Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Living in Anticipation of Christ's Return, Part 2
Scripture: 2 Peter 3:14-18
Code: 61-27

Let's turn in our Bibles tonight for our study in God's precious truth, to 2 Peter chapter 3. We are closing in now on the end of this great epistle. I am hoping we can do that tonight, but I'm not going to try to push too hard, cause the truth here is too significant for us.

Second Peter chapter 3, we're looking at the section from verse 11 down through verse 18, under the title, "Living in anticipation of Christ's return." We've been asking the question since we have throughout this third chapter been dealing with the return of Christ, the question...what does it mean to us as Christians that Jesus is coming?

Peter has been talking about the arrival of the day of the Lord. We noted for you that following the day of the Lord is another great day, called the day of God also in verse 18 called the day of eternity. We as believers are not necessarily anticipating the day of the Lord, that's a judgment. We are anticipating the day of God, that's the eternal day, the day of the new heavens and the new earth. We are joyously anticipating entering into God's glorious eternal creation. We are longing for that. We do not long for the day of the Lord, the time of severe judgment, the time of damnation on sinners, but we do long for the eternal state of righteous glory in the day of God. That marvelous day when God is all in all. That term, "day of God," as you note, appears in verse 12 of this text.

And already, though we have not yet entered into the day of God, and will not until after the millennial Kingdom, we already anticipate it. Furthermore, we are already citizens of that eternal state. Our citizenship, says Paul to the Philippians, is in heaven. We are those who seek a city whose builder and maker is God. And that is the celestial city, the eternal new Jerusalem, the new heavens and the new earth being its final dwelling place. And so we live in anticipation of that eternal glory, that eternal day of God.

Verse 11 then says, "Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be," what are the implications of the entire universe in a holocaust of fire followed by the new heavens and the new earth, the eternal day of God in which you will dwell. Granted that you are citizens for that glorious day, that eternal kingdom, that eternally new universe, what sort of people should you be! And we notice that that is not a question but rather an exclamation as if it were to say...what sort of people ought we to be, in what kind of astounding excellence should we behave and live. Since Jesus is coming to judge the ungodly, coming to destroy the sin-cursed universe and replace it with a brand new one, made for us in which we will eternally dwell, it should impact our lives

powerfully. We are citizens of that eternal Kingdom.

How should it impact us? Well he says it in verse 11, "In holy conduct and godliness." Holy conduct has to do with our action, godliness has to do with our attitude. In attitude and action we are to be separated from sin, holy and godly.

Now what does that mean? How does that break down? What are the components of that? What are the elements of such godly attitudes and godly conduct? Well with that we draw ourselves into verse 12, and I said to you last time Peter is going to give us a series of features or elements or components that fit into the kind of attitude, the kind of action that should characterize us. Here is an expanded definition of holy conduct and godliness.

Last time I told you, first of all, it includes expectation. Verse 12 and 13, "Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning and the elements will melt with intense heat, but according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."

Notice there in verse 12 he says we are looking for, we are hastening. Down in verse 13 again, we are looking for a new heaven and a new earth. We should be living in then in anticipation or expectation. We went into that in detail last time.

Let's go to the second component, the second element in his instruction here. Not only should we be characterized by anticipation, but let me give you a word and then explain it, we should be characterized by pacification. That is just another word for peace. We should be pacified. We should be in a peaceful condition. Please notice verse 14, "Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace." To be found by Him in peace.

Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things...what things? The day of God, the new heavens and the new earth, the eternal state, the glorious Kingdom awaiting us in the presence of God forever and ever. Since we look for these things...by the way, the word "beloved" isolates this to Christians alone and he says, "Since you look for these things, the new heavens and the new earth with all their glories, you should be diligent..." Another way to say that is to make every effort. It stresses Christian duty, it stresses Christian responsibility, making every effort to be found by Him in peace.

