

You're In But Are You Of?

*Facing the Challenge of False
Teaching and False Doctrines*



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INTRODUCTION

Where are you as the bride of Christ? Are you where you need to be?

In Peter's first letter he addressed the attack on the church from the outside by Satan. He shared his burden for the believers who were going through the fire. He was moved to write second letter because people of God were being seduced by false prophets. He addresses the attack from within by false teachers who call themselves Christians and addresses and warns those who were playing with the fire addresses.

The church cannot be destroyed by the enemy's fierce torments from the outside, but false teaching from the inside could destroy it. Looking back at Ezekiel, the Jews followed false prophets and were driven away from God and into the world's system. That very thing was being repeated and Peter shouts the warning.

Let's take a journey through Peter's second letter and see what wisdom he has for us here in the 21st century. In particular I want to look at what he was warning the Christians in the first century about that is alive and well today — false teaching. We will explore this subject in several areas that all deal with our spiritual growth as the bride of Christ.

In Chapter 1 Peter matches our Christian calling and resources with our growth in practical holiness; faith's convictions. In Chapter 2 he urges us to resist false teaching; faith's contention. And in Chapter 3 his message is to live in the light of the coming day of God; faith's consummation.

Our challenge is to allow the Holy Spirit to move us on from the cross along the path to spiritual maturity; to move us from just being IN Christ to becoming OF Christ. We can't be satisfied with just being saved. There is a whole lifetime of growth that God has planned for us as we slowly become transformed into His image; His character. He has given us all of Himself and our life's purpose here on earth is to work with the Holy spirit to begin cleansing our wedding dress of all the spots and blemishes the world has brought us.

So, let's start there with Peter as he opens his letter by addressing it to those who have attained a faith of equal standing to his by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ... to us, His bride.

CHAPTER 1

DON'T STAY AT THE CROSS

2 Peter 1:1 -4

As the Bride of Christ, we need to make sure we aren't satisfied with just partaking **IN** Christ. We can't be satisfied with just our salvation. We need to be **OF** Christ and move into an abiding relationship with Him.

Our place is sitting at Jesus' feet, learning about Him and, as Paul said, conforming ourselves into His image (*Rom 8:29*). This is what abiding with Him in the Holiest Place is all about, growing more like Him every day by submitting to and allowing the Holy Spirit to help us become all that we were created to be. Our life here and now is not only critical to our future, it is critical to the soon coming Kingdom of Christ. We have a role to play both now and in the future. Our challenge is to be fully committed to finding out what that role is and to step into it.

Jesus promised us that if we're faithful and overcome (*Rev 3:12*) we will be a pillar in the Temple of God. He is the foundation and we are the pillars of stability and strength. We will stand tall in the coming kingdom and be rewarded for our spiritual work here on earth, that has nothing to do with our salvation, which is ours by grace through faith. This is the work that has to do with what we do with what we have been given, which costs us something ... our total commitment and obedience. Our work in this life, what we have done with what we have been given, will be judged at the Judgement Seat of Christ and rewarded as gold and silver or

burned up as wood, hay, and stubble. Let's start by looking at what we have in Jesus.

What We Have Been Given

As Jesus' bride, we are those who have been given His faith:

2 Peter 1:1 Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

Through our knowledge of Jesus our grace and peace are multiplied. In the eyes of God, we have been given faith of equal value to that of Abraham, and like Peter, we have also stepped from the Outer Court into the Holy Place.

2 Pet 1:2 May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Our righteousness (justification) came by faith in Jesus. In verse 2 Peter adds that the grace and peace that comes with our salvation will be multiplied (abound) through the knowledge (full discernment, full acknowledgement) of the Father and of the Son. However, it is up to us to acquire that knowledge, which can only be accomplished by spending time with Him. That's where we will learn to live His life in His divine power by spending time sitting at His feet.

Heb 4:16 Let us then with confidence [boldly] draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus has granted us all things through our knowledge of Him. Things we have in heavenly places according to his divine power (dunamis; miracle working power) that pertain to life and godliness. They apply to where we are now and to what we are to become as our knowledge of Him increases. The greater our knowledge (precise, further knowledge) of Jesus, the greater we will appreciate the grace and peace that we have been given.

2 Peter 1:3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,

Eph 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Jesus has called us to glory (God's dignity) and virtue (man's excellence) and has given (past tense) us promises that will help us get there. These *precious great and precious promises* (exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think) are in the present tense and are for one purpose. We have been given all of Jesus and being **OF** Jesus is all about becoming all that we were created to be in His image, His character (*Rom 8:29*).

2 Peter 1:4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

We have been given grace and peace in order that we “might” be partakers (companions, partners, fellows) **OF** the divine nature.

We are told that in Jesus, all the fullness of the Godhead dwells and we are complete in Him.

Col 2:9-10 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

Note that this comes after we have escaped the corruption in the world, after we have partaken **IN** Christ; our salvation. When we walk and live in the power of the Spirit (partaking **OF** Christ) we are walking in the opposite direction of our fleshly life and we do not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

These promises are available to us but in order to receive them we need to continue to abide in His divine miracle working power. This is the power we need to follow, obey, and partake **OF** Him, the power to live by. When we do, we continue to grow in grace and the knowledge of Him, drawing ever closer and becoming more like Him, revealing Him to the world around us. At the same time, we won't fall prey to all the false teachings that are exploding all around us. It's the knowledge of Jesus that provides us with our defense against the false teachers who are delivering messages that are not from the Word, are not the truth, and dismiss the Cross.

