
Into Thy Word Bible Study in 2 Peter

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2 Peter 3: 14-18: The Exhortation to Remain In Christ

General idea: We are to wait, but we are not to be idle while we wait. We are to be involved and make every effort to know Him and make Him known. Consequently, we are to remain firm in our faith regardless of when He comes back. We do this actively with the contribution of our trust and assurance in Christ, making the most of what He has given us in His call, precepts, and opportunities. This means being pure and blameless in our obedience to and trust in Christ and being humble, the opposites of the character of the false teachers.

Peter is communicating to us that God is involved, that He does indeed care, and that He is concerned and does intervene in history, thus we can trust Him. If people come against your belief in Christ and good character, take comfort. No matter what others say or do, God will intervene in His time, and make them the ultimate fools. Peter continues to tell us to beware of scoffers who deny Christ's return! We often need to be reminded of this, no matter how long we have been in the Lord. We need that gentle refreshing to stimulate us into correct thinking so we can have the faith and strength to stay on His path. We are to know the Scriptures and be disciplined in the faith because this is what keeps our minds on Him, and when we practice these precepts, they become rooted and make us firmer in our faith.

Vs. 14-16: Peter is closing his Epistle with encouragements and blessings. He is reminding his people of the importance of Paul's letter(s) to them and that they are to take what he says seriously. He also warns that if they do not understand something, they are not to twist it to fit what they do understand or want. Doing that only disrupts His Truth with our whims, resulting in disaster for all who do this heinous act.

- *Make every effort* means for us to serve Christ with lives of holiness, being devoted to the worship and service of Him. This also means to be diligent in looking forward to Christ's Second Coming (Matt. 25:13; 1 Thess. 5:6, 8, 11; 2 Pet. 1:13-16).
- *Spotless... blameless* means to be at *peace with him*. This means that as Christians, we can have peace with God as a result of being justified by faith. By the same token, we can still sin, disappoint, and displease God even though we are saved. He calls us to live according to His requirements, and if we refuse, we need to take heed. Our salvation is secure but we are still accountable for our actions for we will receive commendation and rewards when He returns (Rom. 5:1; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 1:19).

- *Patience means salvation.* This reference indicates that instead of whining, complaining, and theorizing about when He will return, we should trust in God's timing and providence. It is because of God's patience that He has the will to save us, for we tempt His patience all of the time (Gen. 6). We are *just* in God's sight; we are *just* because He declares us so!
- *Wisdom.* Peter is stating the case; these are not his words but His words, because Paul's letters were inspired by God (Eph. 3:2-5; 1 Cor. 2:12; Gal. 1:1).
- *Hard to understand* was not necessarily a demeaning statement, rather one of respect as meaning *inspired* and *complex*. In such matters, it is important we remain diligent to persevere in searching for better understanding. If we allow our emotions and first impressions to stop us, we will miss out on a lot that God has for us.
- *Ignorant and unstable people.* *Ignorant* refers to people who are not educated or refuse to learn and grow, such as Christians who have not been discipled and do not know the precepts of Jesus. *Unstable* refers to those who manipulate, perhaps are mentally ill or just scheming, whose thinking is twisted, and who seek to lead others away from sound teachings and God's Word.
- *Distort/twist* refers to misrepresenting and manipulating something so to make it what it is not. This is done by deliberately making a declaration of what it means when it really says otherwise—just to fit a personal or group agenda. This can also arise when we misinterpret God's Word from a lack of research and study, catering to a particular viewpoint without considering the merits of it, or being sloppy in our *exegesis*. The people in Peter's day were allegorizing (seeing the text as abstract thoughts for deliberation but not for application) Paul's words, and other Scriptures, muting the value and application of it. Today, we would call this *liberalism*.
- *Other Scriptures* refers to Paul's Epistles, possibly a copy of Romans, which was a circular letter to many churches, and/or possibly an early Gospel and that they are God's inspired, authoritative Word. This passage also testifies to Peter's acceptance of Paul's Apostleship, a testimony of unity in teaching and purpose (Rom. 1:1, 21; 16:4; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:1).

What we go through, even suffering, has meaning and purpose to it. We can remain spotless, as Jesus showed us by His words and His example. When something happens which you do not understand, seek answers in prayer, asking God what you are to learn. This is how we can better grow in the grace and love of our Lord. Then, your faith-development and steadfastness will be far more impacting and real for you and those around you.

Vs. 17-18: Peter's Benediction. He calls us to be on our guard by pursuing our relationship with Christ, allowing our bonds to grow and become stronger so no reproach can come against our church.

