

# **EXPOSITORY NOTES**

## **2 PETER**

**Gordon Lyons**

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# Expository Notes

*2 Peter*

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## **2 Peter**

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## Principal Works Consulted

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Brown, John	<i>1 Peter</i> (Vols. 1 & 2), Geneva Series Commentaries: Edinburgh, Scotland, Banner of Truth Trust, 1848, 1975 reprint.
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## Introduction and Background

The writer of this letter introduces himself as Simon (Gk., Symeon) Peter, and an eyewitness of the Excellent or Majestic Glory on the mount of Transfiguration. Peter alludes also to the remarks made by the Lord Jesus concerning the manner of his [Peter's] death (or 'exodus').

The Epistle known as 2 Peter was not immediately recognised as genuine by the early church. It differs somewhat in style from 1 Peter, although this may simply be due to a different scribe or amanuensis being used by Peter to write down the apostle's dictation. In any event, 2 Peter was accepted later by the church as a genuine epistle of Peter, and there seems to be no reason for doubting its authenticity as the inspired Word of God.

There are a number of similarities between 2 Peter and Jude. This may be because Jude borrowed from Peter, or Peter from Jude; or it may be because both borrowed from a common source, now lost.

In this letter, Peter has much to say about the danger posed to the church by false teachers. These false teachers would arise from within the church fellowship itself, and would lead many astray. Furthermore, these particular false teachers would attempt to persuade believers to despise authority; civic and celestial. In addition, these false professors of the Christian faith would attempt to entice God's people into committing the vilest forms of immorality—in the name of Christian liberty. Clearly, these evil men wilfully refused to recognise that a believer's liberty in Christ did not mean license.

Furthermore, these false teachers would scorn and despise the promises of the Lord's second coming. Peter repudiates their evil teachings by pointing out that God defers the second coming of his Son, and the coming final judgment, because he is not willing that any should perish. In the same way, and in the days of Noah, God deferred the coming judgment on the wicked world. Nevertheless, when God's day of grace and mercy ended, the Lord overwhelmed the world with a catastrophic flood. So it will be in the last days, says Peter. When God's day of grace has run its course, the Son of God will come. In like manner, the end of all things and God's final judgment will surely come—notwithstanding the denials of these truths by the false teachers.

Peter warns his readers to shun these evil men completely and to repudiate their pernicious teaching. To the same end, the apostle exhorts the people of God to seek to know the Scriptures so that they will grow in their faith and will be able to recognise error and false teaching as soon as it appears. The apostle encourages the saints to persevere in godliness and holiness of life, and to show by the example of their lives how the teachings of Christ and his apostles ought to be practised.



## 2 Peter Chapter 1

### Opening Greetings

#### 2 Peter 1:1-2

#### 2 Peter 1:1

Peter opens his letter with the declaration that he is the servant—or slave—of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter says also that he is the Lord's apostle: That is, he is an official delegate or messenger of the Lord, sent forth by the Lord Jesus to proclaim the gospel and to teach the Word with the full authority of an apostle. (Cf. Matt. 10:2) Apostolic authority of this nature included the right and power to speak, write and teach the very words of God as the Holy Spirit guided and inspired them (plenary inspiration). Such authority to speak and teach infallibly in the name of the Lord was given to no others but these apostles of the Lord Jesus, and to the holy prophets of God who lived and ministered during the Old Testament era.

After reminding his readers of his servant status before Christ and of his apostolic office, Peter then intimates that the recipients of his letter are those who are sharers with him in the salvation from God. This salvation comes to fallen men and women from the most high and holy God, who is characterised by righteousness.

However, the term 'righteousness' may be understood in another sense: viz., concerning the righteousness that God imparts to the believer upon his or her justification. Taken in this sense, these believers—like Peter himself—had received from God the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

These believers had received also the precious gift of faith. Faith is that firm confidence in the truth of God; and especially in the truth of the gospel and in the Lord Jesus Christ of whom it speaks. (Rom. 3:21-24)

#### 2 Peter 1:2

The apostle prays that God may bestow the abundance of his blessings upon these beloved saints. Included in God's gifts and blessings are grace and peace. (Cf. Num. 6:24-26)

*Grace* is that unmerited favour of God freely bestowed upon the unworthy. God's grace brought us to Christ. By God's grace, we are being sanctified. By God's grace, we are being kept secure in our salvation. By his abundant grace, the Lord Jesus will present us faultless and blameless in his Father's presence. (Titus 3:4-7)

*Peace* is that unsurpassed and inexpressible sense of well being experienced by God's children because of their reconciliation with their heavenly Father. Since Christ has made atonement for our sins, nothing now remains to alienate us from God. Our reconciliation has effected true, lasting peace in our hearts. This peace comes to us from the Lord Je-

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sus Christ, through the person and instrumentality of the Holy Spirit. (John 14:27; Phil. 4:7; Col. 1:20)

The apostle had said,

*Grace and peace be yours in abundance...* (v.2a NIV)

Then he adds:

*...through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.* (v.2b NIV)

Grace and peace are gifts and blessings of God to all his redeemed people. However, the *abundance* of grace and peace of which the apostle speaks comes through the knowledge of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ. (Eph. 4:13)

The knowledge to which Peter refers means a precise or accurate knowledge, i.e., a full and detailed understanding of the things of God. Such an understanding of spiritual things comes only through searching the Word, and seeking the Holy Spirit's illumination of that Word. The greater our knowledge and understanding of the spiritual truths of God's Word, the greater will be our experience of God's grace in our lives, and God's peace in our hearts. (Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9; 2 Tim. 3:15)

## Everything for Life and Godliness

### 2 Peter 1:3-4

#### 2 Peter 1:3

God conveys something of his divine power to us in and through the person and work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Because the Holy Spirit indwells the believer, everything requisite for holy and godly living is available to him or her. (2 Cor. 12:9; Eph. 1:19-2)

Life and godliness come through applying the teachings of God's Word to our hearts and lives. The Spirit of God reveals this teaching to us fully and plainly. Therefore, the apostle says that all we need to practise a holy and godly life comes to us through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

#### 2 Peter 1:4

Through God's glory and goodness, we have received very great and precious promises from our heavenly Father.

Summarily, God has forgiven our sins, and has promised us forgiveness of all future sin. Again, he has given us abundant and eternal life, and has promised us the fulfilment of these gifts. He has given us his Holy Spirit, and has promised us that the Spirit will guide us into all truth. In addition, God has promised that the Holy Spirit will keep us secure in our salvation, and that he will sanctify our lives on a day-to-day basis. (1 John 1:9; 2:1-2; 5:11-12; John 16:13)

One reason for bestowing his grace and goodness upon us is that we might escape the corrupt desires and practices of the world, and live unto God. Apart from the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, this is impossible. However, when fully submitted to the Spirit of God and to his Word, it becomes possible to live in a manner well pleasing to God.

Then, in reality, we are participating in the divine nature. Then, in practice, we escape the corruption—or moral decay—of our fallen nature and the evil desires of that old nature. (Gal. 5:16; Col. 3:1-17)



## Add Godly Qualities to Faith

### 2 Peter 1:5-9

#### 2 Peter 1:5

God has richly blessed us with his Spirit, his Word and his promises. In view of these blessings, it our duty and responsibility to heed the voice of our heavenly Father.

The apostle says we are to make every effort—or apply all diligence—to add to our faith. Our faith includes our belief in God and our wholehearted commitment to Christ. To this faith, we are to add *goodness* (KJV, *virtue*). This is moral goodness. It includes the characteristics of modesty and purity of life, as well as virtuous or uprightness of character and conduct. (Prov. 4:23-27; cf. 1 Pet. 3:1-4)

Next, Peter says we are to add to goodness *knowledge*. The word for knowledge here is a word meaning 'general intelligence' or 'understanding'. This is the kind of understanding that we acquire through searching the Word of God prayerfully and regularly. As our knowledge of God's Word increases, so also does our awareness of what God requires. (Acts 17:2; 2 Tim. 3:14-15; 2 Pet. 3:18)

With this kind of knowledge, comes true wisdom. This wisdom comes down from the Father above, through our increasing understanding of his inerrant living Word. (1 Cor. 12:8; Eph. 1:17; Col. 1:9; Jas. 3:13,17)

#### 2 Peter 1:6

The apostle continues by saying that to knowledge we are to add *self-control* (KJV, *temperance*). Self-control is the ability to master one's life. It is the ability to control those situations that would seek to overcome us. (Gen. 4:7; 1 Cor. 10:13; Gal. 5:22-23)

This is especially true of the desires of the old sinful nature that is still within us. Although our old passions or desires may attempt to draw us astray from God's way, by applying self-control, we are to gain the mastery over the evil desires of that old nature. This nature has been crucified with Christ. Therefore, we ought to reckon it dead with Christ. Of course, we are to live in the power of the new nature—that nature which we associate with the risen and glorified Lord Jesus. (Gal. 2:20; 5:24; 6:14)