Peter asks us the question ... ***You're In, But Are You Of?*** To help us discover that victorious life of being one with Christ, he has identified seven key qualities of that life. Let's begin looking at Peter's second letter with our eyes fixed on our responsibility as the bride and see what it means and what is required of us as we grow in Christ.

CHAPTER 2

GROW IN CHRIST

2 Peter 1:5-8

Partaking **OF** Jesus is living the Spirit-filled life that comes from abiding in Him, resting in Him. In this chapter we look at what Peter tells us that life looks like in seven qualities of spiritual life.

Spiritual Addition

Let's take these one at a time and see how they come together to form the ingredients for living a victorious and spiritually abundant life in Christ. To Peter it's a case of spiritual addition.

2 Peter 1:5-7 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement [fully supply] your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, [phileo] and brotherly affection with love [agape] .

First, we are reminded that we are to “make every effort” (earnest care) to add to (fully supply) our faith (assurance, fidelity). We are to have a faith that, as John Phillips says, “behaves.” To this we are to develop these seven qualities of life that will build our faith and, as they build upon one another, we will grow in Christ.

1. **Virtue** (genuine goodness, moral excellence). Faith that honors God has the character of goodness and moral

excellence. The more we meditate on virtue the more repulsive sin becomes. The more we think about virtue the more terrible sin will appear. This is the quality of Christian life that filters the knowledge we attain.

2. **Knowledge** (acquired by learning, effort, and experience). Our faith is not blind and it doesn't exist in a vacuum. This is the exact opposite of the ignorance we walked in before we were born again. This is knowledge that refers to spiritual truth, the truth we learn from the Word of God. In the middle of one of his sermons, Paul couldn't contain himself and he shouted out:

Rom 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

3. **Temperance** (strength, self-control) – Having knowledge isn't enough, we need to know what we are to do with it to avoid the natural gulf that exists between what we know and how we act. The word comes from *kratos*, which means strength in self-control; putting what we learn into practice. It means being under control of the Holy Spirit and it is a fruit of the Spirit (*Gal 5:23*). Think about Solomon. All that wisdom and knowledge he had and yet his personal life was filled with scandal and the oppression of his reign brought about open revolt. He failed to add self-control to his knowledge. James points out his failure.

James 4:17 So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

4. Patience (endurance, waiting, continuing, perseverance).

This comes from the root word that means to bear trials. Those who persevere are the ones that win the prize. The patient person doesn't act in a hurry, he doesn't react, he puts things in perspective and puts up with what is distracting. The Christian who has learned patience has learned how to submit to *that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Rom 12:2)*. Think of Job and Joseph who exhibited great patience in the face of adverse circumstances. Paul tells us one of the keys to being patient:

Phil 4:11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

He knew what it was to be successful as well as unsuccessful (to abound and to be abased). He was content in either place because he was committed to being patient and following the perfect will of God.

5. Godliness (holiness, devout). This is something that can't be conjured up or faked, it only comes from God. To receive it we must be dead to self and alive to God, which is evident by the Fruit of the Spirit alive in us. This is the result of spending more time with Him, moving from *teknon* (natural son) to *huios* (fully mature son); being conformed into His image. It means doing those things that are pleasing to God, the things that Jesus did. Consider the leper, the woman at the well, the demonic, the hungry, the sick, the lame, and the list goes on. The more we're like Jesus the godlier we are (*1 John 4:17*) and the more glory

that God receives the closer we will come to achieving the goal of this life; becoming just like Jesus.

6. **Brotherly Kindness** (love of the brethren; helpful) – For Peter this meant having unfeigned love for the brethren; being kind and affectionate one to another. Brotherly love seeks the well-being of all and doesn't harbor ill will to anyone (*Rom 15:2; 13:8-10*). This is how we live out our Christian faith, having love for each other. It's God's plan that the love we have for one another will spill over into the world, for it is that love that attracts the lost soul, not a stand-offish holier than thou spiritual attitude. For Jesus it meant in simplest terms, lending a helping hand in love.
7. **Charity** (benevolence, love feast). This is the "God kind" of love, the unconditional love the Father has for His Son (*agape*).

1 John 4:8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

It is by agape that we are recognized as Christians. It underlies the Fruit of the Spirit. As Peter said in his first letter:

1 Peter 4:8 Above all, keep loving [agape] one another earnestly, since love [agape] covers a multitude of sins.

Charity is not the love that results from feelings, it comes from a commitment that sets Christianity apart from any other religion in the world.

So, Peter has challenged us to develop these character traits in the process of building up our faith. *If* they are ***In*** us and ***Abound***.

2 Peter 1:8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Effective and Fruitful

John Phillips put it in perspective: “Christ! And knowing Him! That’s it! That is the genius of Christianity! Christianity is not a dull creed or a sterile set of rules. It is a living, loving Lord.”

First, we will not be *ineffective*, or as it means here, to be useless or idle. If we are dedicated and diligently follow Jesus, we will never be spiritually barren in our walk with Him. Second, we will not be unfruitful. If we abide in Christ, we won’t bare rotten fruit because we (the branches) are attached to the Him (the vine). Likewise, if we abide in Him then He will abide in us. But more importantly we will be abiding in the knowledge of Jesus and there is nothing more precious than knowing Him. Every one of these seven characteristics were evident in His life and as we develop them our knowledge of Him will grow and mature.