I need to make a brief note about that "Be found by Him." That's quite an interesting comment. When the Lord Jesus comes, you will be found...personally by Him. I need to just remind you of that. There will be nothing hidden in that day, there will be nothing overlooked in that day. Everything will be brought to light in the day when the Lord Jesus comes, we're very much aware of that. It says in 1 Corinthians 4 that when He comes He will bring to light the secret things in the innermost recesses of the human heart. When He comes He will bring to light everything we've done in our lives, whether it

be good or worthless, 2 Corinthians 5 says, we will be found by Him. That emphasizes that it is He who is coming and it is He who will confront us when He comes. Since we are anticipating all of this, it should be that when He finds us He will find us having been diligent to live in peace. So that He finds us pacified.

What does he mean by that? What does he mean that in the event that He comes and when it happens we should be found in peace? What is he saying? Well it could mean peace with God. It could mean that He would find us in a relationship of peace with God, which would be the equal of salvation, according to Romans 5 and Ephesians 2. But then again we're already Christians, called beloved here, he is writing to believers so it wouldn't seem that he is saying you need to be saved. It could be that he is referring to some unsaved professors in the church who are espousing a salvation they do not possess and perhaps he is working them and saying be diligent that when it does come you will be found genuinely saved.

But, I think that that's not the primary meaning, though it could be a secondary one. It is also possible that he could mean be at peace with other believers, that what he is saying that when I come and set up My glorious Kingdom, I want to find you living peacefully with each other, the peace of Christian love, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, as we hear from the Apostle Paul. Peace with men.

But I don't think that's best either, although that may be a component certainly. I think what he is saying here is that you be found enjoying the peace of God, personal peace of mind, the peace that comes from a strong faith in the Lord. In Philippians chapter 4, those familiar words are worth reminding ourselves about. "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

I believe that he is talking about that kind of peace that guards the heart and the mind. That kind of peace that makes us free from anxiety. That kind of peace that makes us free from fear. That kind of peace that is not less than anxious for Christ to come for fear that He will discover our sinfulness and our shame. That kind of peace that is free from worry about the future. That kind of peace that knows no fear regarding the day of the Lord, the judgment of Christ, world conditions or whatever because we enjoy the peace of God. And this says, the Apostle Paul as I just read you, is a peace that transcends human comprehension, it transcend human intellectual power, it transcends human definition and it transcends human explanation.

I think what he is saying is...I want it so that when I come you will be at total peace living without fear. Another way to say it is the way Paul said it when he wrote to Timothy and spoke about those who love His appearing. Those who love the appearing of Christ because they have no fear, they have no anxiety. It means you have a strong sense of the assurance of your salvation. It means you have a strong sense of the reality of your Christian faith and obedience so that you will not be ashamed at

His coming. It means that you have no fear that you might get caught up or swept away in the judgment of the day of the Lord because you know all is well between you and God. You are completely comfortable with the anticipation of the end of the word, and should you know it was coming in the next twenty-four hours, you could pillow your head in rest and sleep. You'd have no fear, you'd have no anxiety.

I wonder if that's the case. I wonder if you knew if Jesus was coming tomorrow night what it would be like in the next twenty-four hours, if you would be living in complete peace, calm and comfort knowing your account with God is settled up to the very moment and being certain that if the day of the Lord were to begin in twenty-four hours, the holocaust of God's judgment were to break loose upon the world, all would be well with you. The real challenge of Christian living, beloved, is not to see if you can eliminate every uncomfortable issue in your life, the real challenge of Christian living is not to create a perfect world so you'll be happy, but to live in a fallen world as a fallen sinful person, surrounded by fallen people, in the midst of all the manifestation of the curse, enduring all the pain and having perfect peace that all is well between you and God, and that HIs purposes for you will unfold perfectly as revealed in the Scripture. That is the peace of assurance. That is the peace of security. That is the tranquility of a man or a woman who knows that all is well with God and fears no shame at the appearing of Christ. This, says Paul in Philippians 4, will guard your heart, it will guard your mind.

If you think about the coming of Christ and the eternal state, the new heavens and the new earth and the glorious eternal plans that God has established for you, if you think about seeing Him face to face, if you think about the day when you will enter into the glories of His presence and dwell there forever, then you should be rejoicing with exhilaration and anticipation, loving His appearing, crying out, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." You should have a fearlessness in your heart because you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that all is well.

