14-22.)

(4) Paul made the doctrine of the resurrection a test of fellowship. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker; of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." (2 Tim. 2:16-18.)

4. Teach there is such a thing as absolute truth and that we can know that truth. There are those who contend "there is such a thing as absolute truth but we can never know it, thus we must ever view it as a goal which demands unflagging efforts to attain it."

a. "How long can New Testament Christianity survive in an atmosphere where its teachers question everything, are tentative in all things, are non-militant in all their positions, who must view all as in the same tentative quest, and to whom it is said that a 'healthy respect' for the tentative findings of others would become mandatory."²⁰

b. "If we cannot learn the truth, then the Bible is not even a meaningful revelation from God to man. What difference would it make (if the Bible is not God's truth) if *none* of us can possibly *learn* the truth. But, thanks be to God, the

worthy of the name. Finally, when the crisis has come in the conflict of the faith, with the turn of the tide of events affecting the fate and fortune of the church is uncertain, when men are seen to weaken and waver - Christ calls for heroism, the heroism of faith - 'be strong' - 'hold the line!'"²³

²⁰James Bales, "The Difference is not Really so Small," *The Spiritual Sword*, Vol. 2, No.1, Oct., 1970, p. 12.

²¹Warren, op. cit., p. 15.

²²E. R. Harper, "Brother Harper Writes," *Gospel Advocate* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, Aug. 31, 1972), p. 549.

²³Foy E. Wallace, Jr., "The Faith Once Delivered," *God's Prophetic Word* (Lufkin: The Roy E. Cogdill Publishing Company, 1946), p. 42.

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Jude clearly reveals the characteristics of these early opponents of the faith and the same characteristics are displayed today.

- 1. They creep in alongside, craftily infiltrating the saints while pretending to be something they are not (v. 4).**
- 2. They are men of impure, unholy motives (v. 4).**
- 3. They are most indignant in the presence of proper authority (vv. 8-10).**
- 4. They are destructive and willing to compromise**

(v. 11).

**5. They are hidden dangers,
making progress by false
promises (vv. 12-13).**

**6. They use others for their
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SOME ERRORS AS TO HOW CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP IS MAINTAINED

By James Meadows

Many Bible passages emphasize unity in Christ (John 17:1-21; Eph. 4:1-6; Rom. 12:4,5; I Cor. 12:12,13; John 8:32; Acts 2:41-47; I John 1:4-7). Ephesians 2:13-16 clearly teaches reconciliation to God in the one body (the church, Eph. 1:22,23) of Christ. We are baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3-5), and we become *sons* of God when we are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:26,27). Unity is attained by obeying the truth (I Pet. 1:22-25), and I John 1:6,7 shows how it is *maintained*: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie; and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

The glorious body of Christ is being ripped apart today by many insidious doctrines, one such being that of "Unity in Diversity." This is one of the most treacherous, double-tongued, underhanded, delusive, guileful, cunning, slippery, intriguing, crooked, questionable, fishy and deceitful doctrines and must be met with a head-on onslaught.¹ What are some errors as to how Christian fellowship is *maintained* in the "unity-in-diversity" concept?

Unity movements are not new but are the same old denominational error of union, but not *real* unity. Earnest Beam and Claud Witty sought to reconcile churches of Christ and the Christian Church in the late 1940's. In *The Christian Forum*, March, 1951, brother Beam taught that the use or non-use of the mechanical instrument in worship was a matter of judgment, and he was willing to fellowship the Christian Church and let it retain the instrument. He advocated "unity-in-diversity." W.

Carl Ketcherside, Leroy Garrett, and others of the New Unity Movement are seeking to unite "not only all segments of Restoration Movement heritage, but eventually all who have been immersed upon a confession of faith in Christ, whether 'for the remission of sins or not.' They hope to do this regardless of name and of doctrine and practice subsequent to baptism, without mutual endorsement of doctrines and practices necessarily."²

The following statements are examples of what is meant by "unity-in-diversity." "The Church believes that the only unity possible among thinking people is unity within diversity. The church, therefore, welcomes all those who have placed their faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour, regardless of doctrinal differences regarding other matters."³ "And, therefore, unity within diversity is the only kind of unity possible among *free* people."⁴

One contention for "unity-in-diversity" is made on the basis that fellowship is not to be equated with endorsement, but with brotherhood. We enter this state as a consequence of the new birth (John 3:3,5), and it can neither be extended nor withdrawn by us. It is contended that "fellowship" is a noun, not a verb; therefore, we cannot "disfellowship" except in cases of heresy, moral turpitude, and a doctrine that denies the deity of Christ. Fellowship, it is contended, can only be extended to persons, not things. In proving the error of such a claim, "attention is called to the fact that the New Testament uses the verb *Koinoneo* in numerous places... These include Heb. 2:14; Rom. 15:27; I Peter 4:13; I Tim. 5:22; II John 11; Gal. 6:6; Eph. 5:11; Phil. 4:14; and Rev. 18:4. It is interesting that these verbs are used with nouns of 'the thing,' referring to the 'thing' with which fellowship was conducted."⁵ The Bible clearly states that we are to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11); that you "have no fellowship with her sins" (Rev. 18:4,

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The challenge that the only test of fellowship is belief in the deity of Christ is a plain denial and rejection of many Bible verses (Acts 2:42; I John 1:5-7; II John 4-6; II Tim. 3:10; I Tim. 1:3; Titus 1:9; I Cor. 15:2). "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God..." (II John 9a). "The Greek expression *te didache tou Christou* needs to be thoroughly studied and the scholarship accepted, which is, 'not the teaching concerning Christ, but the teaching of Christ himself, and the apostles, that is, the doctrine which has Christ as its author, its giver.'"⁶ False preaching must be challenged and stopped (Gal. 1:7,8; Matt. 15:9; Acts 20:29,30; Titus 1:11; Rom. 16:17,18).

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Footnotes

1. Goebel Music, *The Spiritual Sword*, Oct., 1980, Vol. 12, Number 1, p. 19.
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By James Meadows

Many Bible passages emphasize unity in Christ (John 17:1-21; Eph. 4:1-6; Rom. 12:4,5; I Cor. 12:12,13; John 8:32; Acts 2:41-47; I John 1:4-7). Ephesians 2:13-16 clearly teaches reconciliation to God in the one body (the church, Eph. 1:22,23) of Christ. We are baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3-5), and we become *sons* of God when we are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:26,27). Unity is attained by obeying the truth (I Pet. 1:22-25), and I John 1:6,7 shows how it is *maintained*: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie; and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

The glorious body of Christ is being ripped apart today by many insidious doctrines, one such being that of "Unity in Diversity." This is one of the most treacherous, double-tongued, underhanded, delusive, guileful, cunning, slippery, intriguing, crooked, questionable, fishy and deceitful doctrines and must be met with a head-on onslaught.¹ What are some errors as to how Christian fellowship is *maintained* in the "unity-in-diversity" concept?

Unity movements are not new but are the same old denominational error of union, but not *real* unity. Earnest Beam and Claud Witty sought to reconcile churches of Christ and the Christian Church in the late 1940's. In *The Christian Forum*, March, 1951, brother Beam taught that the use or non-use of the mechanical instrument in worship was a matter of judgment, and he was willing to fellowship the Christian Church and let it retain the instrument. He advocated "unity-in-diversity."² W.

Carl Ketcherside, Leroy Garrett, and others of the New Unity Movement are seeking to unite "not only all segments of Restoration Movement heritage, but eventually all who have been immersed upon a confession of faith in Christ, whether 'for the remission of sins or not.' They hope to do this regardless of name and of doctrine and practice subsequent to baptism, without mutual endorsement of doctrines and practices necessarily."³

The following statements are examples of what is meant by "unity-in-diversity." "The Church believes that the only unity possible among thinking people is unity within diversity. The church, therefore, welcomes all those who have placed their faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour, regardless of doctrinal differences regarding other matters."⁴ "And, therefore, unity within diversity is the only kind of unity possible among *free* people."⁵

One contention for "unity-in-diversity" is made on the basis that fellowship is not to be equated with endorsement, but with brotherhood. We enter this state as a consequence of the new birth (John 3:3,5), and it can neither be extended nor withdrawn by us. It is contended that "fellowship" is a noun, not a verb; therefore, we cannot "disfellowship" except in cases of heresy, moral turpitude, and a doctrine that denies the deity of Christ. Fellowship, it is contended, can only be extended to persons, not things. In proving the error of such a claim, "attention is called to the fact that the New Testament uses the verb *Koinoneo* in numerous places... These include Heb. 2:14; Rom. 15:27; I Peter 4:13; I Tim. 5:22; II John 11; Gal. 6:6; Eph. 5:11; Phil. 4:14; and Rev. 18:4. It is interesting that these verbs are used with nouns of 'the thing,' referring to the 'thing' with which fellowship was conducted."⁶ The Bible clearly states that we are to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11); that you "have no fellowship with her sins" (Rev. 18:4,

ASV). In Bible language, fellowship can be extended or withheld or withdrawn by us since we have it with one another, and not just with Christ (I John 1:3,6; Gal. 2:9; II Thess. 3:6).

The challenge that the only test of fellowship is belief in the deity of Christ is a plain denial and rejection of many Bible verses (Acts 2:42; I John 1:5-7; II John 4-6; II Tim. 3:10; I Tim. 1:3; Titus 1:9; I Cor. 15:2). "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God..." (II John 9a). "The Greek expression *te didache tou Christou* needs to be thoroughly studied and the scholarship accepted, which is, 'not the teaching concerning Christ, but the teaching of Christ himself, and the apostles, that is, the doctrine which has Christ as its author, its giver.'" ⁷ False preaching must be challenged and stopped (Gal. 1:7,8; Matt. 15:9; Acts 20:29,30; Titus 1:11; Rom. 16:17,18).

The concept that "there is such a thing as absolute truth but we can never know it, thus we must ever view it as a goal which demands unflagging effort to attain it," has furnished fertile soil for the planting of the seed of "unity-in-diversity." If one cannot *know* anything, he cannot *know* that he cannot *know* anything. If one cannot *know* the truth then many Bible teachings are impossible (John 7:17; 8:32; 17:17-19; Rom. 1:16; Eph. 4:15; 6:14; II Thess. 2:13; I Tim. 2:4; II Tim. 2:15,25; James 1:18; 3:14; I Pet. 1:22; II John 4). "How long can New Testament Christianity survive in an atmosphere where its teachers question everything, are tentative in all things, are non-militant in their positions, who must view all as in the same tentative quest, and to whom it is said that a healthy respect for the tentative finds of others would become mandatory."⁸

The "unity-in-diversity" movement is not a unity effort at all, but a movement to take over and divide churches of Christ all over the land. The Holy Spirit gives the only platform for unity (Eph.

4:4-6). The early Christians were of one heart and one soul (Acts 4:32) because they continued in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). We must all speak the same thing (I Cor. 1:10) and teach the same truth "in every church" (I Cor. 4:17).

Footnotes

1. Goebel Music, *The Spiritual Sword*, Oct., 1980, Vol. 12, Number 1, p. 19.
2. Cecil Wright, *Freed-Hardeman Lectures* 1973, p. 402.
3. Central Church of Christ, Irving, Texas, brochure for March 22-24, '79 entitled: "A Celebration of Unity In Christ."
4. Sermon by Dr. David Reagan, "Our Ministry of Fellowship and Unity," Part I, Jan. '79.
5. William Woodson, *Freed-Hardeman Lectures* 1974, p. 51.
6. Goebel Music, op. cit., p. 20.
7. James Bales, *The Spiritual Sword*, Vol. 2, Number 1, Oct., 1970, p. 12.

THE ERROR OF DISTINGUISHING "THE GOSPEL" FROM "THE DOCTRINE"

By Roy Deaver

Many years ago certain brethren sought to make a distinction between "gospel" and "doctrine," insisting that "gospel" was for the non-Christian and that "doctrine" was for the Christian (the church). They insisted that "gospel" was not (and could not be) directed to the church and that "doctrine" was not (and could not be) directed to the non-Christian (the outsider). These brethren insisted that a similar distinction existed between "preaching" and "teaching" — that one could "preach" to the non-Christian and could "teach" the church, but that one could not "preach" to the church nor "teach" the non-Christian. They concluded, therefore, that there could not be (scripturally) a situation in which a preacher would work on a full-

The Life of Christ

Sara Jones

Lesson 1

(Part 1)

INTRODUCTION

I. As Christians we must come to understand and know Jesus well in order to effectively follow him.

- A key question asked by Jesus during His ministry: “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt. 16:15).
- Jesus knew that it would be crucial for His followers to really understand who He is in order to make the commitment to follow Him.

II. Getting to know Jesus.

- Most people today don’t really know Jesus or understand who He is.
- In order to know Jesus it is necessary to do a thorough and systematic study of His life.
- Much of Jesus life is portrayed in the four Gospels which make up a large portion of the N.T.

III. It is crucial to know and understand Jesus in order to understand the scripture.

- Jesus is the context for understanding the whole of the Bible.
- It is through Him and for Him that all things are created. (Col. 1:15-17).
- He is the crux, or focal point of the Bible.
- It is necessary to have a good understanding of Jesus for the scripture to make sense to us.

IV. It will be our goal this quarter to come to a better understanding of Jesus, His life and His work.

The Life of Christ

Sara Jones

Lesson 1

(Part 2)

THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST

I. Jesus is Pre-incarnate

- Incarnate-In the Flesh.
- Pre-Incarnate-Existed before coming in the flesh.
- Has no beginning and no end.

II. Jesus existed before time as we know it, as one of the Godhead. Heb. 1:3 describes Him as:

- The image of the invisible God.
- The brightness of His glory.
- The express image of His person.

III. In the Hebrew language the word for God had both a singular and a plural form.

- El-singular-refers to God the Father.
- Elohim-plural-refers to the Godhead-The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- Often when we read the English word “God” and we are thinking of the word “God” in the singular, the scripture is actually referring to the Godhead in the plural sense.

IV. Examples:

- (Gen. 1:26) “Then God (Elohim-plural) said, ‘Let us make man in our (plural) image.’”
- (Gen. 3:22) “Then the Lord God (Elohim-plural) said, ‘Behold the man has become like one of us.’” (plural).

V. As one of the Godhead Jesus would have had all the characteristics of deity.

- Omnipotence: All power
- Omnipresence: All present
- Omniscience: All knowledge

VI. “The Word”

- Jesus is often referred to as “The Word” in the scripture.
- (Jn. 1:1) “The word was in the beginning...”
- (Jn. 1:14) “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”
- From the beginning, in God’s plan to save man there was a focal point which was the coming of the word in the form of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice to pay the penalty for the sins of man.

VI. What was Jesus' role in the Old Testament?

- Jesus was not idly sitting by his father's side waiting for his cue to come to earth in the flesh.
- He was active in the affairs of the world before he took the form a human and came in the flesh.
- Study the scripture comparisons at the back of your outline.
- These comparisons show events where Jesus was actively working with the Father before he came in the flesh.
- "The Word" is portrayed as an active part of the Godhead, acting with the authority of deity.

VII. Many prophecies made throughout the O.T. were fulfilled with the coming of Christ.

- Study the parallel verses at the back of your outline.
- In prophetic statements made about the Lord and fulfilled by "The Word", Jesus Christ, He is identified as *Jehovah*, *The Lord of Glory*, *The Father*. The portrayal is one of shared glory and equality in the Godhead.

VIII. Conclusion:

- Everything about Jesus the Christ was in accord with a divine plan drawn before the foundation of the world.

PARALELL TEXTS

To answer this question, let us allow the scriptures to speak for themselves:

Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and His redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God. Isaiah 44:6

In Revelation 1:8, Jesus Christ said: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

By the parallel identification of the speaker in these two verses, we see that the 'Jesus Christ' of the New Testament was also 'the Lord' who spoke to the people with absolute authority in the Old Testament.

...The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob! And they did not thirst when He led them through the deserts; He caused the waters to flow from the rock for them; He also split the rock, and the waters gushed out. Isaiah 48:20,21

...our fathers were under the cloud...and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. 1 Corinthians 10:1-4

Prophesies Fullfilled-Comparison Texts

Old Testament

Isaiah 40:3: The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord: make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

Psalms 24:9,10: "...and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory."

Jeremiah 23:5: "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "that I will raise to David a Branch of *righteousness*; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute *judgment* and *righteousness* in the earth...Now this is His name by which He will be called: *THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*." *

Isaiah 8:13,14: The Lord of hosts, Him shall you hallow...He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel....

Psalms 110:1: The prophecy was made by the pen of David, the king: "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"

Malachi 3:1: "Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And *the Lord*, whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple; even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts. *

New Testament

Matthew 3:3: For this is he [John, the 'voice of one crying in the wilderness'] who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying; "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.'" Later, in John 1:29, John himself identified the One for whom he was preparing the way as Jesus Christ, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

1 Corinthians 2:8 says that the rulers of that day had not known the mystery of the work God was doing through Jesus Christ, "...for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

James 2:1: "...our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory...."

1 Corinthians 1:30: But of Him [God] you are in *Christ Jesus*, who be-came for us wisdom from God—and *righteousness* and *sanctification* and *redemption*... *

1 Peter 2:7,8: Therefore, to you who believe, He [Jesus Christ] is precious; but to those who are disobedient, 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,' and 'A stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.'

In Acts 2:34-36, the statement is made: "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand till I make Your enemies Your footstool."' Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Luke 1:76 records this statement about the prophet, John the baptizer: "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest, for you will go before the face of *the Lord* to prepare His ways...." *

John 1:30, John himself said of Christ Jesus: "This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for *he was before me*.'" [Preexistence of the Word, Jesus Christ] *

PROPHECIES FULFILLED IN JESUS

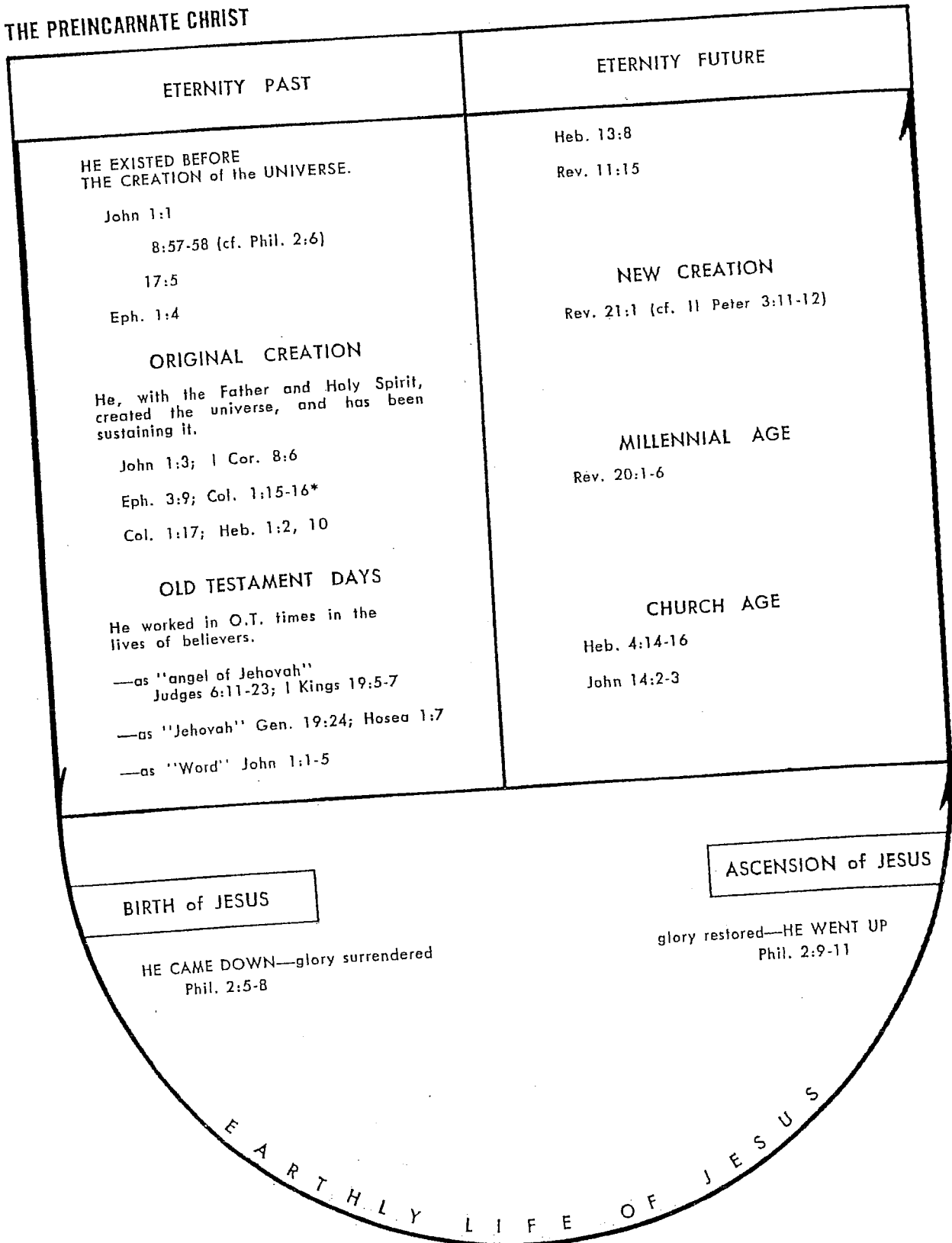
Chart C

PROPHECY	DESCRIPTION	FULFILLMENT
	PRE-EXISTENCE AND BIRTH	
Isa. 11:1		Rev. 22:16
Isa. 7:14		Matt. 1:18-23
Micah 5:2		Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:1-7
Dan. 9:25		Luke 3:1, 21-22
	PUBLIC MINISTRY	
Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6 Isa. 40:3-4		Luke 1:13-17; Matt. 3:1-3, 16; 17:10-13
Isa. 11:2		Matt. 3:16
Isa. 61:1-3		Luke 4:16-21
Isa. 53:3		Mark 3:6
Zech. 9:9		Matt. 21:1-11
	DEATH AND RESURRECTION	
Isa. 53:4-8; Dan. 9:26		John 19:18; II Cor. 5:21; I Peter 3:18
Ps. 34:20; Exodus 12:46		John 19:33, 36
Zech. 13:7		Matt. 26:31, 56
Isa. 53:9, 12		Luke 23:32-33; Matt. 27: 57-60; John 19:39
Ps. 22:7-8		Matt. 27:39-43
Ps. 22:18		Matt. 27:35; John 19:23-24
Ps. 22:1		Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34
Ps. 16:10; Isa. 53:10		Matt. 28:1-6; Acts 2:22-32
	PRESENT AND FUTURE MINISTRIES	
Ps. 110:1, 4		Acts 5:31; Heb. 8:1
Isa. 9:6-7; Dan. 7:13-14		Luke 1:32-35; Matt. 25:31

CHRIST FROM ETERNITY TO ETERNITY

Chart A

THE ASCENDED LORD



Discussion Group Assignment

The class will be divided into groups and a leader will be selected for each group to compile the results of the discussion.

Please discuss the following questions in your group:

1. Do you think the average Christian has a good understanding of who Jesus really is? Why or why not?
2. How do you think having a good understanding of Jesus affects our ability to serve him and teach others about him?

The Life of Christ
Sara Jones
Lesson 2
(Part 1)

THE GOSPELS

- I. The gospel books contain four different accounts of Jesus' life and works.
 - Each of the books varies in perspective.
 - The accounts, though different, are not contradictory.
- II. The gospels were not intended as chronological records.
 - Each author had a unique or different perspective.
 - Each author focused on different events.
 - Each author wrote with a different group of people in mind.
 - Each author wrote to achieve a different purpose.
- III. There are five possible purposes for there being four different accounts.
 - Content: To show four different portraits of Jesus from different angles.
 - Contact: To reach the different groups of people who needed to be reached.
 - Clarity: That what might appear unclear or incomplete in one might be made clear by comparison with the others.
 - Confirmation: Four witnesses to the same facts carries more weight than one.
 - Bulk: The large bulk of space devoted to the Gospels reiterates the gospel story's importance.
- IV. The Gospel writers.
 1. Matthew:
 - He wrote for the Jews,
 - He wrote as a preacher.
 - His emphasis was on Jesus as the Messiah.
 2. Mark:
 - He wrote to the Romans.
 - He wrote in chronological order.
 - His emphasis was on Jesus' service and sacrifice.
 3. Luke:
 - He wrote for the Greeks.
 - His emphasis was on Jesus as the ideal man.
 4. John:
 - He wrote for the universal church.
 - His emphasis was on the deity of Christ.
- V. Two of the Gospel writers recorded genealogies of Jesus.
 1. Matthew:
 - Matthew's genealogy is the shorter of the two.
 - He traces the ancestry of Jesus legal father, Joseph.
 - He traces the line from Abraham.
 - He records 42 generations.
 - His list is divided into 3 groups, rounded off to 14 generations each.

2. Luke:

- Luke's genealogy runs backward from Jesus to Adam.
- He traces the ancestors of Mary.
- He records 76 generations.

VI. Some prophecies that are fulfilled in Jesus' genealogies.

1. That He was the son of man: (Isa. 9:6 a)

- Luke emphasizes His identity with the human race by going back to the first man, Adam.
- Matthew brings out the "human aspect" of this race by citing names with moral blots (i.e. Rahab), and making a big point of the captivity of Judah in Babylon.

2. That He was the Messiah: (Gen. 22:18).

- Jesus is identified four times in the first eighteen verses of Matthew as the Christ (Greek-chrio, "anoint").
- Matthew identifies Jesus as the son of Abraham. (Gen. 1:1).

3. That He would be King of the line of David: (II Sam. 7:14-17), (Isa. 11:1).

- Matthew calls Jesus "The Son of David". (Matt. 1:1).
- Matthew repeats the phrase "David the King" twice. (Matt. 1:6).
- Matthew records the royal line of David continued through Solomon his heir.

4. That He was the son of God, and He himself was God. (Isa. 9:6).

- His birth was of supernatural conception by the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 1:20).
- Matthew identifies Jesus as God. (Matt. 1:23).

The Life of Christ
Sara Jones
Lesson 2
(Part 2)

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

- I. "When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His son..." (Gal. 4:4).
 - The law had served its purpose of discipline and instruction.
 - The political, religious, and social climate was conducive to the ministry of the gospel.
 - There was a spiritual vacuum needing to be filled.
- II. The two worlds of Jesus day.
 1. The Jewish world.
 2. The Graeco-Roman world.
 - The world of Jesus day was ruled by Gentile Rome.
 - The primary people to whom Jesus would minister were the Jews of Palestine.
- III. Events leading up to Jesus birth.
 1. Zacharias was visited by an angel to announce that his wife Elizabeth (cousin to Mary) would give birth to John the Baptist. (Lk. 1:5-25).
 - Elizabeth was well past childbearing years. (Lk. 1:18).
 - The angel told him that they were to name the child John. (Lk. 1:13).
 - He was told by the angel that John would prepare the way for Christ. (Lk. 1:17).
 - Zacharias was struck mute because he doubted the things told him by the angel. (Lk. 1:20).
 2. Mary was visited by an angel to announce that she would give birth to the Messiah. (Lk. 1:26-38).
 - The angel tells her that she is to call his name Jesus. (Lk. 1:31).
 - The angel tells her that he will be the son of God (Lk. 1:35).
 3. Mary visited her cousin, Elizabeth, in Judah. (Lk. 1:39, 40).
 - When Mary greeted Elizabeth, the babe in Elizabeth's womb leaped and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. (Lk. 1:41, 42).
 - Elizabeth said that there would be fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord. (Lk. 1:45).
 - Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months. (Lk. 1:56).
- IV. The Betrothal of Mary.
 - Mary was betrothed to a man named Joseph. (Matt. 1:18).
 - The average age of a girl at betrothal in those days was 13.
 - Betrothal was a legally binding contract between a man and a woman.
 - During betrothal a man and woman were considered just the same as if married though the ceremony and consummation did not take place until the wedding day.

- The betrothal contract could only be broken by a formal divorce.
- A woman who violated her betrothal was considered an adulteress.

V. Joseph's reaction to the conception.

- Joseph was planning to put Mary away secretly, since he was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her. (Matt. 1:19).
- An angel was sent to Joseph in a dream to explain to him that the child conceived in her was of the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 1:20).

VI. The marriage of Mary and Joseph

- Joseph took Mary as his wife. (Matt. 1:24).
- The marriage was not consummated until after the birth of Jesus. (Matt. 1:25).

VII. The birth of John the Baptist.

- The child promised to Zacharias and Elizabeth is born. (Lk. 1:57).
- He was circumcised on the 8th day and given the name of John as instructed. (Lk. 1:60, 63).
- Zacharias' tongue was loosed and he was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke praising God, and prophesied that John would prepare the way for Jesus. (Lk. 1:64.), (Lk. 1:76).

VIII. The birth of Jesus.

- Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem for a census. (Lk. 2: 4,5).
- While there the time of Mary's delivery came. (Lk. 2:6).
- There was no room in the Inn so she gave birth in a stable. (Lk. 2:7).

IX. The Shepherds visit. (Lk. 2:8-20).

- Angels came to some shepherds in the field and told them the Christ had been born.
- The shepherds decided to go to Bethlehem to see the baby.
- Shepherds in that day were considered unclean and dishonest and were looked down on.
- The shepherds were forerunners of the common people who would "hear him gladly."
- The shepherds signified that the gospel was for the poor, sinners, and outcasts, etc.
- The shepherds visited the baby at his manger in the stable.

X. The time of Jesus birth.

- The scripture does not tell us the time of Jesus birth.
- Jesus was born during the time Herod was king (Lk. 1:5).
- Records show that Herod reigned from about 37 BC-4BC.
- Jesus was born during the first census that took place in Bethlehem during the reign of Quirinius, governor of Syria. (Lk. 2:2).

- Records show that Herod reigned from about 37 BC-4BC.
- Jesus was born during the first census that took place in Bethlehem during the reign of Quirinius, governor of Syria. (Lk. 2:2).
- Records show that Quirinius held office the first time around 4 BC.
- The time of Jesus birth is believed to be around 4 BC.