Peter then goes on to remind us that just the opposite is true of those who have lost sight of their condition, their conversion, and that they have been purged from their old sins.

Blind and Forgotten

2 Peter 1:9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

When we're walking in sin it blinds us from the truth, blinds us from seeing ahead. Sin has a way of keeping us from seeing things as they really are, seeing our sin for what it is. The expression "cannot see" is *muopazo* and it occurs only here in the New Testament. It means to be shortsighted, from which we get our word myopic. The result is that if we stay in sin, we are going to be led astray by it. The end result of that may well be that we forget that we have been forgiven and wind up living in our sin again, out of fellowship with Jesus and our brothers and sisters. It's the step that begins a slow slide back into the life from which we've been redeemed. It's the point at which we find ourselves like the prodigal, sitting in a pig sty wondering what happened. If we choose to stay there and continue wondering long enough without doing something about it, we may stop wondering altogether and never get out. This is the perfect description of the Israel in the wilderness and those Christians today who continue to be perpetual babes in their Christianity.

If we will focus on Peter's seven qualities of Christian life, we won't find ourselves listed as those who never grew up, never learned to walk by faith rather than by sight, and never entered the promised rest in Jesus. Like the Jews who continually thought nostalgically of the fleshpots of Egypt, forgetting about their slavery and how they had been saved from their old way of life. Paul warns us of the very same danger in his letter to the Hebrews (3:7-4:13) ... *unbelief*.

Invest in the Future

The bride of Christ needs to face the challenge and continue to grow in her faith as she becomes more and more conformed into the image of her bridegroom. She needs to become the mature sons and daughters of God that all creation is looking for (*Rom 8:19*).

2 Peter 1:10-11 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Jude 3 Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

It is clear in these two verses that not everyone who enters heaven will have a rich entry. Not everyone will hear ... *Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master (Matt 25:21)*. There are degrees of glory and different rewards for the life we have lived here on earth (*1 Cor 15:39-44*).

Our position and potential in the kingdom are based upon our development of these qualities that Jesus has given us in His Word and His Spirit. Sadly, many are content with just making a profession of faith in Christ and leaving it at that, investing in this world and not in the one to come.

2 Peter 1:12 Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.

Heb 6:1 Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

Many in Israel were content to settle in the wilderness side of the Jordan river. Moses allowed them to stay but Joshua pressed on into the challenge of taking the Promised Land. Likewise, Peter urges us to ensure that we have a hard-won stake in Jesus' rest, His eternal kingdom, by growing in Him in this life... *moving from just being **IN** Him to being **OF** Him.*

Just as it was with Israel turning to the voice of the false prophets, today many Christians lightly set aside the Word of God in favor of the teachings of false teachers and preachers. Their words can originate from satanic and demonic sources and many church movements today have been based on this type of deceptive teaching.

Peter reminds us that like Israel had the Law and the true prophets to lead them, we have the sure word of prophecy. As the world gets darker the Word is a light that shines brightly (*Ps 119:105*). Those who ignore this sure word of prophecy can easily succumb to false teaching and fall into sin as they become tangled with the affairs of this life and lead others astray. In the end they wind up either in a lost eternity or, if they are saved, with a wasted life that will haunt them right up to the Judgement Seat of Christ.

2 Peter 1:19-21 And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention

as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

So, Peter points out that we are to be mindful that no true prophecy of Scripture comes from man's own (special, private) interpretation or his own will and therefore we are commanded to be diligent Bible students (2 Tim 2:15). We must seek the aid of the Holy Spirit to interpret the Scriptures because He is the One who inspired them

Next, we look at what Peter has to say about our battle for the truth in this world that surrounds us with false teaching and how we are to finish our walk with Jesus in the face of the enemy's lies. He deals with those who are denying the faith by putting on his armor and going forward into battle.

CHAPTER 3

THE BATTLE FOR TRUTH

2 Peter 2:1-19

Peter tells us what we need to do if we want to be partakers **OF** Christ. Developing his seven qualities of spiritual life will put us in the place we need to be in order to recognize and guard against the false teaching that would draw us out of His presence should we fall under it. In this chapter we look at what Peter has to say about false teaching itself. He has stern warnings for both those who deny Christ and for His bride as the day of Jesus' return draws ever nearer.

Peter doesn't package his teaching in this chapter into short little bites but rather he presents a long passage that is hard to divide. In verses 1-19 he tells us how we are to recognize false teaching and then he speaks directly to the certain doom these false teachers face. Let's first look at how to recognize false teaching as it comes in many forms and approaches and is often presented by very charismatic and gifted teachers.

The church is flooded with a message that sounds and feels good but is not based on the truth. There is a church movement that is solely focused pushing "social justice." Yes, the Word speaks about our responsibilities in this area, but we cannot put that message ahead of the gospel, ahead of the Cross. Consider the definition of religion that James gives:

James 1:27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

While it's clear that we are to care for those who are less fortunate, it also tells us that we are to keep ourselves from becoming part of the world we are serving. There is only one antidote — the Holy Spirit. He is the only One who speaks the truth, and the only truth is:

1 Cor 2:2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

This is the message these churches are ignoring in their push, like the world around them, for social justice. Their goal is to avoid offending people by giving them a message that ignores sin and the blood of Christ. Their message is a watered-down gospel in a safe and non-offending package.