First John chapter 4 verse 17 says, "That we should have confidence in the day of judgment." We should be very confident that it will pass us by. So says Peter, as you anticipate the coming of Jesus Christ, you should be living in anticipation and you should be living in a condition of pacification at perfect peace.

Thirdly, another component in living in the light of the return of Christ we'll call purification. Back to verse 14 again. He says there in verse 14, "Beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent not only to be found by Him in peace, but to be found by Him spotless and blameless." To be found by Him spotless and blameless.

Now this is in contrast, I believe, to the false teachers. You remember back in chapter 2 when he described the false teachers he said they were stains and blemishes. In contrast to being stains and blemishes, or more graphically, scabs and filth spots, you should be spotless and blameless. These

two terms speak of both character and reputation. They speak of both what we are in reality and what people think we are. Spotless means my character. What I really am. There's no spot, there's no blotch on my life. Blameless is my reputation. What people think I am and I am to be spotless, that is pure in reality and blameless, that is pure by reputation. That's how the Lord wants to find us. Pure in reality, pure in reputation, spotless as to our character, blameless as to our reputation.

Now there are four possibilities in these words and we have to deal with them realistically. Let me give you the four possibilities. It is possible that you could be spotless, but at least in one sense not blameless. What do I mean by that? It is possible that you could be living a pure and a godly and a virtuous life, but in the eyes of the world you are not blameless. That is usually because somewhere in your past there has been a severe stain in your life that has stained your reputation with such a degree of stain that though you now are spotless, people remember the stain. And so while at the time of the coming of Christ all might be well and you would be spotless, it might be that you're not blameless, for somewhere along the line you brought reproach upon yourself and the testimony of Christ and you have been wearing the blame for that. It is possible to be spotless, but not blameless.

It is possible to be blameless but not spotless. It is possible that people don't know the real truth. It is possible that while people think you to be spotless, you are not, that while people think you to be blameless, your reputation is flawless, but the truth is, you're not spotless. So we say there are some who are spotless and not blameless, and there are some who are blameless but not spotless.

There's a third possibility. When Jesus comes you are spotless by way of character as much is as possible by His grace, and you are blameless by way of reputation. Both your life and your reputation are untarnished. Both your life and your reputation are unblemished. There has never been a stain that has that capability to abide on your life.

It is fourthly possible that you are neither spotless nor blameless. And by that I mean you have spots and you've been blamed. You can be both spotless and blameless, you can be neither spotless nor blameless. And in that case, both life and reputation are tarnished and blemished.

It is possible then that you can be, as we noted, spotless but not blameless, that is you've been restored but the scandal on your life remains in some people's minds. You can be blameless and not spotless, that's to be a hypocrite. You can be both spotless and blameless, that's to be holy. Or you can be neither spotless, or blameless, that's to be sinful.

I just draw that out for you so you can see the implications of what is at first glance a rather simple statement. We are to take care of the sins in our lives, that is the point, to live holy lives. And when the Lord comes, He wants us to be pure.

How can you be that way? Know you have to discern your sin, detest your sin, confess your sin, desire the holy life, abstain from temptation situations, be faithful in the means of grace, the spiritual means of Bible study, prayer, worship, so that you maintain a pure life. The Lord says that's how I want you to live until I come. And that's consistent with what you're anticipating in the eternal state. If I am destined for eternal purity, if I am destined for eternal glory, I ought to seek to live that way now.

So Peter says, as we anticipate the coming of Christ, here's the kind of people we ought to be, characterized by anticipation, pacification, purification. Verse 15 takes us to a fourth thought, this is a marvelous one. We are to be characterized by evangelization...we are to be characterized by evangelization.

In the time in which we are waiting for this great, glorious, eternal state, he says, verse 15, "We're to regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation." In other words, we are to be caught up in using the time, energy, gifts, life that we have for the purpose of salvation. The Lord is waiting in order that He might save.