XI. Jesus is circumcised.

- According to the law of that day all Israelite males were to be circumcised on the 8th day after birth. (Lev. 12:3).
- At that time the baby was also given the name of Jesus, as instructed by the angel before his conception. (Lk.2:21b).

XII. The presentation at the Temple.

- According to the Law of Moses a woman had to wait for 40 days after birth to be clean or purified. (Lev. 12:4).
- After the 40 days of Mary's purification were up, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem to dedicate Him to the Lord. (Lk. 2:22).
- According to the law a sacrifice was to be made for every first born male. (Ex. 13:2,12).
- Mary offered two pigeons as her sacrifice. (Lk. 2:24).
- God arranged for two people to meet the baby Jesus in the Temple.
 - Simeon: He was a priest who had been told by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until after he had seen Christ. (Lk. 2:25).
 - Anna: She was an aged widow who stayed in the temple and did service to God day and night there. (Lk. 2: 36, 37).
 - They each recognized Jesus as the Christ and praised God.

XIII. The Magi's (Wisemen) visit. (Matt. 2:1-12).

- A star guided the Magi to the place where the baby Jesus was.
- When they arrived in Jerusalem inquiring about the baby, they aroused the suspicion of Herod who told them to let him know when they found the baby.
- The visit of the Magi did not take place in the stable as common folklore has it, but was rather at a house. (Matt. 2:9-11).
- The scripture does not say how many Magi there were, though common folklore portrays that there were three.
- The Magi fell down and worshipped Jesus and presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
- The Magi were warned in a dream not to return and tell Herod of the baby's whereabouts so they went back another way.

COMPARISONS OF THE FOUR GOSPELS

Chart E

	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Portraits of Jesus	The Prophesied King	The Obedient Servant	The Perfect Man	The Divine Son
Prominent words	"fulfilled"	"straightway"	"Son of man"	"believe"
Cultures of the original readers	Jews (Jesus, Son of Abraham)	Romans (Action: no genealogy)	Greeks (Jesus, Son of Adam)	Church (Jesus, Son of God)
Outlook and style of the writers	Teacher	Preacher	Litterateur	Theologian
Outstanding sections	Sermons	Miracles	Parables	Doctrines
Prominent ideas	Law	Power	Grace	Glory
Broad division	"SYNOPTIC GOSPELS" —stressing the humanity of Christ, from the outward, earthly side			"FOURTH GOSPEL" —stressing the deity of Christ, from the inward, heavenly side

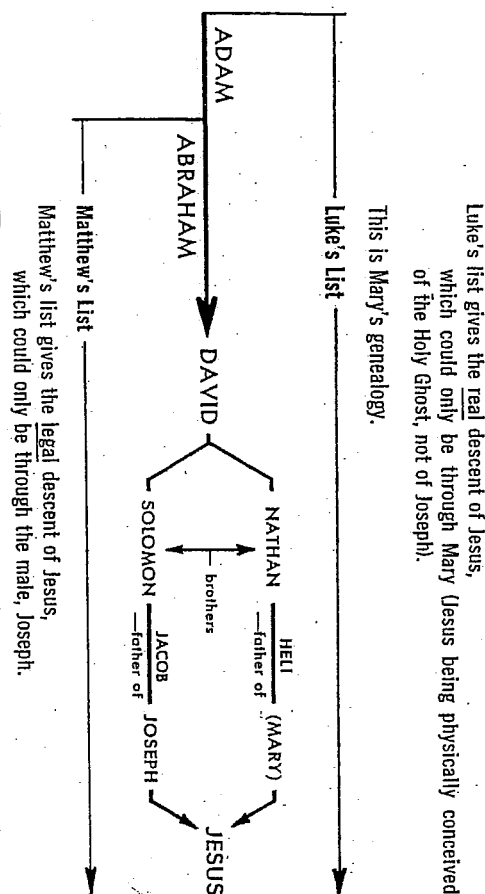
WORLD OF JESUS' DAY

Chart D

ROMAN EMPIRE	JEWISH PEOPLE
POLITICAL SETTING	
—Unification of the Mediterranean world —Safe and easy communication —Universal language —Universal peace	—Under the yoke of Rome —Expectation of a Deliverer, of their own race —Sanhedrin (the Jewish organ of local government) had only limited power
MORAL SETTING	
—Degradation —"To corrupt and be corrupt is the spirit of the times" (Tacitus)	—Generally strict standards —Sadducees sponsored moral compromise
INTELLECTUAL SETTING	
—Greek and Roman culture highly developed	—Education a prominent part of the Jews' life
RELIGIOUS SETTING	
—Heathen idolatry —Mystic religions —Philosophic religions —Spiritual vacuum	—Generally intensely religious as to externals —Religious life molded by three sects: 1. Pharisees: rigid legalists; self-righteous; middle class 2. Sadducees: free thinkers; worldly; upper class 3. Essenes: mystic pietists; ascetics —Synagogues and rabbis: a thriving institution of worship which arose after the exile —A believing remnant: there were some who looked and prayed for the advent of the Messiah (Read Luke 2:21-39.)

GENEALOGIES OF CHRIST

Chart B



Assignment

Written Report on Bible Women from Jesus' Life

Please choose one subject and write a one-two page report on this woman using as many sources as possible. The school library is a good starting point for sources. You will be graded on content, neatness, and effort.

Woman of Samaria
Woman with an Issue of Blood
Woman Crooked for 18 Years
Syro-Phoenecian Woman
Salome: Mother of James and John
Widow with Two Mites
The Adulterous Woman
The Sinful Woman
The Widow of Nain
Mary Magdalene

me to respond in a godly manner. And then I pray for practical wisdom to know how to deal with the situation. After all, in my illustration about the computer printer, the important document does eventually need to be printed.

It is also beneficial to ask God if there is something I need to learn, or if there is something I need to be attentive to. Sometimes God uses events that tempt us toward frustration to get our attention, or even to push us further in an area we need to grow in. In any case, there are no events in our lives that do not ultimately come to us from the invisible hand of God, even though they come through some visible cause.

Let me repeat, however, what I have said or implied throughout this chapter. Both anxiety and frustration are sins. They are not to be taken lightly or brushed off as common reactions we have to difficult events in a fallen world. Can you picture Jesus ever being anxious or frustrated? And whatever in our lives is not like Jesus is sin. Granted, we will never achieve complete freedom from anxiety or frustration in this life (at least I don't expect to). But we should never accept them as just part of our temperament any more than we would accept adultery as part of our temperament. Keep in mind that even though anxiety and frustration may not be as serious as adultery, they are still sins. And all sin is serious in the eyes of a Holy God.

Discontentment

Anxiety is a fearful uncertainty over the future, whether short-term (as in my plane trips) or long-term, such as might result from a job loss. Frustration is usually the result of some immediate event that has blocked my plans or desires. Discontentment, the subject of this chapter, most often arises from ongoing and unchanging circumstances that we can do nothing about.

Before we get into the subject, however, I want to acknowledge that there is a place for legitimate discontentment. All of us should, to some degree, be discontent with our spiritual growth. If we are not, we will stop growing. There is also what we might call a prophetic discontentment with injustice and other evils in society that is coupled with a desire to see positive change. The subject of this chapter is a sinful discontentment that negatively affects our relationship with God.

Actually, the most frequent warnings in Scripture against discontentment concern money and possessions, but in this chapter, I want to address what is perhaps a more common form of discontentment among committed Christians, an attitude that may be triggered by unchanging circumstances that are trials to our faith.

Here are some examples of such unchanging circumstances:

- An unfulfilling or low-paying job
- Singleness well into midlife or beyond

- Inability to bear children
- An unhappy marriage
- Physical disabilities
- Continual poor health

I'm sure there are other painful circumstances I haven't included in this list. But whatever they are, the truths of this chapter will apply to them all.

In addition to the really painful circumstances of life, the cause of our discontentment may even be trivial at times. I am not good at administrative details, so having to constantly deal with them can become an emotional leak for me and thus a temptation to be discontent. Obviously, the necessity of having to handle administrative details is trivial compared to any of the areas I've listed above. But I mention it to point out that however good our overall circumstances may be, there is often some small thing over which we can become discontent.

It's not that I am unacquainted with some of those more difficult areas. I was almost thirty-four when I got married, so I know something of the loneliness of single adult life. And even after marriage I struggled with discontentment at our son's soccer or basketball games because I was at least ten years older than the other parents around me. And then there are the physical disabilities. All my life I have had both a visual and a hearing disability, neither of which is treatable. I can remember the feeling of rejection as I was growing up when, because of my visual disability, I could not play baseball like the other boys. Still today, even as an older adult, those lifetime disabilities often make life inconvenient, if not difficult.

I don't intend that last paragraph to sound like a pity party. And I readily recognize that the circumstances I deal with are minor indeed compared to what many believers experience. But I do want you to know that if you struggle with discontentment, I'm right there with you. Your circumstances may be much more difficult than any I've ever experienced, but the truth is, it is our

response to our circumstances rather than the degree of difficulty that determines whether or not we are discontent.

Whatever situation tempts us to be discontent, and however severe it may be, we need to recognize that discontentment is sin. That statement may surprise many readers. We are so used to responding to difficult circumstances with anxiety, frustration, or discontentment that we consider them normal reactions to the varying vicissitudes of life. But if we tend to think this way, that just points out to us the subtleness and acceptability of these sins. When we fail to recognize these responses to our circumstances as sin, we are responding no differently from unbelievers who never factor God into their situations. We are back to our ungodliness as the root cause of our sins.

The primary purpose of this book is to help us face the presence of many of these subtle sins in our lives and to recognize the fact that, to a large degree, they have become acceptable to us. We tolerate them in our lives with hardly a second thought. That makes them more dangerous because, in addition to the basic sin itself, they can open the door of our hearts to greater sin. Discontentment, for example, can easily lead to resentment or bitterness toward God or other people.

The second purpose of the book is to suggest means of dealing with these sins, even though these sections are admittedly brief. And you will find as we go through these chapters that, for me, appropriate passages of Scripture are my first line of attack. After all, in His High Priestly prayer, Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). While the "word of truth" probably refers primarily to the gospel, it certainly includes the truth of God's moral will throughout Scripture as well as the words of instruction and encouragement that help us obey that moral will.

I have already mentioned Psalm 139:16 as a passage of Scripture that helps me with frustration. But the same truth that God has ordained all our days, with all their ups and downs, their blessings

and disappointments, can help us (and does help me) deal with the circumstances that tempt us to be discontent. Whatever your circumstances, and however difficult they may be, the truth is that they are ordained by God for you as part of His overall plan for your life. God does nothing, or allows nothing, without a purpose. And His purposes, however mysterious and inscrutable they may be to us, are always for His glory and our ultimate good.

And for those of us who face physical disabilities or even physical appearance issues, Psalm 139:13 can help us. "You formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb." God so directed the DNA and other biological factors that determine our physical makeup that the psalmist can say, "God formed me in my mother's womb." That is an incredible thought! You and I are who we are physically because that is the way God made us. And He made us the way we are because that is how we can best fulfill His plan for our lives. For some with severe disabilities, that plan may at times seem meaningless. But if we believe that we are who we are and what we are because that is the way God made us, then we can learn to accept our disabilities and believe that He can even use them to glorify Himself.

Psalm 139:13 can be helpful to those of us who experience some degree of physical limitation. Obviously, there are many other areas of life that would not be addressed by this text. But you can be sure that you will be able to find in the Bible specific texts or principles that will address your particular circumstances.

Years ago a friend gave me a poem by Amy Carmichael titled "In Acceptance Lieth Peace." In the first four verses Amy Carmichael portrays the suffering speaker in the poem as seeking peace in forgetting, in restless endeavor, in aloofness, and even in submission to the inevitable. Finally in the fifth verse the sufferer finds relief in these words:

He said, "I will accept the breaking sorrow
Which God to-morrow

Will to His son explain."

Then did the turmoil deep within him cease,

Not vain the word; not vain:

For in Acceptance lieth peace.¹

One avenue of dealing with disappointing circumstances that Amy Carmichael did not cover is that of resignation, which can often be done grudgingly because we have no choice. We can resign ourselves to circumstances we know will never change but still harbor in our hearts a smoldering discontentment. But as Amy Carmichael so helpfully brought out, it is neither in resignation nor submission but only in acceptance that we find peace.

Acceptance means that you accept your circumstances from God, trusting that He unerringly knows what is best for you and that in His love, He purposes only that which is best. Having then reached a state of acceptance, you can ask God to let you use your difficult circumstances to glorify Him. In this way you have moved from the attitude of a victim to an attitude of stewardship. You begin to ask, "God, how can I use my disability (or whatever the difficult circumstance may be) to serve You and glorify You?"

You may ask, "But shouldn't I pray for physical healing or for relief from any other painful circumstance?" Yes, we are invited to pray about these circumstances, but we should always pray in confidence that our infinitely wise and loving heavenly Father knows what is best for us, and we should be willing to accept His answer to us.

After the death of my first wife, a friend sent me a card with the following anonymous quote:

Lord, I am willing to —

Receive what you give,

Lack what you withhold,

Relinquish what you take.

Obviously, at the time, the thought of being willing to relinquish my wife was the message appropriate for me. But if through an accident you become totally disabled, could you say, “Lord, I am willing to receive this crippling disability You have given me”? If you are single with no prospects of marriage, can you say, “Lord, I am willing to lack what You have withheld”?

Some years ago, I experienced a crushing and humiliating disappointment. At the time, I didn’t know the little anonymous verse I’ve just quoted, but I did know Job 1:21: “[Job] said, ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.’” The morning after the event, I knelt before the Lord and said, “Lord, You gave and You have taken away; blessed be Your name.” Through that Scripture and that prayer, God enabled me to relinquish what He had taken. I did not know at the time that that experience was a trial run for the far greater challenge of relinquishing my wife several years later.

You will recognize that there is a recurring theme running through this chapter as well as the previous one. That theme is the importance of a firm belief in the sovereignty, wisdom, and goodness of God in all the circumstances of our lives.² Whether those circumstances are short-term or long-term, our ability to respond to them in a God-honoring and God-pleasing manner depends on our ability and willingness to bring these truths to bear on them. And we must do this by faith; that is, we must believe that the Bible’s teaching about these attributes really is true and that God has brought or allowed these difficult circumstances in our lives for His glory and our ultimate good.

Finally, I realize that in dealing with discontentment, I probably have touched some raw nerves. And this may be especially aggravated when I label discontentment as sin. You may be thinking, *If he only knew my situation, he wouldn’t be so glib and “preachy.”* It’s true, I don’t know your situation, but I write as one who has

struggled with discontentment and has sought to overcome it with the truths I have set forth in this chapter. They have helped me, and I pray they will help you. May all of us, with the help of the Holy Spirit, move from any negative attitudes of discontentment to a positive attitude of being stewards of the difficult and disappointing circumstances God has given us so that we may somehow glorify Him in all of life.

II Peter Chapter 2

Lot distressed – though in the midst of wickedness.

1. Lot was not corrupted by it.
2. He did not become indifferent to it.
3. He was daily concerned about it.

Some heresies afloat near end of the first century.

1. The Lord's deity was questioned by some (I John 4:15).
2. The Lord's humanity was questioned by others (I John 4:2).
3. Some denied the threefold personality of the godhead.
4. Others held the body of Christ was not real, only imaginary.
5. Others, by their wicked and corrupt lives, denied Jesus as their Master and used their bodies like they wanted to.

Hell – [~]tartaros – only time in Greek N.T.

Used in “Greek mythology of the place of restraint and punishment for the souls of wicked men after death.” (Woods, p. 166)

V. 15 – Forsaken the right way.

1. “the way of the Lord” (Genesis 18:19)
2. “the way of peace” (Romans 3:17)
3. “the way of wisdom” (Prov. 4:11)
4. “the way of life” (Prov. 10:17)
5. “the way of salvation” (Acts 16:17)

A FALSE TEACHER
II Peter 2
Winfred Clark

INTRODUCTION

1. Peter describes well the nature and method of the false teacher?
2. As one reads II Peter 2, he can see the trial of the serpent's agent.

DISCUSSION

I. PETER STATES THE FACT.

- A. II Peter 2:1. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you."
 1. Now, before going on, stop and take note of the fact of the false teacher.
 2. He will or she will not call himself or herself such.
 3. If this occurred, nobody would listen. A false teacher will never come with a sign of his true colors.
- B. But it is a sad fact now that people deny that there are false teachers in some areas.
 1. Charming personalities overwhelm the unsuspecting.
 2. Sweet and smooth speeches blind many eyes.

II. THEIR APPROACH IS NOTED.

- A. II Peter 2:1. "Who privily shall bring in damnable heresies."
 1. That word privily means: secretly, covertly.
 - a. It just means it is undercover.
 - b. He operates much like the "fifth column" of World War II.
- B. He seeks to do his work without attracting attention.
- C. He will use others, if they will allow it, and he stands in the background.
- D. In this way, the damage is done and he does not have to hear the blame. Judas is a case in point as an agent of the devil.

III. THEY USE ONE FOR UNHOLY PURPOSES.

- A. II Peter 2:3. "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you!"
 1. They will play on emotions and plead for sympathy while going about their destructive work.
 2. They will not hesitate to ally themselves with those with whom they do not agree, if only they can carry a point.

3. As in the case of Pilate and Herod, they were made friends that day.
 4. Neither cared for the other, but they both were opposed to Christ.
- B. You may find those who have little in common, but if they think others are opposed to something going on in the church, they seek to get together. This is not new.
- C. Did not Absalom seek to use the people against David when he "stole their hearts."
1. He could stand in the gate and talk about what he would do if he were judge. II Samuel 15:1-4. Notice how much attention he gave them.
 2. In verse 5, you find him acting as though he wanted to get down on their level. Note carefully verse 6. "So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel."
 3. But how did he do it? Just as men do today. Play both ends against the middle.
- D. May I ask whether you could bring yourself to admire such a person? Does Absalom have your support? Would you be in sympathy with him? You say, no. I ask you why? Your answer would be that he is seeking to overthrow God's appointed king. He is not acting in good faith. If he really wanted to contribute something, let him do so under David his father.

IV. THEY DESPISE AUTHORITY.

- A. II Peter 2:10. Peter says, "They despise government. They are presumptuous and self-willed."
1. You would expect this of a false teacher.
 2. He wants to teach what he wants to without restraint.
 3. When you boil it all down, it comes to the selfishness that dominated such a one. Self must be served at all cost.
- B. We will do well to be on guard against such. Mark and avoid them.

II PETER 3
James Meadows

- I. The purpose of the epistles (v. 1,2).
 - A. "...stir up your pure minds" -- To arouse thoroughly.
 - B. Recognize -- Be mindful.
- II. Scoffers come in last days (v. 3-4).
 - A. Last days refer to the Christian dispensation, Acts 2:16-17; Hebrews 1:1,2; I Timothy 4:1; II Timothy 3:1.
 - B. Scoffers would be those that would mock and jeer at the idea of Christ's coming. (cf. Genesis 19:14). "Mockers...with their mocking." (NASB).
 - C. The erroneous views of some of the first century Christians may have given grounds for their charges since some of them believed in the immediate return. (cf. I Thessalonians 4:13-17).
- III. The apostle's reply to the scoffers' charge that Christ would not return. (v. 5-9).
 - A. They alleged that the unvarying conformity of nature proved this.
 - 1. They had deliberately and willfully ignored the lessons of the flood which demonstrated conclusively that all things have not continued as they were from the beginning (v. 5-6).
 - 2. The same word that brought the flood holds the earth in place today. (v. 7).
 - B. The lapse of time between the promise and the fulfillment is not to be interpreted as meaning God will not fulfill His commitments. (v. 8).
 - 1. The passing of time does not affect God's fulfillment as it does now.
 - 2. The longer the interval between the promise and the fulfillment on man's part, the less likely he will fulfill.
Reasons:
 - a. Man may die.
 - b. He may forget his promise.
 - c. He may violate his word and simply refuse to do what he promised.
 - d. Conditions may arise making it impossible for him to perform it.

up with fire..." (NWT). Revelation 8:7, "...A third of the earth was **burned up**, and a third of the trees was **burned up**, and all the green vegetation was burned up..." (NWT). [All emphasis mine--JLW].

- a. Why would they translate correctly in these four instances and then incorrectly in the only other occurrence of the phrase? Because II Peter 3:10 stands diametrically opposed to Jehovah's Witness' doctrine.
 - b. This same place also stands diametrically opposed to the A.D. 70 error.
5. Not only is the NWT inconsistent in its translation (or mistranslation!)--it also contradicts itself on this very matter.
- a. Consider the wording of Hebrews 1:10 in the NWT: "...You at the beginning, O Lord, laid the foundations of the earth itself, and the heavens are the works of your hands, they themselves **will perish**..." [Emphasis mine--JLW].
 - b. Then, within the context itself, notice II Peter 3:7 in the NWT: "...by the same word the heavens and the earth that are now **stored up for fire**..." [Emphasis mine--JLW]. Shades of contradiction--what shall it be?
 - c. The A.D. 70 errorists are in league with the doctrine of Jehovah's Witnesses.
 - d. Paul warned in I Corinthians 15:33, "BE NOT DECEIVED. EVIL COMPANIONSHIPS CORRUPT GOOD MORALS." (All the points under Letter G. above were written by Jesse Whitlock.)

is made by private interpretation." **A Commentary on the New Testament**, prepared by the Catholic Biblical Association, in 1942 says: "Prophecy comes **not by the will of man**, i.e., by some natural medium whereby man can know the future." (p. 630).

We can depend on the prophetic word, as well as on the New Testament word, for God's word is not the product of man's uninspired efforts to penetrate the mind of God, but is God's revelation by the Spirit through the inspired apostles and prophets. (I Corinthians 2:9-14; Hebrews 2:3-4).

Examining the Evidence

"But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. For if God did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly thereafter; and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds), then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment" (2:1-9).

A careful painter in London exhibited a piece of his work representing a friar in his canonicals. Viewed at a distance you would think the friar to be in a praying attitude. His hands seem clasped together and held horizontally to his breast; his eyes meekly dismissed like those of the publican in the Gospel narrative; and the good man appears to be absorbed in humble adoration and devout recollection. When a nearer survey is taken, the deception vanishes. The book which seems to be before him is really a punch bowl into which he is squeezing a lemon. How lively a

picture of the hypocrite has thus been painted. He appears at a distance to be one thing, but upon closer observation his true character is exactly the opposite.

Hypocrisy is one of the greatest tools in Satan's arsenal. Through deceit the devil captures the hearts of many who were once stalwart believers. In Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, he observed that Satan works with "all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness. . . ." (2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10). Satan is a master at taking a small kernel of truth and weaving a whole system of error around it. The end result is a most believable doctrine with only a small amount of truth, a large amount of error, and a damning fate!

Peter turns his attention to this problem. His friends were being beguiled by people who, like the friar above, appeared to be one thing while in reality they were the opposite. The second chapter is a rebuttal of the false teacher. Peter's words are curt and clear. We cannot mistake what he says. After finishing the reading of this section, the readers would understand the extreme danger that was in their midst and which they were regarding in a light manner.

The problem addressed by Peter is not a novel one confronting the people of God. The old nation of Israel had often been confronted with false prophets who encouraged and actually succeeded in promoting error. Urgent warnings are found before 2 Peter which were written to guard the believers from the pollutions of false doctrine (cf. Matthew 7:15; 24:15; Acts 20:29, 30; 1 Timothy 4:1-7; 2 Timothy 4:2-5; etc.).

Now history is repeating itself. The urgent warnings of prophecy were becoming reality. In the new Israel, false teachers had arisen. They portrayed a different character and doctrine than they truly believed. The plague of the false teacher is always with us. People will always be around who love to have their ears tickled and be fed with doctrine that is palatable, demanding no commitment or consecration. Simply stated, we will always have those who love error more than they love truth and are more willing to follow a lie than a fact. Just as it is easy for some to follow error, it is easy for some to be complacent in recognizing this danger. The brethren addressed by Peter seemed to have convinced themselves that the false teacher was someone who was not in their midst. They believed that doctrinal error was far removed from their congregation. In response Peter writes one of the most direct attacks in the New Testament on the dangers of false teachers.

This passage seems to have an emphasis on a courtroom scene. "Judgment" or "sentence" (2:3, 9) is used to describe a judicial pronouncement. The picture we draw is one of a defendant appearing before a court of law to face certain charges against him. We see the evidence presented after the defendant has been identified (2:1-3a); the verdict is then rendered (2:3b); the justification for the harsh punishment is next discussed (2:4-8); and finally, we see Peter making practical application to those who would read this epistle (2:9).

Basically, we find in this section a point often repeated in Scripture. Peter says that as the testimony of the court is taken and the documents examined, the evidence shows the folly of following error. Consequently, as we ponder this evidence we ought to see that diligence must be demonstrated so we will not follow error and suffer condemnation.

THE TRIAL (2:1-3a)

As Peter opens the doors of the courtroom, we observe that the trial is just beginning. The defendant is about to be identified, and the evidence is soon to be presented for examination.

The Defendant

The defendant is clearly identified by two expressions in verse 1. He is identified as a "false prophet" and as a "false teacher." The first iden-

tifies him with his counterpart in the Old Testament, the second with his contemporaries under the new dispensation. We can see the true character of those like this man from other passages of Scripture:

But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage (Galatians 2:4).

Such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:13).

Their true character is black and dark. But when these approach believers they conduct themselves as "angels of light"—sweet, pious, and humble in their acts. These had arrived and had been accepted in the congregation to which Peter wrote. They had been trusted, respected, loved, fellowshiped, and esteemed. But like the unseen reefs that hold disaster (cf. Jude 12), these had begun an evil work. Their teaching was vain, their goals were greedy, and their morals were perverse. They had used the trusting souls in the congregation, playing upon emotions and weaknesses to satisfy their greedy lusts. This then was the true identification of the one who stood in court in 2:1-9.

After the identification had been made, the court turns its attention next to the charges pressed against them. Six charges were made against these false teachers.

The Charges

First, these brethren secretly introduced destructive heresies (2:1). They "secretly introduced" or "privily brought in" (KJV) these errors. "Bring in" literally means to "lay alongside of" another object so it passes unnoticed. Such an expression reveals how the false teachers were able to penetrate the steadfast doctrinal position of Peter's brethren. It was a most clever manner of introducing error. They would teach a fact that was unquestionably true, but in teaching truth they would place alongside it some doctrine that was filled with error. They taught truth, but they did not tell *all* truth. Little by little, they introduced error until their listeners had been indoctrinated with enough error that the truth lost its appeal! These wove their error into the teaching, secretly whispering their doctrines to any who would

less. Phony arguments, twisted words, and invented expressions were used to distort the pure and simple truth (cf. 3:16).

THE VERDICT (2:3b)

After the defendant has been identified and the evidence properly evaluated, the jury deliberates. The jury returns with a clear verdict—guilty on all counts! The word "sentence" is a courtroom word expressing the final pronouncement of the presiding judge on the defendant.

The sentence is consistent with the nature of God. Sin always leads to death. In the Ephesian letter, Paul says that through sins and trespasses we become "dead" (2:1, 12): "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Those who follow the false teachers will experience "swift destruction" (2:1). The sentence is one recorded and illustrated from the beginning. The false teachers of the Old Testament were recipients of a tragic sentence. If such occurred in the Old Testament, believers can be sure that such will befall false teachers in the New Testament.

Two expressions are used by Peter to emphasize the certainty of this harsh verdict. The phrase, "is not idle," refers to the fact that God is not inactive. He will carry out this sentence. It may appear to some that God will not carry out the penalty (cf. 3:4ff.), but Peter assures them that God is not idle! "Not asleep" also indicated the certainty of the verdict. I like the rendering in the NEB: "Perdition waits for them with unsleeping eyes." Judgment is certain (cf. 1 Kings 18:28). The evil of the false teacher will be punished. It is coming.

THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE VERDICT (2:4-9)

Why can God be so certain in His condemnation? Why can He say that some will spend an eternity in painfilled torment? Some contend that God would be unloving if he has an eternal hell prepared and consigns souls to that black abode. By what right can such a verdict and penalty be justified? By close investigation of the present text, I believe we are able to discover at least three reasons which justify the reality of hell and the condemnation of souls for eternity in it.

Evil Is Never Able to Hide From God

First, it is justified because evil is never able to

hide from God. You just cannot hide sin from God. Peter uses three illustrations to verify this fact—fallen angels, the ancient world of Noah's time, and the two cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah. Each of these reveals the impartial judgment of God and assures the readers that such a judgment would come even if it is far into the future. These three present a fitting summary of evil in the world today. The rebellious angels illustrate the pride and open rebellion of the impenitent sinner. The ancient world illustrates the apathy and disobedience of the sinners' hardened hearts. The cities of the plain serve well to show us the decay and sensuality of mankind gone mad after pleasure and passion. Just as these three could never hide from God, the traits they reveal can never be hidden from God today. It is absurd for us to deceive ourselves into thinking that sin carries no consequences. If God did not tolerate and spare angels, or an entire world's population, or even two great cities, why should we think He will allow us to get away with sin today? Those who think they have outgrown God, as these three examples did, will discover their mistake too late! God's harsh verdict and eternal sentence is quite justified, for it reveals the reality of evil's deception.

Righteousness Is Always Rewarded

Second, it is justified because righteousness is always rewarded. As he considers Noah and Lot, Peter uses two words that bring comfort to God's saints: "preserved" (2:5) which literally means to "keep safe" and "rescued" (2:7, 9) which literally means to "drag out of danger." Those who follow God's will benefit from a divine protection. This is the meaning of the prayer petition urged upon believers to pray that God would "lead us not into temptation." When we issue that petition, we are asking God to treat us as He did Noah and Lot. We are asking Him to rescue, preserve, and deliver us. Here then is a tremendous motive to live godly. God always delivers His righteous followers (cf. Psalms 147:3; 2 Corinthians 7:6). Thus the harsh penalty on evil is justified.