Next, Peter says that we are to add to self-control, *perseverance* (KJV, *patience*). Perseverance or steadfastness is the determination or resolve to stay the course—no matter how great the difficulties. Included in perseverance is the characteristic of patience. Patience is necessary especially during times of trial and affliction. (Rom. 2:7; 5:3-5; 15:4; Heb. 12:1-3)

Then Peter says, to perseverance we are to add *godliness*. Godliness is piety toward God. It includes the ideas of respect or reverence in the presence of God. It implies that we will live our lives in the fear of God: That is, with a wholehearted trust and confidence in him, and with a due and holy regard for the glory and majesty of his Person. (2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Tim. 4:7-8; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet. 2:17; 2 Pet. 3:11; see also Isa. 6:1-3; 1 Tim. 6:15-16; 2 Tim. 3:16)

#### 2 Peter 1:7

In verse 7, Peter says we are to add to godliness, *brotherly kindness*. Brotherly kindness is that genuine and natural love that ought to exist between brothers and sisters. This love is exemplified by the way in which brothers and sisters care for one another, and are pre-

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pared to help and comfort one another. It is further exemplified by their resolve to remain close to one another in times of difficulty, because of the bond that exists between them.

In the Christian sense, brotherly kindness among believers has the additional qualities that it is an expression of the love of Christ for his own. Again, it is the love of brothers and sisters of the same heavenly Father, and therefore of the same family. The type of bonding, caring, loving relationship that exists between brothers and sisters of natural families should much more exist among the children of God. (John 17:21; Rom. 12:10; 1 Thess. 4:9; 2 Thess. 1:3; Heb. 13:1)

Next, the apostle says we are to add to brotherly kindness, *love* (KJV, *charity*). The word used for love here, is the Greek word, *agape*. This is the highest form of love imaginable. It is a pure, selfless and ever-giving love. This was the kind of love that God demonstrated for the world, when he gave us his one and only Son. This is the type of love that Jesus had for his disciples—the pure, untainted, bonding love of God. Each one of our lives should reflect this kind of love. (John 3:16; 13:34-35; 15:17-19; 1 Thess. 3:12; 1 Pet. 1:22)

### 2 Peter 1:8

In verse 8, the apostle says that when we acquire and exhibit more and more of these godly qualities, we produce greater spiritual fruit. Instead of becoming ineffective or barren, we will produce in our lives the graces of the Spirit. Instead of becoming idle or inactive, we will labour willingly at pleasing the Lord. (1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Thess. 1:3)

In all that we do, our lives will yield the fruit of the Spirit—to the glory of God, and for the benefit of others. Such spiritual fruit, however, comes only by adding to our faith those qualities that Peter has mentioned in the preceding verses. (Cf. Gal. 5:22-26)

### 2 Peter 1:9

However, if a person does not exhibit these qualities in his life, then clearly something is wrong. Where a person does not endeavour to add to his faith those characteristics already mentioned, he cannot make any real spiritual progress. If there are no indications of spiritual progress, however, there can be no ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in that person's life. (2 Cor. 4:3-4)

The apostle says that such a person is short-sighted and blind. He is short-sighted in that he can apprehend only that which is near. Progress in the spiritual life, or advanced spiritual truths, are too far off for him to see. Peter says also that this person is blind—meaning that he is mentally, morally or spiritually blind. He has completely failed to see that salvation—which begins with regeneration—continues with sanctification. (Cf. John 9:39-41; 1 John 2:9; Rev. 3:17-18)

Therefore, says the apostle, [he] *has forgotten...* (v.9)

What has he forgotten? He has forgotten that God has cleansed him from his past sins. He has forgotten that God has justified him. He has forgotten that the Son of God made atonement for his sins through his blood shed on the cross. (Eph. 5:25-27; Titus 3:4-7) However, since Christ's blood has atoned for his sins, then he must be God's redeemed child. Since he is God's child, his heavenly Father expects him to grow steadily to maturity. This, however, is the very thing that he is failing to do. This is why it is essential for him—and for us—to add to our faith those qualities that lead to our spiritual growth and maturity.

## Making Our Calling and Election Sure

### 2 Peter 1:10-11

**2 Peter 1:10**

Considering these truths, continues the apostle, we must be diligent in applying God's Word to our lives. We must add to our faith all the qualities already mentioned. These qualities are,

- goodness (KJV, *virtue*),
- knowledge,
- self-control (KJV, *temperance*),
- perseverance (KJV, *patience*),
- godliness,
- brotherly kindness,
- love (KJV, *charity*).

By applying God's Word practically in this way, we are confirming or making sure and demonstrating the reality of our calling and election. That we desire eagerly to know God's ways and to live by his ways, is evidence that we are called of the Lord.

By putting God's Word into practice, and by the grace of God in our lives, then we will never fall. At times, we may stumble—but we will never fall fatally, or be lost. At times, we may err or sin; but, upon our confession to God and heartfelt repentance, the blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin. (Heb. 6:11-12; 2 Pet. 3:17-18; 1 John 1:9)

**2 Peter 1:11**

In verse 11, the apostle reminds his readers of the outcome of their faith and of God's abundant grace toward them in Christ Jesus. On a coming day, we will receive not only a welcome from our Father in heaven—but also the richest welcome he could possibly afford us. The Father's welcome will be an expression of the full measure of his love toward us. (Matt. 25:34; John 14:1-3; 2 Tim. 4:8)

In God's heavenly abode, we will inherit the promised everlasting kingdom of his Son. There, we will live and reign with him throughout the eternal ages. There, we will exult in all the blessings that he has bestowed upon us, and in all the love that he has demonstrated toward us. There, we will praise, worship, glorify and serve the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. (Rev. 3:21; 5:10; 22:5)

**Reason for Peter's Reminders****2 Peter 1:12-15****2 Peter 1:12**

Because of the importance of these spiritual principles, Peter declares that he will constantly remind his readers of them. The apostle is aware that these believers already know these truths. However, in case they should fail to apply them to their lives, the apostle and shepherd of the flock intends to stir them up by way of this written reminder. (2 Pet. 3:1-2)

Peter concedes that his readers have already been established firmly in the fundamental truths of God's Word. All the more reason, then, for them to align their lives with the

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teaching of that Word. This, however, meant that they needed to continue adding to their faith those characteristics to which the apostle had referred already.

### 2 Peter 1:13

There was, however, another reason why Peter was constantly reminding the believers of these things. The apostle knew that his time with them was limited. A day would come when Peter would no longer be able to give them these solemn reminders. Before that day came, the apostle desired that these believers would be strong enough—and knowledgeable enough in the things of God—to keep on seeking those things for themselves.

As for Peter, he would continue to stir up God's people until the day that he departed from this earthly tent (or 'tabernacle'). The 'tent' or 'tabernacle' was his body: the vehicle of his earthly life and the temporary dwelling place of his immortal soul. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5:1)

### 2 Peter 1:14

Why, however, was Peter so sure that he would not remain with the believers for much longer? Because, a number of years earlier, while he had walked this scene of time with our blessed Lord Jesus, the Lord had told Peter what would happen to him in the latter days of his life:

*(18) [Jesus said] "...I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." (19) Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God...*

(John 21:18-19 NIV)

As the Lord's servant, the apostle Peter's desire had been to serve and honour the one who had loved him with an everlasting love, and to preach his name wherever he had the opportunity. This he had endeavoured to do faithfully over many years.

Nevertheless, many would oppose God's message of salvation. They would attempt to silence the message by silencing the messengers. Certainly, God's Word cannot be silenced or rendered ineffective—otherwise, it would cease to be the Eternal Word of the Everlasting God.

Even so, those who opposed Christ would soon lay hands on Peter, the Lord's faithful servant and disciple. Evil men would take hold of the apostle forcefully, and bind him.

Ultimately, his soul would be received into the presence of his blessed Redeemer. Peter's body (his earthly tent) would be laid in the dust of the earth, until the glorious resurrection. One day, however, both he and they would meet again. This was why the apostle Peter was preparing these believers then for what was soon to come.

### 2 Peter 1:15

Therefore, concludes the apostle in verse 15, this is why I am doing my utmost to make you aware of God's truths now, and to remind you of your commitments and responsibilities.

The word, 'departure' (KJV, *decease*), is the Greek word, 'exodon' (ἐξοδον). As in English, an exodus is a 'going out' (on a journey). It is the closing of a person's career or circumstances, or their final departure—here, euphemistically, from this earthly life to greater

and eternal life in glory. It is, of course, the same term used by the Lord Jesus in Luke 9:31 when speaking to Moses and Elijah on the Mount of his coming decease (lit., 'exodon'). Again, it is the same term used concerning Israel's final departure from the land of Egypt.