Go back to verse 9, some of the critics were saying, "Well, the Lord doesn't come, He said He would come but He'll never come. Look how long it's been and He hasn't come." And so Peter says, "The Lord isn't slow about His promise as some count slowness," as some men might think Him is what he means, "but the reason it appears as though He is slow is because He is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

He's waiting patiently. And back in verse 8 he said, "Don't let it escape your notice that a day with the Lord is like a thousand years and a thousand years like a day," so He doesn't keep time like you do anyway. He's very patient, very merciful. God does not wish that any should perish, He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. God our Savior, 1 Timothy 2:4, will have all men to be saved. His tarrying and tarrying and waiting and waiting and wishing for those who have yet not repented to come to repentance. When God said to Israel, "Why will you die, O house of Israel," Ezekiel 18:31, He underscored His compassion and He underscored His mercy.

You see the image of this magnificent merciful patience in the beautiful story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. The son living in the world riotously, in immorality, in wasting his gospel privilege and opportunity and his father at home patient, gracious, compassionate, waiting and waiting and waiting until the son comes home. So it is with God the Father.

And so what Peter is saying is, in this time of God's patience, recognize, in verse 15, that the patience of our Lord is for the purpose of salvation. And back to that same thought that we noted a few weeks ago, the fact that we're waiting for the coming of Christ doesn't give us license to sit around and do nothing. We're not to, as I said then, put our pajamas on and sit on the roof till He gets here. We're to be involved in the ministry of reconciliation.

In fact, in 2 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul really articulated what should be the passionate heartbeat of every believer who is waiting for the coming of Christ. This is what he said. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, or the fear of the Lord, we persuade men." In other words, when I think about the day of God which is blessing for me, I also have to think about the day of the Lord, which is cursing for them.

There's a graphic illustration of this same attitude that comes from the heart and pen of the Apostle John. As the Apostle John was contemplating judgment in Revelation chapter 10, the angel brought him a book and he gave the book to John and he said, "Take it and eat it," in the symbolism. John ate it. He said, "It will make your stomach bitter but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey. And I took it and I did that and I ate it and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter."

What is this? The little book represents the truth of God about final judgment which is bittersweet. It is, on the one hand, sweet because it ushers us into the day of God. It is, on the other hand, bitter because it means the damnation of the unbelieving world. The true Christian who is waiting in the time of God's patience sees that the purpose of the patience of God is to extend Himself in salvation to sinners.

With what attitudes then do we await the day of God, the glorious eternity that God has prepared for us? With what attitude do we await that final glory? With anticipation, looking for it, eagerly anxious that it come and come soon. In pacification, that is dwelling in perfect peace because all is well with the Lord, the account is settled up to the moment so that should He come there would be no shame and there is no fear for assurance guards our hearts. Purification, living in virtue, purity of life, both in character and reputation. And then evangelization, making sure that as the patience of God lingers, our zeal to lead men to salvation carries us through the time of His patience.

Number five, discrimination...discrimination. This too must characterize us. And I want you to be very careful as we go through this section because it is an exceedingly important text. It could lead us on a lot of different subjects, but I want to resist that, subjects which we have discussed in the past, and shall in the future, and stick with the flow of Peter's thought.

Verse 15, not only are we since we look for these things to be diligent in regarding the patience of the Lord to be salvation, but follow what he says, "Just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand which the untaught and unstable distort as they do also the rest of the scriptures to the their own destruction, you therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard, lest being carried away by the error of unprincipled men you fall from your own steadfastness."

Now in first reading you got lost...I know. But I want to take you back and find you somewhere in this because it is absolutely crucial. "Just as," there in verse 15, in the middle, I believe introduces a new idea. He says, "Just as also," and I really think you could start a new sentence there and transition into a whole new concept. He says, "Just as also our beloved brother Paul," and then he launches off to discuss something about Paul and Paul's warning about false teaching. And then he says, "You need to be on guard so you don't fall from your own steadfastness." This is a call to discrimination.

He is saying as you live in anticipation of the coming of the day of God, you've got to realize that there are going to be a lot of people coming along who are going to try to confuse you about that. And you've got to use good judgment. Our beloved brother Paul warned about that, even as I have been warning you. That's the general flow. Now let's look at the parts of this separately.