Evil Has Terrible Effects Upon Believers

Third, such a verdict is justified because evil has terrible effects upon believers (2:7, 8). Lot is alluded to here, and we discover facts about him which are otherwise unknown in the Bible. He

• 2 Peter 2:10-19 •

Musings on the “Playboy Philosophy”

“And especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord. But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; forsaking the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but he received a rebuke for his own transgression; for a dumb donkey, speaking with the voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet. These are springs without water, and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved” (2:10-19).

It is in epidemic proportions—everyone is at risk! Simply put, no one is immune to this epidemic. What are we talking about? The epidemic of the 1980s is “Sexually Transmitted Diseases” (STD). In a magazine article of October 1985, the following statement appeared: “STDs have touched the lives of everyone from innocent

spouses to a celibate nun, resulting in birth defects, cancer, sterility, and death among men, women and even children, who never knew they had a disease.” The epidemic is so vast that some experts predict that 1 in every 4 Americans of reproductive age will contract a STD in his or her lifetime! The delusion of the Playboy Philosophy is the root of this epidemic. Those who have followed its “piper” and lived its “freedom” by a promiscuous lifestyle have opened Pandora’s box, and the effects will never be fully known.

Some may wonder what the connection is between the epidemic of the 1980s and the ancient writing of Peter the fisherman. A closer investigation of 2 Peter 2:10-19 reveals that he, too, addresses the volatile issue of “free” sex and uninhibited morality. Notice Peter’s adamant words. His righteous anger burns hot. He has just demonstrated (2:1-9) the disastrous sentence awaiting the false prophets and all who heed their error. Now he turns and speaks in harsh specifics about the false teacher and the system of morality which comes to infect the followers of such a system. We read a clear and vivid description about the character, effects, and fate of those who dare shun God’s absolutes in morality. The passage has to be among the most scathing in rebuttal to those who advocate forsaking God’s laws of morality.

Why is Peter so upset? Is his indignation justified? Certainly such a response was justified because it struck a telling blow at the philosophy of life that deludes, blinds, and condemns! Peter held a devoted love for those whom he oversaw. He desired that they look at the real truth of the

nosed as addicted to sensuality. Why? Because they have followed the broad path of promised "freedom." They are addicts because they, like some of Peter's readers, have their eyes filled with adultery, cannot cease from sinning, revel in the daytime, and are bent on a course of self-willed pleasure. Believers are just as endangered by this addiction as the unbeliever, and Peter urges Christians to remember the truth of the matter.

Another facet of the character of those who follow this Playboy Philosophy must be discussed (2:14b). Those who have become ensnared have forsaken concern for others. They are motivated by "greed" (cf. 2:3). This causes them to use and manipulate anyone for their selfish pleasure. The word used by Peter, "trained," is important. Literally, it means that such are specially trained for a work. Those who are mastered by the Playboy Philosophy are special experts at getting others to succumb to their wishes.

In a November 1985 letter from Dr. James Dobson, there is an alarming discussion about the practice known as "Dial-a-porn." Through this, telephones are used to deliver the most obscene and profane messages one can imagine. The tapes can be listened to by anyone old enough to dial the number. There has been opposition to this practice, and testimonies were taken by the Presidential Commission on Pornography. At these hearings, Brent Ward, U.S. Attorney, made the following remarks:

We know from our work that these recordings conjure up images in the minds of young people which become powerfully anchored in the memory and which have a powerful, addictive effect. They are like morphine to some children. These listening experiences become vivid memories which the mind continually "replays"—stimulating the child again and again and suggesting the need for even further stimulation by making more calls. . . . They gain such a hold that some parents, teachers, and counselors have found themselves powerless to do anything about it.

Do you see how Peter describes the same thing? The proponents of the Playboy Philosophy have become experts at addicting men, women, and even eight-year-olds to their perverted practices!

This is the real character of one who follows the lascivious philosophy of our modern times. Such a character is laid bare, exposed for all to

see. Such a one has rejected God for self, and the consequences are most tragic!

Before going to the next point, let me briefly notice the results that Peter says will arise in the lives of all who develop this kind of sordid character.

First, they will become foolish (2:12). They may pretend to be wise, but really they are ignorant. They become as Paul described:

For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions (1 Timothy 1:6, 7).

Second, they forsake the "right" way (2:15). Like stubborn Balaam (cf. Numbers 22:1-14), these are bent on self-serving pleasure, and nothing will turn them from their gross objectives. They were once a part of the right way, but now because of their bullheaded position they, like the prophet Beor, follow the wrong course.

Third, they try to encourage others to join with them (2:14, 18). They seek to strengthen their numbers, for that will give them acceptance and lessen their individual responsibility. They look especially for the newer converts or those struggling with sin in their lives. They deliberately lead the innocent and conscientious astray by baiting a snare for the unsuspecting ("entice"). This evidently is a universal practice of this perverted philosophy, for Paul observed the same thing (cf. Romans 1:32).

Fourth, they become slaves of corruption (2:19). They will brag and boast about the "freedom" they enjoy. They will scoff at the notion of "one man for one woman forever." They paint a glowing picture of what "real living" is all about. In reality, they are the sad slaves of their philosophy. Where will they be when disease ravages their physical bodies? What peace will abide when sin's burdens weigh upon them? Nothing in life is free, especially sin, but this realization comes too late.

James II lay on his deathbed and sought to convey lasting words to his son. He remarked, "There is no slavery like sin, and no liberty like God's service." I believe the dethroned monarch was absolutely right. When you consider the chains that indulged lust forges, you realize the slavery that is accepted. The drunkard who can-

"You will be captured" (2:12, 19b). A fitting comparison is found in the animals who act from instinct, not from reason. Those who follow instinct will degenerate to the animal's level and face the animal's plight. Without reasoning the dumb animal steps into the set trap and is captured. The deceptive look of the snare served its purpose as it misguided the beast. In reality, Peter says that is what happens when we pursue the philosophy of self-pleasure. "You will be caught." One realizes too late, that he is caught. Unhappiness and despair compound the problem. One begins to realize that he or she is a slave to the polluted passions of lust and are not at all "free." The slave who digs in the mine or labors at the oar can rejoice in the prospect of laying down his burden at the end of his life, but the slave of sin finds no hope arising from death. He is obliged to look forward with constant terror to this most certain of all fates. At death his miseries commence. Peter says to recognize this fact—sin does enslave.

"You will be destroyed" (2:12). Peter could not use stronger words here. A corrupted lifestyle can lead to only one way—destruction! If people cherish the Playboy Philosophy, they must be prepared for this sure destruction. Those who follow this philosophy have destroyed others, and they shall likewise be destroyed.

"You will suffer now, and you will suffer more" (2:13). Wages will be paid. I like the picture John provides, "Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her" (Revelation 18:6; cf. Romans 6:23; Galatians 6:7). Anyone accepting this philosophy will experience pleasure to some extent now, but in the process even the initial pleasure will be lost. In the end, health is ruined, the family is shattered, emotions are distraught, and the mind is tormented. Immorality is never free—it costs a heavy price!

"You will be accursed by God" (2:14). Even though a person was once among the redeemed and beloved of God, by his choice he is now among those receiving God's curses (cf. Matthew 7:21-23). Those who intentionally deceive others and those who live a cursed lifestyle will be eternally cursed in hell's fires.

"You will spend eternity in the blackest dark" (2:17). Having loved the deeds of darkness, a person who decides to follow this philosophy will spend

eternity in darkness (cf. Matthew 25:30; 8:12; 22:13; Jude 13). How some imagine they can live presently in darkness and eternally in light is beyond my comprehension.

CONCLUSION

Peter's words are brutally frank. It is as though he has been sitting in our living rooms, reading our nightly newspapers! Our society is so much like Peter's. The words he used to stir up his brethren in the first century ought to stir us as well. The Playboy Philosophy plagues us, and we must be prepared to help our children meet it in the appropriate manner.

Society today is taking a liberal view of sex. The world is advocating sensuality in every aspect of life. When you mention perversion, you are laughed at by most. We have advocates of the "new" morality that is really not "new" at all. We are bombarded with advertisements that fill our eyes with adultery and fornication. A reckless and daring self-pleasing attitude seeks to invade and conquer the hearts of God's children.

Peter's message is urgent. Muse over the Playboy Philosophy, and remember the truth about it. When we do this, we will be preserved. τ

Attitudes Held by False Teachers (2 Peter 2:10-19)

False teachers have these attitudes:

1. They despise authority (2:10, 11).
2. They follow instinct instead of reason (2:12).
3. They try to grasp all pleasure immediately (2:13-19).



The Utter Failing of Error (2 Peter 2:17-19)

1. Error gives the appearance, but lacks substance (2:17).
2. Error offers escape, but only brings bondage (2:18).
3. Error promises freedom, but only leads to slavery (2:19).

Sin and error always paint a much brighter picture than it really is. When looked at in an honest manner, its deceit is evident.

went unfilled because commitment was not 100 per cent. With each verse, Peter's words gain momentum, and the pitiful plight is fully reviewed at the end. Three facts become clear in a review of the backslider's life.

Why Will Such a Tragic End Await the Apostate? (2:20)

The apostate believer did not fully appreciate his rescue from the world by Christ. Here was one who had been rescued from the doom of the world by God's love and mercy, but now he has turned his back upon God. Earlier, Peter had confirmed that all believers have "become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust" (1:4b). But the ingrate has now forgotten what God had done for him! The rescue of man from Satan's grasp required much from God, but the apostate evidently never comprehended or appreciated what had been done for him through God's grace and mercy. The ungrateful disposition, along with its accompanying actions, is fully described in Hebrews 10:26-31. Nothing is harder to understand than the ungrateful heart's response to God's love. History is replete with illustrations of the hardened hearts of ingrates.

At the battle of Alma, in September 1854, a wounded Russian was calling piteously for water. A certain Captain Eddington, whose heart was kind and charitable, ran up to him and gave him the desired drink. The captain then ran forward to join his regiment when the wretch, who had just been restored by the captain's kindness, fired and shot the one who had been his friend in time of need. How tragic are the lives of ingrates!

~~Because the apostate has never appreciated the love of God, he began a career in Christianity which set at naught the following blessings. He set at naught the grace and mercy of God. It has appeared to all men, equally inviting each to share in the wedding feast, the true contentment, and the abiding peace that passes all understanding (cf. Titus 2:11). He set at naught the willing sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Christ had voluntarily offered Himself. He had emptied Himself of the divine glories of heaven and became man. He suffered and endured shame, the cross, and multiplied abuses to save mankind (cf. Philippians 2:5-11). He set at naught the eternal purpose of the church. God's beautiful church was designed to house the saved saints and to show the omnis-~~

cience of the Creator in saving man (cf. Ephesians 1:3, 4; 3:10). He set at naught the effectual cleansing of sin by Christ's blood. In 2:20-22, we find the word "defilement" which comes from a Greek verb meaning "to stain, color." Sin had stained man, and no remedy except Christ's blood is accepted by heaven. Christ offered sin-stained man the option of having his sins washed away and his soul restored to a pristine beauty (cf. Isaiah 1:18; Acts 22:16). He set at naught the beauties of heaven's promises. Heaven holds all for the true saint of God. It is a promised place of peace and happiness. It is a place of true rest. In this eternal city, no pollution of sin will exist, and only those who hold fast to Christ will be allowed entrance (cf. Revelation 21:27).

This failure to appreciate God's gift of salvation is clearly seen in the parable of the sower (Luke 8:12-14). The first three types of soil were not productive, and the seed did not survive. The seed could germinate and sprout, but lasting nourishment was lacking. Life existed for only the shortest time. Those today who have hearts symbolized by the wayside, rocky, or thorny soils are like the apostate in the text. They are ungrateful and unappreciative of God's grace and mercy. Such will inevitably lead to apostasy.

As verse 20 is further considered, we learn why ingratitude became so prominent in the apostate's life—he had failed to let go of the world! Evidently, he had failed to sever his love with the lusts of life. Many had been let loose, but a few were still cherished deep within the heart. So tightly held, these soon gained the upper hand in actions. They led to him becoming "entangled." Just as a hapless fish is trapped and faces certain doom, so is the apostate believer. The writer of Hebrews urges those Christians to make sure they do not cherish some deep hidden lust: "... lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1b).

The apostate is one who is ignorant of gratitude because he cherishes hidden lust, but he fails to consider the end of apostasy's path! This point is described in verse 20b. The eventual state is frightening—the heathen, ignorant, uncouth, unclean are better off than the wayward saint of God! Apostasy lures with a promise of lively hopes but only leads to great ruin. No greater ruin can be pictured in the life of the

putrid manners if he is not careful. The dog and sow were changed, just as man is changed in conversion. The fact that each animal went back does not nullify the fact that change had taken place!

Those who have gotten rid of the putrid (sin) should never return to wallow in it again. Those who have been washed from sin's stains should not become spotted by it again (cf. Romans 6:1, 2).

In this review, Peter has shown the life and actions of the backslider. May we cautiously guard against falling from our saved position with God.

A REVELATION

Basically one attitude is responsible for apostasy in the believer's life—arrogance. The putting of one's self as the supreme governor in life is the attitude responsible for one falling from God's salvation (cf. 2:10, 11).

Arrogance prompts one to totally disregard God's will. Those in 2:20-22 had possessed "knowledge" of God's will. They had known about God's salvation and faith and followed it in the past (cf. 1:2, 3, 8; etc.). They had not always been hypocrites. As time progressed, evidently some began to question God's commands and the necessity of adhering to them. Once the questioning began, apostasy was soon to follow. This demonstration of arrogance is common in our times.

I remember talking with a lady who wanted to remarry after a divorce. We spent a number of hours studying God's teachings to see what He had to say about her right to remarry. After our study, she was convinced that she had no scriptural right to remarry. After a few weeks I received a lengthy letter which contained these disturbing sentences, "... our conference about my wanting to remarry was very enlightening, and I could see that every one of your words came directly from the Bible ... As the weeks passed, I pondered the problem until I finally felt that God would not require me to follow His Word exactly. ..." How sad it is to see arrogance control a person's response to God's commands. The same thing that happened in this woman's reasoning takes place in the minds of those who fall away from God—they believe that God does not mean what He says. Arrogance prompts them to twist Scriptures to suit their purposes.

These apostates were adept at wrangling God's Word until believers thought sin was good and bondage was freedom (cf. 3:16). Only an arrogant interpretation of Scripture could command practice of sin like this. Arrogance causes a rejection of "law" for "love." Concerning the woman in the example, how could she justify remarriage that was contrary to everything God commanded? Look at the brethren Peter addressed. How could they believe the flagrant error that the false teachers advocated? The answer to both situations is easy—they believed that "God's laws do not matter, only His love." They, and many like them today, believe that God's love is so great that it will cancel any responsibility on man's part. They forget that the greatest "love passage" in the Bible, John 3:16, speaks with equal force on the necessity of obedience to God's laws (cf. John 3:16-18).

Thus, Peter has revealed the attitude of arrogance that directs those who have fallen away from God. Such an attitude is disastrous and will bring tragic consequences in the lives of all who follow it.

TWO REMINDERS

As Peter concludes the harshest chapter in the Bible on false doctrine and error, he stresses two pointed reminders.

Apostasy is a real and awful possibility! You cannot read this section without knowing that apostasy can actually happen in any believer's life—even yours! Some wish to deny this simple fact. It is not uncommon to hear objections to Peter's teaching on apostasy. In order to argue that this text does not speak about a saved believer falling from grace and being lost, the following points must be answered. (1) These were said to have "known"—a word used to describe personal acquaintance and relationship. These did more than have the Scriptures in their minds. They were personally acquainted with the way of righteousness (cf. 1:2; 2:20; 3:18). These were Christians! (2) These had "escaped" from sin. If one escapes from sin where does he go? Only to Christ (cf. 1:4; 2:20). You cannot help but be a Christian if you have escaped from sin and the world through Christ. (3) These had turned "again." How could they "turn again" if they had never left? They had left sin and the world, and now they "turned again" from salvation to corruption!

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Thoughts From Second Peter

Near the end of the New Testament are two books authored by Peter, the apostle of Christ. Each of these is designed to caution the saints of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Pet. 1:1; cf. 2 Pet. 3:1) of the hardships that would befall them and the fidelity they must exercise under these difficulties. The term “Dispersion” generally refers to the scattering of the Jews beyond their land, especially in the time of Alexander the Great. The first epistle focuses mainly upon attacks that would arise from outside the church, while 2 Peter concentrates on false teachers that would assault the church from within.

It is tragic that there has been such a widespread denial of Peter’s authorship of the second letter. Carl Holladay, a professor at Emory University (a Methodist school), characterizes 2 Peter as “transparent fiction” (2005, 516). Holladay presented his material on “Introducing the New Testament Theologically” at the Harding Graduate School of Religion W. B. West Lectures (Memphis) in 2002, and he regularly teaches Bible classes at the Northlake Church of Christ in Atlanta.

Second Peter begins with the declaration that it is the work of “Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1). It contains the writer’s affirmation that Christ specifically foretold the apostle’s death (1:13-14; cf. Jn. 21:18ff). The author asserts that “we were eyewitnesses of [Jesus] majesty” in the “holy mount” (1:16-18) — a reference to the events of the Transfiguration. The “we” would include Peter, along with James and John—the latter two clearly being excluded as the authors of this book (cf. Mt. 17:1ff).

If one contends that 2 Peter was written in the late first or early second century A.D., as Holladay alleges, then the undeniable conclusion must be that the **real** author **lied** in his initial affirmation, together with the supporting historical allusions, when he attributed the composition to Peter, the apostle. If the book commences with deception, how would one know that **anything** in the document is trustworthy?

There were early pseudo-writings attributed to Peter, e.g., the *Gospel of Peter*, or the *Apocalypse of Peter*, but the character of the spurious documents was vastly inferior to that of 2 Peter (Hillyer 1992, 11).

There have been many able defenses of the genuineness of this work. Gundry confidently contends: “Despite modern doubt, then, we may accept the final verdict of the early Church that shortly after the Apostle Peter wrote his first epistle and shortly before his martyrdom in A.D. 64, he wrote this second epistle which bears his name” (1970, 354). Thiessen firmly stated: “the Christian earnestness, apostolic tone, and autobiographical allusions make it impossible to believe that the Epistle is spurious” (1955, 289). It should be accepted as genuine. For a brief but powerful defense of Peter’s authorship, see McNab (1954, 1143–1144). It is a rather amazing phenomenon that liberal scholars who deny the genuineness of second Peter nonetheless include it in their commentaries. Why do so if the work is a mere forged document by a criminal scribe? Has any modern English translation omitted the book?

There are two major errors addressed by the apostle in this second letter; they pertain

to enemies **without**, and those **within**.

Denying the Master

The following text sets the tone for the warnings that follow.

But there arose false prophets also among the people, among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall secretly bring in destructive heresies, denying even the master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction (2 Pet. 2:1).

Several important points are apparent.

(1) False teachers will import “heresies” into the church. As to the nature of their doctrine, it is false—further characterized as “heresies” (plural). “Heresy” takes its rise from the Greek, *hairesis* (9 times in the New Testament). Originally, the term meant simply “to choose” (Lev. 22:18, 21 – LXX). Then it came to signify a choice, i.e., an opinion — especially a destructive opinion, as in this passage. The term also takes on the sense of a “sect” that adopts an opinion contrary to divine revelation. Both the Pharisees and the Sadducees were “sects” that distorted the Law of Moses (Acts 5:17; 15:5). The early Christians were charged falsely with being a “sect” (Acts 24:14; 28:22) as they were perceived to be but an off-shoot of Judaism. The expression also is used for a factious element (that follows an opinion or dominant leader) within the church (1 Cor. 11:19; Gal. 5:20).

(2) The erroneous teachings would be brought into the church from outside sources. The mode of operation would be covert, “secretly.” False teachers not only disdain gospel

truth, they are duplicitous in their mode of operation; thus, wholly void of honor.

The heresies would be “destructive” (Grk. *apoleia*), indicating “the loss of well-being, not of being” (Vine 1991, 212). It is a ruin that conveys the idea of misery (Thayer 1958, 70-71). There is no extinction of existence implied in the term, as some suppose in their efforts to nullify the doctrine of eternal punishment for the wicked (Smith 2003, 165ff). The doom of these heretics will arrive at the appropriate time with decisive swiftness. The visitation of destruction will be upon both the teachers and those who yield to their fallacious dogma. Listening with discernment is as important as the teaching itself (cf. Lk. 8:18).

The core of the heretical doctrine appears to be a repudiation of Christ as Savior, for the apostle declares that they are “denying even the Master who bought them.” It will not do to depict these as mere “professing Christians” (Robertson 1933, 160), in an effort to avoid the conclusion that these were apostates from the faith who were destined for hell. The text is far too clear to miss the point that they had been “bought” by Christ’s blood at the time of their conversion (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:19-20), but they had abandoned the relationship (cf. Heb. 10:29).

Mocking the Promise of Return

A second major heresy had to do with a sneer at the divine promise that Christ would return to render judgment (Jn. 5:28-29; cf. 2 Cor. 5:10).

[I]n the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of his coming? For, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (3:3-4).

This brief statement contains several facts that warrant examination.

(1) Certain false teachers are characterized as “mockers” (*empaiktes*), i.e., those who add ridicule to the other base traits that blighted their ungodly souls. The term depicts those “who are hostile to revelation and to godliness” (Kittel 1985, 759). The pattern of such conduct is well defined in the Gospel records as used with reference to the hateful treatment of Jesus (cf. Mt. 27:29, 31; Mk. 15:31; Lk. 18:32). Mockers are not an extinct species!

(2) Their wanton lives are a telling index of their true character. They pursue their own “lusts,” and doubtless this indulgence is reflected in their ridicule of that coming day when the Lord Jesus will judge the lives of all (cf. 1 Pet. 4:3; 2 Pet. 2:10).

(3) Arrogantly, they challenge the promise of the Lord’s Second Coming. They appeal to the seeming uniformity of history as support for their proposition. They contend that since the “fathers [i.e., notable ancestors] fell asleep,” the regularity of nature has remained relatively constant “from the beginning of the creation.” [Note: The “sleep” of the fathers is a reference to the disposition of their **bodies** in death (Dan. 12:2); not to a state of post-mortem **non-consciousness**, as alleged by some (cf. Smith 2003, 102ff).

It is important to observe that even these crass advocates of error believed: (a) that there was a “creation,” hence the earth has not existed eternally; and, (b) that humankind had observed the orderliness of the creation since its “beginning.” They did not subscribe to the modern anti-biblical notion that the creation occurred eons before the arrival of man, who by some folks is alleged to be but a “very recent newcomer to the planet” (Clayton 1968, 2). In this matter the first-century heretics were closer to the truth than some members of the modern church!

(4) The apostle counters with a devastating argument, which the lust-laden critics had “willfully” dis-remembered. The same earth that initially had been “compact” (made to stand) out of water, and in the presence of water, by the “word of God” (cf. Gen. 1:1-2, 9), completely overflowed with water and “perished” (Gen. 6-8). It was a **world-wide** flood.

The term “perished” (*apoleto*) “does not carry with it the sense of utter destruction or annihilation, but rather that of a change, or breaking up, of an existing order” (Plumptre 1893, 192).

Peter’s contrast between the “world that then was” and the implied “world that now is” is significant. The geologic and fossil evidence around the globe is dramatic testimony to the Genesis Flood. Such, however, surely was unknown empirically to any appreciable degree to first-century citizens. The information came to the apostle by **revelation**, not **investigation**!

Peter’s point is this: the terrible interruption of the earth’s ancient features, as revealed

in the testimony of Scripture, should be a sobering reminder of the promised judgment yet to come. The material universe has been “reserved” for a coming “day of judgment” and the horrible punishment of the ungodly. There is no room for a “heaven-on-earth” theory in this context, though this concept appears to be gaining some momentum in the church (see Jackson 2007).

An Appeal For Repentance

The apostle urges his readers not to be swayed by the baseless argument that Christ has **delayed** coming, therefore he is **not** coming. One must remember that God is eternal and his “clock” is not set according to human standards. What spans hundreds of years in earth’s chronology is but a moment to the Eternal One.

I am compelled to comment on the frequent wresting of this text from its context for the purpose of alleging that the chronological references in Scripture are wholly elastic. This has been the ploy of those who have inhaled the fumes of evolutionary propaganda by attempting to stretch the “days” of the creation week into billions of years in order to facilitate the evolutionary timetable. Such is an unconscionable perversion of biblical truth.

Peter then penned this statement.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all come to repentance (3:9).

Four great truths regarding God here are set forth. Careful consideration should be given to each of them.

(1) **God is faithful.** The God of the Bible is a “God of truth” (Psa. 31:5; Isa. 65:16). He does not lie (Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18). His word is one of integrity. When he makes a promise, he fulfills it (Dt. 7:8; cf. Psa. 36:5b; Isa. 25:1). When Abraham was promised that through his “seed” all nations of the earth would be blessed, he believed the Lord (Rom. 4:3). He operated upon the premises that God is faithful; he can be trusted, and he is “able also to perform” what he has promised (v. 21).

It must be borne in mind, however, that some of Jehovah’s promises are **absolute**, while others are **conditional**. When a promise is conditional, its fulfillment is dependent upon the **obedience** of those to whom it has

been addressed (cf. Acts 2:38-39). The promise of Christ's return is absolute. He will "come again" (Jn. 14:3), and he will do so according to his own time schedule — of which no man has been apprised (Mt. 24:36).

(2) God is patient. The apostle affirms that the Lord is "longsuffering." The Greek verb is *makrothymeo*, from *makros* ("long" in terms of time), and *thymos* (anger, fury). God's wrath at sin is tempered by his love for pitiful, stupid human beings who, against their own best interests, frequently ignore him and reject his plan for their present lives and eternal welfare.

The pre-Flood world was "corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence" (Gen. 6:11), but the "longsuffering of God waited [more than a century] in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared" (1 Pet. 3:20).

Fifteen centuries before the birth of Christ, God, through Moses, promised the nation of Israel blessings in abundance if the people would obey his voice (Dt. 28:1-14). But if they refused to obey, great punishment would be visited upon the nation in the course of time (28:15ff). Centuries passed, with the people becoming increasingly apostate. A temporal judgment came with the overthrow of northern Israel by the Assyrians (722-21 B.C.); then Judah was taken into Babylonian captivity for seventy years (606-536 B.C.). Eventually, after the Jews crucified their own Messiah, the full wrath of God came in the complete destruction of the nation by the Romans in A.D. 70 (cf. Mt. 22:7; 23:32-36; 24:1-34). Fifteen hundred years of longsuffering was exhausted! God is patient, but his Spirit will not strive with man indefinitely (Gen. 6:3).

(3) God is merciful. Peter declares that God does not "will that anyone perish." Does this mean that no one will? It does not (see v. 7b). Universalism (the notion that everyone will be saved) finds no support in the Bible (Mt. 7:13-14). The text does signify that it was never the **divine ideal** that anyone be lost. Before the foundation of the world the omniscient God knew that humanity would stray from his will, and a plan of salvation was in motion already (Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:20).

As noted above, the Lord does not "will" (KJV) or "wish" (ASV, ESV) anyone to be lost. The Greek term is *boulomenos* (a present, middle participle), which reflects the **ideal** desire of God, but the word leaves open the

door of human choice (Hiebert 1989, 156). The crucifixion of Jesus was according to the will or counsel (*boule*) of God, but the Jews nonetheless were held accountable for their own sinful actions in that event (cf. Acts 2:23; 4:28; see Muller 1971, 1017). The notion that some were "elected" or "predestined" to be lost before the foundation of the world, irrespective of their personal choices, is a false doctrine that is horrible in its implications.

In a time of great danger, when pursued by enemies, David praised "the God of my mercy" for his deliverance (Psa. 59:17). The Lord is described as being "rich in mercy" (Eph. 2:4), and that mercy has been manifest in the offering of Christ as the atonement for sin (Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:3; Jude 21). Divine mercy is an extension of love (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:8). God's mercy is not unconditional, however; it is available only to those who reverence him and submit to his word (Lk. 1:50; cf. Eccl. 12:13).

(4) God is demanding. There appears to be a common view in the world that "God" (whoever he is perceived to be) is a benevolent "fellow" who allows every one to enter heaven eventually. Even the vilest Hollywood sleazes and the most corrupt politicians are said to be "in a better place" after death. All who bravely fight and die in defense of their respective countries are almost guaranteed a home in whatever "heaven" they espouse—be it Islam's "happy bedroom," or "Christendom's" hall of "national valor." True obedience and genuine fidelity appear to be unknown requirements in certain circles. But the apostle declares it is God's will that "all come to repentance."

The expression "come to" derives from *choreo*, "to leave a space (which may be occupied or filled by another), to make room, give place, yield" (Thayer 1958, 674). It implies the exercise of one's personal initiative. It is an attitude of surrender. One must make room in his life for submission to God.

"Repentance" is a change of mind that results in a transformation of state or action. It is a "radical, moral turn of the whole person to God" (Mounce 2006, 580). Here the word is used as a synecdoche (the part stated for the whole; see Jackson 2005, 101-05). By that we mean that "repentance" stands for the full complement of conditions leading to the forgiveness of past sins on the part of the sinner. Other items of the plan of salvation are similarly used as summary terms, e.g., faith (Acts 16:31), confession (1 Tim. 6:12), and

immersion in water (Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). "Repentance" is employed in several other contexts as a summary term for full gospel obedience (Acts 11:18; 17:30; Rom. 2:4). One may not isolate one item of the plan of redemption from the full complement of requirements.

What marvelous two verses are these that contain an abbreviated sketch of the character of our Creator. What an awesome responsibility it is to live before him in humble obedience! WJ

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Do This and You Will Never Stumble

WHEREVER we look today, it seems that we are bombarded by messages trying to persuade us that we need whiter teeth or bigger cars, that we deserve finer clothes or fancier gadgets. Advertisers know that they will sell their products only if they cause consumers to perceive needs in their lives.

In the same way, false teachers influence Christians by first convincing them that they lack some spiritual blessing. When Peter wrote his second letter, many teachers were claiming to have new revelations.