I am about to depart from this life, summarises Peter, so I am doing my utmost now to provide you with sound teaching. This teaching is designed to enable you to remember it in the future, and to refer to in its written form.

## **No Cleverly Invented Stories**

### **2 Peter 1:16-18**

#### **2 Peter 1:16**

Concerning the instructions that Peter was giving these believers, however, they needed to remember one thing: The teachings that they received from Peter were not the words of man. On the contrary, they were the words of God. Although spoken and written by the apostle—perhaps using an amanuensis—Peter is not expressing his own opinions to these believers. Rather, the apostle is declaring the mind and will of God as he is being led or inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. (2 Tim. 3:16; cf. 2 Pet. 1:21)

Furthermore, these teachings are not cleverly or cunningly devised myths or fables (lit., 'sophisms')—such as false teachers were commonly presenting to the church. They are the words of the Lord Jesus himself. They are the reports of his teaching and the account of his work on this earth. These teachings summarise and illustrate the almighty power of God the Son. They speak clearly and unmistakably concerning the life, death, resurrection and glorification of God's Son—and of his coming again. (John 1:1,18; John 17:17; 1 Cor. 1:17-18)

Again, Peter reminds the recipients of his letter that he did not receive this teaching second-hand. Peter was present with the Lord Jesus while he was teaching these very things. Together with the other disciples, Peter was there while the Lord Jesus performed these powerful and convincing miracles, demonstrating his glory and proving him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God.

#### **2 Peter 1:17**

{Cf. Matt. 17:2-5; Mark 9:2-7; Luke 9:35}

If this were not enough, Peter reminds his readers that—together with James and John—he was present with the Lord Jesus on the holy mount, when the Son of God was transfigured in these disciples' immediate presence.

We saw his glory, asserts Peter—the glory of the only begotten Son of God. We heard that voice from the Majestic Glory (NKJV, *Excellent Glory*) attesting to the fact that Jesus was God's Son—His Beloved Son. We heard this majestic and glorious voice pronounce from heaven that—with his Son—the Father was well pleased. All the Father's delight lay in, with and upon his one and only Son.

#### **2 Peter 1:18**

No one needed to tell Peter what had happened on the mount of transfiguration. He was there himself. Together with James and John, Peter had witnessed the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus, and had beheld his majestic glory. He had witnessed the presence of Moses and Elijah talking with the Son of God. Again, Peter, James and John had heard

the voice of the Almighty God thundering from the heavens, proclaiming Jesus to be His Son—His Beloved Son.

No one could deprive Peter and the other two disciples of this experience. No one could deny that it had happened exactly as they had reported. It was the word of eyewitnesses, reporting what they had seen and recording the very words of the Almighty Sovereign God.

### No Prophecy Originated with Man

#### 2 Peter 1:19-21

##### 2 Peter 1:19

*And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. (NIV)*

Peter and the other disciples had seen many of the prophets' words reach their fulfilment in and through the Lord Jesus. Concerning the Christ, the Old Testament prophets had spoken of things yet to come. However, those who—like Peter—were with the Lord, and who heard his teachings, saw in him the fulfilment of many of these Old Testament prophecies. (Cf. John 5:39)

This is why Peter can say that he (and the other apostles) had the words of the prophets made more certain. The Twelve had heard and seen the Lord Jesus, and they had heard the voice of his heavenly Father concerning him, not only on the mount of transfiguration but also at his baptism. (Matt. 3:17)

This is the reason why the readers of Peter's letter ought to heed his words—for he was reporting to them what he had seen and heard from God and from his Son.

Therefore, these believers should take heed to the Word of God: for it is the Word of truth and life. It is as a light shining in the darkness. God's Word of truth had illuminated the darkness of their lives, and by that light and by the Spirit they had come to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, Peter exhorts them to continue walking in the way of the Lord. (Isa. 9:2; Matt. 4:16; Luke 1:78-79; John 1:9-10; 8:12; 9:5)

One day, this Lord Jesus will come in his Father's glory. One day, the fullness of the new eternal day will light upon every believer's soul. Then, the morning star will rise in all its glory within our hearts and lives for evermore. Christ is that morning star—the bright shining light of our lives, and our hope for all eternity. (Cf. Rev. 22:16)

##### 2 Peter 1:20

*Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. (NIV)*

Yet, there is one thing we must understand and maintain as a first principle of Christian truth: No prophetic utterance contained in Holy Scripture ever originated from the prophet himself. It was not the prophet's personal explanation or interpretation of some truth revealed to him by God.

The prophets of God were merely the spokesmen of God. The LORD God authorised his servants the prophets to utter nothing other than what he made known to them. The prophets could not alter God's words. They could not add to God's words. They could not

place a private interpretation on God's words. The LORD required that they declare his word or message to the people without change or other modification.

An 'interpretation' of God's Word, is literally 'an unloosing' of that Word, i.e., a releasing of the truth of God's Word. This was all the LORD required his prophets to do—release God's Word or God's messages to the people. They were not required to enlarge upon it, or to add to it their personal interpretations.

**2 Peter 1:21**

*For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (NIV)*

There is, of course, a reason why God prohibited the prophets from enlarging upon the truths of his Word. It was because the prophetic message that God commanded his servants to declare did not originate with them. Therefore, the prophets were restricted to proclaiming God's messages accurately and faithfully to the people. However, they were not able to enlarge upon the truths contained in these prophecies, nor under any circumstances were they permitted to interpret these prophetic messages in accordance with their own personal opinions.

The originator of the prophetic word was the living God himself. The LORD God conveyed his word of truth to his servants the prophets through his Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Truth. Only he—the Holy Spirit—was capable of correctly interpreting the Word of God. Therefore, when the prophets declared God's Word, they were being carried or borne along—not by some intuitive force—but by the Holy Spirit. (2 Sam. 23:2; Micah 3:8; 2 Tim. 3:16)

This does not mean, of course, that God overrode the prophets' rational faculties. The LORD God made full use of the prophet's reason, mind and will. It means only that the prophets' thoughts were being borne along by an irresistible power—in this instance, the Holy Spirit of God. By means of the Holy Spirit's inspiration, the prophets proclaimed God's Word to the people. Again, by this inspiration of the Holy Spirit, God preserved his servants from error when they were declaring and writing the Word of God.

Without the presence of the Holy Spirit, it is not possible for any person to comprehend correctly or to interpret the Word of God. This living and eternal Word requires spiritual discernment. To this end, it requires a spiritual interpreter—the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 2:14)

This is why any person who interprets or expounds the Word of God, and yet who has no personal experience of the regenerating and indwelling Holy Spirit, cannot be accepted as a true servant of God. Such a person is still in his sins. (Rom. 8:9)





## 2 Peter Chapter 2

### False Teachers among You

#### 2 Peter 2:1-3

#### 2 Peter 2:1

From the very midst of God's people of old—the people of Israel—false prophets arose. These prophets claimed that God had sent them, but they were not telling the truth. Instead of bringing God's Word to the people, they brought their own words—or a distortion of God's Word. Because of their false teaching, they led many of God's people astray from the paths of righteousness. They became guilty of all sorts of sin against God. Ultimately, God punished these wicked prophets, and chastised his straying people. (Deut. 13:1-3; Jer. 23:25-40)

Just as it was in a previous age, so it will be in this age. Even from our own midst, infers Peter, false prophets will arise, claiming to speak in the Lord's name. These individuals, however, are not from God. Instead of feeding the church on God's pure Word, they will introduce heresies or false and perverse teaching into the church fellowship, and they will do this subtly and cunningly. (Matt. 7:15-17; Rom. 16:17-18; Acts 20:29-31; 2 Cor. 11:13-15)

Eventually—by their evil teaching and practices—these false teachers will effectively deny the Lord who 'bought' them. For their wickedness in misrepresenting God's Word, and for leading his people into sin, God will cause their utter destruction. In this age, their sin will bring them to ruin. In the age to come, they will endure the punishment of eternal loss and the most intense sufferings in body and soul. (1 John 2:22-23; Heb. 10:29; Jude 1:4, 12-13)

The phrase, *'the...Lord who bought them'* (v.1b), may be an allusion to Deuteronomy 32:6. There, the LORD God is said to have 'bought' or redeemed his people (i.e., out of Egyptian bondage). Clearly, however, not everyone included in the deliverance from Egypt belonged to the LORD. Subsequent events proved that—although the LORD had redeemed Israel as a nation—many individuals within that nation knew nothing of God's soul-redeeming power.