He calls Paul our beloved brother Paul. Really Paul was a fellow Apostle, Peter uses gracious terminology to describe Paul. That's wonderful really, wonderful. They were together at the Jerusalem Council. And you read Acts 15, Peter and Paul were together there.

They shared a common man, did you know that? They shared a common ministry partner. Both of them had the same assistant, a man by the name of Silas. Compare 1 Peter 5:12 with Acts 15:40. So they shared a ministry together in the Jerusalem Council. They shared a man's life together, namely the man Silas. Certainly they loved the same Lord and believed the same truths.

But do you remember that early on in the life of Paul there was a great, great conflict between Paul and Peter? If you go back to Galatians chapter 2 for just a moment, I'll put you in touch with it. Galatians chapter 2, Paul was in Antioch. He had gone there to be the instrument of the Lord founding a church. And the church at Jerusalem had sent some people there to establish a church in Antioch and from Antioch, you remember, they began to launch the ministry into the world, as Paul and Barnabas were sent from there.

But when Paul was in Antioch, Peter came. Peter had come to Antioch and done a terrible thing. He had, in effect, pulled all of the believers back into legalism. It was really a very overt sin on Peter's part. Verse 11 of Galatians 2, Paul says, "I opposed him to his face." I opposed him to his face. "Because he stood condemned." And he goes on to describe the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles but when they came he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision, and the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. When I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you being a Jew live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" He was, in effect, saying why are you free to eat with Gentiles before these Jews come, and now you're hypocritical.

He withstood him to the face publicly. Now you've got to remember that Peter was the early leader of the church, the primary spokesman. And no doubt, the kind of man he was, didn't relish the thought of being publicly disgraced. Isn't it wonderful though that when truth prevails and when both men recognize truth, they can deal with sin as sin and not take it personally? Peter obviously didn't take it personally. Peter knew it was a sin. Peter saw it as a sin. I'm sure that Peter realized the true spirituality of Paul and loved him for it and so here he says, "Our beloved brother Paul." And there's much more in those words than just meets the eye.

So, he says just as also our beloved brother Paul according to the wisdom given him, that's a marvelous statement. Fritz Rineka(?) calls it a divine passive. The wisdom given him by God wrote to you.

Now he is referring back to a letter from Paul. He's looking to Paul for some support for this next point that he wants to make about discrimination. He says let me remind you about Paul and about what God gave him by way of wisdom that he wrote to you.

What's he talking about? What is this? Was it a letter? Well he doesn't say it was one letter. He doesn't say if it was a special letter just to them. We don't even know that they were an easily identifiable group. He's simply saying...Paul according to the wisdom given him from God wrote to you.

Then he adds, "As also in all letters...in all letters." What's he talking about here? Does he have a specific letter in mind? If he does there's no way for us to know that. Let me see if I can't give you an opinion, all right? It's a pretty strong opinion, I can't be dogmatic.

Second Peter was written to the same group of Christians as 1 Peter. You say, "How do you know that?" Look at chapter 3 verse 1. "This is now, beloved, the second letter I'm writing to you." Now that's not too hard, is it? Then to whom was 1 Peter written? Let's go back to 1 Peter 1;1 and find out. It was written to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia who are chosen. It's Christians all over that area so we can't be very definitive about what group it went. It seems to me it went to a whole lot of folks. So whatever 1 Peter went to, whatever group, so did 2 Peter.