We cannot afford to join the world in its crusade to satisfy social needs. We cannot simply set the Cross and Christ's atoning blood aside for fear of offending someone. If we are going to do our part to meet the social challenge as the Lord leads us, then it is essential that we be prepared to do it His way and not man's way. To accomplish that we need to be equipped, empowered, and sent by the Holy Spirit where He leads with the message of truth.

Yes, there are false teachers in the church today that in all sincerity believe they are preaching and teaching a message that God has given them. But they are teaching a watered-down gospel that appeals to people who (perhaps out of guilt) feel the need to focus their Christianity on serving the physical needs of others.

Nevertheless, without the truth of the gospel as the underlying foundation the message becomes nothing more than human works. No matter how it is approached, the goal in many instances is “church building.” Far too many pastors are concerned with how many members they have and how large the offering is on Sunday. Sadly, many seek the solution in the message of the emergent movement and as a result, far too many sheep are being fed a meal that is without “eternal substance.”

As the bride of Christ, we need to be fully aware of the false teaching that is out there. It is very appealing to those who are searching for answers, but it’s a feel-good message that steers away from the gospel. Remember, Jesus tells us that we are to “make disciples” and the only message that makes true disciples is *Jesus Christ and Him crucified*.

Paul A. Cedar, in his commentary on Peter’s second letter, breaks down verses 1-19 into what he calls clues that will help us identify the false teacher and the false message. I have paraphrased them with some personal thoughts. I think you will find that they stand out like a flashing red light at a railroad crossing; danger, don’t go there!

The bride needs to be well-armed and prepared to deal with these false teachings whenever and wherever she runs into them. The lives of many that have and are being misled depend on it. Who are these false teachers?

They Secretly Bring False Heresies

2 Peter 2:1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies...

Just as there were false prophets in the Old Testament, so there are false teachers in the church today. They expound on their opinions (damnable heresies) that deny the Lord who paid the price for their salvation.

False teachers are not forthright in their message as they prefer to sneak up on their audience to deliver their heretical doctrine. They present it as new light, new revelation, or something God has specifically revealed only to them. Their heresies are doctrines that contain some truth but are blended with a false message. It always begins with their lying message that causes confusion and disunity in the bride that Satan thrives on. But God is not the author of confusion.

1 Cor 14:33 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace

The truth of the Word of God is not new, it is only new to those who have not heard it taught by the Spirit of Truth. The Jews were plagued with Satan's counterfeits and Jeremiah called out their sin: *The prophets prophesy falsely... and my people love to have it so (Jer 5:31)*. Isaiah also preached against the false prophets who deliberately distorted, or denied the truth of God:

Isa 30:9-11 For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the

Lord; who say to the seers, "Do not see," and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, I leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel."

Likewise, Jesus warned us that we are to expect false teachers inside and outside the church who bring liberal doctrines that propagate their opinions rather than the truth and deny the Lord because we are not immune from embracing them as well.

They Deny the Lord

2 Peter 2:1 ... even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

This sounds like someone standing up and apostatizing but that isn't what it means. As used here, "deny" means to contradict or reject. There is a message of comfort in the church today that contradicts the truth of the gospel by denying and ignoring the blood of the Cross. There are cults that will come to your door with a heresy denying Christ with a liberal theology that twists the truth. They deny the Trinity, hell, the deity of Christ, and His bodily resurrection. They tell us that we too may be as gods and they embrace heresies like exalting the Virgin Mary to be equal to Jesus, inserting a priest between man and God, etc. Nothing has changed from the first lie Satan propagated in The Garden:

Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

They Exploit with Deceptive Words

2 Peter 2:3 And in their greed, they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

The word “exploit” in the KJV is *amporeuomai*, which means “to make merchandise of you” (buying and selling). False teachers exploit people as a result of their greed (covetousness), their craving to have larger congregations, more money, and more power. The term “false words” is *plastos* from which we get our word plastic, representing something formed, fabricated, or molded. That is what false teachers do. They fashion their words in order to deceive people to satisfy their own personal goals. In the Middle Ages the Roman Catholic Church was notorious for its merchandising of the gospel by selling indulgences; a way to reduce the amount of punishment one has to undergo for sins or reduce the temporal punishment for sin after death in the state or process of purification called purgatory. It was the use of indulgences that ultimately brought about the Reformation.

Peter tells us that while we may think that they are not being judged, God will not linger in His judgment ... *their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction [damnation] is not asleep*. But while He is also merciful in His patience and gives them time to repent, their eventual downfall is assured.