Similarly, the visible church is sometimes referred to as the 'bought' (or redeemed) of the Lord. Yet, not everyone within the visible church has experienced the power of Christ's redeeming blood. (Acts 20:28) Many who profess the name of the Lord know nothing of the Lord's saving grace and power. As it is written concerning the coming Day of Judgment:

<sup>21</sup>*"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup>Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' <sup>23</sup>Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"* (Matt. 7:21-23 NIV)

So it is with the false teachers that arise from within the church. They claim to know God but they deny him by their deeds. (2 Tim. 2:19) To deceive unwary believers and to achieve their own evil ends, they claim to have been bought or redeemed by the blood of Christ. However, even while making such a claim, they despise and trample underfoot the blood of Christ. (Heb. 10:29) Thus, they are seen to be false professors. These false teachers deceive and delude the church of Christ, leading many into evil and perverse ways. Therefore, their condemnation and judgment will be most severe. (Jude 1:4-13)

### 2 Peter 2:2

Sadly, many other professing believers will follow the teachings of these false prophets. This could be true especially of those who are young and inexperienced in the faith, and in the knowledge of the truth. From among the church of Christ will be those who will follow the false teachers. Deceived and deluded by their flattering speech and pernicious lies, some of God's children will adopt their evil course of conduct, or way of life—at least for a time. They will begin to think, feel and act as do these wicked teachers. (1 John 2:18-19)

Peter says that many will follow their shameful ways (KJV, *pernicious ways*). They will become involved in the lascivious or sexually immoral sins of these false teachers. However, although a number of God's people may be deceived and deluded for a time, perhaps the majority of these followers of evil are those who have never experienced in their lives the regenerating and sanctifying power and presence of God's Holy Spirit. It is likely that the many who follow these shameful ways are—like the false teachers—mere professors of the Christian faith, perhaps attending church services, but with no real saving knowledge of Christ or of the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, because of their outward profession of Christianity and because of their involvement in such vile practices, these people will bring the way of truth into disrepute. Because they see those whom they believe are 'Christians' living the most vile and perverse lifestyles, unregenerate men and women will despise the things of God. Even worse, the world will hold the church in contempt when it sees religious leaders and teachers preaching and practising the vilest forms of human behaviour. It is for this reason that the Lord will judge these false teachers and preachers most severely, condemning them to the most intense sufferings in the hell, described as a 'lake of fire'. (v.3b; Jude 1:7; Rev. 20:15)

Peter had said that the way of truth would be brought into disrepute, i.e., people would slander and scurrilously attack God's way because of the sinful practices of these wicked individuals. Even so, we must note that this is due to a certain amount of ignorance on the critics' part. Had they known the Word of truth, they would have known that God's Word utterly and uncompromisingly condemns all such sinful behaviour and attitudes. (Rom. 1:18-32; Jude 1:7)

Because of the great danger posed by these false teachers, especially today, God's people need to remain constantly vigilant. It is essential that they know God's truth, and that they guard that truth diligently from the slightest deviation or inroads of error.

### 2 Peter 2:3

These false teachers possess an insatiable appetite for more of everything. They present the church with all kinds of 'deep teaching' or 'contemporary interpretations' of God's Word adapted to the accepted lifestyles of the day. This 'new understanding of Biblical truth' comes from God—it is claimed, and it is presented to the church in the name of God. In truth, however, these teachings or interpretations are a perversion of God's holy Word. The teachers of these evil doctrines not only practise the very things that God's

Word forbids and condemns, but they encourage others in the church to follow these vile practices. (Isa. 56:10-12; Rom. 16:18; cf. Rom. 1:32)

Their teaching and their conduct are completely alien to the teaching of God's Word, and to the practice of righteousness. Holiness of life—or separation from the contaminating influences of the world—holds no place in their thinking. To them, ungodly practices can be tolerated in a spirit of liberty. Such is the depth of evil and perversity to which these individuals have sunk. (Cf. 1 Thess. 4:3)

Yet, God is fully aware of what they are doing. The Lord knows what harm these individuals can cause. However, he also knows that these false teachers will not ensnare his people, unless—of their own free will—they choose to listen to them and follow their teachings. In this case, of course, God will hold his people responsible for departing from the way of truth and righteousness, and for setting others the wrong example.

Concerning the false teachers themselves, God's judgment awaits them. Indeed, the Scripture tells us that this condemnatory judgment has been hanging over them for some considerable time. Their destruction is certain. Total and eternal ruin awaits them—and there will be no escape.

## **The Lord Rescues the Godly**

### **2 Peter 2:4-9**

#### **2 Peter 2:4**

God did not overlook or forgive the sins of the angels when they sinned. Rather, the LORD immediately and finally expelled these formerly holy celestial messengers from his presence. (Luke 10:18; cf. Isa. 14:12; Rev. 12:7-9)

As a punishment, God committed them to hell; or, in the Greek, *Tartarus* (answering to *Gehenna* (γεεννα) in Hebrew. Once only mentioned by this name in Scripture (although common in the Classics), Tartarus was considered as the deepest abyss of Hades and a place of unending torments. In this place, many of these fallen angels remain bound, awaiting their final judgment and commitment to the dreaded everlasting fire. Meanwhile, they are being held in what the Scripture describes as 'gloomy dungeons' or 'chains of darkness'.

Since spirit beings, such as angels or demons, cannot be restrained or restricted by physical means, the 'gloomy dungeons' or 'chains of darkness' possibly represents the blackest darkness of sin's unremitting misery. They represent also a state of complete separation from the favour and blessing of God until the final judgment and their consignment to that place of eternal punishment described as 'everlasting fire' or a 'lake of fire'. (Rev. 20:10) This 'everlasting fire' was prepared by God for the devil and his angels (i.e., the fallen angels or demons), and for finally impenitent mankind. (Matt. 25:41)

God prepared this everlasting 'fire' for fallen spirits. However, spirits cannot be harmed by material fire. Therefore, this place of punishment need not be thought of as literal fire. All that is required is that it is understood as a place where the torments and sufferings endured there for all eternity are the same as, or greater than, that which would be produced by everlasting burning or fire. (Matt. 25:41; Jude 1:6) Most likely, it refers to the everlasting burning wrath and righteous vengeance of God on the finally impenitent and on the fallen angels. In fact, the Scriptures tell us that God's wrath burns like fire. (Cf. Ps. 89:46; Ezek. 22:31; Rev. 14:10,19) A single instance of the Lord's vengeance and wrath is given below:

*...when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,*

<sup>8</sup> *In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: <sup>9</sup> Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power... (2 Thess. 1:7-9 KJV)*

Just as God did not spare rebellious angels, neither will he spare rebellious false teachers and false professors of the Christian faith. Just as one group's wickedness resulted in eternal punishment, so also the other group's wickedness leads to the same dreadful end.

### **2 Peter 2:5**

Again, to restore the old world to righteousness, God brought his judgment upon wicked and ungodly humanity. This occurred in Noah's day when the LORD overwhelmed the world with a catastrophic flood. With that flood, God destroyed mankind and every creature on earth. (Cf. Matt. 24:37-39)

Before this judgment, God had commanded Noah to proclaim a message of salvation or deliverance from God's coming judgment. The people, however—filled with wickedness, violence and corruption—persistently refused to hear or heed the message. Ultimately, God destroyed them for their impenitence and wickedness. The only exceptions were Noah and those who accompanied him into the ark. (Gen. 6:5,11-13; 7:13; 1 Pet. 3:18-20)

Just as God brought judgment upon an ungodly world, so God will bring a like judgment upon all ungodly individuals. In the case of the false prophets, however, their judgment will be the more severe. They purported (falsely) to be representing God, but they distorted God's Word—wilfully and perversely. They professed to be teaching the way of righteousness, but they practised and encouraged others in the way of the vilest iniquity. (Jude 1:14-15)

### **2 Peter 2:6**

On another occasion, the Lord God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. In their case, the inhabitants of these cities endured the wrath of God because of their wickedly immoral and homosexual practices. In his Word, God had expressly forbidden such evil practices. (Gen. 19:1-25)

God had created mankind male and female so that—within the natural marriage bond—they could share their love for and with one another, spiritually, emotionally, physically and sexually. However, God prohibited the sharing of sexual relations outside the marriage relationship.