- *Lawless men* refers to the false teachers who have ignored God or have no regard for truth or morality. Do not be led away by errors or personal desires!
- *Fall/lose...stability* means to fall away from Truth, which includes God's percepts, call, and standards. This does not mean we lose our salvation. Rather, it refers to our weakness (John 6:37-40; 10:28-29; 17:2-24; Phil. 1:6; 1 Cor. 1:8; 9:1; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 2 Thess. 3:32; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:18). We are to be firm in our faith and not allow our desires or others to distract us from Christ. This reinforces the importance of sound doctrine and teaching (John 6:39; Phil. 1:6).
- *Grow* means to be steadfast in faith and in Christ. We do this by pursuing holy living through deepening our relationship and experiences with Christ. We are called to learn as much as we can about our Lord and His teaching and then apply it wholeheartedly into our lives. This is in contrast to the arrogance and pretentious knowledge and *pseudo*-growth of the false teachers and hypocrites who know little and apply none. Growing is an ongoing experience that should never stop until we are called home to heaven. It is not enough to know; we are also called to do. In conjunction, our persistence to know Him and His Word prevents false teachers from getting a hold on us or our church (2 Pet. 1:2-3)!
- *Knowledge*. The antidote to heresy is knowing the real truth, and we do this by going to God's Word. We are called to pursue education and practice knowledge so we can learn and know more about God, live for His glory, and help one another.
- *To him be glory* means that because of the deity and supremacy of Christ as God and Lord, all that we do in our Christian lives is to be about glorifying Him. This ties into Peter's opening statement in 1:1 (Col. 1:15-20; Rev. 1:5-6).
- *Forever* means "unto eternity." Time is endless and glory, through all time past, present, and future belongs to Christ alone (Isa. 60:19-20).

In Acts 13, the Church in Antioch was in a dilemma about who to send to the mission fields—to parts unknown and unclear. There were many gifted and qualified teachers to choose from, so they inquired of God who to send out. In their considerations, what was *not* pursued is as important as what was. They chose to send Paul and Barnabas. Their decision was authentically sought, as God was adored through worshiping, fasting, and prayer. This is "mission critical" for us to recognize the real work of the Holy Spirit. The results were from the

Spirit's initiative and not from a planning or strategy session. The lesson for us today is that when leaders and churches worship God and not trends, God moves (1 Tim. 4:1-8, 14)! We are still called to plan, but God is to be first and foremost in our sights, and that starts with our humility (Col. 1:18; 1 Peter 5).

Humility was not a virtue in the pagan world of Peter's day, just like it is not a virtue today. Humble people today get mocked and trampled by the media and society. They're called *wimps* by the world. This is the day of the macho, rugged individual who does not need anyone, and who steps on anyone who gets in the way. Humility was no virtue. Humility was for the weak and cowardly. Humility is what Christ wore as an apron of a servant to show how He came to serve (John 13:2-17). Our apron will keep our ministry, one another, and us clean, so put on the one-size-fits-all garment of humble service. Put on the apron of the slave. We should all be slaves in Christ if we are to be mature in Christ. We are called to tie humility on ourselves with a knot or a bow as a covering, so that it is tight and will not fall off—an attitude that we are not too good to serve others!

So, clothe yourselves with an attitude that you are lowly, an attitude that you are not too good to serve, that you are not too great to stoop down to help another. And, by the way, this was the only humility the pagan world tolerated the involuntary humility of slavery. Therefore, Peter is saying you need to put on the garment of a slave and take on a voluntary humility, a subordinate mentality "first toward one another." With this essential attitude, we will be glorifying Him to keep our faith growing and in Him, thus preparing our church for now and our selves for His return.

God has given us a great promise to keep us in the faith: He is here and He is returning. Thus, we need to live our lives worthy in Him and not forget who and what He is and has done. If we have no accountability because we believe there is not anyone to whom we are accountable, we will engage in doing what we want; and that is sin. Many people in Peter's time (as well as ours) did not believe there would be a judgment and therefore there were no personal responsibilities or obligations. This thinking produces *relativism* and our postmodern mindsets (nothing new here), and leads to immoral behaviors and a society in distress headed for ruin. Such thinking says we can do as we please; however, that will only bring us damnation at worst and missed opportunities at best. Why would we want to play these games?

Disgrace and shame take place when we only fear and honor one another; scruples and character come from when we fear and honor God (Prov. 3:5).

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What are you hopeful for or looking forward to? What does it mean to live worthy in Christ?
2. How does it make you feel knowing that God is involved and that He indeed does intervene and care for you? How can this help you trust in Christ more? What would your life look like with this working more effectively?
3. Why is it important to have a basis upon which to build a morality?
4. How do you tempt God's patience? What does it mean to your faith that God is patient with you more than you can fathom? That He saves you even though you tempt His patience all of the time?
5. Peter asked, *what kind of people you ought to be*; how would you respond to God saying this (by the way, He does)?
6. Growing is an ongoing experience that should never stop. Why is this true? Why would a Christian think otherwise?
7. How can you balance being curious with being hopeful so you do not diverge into obsession, impatience, or sensationalism regarding Christ's Second Coming?
8. What does it mean to you to make the most of your life here and now? What would your life look like if you did?
9. What can you do now so your Christian life will be more about glorifying Him? How can this combat liberalism and false teachers?
10. When something happens which you do not understand, what can you do to grow from it? How about seeking the reason in prayer, asking God what you are to learn from it? How would this help you grow further and firmer in the

faith?

11. What does it mean to be established in your faith? What can you do to keep your mind in Christ?
12. How can you make the most of what Christ has given? When will you do this? Now, how would you respond to *make every effort*? What are you going to do about becoming better in your faith in response to these questions from our Lord?

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