BECOME PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE (1:3-7)

Peter assured his readers that they had received everything they needed "through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence" (1:3). Through the message of Peter and others like him, the Christians of Asia Minor had become heirs to the full blessings of Christ.

Through hearing their original teachers and obeying their message, the Christians whom Peter addressed had been born again to a spiritual life of oneness with God. The Word they had received had given them the resources they needed to resist sin and to live as redeemed and holy people. Had other teachers offered them additional access to God or shown them some new standard of morality? Peter assured his readers that the message they had received from him was God's full revelation. They had been deficient in nothing.

Peter's readers had both received promises and been heirs to promises—in the words of Paul, "... of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He

raised up Jesus, . . ." (Acts 13:32, 33). Before the arrival of the latest teachers, Peter's audience had experienced the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ. They had received the precious promise that on the great day of the Lord they would be saved. No promises made by false teachers could match the greatness of those which Peter's readers already enjoyed.

Christians are spiritually united with God. Paul said, "We have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). God's grace allows participation in the divine nature; the Christian becomes pure and holy because Christ has forgiven his sins. In this way he escapes the corruption that is in the world by lust. Could those who had lately come on the scene offer Christians anything comparable to their participation in the divine? Whenever a Christian hears a teacher who claims to have a new gospel message, a new revelation about the second coming of the Lord, or some interpretation of Scripture that men have never heard before, he must use discretion. He might pause and ask, "Has the gospel message I've heard from the beginning proven to be deficient? Doesn't it promise enough?" Peter made it clear in the next verses that when Christians supply themselves richly with a godly character, they become heirs to all of God's promises. The path to a godly character is described in 1:5-7, the best known and most cited passage of the letter.

Faith is the beginning point of the Christian journey, but in the words of James, "... faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). Therefore, Peter said, "In your faith supply moral excellence [goodness,

NIV]” (1:5). Christians are to add to their faith the qualities that make for moral uprightness and personal integrity. To moral excellence we are to add “knowledge” (1:5). Knowledge, in this context, is “God’s wisdom,” which Paul mentioned in 1 Corinthians 2:7. It is the knowledge of God’s truth and the use of knowledge to God’s glory. To knowledge we are to add “self-control” (1:6), a better word than “temperance” (KJV). Paul included self-control in his listing of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). One of the proverbs of Solomon reads, “Like a city that is broken into and without walls is a man who has no control over his spirit” (Proverbs 25:28).

To self-control we are to add “perseverance” (1:6). The KJV has “patience,” a word which often conveys the idea of passive acceptance. The sense of the Greek word is steadfast endurance in the face of obstacles. To perseverance we are to add “godliness” (1:6). Godliness is the way we act when our lives are in harmony with God, when all that we do is to please and honor Him.

To godliness we are to add “brotherly kindness” (1:7). The same Greek word is used in 1 Peter 1:22, while a similar one is used in 1 Peter 3:8. In the secular world it often meant love for a brother in the flesh. In the New Testament it means love between brothers in Christ.

To brotherly kindness, Peter said, we must add love” (1:7). Like Paul (1 Corinthians 13:13), he saved the prince of virtues until last. This word is one of such lofty dimensions that it cannot be summed up in a sentence.

CONFIRM YOUR CALL AND CHOOSING (1:8-15)

Peter had not wandered from his purpose, to help his readers grow in knowledge so they could deal effectively with false teachers. He said, “For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:8). When a Christian supplies his life generously with the virtues listed in 1:5-7, and when he practices them, the knowledge of Christ is the natural by-product. Peter was talking about practical, not theoretical, knowledge. The two are not the same. One might read about gymnastics, for example, but he only *knows* gymnastics after he has invested much of his life in the practice of gymnastics.

The spiritual realm is the same. One may read about perseverance, but he *knows* perseverance and his capacity for it only when he has persevered. Similarly, he knows self-control when he has exercised self-control. To know perseverance, self-con-

trol, and the other Christian graces is to know Christ. Doing begets knowing. If these abound in us, the apostle assured, we will be effective and productive in the knowledge of our Lord. One who professes Christ and fails to know these practical manifestations of Christian teaching is blind and has forgotten (i.e., he does not know) that he has been cleansed from his past sins (1:9).

God has called, elected, and chosen a people to wear His name and to be His own. It is a concept that stretches deep into the doctrinal core of the Old Testament. After Moses gave the law to God’s chosen people, a person was numbered among the chosen by virtue of birth. Since Christ established the new covenant, we are numbered among the elect by means of faith. Peter’s concern was that his readers’ lack of knowledge would result in their falling from among the elect (1:10). The doctrine that says, “Once you are saved you can never be lost” is not found in the Scriptures. When we make our calling sure, Peter said, we will live faithfully, and we will have a rich welcome into God’s eternal kingdom (1:10, 11). Peter made it clear that he was teaching nothing new. His only purpose was to remind them of what they already knew to be true (1:12). We need to be reminded of what we already know more than we need to learn some new teaching. Unstable and immature people are always searching for something more, something new. The Bible will firmly establish us in the truth. Every teaching ought to be carefully compared with its revelation.

Unlike 1 Peter, 2 Peter contains allusions to incidents in Peter’s life which could be identified from the Gospels. In 2 Peter 1:14 he referred to the words Jesus had spoken to him:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.” Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God (John 21:18, 19).

Peter understood that the time for the fulfillment of the Lord’s prophecy was at hand (1:14).

It was not to a past event that Peter referred in 1:15 but to his plans for the future. He said, “And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you may be able to call these things to mind.” He wanted his readers to remember after his death the “things” which Christ had made known to him. It is likely that 1:15 refers to his intention to leave a record of the life of Christ for his

readers. We have no Gospel of Peter, but the testimony of the ancient church is that Peter's authority stands behind the Gospel of Mark. It is possible that in Mark's Gospel we have the result of the effort Peter promised.

BE CONFIDENT IN YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE POWER AND THE COMING OF THE LORD (1:16-21)

Verse 16 says, "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty." Peter made clear the difference between the authority behind his own teaching and the false teachers' lack of authority. Their teaching was the product of "cleverly devised tales." In 1:1-21, Peter gave them two important reasons for choosing the message of the apostles instead of those stories.

First, Peter was an eyewitness. In both 1 Peter 5:1 and 2 Peter 1:16, the apostle appealed to his witness of Christ as a basis for his authority. In 1 Peter he did not refer to a specific incident, but in 2 Peter he did (1:17, 18). The incident which he chose was, no doubt, one that he had rehearsed personally to these Christians. Peter, James, and John had been with the Lord on the mountain of His transfiguration when Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Him. Something even more dramatic had happened. The Majestic Glory had spoken from on high and borne witness to Jesus: "This is My Son with whom I am well-pleased." Matthew 17:1-5, Mark 9:2-7, and Luke 9:28-35 record the incident. In all three passages there was the additional statement from God, "Listen to Him."

Second, Peter's message had the testimony of the prophets. The false teachers had neither eyewitness accounts nor the support of the prophets of God. Peter advised his readers to pay attention to what the prophets had said. The translation of the KJV in 1:20 is somewhat confusing. It says, "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." Peter was not telling us that we should not privately interpret the Scriptures. How can we know what God's Word means for ourselves or for anyone else unless we interpret it? He was saying that prophecy is not a matter of an individual's acting on his own, private initiative. It was God Himself who had inspired the prophets. That is why their message carries the weight and the authority it does. The translation of the NIV in 1:20 expresses the idea more clearly: "... no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation." The NASB says, "No prophecy of Scrip-

ture is a matter of one's own interpretation."

CONCLUSION

In chapter 1, Peter emphasized knowledge. It was no longer the suffering of his readers that concerned the apostle. His concern was with false teachers who had entered the congregations and threatened to take from Christians the life that they had only recently gained. Peter reminded them of the great and precious promises they had inherited. He called on them to grow in knowledge by putting on the Christian graces which would make them fruitful in the knowledge of Christ.

It was important for these Christians to understand that Peter's authority came by virtue of his apostleship. An implicit contrast existed between his witness and the fact that the false teachers had only lately come on the scene. Further, Peter appealed to the prophets for support for his message.

We can learn from Peter's words to: False teachers were not peculiar to the first century. Every generation must search the Scriptures and examine every doctrine. The church today needs the frequent reminder that in His Word the Lord has given us "everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence" (1:3).

AN OUTLINE OF 2 PETER

SALUTATION: Peter to those of like precious faith (1:1, 2)

I. DO THIS AND YOU WILL NEVER STUMBLE (1:3-21).

- A. Become partakers of the divine nature (1:3-7).
- B. Confirm your call and choosing (1:8-15).
- C. Be confident in your knowledge of the power and the coming of the Lord (1:16-21).

II. BEWARE OF FALSE TEACHERS (2:1-22).

- A. False teachers malign the way of the truth (2:1-9).
- B. False teachers are daring and self-willed (2:10-16).
- C. False teachers are slaves of corruption (2:17-22).

III. REMEMBER THE PROMISE OF THE LORD'S COMING (3:1-18).

- A. Mockers deliberately forget (3:1-7).
 - B. The Lord is being patient (3: 8-10).
 - C. What kind of people ought you to be? (3:11-18).
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"AN EXPOSITION OF 2 PETER 3"

2 Peter 3: 1-18

Gary L. Robertson

THESIS: The second coming of Christ will be God's reply to those who ridicule knowing about His Son.

PURPOSE: To explain the meaning of 2 Peter 3 and present some practical applications to Christians today.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Background material of 2 Peter 3

a. 2) Authenticity

(1) Internal evidence verifying Simon Peter as the author

1-V. 1 - "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle..."

2-VY. 13-14 - describes nature of his death (cf. Jn. 13:36, 21:19)

3-V. 18 - association with Christ at transfiguration (cf. Mt. 17:1-7)

(2) Doesn't bear characteristics of a forgery

1-Isn't romantic in nature or doesn't express anything new about Peter

2-Autobiographical allusions

4) Date - @ 66-67 A.D.

4) Key Word - "Knowledge" (referred to 14 times)

4) Key Verse - 2 Peter 3:18

4) Outline of 2 Peter

- (1) Receiving the Word of God, 1:1-21
- (2) Rejecting the Word of God, 2:1-22
- (3) Ridiculing the Word of God, 3:1-13
- (4) Return of the Word of God, 3:14-18

2. Basis for Misunderstanding of 2 Peter 3

a. 1) Concerns the "return of Christ"

(1) In reference to the destruction of Jerusalem?

(2) In reference to the "rapture"?

(3) In reference to the beginning of the "millennial kingdom"?

b. 2) Concerns the destruction of the World

(1) Will there be a new heavens and new earth, i.e., one other than the one presently existing?

(2) Are the "new heavens and new earth" representative of the present earth, remodeled for the "millennial kingdom"?

(3) Does the phrase "new heavens and new earth" represent heaven as spoken of in Revelation 21: 1-22:5?

DISCUSSION:

I. Ridiculing the Word of God, 2 Peter 3:1-13

A. Mockers and the end of the world (vv. 1-7) - In this section, Peter discusses:

1) The purpose of the epistle (1-2)

a. (1) To stir up their sincere minds

b. (2) To encourage the readers to remember:

(1) The words spoken through the holy prophets

(2) The commandment spoken by the Lord and Savior through the apostles

2/ The character of the epistle (3-6)

a (✓) Their nature

(1) Mockers (ἐμπροσθεν) - those who ridicule, make fun of; tricksters, cf. Jd. 18

(2) Walk after own lusts - lit., "live for lusting"

b (✓) Their time of appearance

(1) "in the last days" - i.e., from the beginning of the reign of the Messiah to the end of the world (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; Acts 2:16-17; Heb. 1:1-2)

(2) NOTE: Such appear in all generations (cf. Gen. 19:12-14; Acts 17:31-32)

c (✓) Their mockery

(1) "If the world continues as it always has, and Jesus has not yet returned as He promised, then He was not the Son of God, and it isn't essential to know about Him.

(2) The world continues as it always has, and Jesus has not yet returned as He promised.

(3) Therefore, He was not the Son of God, and it isn't essential to know about Him."

d (✓) Their forgetfulness

(1) Forget - to escape the notice of; to purposely allow to pass

(2) God's swift and sudden destruction by the flood was a precedent set by the Creator that the mockers couldn't consistently deny; thus, they chose to forget it.

3/ The punishment of the epistle (7)

a (✓) By the same word (i.e., the authority of God, cf. v. 5), heavens and earth have been stored up

(1) stored up (ἐκκρυβέντες) - stored with a view of helping a special case in need (cf. 1 Cor. 16:2) (Vine's)

(2) Earth and heavens are set aside for destruction

b (✓) By same word, heavens and earth have been reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men

(1) reserved (ὑποκείμενα) - to guard, preserve with a retributive issue (Vine's)

(2) Heavens and earth are preserved for the day of judgment

B. The Day of the Lord (vv. 8-13) - In this section, Peter describes the second coming as a time which:

1/ Displays God's long-suffering nature (8-9)

a (✓) The Lord is not bound by a time schedule

(1) God views events from the aspect of eternity - not how much time passes from T₁ to T₂

(2) Not important to God that Christ has not returned during the time prescribed by the mockers

b (✓) The Lord is long-suffering

(1) He is not slack, i.e., his reason for not returning is not because He can't.

(2) He is long-tempered, i.e., "God has a self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate or blaze up in anger." (Trench)

(3) NOTE: Because God desires man to use his free will to choose Him, He allows them many opportunities and much time to repent (1 Pet. 3:20; 1 Tim. 2:3-4)

c / Demands preparation by man (10-11)

(1) ~~10~~ The "day of the Lord" - when will it occur?

(a) ~~10~~ In the Old Testament, it depicts a time of judgment

(b) ~~10~~ In the New Testament, it generally refers to the day of judgment (cf. 1 Cor. 1:8, 5:5; Phil. 1:6, 10, 2:16; and 1 Thes. 5:2)

(2) ~~10~~ The "day of the Lord" - What will happen?

(a) ~~10~~ It will come suddenly, i.e., as a thief (cf. 1 Thes. 5:2-4; Mt. 24:43-44)

(b) ~~10~~ It will bring destruction - heaven shall pass away with a great noise, and the earth shall be dissolved

d / Depicts a day of happiness and sorrow (12-13)

(1) A day of happiness for those who desire the Lord's return

(2) A day of happiness for those who look for a new heavens and new earth (most of the following material is taken from Guy N. Woods, Gospel Advocate Commentary on the Epistles of Peter, John and Jude)

(a) ~~10~~ "Heaven" is used in reference to : (1) where the birds fly; (2) where the stars are; and (3) where the throne is and where our Lord reigns (ps. 11:4)

(b) ~~10~~ The present earth is not the new earth because of:

(1) John 18:36-37; and (2) John 14:1-6- the place prepared for Jesus' disciples was not this earth

(c) ~~10~~ The new heavens and new earth where the righteous will live (cf. Rev. 21,22) is typified by the present heavens and earth where we now live

(3) A day of sorrow for those who:

(a) ~~10~~ Have mocked Christ's return and the ensuing destruction of the world

(b) ~~10~~ Love this world (cf. 1 Jn. 2:15-17)

II. The Return of the Word of God, 2 Peter 3:14-18

A. Look Diligently (v. 14)

1/ That we may be found in peace

2/ That we may be "without spot and blameless"

a / (1) A perfectly cleansed body (cf. 1 Pet. 1:19; 1 Jn. 1:7)

b / (2) Essential to enter the eternal kingdom (2 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 21:27)

B. Look Thankfully (vv. 15-16)

1/ Because the longer Christ delays His coming, the more time we have to work and/or repent

2/ Because we have the inspired messages of Peter and Paul concerning these matters of eternity

NOTE; A Special Warning

a / (1) Don't misunderstand the information you have concerning the return of the Lord

b / (2) Don't wrest the Scriptures that are concerned with the Lord's return

(1) ~~10~~ wrest (отречение) - to distort or twist, e.g., a victim on the torture rack was "wrested"

(2) ~~10~~ This passage would implicitly refer to any passage of inspired Scripture

e/. Look Carefully (vv. 17-18)

- 1) So that you're not carried away:
 - (1) With the wicked
 - (2) From your own steadfastness and hence, the grace of God
- 2) So that you do not fail to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord

3, NOTE: To grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord will be the answer to all the questions raised by those who reject and ridicule a knowledge of the Son of God

CONCLUSION/SOME PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS ON 2 PETER AND 2 PETER 3:

1. For 2 Peter

- a/* 1) Through His word, God gives man all the information he needs pertaining to life and godliness
- b/* 2) Man can know how to enter the eternal kingdom
- c/* 3) Man's plan for salvation comes from God - not from man's private interpretation
- d/* 4) Men will reject that very message which can save them

2. For 2 Peter 3

- a/* 1) Men will ridicule the concept of Christ's second coming
- b/* 2) Men must be prepared for the return of Christ
- c/* 3) Those who have prepared for and anxiously anticipate Christ's return will be rewarded
- d/* 4) To grow in God's grace and the knowledge of His Son is the key to entrance into the eternal kingdom

- Gary L. ROBERSON

2 PETER 3

- A. The Purpose of the Epistles (v. 1,2). *Greek word epistole occurs 24 times and N.T. translated epistle 15 times + letter 9 times.*
1. "...stir up your pure minds"—To arouse thoroughly.
 2. Recognize—Be mindful.
- B. Scoffers come in last days (vv. 3-4).
1. Last days refer to the Christian dispensation, Acts 2:16,17; Heb. 1:1,2. *1 Tim. 4:1,11 - 2 Tim. 3:1 -*
 2. Scoffers would be those that would mock and jeer at the idea of Christ's coming (cf. Gen. 19:14). *"mockers...with their mocking" (NASB)*
 3. The erroneous views of some of the first century Christians may have given grounds for their charges since some of them believed in the immediate return (Cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-17).
- C. The apostle's reply to the scoffers' charge that Christ would not return (vv. 5-9).
1. They alleged that the unvarying conformity of nature proved this.
 - a. They had deliberately and willfully ignored the lessons of the flood which demonstrated conclusively that all things have not continued as they were from the beginning (vv. 5-6).
 - b. The same word that brought the flood holds the earth in place today (v. 7).
 2. The lapse of time between the promise and the fulfillment is not to be interpreted as meaning God will not fulfill his commitments (v. 8).
 - a. The passing of time does not affect God's fulfillment as it does now.
 - b. The longer the interval between the promise and the fulfillment on man's part the less likely he will fulfill. Reasons:
 - (1) Man may die.
 - (2) He may forget his promise.
 - (3) He may violate his word and simply refuse to do what he promised.
 - (4) Conditions may arise making it impossible for him to perform it.
 - c. Since none of these are true of God it's idle for man to infer that the delay means God has forgotten.
 - d. An admonition to recognize that the delay is God's longsuffering because he wants all to be saved (v. 9).
- D. Heavens - 2 Peter 3:10
1. By the words of God "the heavens" were of old, 2 Pet. 3:5.
 2. The heavens and earth which are now kept in store by the same word, 2 Pet. 3:7.
 3. The heavens shall pass away with a great noise.
 4. God will destroy the same heavens he made with his word and holds in place with his word, 2 Pet. 3:10.
 5. Since God is eternal then his dwelling place is eternal and is therefore not included in the heavens that will pass away.
 6. Greek word used is ouranoi, Mt. 3:16; 24:29; Mk. 1:10; Lk. 12:33; Acts 2:34; 7:56.
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- a. The New World Translation (NWT) has corrupted the text to read, "Yet Jehovah's day will come as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a hissing noise, but the elements being intensely hot will be dissolved, and the earth and the works in it will be **discovered**" (Emphasis mine--JLW).
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 - (1) Why would they translate correctly in these four instances and then incorrectly in the only other occurrence of the phrase?--Because 2 Peter 3:10 stands diametrically opposed to Jehovah's Witness' doctrine.
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 - (3) The A.D. 70 errorists are in league with the doctrine of Jehovah's Witnesses.
 - (4) Paul warned in 1 Corinthians 15:33, "BE NOT DECEIVED. EVIL COMPANIONSHIPS CORRUPT GOOD MORALS."

(All the points under number 7 were written by Jesse Whitlock.)

E. Peter pictures dramatically the obligations falling on Christians because of what God will do in that day

1. First, the general exhortation (v. 11)
2. Second, and again, as in 1:5 with the imperative: "be diligent that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (v. 14)
3. Third, the warning (v. 17).

II PETER 3
James Meadows

- I. The purpose of the epistles (v. 1,2).
 - A. "...stir up your pure minds" -- To arouse thoroughly.
 - B. Recognize -- Be mindful.
- II. Scoffers come in last days (v. 3-4).
 - A. Last days refer to the Christian dispensation, Acts 2:16-17; Hebrews 1:1,2; I Timothy 4:1; II Timothy 3:1.
 - B. Scoffers would be those that would mock and jeer at the idea of Christ's coming. (cf. Genesis 19:14). "Mockers...with their mocking." (NASB).
 - C. The erroneous views of some of the first century Christians may have given grounds for their charges since some of them believed in the immediate return. (cf. I Thessalonians 4:13-17).
- III. The apostle's reply to the scoffers' charge that Christ would not return. (v. 5-9).
 - A. They alleged that the unvarying conformity of nature proved this.
 - 1. They had deliberately and willfully ignored the lessons of the flood which demonstrated conclusively that all things have not continued as they were from the beginning (v. 5-6).
 - 2. The same word that brought the flood holds the earth in place today. (v. 7).
 - B. The lapse of time between the promise and the fulfillment is not to be interpreted as meaning God will not fulfill His commitments. (v. 8).
 - 1. The passing of time does not affect God's fulfillment as it does now.
 - 2. The longer the interval between the promise and the fulfillment on man's part, the less likely he will fulfill.
Reasons:
 - a. Man may die.
 - b. He may forget his promise.
 - c. He may violate his word and simply refuse to do what he promised.
 - d. Conditions may arise making it impossible for him to perform it.

3. Since none of these are true of God, it is idle for man to infer that the delay means God has forgotten.
4. An admonition to recognize that the delay is God's longsuffering because he wants all to be saved. (v. 9).

IV. Heavens. II Peter 3:10.

- A. By the words of God "the heavens" were of old. II Peter 3:5.
- B. The heavens and earth which are now kept in store by the same word. II Peter 3:7.
- C. The heavens shall pass away with a great noise.
- D. God will destroy the same heavens He made with His word and holds in place with His word. II Peter 3:10.
- E. Since God is eternal, then His dwelling place is eternal and is therefore, not included in the heavens that will pass away.
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Helps

1. Annual Lesson Commentary, 1956, page 318.
2. Albert Barnes, Notes On the New Testament, "James-Jude."
3. J. W. McGarvey, The Eldership.
4. G. C. Brewer, The Model Church, Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 22.
5. Merrill C. Tenney, Philippians: The Gospel at Work.
6. W. E. Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.
7. Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies In the New Testament, Vol. I.
8. Guy N. Woods, Peter, John & Jude, Vol. II, In the Gospel Advocate Series.
9. Some sources noted in the lessons.
10. James Bales, Firm Foundation, "No Prophecy of Scripture Is of Private Interpretation," April 21, 1970, p. 246-247.
11. Winfred Clark, "A False Teacher," notes on II Peter 2 as appeared in the Bremen, GA, bulletin, April 24, 1975.

A FALSE TEACHER

II Peter 2

Winfred Clark

INTRODUCTION

1. Peter describes well the nature and method of the false teacher?
2. As one reads II Peter 2, he can see the trial of the serpent's agent.

DISCUSSION

I. PETER STATES THE FACT.

- A. II Peter 2:1. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you."
 1. Now, before going on, stop and take note of the fact of the false teacher.
 2. He will or she will not call himself or herself such.
 3. If this occurred, nobody would listen. A false teacher will never come with a sign of his true colors.
- B. But it is a sad fact now that people deny that there are false teachers in some areas.
 1. Charming personalities overwhelm the unsuspecting.
 2. Sweet and smooth speeches blind many eyes.

II. THEIR APPROACH IS NOTED.

- A. II Peter 2:1. "Who privily shall bring in damnable heresies."
 1. That word privily means: secretly, covertly.
 - a. It just means it is undercover.
 - b. He operates much like the "fifth column" of World War II:
- B. He seeks to do his work without attracting attention.
- C. He will use others, if they will allow it, and he stands in the background.
- D. In this way, the damage is done and he does not have to hear the blame. Judas is a case in point as an agent of the devil.

III. THEY USE ONE FOR UNHOLY PURPOSES.

- A. II Peter 2:3. "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you!"
 1. They will play on emotions and plead for sympathy while going about their destructive work.
 2. They will not hesitate to ally themselves with those with whom they do not agree, if only they can carry a point.

3. As in the case of Pilate and Herod, they were made friends that day.
 4. Neither cared for the other, but they both were opposed to Christ.
- B. You may find those who have little in common, but if they think others are opposed to something going on in the church, they seek to get together. This is not new.
- C. Did not Absalom seek to use the people against David when he "stole their hearts."
1. He could stand in the gate and talk about what he would do if he were judge. II Samuel 15:1-4. Notice how much attention he gave them.
 2. In verse 5, you find him acting as though he wanted to get down on their level. Note carefully verse 6. "So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel."
 3. But how did he do it? Just as men do today. Play both ends against the middle.
- D. May I ask whether you could bring yourself to admire such a person? Does Absalom have your support? Would you be in sympathy with him? You say, no. I ask you why? Your answer would be that he is seeking to overthrow God's appointed king. He is not acting in good faith. If he really wanted to contribute something, let him do so under David his father.

IV. THEY DESPISE AUTHORITY.

- A. II Peter 2:10. Peter says, "They despise government. They are presumptuous and self-willed."
1. You would expect this of a false teacher.
 2. He wants to teach what he wants to without restraint.
 3. When you boil it all down, it comes to the selfishness that dominated such a one. Self must be served at all cost.
- B. We will do well to be on guard against such. Mark and avoid them.

II Peter Chapter 2

Lot distressed – though in the midst of wickedness.

1. Lot was not corrupted by it.
2. He did not become indifferent to it.
3. He was daily concerned about it

Some heresies afloat near end of the first century.

1. The Lord's deity was questioned by some (I John 4:15).
2. The Lord's humanity was questioned by others (I John 4:2).
3. Some denied the threefold personality of the godhead.
4. Others held the body of Christ was not real, only imaginary.
5. Others, by their wicked and corrupt lives, denied Jesus as their Master and used their bodies like they wanted to.

Hell – tartaros – only time in Greek N.T.

Used in "Greek mythology of the place of restraint and punishment for the souls of wicked men after death" (Woods, p. 166).

V. 15 – Forsaken the right way –

1. "The way of the Lord" (Gen. 18:19).
2. "The way of peace" (Rom. 3:17).
3. "The way of wisdom" (Prov. 4:11).
4. "The way of life" (Prov. 10:17).
5. "The way of salvation" (Acts 16:17).

Playboy Philosophy – Following this philosophy

1. First, one actually becomes addicted to pursuing pleasure (II Pet. 2:4).
2. Second, they have forsaken concern for others (II Pet. 2:3, 14b).

Results of following such a Philosopher

1. They become foolish (II Pet. 2:12).
2. They forsake the "right" way (II Pet. 2:15; I Tim. 1:6-7).
3. They try to encourage others to join them (II Pet. 2:14, 18).
4. They become slaves of corruption (II Pet. 2:19).
5. Dangers:
 - a. You will be captured (II Pet. 12, 19b).
 - b. You will be destroyed (II Pet. 12).
 - c. You will suffer now and you will suffer more (II Pet. 2:13).
 - d. You will be accursed by God (II Pet. 2:14).
 - e. You will spend eternity in the blackest dark (2:17).

Survey of II Peter 2

Six Charges Made Against False Teachers.

1. First, these brethren secretly introduced destructive heresies (II Pet. 2:1).
2. Second, these denied the Master (II Pet. 2:1).
3. Third, these encouraged sensuality in daily living (II Pet. 2:2).
4. Fourth, these brethren caused the church to have a bad reputation (II Pet. 2:2).
5. Fifth, these brethren exploited believers (II Pet. 2:3).
6. Sixth, these brethren used false words (II Pet. 2:3).

The Characteristics of False Teachers

1. They are mockers

WILLINGLY IGNORANT #3

Bob Berard

Far from eternal bliss is the prospect of those willingly ignorant persons about whom we have studied in this series. Like that of the infamous scoffers Peter reports, the end of those willingly ignorant of spiritual essentials is perdition (2 Pet. 3:3-7; Mt. 7:21-23). Articles #1 and #2 discussed **those who are willingly ignorant of the Bible in general and those who are willingly ignorant of the purpose of Bible preaching.** Consider now **those who are willingly ignorant of their need to acknowledge past sins** even though they have resumed regular attendance.

It is a sometimes a surprising, but nevertheless a delightful thing to see a member who has long been willfully absent from our assemblies walk in the meeting house door. In that moment our love for this erring one's soul causes us to rejoice at what appears to be a certain return of a "prodigal son" and both love and duty demand that we be eager to accept him back as part of the faithful family (Mt. 22:39; Lk 15:20). However, it is a strange thing that such a member sometimes returns to the assemblies and resumes regular attendance with never a comment explaining his sorrow for his unfaithfulness or his intention to again be an active soldier of the cross. Before long his presence in the assemblies becomes an expected thing and both he and the rest of the church behave as if no interruption in his service ever occurred. Is this right? Are we to assume that repentance has occurred? What are we to do?

Could a husband/wife leave his/her mate for several months and return with never a word of explanation or apology about his departure or future intentions? Could an employee not show up for work for all of the month of July and walk in on August 1 and simply take up where he left off, leaving boss and co-workers guessing about the absence?

The prodigal son left no doubt about his change of will when he returned to his father's house. In his determination to return, he resolved to confess his fault and when he met his father he announced, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight..." (Lk. 15:17-19).

Simon, when exposed in his sin, requested the prayer of Peter, thereby implying an acknowledgement of his guilt as charged and his desire to be restored (Acts 8:20-24).