Similarly, the Lord God expressly condemned and forbade the sharing of sexual relations between two men or two women. Homosexual relationships are never acceptable in the sight of God. To speak or think of these relationships on equal terms with the marriage relationship is perverse and detestable. (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 6:9)

In God's sight, the marriage relationship as it exists between a husband and his wife is a sacred relationship. It is sanctified by his Spirit as being the fulfilment of his plan for the vast majority of humanity. (Those who do not marry must remain without a sexual partner.) However, in God's sight, a sexual relationship between two people of the same sex is utterly perverse and unnatural. (Gen. 2:18,22-25; Eph. 5:25-33; see also Matt. 19:11-12)

In spite of the detestation with which God views these sins, Sodom and Gomorrah had become notorious for practising them. It was for this reason, and for their continued impenitence, that the Lord caused their destruction. Both cities were reduced to ashes as a judgment from God. The LORD intended this sudden and final destruction to serve as a

perpetual reminder of how a holy and righteous God views the perversion of his priceless gift of love and sex to humanity. (Jude 1:7)

Within marriage, sexual union carries with it the blessing and approval of God. God intends that a husband and his wife should enjoy sexual relations to the full. Again, within marriage, it would be sin to neglect or refuse sexual relations with our partner. However, because the people of Sodom and Gomorrah despised God's gift, and degraded their bodies among themselves, God inflicted his righteous judgment upon them. (Rom 1:18,26-27; 1 Cor. 7:1-5)

### **2 Peter 2:7**

There was, however, one person living in Sodom who took no part in these evil activities. This was Lot, the son of Haran and a nephew of Abraham. Lot had chosen to live in the cities of the plain—possibly not then realising the wickedness of its inhabitants. However, as he became aware of the immorality and perversity all around him, he became increasingly distressed. His anxiety would not be for himself alone, but undoubtedly for his wife and children as well. (Gen. 13:12; 19:1-26)

Peter says that Lot had become distressed by the filthy lives of these lawless men. The word 'filthy' has the meaning of unbridled lust, licentiousness, wantonness, shamelessness, etc.

### **2 Peter 2:8**

The Scripture tells us that Lot eventually became tormented by the vile practices of these evil individuals. Aware of God's righteous decree, Lot knew that what they were doing was contrary to God's law. No doubt, too, Lot feared that his family might be contaminated, morally and spiritually, by their evil practices, or that they might become exposed to considerable danger. However, God knew his servant's anxiety, and he had taken steps to preserve him from further exposure to danger. (1 Tim. 1:9-10)

That the evil practices of these men caused such distress to Lot, is a telling indictment on modern society. Today, society attempts to justify such behaviour, declaring it an acceptable alternative. God, however, has not changed. The practice of these sins is still contemptible and repulsive in his sight. Homosexual relations remain expressly forbidden by God, and God declares such relations unnatural and perverse. Those who continue to practise them are presently abiding under God's wrath, and will face even greater wrath on the Day of Judgment.

What is true of homosexual immorality and abuses is true also of heterosexual immorality and abuses, and of every other form of ungodly and sinful behaviour, thoughts and attitudes. All categories of sin bring a person under God's wrath and judgment. Yet, by God's grace, any person—homosexual or heterosexual—who calls upon the name of the Lord for mercy and forgiveness will be saved. Even if they have been the vilest offenders on earth, those who utterly repent of their sin and renounce it, will find the love, mercy, grace and healing of the Lord extended toward them. (1 Cor. 6:9-11)

### **2 Peter 2:9**

God knew about Lot's distressed condition, but he had already determined to rescue Lot from the city of sin. Similarly, God knows about the distress caused to his people by the sinful attitudes and behaviour so prevalent all around them. Yet, he has determined to keep each one of his people safe during these times of trial—and to deliver them from that which vexes their souls. (Job 5:19-21; Ps. 34:15,17-22)

On the other hand, God knows how to hold the unrighteous until the Day of Judgment. That is, they are being held in the chains of sin—chains of their own making—until God's final judgment falls upon them.

These 'chains' represent:

- The *misery* that their sin eventually brings into their lives.
- The *harm* that they inflict upon themselves by their evil practices.
- The *enslaving habits* that make them prisoners to their sins.
- The *illnesses and diseases* that their sin brings upon them.

This is how the Lord continues their punishment. (Ps. 106:14-15; Jer. 4:18; 21:6; John 8:34)

These judgments are known as God's *temporal* judgments. They are intended to warn of coming *final and eternal* judgment, and to cause men and women to seek the mercy of the Lord. However, if they refuse to heed God's warnings, the final and eternal judgment will result in their committal to the lake of fire. (1 Cor. 10:1-13; Heb. 4:11; Jude 1:7)

Hence, the reason why the gospel of God's eternal salvation must be proclaimed in all its power to people of all nations, that those who are facing this dreadful judgment may yet—by God's grace—find forgiveness and life eternal.

## Creatures of Instinct

### 2 Peter 2:10-12

#### 2 Peter 2:10

Moving now from God's judgment on evil men and women of the past, the apostle returns to his remarks about the evil people of the present. In particular, he returns to his theme concerning false teachers and their wicked and immoral teachings and practices. As with those already mentioned, God holds the false prophets for the Day of Judgment too.

This is especially true, says Peter, of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature (KJV, *flesh*). Essentially, such people live according to their animal or basic instincts, seeking only to satisfy the desires of their sensual nature.

Such people commonly despise authority—the very authority that God has ordained. They think little or nothing of God-ordained authority, and show no respect for those whom God has appointed to serve him in these offices. Therefore, they are found to be resisting God. (Eph. 4:17-19; 5:5; Jude 1:4; Rom. 13:1-5)

Frequently, they are bold and arrogant individuals—the very opposite of those who walk humbly by the Spirit of God. In their arrogance, they foolishly bring railing accusations against 'dignities' or 'dignitaries'.

If this is to be understood of dignitaries on earth, then the reference is to men or women in places of high honour or exalted rank, such as rulers, high government officials, members of the judiciary, or people in other similar positions. In this case, these arrogant individuals are not afraid to rail against such authorities.

However, in view of what follows, and taking into account the reference to (holy) angels, it is also possible that the dignities or dignitaries are celestial beings or 'glories' (Gk., δόξα) in the commonly understood sense: i.e., the formerly glorious, but now fallen, angels,

demons or evil spirits. (Cf. the near parallel passage in Jude 1:9, referring to the archangel Michael and the devil.)

These spirit beings, however, are far greater in power and might than those who accuse them. It is folly indeed to attempt to judge one greater than ourselves. In any event, such judgment belongs to the Lord. (Jude 1:8-10)

### **2 Peter 2:11**

Even Michael and the other holy angels—who are stronger and more powerful—do not bring slanderous accusations against these (fallen) celestial beings. Similarly, they do not offer to God their opinion concerning these celestial wickednesses. The holy angels might feel some justification for accusing Satan and the demons (the fallen angels). Nevertheless, they desist from bringing accusations against these evil spirits. They know that God has already judged them, and that—finally—he will commit them to everlasting fire. Therefore, they remain content, leaving the present situation in the hands of an all-wise, all-knowing Sovereign God. (Jude 1:9)

### **2 Peter 2:12**

The false prophets, however, do not hesitate to slander such evil spirits. In their folly and ignorance concerning spiritual things, they rail against beings who have power to retaliate.

These false teachers do not have the Spirit of God within them. Therefore, they remain continually exposed to the forces of evil and to the malignity of the devil. This is why their slanderous accusations are not only foolish, but highly dangerous. (Cf. Acts 19:13-16; 1 John 5:19)

Satan will use such people to further his own ends, to infiltrate the church, and to introduce the most destructive and vile heresies. To this end, God's Word warns the church:

*<sup>13</sup>For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup>And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. <sup>15</sup>It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve. (2 Cor. 11:13-15 NIV)*

However, the same devil who uses these false teachers as his tools, is just as likely to turn against them whenever he sees fit.

Peter says they are like *brute beasts*—destitute of reason and common sense. Their behaviour and actions are nothing more than animal behaviour and they act accordingly. Such should never be found among the true servants of God. Among many other characteristics of these men, these are some of the traits that confirm them as being children of the evil one—as the above passage demonstrates clearly.

Ultimately, these creatures of instinct and slaves of passion will be caught in the trap of their own making, and will be destroyed. Their temporal ruin will lead on to their eternal destruction—not their annihilation, however, but their everlasting punishment. (Gal. 6:7-8; Jude 1:10)

## **They have Left the Straight Way**

### **2 Peter 2:13-16**

### 2 Peter 2:13

In that day, says Peter, God will repay them for the harm they have caused.

Yet, not only have they been guilty of foolishly slandering evil spirit beings, they have added to this sin the sin of carousing or taking part in orgies, freely indulging their most corrupt passions. Not content, however, with practising their evil deeds at night and under the cover of darkness, they have practised them also in broad daylight, and in public. Their sins have become notorious to all.