All of those places mentioned there in 1 Peter 1:1, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, are that area of Asia Minor. The region of Asia Minor was the region to which Paul wrote many letters...Galatians, Ephesians which is a circular letter that went to all of them, Colossians, for example. We also know that the letters written to the Galatians, the Ephesians, the Colossians, and as I said the Ephesian letter was a circular one, that went to a lot of different places, we know that those letters were shared with other churches. There's no question about that and Colossians chapter

4 and verse 16, "And when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans and you for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea." They swapped the letters, they shared the letters, they passed the letters around. And they began actually collections of those letters as they shared them with other churches.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:27, writing to the Thessalonians Paul says, "I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren." So I don't really know that we can say this is any specific letter, but what he is saying is you are familiar with the wisdom of God given to our beloved brother Paul, which he wrote to you as in all letters. We don't know whether he's simply referring to these epistles, or one of these epistles, or some other specific letter that was not inspired. But I like the fact that in verse 16 he says, "As also in all letters." So I would take it that he is simply referring to the writing of Paul. It is possible that Paul had written a specific letter to this group, but it's such a hard group to identify, that would be hard to discover which letter. And it's perhaps best to say they were just familiar with the writing of Paul.

What's the point? Well he's saying Paul wrote you about the Second Coming. Paul wrote you about the glories of heaven. Paul wrote you about the glories of heaven. Paul wrote you about the day of God, if not using the term, certainly speaking of eternity. First and Second Thessalonians, for example, are the earliest writings of Paul, they deal extensively with prophecy relating to the coming of the Lord Jesus. The second set of letters would be Romans, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, all of them have passages anticipating the coming of Jesus Christ, passages outlining the future plan of God for Israel and the church. Then the third wave of letters would be known as the prison epistles, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon, again there are statements about the future, about Jesus as head over all things, and how all things are headed toward a glorious climax and conclusion in Him, the final reconciliation of all things. Then the last wave, the fourth wave of letters would be the pastoral epistles, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus, and even those things anticipate the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So Peter is saying as Paul has written in all his letters, including the one that you have, or the ones that you have, about the return of Christ, about the glories of heaven and the eternal state...in other words, I'm leaning on Paul here for a little support. What I'm saying has been confirmed by him. He wrote about the day of the Lord. He wrote about eternity. He wrote about the fact that God will keep His promise, judge the wicked, change the universe, bring in ultimate glorious eternal righteousness.

Peter's not done. He's going to go deeper into this, follow this, very interesting in verse 16. "In which are some things hard to understand." Now in some of Paul's writing about the future, it's hard to understand. The verb actually means difficult to interpret. Please note this, not impossible, did you hear me? Some people say, "Oh, we just can't know. I claim no view. I just don't think we can know." He doesn't say it's impossible, he says it's difficult. Some of Paul's passages about the Rapture of the church, the time of the Tribulation, the coming of the man of sin, the return of Christ in judgment, the

great age we call the Millennium, the final glorious eternal heaven, some of what Paul says about that is hard to understand, literally difficult to interpret.

You say, "Does this mean that Peter didn't understand it?" No, I"m sure Peter did understand it as much as could be understood. He doesn't say that he didn't understand it, follow this, he simply said it's hard to understand, difficult to interpret so the untaught and the unstable distort it. And I'll promise you, Peter didn't put himself in that category with the untaught and the unstable. He's saying it's just difficult, therefore people can be easily deceived...they can be easily deceived.

I'll tell you, folks, there is an unending proliferation of stuff written about prophetic truth regarding the future. It just comes out all the time. And, of course, for the unstable, the untaught, it can deceive them, particularly when it's perpetrated by unscrupulous false teachers. Now they don't do this just with prophecy, he says the untaught and the unstable distort as they do also the rest of the scriptures. They do it with the whole of the Bible. Untaught means they lack information, unstable means they are therefore vacillating in their spiritual character.

The untaught and the unstable are victimized by error. To distort literally, if it was used in a physical sense, would mean to put a body on a rack, a torture rack and wrench that body. And people, as it were, take the truth, put it on a rack and wrench it. They twist it, they torture the truth. They're hucksters conning people. The lack of simple clarity on all prophetic issues gives place for the ignorant and the immoral to confuse the truth. And they don't do it just with prophecy, he says, they do it with all the rest of the scriptures also.