John and James further declare God's will in this matter. We are to confess (acknowledge) our sins to both God and man. In every case, one's sins should be confessed to God; in cases in which our brethren know of the sin, they have need to know of our repentance (1 John 1:9; James 5:17). *More on this next time.*

ABOUNDING MORE AND MORE

Al Macias

To love one another is one of the most important principles of Christianity. We can find passage after passage commanding us to love one another as Christ loved us. If we as Christians would only love one another as we have been commanded, many problems which sometimes occur among ourselves could be completely avoided. The apostle John wrote about how important Christian love really is. We read in I John 3:14, "*We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death.*" What was the apostle John saying in this passage? He was saying that one of the signs indicating that one has passed from death to life is his love for the brethren.

Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, exhorted them not to just love one another but to abound in it more and more. We read in I Thessalonians 4:11,12, "*...and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business and to work with your own hands, as we command you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.*" Paul exhorted the Thessalonian brethren to study to be quiet. This meant that the brethren were to avoid meddling or being busybodies in the lives of others. Paul also wrote to Timothy concerning the kind of life that is expected of all Christians. In I Timothy 2:2b-3 we read, "*...that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our savior.*"

Paul, in writing to the Thessalonian brethren, instructed them and us to do our own business and work with our hands. What did Paul mean by "doing our own business"? It is a commandment from God that Christians attend to their own affairs and not be wanting to interfere in the affairs of other people. Apparently the Thessalonian brethren were having a problem with this. Finally, Paul exhorted the brethren to work with their own hands. Even from the beginning, in the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were told to dress and keep the garden.

What would be accomplished if the Thessalonian brethren followed the instruction given them by the apostle Paul? They would gain the respect of them that were without; those in the world would have no reason to speak against the kind of lives the Christians were living. And so would it be today.

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The Ministry of Reminding

"This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles" (3:1, 2).

A medical missionary once became so discouraged that he was about to quit, pack up, and return to the States. But he had a dream that strengthened him. He dreamed he was working on top of a basaltic rock with a pickax. His muscular arms brought down stroke after stroke for hours, but the rock was not dented. He said to himself, "It's useless. I'm not going to pick any more." Suddenly a stranger of dignified mien stood by his side and asked, "You'll pick no more?" "No." "Weren't you set to this task?" "Yes." "And why abandon it?" "My work is vain; I have made no impression on the rock." Solemnly, the stranger replied, "What's that to you? Your duty is to pick whether the rock yields or not. Work on!" The doctor then awoke and decided that he would continue. Soon his labors bore much fruit.

Many "ministries" are found in the Bible. The word "ministry" simply means a duty, service, or function that one is to perform. So we read of the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18); the ministry of edification (1 Corinthians 16:15); the ministry of preaching the Word of God (2 Corinthians 4:1); and the ministry of saint-hood (Colossians 4:17). From 2 Peter 3:1, 2, we discover another ministry—the ministry of reminding. As fellow saints, each shares an obligation to remind others of spiritual matters. This

duty falls upon every saved believer and is mentioned throughout Scripture. One of the clearest references is in Hebrews 3:13: "But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." If the reminding is not performed, many will be discouraged and apt to fall from the ranks of God's dedicated servants!

Peter strongly felt the urgency to perform this ministry. His brethren faced dangers from within as error slowly invaded their fellowship (cf. chapter 2). They also faced danger from without as trials compounded because of their faith (cf. 1 Peter). Temptation urged surrender or retreat. But Peter strongly urged them to persevere. He did this through the ministry of reminding.

We need to share a similar sense of duty in this ministry. Let us focus on three vital considerations found in 3:1, 2 which all believers must understand and apply in everyday living.

THE FORMULA IS GIVEN

Peter reveals a simple formula which all can follow in order to perform this pressing ministry.

Love (3:1)

First, we must establish and maintain a strong love bond with our brethren. Peter's use of the word "beloved" is the key focal point. He uses it three times to refer to his brethren in this chapter (3:1, 14, 17). It is a wonderful word revealing love and endearment. It exposes a genuine concern and affection for another. Peter was able to effectively remind his brethren because he and they shared a love that bound them to one

another.

Affection and devotion are essential if we are to remind one another in an effective manner. If I know that someone loves me and is concerned for only the best in my life, it does not embitter me if he approaches me about a personal failing or irresponsible acts in spiritual matters. It is this affection that all New Testament believers shared, and it was the visible mark of the Savior's followers (cf. John 13:34, 35).

As Paul wrote to the Colossian brethren he made a marvelous remark about the Laodicean believers. He stated that they were "knit together in love" (Colossians 2:1, 2). Peter said this love bond also bound Paul: "... just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, ..." (3:15). Look further as in just a few more verses it is observed that this love bond bound not only Peter but also Paul (3:15). This love bond enabled Peter and Paul to remain true Christian friends even when Paul had to remind Peter of his irresponsible attitudes (cf. Galatians 2:11ff.).

When each Christian understands the other as a "beloved" brother or sister, love will logically lead to the reminding of spiritual duties. Each will only want the very best in the lives of his brethren. This aspect of the ministry of reminding is essential.

Fellowship (3:1)

Second, we must have regular contact and fellowship with one another. Peter states that this was the "second time" he wrote. Literally, the passage reads, "... already a second one I write." This indicates that the two epistles were very close together. Peter was in constant contact with the readers. He knew of their trials and temptations and was aware of their weaknesses and strengths. Because of constant association and intimate knowledge, he could remind them of duties and commitments to God.

Reminders among brethren do little good if contact is sporadic or nonexistent. If we hope to be of service to our brethren in the ministry of reminding, we must be together! Ideally, we should be together not only at *all* assemblies of the church, but we should enjoy fellowship at times outside of the usual assemblies. Contact on a regular basis is needed to gain the maximum benefit of Christian fellowship. Contact is necessary for communion.

Gentle Confrontation (3:1)

Third, we must use meaningful conversation to deepen relationships with our spiritual family. Whenever Peter and the brethren spoke, they discussed vital matters. Their conversation always "stirred up"; it aroused and awakened their minds. Peter was saying, "When we talk we go beyond the weather and the aches and the pains. When we talk we get things stirred up!"

Too often here is where you and I fail in the ministry of reminding. When we see brethren failing in spiritual matters, let us go gently but specifically (cf. 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Galatians 6:1-5).

The Word (3:2)

Fourth, the Holy Scriptures must be emphasized in the ministry of reminding. Peter realized that reminding his beloved brethren must be done with the Holy Scriptures. He said that as he spoke it would be the language of the "oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). The reference in verse 2 to the power and authority of Scripture does not surprise anyone who has studied the frequent mention of inspiration and the authority of Scripture that permeates his two brief letters (cf. 1 Peter 1:10, 12, 23; 2:2-8; 2 Peter 1:19-21; etc.). All that Peter wanted his readers to remember were the commands of God. What more effective means is there to remind us of spiritual duties than the Holy Scriptures?

A ship was in a heavy fog as it neared shore. The very stars were shut out and no longer able to guide the vessel's course. The man at the mast-head hoarsely cried, "Breakers ahead!" The crew furled the sails, and the helmsman stood by the wheel. But where was the captain? The old sailor was pouring over his charts and compass as he sought to steer his ship and keep it clear of rocks and shallows saving both his crew and cargo. At length he reached the harbor's safety. In just the same way the Scriptures stand as our "chart and compass." Only by "searching the Scriptures" can we ever gain safe passage through life's perils. As we involve ourselves in the ministry of reminding, let us hold fast to the truth of the Scriptures. If one should become upset at being reminded, he should be upset only with the Scriptures. No one can ever argue successfully with the Word of God!

Thus Peter has given us a simple formula by which we are able to learn the "how to" of

reminding one another. If you want to be active in reminding your brethren, develop a strong affection that is nurtured by constant contact and deep conversation, and in your reminders emphasize only the oracles of God! But more must be considered. Some may not be sure that they want to be involved in such a ministry. They may not see the reasoning.

THE "WHY" IS ANSWERED

We note four answers in response to the one who would question the necessity of being involved. When you are called upon to go to an erring brother, it is not often a pleasant task. Who enjoys confronting another about sin and irresponsibility? It is very easy to excuse ourselves from being involved in this ministry. But the excuses will pale in consideration of the following:

You must be involved because practicing this ministry will reveal your commitment to God. All Christians should realize that they are accountable to each other and for each other. Cain tried long ago to shirk his duty with the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" When you go to someone and gently remind them of God's expectations, you are revealing love, concern, and tender care for a brother's soul. You are simply being accountable. This accountability springs from a deep sense of God's expectations.

As Paul wrote to the Corinthian brethren, he spoke of a comfort he had received from God. Paul explained that he had passed this comfort along to the Corinthians and they were expected to pass it along to the brethren around them (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4). Basically, Paul was illustrating that he was accountable; he wanted to extend comfort to others because of his dedication and commitment to God.

Brotherly love finds its tap root in our love for God (1 John 4:19). If our commitment to God is strong, we will be active in reminding others of spiritual matters (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:14). Why should we contact absentee members, visit the sick and shut-in members, and be regular in attendance at all services? When we are reminding others of God's love, the brethren's concern, and eternity's destiny we are revealing our true commitment to God!

You must be involved because practicing this ministry will keep your thinking straight. Peter uses the phrase "sincere mind" (3:1). "Sincere" literally

refers to a close and careful examination by sunlight and being found "without wax." If we are involved in reminding others of spiritual truths, our minds will be kept in such a condition that they can be examined and be found clear and flawless (cf. Philippians 4:8). When you are constantly urging another to be mindful of spiritual matters, you will not lose sight of those things either. The best guard for your spiritual life is to be active in the ministry of reminding!

You must be involved because practicing this ministry will provide an effective means by which you can "recall" biblical truths. Through reminding, the readers of Peter's letters could recall the words of "the holy prophets" and "the commandment of the Lord and Savior." Most brethren possess ample information, but they forget much of what they learn. If they are busily engaged in reviewing and rehearsing the truths of God with others, they will become firmer in their retention of those facts.

You must be involved because practicing this ministry will keep you prepared for Christ's return. This is the basic thrust of Peter's letter. He wanted the readers to know that the Lord was coming back and that they must be ready. Our early brethren would often pray, "Maranatha," as an expression of their urgent desire for Christ's return.

The Scriptures suggest that this reason is the most important for participating in the ministry of reminding. If "the day" in Hebrews 10:23-25 is understood as the day of the Lord's return, you find there a paragraph that clearly illustrates our point. As we remind others of the Lord's return and the urgency to be properly prepared for it, we will find ourselves prepared to meet Him as well.

These are four excellent reasons why believers must be involved in the ministry of reminding. Each member of the Lord's body does have a responsibility to be involved in this duty.

THE "RECEIVING" IS URGED

Sometimes we will be on the receiving end of the reminders instead of the giving end. It happened to Peter, and it was happening to those who received his letter. It can happen to us as well. It may be that in some future point, or maybe right now, you are not walking in full harmony with the teachings of God's Scriptures. If so, it is time to receive reminders. In order to profit from the ministry of reminding, we should

take a long hard look at the following points.

You must possess a "sincere mind." Our thoughts ought to be such that even subjected to the full test of brilliant sunlight they will be found pure. Our minds must not harbor deceit, sinister motives, hate or any other evil emotion that Satan produces so we can be stimulated by godly reminders. Peter's reminders were sent to the "sincere minds" of his readers and were greeted with warm reception. Such is not always the case. Too often, brethren refuse to guard their minds. When reminders are spoken, they are not received. Take careful watch of your mind. Be sure it is in the condition to receive reminders.

You must appreciate the concern another is showing for you. How will we respond to one who comes in love to remind us that we are amiss in some spiritual duty? Will there be bitterness, ill-will, or antagonism? When Paul wrote to his Galatian brethren, reminding them of duties and responsibilities, his words were not received with appreciation. He asked, "Have I therefore become your enemy by telling you the truth?" (4:16). Peter's reminders were received differently. Those brethren had now received two strong letters filled with reminders, yet they still loved the apostle because of his love for them. No resentment or bitterness was manifested. Let us always appreciate the concern that motivates a brother to come to us with timely reminders.

You must be open to the reminders of others because we all "forget" important facts. In James 1:24, 25, James discusses the "forgetful hearer." Many of us find ourselves in that position too often. The writer to the Hebrews twice urged his readers to "forget not" in the closing chapter (Hebrews 13:2, 16). Because of memory lapses, we all need to be reminded. Maybe you have committed yourself to a particular work, committee, or responsibility, and other things have pushed your promises aside. If so do not become upset or aggravated because someone reminds you of your commitments. In obeying the gospel we made a commitment to God, and we can be sure Satan is busily engaged at persuading us to bypass those commitments. If you have become sidetracked, do not become bitter at the one who tries to remind you of the commitments you have forgotten.

When you are reminded, be stimulated to change! When you see that God's Book commands one thing and you are either failing to do

it or you are doing it in the wrong way, do not be stubborn. Change immediately.

CONCLUSION

I like the way brother Guy N. Woods has commented on the verse in our present section of study:

It is equally important that the Lord's people *today* should have their minds stirred to remembrance of the vital teaching issuing from the apostles and prophets of the Lord. Ceaseless vigilance is the price of a pure faith and a faultless practice, and the obligation of all teachers and preachers in this matter is indeed weighty. Remissness in this respect leads to eventual apostasy.¹

The greatest kindness you can extend a fellow saint is a proper response in the urgent ministry of reminding. T

Endnote

¹Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude* (Nashville, Tenn.: Gospel Advocate Co., 1959), p. 180.

Qualities of a Faithful Teacher (2 Peter 3:1, 2)

1. Tender love and affection toward those taught ("Beloved").
2. A personal involvement ("I write"; "I stir").
3. A desire to stimulate response to God ("Remember the words and commands").
4. A respect for the Scriptures ("Holy prophets").



Why Should I Remember? (2 Peter 3:1, 2)

The clear command to remember expresses an obligation upon the readers. They are obligated to remember. Why? The following reasons are more than adequate to justify such an explanation:

1. Because of the loving devotion of the teachers to "stir" them up.
2. Because they possessed "sincere minds."
3. Because the prophet's message was recorded long ago.
4. Because of the accuracy of the apostles' teaching.

Fostering Forgetfulness

"Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.' For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (3:3-7).

John Bunyan's classic, *Pilgrim's Progress*, speaks of a certain place named "Forgetful Green." According to Greatheart, it is a most dreadful place, for there the Christian pilgrim meets with great calamity. The cause for the calamity is this: he forgets the greatness of God's grace and love. Many battles have been fought on the plains of "Forgetful Green," and often Satan is the victor because believers have fostered forgetfulness instead of godly memories.

In 2 Peter 3:3-7, you read of certain brethren who had lost valor and faith on the plains of "Forgetful Green." These had become "mockers" who could not hold to their former conviction regarding the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith. They had been found guilty of rejecting many things, but their crowning rejection, and that which summarizes the entire Christian system, was a total repudiation of the second coming of Christ.

The forgetfulness regarding this basic doctrine was both convenient and practical. Why?

Ask yourself: "If I wanted to be free to do whatever I desired—to live a pure libertine lifestyle, to nullify every restricting command of God—what would I do?" The most logical course would be to discard the doctrine of the second coming. If you succeeded in believing that the second coming was false, then three results would follow. *You would see restrictions as vain. Why restrict yourself when all that comes after life is death? You would view God's Word as unstable and false. Why believe in anything He says if He was wrong about the second coming? And, if you could toss aside God's commands and convince yourself that godly conduct was useless, you could then live according to the ungodly principles discussed in chapter 2!* This is the point Paul speaks of in his great chapter on the resurrection. How succinctly he exposes such a false position! "If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1 Corinthians 15:32).

The scoffing at the second coming was a well planned attack by the false teachers which had to be answered. If it went without appropriate response, believers would continue to be in a real dilemma. To help understand the pressure that such an attack posed to the brethren, consider these comments which were likely made. "Whatever happened to Jesus? He promised He would return 'quickly.' Wouldn't you be better off to just forget this silly stuff and enjoy life?" To a believer who was constantly battling false doctrine, this argument would present tremendous pressure. Evidently, some brethren were unable to stand the pressure and were on the verge of joining the doubters. It was to this desperate

predicament that 3:3-7 was addressed.

Let us observe the overall significance of the second coming in Scripture. Even a casual investigation with available Bible dictionaries, concordances, encyclopedias, and topical lists will verify that it is a most important doctrine.

In the New Testament, the second coming occupies a place of importance second only to faith. Believers are encouraged to be ready for the second coming over fifty times. Inspiration has devoted entire chapters to a discussion of the details of the second coming. Even with this weight of evidence scoffers continue to forget! With the facts clearly set before them, they refuse to accept them. They are guilty of fostering forgetfulness instead of godly memories. Their forgetfulness brings a harvest of disaster.

Peter's words now bring the advocates of this erroneous position face-to-face with their failings. By his efforts Peter hoped not only to turn the false teachers from their error but to shore up the faith of his beleaguered brethren. Peter does an excellent job. Notice how he accomplishes his objective.

THE FAILINGS OF FORGETFULNESS

First, *forgetfulness leads one to mockery* (3:3a). The word "mockery" literally means to be a "derider, skeptic, or scoffer." When it is used as a verb, it means "to play with." These mockers had been faithful believers, but now they had turned away from Christ. They had become so hardened that they were playing with the idea of the second coming. They had actually reached a point of laughing at and ridiculing the notion of its validity.

This mockery of God's Word was not a new reaction. Peter's brethren were not suffering anything that had not already been expressed many times before. Long before any of the brethren who received 2 Peter were born, this mocking reception of God's Word was present. Isaiah was told to condemn the ten northern tribes because they demonstrated this mockery toward God. In Isaiah 28:14-22, the pride and arrogance of the ten tribes is described. The rulers are described as "scoffing" at the idea of death, exile, and the Assyrian invasion. These rulers fostered the same forgetfulness that those in the present text did—they refused to believe the truth of God. They actually laughed at Isaiah's teachings as well as the other prophets. In

John 3:19, we find reference once again to the attitude of mockery that refuses to accept the teachings of Christ, for "men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil."

It is terribly sad to remember that those addressed by Peter had once confessed and glorified the very one they now ridiculed! The sad predicament of these brethren is illustrated by those in the letter to the Hebrews. They had "once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come" (Hebrews 6:4, 5). Again, we find a fitting description in Hebrews 10:29. These are like those who trod underfoot the Son of God and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing and have done despite unto the Spirit of grace. Can you think of a sadder ending to the life of one who had begun to run the Christian race?

We have already noticed how these mockers defied God by cynically questioning the deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the apostles' authority, and God's morality (cf. 1:19-21). The sad state of the believer who becomes a "mockery" is alluded to by Paul in Philippians 3:18, 19. They have become enemies of the cross, and the very thought of them brings weeping and sorrow to the saint of God.

Oh, how tragic is this failing in the life of one fostering forgetfulness—he becomes a mockery. What a tragic toll is taken on the plains of "Forgetful Green"!

Second, *forgetfulness encourages the pursuit of immediate lusts instead of respect for God's eternal commands* (3:3b). Again, we are called to deal with the urgency of an absolute moral standard in life. Here is the sole reason that the second coming was denied: The people had become so enamored with fleshly desires that they had neither respect, the desire to obey, or serious reflection on spiritual truths. They had become intent on living for the moment. They wanted to grab the "gusto" in life and could care less about tomorrow. This pursuit for the immediate is condemned by Isaiah: "The Lord God of hosts, called you to weeping, to wailing, to shaving the head, and to wearing sackcloth. Instead, there is gaiety and gladness, killing of cattle and slaughtering of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine: 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die' " (Isaiah 22:12, 13).

By supposing that they had made a sound case for rejecting the second coming, these people believed that a total freedom was allowed in morality. The words "their own" are emphatic and underscore their rejection of God's standards for self-direction. Forgetfulness is quite suited to the one who wants to live for self. One who is determined to set up his own pattern and plan of morality will always refuse God's will. He prefers to live life for the immediate gratification, enjoying selfish desires! Perhaps the following quote from a well-known author will help illustrate why some choose to foster forgetfulness.

I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning . . . and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption . . . the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation—sexual and political.¹

Do you now understand this great failing of forgetfulness? The scoffers attacked and ridiculed the second coming because they wanted to live differently than how the Scriptures commanded! Their accountability to God was such a bitter pill that they refused to take it! As the proverb says, "Fools mock at sin" (Proverbs 14:9a). The fool will ridicule the notion that any act is "sin." He will laugh at anyone who advocates restrictions in morality. This is a simple explanation for the response of the taunts and ridicule of the godless upon all who fear God and strive to obey His will.

Third, *forgetfulness replaces faith, respect, and reverence with ridicule and arrogance* (3:4). Peter gives the basic argument of the mockers. The argument strongly implied that God's promise of the second coming was a bold-faced lie. They suggested that it was far-fetched and without any real substance. The same caustic arrogance confronted Jeremiah. For years, the lonely prophet had been foretelling doom and disaster that would fall upon Israel, but it had not yet arrived. When Jeremiah spoke of the coming exile and destruction, his listeners would snicker and say, "Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now!" (Jeremiah 17:15). The same taunting and chuckling ridicule was being heard by Peter: "All right. If Christ is really coming back—let it happen right now!"

When the forgetful believers denied the reality of the second coming, they were placing a dubi-

ous question mark over all who spoke of its reality in Scripture. We have already seen how prominent such a doctrine is in the New Testament. By claiming the second coming was a delusion, the readers were called to question the teachings of Christ, Paul, Peter, and a host of other inspired writers. The forgetful brethren called for others to follow them as they walked by sight. They had seen the seasons come and go; they had witnessed the persecutions and deaths of the righteous, and nothing dramatic had happened—no dramatic change had taken place. "Why worry about the future? It will be just as it always has been! The earth is stable and will remain as such!" These disrespectful and irreligious words were surely uttered with a sarcastic smirk.

Fourth, *forgetfulness maintains a dangerous course* (3:5-7). Peter turns his attention to answering these cynical claims. As he begins, he exposes the true attitude behind the mockers. They have "willfully" forgotten. This phrase refers to an attitude which deliberately refused to see the gross inconsistencies of their position and refused to know the truth. It was an act of their will—they chose such!

In his discussion of this willful ignorance, Peter reveals two points which clearly reveal the danger of fostering this kind of forgetfulness. In his first point, he shows that such is dangerous because it leads one to uphold and attempt to sustain unreasonable positions (3:5, 6). Once these had denied God, they were forced to "forget" that God had created all things. Now they had to explain how the world and all that is in it exists—a most undesirable predicament. Having eliminated God, how could they explain the world? Those who follow their course in our modern time have attempted to explain this unreasonable position with the theory of evolution. But those who fondly uphold evolution quickly encounter more problems than they explain. Another unreasonable position which has to be taken by these denying the second coming was that the earth has always remained stable and unchanging. But Peter points out that the world *has not* always remained the same. He points to the Genesis flood (Genesis 6-9) as evidence of his proof. Once again the advocates of the "No Second Coming" theory found themselves in a most uncomfortable position. It is interesting to note that even though centuries apart from those in Peter's day, these two

dilemmas still face all who wish to deny the validity of the Bible. The question as to the origin of the universe and the preponderance of evidence for the Genesis flood befuddle all who seek to deny God. These two points stand just as firm today as they did when the ink from Peter's pen was still wet! One can rest assured that these two points will remain as a bulwark against any who desire to hinder God's Word. Those in Peter's day could not explain away the predicament resulting from their unreasonable positions, such is true in our day, and such will remain forever true!

The second point discussed by Peter, as he shows the dangerous course of forgetfulness, is found in verse 7. It prepares one for eternal tragedy. The very God who created this world by a word has stored up fire by which it is to be forever destroyed by the same word! (Cf. Matthew 24:38, 39; Isaiah 29:6; 30:30; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Hebrews 1:10, 11.) In our modern age we are often reminded of the destructive force contained in a single nuclear warhead. We are reminded that the "superpowers" possess hundreds of these destructive warheads—enough to blow our frail world into oblivion! Whether this earth is destroyed by a bomb or by the "word" of God, it is destined to perish. Those who remain on it will suffer destruction for eternity. Peter reminds his readers that this is the tragic destiny ahead for those who foster forgetfulness in spiritual matters.

The dangerous course maintained by all who foster forgetfulness in spiritual matters is well illustrated with a conversation between the recognized skeptic Robert Owen and Alexander Campbell. Mr. Owen was visiting Alexander Campbell at Bethany, West Virginia, and went to view the family cemetery. Mr. Owen remarked, "There is one advantage I have over the Christian. I am not afraid to die. Most Christians have fear in death, but if some few items of my business were settled, I should be perfectly willing to die at any moment." Mr. Campbell responded, "You say you have no fear in death. Have you any hope?" After a solemn pause, he answered, "No." "Then," rejoined Campbell, pointing to an ox standing at a distance, "you are on a level with that brute. He has fed until he is satisfied, and stands in the shade, whisking off the flies, and has neither hope nor fear in death."

For the fourth time, we are able to see that a

tragic failing is evident in the life of one fostering forgetfulness. He maintains a dangerous course that leads to destruction and eternal misery! Is there a greater toll ever exacted on the stern plains of "Forgetful Green"?

THE PRACTICAL POINTS

Although our study has focused on four vital points, several more considerations arise from studying the text. These present some practical devotional thoughts that should stir our minds to the responsibility of fostering memories instead of forgetfulness.

First, one may try to forget spiritual matters, and may even succeed to some degree, but such forgetfulness does not void the reality of spiritual matters! Those addressed by Peter had convinced themselves that the second coming was a myth. But Peter forcefully challenged their position and assured them of the certainty of Christ's return. Sinners today may convince themselves that certain spiritual truths are not realities (i.e., the existence of God; the brevity of life; the urgency of baptism; the wrath of God; etc.), but their willful forgetfulness of these matters does not eliminate their certainty!

Charles Spurgeon tried to illustrate this fact with the following account. We must not be like the foolish drunk who, staggering home one night, saw his candle lit for him. "Two candles!" he exclaimed, for his drunkenness made him see double. "I will blow one out," he said, and as he blew it out, he was in the dark. Many a man sees double through the drunkenness of sin. He has but one life, but he expects another life in which he can turn to God. Like a fool, he blows out the only candle he has, and in the dark he will have to lie down forever! He has convinced himself that he really has two lives, but he is deceived. The reality of spiritual truths persists in the face of self-deception.

Second, one can be assured of God's interest in mankind. At key times in history, God has directly intervened for the good of man—the creation, the flood, the virgin birth, etc. These interventions of God are certain. This being the case, who can deny His interest in our well-being now? Who can honestly doubt that He will act again and with the resounding trumpet come to gather His saints and punish the sinners? (Cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-12.)

Third, those who rest in Christ can gain tremendous

comfort from this (cf. James 5:8). Imagine the joy that abides in the heart of the believer resting in the assurances of the second coming (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:18). Let each reader be certain that he has this abiding joy. Be ready to meet the returning Lord in the air. Do not allow the modern scoffers to move you from this resolve!

Fourth, if the wayward believer finds comfort in this paragraph, then the unbeliever and wayward child of God ought to find terror. The "last days" are here. Christ's return is immediate (cf. Matthew 24:44). God has revealed Himself so that you can believe in Him and be saved. It is tragic to witness multitudes blindly live in the greatness of God and never come to appreciate the great God Himself.

Years ago, I heard a story about Sir Isaac Newton that remains etched in my memory. As a great scientist, Newton was associated with others of renown in that field. Newton had one close friend who was an avowed infidel while Newton was a firm believer. In conversation, the two would often become involved in heated discussions regarding the existence of God. Newton contracted a designer to put together an exact replica of our solar system. It was so fashioned that when a lever was turned each planet would revolve around the sun in perfect harmony. After the project was finished, Newton placed it on a table in his study. When the friend saw it the first time, he walked carefully around it, turning the crank, and admiring the intricate details of design. He then asked, "Who made it?" Newton simply responded, "Nobody." The friend turned, thinking his question had been misunderstood. "No, I mean who designed and constructed this marvelous thing?" Newton responded again in a casual tone that no one had made it, it just "happened." The friend replied, "You must think I am a fool. Of course someone made it, and he is a genius. I would like to know just who he is." Newton's response was classic. "This thing is but a puny imitation of a much greater system whose laws you know. I am not able to convince you that this mere toy is without a designer and maker. Yet you profess to believe that the great original from which the design was taken has come into being without either design or maker. Now tell me, by what logic of reasoning have you reached such incongruous conclusions?" It is reported that the infidel was convinced and became a firm believer.

I believe Peter's point is just as shocking to

unbelievers and wayward saints today—if you have succeeded in rationalizing God's commands so they do not restrict your life, how can you explain the contradictions that arise? All who are unprepared for the Lord's return should find Peter's passage a shocking lesson!

CONCLUSION

Do you see the danger Greatheart warned us about regarding "Forgetful Green"? It is indeed a terrible place where Christians meet great harm. If you have fallen prey to Satan on the "Forgetful Green," you have paid a heavy toll.

Peter's words urge each reader to remember. Do not forsake godly memories by fostering forgetfulness. When forgetfulness reigns, we suffer at least four devastating calamities: We become mockers; we follow the desires and dictates of the immediate; we ridicule God's promises; and we maintain a disastrous course.

"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, . . ." (John 14:2, 3).

"This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven. . . ." (Acts 1:11).

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. . . . (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

So Christ also . . . shall appear a second time, not to bear sin, to those who eagerly await Him. . . . (Hebrews 9:28).

"Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour" (Matthew 25:13). τ

Endnote

¹Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1937).

There Is a Great Day Coming (2 Peter 3:7)

1. It is a day appointed by God when the earth and heaven will be destroyed by fire.
2. It is a day of judgment for the ungodly.
3. It is a day of destruction for the ungodly.