As such, they have become blots and blemishes in the church. They continue to revel in the pleasures of sin, while participating with believers in their sacred love feasts and other hallowed fellowship meetings. By their shameless and unbridled iniquity, these evil individuals bring the church of Christ into disrepute. (Cf. 1 Cor. 11:27-29) Such wicked behaviour is intolerable and must not be permitted in the church of God. (Isa. 3:11; Rom. 2:8; Gal. 5:19-21; Phil. 3:19; 1 Pet. 4:4-5; Jude 1:12)

### 2 Peter 2:14

Even worse, the eyes of their minds, or their thoughts, are satiated with adultery. They cannot look at a woman or think of a woman without committing adultery with her in their hearts. They never stop sinning, because they cannot cease to sin. Sin has taken them captive and is holding them in bondage. (Matt. 5:28; 1 John 2:16; see also 2 Pet. 2:18)

Yet, they desire that others should join them in their slavery to sin. They do all in their power to seduce or entice the unstable—those who are not steadfast in the faith. They attempt to drag them down to the same pit of corruption that they have dug for themselves. (Rom. 16:18)

They are experts in greed. Their sin knows no bounds. In the greedy pursuit of their sinful practices, all they can say is, 'More!' 'More!' 'More!' Indeed, they are an accursed brood—for they are children of God's wrath and curse, and are destined to pay the penalty of their sin. (Isa. 56:10-12)

### 2 Peter 2:15

They have abandoned the straight way—the right code of conduct or standard of behaviour set forth by God. They have wandered from the narrow way and set their hearts on the broad way leading to destruction. They have departed from the way of truth and righteousness to follow the way of deceit and unrighteousness. (Matt. 7:13-23)

Like Balaam before them, who was considered a most abandoned deceiver, so these false prophets are nothing more than gross deceivers—abandoned by God. Balaam's love was not for the things of God, but for the things of this world. Although he professed otherwise, Balaam coveted reward. He loved money. He enticed Israel to commit idolatry and sexual immorality. (Num. 22:7; 31:16; Neh. 13:2; Rev. 2:14; cf. Num. 25:1,2)

Likewise, these false teachers have no desire to honour God by taking care of his flock. On the contrary, these men seek only to take care of themselves, to accumulate payment for their 'prophetic' services, and to gather disciples around themselves.

The people of God must have nothing to do with such men. (2 John 1:9-11) These evil false teachers know nothing of the Spirit of truth and righteousness. (Jer. 6:13-15; 1 Tim. 6:5; cf. 2 Cor. 2:17)



**2 Peter 2:16**

For his sin, Balaam the sorcerer and prophet (so-called) was rebuked by a donkey. God gave to an otherwise speechless animal the power of speech to restrain the prophet's insane behaviour. (Num. 22:22,32-33)

**Slaves of Depravity****2 Peter 2:17-22****2 Peter 2:17**

Like Balaam, the false prophets among God's people resembled dried up springs. People coming to the wells expected to find refreshment from springs of living water. These wells, however, were dry and barren. Instead of conveying to God's people the cleansing word of life, they spurted out messages of filth and death. (Cf. Jer. 2:13; Isa. 12:3; John 4:14)

Spiritually, such men are lifeless. Like mists driven before the storm, evil holds them in its power, and compels them to perform the works of the wicked one. Of themselves, they are helpless to do good, or to practise righteousness. They are the slaves of sin and Satan is their master. (2 Cor. 11:13-15; Jude 1:12-13)

There can be but one outcome for such people. Blackest darkness is reserved for them for all eternity. The sin that enslaves them now will torment them for eternity. The separation from God and his love that they are experiencing now will be extended to them throughout the eternal ages. Abandoned by God for ever, they will suffer the miseries of an accusing conscience; of the ceaseless bondage to sin, and of God's eternal wrath upon them. (Jude 1:13; Rev. 21:8)

**2 Peter 2:18**

These false teachers and wicked impostors are the ones who loudly proclaim the so-called deeper truths of God's Word. Confidently, yet falsely, they assert that God has given them a message to deliver to the people. However, although they may sound most convincing, and their arguments may have a degree of plausibility, they are not God's messengers. The words they proclaim are empty words. They are words devoid of truth, and devoid of the Spirit of truth. They are boastful words—words loudly proclaimed, but proclaimed from empty vessels. Empty vessels invariably make most noise.

Far from being spiritual, they tailor their words to appeal to the lustful desires of the sinful human nature. By appealing to the desires of the flesh, they entice spiritually weak believers away from the truth. They seek to ruin those who have only recently escaped from sin and corruption by drawing them back into their former ungodly and sinful lifestyles.

Such men are perverse. They are the agents of the devil. Their presence ought never to be tolerated among the fellowships of the Lord's people. The Lord's people ought never to give heed to their words—not even for a moment.

**2 Peter 2:19**

Although these men are the willing servants of sin and Satan, yet audaciously they promise freedom to those who hear and heed their words. All the while, however, these men are slaves of depravity. (John 8:34; Rom. 6:16; Cf. Gal. 5:13; 1 Pet. 2:16)

Such is the perverseness of their minds, that they imagine immorality to be an exercise of their freedom! 'It is right,' say they, 'to do anything that fulfils your bodily desires. This is an

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exercise of your liberty in Christ. Satisfy your natural desires. Cast aside restraint! You are only doing what nature requires you to do.' (1 Cor. 6:12-20)

Such an argument, however, is perverse in the extreme. It is never right to do what God forbids. Freedom or liberty in Christ is never a licence to sin. Satisfying natural desires without regard to God's moral standards is always evil, and is expressly forbidden in God's Word. Yet, this is the very thing these false teachers encourage and practise. (1 Thess. 4:1-8)

Such men have been overcome by evil. God's people must utterly repudiate their teaching and shun their company. (2 Tim. 3:1-9)

### 2 Peter 2:20

Clearly, then, these men knew nothing personally and inwardly of God's salvation, or of his power to deliver men and women from the bondage of sin and corruption. Nevertheless, they had sufficient knowledge of the truth to render them inexcusable for rejecting the truth—yet this is what they did. In the light of better knowledge, these evil men despised the truth and vilely distorted the Word of God. Yet, at the same time—and in order to deceive unwary believers—these corrupt individuals professed (falsely) that they believed in, and belonged to, Christ!

Although they knew the truth concerning salvation, they repudiated it in order to practise their own evil lifestyles and peddle their own false doctrines. However, to know the truth concerning salvation, and then to reject it and continue practising the corrupt lifestyle of the world—is the sin of apostasy. Those who apostatise are those who have known the truth (intellectually), but who have spurned the truth and returned to the ways of unrighteousness. The end of such people is worse off than their beginning. As Peter declares in the following verse, it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness; i.e., never to have been made fully aware of the truth only to despise and reject the truth—as did Judas Iscariot. (Luke 22:3; John 13:2; see esp. Acts 1:25) The outcome for such people is eternal perdition. (Matt. 12:43-45; Heb. 10:29-31)

From the context, however, we can see clearly that these false teachers had never experienced true spiritual conversion. They may have known much about the way of salvation, but they knew nothing of the saving and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

Certainly, when Peter alludes to their possible escape from the world's corruption by *knowing* our Lord and Saviour, the word he uses for 'knowing' is a word that implies a full and accurate knowledge. As we have shown above, these men were not ignorant of God's ways. They possessed more than sufficient knowledge to realise what God required of them. Therefore, their condemnation for refusing God's message and for presenting a perverted form of God's Word to others, becomes all the more severe.

### 2 Peter 2:21

In view of the knowledge of the truth in their possession, it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness. They had seen the light—and shunned the light. They had seen the Light of life from afar—and had sought out the darkness as a cover for their evil deeds. (John 9:41; 15:22; Luke 12:47-48)

For such men, there is no hope—except by God's immediate intervention. However, unless the Holy Spirit convicts them and brings them to repentance and faith in Christ, they will remain alienated from God and utterly lost. Their misery will be all the greater in view of the light, or degree of knowledge, that they possessed. In spite of better knowledge, they chose darkness, and in blackest darkness they will forever remain. Better they

had never known of God's righteousness, than—knowing it—to turn away from the sacred command leading to life.

**2 Peter 2:22**

{Cf. Prov. 26:11}

Proverbs 26:11 NIV says:

*As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.*

Like a dog returning to its own filth, so these men return to indulge in their vile pleasures. Like a sow that has been washed, so these men repudiate the cleansing effects of God's Word only to return to their immoral, impure and perverse lifestyles. They are creatures of instinct. They know nothing of the new creation that comes from God above. (Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17)

Therefore, implies the apostle, have nothing at all to do with such evil men. Rather, associate with men and women of God. Fellowship with the Lord's people, and share with them in the things that are pure, righteous, noble and honourable. Feed your souls on the bread from heaven. Hear the Word of God as proclaimed by the true messengers of God. Beware, however, of those who seek to draw you away from the paths of truth, of righteousness and of peace with God. They are eternally accursed of the Lord. (Gal. 1:8-9; Phil. 4:8-9; 1 John 4:1)



## 2 Peter Chapter 3

### Reminders to Wholesome Thinking

#### 2 Peter 3:1-2

##### 2 Peter 3:1

The apostle Peter reminded his readers that this was now the second letter that he had written to them. Peter's purpose in doing this was to stir up these believers, or bring to their remembrance, those things that were wholesome and honourable. False teachers abounded; and more were in danger of arising, even from within their own fellowships. In fact, many of the believers may have known these deceivers personally (without being aware of their evil intentions). However, once they became aware of their true motives, the church must prevent these false teachers from leading believers away from the truth. The church, consisting of genuine believers, knows the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, and by this truth alone they must ever remain. (2 Pet. 1:12-13; Eph. 4:21; Titus 1:1)