2 Peter 2:4-6 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he

brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;

Jude 6-8 And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

Peter gives us a perfect example of how sitting under deceptive teaching can impact a believer:

2 Peter 2:7-8 ... and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed [worn out] by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard);

There was Lot, Abraham's nephew, living with his family in pagan Sodom. He traveled with his uncle, knew his God, and had witnessed the blessings that God had provided. But when given the opportunity he chose the world over God. What did it do to him? Being exposed to the world and its ways *vexed* (tormented, tossed, pained) *his righteous soul*. It was their *sensual conduct*, their manner of life that tormented him with their filthy conversation. Today we would call it their lifestyle and life choices. In fact, as we get to his rescue, we see that he didn't even have any impact on those around him. He had totally lost his witness for God. That is one of the insidious results of sitting under

false teaching. Yes, God delivered Lot because he was a righteous man, but the impact of Sodom had long lasting effects on him and Israel (*Gen 19:30-38*). He had immersed himself and his family in a worldly lifestyle and as a result he lost it all. Consider that false teaching does not just come from the pulpit or the cult member at your door, it comes from television, radio, and the Internet. It comes from one's lifestyle.

The Lord foretold that one mark of the end times would be that society once again would become as pornographic as it was in the days of Noah, and as perverted as it was in the days of Lot (*Luke 17:26-32*). John Phillips put it this way: "Both Peter and Jude point us back to the overthrow of the antediluvians and Sodomites. Their parallel revelations make clear that the end-times apostasy, now beginning to come to full flower and fruit in our society, is to be accompanied by the growth of abnormal wickedness in the world." But God is faithful and as He rescued Lot so He will rescue those who remain true to His Word.

2 Peter 2:9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,

They Walk According to the Flesh

2 Peter 2:10 ... and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion [according to the flesh] ...

In his first letter Peter warned of the fleshly lusts that war against the soul:

1 Peter 4:1-2 Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God

False teachers don't walk in the Spirit, they walk in the flesh and live in the lusts of the unclean world. It speaks of something becoming stained, those who were changing their color. They are self-willed or arrogant and are ruled by their own self-interest. They have little respect for anyone or anything other than themselves. They do not walk in the Spirit but rather live in the flesh, pursuing their own interests, often in the name of the Lord.

Jude 8 Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh...

The Holy Spirit is the answer to false teaching; *the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh*. The Spirit of Truth will lead you away from the deception the enemy uses to distract and mislead you. We need to be on guard for his subtle ways that are often followed and advanced by teachers who know better, who know the truth but have been blinded by the bright light of the enemy. Paul makes the point loud and clear:

2 Cor 11:13-15 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

They Despise Authority

2 Peter 2:10 ... and despise authority.

They are said “to despise authority” (to think slightly of someone). This is not speaking directly to other men but more importantly to the authority of God. This is in direct disobedience of God’s first commandment: *Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Ex 20:3)*. False teachers refuse to live under God’s authority because the Lordship of Christ carries with it the responsibility for submission and obedience to Him as opposed to their own self interests.

They Are Presumptuous and Self-willed

Presumptuous means to be a daring, audacious, arrogant, or rash person. Sin eventually leads to presumption. These teachers hate anything in authority that will discredit or diminish their message. Jude touched on this in the very next verse:

2 Peter 2:10 ... Presumptuous are they, self-willed...

Being self-willed infers self-pleasing. False teachers always want their way no matter what, which translates into wanting to do their own will rather than the will of God. It reminds me of the song made famous by Frank Sinatra: *I did it my way!* They are blinded by their own natural wisdom and their commitment to its message:

Prov 21:2 They are blinded by their own natural wisdom and their commitment to its message. Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart.

Rom 12:3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

They Speak Evil of Dignitaries

False teachers are so arrogant that they are not afraid to speak evil of angels or those in high esteem. They feel that they are better than others and have little respect for anyone but themselves.

2 Peter 2:10 -11 ... and speak evil of dignities whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.

Jude 9 But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you."

They Speak Evil of Things They Don't Understand

Peter says that false teachers are like brute beasts or irrational (unreasonable) animals who abuse, sneer, and scoff at things they don't understand out of their own natural instincts. They are living in the flesh and can't understand things of the Spirit, mocking and speaking *evil* (blaspheming, defaming, railing) of spiritual things and abandoning divine revelation for human reasoning and sense and logic for stupidity. Teachers with liberal theological views are mentally closed to what God has revealed in His Word about demons, evil spirits, and fallen angels. They deny the existence of

Satan and the fallen angels of vast power and intelligence that hold this world in bondage. In the end they will be destroyed for their own corruption as they fall victims of their own lies and lifestyles.

2 Peter 2:12 But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction...

They Are Spots and Blemishes, Reveling in Their Own Deceivings

Spots are unwanted ugly stains and blemishes that speak of those who are worthy of blame and shame, moral disgrace, and extravagance who live in luxury, doing very well as a result of their false teaching.

2 Peter 2:13 suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you.

They are in direct contrast to Paul's description of the bride of Christ:

Eph 5:27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Reveling (*truphe*) means to take pleasure in rioting in the daytime. They have no regard for the constraints imposed by time. They celebrate in their own deceptions while at the same time feasting with others. Sin is deceptive and those who live in sin become

entangled in their own deceptions, the kind of deceptions Jesus warned us of:

Mark 4:19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

Paul encourages us to do just the opposite:

Heb 3:13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

What a contrast!

While Peter has in mind some of the despicable practices of false teachers in the first century, we are certainly not immune from them today. It is incumbent upon the bride of Christ to be on the alert for teachings that compromise and go directly contrary to the Word of God, the Word of Truth. Remember, we are not to be ignorant of spiritual things and therefore we are to guard our mind and our spirit from the subtle and appealing messages that entice our flesh and our emotions to sin.