Now you remember, don't you, back in verse 3 that the reason false teachers deny the Second Coming isn't become they've come across some great prophetic truth, it's because they walk after their own lusts and they want a future that doesn't hold them accountable for their immorality. So along with their twisting and perverting and distorting of the teaching of the future judgment, and the future glory of the saints and all that's involved in the coming of Christ, along with twisting that you can be sure they twist teaching on judgment itself, teaching on the law of God, teaching on righteousness, teaching on holiness, teaching on repentance, teaching on salvation by grace through faith, they will be antinomian. And so they distort all kinds of things.

By the way, as a footnote, did you notice that he says they do the rest of the scriptures? That means that he is calling what Paul wrote scripture. Paul wrote in all his letters, he says, speaking of these matters of prophetic themes, they're hard, difficult to interpret, the untaught and unstable distort these as they do the rest of the scriptures. That is the most clear cut statement on the pages of Scripture to affirm the writings of Paul are Scripture. That's Peter's testimony that Paul writes Scripture. And the false teachers distort it all.

The end of verse 16, "To their own destruction...to their own destruction." If you go back into chapter 2 for a moment, that's pretty clear. The end of verse 1 says the false prophets and false teachers bring upon themselves swift destruction. Verse 3 says their judgment from long ago is not idle and their destruction is not asleep. They will be destroyed with those creatures also who will be destroyed, those unreasoning instinctive animalistic creatures. Chapter 3 verse 7, there is a day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. Four times the word "destruction," all four times referring to false teacher, false prophets and those who follow them.

In Jude verse 10 it says they will be destroyed like unreasoning animals. Verse 13 it says for them the blackness of darkness has been reserved forever.

Now listen carefully. He says those people who distort the teachings of Paul will be led to eternal destruction. Let me give you a consequent thought. If that is true, then the writing of Paul must be Scripture because if you distort it, it lead to eternal damnation. It must be Scripture if any distortion of it leads to eternal damnation. Sounds like Revelation 22:18 and 19, doesn't it? "If you add anything to this book, shall be added to you the plagues that are in it, or if you take anything away..."

Now, let's get the sum of this. The therefore comes in verse 17, "You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand," knowing what? "Knowing that there will be false teachers who will come along twisting and distorting the Scripture and who therefore will lead people to their own damnation, since you know this beforehand, since you have this information, be on your guard." Be on your guard against false teachers, against their destructive heresies. That's why Paul says to Timothy, "Study to show yourself approved unto God." Be on your guard. Why? "Lest being carried away by the error of unprincipled men." There's another title for the false teachers. Their victims are the untaught and the unstable who distort the Scripture. But the ones who lead the distortion are the unprincipled men, the false teachers. Unprincipled is lawless, lawless. He says don't be carried away. It's the same word used in Galatians 2:13 when it says that Barnabas was carried away with the hypocrisy. Don't get carried away with their error.

These unprincipled men, these lawless men, these men who live apart from and without God's law...listen, any time you hang around or listen to lawless false teachers who distort the Scripture, you run the risk of being led astray. You can't sit in a church where somebody is twisting and distorting the Scripture without running the risk of being led astray. You can't sit in a college, be it called Christian or not, and listen to people distort the Scripture without running the risk of being led astray. You can't go to a seminary for the sake of its academic reputation, sit there and hear error all the time without running the risk of being led astray by unprincipled, lawless men. Only truth sanctifies. Only truth brings righteousness.

You must then be discerning. End of verse 17, "Or you might fall from your own steadfastness." Literally fall out of, you could be seduced and fall out of your own steadfastness. What's that word

steadfastness? Firmness, it's the opposite of unstable, the very opposite of unstable. Peter has in mind a firm stance on truth, taking a firm stand. Remember when Paul wrote 1 Timothy at the end of the first chapter he talked about Hymenaeus and Alexander who had led people into shipwreck in regard to their faith, falling out of steadfastness. He's not saying losing your salvation, that's eternal. But you fall from your stability, you fall from your steadfastness in doctrine, in truth, conviction, confidence.

So Peter says...Look, living in the light of our eternal destiny calls for discrimination. Paul wrote all these things about the Second Coming, false teachers called unprincipled men will come along and take these things that are hard to interpret, twist them, distort them and with that twisting and distorting lead people astray who will also twist and distort other parts of Scripture and will fall out of their steadfastness into confusion, double mindedness, doubt, chaos. Don't let that happen.