They need only remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life. There is no other way to God. There is no other source of divine truth, and no other means of receiving abundant and eternal life. The Holy Spirit is the one who guides believers into all truth and who reveals to them everything that God wants them to know. The Spirit does this through God's Word, the Bible. There is no *other* source of divine revelation, and there is no *supplementary* source of divine revelation. (John 14:6; 15:26; 16:13; 17:17)

##### 2 Peter 3:2

Peter stimulates these believers to recall the words spoken in past ages by the holy prophets. These holy men of God declared to the people nothing but the Word of God, and nothing but the truth of God. These sacred truths were recorded for the people of God in the (Old Testament) Scriptures. Therefore, the church—including these believers to whom Peter was writing—already knew what God had said in his Word. (Luke 24:27,44; Acts 10:43; 2 Pet. 1:19)

Similarly, they knew the teachings of the Lord Jesus, for the Lord's apostles—including Peter—had brought these teachings to them. Again, these believers possessed at least some of the Spirit-inspired letters written by the Lord's servants to the churches. (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 2:20)

Therefore, Peter appeals to them to call to remembrance the sacred truths of God's Word as it was delivered to them by the holy prophets and apostles. These—and these alone—were the people of God's authorised teachers. Their message, the Word of God—and the Word of God alone—was the people of God's authorised source of instruction and guidance.

However, not all who claimed to be a servant of God was in fact so. Not all who claimed to be bringing a word from God did in fact speak the words of God. Many deceivers had arisen in the church. The church had to beware of those who claimed to bring messages from God, but who distorted, twisted or misapplied God's Word. The church had to be-

ware, too, of those who professed to be *in* the church, but who denied some of the fundamental teachings of the church. (Matt. 7:15; Luke 20:46; Col. 2:8)

## **Christ's Second Coming Questioned**

### **2 Peter 3:3-7**

#### **2 Peter 3:3**

In particular, Peter warns of those who deny the Lord's Second Coming—or some other essential truth. To this end, the believers must be fully aware that such people would arise from within their own fellowships.

Initially, these people will profess to hold to the teachings of God's Word. Eventually, however, it will become clear that they have departed from one or more of these teachings. They will seek to influence God's people with their erroneous opinions, and, regrettably, many will be deceived and will follow these impostors. (Cf. 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 1 John 2:18-19; Acts 20:29-31; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 2 Pet. 2:1-2)

Ultimately, these apostates will repudiate their former (false) profession of faith. They will stand against the unchanging and infallible truths of the Bible. They will scoff, scorn and mock these eternal truths. Yet, their own lives will testify against them, for they will despise the way of holiness and righteousness. On the one hand, they will claim to possess greater insight into spiritual truths. On the other hand, however, the desires of their fallen sinful nature will dominate and control their lives, rather than the Spirit of holiness. Lust will become their idols, and their sensual idolatry will lead to their destruction. (1 John 4:1; Jude 1:17-19)

#### **2 Peter 3:4**

Clearly, these unbelieving mockers will refuse to accept the Lord's word, and they will twist the truth to suit their own evil ends. They will reject the teachings of the Lord Jesus and his apostles concerning his coming in glory to judge the world. They will seek to overthrow the faith of God's people by challenging the unchanging Word of the living God. Perverse indeed, when men with polluted minds, and dead in sin, dare to challenge the one who ever lives in glorious perfection! (Cf. Gen. 19:14; Matt. 24:26, 29-31; Acts 17:31)

Yet, they will say of the Lord,

*"Where is this 'coming' he promised...?"* (v.4a NIV)

They will assert that since nothing has changed since the beginning of creation, therefore nothing is likely to change in the future. Such assertions are typical of those who wilfully twist the Scriptures to their own destruction. If they had believed the teaching of God's Word, they could never have uttered such vain, presumptuous and wholly erroneous pronouncements. (Isa. 5:18-25)

#### **2 Peter 3:5**

*They deliberately forget*, i.e., they wilfully choose to ignore....

*They deliberately forget* that, in the beginning, the heavens and the earth were created at God's command. At God's word of command—or by a demonstration of God's almighty power—the worlds and everything in them came into existence. However, contrary to the assertions of those who deny the truths of God's Word, the created world did not continue

without change. They wilfully ignore the fact that—because of mankind’s wickedness—God brought judgment upon the original creation. (Gen. 1:1; 6:5-7; cf. 2 Thess. 2:11-12)

**2 Peter 3:6**

*By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. (NIV)*

God’s judgment upon the whole of rebellious humanity came in Noah’s day. Then, the world had become filled with violence, corruption and vile wickedness. Therefore, it grieved the LORD that he had created mankind. In punishment for their unabated wickedness and impenitence, God overwhelmed the world of that day with a catastrophic flood.

Therefore, these present day scoffers are wilfully disregarding the truths of God’s Word when they say that everything has continued unchanged from the beginning of creation. (Gen. 6:5,11-13; 2 Pet. 2:5) Only eight persons survived that overwhelming deluge. All others perished in the waters of the flood. This fact of divine revelation and history stands recorded in God’s Word so that people might know that God judges the impenitent. (Gen. 7:6-7,11-13,22-23)

**2 Peter 3:7**

*By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. (NIV)*

By a word of command (or by the exercise of his omnipotence), God created the world. By a word of command, God destroyed the world by a flood. By a like word of command—the word of God—the present heavens and earth are being held in store for the coming final judgment. (Matt. 24:38-39)

On that day, the heavens and the earth will be destroyed by fire. On that day, impenitent and ungodly men and women will be judged and brought to eternal ruin. Forever separated from God and his love, they will spend eternity in the torments of the lake of fire. There, they will endure the miseries of an ever-accusing conscience, and of endless pains in body and soul. (Matt. 25:41,46; 2 Thess. 1:8-10; Rev. 20:15) Such is the only just punishment for their wilful unbelief and obstinate refusal to hear and heed the message of salvation. (Cf. Acts 13:40-41)

**Not Willing that Any Should Perish****2 Peter 3:8-9****2 Peter 3:8**

*But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. (NIV)*

At this point, Peter appeals to his readers as dear friends: ‘Do not forget...’ he writes. Do not forget this one very important matter: *With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.*

Therefore, these dear believers must not allow themselves to be deceived or misled. Indeed, they must disregard altogether the ungodly scoffers who call into question the Lord’s second coming. God does not measure time as we do. With God, time does not exist. God dwells in eternity. Eternity is one timeless and endless present.

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To God, the creation of the world is as the present time. To God, the last 2,000 years since his Son's first appearance, is as nothing insofar as time or duration is concerned. Therefore, says the apostle,

*With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day* (v.8b NIV; cf. Ps. 90:4).

God's purposes concerning the unfolding of events and concerning the second coming of his Son will be fulfilled in their proper time—i.e., at the very moment in the history of the world that God determined from the eternal ages.

In verse 9, the apostle continues:

### 2 Peter 3:9

*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.* (NIV)

Yet, contends Peter, the Lord has a very good reason for deferring his Second Coming. In Noah's day, God deferred his judgment to give men and women space to hear the word of salvation and to repent. Only when they refused continually to repent of their vile and wicked ways and seek the mercy of the LORD, did God's judgment fall. So it is on this occasion. The Lord is deferring his Second Coming so that men and women may hear the gospel, and be led by the Holy Spirit to repentance. (Rom. 11:25)

The Lord, however, will keep his promise. He has promised to return in power and glory—and, most certainly, he will. He has promised to return for his elect—and, most certainly, he will. He has promised to return to judge the world in righteousness—and, most certainly, he will.

The Lord is not slow in keeping any of these promises. Rather, he is patient. He is long-suffering. He does not desire to inflict eternal punishment on men and women, but rather that they repent. Nevertheless, one day, the Lord's patience will end. Then, in perfect justice, God the Son must examine the thoughts and actions of all mankind. Upon all those who have not obeyed the truth, but who have followed unrighteousness, righteous, holy, and terrible judgment must inevitably fall. (Matt. 24:27,30-31; Acts 1:11; 17:30-31; Exodus 34:6-7; Rom. 9:22; 1 Tim. 1:16; 1 Tim. 2:4)

## The Day of the Lord Will Surely Come

### 2 Peter 3:10

*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.<sup>1</sup>* (NIV)

Certain it is that the Lord Jesus will come in the glory of his Father—and all the holy angels with him. However, that day will come unexpectedly, like a thief. When men and women are totally unprepared, the Lord will appear. Therefore, it is obligatory on the children of God to live as though their Lord might appear at any moment. (Matt. 24:42-44; 1 Thess. 5:2-4; Rev. 3:3)

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<sup>1</sup> Some mss., *be burned up* [NIV footnote to 2 Peter 3:10]



When that day comes, the heavens will disappear with a resounding roar. An inferno of unimaginable proportions will consume the elements—or composition—of this earth. This conflagration will burn up, melt, or lay bare everything in the earth, i.e. the earth will be scorched to utter destruction. (Cf. v.12; see also Isa. 34:4; Matt. 24:35; Rev. 6:13-17)

## New Heaven and New Earth

### 2 Peter 3:11-13

#### 2 Peter 3:11

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

Since they know these things will take place, God's people ought to examine their lives. They ought to consider how they should be living.