The Deliberate Kind of Forgetfulness (2 Peter 3:7)

1. Who demonstrates deliberate forgetfulness? "Mockers" (3:3).
2. What is deliberately forgotten? The manner of God's working (3:5-7).
3. What causes this forgetfulness? Basic attitude problems.
 - They are full of "mockings" (3:4). They ridicule God's Word.
 - They follow a self-serving discipline rather than a God-serving one (3:3b).
 - They focus on the immediate, not the future (3:4b).
 - They fail to "remember" (3:5), thus becoming servants of a foolish direction in life which identifies them with the "ungodly."
4. What is the destination of one who deliberately forgets these things?
 - They will live self-deluded about their eternal fate (2 Thessalonians 2:11).
 - They will stand before the harsh judgment of God (3:7).
 - They will experience destruction with all others who are ungodly (3:7).

A Fact, a Philosophy, and a Destiny (2 Peter 3:3-7)

1. *A Fact to Remember.* The second coming will come but only after mockers arise (3:3).
2. *A Philosophy to Shun.* Remain firm in hope. Do not fall into the trap of thinking that because He has not come He is not coming. Some will not remain firm and will lose sight of the promise (3:4-6).
3. *A Destiny to Avoid.* Those who fail to remember the blessed hope of the second coming will face a tragic eternity (3:7).

Forgetting One Thing (2 Peter 3:3-7)

Those described by Peter are guilty of forgetting one obvious fact: God is in control. Once this fact is forgotten, the following tragedies occur:

1. Instead of praise and obedience, one displays "mocking" (3:3).
2. Instead of looking for the blessed hope of Christ's return, one ridicules the notion (3:4a; cf. Titus 2:13).
3. Instead of acknowledging God as the Sovereign Governor of all the world, one accepts the foolish position of deism (3:4b-6).
4. Instead of living to be among the godly eternally, one lives to suffer among the godless eternally (3:7).

What Do Scoffers Want to Forget? (2 Peter 3:3-7)

1. The fact that Christ will "come" again (3:4).
2. The fact that God has demonstrated His presence on earth (3:4b-6).
3. The fact that this earth is destined for destruction (3:7a).
4. The fact that since there is a God, there is a judgment and an eternity (3:7b).

The Power of God's Word (2 Peter 3:5-7)

1. It had the power to create the heavens and the earth (3:5).
2. It had the power to destroy the earth by the flood (3:6).
3. It has the power to destroy the earth and the heavens with fire (3:7a).
4. It has the power to sentence a soul to eternal destruction (3:7b).

The Mighty Power of God (2 Peter 3:5-7)

1. God has the power to intervene in the affairs of this world—He has done so by a flood and will do so when the world ends. He sent His Son and still works providentially to guide, guard, and assure His children.
2. God has the power to create. Through Him and by Him all things exist.
3. God has the power to absolutely judge. Some He will comfort with eternal peace; others will suffer His wrath in eternal hell.

Remember the Promise Of the Lord's Coming

THE DISCIPLES of Jesus had little idea of what to expect when they met with Him on the Mount of Olives after His resurrection. During the forty days since the crucifixion, they had witnessed happenings they had never dreamed possible. The Lord was talking to them about the coming of the Holy Spirit and the building of His kingdom. They were trying to understand, but they were by no means sure what their risen Lord was talking about. Just when they thought it was question-and-answer time, it happened—the event that people would talk about as long the earth would stand. The Lord began ascending toward the heavens.

While the disciples watched in amazement, Luke recorded that two men dressed in white stood beside them. They said, "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Since the men in white made that promise, few subjects have stirred more interest or controversy than the time and the manner of the Lord's return. It was true even while the New Testament was being written, as Paul's letters to the Thessalonians illustrate. In the Thessalonian church speculation on the time of His return had led some to stop working and to idle away their time until He should appear (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3; 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2; 3:6-12).

Speculation and controversy over the time and the consequences of his second appearance have continued to the present. Over the last century, variations of premillennialism have been taught in many churches. With complex timetables in hand, experts discuss the Rapture, the battle of Armageddon, the rebuilding of the temple, and similar topics. Just when one of these men thinks he has it all

figured out, another expert appears with different calculations. Best-selling books, films, and lectures on the last times testify to the intense interest that exists in the Lord's return—an interest that has continued for nearly two thousand years.

Like 1 Peter, the last chapter of 2 Peter focused predominantly on the return of the Lord, but the approach differed. The return of the Lord hovered over 1 Peter. Rather than being a topic for instruction, it was woven into the warp and woof of the epistle. In 2 Peter the apostle taught his readers about Christ's second coming. Some doubted that He would return at all. Peter closed his second letter with an affirmation that the Lord would appear suddenly, when least expected by scoffers, to bring judgment on the ungodly.

MOCKERS DELIBERATELY FORGET (3:1-7)

Twice in his second letter Peter set forth his intention of stirring his readers to remembrance (1:12, 13; 3:1). In a general sense, both letters had been to stir up each Christian's "sincere mind by way of reminder" (3:1), but there was a particular matter the prophets and apostles had spoken of that he wanted his readers to recall (3:2). Because some had raised questions and doubts, they needed a reminder that the promised return of the Lord was fundamental to Christian doctrine. Disciples of Christ are to live in expectation that the Lord will appear soon; they are to expect it, not demand it. If He should delay His coming for a thousand years, they have not been disappointed. They have lived as if He would appear today.

Between the parable that ends Matthew 24 and the one that opens Matthew 25, we see a subtle but

important shift of thought. The wicked slave in Matthew 24:45-51 expected his master to delay his return. While he was in the midst of his revelry and high life, his master had returned and appointed him a place with the hypocrites, where there would be "weeping . . . and the gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:51). The Parable of the Ten Virgins is just the opposite. The five foolish virgins had expected the bridegroom to come soon, but he came later than expected. A similar change in emphasis occurs between 1 and 2 Peter. In 1 Peter the prospect of the Lord's imminent return was a comfort for suffering Christians; in 2 Peter doubt plagued the church because their expectation of an immediate return had failed to materialize.

Probably, the false teachers Peter described in 2 Peter 2 were among those who scoffed, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (3:4). Peter reminded them that the God who had called the world into being was capable of calling it into judgment (3:5). He had already called it into judgment once. The deluge had washed the ancient world clean. The Word of God had warned Noah's generation. They had refused to listen, and judgment had come (3:6). Peter said that the same God who judged the antediluvian world had reserved the present world for fire (3:7). His Word is keeping the heavens and earth "for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (3:7).

THE LORD IS BEING PATIENT (3:8-10)

Sometimes I am discouraged by the impact, or the lack of impact, that the Lord's church is having on the world. Few people seem to pay attention to the message of Christ. For many men and women the commitment to marital fidelity is meaningless. In America marriage is not permanent, and the home is not stable. We are told that nearly half of the marriages currently contracted will end in divorce. Millions simply forego marriage and live together. Nearly one-half of school-age children live either with a single parent or with a stepparent.

Satan appears to be winning the battle for people's minds and souls. Public gambling helps to support state governments. Millions live in the shadowy world of alcohol and drugs. Pornography and abortion are rampant, while crime and corruption grow yearly. What more do we need to say? The church is small in number. What can Christians do? Perhaps we should simply build walls about ourselves and let the world go its way, but we cannot do that. Sin even reaches its tentacles into the church. The sinfulness of the world lures us and

our children. Even Christians follow the siren songs. It is not an encouraging scene.

In the face of this dreary landscape the message of chapter 3 is important. The strength and power of Satan over this world are only illusions. The world belongs to God, and the ultimate victory is His. Those who long for and expect His return will reign with Him for eternity. The world and all that is in it will be judged and consumed by fire (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10). In comparison to that event, the present world scene is like a skirmish preceding a battle. What if He should delay His coming? Long before Peter's time, Moses had said, "For a thousand years in Thy sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night" (Psalm 90:4; cf. 2 Peter 3:8). Men cannot hold God to a schedule. If God said Christ will return and judge the earth, we may be sure that He will. If the Judgment Day delays, it is because His patient kindness is giving His world time for repentance (3:9).

Peter was recalling the Old Testament prophets when he wrote, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief" (3:10). Isaiah had written, "For the Lord of hosts will have a day of reckoning against everyone who is proud and lofty" (Isaiah 2:12), and "Men will go into caves of the rocks, and into holes of the ground before the terror of the Lord, and before the splendor of His majesty" (Isaiah 2:19). Isaiah 13 speaks of the day of the Lord as a day of judgment against Babylon; Isaiah 34:8 speaks against Edom. Jeremiah 46:10 says that Egypt will face God's wrath on the day of the Lord. Amos 5:18 and Zephaniah 1:7 say that God will be avenged against Israel on the day of the Lord. For the prophets, the day of the Lord was any day when God mightily vindicated Himself by executing judgment. In 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and 2 Peter 3:10, it is the day of God's ultimate judgment, when all people will appear before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 2:6-8).

Jesus and Paul had also said that the day of the Lord will come like a thief (Matthew 24:42-44; 1 Thessalonians 5:2). There is little difference between the expectation of the Lord's immediate return (1 Peter 4:7; James 5:8) and the expectation that He will return as a thief. In either case, the Lord's people are to be prepared and to live expectantly. When He comes again, His mighty judgment will be final and absolute. The earth, the sky, the seas, and all the elements of nature will be destroyed.

The final words in 3:10 are difficult. The NASB translates, "Its works will be burned up," but the NIV says, "Everything in it will be laid bare."

Behind the two translations lie two different Greek words. Some ancient copies of 2 Peter have the word which means “burned up,” while others have a word that means “will be found.” Which word Peter actually wrote is difficult to determine, but if he used “will be found,” the NIV has understood it correctly. The Greek word is used in the sense of 1 Corinthians 3:13, which says that in the last day each man’s work “will become evident” and “will be revealed with fire.” “To be found” can mean to be found out, revealed, or laid bare. Other translators have rendered the final clause as a rhetorical question: “And the earth and the works it contains—will they be found?”

Some have attempted to use this passage to support the teaching that the earth will not be destroyed but simply renovated in the last day. The context will not bear that interpretation. Peter was saying that the earth and the universe as we now know them will be no more when the Lord returns. There is no other way to understand the statement “The heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat.”

WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE OUGHT YOU TO BE? (3:11-18)

Peter did not intend to strike terror in the hearts of the Christians by reminding them of the end of time. Only the unbeliever and the ungodly have cause for fear. For Peter and his readers, knowing that the present world order would end only strengthened their resolve to live holy and godly lives. “What sort of people ought you to be, . . . looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God?” Peter asked (3:11, 12). When Paul wrote about Christ’s return, he had a similar exhortation in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-5. By living godly lives, Christians are ready for the Lord if He comes unexpectedly, and they hasten the time of His appearing (i.e., they look forward to it with anticipation.)

Some ask, “With the heavens and the earth destroyed, where will God’s people live?” Peter attempted to give no detailed explanation. The answer is hidden in the omniscience and power of God. It is enough to know that God will provide a new heaven and a new earth, of a wholly different kind than this one. In that heaven and earth, righteousness will dwell. Peter’s imagery was clear, if not as picturesque and dramatic as John’s in Revelation:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of

heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, . . .” (Revelation 21:1-4).

Peter’s closing remarks repeated his exhortation to holy living. Christians needed to prepare themselves for life with Him, when all things are renewed and the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne (Matthew 19:28). As the Lord Himself was “a lamb unblemished and spotless” (1 Peter 1:19), Peter urged Christians to be “spotless and blameless” (2:14). The words may be a purposeful contrast to the false teachers who were “stains and blemishes.” While anxiously awaiting His return, the faithful were to remember that the delay would allow others to hear the gospel, be saved, and join the elect.

A singular witness to the authority and inspiration of other New Testament writings appears in 3:15. Paul wrote the first letter that came down to us, 1 Thessalonians, around A.D. 51, approximately fifteen years before the writing of 2 Peter. Further, if Peter was in Rome when he wrote, which we suppose he was, Paul had written his letter to the church in that city approximately eight years before. We do not know when, how, or by whom Paul’s letters were gathered together, but even as early as the writing of 2 Peter, Peter and his readers could have been acquainted with Paul’s letters.

Peter’s statement that the ignorant and unstable distort what Paul had written likely indicates that the false teachers described in chapter 2 had attempted to use statements in Paul’s letters to support their false teaching. Peter made it clear that he and Paul were brothers together in a common cause. Paul “according to the wisdom given him” had also written of the day of the Lord and of the consequent need for holy and righteous living (3:15, 16).

Which passages, or even which epistles of Paul, Peter alluded to in 3:15, 16 is difficult to say. Colossians, Ephesians, and Galatians were addressed to churches of Asia Minor. The churches of Asia could easily have known the letters to Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth. Further, Timothy was at Ephesus in Asia when Paul wrote to him, and Titus was on the nearby island of Crete. The significant thing is that Peter and his readers knew at least some of Paul’s letters and recognized them to be as authoritative as “the rest of the Scripture.” Of course, Paul himself affirmed that his words had authority because they were given by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:13; Ephesians 3:5).

Unfortunately, Christians in every period of time must be on guard not to be "carried away by the error of unprincipled men" (3:17). The basic truths, commandments, and way of life commended to Christians are in the New Testament for any who care to read them, but more than one Christian has been led away from his secure position by those who specialize in the "things hard to understand" (3:16) written by Paul and other New Testament authors. Christians need to beware of teachers who set aside clear, commonly understood teachings of the Scriptures in favor of their own peculiar interpretations of difficult and little understood passages. Many Christians have fallen and been crushed on the rocks of the seventy weeks of Daniel, the night visions of Zechariah, and the figurative language of Revelation.

CONCLUSION

The last chapter of 2 Peter contains one of the New Testament's most graphic descriptions of the second coming of the Lord. Modern Christians have trouble understanding the eager yearning which the first-century church had for the return of the Lord. From their first hearing of the gospel, Christians had learned that the Lord was coming back. They expected Him any time, and when a few years passed and He had not come, they began to wonder. Their detractors and enemies found the expectation to be a convenient object for ridicule and mockery.

Peter kept alive the hope of Christ's second coming in a context that helped Christians deal with the delay, however long it might be. He did not suggest that they should give up hope of His immediate return. The only way to expect the return of the Lord is to expect it shortly. To expect Him shortly is not the same as demanding that the Lord fit Himself into a human time frame. The Christian's faith is that the Lord will return.

(BEWARE continued from page 42)

freedom to have a clear head and good health excludes the freedom for alcoholic indulgence. The freedom for an honest man or woman to have self-respect excludes the freedom to lie, steal, and cheat. Every individual must choose which freedoms are more important to him. Peter said that the false teachers in the churches of Asia Minor who promised freedom were themselves slaves. Then he added the pungent statement, "... for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved" (2:19). The inspired men who wrote the New Testament did not view Christian freedom as license for self-in-

dulgence. James spoke of the gospel as "the perfect law, the law of liberty" (James 1:25; 2:12). Paul wrote, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death" (Romans 8:2).

The great tragedy of the false teachers was that when they enticed newly-won converts to follow them, they effectively sealed them out of the kingdom of God forever. Peter said, "It would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them" (2:21). For a recent convert to Christ to be drawn into bickering among those who claim the Lord's name is perhaps the most destructive thing that can happen to him. To illustrate the state of the recent convert who turns with disgust back to the world, Peter drew a proverb from Solomon (Proverbs 26:11) and another from his contemporary world. The one who turns back to the world after having known Christ, he said, is like a dog that returns to his vomit or a sow that returns to her wallowing (2:22).

CONCLUSION

Peter's purpose in his first letter was to strengthen and build up Christians who were suffering from outside forces. In comparison to the problems confronted in 2 Peter, it had been a fairly joyful task. The church has always borne up well in the face of persecutions from without; it has not fared as well from destructive forces arising from within. If the church of Christ is to influence the world for the Lord, Christians must have the courage to face problems that arise from within.

While tragedies lie behind the writing of this letter, it had to be written to avoid the greater tragedy of compromising the message of Christ. It is beautiful when brothers and sisters dwell together in peace and unity and carry out the mission Christ has given His church; but Christians should not be surprised when they occasionally must deal with internal dissension. Satan uses all the weapons of his arsenal to discourage and defeat Christians, and one of his most powerful tools is the perversion of the gospel by false teachers who claim to speak the truth.

Almost True

"Whatever is only almost true is quite false, and among the most dangerous of errors, because being so near truth, it is the more likely to lead astray."

Henry Ward Beecher

2 Peter 3 - David Phares

Intro.

1. Don't with context
2. Can't preach everything in one sermon.
3. Good preaching has to be condensed

Discussion

I. Attitude of the Scoffers.

- A. Walking after their own lusts (v. 3)
- B. Where is the promise of his coming - intended to express doubt.
- C. All things continue as they have always been
- D. They are willfully ignorant - don't want to know
- E. By the word of God.
 1. All things created by the word of God
 2. Present order held in place by the word of God (cf. Heb. 1:3).
 3. Bring flood on the ungodly.

II. Why Have We Not Seen it Happen?

- A. God doesn't operate on our schedule (v. 8)
- B. God's long-suffering is why the day of the Lord has not come (v. 9)

III. But The Day of the Lord Will Come (v. 10)

- A. All be destroyed.
- B. In view of this what kind of people should one be (v. 10-11).

2 PETER 3

- A. The Purpose of the Epistles (v. 1,2). *Greek word epistle occurs 24 times in N.T. Translated epistle 15 times + letter 9 times.*
1. "...stir up your pure minds"—To arouse thoroughly.
 2. Recognize—Be mindful.
- B. Scoffers come in last days (vv. 3-4).
1. Last days refer to the Christian dispensation, Acts 2:16,17; Heb. 1:1,2. *1 Tim. 4:1, 2 Tim. 3:1 -*
 2. Scoffers would be those that would mock and jeer at the idea of Christ's coming (cf. Gen. 19:14). *"mockers...with their mocking" (NASB)*
 3. The erroneous views of some of the first century Christians may have given grounds for their charges since some of them believed in the immediate return (Cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-17).
- C. The apostle's reply to the scoffers' charge that Christ would not return (vv. 5-9).
1. They alleged that the unvarying conformity of nature proved this.
 - a. They had deliberately and willfully ignored the lessons of the flood which demonstrated conclusively that all things have not continued as they were from the beginning (vv. 5-6).
 - b. The same word that brought the flood holds the earth in place today (v. 7).
 2. The lapse of time between the promise and the fulfillment is not to be interpreted as meaning God will not fulfill his commitments (v. 8).
 - a. The passing of time does not affect God's fulfillment as it does now.
 - b. The longer the interval between the promise and the fulfillment on man's part the less likely he will fulfill. Reasons:
 - (1) Man may die.
 - (2) He may forget his promise.
 - (3) He may violate his word and simply refuse to do what he promised.
 - (4) Conditions may arise making it impossible for him to perform it.
 - c. Since none of these are true of God it's idle for man to infer that the delay means God has forgotten.
 - d. An admonition to recognize that the delay is God's longsuffering because he wants all to be saved (v. 9).
- D. Heavens - 2 Peter 3:10
1. By the words of God "the heavens" were of old, 2 Pet. 3:5.
 2. The heavens and earth which are now kept in store by the same word, 2 Pet. 3:7.
 3. The heavens shall pass away with a great noise.
 4. God will destroy the same heavens he made with his word and holds in place with his word, 2 Pet. 3:10.
 5. Since God is eternal then his dwelling place is eternal and is therefore not included in the heavens that will pass away.
 6. Greek word used is ouranoi, Mt. 3:16; 24:29; Mk. 1:10; Lk. 12:33; Acts 2:34; 7:56.
 7. Judge Rutherford, founder of Jehovah's Witnesses, attempted to explain away 2 Peter 3:10 by saying that "...the apostle is here using symbolic language." The passage states that "...THE EARTH AND THE WORKS THAT ARE THEREIN SHALL BE BURNED UP" (Emphasis mine--JLW).

- a. The New World Translation (NWT) has corrupted the text to read, "Yet Jehovah's day will come as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a hissing noise, but the elements being intensely hot will be dissolved, and the earth and the works in it will be **discovered**" (Emphasis mine--JLW).
- b. Now let me say that there is a world of difference in a thing being **burned up** and a thing being **discovered**! Which had you rather hear: "Our dinner just got **burned up**?" or "Our dinner was just **discovered**!"?
- c. The words "burned up" are taken from the Greek **Katakaio** which means "to burn up, to consume with fire." The Greek for "discovered" is **Katanoeo**. The scholars have stated, "...discovered is strange and improbable" (Thayer). Also, "...discovered obviously makes utter nonsense of the place" (Burgon). The evidence is highly in deference to "burned up."
- d. The NWT, like the current A.D. 70 heresy, is not even consistent. The same Greek phrase is used elsewhere in the Scripture. Matt. 3:12, "...but the chaff he will **burn up** with fire..." (NWT). Revelation 8:7, "...A third of the earth was **burned up**, and a third of the trees was burned up, and all the green vegetation was **burned up**..." (NWT). [All emphasis mine--JLW.]
 - (1) Why would they translate correctly in these four instances and then incorrectly in the only other occurrence of the phrase?--Because 2 Peter 3:10 stands diametrically opposed to Jehovah's Witness' doctrine.
 - (2) This same place also stands diametrically opposed to the A.D. 70 error
- e. Not only is the NWT inconsistent in its translation (or mistranslation!)--it also contradicts itself on this very matter.
 - (1) Consider the wording of Hebrews 1:10 in the NWT: "...You at the beginning, O Lord, laid the foundations of the earth itself, and the heavens are the works of your hands, they themselves **will perish**..." [Emphasis mine--JLW]
 - (2) Then, within the context itself notice 2 Peter 3:7 in the NWT: "...by the same word the heavens and the earth that are now **stored up for fire**..." [Emphasis mine--JLW]. Shades of contradiction--what shall it be?
 - (3) The A.D. 70 errorists are in league with the doctrine of Jehovah's Witnesses.
 - (4) Paul warned in 1 Corinthians 15:33, "BE NOT DECEIVED. EVIL COMPANIONSHIPS CORRUPT GOOD MORALS."

(All the points under number 7 were written by Jesse Whitlock.)

E. Peter pictures dramatically the obligations falling on Christians because of what God will do in that day

1. First, the general exclamation (v. 11)
2. Second, and again, as in 1:5 with the imperative: "be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (v. 14)
3. Third, the warning (v. 17).

"AN EXPOSITION OF 2 PETER 3"

2 Peter 3: 1-18

Harry L. Robertson

THESIS: The second coming of Christ will be God's reply to those who ridicule knowing about His Son.

PURPOSE: To explain the meaning of 2 Peter 3 and present some practical applications to Christians today.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Background material of 2 Peter 3

a.2) Authenticity

- (1) Internal evidence verifying Simon Peter as the author
 - 1-V. 1 - "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle..."
 - 2-VV.13-14 - describes nature of his death (cf. Jn. 13:36, 21:19)
 - 3-V. 18 - association with Christ at transfiguration (cf. Mt. 17:1-7)
- (2) Doesn't bear characteristics of a forgery
 - 1-Isn't romantic in nature or doesn't express anything new about Peter
 - 2-Autobiographical allusions

b.2) Date - @ 66-67 A.D.

c.3) Key Word - "Knowledge" (referred to 14 times)

d.4) Key Verse - 2 Peter 3:18

e.5) Outline of 2 Peter

- (1) Receiving the Word of God, 1:1-21
- (2) Rejecting the Word of God, 2:1-22
- (3) Ridiculing the Word of God, 3:1-13
- (4) Return of the Word of God, 3:14-18

2. Basis for Misunderstanding of 2 Peter 3

a.1) Concerns the "return of Christ"

- (1) In reference to the destruction of Jerusalem?
- (2) In reference to the "rapture"?
- (3) In reference to the beginning of the "millennial kingdom"?

b.2) Concerns the destruction of the World

- (1) Will there be a new heavens and new earth, i.e., one other than the one presently existing?
- (2) Are the "new heavens and new earth" representative of the present earth, remodeled for the "millennial kingdom"?
- (3) Does the phrase "new heavens and new earth" represent heaven as spoken of in Revelation 21: 1-22:5?

DISCUSSION:

I. Ridiculing the Word of God, 2 Peter 3:1-13

A. Mockers and the end of the world (vv. 1-7) - In this section, Peter discusses:

1) The purpose of the epistle (1-2)

a.1) To stir up their sincere minds

b.2) To encourage the readers to remember:

- (1) The words spoken through the holy prophets
- (2) The commandment spoken by the Lord and Savior through the apostles

2/ The character of the epistle (3-6)

a (✓) Their nature

(1) Mockers (ἐκτρεφόμενοι) - those who ridicule, make fun of; tricksters, cf. Jd. 18

(2) Walk after own lusts - lit., "live for lusting"

b (✓) Their time of appearance

(1) "in the last days" - i.e., from the beginning of the reign of the Messiah to the end of the world (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; Acts 2:16-17; Heb. 1:1-2)

(2) NOTE: Such appear in all generations (cf. Gen. 19:12-14; Acts 17:31-32)

c (✓) Their mockery

(1) "If the world continues as it always has, and Jesus has not yet returned as He promised, then He was not the Son of God, and it isn't essential to know about Him."

(2) The world continues as it always has, and Jesus has not yet returned as He promised.

(3) Therefore, He was not the Son of God, and it isn't essential to know about Him."

d (✓) Their forgetfulness

(1) Forget - to escape the notice of; to purposely allow to pass

(2) God's swift and sudden destruction by the flood was a precedent set by the Creator that the mockers couldn't consistently deny; thus, they chose to forget it.

3/ The punishment of the epistle (7)

a (✓) By the same word (i.e., the authority of God, cf. v. 5), heavens and earth have been stored up

(1) stored up (ἐκκείμενα) - stored with a view of helping a special case in need (cf. 1 Cor. 16:2) (Vine's)

(2) Earth and heavens are set aside for destruction

b (✓) By same word, heavens and earth have been reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men

(1) reserved (ἐκπεσσω) - to guard, preserve with a retributive issue (Vine's)

(2) Heavens and earth are preserved for the day of judgment

B. The Day of the Lord (vv. 8-13) - In this section, Peter describes the second coming as a time which:

1/ Displays God's long-suffering nature (8-9)

a (✓) The Lord is not bound by a time schedule

(1) God views events from the aspect of eternity - not how much time passes from T₁ to T₂

(2) Not important to God that Christ has not returned during the time prescribed by the mockers

b (✓) The Lord is long-suffering

(1) He is not slack, i.e., his reason for not returning is not because He can't.

(2) He is long-tempered, i.e., "God has a self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate or blaze up in anger." (Trench)

(3) NOTE: Because God desires man to use his free will to choose Him, He allows them many opportunities and much time to repent (1 Pet. 3:20; 1 Tim. 2:3-4)

~~C~~ 2) Demands preparation by man (10-11)

(1) ~~Q~~ The "day of the Lord" - when will it occur?

(a) ~~Q~~ In the Old Testament, it depicts a time of judgment

(b) ~~Q~~ In the New Testament, it generally refers to the day of judgment (cf. 1 Cor. 1:8, 5:5; Phil. 1:6, 10, 2:16; and 1 Thes. 5:2)

(2) ~~Q~~ The "day of the Lord" - What will happen?

(a) ~~Q~~ It will come suddenly, i.e., as a thief (cf. 1 Thes. 5:2-4; Mt. 24:43-44)

(b) ~~Q~~ It will bring destruction - heaven shall pass away with a great noise, and the earth shall be dissolved

~~d~~ 3) Depicts a day of happiness and sorrow (12-13)

(1) A day of happiness for those who desire the Lord's return

(2) A day of happiness for those who look for a new heavens and new earth (most of the following material is taken from Guy N. Woods, Gospel Advocate Commentary on the Epistles of Peter, John and Jude)

(a) ~~Q~~ "Heaven" is used in reference to : (1) where the birds fly; (2) where the stars are; and (3) where the throne is and where our Lord reigns (ps. 11:4)

(b) ~~Q~~ The present earth is not the new earth because of:

(1) John 18:36-37; and (2) John 14:1-6 - the place prepared for Jesus' disciples was not this earth

(c) ~~Q~~ The new heavens and new earth where the righteous will live (cf. Rev. 21,22) is typified by the present heavens and earth where we now live

(3) A day of sorrow for those who:

(a) ~~Q~~ Have mocked Christ's return and the ensuing destruction of the world

(b) ~~Q~~ Love this world (cf. 1 Jn. 2:15-17)

II. The Return of the Word of God, 2 Peter 3:14-18

A. Look Diligently (v. 14)

1) That we may be found in peace

2) That we may be "without spot and blameless"

a (1) A perfectly cleansed body (cf. 1 Pet. 1:19; 1 Jn. 1:7)

b (2) Essential to enter the eternal kingdom (2 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 21:27)

B. Look Thankfully (vv. 15-16)

1) Because the longer Christ delays His coming, the more time we have to work and/or repent

2) Because we have the inspired messages of Peter and Paul concerning these matters of eternity

NOTE: A Special Warning

a (1) Don't misunderstand the information you have concerning the return of the Lord

b (2) Don't wrest the Scriptures that are concerned with the Lord's return

(1) ~~Q~~ (Cτρεφικα) - to distort or twist, e.g., a victim on the torture rack was "wrested"

(2) This passage would implicitly refer to any passage of inspired Scripture

ex. Look Carefully (vv. 17-18)

- 1) So that you're not carried away:
 - (1) With the wicked
 - (2) From your own steadfastness and hence, the grace of God
- 2) So that you do not fail to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord

3, NOTE: To grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord will be the answer to all the questions raised by those who reject and ridicule a knowledge of the Son of God

CONCLUSION/SOME PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS ON 2 PETER AND 2 PETER 3:

1. For 2 Peter

- a) Through His word, God gives man all the information he needs pertaining to life and godliness
- b) Man can know how to enter the eternal kingdom
- c) Man's plan for salvation comes from God - not from man's private interpretation
- d) Men will reject that very message which can save them

2. For 2 Peter 3

- a) Men will ridicule the concept of Christ's second coming
- b) Men must be prepared for the return of Christ
- c) Those who have prepared for and anxiously anticipate Christ's return will be rewarded
- d) To grow in God's grace and the knowledge of His Son is the key to entrance into the eternal kingdom

- GARY L. ROBERTSON

WILLINGLY IGNORANT #3

Bob Berard

Far from eternal bliss is the prospect of those willingly ignorant persons about whom we have studied in this series. Like that of the infamous scoffers Peter reports, the end of those willingly ignorant of spiritual essentials is perdition (2 Pet. 3:3-7; Mt. 7:21-23). Articles #1 and #2 discussed those who are willingly ignorant of the Bible in general and those who are willingly ignorant of the purpose of Bible preaching. Consider now those who are willingly ignorant of their need to acknowledge past sins even though they have resumed regular attendance.