You live in the light of your eternal destiny with discrimination. Guard, he says, guard yourself, be on guard. The only way to do that is to study the Scripture and show yourself approved. So, he adds discrimination to evangelization, purification, pacification, and anticipation.

Quickly there are two left in verse 18, very simple. Maturation, verse 18, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." He's saying while you're waiting, while you're anticipating your eternal glory, be growing toward that. Paul had said, "Be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about every wind of doctrine through the crafty, cunning operations of Satan," Ephesians 4:14. Peter had said that in 1 Peter 2:2, "As babes desire the pure milk of the Word that you may grow by it." And so here he just reminds us that since we're going to spend our eternity with the Lord Jesus, we need to be growing in the grace and knowledge of Him. The verb auxano means to advance in the sphere of grace through the knowledge, the sphere of grace through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

How do we gain that knowledge? Coming to know Him better through the study of the Word, through intimate fellowship with Him. All this means a deeper and deeper knowledge of Christ. Paul cried, "That I may know Him." Grace is the sphere of our growth. Knowledge is the component of that growth. In the sphere of grace where God forgives our sin and overlooks our weaknesses, we feed on the Word of God and communion with the living Christ and thereby grow in our knowledge of Him in the sphere of grace which deals with our failures and our shortcomings. This is an essential safeguard. If I'm going to be on guard, I'm going to have to be increasing in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Please note that He is both Lord and Savior. Not just Savior and not just Lord. This is an essential safeguard. If I'm going to live in the light of my eternal glory, then at this particular point in time as I live my life in this world, I pursue in the sphere of God's compassion and mercy and grace a deeper and deeper knowledge of the fullness of the person of Christ both in His lordship and His saving work.

That's the only way that I can prevent being led astray.

And there's one final word as Peter closes and that's adoration...adoration. He says, "To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity, amen." It just calls for adoration. It just calls for worship. Give Him the glory now and on into the day of eternity. Paul had said, "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." We are to live to His glory. Paul had written to the Ephesians and said that God should get glory, Christ should get glory through the church, that means through you. We are to be to the praise of His glory.

There's a marvelous truth here, however, that's not something you can resist commenting about. "To Him be the glory." Who is Him? Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the modifier, obviously. That's quite important, folks. Glory belongs to God. Glory belongs to God and God alone. The Old Testament says that God said, "My glory will I not give to another." And here the Holy Spirit is saying give glory to Jesus Christ. What does that tell us? It's a great affirmation of the deity of the Jesus Christ, His equality with God.

In John chapter 5 and verse 23 that statement, so important, "In order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father, he who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him." They're equal.

Romans 11:36 is a great doxology given to God. Jude 25, a great doxology given to God. Second Peter 3:18, a great doxology. Doxa is the word for glory, a great doxology given to the Lord Jesus Christ. We therefore conclude that God and Christ both deity are worthy of our praise. Christ must be God's equal, worthy of glory.

How then do I live? How do I live in the light of some day entering into eternity and living forever in the day of God, the day of eternity, the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness eternally dwells? How do I live in the light of that in this life? Peter says what kind of person should you be, at what level of excellence should you live? And he answers his own question. You should live in anticipation, you should live in pacification, that is in perfect peace because you're assured that the day of the Lord will pass you by even as the angel of death did and you'll enter the day of God. You should live in purification, both spotless and blameless. You should live in evangelization, realizing that essential to the use of the time you have is to preach the gospel to the lost. You should live with discrimination, that is being very careful and on guard lest someone coming along and distorting divine truth would lead you away from your steadfastness. You should live in maturation, continually growing in the knowledge of Christ in the sphere of grace. And you should live in adoration, living a doxology, as it were, being an instrument of praise to the God of glory, the Christ of glory who has planned the day of eternity for you.

This then is how we live in the light of our glorious future. Let's bow together in prayer.

What sort of people should we be? Father, we know. Bring these great truths home to our hearts for the sake of Christ and His glory. Amen.

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