Their Eyes Are Full of Adultery

2 Pet 2:14 Having eyes full of adultery,

Jesus tells us that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery in his heart (*Matt 5:28*). False teachers that live in the flesh have eyes that are full of adultery. They use people for their own gratification. Looking at it spiritually, like the prophets in Israel, their teachings are the result of spiritual adultery

with the world, its message, and its system. One doesn't have to look very far to see ministries that have fallen as a direct result of adultery in the natural, along with falling into other vices. They have been corrupted by the world and tragically many still remain in the ministry, tolerated and even supported by congregations that have been fooled or are themselves victims of Laodicean lukewarm apostasy.

They Never Cease From Sinning

Peter tells us that these false teachers cannot stop sinning:

2 Pet 2:14 ... and that cannot cease from sin...

John warns us about the danger inherent in loving the world:

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world— the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world

The world is full of things that can lure us into sin, entrap us in a sinful lifestyle, or envelop our life with coveting. Those who have a lust for money and power in the church are often lured into the world's system by the root of the very thing they are seeking. They are addicted as seen in Peter's use of the word "cease," which in the Greek means incessant, not to be set at rest. It is appalling that false teachers are ordained leaders of the church.

They Beguile Unstable Souls

2 Pet 2:14 ... beguiling unstable souls...

Beguile means to entice, allure, entrap, or delude. False teachers entice those who are unstable or not well founded in the Word of God into following their false doctrines. Unstable people are often easily persuaded by messages that “tickle the ear” and appeal to the conscience. We don’t have to look very far as it is happening all around us. Consider this from J.B. Phillips (paraphrased):

“Liberal theologian Bishop John Shelby Spong of the American Episcopal Church, has no use for conservative Protestants who take a literal view of biblical interpretation. He has written a number of books of ill repute that challenge sexual abstinence and heterosexual monogamy and claim that traditional morality is the product of patriarchal bias. He says that sex outside of marriage can be holy and life-giving and scorns fundamentalist views on homosexuality. He claims that Paul was ignorant when he wrote such scolding passages as *Romans 8: 24-28* and that the church should repent of its past ignorance and prejudice. One of his books is *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism* in which he portrays Jesus as narrow-minded and vindictive. He denies the Resurrection and calls Paul a repressed and self-loathing homosexual.”

These views are not limited, they are growing not only in cults but within the church. Many who are seeking the truth are captivated by these false teachers and their false doctrines. The modern apostate isn’t so far removed from those that Peter writes about.

They both prey on unstable souls. The bride of Christ cannot afford to be ignorant of them and their messages as she will be confronted by those who have fallen into the trap and need to be set free by the Word of Truth.

They Have a Heart Trained in Covetous Practices

2 Pet 2:14 ... a heart they have exercised with covetous practices;

This literally means they have trained their hearts through “continuous use” to be greedy or to covet that which belongs to someone else. This is in direct violation of the 10th Commandment; *Thou shall not covet*. This also infers that they, through long practice, have brought their technique of getting what they want to a high degree of proficiency. They have used false teachings to line their pockets by becoming sophisticated in their seduction of unstable souls.

They Are Children Under a Curse

2 Pet 2:14 ... cursed children:

False teachers who are leading others astray are living under a curse from God. The truly sad part is that they don’t even realize it.

The translation is literally, they are *children of the curse*. One wonders if they have even known the touch of God’s saving grace in their lives. It reminds me of the tares among the wheat. You can’t tell them apart until just before the harvest for its then that the tares, which are poisonous, turn black and can easily be

discerned from the wheat. We are fast approaching the time of the harvest and many of the tares are becoming black. These are those who Paul referred to as the children of disobedience and the children of wrath.

Eph 2:3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects [children] of wrath.

Eph 2:12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

They Have Left the Right Way and Gone Astray

2 Peter 2:15 They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness.

This is a major problem in the church today. Peter identifies these false teachers as those who have gone astray.

Isaiah tells us that we are all like sheep that have gone astray; we *have turned, every one, to his own way (Isa 53:6)*. Jesus tells us that we have the narrow way of righteousness and the broad way which leads to destruction to choose from (*Matt 7:13*). There is no better example than Balaam, who chose the broad way of materialism. Money was his ultimate goal, not the narrow way of the Lord. He was a pagan but had some knowledge of God and God used him by taking control of his tongue, making him bless

Israel rather than curse them. There are many in the ministry today that, like Balaam, have abandoned the faith for lucrative positions in the pulpit and the seminary and their messages are destroying others.

God rebuked (sharply reprimanded) Balaam out of the donkey's mouth, but he soon forgot in his pursuit of money (*Num 22*). He was rebuked for failing to bless Israel, but the rebuke was forgotten and the result was his becoming mad. This, too, will be the fate of those who go against the Word of Truth in pursuit of material gain. We cannot afford to be like Israel and follow today's Balaams or allow others to be deceived by their doctrines. Like Balaam, their messages lead down a path away from purity and separation (the doctrine of Balaam) and God will punish them for it.

Now Peter moves from the spiritual world to the secular world as he continues to illustrate and identify these false teachers (apostates). He provides us with a true picture of their empty profession, preaching, and promises. As the bride of Christ, we need to be well-informed and well-armed to deal with them. There are many who hunger and are seeking an answer for the dryness of their souls and the Balaams of today are only too eager to satisfy them with the world's empty messages and promises.