Firstly, Peter says that they ought to live *holy* lives. Together with believers everywhere, they should set their lives apart to God, and to the service of God. Each child of God should set himself or herself apart from worldly contamination, and from the desires of the sinful nature. (Rom. 6:19,22; 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 4:24)

Secondly, the apostle declares that they ought to live *godly* lives. The lives of God's children should be filled not only with a sense of God's love, confident trust or assurance, mercy and grace, but also with a sense of God's majesty, dignity, righteousness and holiness. This reverential awe of God's majesty and holiness ought to create in the hearts of his redeemed people a due fear of God and a respect for his person. (Isa. 6:1-3; Rev. 4:8-11; Acts 7:32; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 2:17; Rev. 19:5)

#### 2 Peter 3:12

*as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.<sup>2</sup> That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. (NIV)*

In living holy and godly lives in this present evil age, we are 'hastening' the coming of the Lord. People around us see the transformation in our lives. They see the work of God in our character and conduct. Therefore, they become convicted of their own sinfulness, and ought to seek God's mercy.

The more God's people live holy and godly lives, the more the outside world is being brought under conviction of sin. The Holy Spirit uses this situation to lead toward repentance and faith. Therefore, by the convincing, convicting and converting power of the Holy Spirit, even more people find salvation from God's coming judgment. (John 16:8-11)

That day, however, will surely come. It will come just as surely as the waters of the flood came in Noah's day. When it comes, an immense inferno will destroy the heavens, and the elements will melt in the intensity of the heat. (Luke 17:26-27)

<sup>2</sup> Or as you wait eagerly for the day of God to come [NIV footnote to 2 Peter 3:12]

### 2 Peter 3:13

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

What, then, will be the outcome of the old creation? The old creation will pass away—and with it, the curse upon the earth. In keeping with the Lord's promise, however, he will establish a new creation. In this new heaven and earth, righteousness will reign supreme. In it, no sorrow, sin, sickness, pain or death will be found. On the contrary, it will be a creation of everlasting peace, righteousness, joy, happiness, tranquillity and glory. It will be the kingdom of God and of his Christ. Not only will it be our home in glory, but it will also be the home of righteous, godly and holy living. (Isa. 65:17-25; Rev. 7:17; 21:1-5,10,27)

### The Lord's Patience Means Salvation

#### 2 Peter 3:14-16

#### 2 Peter 3:14

Since we eagerly anticipate all this, continues the apostle, we ought to endeavour with all our hearts to live lives honouring to God. We are the redeemed of the Lord. Therefore, we ought to consecrate ourselves in body and soul to our Lord and Redeemer. We should cleanse ourselves from every contaminating influence in our lives.

This means, of course, that we should avoid those places and things that pollute the soul. Instead, we should concentrate on those things that edify and nourish the soul spiritually. We should feed on the Word; dwell on the Word; meditate on the Word; pray over the Word, and let the Word of God dwell in us richly. (Eph. 1:4; Phil. 1:10; 2:15; 3:20-21; Col. 3:16)

By setting our hearts and minds on things above, we will be found spotless and blameless before God. We will be free from censure, free from vice, unsullied. This does not mean that we attain sinless perfection in this age. However, it implies that we ever strive toward that mark. (Col. 3:1-2; Phil. 3:14)

We should make every effort to be found at peace with God, continues the apostle. We receive the peace that passes all understanding upon confession of sin to God, and subsequent forgiveness. (Phil. 4:6-7) However, if we were to harbour unconfessed sin in our hearts and lives, then we would lose this sense of peace. Therefore, implies Peter, we should make every effort to ensure that no unconfessed and unforgiven sins remain in our lives.

Those who are the redeemed and holy children of God must repent of all known sin. They must renounce these sins, seeking God's mercy and forgiveness. Then, assuredly, God will restore his eternal peace to their hearts. He will do this because he has restored that individual to close fellowship with himself. He has forgiven their sins because his one and only Son made atonement for these sins at Calvary. (1 John 1:9 - 2:2)

#### 2 Peter 3:15

Peter exhorts his believing readers to disregard completely everything that the unbelieving scoffers allege. The apostle exhorts God's children to remember why the Lord delays his coming. The Lord's patience results in salvation. It prolongs the day of grace for many more people. His longsuffering is giving sinners the opportunity to seek his ways and to call upon him for mercy. However, when the day of grace has fully run its course, then the

Lord will surely appear. Then, for lost and impenitent mankind, the day of grace, mercy and forgiveness will have passed away forever. (Cf. v.9; see also Rom. 2:4-5)

The other apostles, too, speak of these same truths. For example, in the spiritual wisdom that God gave him, the apostle Paul spoke and wrote of all these things. Paul, too, assured believers that they were living in the day (or period) of grace, but that this day of grace would culminate and terminate with the coming of the Lord and the Day of Judgment. (1 Thess. 5:2-3; 2 Thess. 1:6-10; 1 Tim. 1:16)

### **2 Peter 3:16**

In all his letters to the churches, declares Peter, the apostle Paul had written along very similar lines. Admittedly, some of his letters contain things that some people find difficult to comprehend. Unlearned and unstable people take great delight in digging out these passages and using them to their own ends. Unaware of the true spiritual significance of Paul's writings, they wrest the Word of God out of context, and distort the Holy Scriptures to their own destruction. (2 Tim. 3:1-17; 4:2-4)

Such people ought never to be listened to, or relied upon as interpreters of God's Word. God's people must shun them and disregard their interpretations completely. Instead of heeding and following such unspiritual and ungodly men, believers ought to seek out God-appointed and Spirit-filled pastors and teachers. They are the real shepherds of God's flock. They will remain faithful to the Word of Truth, and to the truths of God's Word. (Ezek. 34:1-10; Jude 1:12; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2-3)

In passing, we should note that the apostle Peter recognises that the writings of the apostle Paul are the inspired Word of God, and part of the Holy Scriptures. This is clear from Peter's remark that the false teachers distort Paul's writings *as they do the other Scriptures*.

## **Guard Against False Teachers**

### **2 Peter 3:17-18**

#### **2 Peter 3:17**

Since Peter's readers were aware of all these things already, they ought to remain constantly on their guard. The true leaders and shepherds of God's flock ought to keep the most diligent watch over the believers' souls, that they may remain protected from the insidious inroads of error. They ought to beware lest the church be deceived by the plausible sounding arguments of the false teachers and the believers be borne along by the error of wicked and lawless men. (2 Cor. 11:3-4,13-15; Col. 2:8; 2 Pet. 2:17-19)

In saying that they are *lawless men* (KJV, *the wicked* [ones]), Peter was saying that they lived without regard to God's law. They were creatures of instinct, ever gratifying their own sinful desires, and never finding full satisfaction for their evil cravings.

Such men are not men of God. Thus, Peter warns his readers to avoid them totally, lest they fall from their assurance of eternal security and complete confidence in the truths of God's Word. (Rom. 16:17-18)

#### **2 Peter 3:18**

Instead of allowing themselves to come under the spell of those who denied the fundamental truths of God's Word, the people of God were to shun them completely. These

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men were not worthy of shepherding God's flock—and the Lord would judge them accordingly. (Gal. 3:1)

As for you, says Peter, do all in your power—through the Holy Spirit within you—to grow spiritually.

- *Grow in grace*: grow and mature in the fruits of the Spirit; ever bringing forth more fruit.
- *Grow in the gifts of grace* that the Spirit of God bestows upon you. Benefit others by the ministering to them and helping to satisfy their needs. (Gal. 5:22-23)
- *Grow, too, in knowledge*. Grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Become fully aware of everything he is saying to you in his Word, and obey him wholeheartedly. Attain a full knowledge of God's living Word. Attain an accurate knowledge of this Word. (Eph. 4:13; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9)

If we follow Peter's instructions to these believers, we too will be able to recognise error, and to refute those who propound it. We too will be able to edify other believers in the faith. The Holy Spirit will equip us to strengthen, exhort, comfort, guide, rebuke, and encourage God's people. However, we must do so in love.

Always let us remember this truth:

*The sin we expose in others today may be exposed in us tomorrow.*