It is a sometimes a surprising, but nevertheless a delightful thing to see a member who has long been willfully absent from our assemblies walk in the meeting house door. In that moment our love for this erring one's soul causes us to rejoice at what appears to be a certain return of a "prodigal son" and both love and duty demand that we be eager to accept him back as part of the faithful family (Mt. 22:39; Lk 15:20). However, it is a strange thing that such a member sometimes returns to the assemblies and resumes regular attendance with never a comment explaining his sorrow for his unfaithfulness or his intention to again be an active soldier of the cross. Before long his presence in the assemblies becomes an expected thing and both he and the rest of the church behave as if no interruption in his service ever occurred. Is this right? Are we to assume that repentance has occurred? What are we to do?

Could a husband/wife leave his/her mate for several months and return with never a word of explanation or apology about his departure or future intentions? Could an employee not show up for work for all of the month of July and walk in on August 1 and simply take up where he left off, leaving boss and co-workers guessing about the absence?

The prodigal son left no doubt about his change of will when he returned to his father's house. In his determination to return, he resolved to confess his fault and when he met his father he announced, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight..." (Lk. 15:17-19).

Simon, when exposed in his sin, requested the prayer of Peter, thereby implying an acknowledgement of his guilt as charged and his desire to be restored (Acts 8:20-24).

John and James further declare God's will in this matter. We are to confess (acknowledge) our sins to both God and man. In every case, one's sins should be confessed to God; in cases in which our brethren know of the sin, they have need to know of our repentance (1 John 1:9; James 5:17). *More on this next time.*

ABOUNDING MORE AND MORE

Al Macias

To love one another is one of the most important principles of Christianity. We can find passage after passage commanding us to love one another as Christ loved us. If we as Christians would only love one another as we have been commanded, many problems which sometimes occur among ourselves could be completely avoided. The apostle John wrote about how important Christian love really is. We read in I John 3:14, "*We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death.*" What was the apostle John saying in this passage? He was saying that one of the signs indicating that one has passed from death to life is his love for the brethren.

Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, exhorted them not to just love one another but to abound in it more and more. We read in I Thessalonians 4:11,12, "*...and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business and to work with your own hands, as we command you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.*" Paul exhorted the Thessalonian brethren to study to be quiet. This meant that the brethren were to avoid meddling or being busybodies in the lives of others. Paul also wrote to Timothy concerning the kind of life that is expected of all Christians. In I Timothy 2:2b-3 we read, "*...that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our savior.*"

Paul, in writing to the Thessalonian brethren, instructed them and us to do our own business and work with our hands. What did Paul mean by "doing our own business"? It is a commandment from God that Christians attend to their own affairs and not be wanting to interfere in the affairs of other people. Apparently the Thessalonian brethren were having a problem with this. Finally, Paul exhorted the brethren to work with their own hands. Even from the beginning, in the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were told to dress and keep the garden.

What would be accomplished if the Thessalonian brethren followed the instruction given them by the apostle Paul? They would gain the respect of them that were without; those in the world would have no reason to speak against the kind of lives the Christians were living. And so would it be today.

Remember those who are at Hensel Camp this week, as they study God's word and enjoy recreation together. We appreciate those who are teaching, cooking and supervising the activities.

Carroll Osborn – “The Christological Use of
1 Enoch 1.9 in Jude 14, 15
In New Testament Studies – 1977 – pp. 334-341

1. Printed by Cambridge.
2. Can get the material for \$30.00.
3. Does not tell where to get the book or if it is available.

Completed
10/4/11

JUDE OR JUDAS IN THE BIBLE

- A. Two apostles wore the same name Judas.
 - 1. Judas, the apostle, Luke 16:16. >
 - > One of these two.
 - 2. Judas, not Iscariot, John 14. >
- B. Judas, brother of James and Lord, Mark 6:3; Matt. 13:55.
- C. Judas of Galilee, Acts 5:37.
- D. Judas, surnamed Barsabas, Acts 15:22.
- E. Judas, of Damascus, Acts 9:11.
- F. Thaddaeus, sometimes thought to be Judas, Matt. 10:3.
- G. Time of writing--Date 64 determined by similarity of material to 2 Peter 2.
 - 1. Some say must have been written a good deal before or after the fall of Jerusalem.
 - 2. Can't tell for sure when written.
- H. Written for this reason?
 - 1. Contend for faith.
 - 2. Warning against false teachers.

22 132
6 10,50
138 1125

I. AUTHORSHIP:A. Jude, the half-brother of Jesus:

1. Internal Evidence: Jude 1---Don't know much about this Jude
 - a. Matt. 13:55
 - b. Mark 6:3
2. External Evidence:
 - a. Athenagoras (177) shows definite knowledge of Jude. 1st to mention Jude.
 - b. Muratorian Canon (180)
 - c. Tertullian (180-200)
 - d. Clement of Alexandria
 - e. Origen---Said that some doubted it.
 - f. Not weighty---Brevity---Cites apocryphal book.

B. Another Jude---No manuscript evidence.C. Pseudonymous work: If so, question: Why would the writer choose a man who is not well known?~~III. DATE:~~

A. 60-140.

B. Argument For late date:

1. "Our common salvation"---This doesn't prove late date--
2. "Faith once delivered"---But Paul used faith as a body of truth earlier:
 - a. Acts 6:7
 - b. Rom. 1:5
 - c. Gal. 1:23--
3. v. 17---Doesn't necessarily imply author lived at later date.

III. RELATIONSHIP TO 2 PETER:A. Most believe author of 2 Peter copied Jude, orB. Jude copied 2 Peter, orC. Both copied common source.D. In favor of 2 Peter copying Jude:

1. Longer copied shorter.
2. Jude is harsher so Peter toned it down.
3. Jude used apocryphal book and 2 Peter author rejected them.

E. In Favor of Jude copying 2 Peter:

1. It is more likely a big name apostle would be copied.
2. Strongest argument, but no guarantee.

~~IV. PURPOSE:~~A. PolemicB. Heresy involves: All such condemned

1. Faulty Christology (v. 4).
2. Misuse of grace (Libertines)---vv. 7, 16.
3. Product of imagination rather than revelation (v. 8).

V. DESTINATION:A. Palestine or Antioch.

B. The readers seems to have known the writer personally (v. 17-18).

(77)

VI. JUDE'S USE OF NON-CANONICAL SOURCES:

A. Jude copies 1 Enoch 1:9:

1. Only one we know for sure in the N.T. Apocryphal book
2. 1 Enoch dated 150-50 B.C.

B. Other Bible Writers quoted other sources to illustrate, but not to claim inspiration for the writer they quoted.

1. Heb. 11:37----"sawn asunder"
2. Titus 1:12----Epimenedes--Paul calls him a prophet.
3. Acts 17:28---Paul cites non-canonical source.
4. 2 Tim. 3:8----Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses

C. V. 9---Jude seems to have cited from "Assumption of Moses"

1. Clement of Alexander, Origen and Didymus say that Jude referred to it.
2. Until more evidence can be brought forth they probably told the truth about Jude.

ARTICLE:

Carroll Osborn---"The Christological Use of 1 Enoch 1:9 in Jude 14,15."
In New Testament Studies---1977--pp. 334-341.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Jude 1-4

JAMES MEADOWS

Introduction

1. This great text is the battle cry of the church. The great truths set forth in this text are demanding and challenging to our nature. It eliminates the idea of our contending for anything that is not "the faith." It demands that we allow nothing to cause us to give less than all diligence in contending for the faith. It summons every member of the church for loyalty to the conflict between truth and error.
2. Jude gave all diligence to write about the "common salvation." Just think how important that subject is.
 - a. It is the "common salvation" because it is available to all, both Jew and Gentile who will comply with the conditions thereof.
 - (1) John the Baptist came to turn Israel back to God, Lk. 1:16.
 - (2) The twelve, during our Lord's personal ministry, were to "go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," Mt. 10:6.
 - (3) But the great commission says "go teach all nations," Mt. 28:19.
 - (4) The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men," Tit. 2:11.
 - (5) It is the "so great salvation," Heb. 2:1-4.
 - (6) Paul refers to the "common faith," Tit. 1:4.
 - (7) Peter addressed one of his epistles to those that "have obtained like precious faith," 2 Pet. 1:1.
3. But, great as the theme was on which he purposed to write, Jude, upon learning that special dangers threatened "the faith," suspended his purposed treatise and wrote without delay to exhort his brethren to "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered for all to the saints."
4. The present study purposes to ask and answer several questions about "the faith" in order that each may be better prepared to "earnestly contend for the faith."

Discussion

I. WHAT IS THE FAITH?

- A. Faith is used several ways in the Bible.
 1. It is used in the subjective sense which is simply the act of believing a thing, Rom. 10:17.
 2. It sometimes means the conviction that a thing is right or wrong, Rom. 14:22,23.
 3. It sometimes, as in our text, means that which is believed. "The faith for which Jude's readers were thus earnestly to contend, put objectively here for the gospel, is the sum of all that which Christians are to believe and obey."
- B. The faith means the gospel, the doctrine, the truth, the word of God, the whole of Christianity.
 1. "...and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith," Acts 6:7.

- a. The apostles preached the gospel on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:1-40.
- b. The high priest accused them of filling "Jerusalem with your doctrine," Acts 5:28.
- c. "Daily in the temple, and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ," Acts 5:42.
- d. They gave themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word," Acts 6:4.
- e. The word of God increased in Jerusalem, Acts 6:7.
- f. The priests were obedient to the faith, Acts 6:7.
- g. Surely the gospel, doctrine, teaching and preaching Jesus Christ, the word, and the faith all refer to the same thing.
2. Elymas the sorcerer sought "to turn away the deputy from the faith," Acts 13:8.
 - a. When Sergius Paulus called for Barnabas and Saul "he desired to hear the word of God," Acts 13:7.
 - b. They were preaching the word of God, Acts 13:5.
 - c. Paul accused Elymas of perverting the "right ways of the Lord," Acts 13:8.
 - d. When the deputy saw what happened to Elymas he "believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord," Acts 13:12.
 - e. The word of God, the faith, the right ways of the Lord, and the doctrine of the Lord all refer to the same body of truth.
3. On the return part of his first missionary journey Paul and his company stopped at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith," Acts 14:22.
 - a. They preached the "word of God" or "the word of the Lord" when they first came to Antioch, Acts 13:44-49.
 - b. They preached the gospel at Lystra and Derbe, Acts 14:6,7.
 - c. In admonishing them to continue in the faith Paul was admonishing them to continue in that which they had heard and believed, namely, the gospel, the word of God.
4. The faith is come, Gal. 3:22-27.
 - a. In this instance, the word "faith" is made to stand for the full Christian system of salvation.
 - b. In the context the word "faith" occurs five times and in each instance, in the original text, it is preceded by the article "the" which means that the word faith in all these passages, is used in a specific and technical sense.

II. WHAT DOES "ONCE DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS" MEAN?

- A. Thayer says "once for all" means "like, Lat, Semel, used of what is so done as to be of perpetual validity and never needs repetition, once for all: Heb. 6:4; 10:2; 1 Pet. 3:18.
 1. Christ "was once offered to bear the sins of many..." Heb. 9:28.
 2. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins..." 1 Pet. 3:18.

3. Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth, Jn. 16:13. Jude is affirming he kept his promise.
 4. Paul declared the scriptures are able to furnish man completely, 2 Tim. 3:16,17.
 5. Peter says God has given us all that pertains to life and godliness, 2 Pet. 1:3.
 6. "The meaning is that the truth is delivered for all time: it is a permanent deposit, it will never be superseded, amended, or modified. As it now stands, it is a perfect, adequate, completely inviolable deposit of truth, providing the means with which to confute the gainsayer, and resist the advocate of false doctrine."
 7. This passage clearly refutes all claims to modern revelation.
 - a. It "refutes the claim of the Catholic Church that the voice of the pope is the voice of God and that God continues to speak through any living representative."
 - b. It refutes such pretended revelators as Joseph Smith, Mrs. Ellen G. White, etc.
 - c. One must deny the truthfulness of what Jude says or cease to advocate the idea of later revelations.
- B. How was the faith delivered?
1. The me~~n~~n of old spake as they were guided by the Holy Spirit, 2 Pet. 1:20,21.
 2. The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all truth, Jn. 3:16.
 - a. They were to remain in Jerusalem until they received power, Lk. 24:49.
 - b. They would receive power when the Holy Spirit came, Acts 1:8.
 - c. The Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, Acts 2:1-4.
 3. The apostle Paul claimed that he was guided by the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 2:6-13.
 - a. He spoke the wisdom of God, v. 7.
 - b. He spoke those things which had not been previously revealed, vv. 8,9.
 - c. He spoke these things as they were revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, v. 10a.
 - d. He declares that just as the spirit of man knows man so the Spirit of God knew God and they received the Spirit of God, vv. 10b,11.
 - e. He declares that the Holy Spirit help choose the words with which to express that revealed, v. 13.
 4. Paul claimed that what he preached was a direct revelation from God, Gal. 1:11,12.
 5. Peter said the apostles preached the gospel by the Holy Spirit, 1 Pet. 1:12.
 6. The apostles "were the inspired and miraculously empowered agents to whom the faith was committed and through whom it has been given once for all to God's children."
- C. The faith was "once delivered unto the saints."

1. The word "saints" applies to God's children.
2. It is applied to God's children 30 times in the Old Testament and 50 times in the New Testament.
3. Paul said the faith (mystery) is "made manifest to the saints," Col. 1:26.

III. WHY MUST THE FAITH BE PROCLAIMED?

- A. The faith must be preached if sinners are to believe and be saved, Acts 6:7; 24:25; Rom. 10:17.
- B. The faith must be obeyed if sinners are to be freed from their sins, Rom. 6:17,18.
 1. That form of doctrine refers to the gospel of Christ, 1 Cor. 15:1-4.
 2. The Romans, as do all, obey it when they believe and are baptized into Christ, Rom. 6:3,4.
- C. The faith must be proclaimed in order for the church to be edified and to grow.
 1. The churches established by Paul were established in the faith by hearing the decrees preached by Paul, Acts 16:4,5.
 2. Paul told the elders from Ephesus that the word is able to build up, Acts 20:32.
 3. The truth was revealed that the church might be edified, Eph. 4:11-16.
 4. We are to desire the sincere milk of God's word that we may grow, 1 Pet. 2:2.
- D. The faith must be proclaimed because only those that "continue in the faith" will be saved eternally.
 1. The Christians at Lystra, Iconium and Antioch were to "continue in the faith," Acts 14:21,22.
 2. The Corinthians were to "stand fast in the faith," 1 Cor. 16:13.
 3. We are admonished to examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, 2 Cor. 13:5.
 4. We will be presented holy, unblamable, unprovable if we continue in the faith, Col. 1:22,23.
 5. Great effort will be needed to continue in the faith because:
 - a. One can depart, 1 Tim. 4:1.
 - b. One can deny the faith, 1 Tim. 5:8.
 - c. One can err from the faith, 1 Tim. 6:10.

IV. WHY MUST CHRISTIANS CONTEND FOR THE FAITH?

- A. What does it mean to "earnestly contend"?
 1. The original word for "earnestly contend" or "contend earnestly" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament and it literally means to fight.
 2. It is here figurative used to "denote extreme efforts which are to characterize the faithful in their defense of the truth, however formidable and numerous its enemies may be.
 3. The word properly signifies to strive as in the Olympic game; that is, with their whole force.
 - a. "dialegomai"

- (1) Is translated "preach" (Acts 20:7), "reason with" (Acts 17:2), "dispute" (Mk. 9:34).
 - (2) Basic meaning: to argue, discourse, debate, discuss, contend.
 - b. "Apologia"
 - (1) Is translated "answer" (Acts 25:16), "clearing of one's self" (2 Cor. 7:11), "defense" (Acts 22:1).
 - (2) Basic meaning: a defense, to make good one's cause, to set forth evidence which defends one's position.
 - c. "agonidzomai"
 - (1) Is translated "strive" (Lk. 13:24), "fight" (Jn. 18:36), "laboring fervently" (Col. 4:12).
 - (2) Basic meaning: to be a combatant, to fight, strive earnestly, to endeavor with strenuous zeal, to contend with adversaries.
- B. Christians must earnestly contend for the faith because it is commanded by God and upheld by example.
 - 1. Put on the armor of God and use it, Eph. 6:10-18.
 - 2. Timothy instructed, 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:3; 1 Tim. 6:12.
 - 3. Peter says, 1 Pet. 3:15.
 - 4. Jesus engaged in public debate with the scribes (Mk. 9:14ff, the Sadducees (Mk. 12:18-28) and the Pharisees (Mt. 22:41-46).
 - 5. Paul said he was set for the defense and confirmation of the gospel, Phil. 1:7,17.
 - a. The word "defense" here means a "verbal defense," a speech in defense.
 - b. The defence (apologia) of the gospel means the defence of the gospel against the attacks which come from outside; it is the defence of the gospel against the arguments and assaults of the enemies of Christianity. The Christian has to be ready to be a defender of the faith, and to give a reason for the hope that is in him."
- C. Christians must earnestly contend for the faith because many false prophets are gone out into the world, 1 Jn. 4:1.
 - 1. There will be false teachers within the church.
 - a. It was the appearance of such teachers that caused Jude's concern and immediate reason for writing the epistle.
 - b. Jude reveals the characteristics of these early opponents of the faith and the same qualities are displayed today.
 - (1) They creep in alongside, craftily infiltrating the saints while pretending to be something they are not, v. 4.
 - (2) They are men of unholy, impure motives, v. 4.
 - (3) They are most indignant in the presence of proper authority, vv. 8-10.
 - (4) They are destructive and willing to compromise, v. 11.
 - (5) They are hidden dangers, making progress by false promises, vv. 12,13.
 - (6) They use others for their advantage, v. 16.
 - c. Paul warned the elders from Ephesus of false teachers among them,

Acts 20:30.

- d. Paul had to contend for the faith because of false brethren, Gal. 2:4.
- e. Peter said there would be false teachers among you, 2 Pet. 2:1,2.
- 2. There will be opponents to the faith outside of the church.
 - a. Some will hold the truth in unrighteousness, Rom. 1:18.
 - b. Some change the truth of God into a lie, Rom. 1:25.
 - c. Some will have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof, 2 Tim. 3:5,7,8.
 - d. Some will have no love for the truth, 2 Thess. 2:10.
- 3. Christians must carefully note and follow Jude's instructions to successfully meet and overcome those in error.
 - a. The saints must be aware of, and dedicated to, their spiritual standing with God, vv. 1,2.
 - b. Christians must recognize the need to stand earnestly for the truth, v. 3.
 - c. They are to remember that God has dealt with error many times and is competent to deal with it again, vv 5-7.
 - d. They are to remember the promise of God to be with those who uphold his will, vv. 14,15.
 - e. They must hold fast the words of Jesus, vv. 17-19.
 - f. They are to assist, if possible, those in error to return to the truth, vv. 22, 23.
 - g. They are to commit themselves in fullness to the care of God, vv. 24,25.
- 4. Every Christian must be involved in this fight.
 - a. Preachers must preach the word, 2 Tim. 4:1-5.
 - b. Elders must hold fast the faithful word, Tit. 1:9-14.
 - c. The church must mark those that cause division, Rom. 16:17,18.
- D. In contending for the faith Christians will:
 - 1. Speak against immorality, Jude 4. There have always been those that made Christian liberty an excuse for ungodly living.
 - 2. Speak against atheism, liberalism, and all other "isms" contrary to the faith, Jude 4, 1 John 2:22.
 - 3. Make doctrine or "the faith" a test of fellowship.
 - a. In a new book entitled "The protest of a Troubled Protestant" (study).
 - b. The apostles and the early church definitely made doctrine a test of fellowship, 2 Jn. 9-11.
 - (1) Jews tried to make circumcision a test of being saved, Acts 15:1; Gal. 2:1-5.
 - (2) The apostles did not accept just any baptism, Acts 19:1-3, 4,5.
 - (3) The apostles did not accept just any kind of worship, 1 Cor. 10:14-22.
 - (4) Paul made the doctrine of the resurrection a test of fellowship, 2 Tim. 2:16-18.
 - 4. Teach there is such a thing as absolute truth and that we can know that

truth. There are those who contend "there is such a thing as absolute truth, but we can never know it, thus we must ever view it as a goal which demands unflagging efforts to attain it."

- a. "How long can New Testament Christianity survive in an atmosphere where its teachers question everything, are tentative in all things, are non-militant in all their positions, who must view all as in the same tentative quest, and to whom it is said that a healthy respect for the tentative finds of others would become mandatory."
 - b. "If we cannot learn the truth, then the Bible is not even a meaningful revelation from God to man. What difference would it make (if the Bible is not God's truth) if none of us can possibly learn the truth. This is false because:
 - (1) We are to study the truth, 2 Tim. 2:15.
 - (2) Learn the truth, 2 Tim. 3:7.
 - (3) Live the truth, Phil. 1:27.
 - (4) Preach the truth, Mk. 16:15,16.
5. Teach that apart from Christ and his church there is no salvation, Lk. 19:10; Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; Mk. 16:16; Eph. 5:23; Eph. 1:22,23; 1 Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:4.

Charles Pledge
Contending for the Faith
Jude 1-4

Introduction

1. Read the text.
2. Attitudes are certainly different from those in times past about the truth.
3. Our attitude must be right but we must contend for the truth.
4. "We ought not to make people feel guilty." How can a sinner be made to turn from his sins unless he feels guilty.
 - I. What We Are To Do? Contend.
 - II. What We Are To Contend For? The Faith.
 - III. Why? Certain men crept in unawares.
 - IV. The two-pronged attack?
 - A. On life - "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness."
 - B. Doctrine - "denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."
 - V. "You can't have an inspired word of God without an authoritative word of God and it is foolish to talk of an authoritative word of God without an inspired word of God."

What the Bible Teaches About Contending for the Faith

James Meadows

"Jude, The servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: Mercy unto you, and peace and love be multiplied. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." (Jude 1-4.)

This great test is the battle cry of the church. The great truths set forth in this text are demanding and challenging to our nature. It eliminates the idea of us contending for anything that is not "the faith." It demands that we allow nothing to cause us to give less than all diligence in contending for "the faith." It summons every member of the church for loyalty to the conflict between truth and error.

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The present study purposes to ask and answer several questions about "the faith" in order that each of us may be better prepared to "earnestly contend for the faith."

I. What is the Faith?

A. Faith is used several ways in the Bible.

1. It is used in the subjective sense which is simply the act of believing a thing. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17.)

2. Faith, sometimes means the conviction of the right or wrong of something. Paul clearly pointed out to the Romans that the eating of meats was not wrong in itself, but if one believed it to be wrong, then it would not be "of faith" to go ahead and eat it. "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. 14:22, 23.)

3. Faith is used in our text, and in many other verses, to mean that which is believed. "The 'faith' for which Jude's readers were thus earnestly to contend, put objectively here for the gospel, is the sum of all that which Christians are to believe and obey."²

B. The faith means the gospel, the doctrine, the truth, the word of God, the whole of Christianity.

1. "...And a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:7.) The apostles preached the *gospel* on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:1-40.) The high priest accused them of filling "Jerusalem with your *doctrine*." (Acts 5:28.) "Daily in the temple, and in every house they ceased not to *teach and preach Jesus Christ*." (Acts 5:42.) They said we will "give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the *word*." (Acts 6:4.) "The *word of God* increased in Jerusalem..." (Acts 6:7a.) The priests were "obedient to the *faith*." Since the apostles were preaching the gospel, doctrine, Jesus Christ, and the word, then the faith must be the same.

these passages, is used in a specific and technical sense."³

II. What Does "Once Delivered Unto the Saints" Mean?

A. The words "once delivered" in the King James Version are "which was once for all delivered" in the American Standard Edition. Thayer says "once for all" means "like, *Lat*, *Semel*, used of what is so done as to be of perpetual validity and never needs repetition, once for all: Hebrews 6:4; 10:2; 1 Peter 3:18; Jude 3, 5." ⁴

Observing the use of the word "once" in other verses will help us to more fully grasp its meaning here.

1. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." (Heb. 9:28.) "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins." (1 Pet. 3:18.) By one sacrifice Christ did everything necessary to the removal of man's sins. Just as his sacrifice was complete, perfect, and never needs to be done again, so "the faith" that has been "once for all delivered" is perfect, complete and never needs to be repeated.

2. Christ promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." (John 16:13.) Jude is affirming that Christ kept his promise.

3. Paul declared that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17.)

4. Peter wrote "according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." (2 Pet. 1:3.)

5. "The meaning is that the truth is delivered for all time: it is a permanent deposit, it will never be superceded, emended, or modified. As it now stands, it is a perfect, adequate, complete and inviolable deposit of truth, providing the means with which to confute the gainsayer, and resist the advocate of false doctrine."⁵

This passage clearly refutes all claims to modern revelations. It "refutes the claim of the Catholic Church that the voice of God and that God continues to speak through any such living representative."⁶ It also refutes such pretended revelators as Joseph Smith, Mrs. Ellen G. White, or any other person who claims to speak by inspiration or revelation today. One must deny the truthfulness of what Jude states or cease to advocate the idea of a latter-day revelation from God.

B. How was "the faith" delivered?

1. The men of God in the old time spake by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. 1:20, 21.)

2. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth. (John 16:13.) They were to remain in Jerusalem until they received power from on high. "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father unto you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:49.) They would receive power when the Holy Spirit came on them. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8.) The Holy Spirit came on the apostles on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of our Lord. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4.)

3. The apostle Paul claimed that he was guided by the Holy Spirit in his message. "Howbeit we speak wisdom among they that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known

it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." (1 Cor. 2:6-13.) Paul make several claims:

- a. He spoke the wisdom of God. (Verse 7.)
- b. He spoke the things which had not been previously revealed unto man. (Verses 8,9.)
- c. He spoke these things as they were revealed unto him by the Spirit. (Verse 10a.)
- d. He declares that just as the spirit in a man is the only one that really knows him (unless he reveals his heart), so the only one that knew the mind of God was the Spirit of God. (Verses 10b, 11.)
- e. Since the apostles received the Spirit of God who knew the mind of God, then the apostles knew the mind of God. (Verse 12.)
- f. He also declared that the Holy Spirit not only revealed *these things* to them, but chose *the words* with which to express them. (Verse 13.)

4. Paul also claimed that the gospel he preached was a direct revelation from Jesus Christ. "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1:11, 12.)

5. Peter said they (the apostles) "preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." (1 Pet. 1:12.)

6. The apostles "were the inspired and miraculously empowered agents to whom the faith was committed and through whom it has been given once for all to God's children."⁷

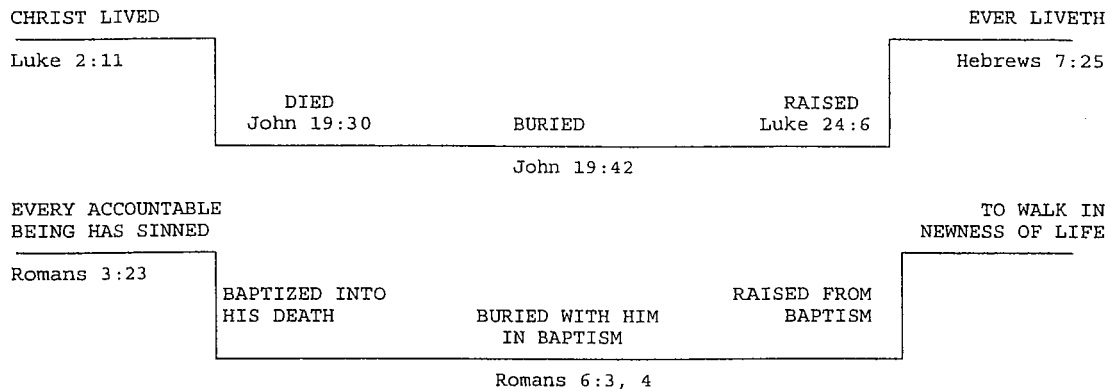
C. "The faith" was "once delivered unto the saints." The word "saints" applies to God's children. It is applied to God's children thirty times in the Old Testament and fifty times in the New Testament. In Colossians 1:26, Paul refers to "the faith" as the "mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made *manifest to the saints*."

III. Why Must the Faith Be Proclaimed?

A. "The faith" must be preached if sinners are to believe and be saved. The apostles preached "the faith" in Jerusalem. (Acts 6:7.) Felix heard Paul "concerning the faith in Christ." (Acts 24:25.) Faith comes by hearing "the faith" and it comes in no other way. (Rom. 10:17.)

B. "The faith" must be obeyed if sinners are to be freed from their sins. The Romans were freed from their sins when they obeyed "that form of doctrine." "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." (Rom. 6:17, 18.) "The faith" and "that form of doctrine," as already shown, refer to the same body of truth. That form of doctrine which the Romans obeyed was the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:1-4.) They had obeyed it through belief and baptism into Christ. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness

of life." (Rom. 6:3, 4.) Notice:



C. "The faith must be proclaimed in order for the church to be edified and to grow. At the beginning of Paul's second missionary journey, Paul and his company went through the cities and "delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily." (Acts 16:4, 5.) Paul commended the elders from Ephesus "to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (Acts 20:28.) Again, Paul wrote that Christ gave some "apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. 4:11-16.) We are to desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow. (1 Pet. 2:2.)