They Are Wells Without Water

2 Peter 2:17 These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.

There is nothing worse for a thirsty person than a well that has gone dry. It provides no purpose or function whatsoever. That is what these false teachers are, what they have to offer will not quench the spiritual thirst because there is no truth in what they teach. They sink their wells to the deepest depths but produce nothing for the thirsty soul. Contrast them with Abraham and Isaac who were well diggers, leaving a trail of wells and blessings wherever they went. When their enemies contested the ownership of those wells they just moved on and dug new ones (*Gen 21; 26*).

Jesus is our example. He told the woman at the well that He had a well that served up *the water of life* (*John 4:14*). It's the true teachers of the Word that lead people to Jesus, the well of living water, and not to the empty wells of man's dry words that never satisfy the soul. Emma Bevan captured the message in her hymn *O Christ, in Thee My Soul Hath Found*:

*I tried the broken cisterns, Lord, But ah! The waters failed;
E'en as I stooped to drink, they fled, And mocked me as I wailed*

False teachers claim to have found the living water but their waters are like the Dead Sea; without life.

They Are Clouds Carried by a Tempest

2 Pet 2:17 ... clouds that are carried with a tempest; NKJV

Peter says these false teachers are like clouds driven by the storm that hold no rain. They have nothing to offer that will provide spiritual truth and they have no idea where they're going.

Putting it in today's terms, their messages are of no value, they are worthless and those who deliver them are driven by Satan. They think they are under their own control but the voice they hear is his. They are, in fact, tornados wreaking destruction on everything they touch. Peter used the term *lailaps*, which is literally translated hurricane or whirlwind. The clouds that ride a hurricane are always destructive. Like the tornados that sweep across our heartland, they leave a path of destruction in their wake.

Their Words Are Vanity

2 Pet 2:18 For when they speak great swelling words of vanity... NKJV

False teachers are not capable of bringing messages of truth. Their words are vanity (empty). They are charismatic and can easily impress their listeners with their worldly wisdom and vocabulary but what they say is empty of spiritual value.

In his commentary, Paul Cedar used the perfect term for today: *they are but bags of wind*. John Phillips says: *In reality, what they have to say is high-sounding nonsense*.

What they preach is filled with themselves, their own ideas, and is devoid of the truth. While they may be logically framed and presented, they ultimately discount the message of the Bible.

Each one of Job's friends thought they were correct in the message they delivered to him. When God spoke out, He asked who was it that was providing all this counsel without knowledge (*Job 38:2*). Because they reject the Bible, nothing they say contains the truth.

They Allure Those Who Have Already Escaped From the Life of Sin Through the Lusts of the Flesh

This is Peter's greatest concern, the allure of what we've been delivered from.

2 Pet 2:18 ... they allure through the lusts of the flesh...
NKJV

These false teachers' "allure" (beguile or entice) with the lusts of the flesh rather than teaching the truth of the Spirit. Their words appeal to worldly wisdom and peoples' lower nature. Peter laid out "these things" that protect us from being allured by false teachers: A perfect example is the advice Ahithophel gave to Absalom (2 Sam 16). Ahithophel had a hidden agenda, he wanted to get even with David for what he had done to his granddaughter Bathsheba, and Absalom overheard and acted. Today's false teachers also have a hidden agenda and their targets are the spiritually immature and ignorant. Sadly, however, many believers fall prey to their empty words in churches every Sunday. We need to remember that we will be accountable for what we allow to enter our soul via our brain. That is why Paul admonished us that the renewing of our mind is our responsibility:

Rom 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Looking back at chapter 1 we see Peter's answer:

2 Peter 1:5-8 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are to remain faithful to Christ and the Word of God and continually be on guard for false teachers are subtle.

They Promise Liberty but They Are Slaves of Corruption

In the first 17 verses of this chapter, Peter addressed what is the certain doom of false teachers, because of allowing themselves to become the servants of corruption. In the last three verses he warns those who listen to them and are led away that their end will be worse than their beginning.

The problem of sin in the pulpit, the classroom, or online is that it always promises what it can't deliver. The promises of liberty and freedom in the world's system are nothing but words of bondage to man's lower nature. The reason they preach these messages is because they have themselves become slaves to the empty words they use.

2 Peter 2:19 They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

We have a choice where our soul is to live, either dominated by the flesh or the Holy Spirit. We can either be bond slaves to Jesus or slaves to our flesh and sin. There is no other option, with Jesus there is no fence sitting. We are either fully committed to Him or we are turning away to our own fleshly desires.

First and foremost, as Jesus' bride, we have the ultimate responsibility and accountability for our spiritual welfare. If we allow ourselves to be led astray, we will pay a tremendous price. It is only through the knowledge of Him that we can escape the bondage of the flesh and the world's system. Here's a word of caution that exemplifies false teaching.

2 Peter 2:20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. 21 For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.

There is a great split in theology concerning verse 20. Some say that we can lose their salvation because of our freedom of choice. Paul clearly taught that is false and gave us the truth in his letter to the Hebrew Christians. As the bride of Christ, the danger of our end is not about losing salvation but falling short of a victorious life in Christ here on earth and the rewards at His Judgment Seat.