D. "The faith" must be proclaimed because only those that "continue in the faith" will be saved eternally. Paul exhorted the Christians at Lystra, Iconium and Antioch to "continue in the faith." (Acts 14:21, 22.) The Corinthians were told to "stand fast in the faith" (1 Cor. 16:13), and to "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Cor. 13:5a). Paul told the Colossians that the Lord would be able to present them holy, unblamable, and unreprouvable "if you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." (Col. 1:22, 23.) Great effort will be needed to continue in the faith because, (1) one can "depart from the faith" (1 Tim. 4:1); (2) one can "deny the faith" (1 Tim. 5:8); and, (3) one can "err from the faith" (1 Tim. 6:10). Christians are to resist the devil "steadfast in the faith." (1 Pet. 5:8.)

IV. Why Must Christians Contend for the Faith?

A. What does it mean to "earnestly contend"? The original word for "earnestly contend" or "contend earnestly" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament and it literally means to fight. It is here figuratively used to denote "the extreme efforts which are to characterize the faithful in their defense of truth, however formidable and numerous its enemies may be."⁸ Vine says, "*Epagonizomai*...signifies to contend about a thing as a combatant (*epi*, upon or about, intensive, *agon*, a contest), to contend earnestly. (Jude 3.) The word 'earnestly' is added to convey the intensive force of the preposition."⁹ "The word...properly signifies to strive as in the Olympic game; that is, with their whole force."¹⁰ There are several words in the New Testament, as shown by Thomas Warren, which emphasize the meaning and responsibility of every Christian earnestly contending for the faith.

1. "*dialegomai*"

a. In KJV, this word is translated:

- (1) "Preach." (Acts 20:7.)
- (2) "Reason with." (Acts 17:2; 18:19.)
- (3) "Dispute." (Mark 9:34; Acts 17:17; 19:8, 9; 24:12, Jude 9.)

b. Basic meaning: to argue, discourse, debate, discuss, contend.

2. "Apologia"...(noun form of "apologeomai")
 - a. In KJV, this word is translated:
 - (1) "Answer." (Acts 25:16; 1 Cor. 9:3; 2 Tim. 4:16; 1 Pet. 3:15.)
 - (2) "Clearing of one's self." (2 Cor. 7:11.)
 - (3) "Defense." (Acts 22:1; Phil. 1:7, 17.)
 - b. Basic meaning: a defense, to make good one's cause, to set forth evidence which defends one's position.
3. "agonidzomai"
 - a. In KJV this word is translated:
 - (1) "Strive." (Luke 13:24; 1 Cor. 9:25; Col. 1:29.)
 - (2) "Fight." (John 18:36; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7.)
 - (3) "Laboring fervently." (Col. 4:12.)
 - b. Basic meaning: to be a combatant, to fight, strive earnestly, to endeavor with strenuous zeal, to contend with adversaries."¹¹

"Everything which he has revealed, we are to defend as true. We are to surrender no part of it whatever, for every part of that system is of value to mankind."¹²

B. Christians must "earnestly contend for the faith" because it is commanded by God and upheld by example.

1. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (Eph. 6:10-18.) Why put on the armor if we don't plan to use it?

2. Timothy was told to "war a good warfare" (1 Tim. 1:18), and to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3). "Fight the good fight of faith." (1 Tim. 6:12.)

3. "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (1 Pet. 3:15.) "This obligation implies sufficient acquaintance with the word of God to substantiate one's hope therewith, and godliness of life consistent with its teaching... The defense is to be made with 'meekness and fear.'"¹³

4. Jesus engaged in public debate with the scribes (Mark 9:14ff); the Sadducees about the resurrection (Mark 12:18-28); and with the Pharisees about who they thought Christ was (Matt 22:41-46).

5. Paul told the Philippians "even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the *defense and confirmation of the gospel*, ye all are partakers of my grace... But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel." (Phil. 1:7, 17.) The word "defense" here means "a verbal defense, a speech in defense."¹⁴ "The defense (*apologia*) of the gospel means the defense of the gospel against the attacks which come from outside; it is the defense of the gospel against the arguments and assaults of the enemies of Christianity. The Christian has to be ready to be a defender of the faith, and to give a reason for the hope that is in him."¹⁵

C. Christians must "earnestly contend for the faith" because "many false prophets are gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1.)

1. There will be false teachers within the church. The appearance of false teachers among the saints was that which caused Jude's chief concern and immediate reason for writing the epistle. He said "there are certain men crept in unawares." (Jude 4.) "They had entered, as it were, by a side door (*pareisedusan*) and without revealing their true motive of seducing the saints."¹⁶ Jude clearly describes the characteristics of these early opponents of the faith, and the qualities displayed by them are the same characteristics of their present day counterparts. They include: (1) They creep in alongside, craftily infiltrating the saints while pretending to be something they are not (verse 4); (2) they are men of impure, unholy motives (verse 4); (3) they are most indignant in the presence of proper authority (verses 8-10); (4) they are destructive and willing to compromise (verse 11); (5) they are hidden dangers, making progress by false

promises (verses 12, 13); (6) they use others for their own advantage (verse 16).¹⁷ Paul warned the elders from Ephesus that "of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:30.) Paul had to contend for the faith "because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage." (Gal. 2:4.) Peter said "there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways: by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." (2 Pet. 2:1,2.)

2. Opponents to the faith will always abound outside the church. Some will "hold the truth in unrighteousness." (Rom. 1:18.) Others will change "the truth of God into a lie." (Rom. 1:25.) There will be those that have a "form of godliness, but denying the power thereof...ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth...men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (2 Tim. 3:5, 7, 8), who will "resist the truth." Some will receive "not the love of the truth that they might be saved." (2 Thess. 2:10.)

3. To successfully meet and overcome those in error, Christians must carefully note and follow Jude's instructions. These include: "(1) The saints must be aware of, and dedicated to, their spiritual standing with God (verses 1-2), and they must know how to maintain it (verses 20-21); (2) Christians must recognize the need to stand earnestly for the truth (verse 3); (3) they are to remember that God has dealt with error many times and is competent to deal with it again (verses 5-7); (4) they are to remember the promise of God to be with those who uphold his will (verses 14, 15); (5) they must hold fast the words of Jesus (verses 17-19); (6) they are to assist, if possible, those in error to return to the truth (verses 22-23), and (7) they are to commit themselves in fullness to the care of God (verses 24-25)."¹⁸

4. Every Christian must be involved in this fight. Preachers must preach the word. "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For

the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." (2 Tim. 4:1-5.) Elders must hold fast the faithful word that they may be able to stand against and stop the mouths of false teachers. (Tit. 1:9-14.) The church must mark those that cause division. (Rom. 16:17, 18).

D. In contending for the faith, Christians will:

1. Speak against immorality - "ungodly men turning the grace of God into lasciviousness." (Jude 4.) The 'grace' of God is salvation (Eph. 2:8,9), ~~vo~~^uchsafed to a man through the gospel; this gospel, these men perverted by interpreting it as actually allowing or supporting the practice of lasciviousness, gross fleshly indulgence.¹⁹ There have always been those, and still are today, who have made the Christian liberty an excuse for ungodly living.

2. * Speak against atheism, liberalism, and all other "isms" contrary to the faith. Jude says the false teachers of his day were denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. (Jude 4.) John said, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ. He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." (1 John 2:22.)

3. Make doctrine or "the faith" a test of fellowship.

a. In a new book entitled *The Protest of a Troubled Protestant*, by Harold O. J. Brown, the author makes the point: "A characteristic of the church in our day - the whole church and of each individual church is the *avoidance of doctrine*. In churches and in church-related schools (both Sunday schools and the regular schools and colleges maintained by churches) there is a growing reluctance to teach anything specific and definite about the Christian faith...Protestant churches...tend to apologize for their doctrines, to push them into the background." The above is a statement about Protestant churches, but, in too many cases, it is the truth about the church.

b. The apostles and the early church definitely made doctrine a test of fellowship. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If

there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 9-11.)

(1) Some of the Jews of the first century taught that the Gentiles must be circumcised in order to be saved. (Acts 15:1.) Paul plainly declared that he would not, and did not, tolerate such doctrine. (Gal. 2:1-5.)

(2) When Paul came to Ephesus he found certain disciples that had been baptized of John's baptism. (Acts 19:1-3.) After hearing the truth they were baptized." After hearing the truth they were baptized in the name of the Lord (Acts 19:4, 5). The apostles did not accept "just any baptism".

(3) Paul made any kind of worship, not according to God's will, a test of fellowship. "...I would not that you should have fellowship with devils...ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils." (1 Cor. 10:14-22.)

(4) Paul made the doctrine of the resurrection a test of fellowship. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker; of whom is Hymenaeous and Philletus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." (2 Tim. 2:16-18.)

4. Teach there is such a thing as absolute truth and that we can know that truth. There are those who contend "there is such a thing as absolute truth but we can never know it, thus we must ever view it as a goal which demands unflagging efforts to attain it."

a. "How long can New Testament Christianity survive in an atmosphere where its teachers question everything, are tentative in all things, are non-militant in all their positions, who must view all as in the same tentative quest, and to whom it is said that a 'healthy respect' for the tentative findings of others would become mandatory."²⁰

b. "If we cannot learn the truth, then the Bible is not even a meaningful revelation from God to man. What difference would it make (if the Bible is not God's truth) if *none* of us can possible *learn* the truth. But, thanks be to God, the

foregoing is false. And God's people are to study the truth (2 Tim. 2:15), learn the truth (2 Tim. 3:7), live the truth (Phil. 1:27), and preach the truth (Mark 16:15, 16)."²¹ Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32.) The Lord's statement should forever settle the matter for all who believe the Bible.

5. Contend that apart from Christ and his church there is no salvation. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10.) "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6.) "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12.) Jesus declared "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16). *There is no other way!* Paul declared that "Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body." (Eph. 5:23.) The body is the church. (Eph. 1:22, 23.) There is but one body. (1 Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:4.)

Conclusion

The challenge is clearly before us. Will we accept the challenge? "It is my firm conviction that we are sinning away our 'days of grace' by the divided condition of our people and the watering-down of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is my fear that we're not hearing enough of the 'old-fashioned gospel of Christ,' that beautiful story of salvation that brought us out of denominationalism to restore the true, yes, the true church of the Lord as we were a generation ago. We have let this permissive age that has captivated the world, especially our precious and lovely young people, make cowards of too many of us. There is entirely too much compromising with this permissive element, both in the world and in the church."²²

Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong." (1 Cor. 16:13.) "Error is crouched in countless forms concealed. Christ calls for vigilance - 'watch ye.' But when error has been flushed out of the hiding, and forms into advancing columns against the church, Christ calls for courage - 'stand fast in the faith.' Then when the lines are drawn tight, surging issues of truth and error are locked in the grim struggle for mastery - Christ calls for valour - 'quit ye like men.' Perform like a Christian soldier,

worthy of the name. Finally, when the crisis has come in the conflict of the faith, with the turn of the tide of events affecting the fate and fortune of the church is uncertain, when men are seen to weaken and waver - Christ calls for heroism, the heroism of faith - 'be strong' - 'hold the line!'"²³

ENDNOTES

¹Guy N. Woods, *"Peter, John and Jude," A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1954), p. 384.

²Ibid, p. 385.

³Guy N. Woods, *"Sermons on Salvation"* (Austin: R. B. Sweet Company, 1959), p. 76.

⁴Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 54.

⁵Woods, op. cit., p. 385

⁶G. C. Brewer, *Contending for the Faith* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1955), p. 17.

⁷Ibid, p. 18.

⁸Woods, op. cit. p. 385.

⁹W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (London: Fleming H. Revell Company, Twelfth Impression, 1962), p. 233.

¹⁰James MacKnight, *Apostolic Epistles* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1954), p. 691.

¹¹Thomas Warren, *Sermon Outlines on the Work of the Gospel Preacher* (Henderson: Arnold Office Supply, 1969), p. 5.

¹²Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the New Testament of James, Peter, John, Jude* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), p. 388.

¹³Woods, op. cit., p. 98.

¹⁴Vine, op. cit., p. 60.

¹⁵William Barclay, *"The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians,"* The Daily Bible Study Series (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), p.21.

¹⁶Woods, op. cit., p. 386.

¹⁷William Woods on, *"What Is Liberalism," Freed-Hardeman Lectures* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1970), p. 11.

¹⁸Ibid. p. 11.

¹⁹Woods, op. cit., p. 387.

²⁰James Bales, "The Difference is not Really so Small," *The Spiritual Sword*, Vol. 2, No.1, Oct., 1970, p. 12.

²¹Warren, op. cit., p. 15.

²²E. R. Harper, "Brother Harper Writes," *Gospel Advocate* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, Aug. 31, 1972), p. 549.

²³Foy E. Wallace, Jr., "The Faith Once Delivered," *God's Prophetic Word* (Lufkin: The Roy E. Cogdill Publishing Company, 1946), p. 42.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Jude 1-4

JAMES MEADOWS

Introduction

1. This great text is the battle cry of the church. The great truths set forth in this text are demanding and challenging to our nature. It eliminates the idea of our contending for anything that is not "the faith." It demands that we allow nothing to cause us to give less than all diligence in contending for the faith. It summons every member of the church for loyalty to the conflict between truth and error.
2. Jude gave all diligence to write about the "common salvation." Just think how important that subject is.
 - a. It is the "common salvation" because it is available to all, both Jew and Gentile who will comply with the conditions thereof.
 - (1) John the Baptist came to turn Israel back to God, Lk. 1:16.
 - (2) The twelve, during our Lord's personal ministry, were to "go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," Mt. 10:6.
 - (3) But the great commission says "go teach all nations," Mt. 28:19.
 - (4) The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men," Tit. 2:11.
 - (5) It is the "so great salvation," Heb. 2:1-4.
 - (6) Paul refers to the "common faith," Tit. 1:4.
 - (7) Peter addressed one of his epistles to those that "have obtained like precious faith," 2 Pet. 1:1.
3. But, great as the theme was on which he purposed to write, Jude, upon learning that special dangers threatened "the faith," suspended his purposed treatise and wrote without delay to exhort his brethren to "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered for all to the saints."
4. The present study purposes to ask and answer several questions about "the faith" in order that each may be better prepared to "earnestly contend for the faith."

Discussion

I. WHAT IS THE FAITH?

- A. Faith is used several ways in the Bible.
 1. It is used in the subjective sense which is simply the act of believing a thing, Rom. 10:17.
 2. It sometimes means the conviction that a thing is right or wrong, Rom. 14:22,23.
 3. It sometimes, as in our text, means that which is believed. "The faith for which Jude's readers were thus earnestly to contend, put objectively here for the gospel, is the sum of all that which Christians are to believe and obey."
- B. The faith means the gospel, the doctrine, the truth, the word of God, the whole of Christianity.
 1. "...and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith," Acts 6:7.

3. Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth, Jn. 16:13. Jude is affirming he kept his promise.
 4. Paul declared the scriptures are able to furnish man completely, 2 Tim. 3:16,17.
 5. Peter says God has given us all that pertains to life and godliness, 2 Pet. 1:3.
 6. "The meaning is that the truth is delivered for all time: it is a permanent deposit, it will never be superseded, amended, or modified. As it now stands, it is a perfect, adequate, completely inviolable deposit of truth, providing the means with which to confute the gainsayer, and resist the advocate of false doctrine."
 7. This passage clearly refutes all claims to modern revelation.
 - a. It "refutes the claim of the Catholic Church that the voice of the pope is the voice of God and that God continues to speak through any living representative."
 - b. It refutes such pretended revelators as Joseph Smith, Mrs. Ellen G. White, etc.
 - c. One must deny the truthfulness of what Jude says or cease to advocate the idea of later revelations.
- B. How was the faith delivered?
1. The ~~mean~~ of old spake as they were guided by the Holy Spirit, 2 Pet. 1:20,21.
 2. The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all truth, Jn. 3:16.
 - a. They were to remain in Jerusalem until they received power, Lk. 24:49.
 - b. They would receive power when the Holy Spirit came, Acts 1:8.
 - c. The Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, Acts 2:1-4.
 3. The apostle Paul claimed that he was guided by the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 2:6-13.
 - a. He spoke the wisdom of God, v. 7.
 - b. He spoke those things which had not been previously revealed, vv. 8,9.
 - c. He spoke these things as they were revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, v. 10a.
 - d. He declares that just as the spirit of man knows man so the Spirit of God knew God and they received the Spirit of God, vv. 10b,11.
 - e. He declares that the Holy Spirit help choose the words with which to express that revealed, v. 13.
 4. Paul claimed that what he preached was a direct revelation from God, Gal. 1:11,12.
 5. Peter said the apostles preached the gospel by the Holy Spirit, 1 Pet. 1:12.
 6. The apostles "were the inspired and miraculously empowered agents to whom the faith was committed and through whom it has been given once for all to God's children."
- C. The faith was "once delivered unto the saints."

- (1) Is translated "preach" (Acts 20:7), "reason with" (Acts 17:2), "dispute" (Mk. 9:34).
 - (2) Basic meaning: to argue, discourse, debate, discuss, contend.
 - b. "Apologia"
 - (1) Is translated "answer" (Acts 25:16), "clearing of one's self" (2 Cor. 7:11), "defense" (Acts 22:1).
 - (2) Basic meaning: a defense, to make good one's cause, to set forth evidence which defends one's position.
 - c. "agonidzomai"
 - (1) Is translated "strive" (Lk. 13:24), "fight" (Jn. 18:36), "laboring fervently" (Col. 4:12).
 - (2) Basic meaning: to be a combatant, to fight, strive earnestly, to endeavor with strenuous zeal, to contend with adversaries.
- B. Christians must earnestly contend for the faith because it is commanded by God and upheld by example.
1. Put on the armor of God and use it, Eph. 6:10-18.
 2. Timothy instructed, 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:3; 1 Tim. 6:12.
 3. Peter says, 1 Pet. 3:15.
 4. Jesus engaged in public debate with the scribes (Mk. 9:14ff, the Sadducees (Mk. 12:18-28) and the Pharisees (Mt. 22:41-46).
 5. Paul said he was set for the defense and confirmation of the gospel, Phil. 1:7,17.
 - a. The word "defense" here means a "verbal defense," a speech in defense.
 - b. The defence (apologia) of the gospel means the defence of the gospel against the attacks which come from outside; it is the defence of the gospel against the arguments and assaults of the enemies of Christianity. The Christian has to be ready to be a defender of the faith, and to give a reason for the hope that is in him."
- C. Christians must earnestly contend for the faith because many false prophets are gone out into the world, 1 Jn. 4:1.
1. There will be false teachers within the church.
 - a. It was the appearance of such teachers that caused Jude's concern and immediate reason for writing the epistle.
 - b. Jude reveals the characteristics of these early opponents of the faith and the same qualities are displayed today.
 - (1) They creep in alongside, craftily infiltrating the saints while pretending to be something they are not, v. 4.
 - (2) They are men of unholy, impure motives, v. 4.
 - (3) They are most indignant in the presence of proper authority, vv. 8-10.
 - (4) They are destructive and willing to compromise, v. 11.
 - (5) They are hidden dangers, making progress by false promises, vv. 12,13.
 - (6) They use others for their advantage, v. 16.
 - c. Paul warned the elders from Ephesus of false teachers among them,

truth. There are those who contend "there is such a thing as absolute truth, but we can never know it, thus we must ever view it as a goal which demands unflagging efforts to attain it."

- a. "How long can New Testament Christianity survive in an atmosphere where its teachers question everything, are tentative in all things, are non-militant in all their positions, who must view all as in the same tentative quest, and to whom it is said that a healthy respect for the tentative finds of others would become mandatory."
 - b. "If we cannot learn the truth, then the Bible is not even a meaningful revelation from God to man. What difference would it make (if the Bible is not God's truth) if none of us can possibly learn the truth. This is false because:
 - (1) We are to study the truth, 2 Tim. 2:15.
 - (2) Learn the truth, 2 Tim. 3:7.
 - (3) Live the truth, Phil. 1:27.
 - (4) Preach the truth, Mk. 16:15,16.
5. Teach that apart from Christ and his church there is no salvation, Lk. 19:10; Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; Mk. 16:16; Eph. 5:23; Eph. 1:22,23; 1 Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:4.

What the Bible Teaches About Contending for the Faith

James Meadows

"Jude, The servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: Mercy unto you, and peace and love be multiplied. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." (Jude 1-4.)

This great test is the battle cry of the church. The great truths set forth in this text are demanding and challenging to our nature. It eliminates the idea of us contending for anything that is not "the faith." It demands that we allow nothing to cause us to give less than all diligence in contending for "the faith." It summons every member of the church for loyalty to the conflict between truth and error.

Jude gave all diligence to write about the "common salvation." Just think how important that subject is. It is the "common salvation" because it is available to all, both Jew and Gentile, who will comply with the conditions thereof. John the Baptist came to turn the hearts of the children of Israel back to God. (Luke 1:16.) The twelve, during our Lord's personal ministry, were to go "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt. 10:6.) But the great commission says "go teach all nations." (Matt 28:19.) The "grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." (Tit. 2:11.) It is the "so great salvation" (Heb. 2:1-4), which, if neglected will result in eternal damnation. Paul refers to "the common faith" (Tit. 1:4), and Peter addressed one of his epistles to those "that have obtained like precious faith" (2 Pet. 1:1). But, great as the theme was on which he purposed to write, Jude, upon learning that special dangers threatened "the faith," "suspended his proposed treatise and wrote without delay to exhort his brethren to 'earnestly contend for the faith' once for all delivered to the saints."¹

these passages, is used in a specific and technical sense."³

II. What Does "Once Delivered Unto the Saints" Mean?

A. The words "once delivered" in the King James Version are "which was once for all delivered" in the American Standard Edition. Thayer says "once for all" means "like, *Lat*, *Semel*, used of what is so done as to be of perpetual validity and never needs repetition, once for all: Hebrews 6:4; 10:2; 1 Peter 3:18; Jude 3, 5." ⁴

Observing the use of the word "once" in other verses will help us to more fully grasp its meaning here.

1. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." (Heb. 9:28.) "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins." (1 Pet. 3:18.) By one sacrifice Christ did everything necessary to the removal of man's sins. Just as his sacrifice was complete, perfect, and never needs to be done again, so "the faith" that has been "once for all delivered" is perfect, complete and never needs to be repeated.

2. Christ promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." (John 16:13.) Jude is affirming that Christ kept his promise.

3. Paul declared that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17.)

4. Peter wrote "according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." (2 Pet. 1:3.)

5. "The meaning is that the truth is delivered for all time: it is a permanent deposit, it will never be superceded, emended, or modified. As it now stands, it is a perfect, adequate, complete and inviolable deposit of truth, providing the means with which to confute the gainsayer, and resist the advocate of false doctrine."⁵

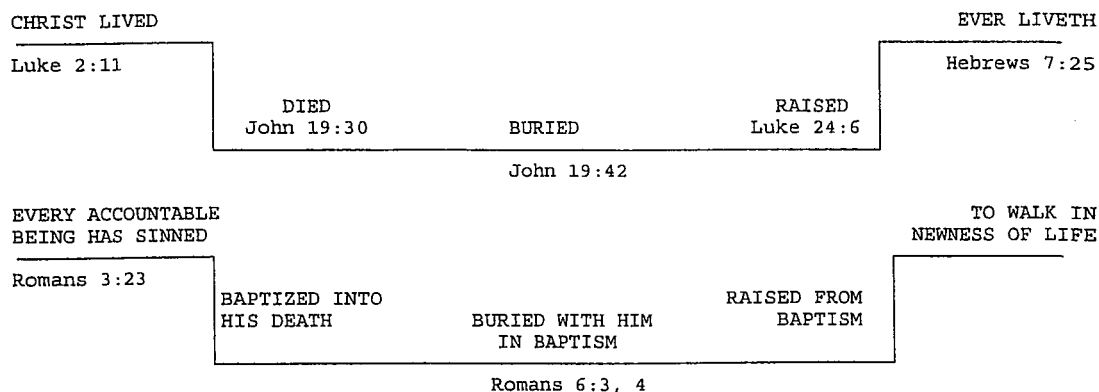
it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." (1 Cor. 2:6-13.) Paul make several claims:

- a. He spoke the wisdom of God. (Verse 7.)
- b. He spoke the things which had not been previously revealed unto man. (Verses 8,9.)
- c. He spoke these things as they were revealed unto him by the Spirit. (Verse 10a.)
- d. He declares that just as the spirit in a man is the only one that really knows him (unless he reveals his heart), so the only one that knew the mind of God was the Spirit of God. (Verses 10b, 11.)
- e. Since the apostles received the Spirit of God who knew the mind of God, then the apostles knew the mind of God. (Verse 12.)
- f. He also declared that the Holy Spirit not only revealed *these things* to them, but chose *the words* with which to express them. (Verse 13.)

4. Paul also claimed that the gospel he preached was a direct revelation from Jesus Christ. "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1:11, 12.)

5. Peter said they (the apostles) "preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." (1 Pet. 1:12.)

of life." (Rom. 6:3, 4.) Notice:



C. "The faith must be proclaimed in order for the church to be edified and to grow. At the beginning of Paul's second missionary journey, Paul and his company went through the cities and "delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily." (Acts 16:4, 5.) Paul commended the elders from Ephesus "to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (Acts 20:28.) Again, Paul wrote that Christ gave some "apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. 4:11-16.) We are to desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow. (1 Pet. 2:2.)

2. "Apologia"...(noun form of "apologeomai")
 - a. In KJV, this word is translated:
 - (1) "Answer." (Acts 25:16; 1 Cor. 9:3; 2 Tim. 4:16; 1 Pet. 3:15.)
 - (2) "Clearing of one's self." (2 Cor. 7:11.)
 - (3) "Defense." (Acts 22:1; Phil. 1:7, 17.)
 - b. Basic meaning: a defense, to make good one's cause, to set forth evidence which defends one's position.
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 - a. In KJV this word is translated:
 - (1) "Strive." (Luke 13:24; 1 Cor. 9:25; Col. 1:29.)
 - (2) "Fight." (John 18:36; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7.)
 - (3) "Laboring fervently." (Col. 4:12.)
 - b. Basic meaning: to be a combatant, to fight, strive earnestly, to endeavor with strenuous zeal, to contend with adversaries."¹¹

"Everything which he has revealed, we are to defend as true. We are to surrender no part of it whatever, for every part of that system is of value to mankind."¹²

B. Christians must "earnestly contend for the faith" because it is commanded by God and upheld by example.

1. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (Eph. 6:10-18.) Why put on the armor if we don't plan to use it?

2. Timothy was told to "war a good warfare" (1 Tim. 1:18), and to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3). "Fight the good fight of faith." (1 Tim. 6:12.)

promises (verses 12, 13); (6) they use others for their own advantage (verse 16).¹⁷ Paul warned the elders from Ephesus that "of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:30.) Paul had to contend for the faith "because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage." (Gal. 2:4.) Peter said "there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways: by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." (2 Pet. 2:1,2.)

2. Opponents to the faith will always abound outside the church. Some will "hold the truth in unrighteousness." (Rom. 1:18.) Others will change "the truth of God into a lie." (Rom. 1:25.) There will be those that have a "form of godliness, but denying the power thereof...ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth...men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (2 Tim. 3:5, 7, 8), who will "resist the truth." Some will receive "not the love of the truth that they might be saved." (2 Thess. 2:10.)

3. To successfully meet and overcome those in error, Christians must carefully note and follow Jude's instructions. These include: "(1) The saints must be aware of, and dedicated to, their spiritual standing with God (verses 1-2), and they must know how to maintain it (verses 20-21); (2) Christians must recognize the need to stand earnestly for the truth (verse 3); (3) they are to remember that God has dealt with error many times and is competent to deal with it again (verses 5-7); (4) they are to remember the promise of God to be with those who uphold his will (verses 14, 15); (5) they must hold fast the words of Jesus (verses 17-19); (6) they are to assist, if possible, those in error to return to the truth (verses 22-23), and (7) they are to commit themselves in fullness to the care of God (verses 24-25)."¹⁸

4. Every Christian must be involved in this fight. Preachers must preach the word. "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For

there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 9-11.)

(1) Some of the Jews of the first century taught that the Gentiles must be circumcised in order to be saved. (Acts 15:1.) Paul plainly declared that he would not, and did not, tolerate such doctrine. (Gal. 2:1-5.)

(2) When Paul came to Ephesus he found certain disciples that had been baptized of John's baptism. (Acts 19:1-3.) After hearing the truth they were baptized." After hearing the truth they were baptized in the name of the Lord (Acts 19:4, 5). The apostles did not accept "just any baptism".

(3) Paul made any kind of worship, not according to God's will, a test of fellowship. "...I would not that you should have fellowship with devils...ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils." (1 Cor. 10:14-22.)

(4) Paul made the doctrine of the resurrection a test of fellowship. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker; of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." (2 Tim. 2:16-18.)

4. Teach there is such a thing as absolute truth and that we can know that truth. There are those who contend "there is such a thing as absolute truth but we can never know it, thus we must ever view it as a goal which demands unflagging efforts to attain it."

a. "How long can New Testament Christianity survive in an atmosphere where its teachers question everything, are tentative in all things, are non-militant in all their positions, who must view all as in the same tentative quest, and to whom it is said that a 'healthy respect' for the tentative findings of others would become mandatory."²⁰

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worthy of the name. Finally, when the crisis has come in the conflict of the faith, with the turn of the tide of events affecting the fate and fortune of the church is uncertain, when men are seen to weaken and waver - Christ calls for heroism, the heroism of faith - 'be strong' - 'hold the line!'"²³

²⁰James Bales, "The Difference is not Really so Small," *The Spiritual Sword*, Vol. 2, No.1, Oct., 1970, p. 12.

²¹Warren, op. cit., p. 15.

²²E. R. Harper, "Brother Harper Writes," *Gospel Advocate* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, Aug. 31, 1972), p. 549.

²³Foy E. Wallace, Jr., "The Faith Once Delivered," *God's Prophetic Word* (Lufkin: The Roy E. Cogdill Publishing Company, 1946), p. 42.

promises (verses 12, 13); (6) they use others for their own advantage (verse 16).¹⁷ Paul warned the elders from Ephesus that "of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:30.) Paul had to contend for the faith "because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage." (Gal. 2:4.) Peter said "there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways: by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." (2 Pet. 2:1,2.)

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