Peter does not address the issue here but he states the end result in either case; *the latter end is worse with them than the beginning*. If, after once coming to the knowledge of Christ as Lord and Savior one becomes entangled in the pollution of the world (succumbs to the false teachers and their messages), they are worse off in their present condition than they were before coming to faith in Christ. It is a serious thing to have been exposed to the gospel and to reject it because the gospel is the truth (*John 1:6*).

I have always been taken by a quote from Myron Augsburger in his commentary on Matthew with respect to Matthews warning about false prophets (*Matt 7:15-20*) that is appropriate here:

“Teaching is false when it claims salvation without discipleship. Teaching is false when it offers grace as something separate from God’s gracious presence. Teaching is false when its emphasis on faith does not include the fidelity that issues in ethical living. But teaching is false when it emphasizes ethics as a saving way of life rather than as the expression of the transforming work of the Spirit in us, the dynamic of our salvation.”

It is false teaching and false doctrine to believe that we can claim to be committed to the Lord and live a carnal (fleshly/worldly) life. Teachers that espouse these lies are on their way to eternal destruction and those who follow them are responsible for their own actions. Their teaching may promise freedom but it leads to the slavery of sin.

Up to now Peter has strongly confronted false teaching and denounced it in no uncertain terms. But now he turns to a message of love and encouragement, pointing us to God who, unlike the

false teachers, can always be trusted. Jesus will be returning soon and it is up to us to be certain that we are ready.

CHAPTER 4

IT'S ALIVE!

2 Peter 3:1-9

To quote a line from Mary Shelly's book, *Frankenstein*: "It's Alive." False teaching is alive and being spread all across the country as a great part of the church becomes more concerned with social justice, numbers, and budgets than with the Cross of Christ. The answer that Peter provides is one of love and encouragement as he points to God, the One who is always to be trusted. His return is certain, it is near, and He is always on time.

2 Peter 3:1-4 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2 that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, 3 knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. 4 They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."

Peter opens this chapter using the term *beloved*. It is the love of God (agape) that he wants us to walk in so we won't be led astray. He wants his message to stir up (arise, awake, raise up) our minds by reminding us of what we already know. This is a message the bride of Christ desperately needs to hear in order to

be fully awakened to the truth of the Word of God. He says there are three things that we need to be reminded of:

Consider the Words That Were Spoken by the Prophets

The contrast here is evident. The prophets were the exact opposite of the false prophets that he has been warning us of:

2 Pet 3:2 ... that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets ...

These prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit and not by the spirit of the antichrist that is still alive today. What they wrote didn't come from man's mind or man's perspective; it came by the will of the Holy Spirit who brings the same truth to us. We need to be sure that we are not being led into false teachings. To be successful we must put our trust fully in God and His Word, the Truth which He gives us through His Spirit-led pastors and teachers.

Be Mindful of the Commandments of the Apostles

Remember that when Peter wrote this letter the New Testament had not been written. That is why he referred to the prophets who were memorialized in the Jewish scriptures. At the same time the apostle's doctrines and fellowship were being followed (adhered to) by believers:

2 Pet 3:2 ... and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this first of all,

that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

Luke recorded this fact when he wrote concerning the early believers:

Acts 2:42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Be Conscious That God is in Control

False teachers (scoffers) don't listen to the words of the prophets or the apostles or look to God, they look at the outward circumstances and ask:

2 Peter 3:4 They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."

We can't afford to listen to those who fail to follow the Word of God. They refuse to follow the One who has everything He created under complete control... *He hasn't come yet; nothing has changed and its business as usual.* One day they will find out that He is still in charge and that He has come back.

Peter's answer to the scoffers and their teaching is to stir up our remembrance of who God is because their message is "willingly ignorant" and is leading many down the same path:

2 Peter 3:5-7 For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, 6 and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

The message that the world was destroyed by water and is reserved to be destroyed by fire is lost on them because they are unfamiliar with the One who sent it. When creation disobeyed the Creator and chose to live in sin, God brought the great flood. We are standing on the precipice of His judgement once again. But as He saved Noah and his family from the flood, so He will save His righteous people from the fire. It's foolish to fail to remember who God is and who we are. By His Word He created and He has destroyed and Jesus warned of what is coming.

Matt 13:40 Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age.

Paul also warned us.

Heb 1:10-12 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: 11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; 12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

And John saw it all.

Rev 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

There can be no doubt that God is in control of this planet in spite of the one who calls himself the god of this world. We don't know God's timing but Jesus gave us the "signs of the time" and they are here now... *altogether for the first time.*

Consider the world today as you read Luke's words ...

Luke 21:8-12 And he said, "See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them. 9 And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once." 10 Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11 There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.

False teachers spread their false doctrines ignoring the Word of Truth. They sneer at God's promised return, and they fail to understand that He has His timetable and He is always on time.

2 Peter 3:8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Peter calls our attention to the prayer of Moses:

Ps 90:4 For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.

These modern-day scorners disregard the fact that Jesus has already come and has promised to come again. They say since He has not come, He is either lying or can't keep His promise. But Peter makes the point that Jesus is not limited by time. Many have tried to use verse 8 to determine the time of Jesus' second coming, attaching seven days of creation to 7,000 years, etc. Jesus said it is not for man to know:

Acts 1:7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

But He has given us a clue and all we have to do is look around us

Matt 24:37 As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Not only are these false teachers misguided, they miss the point completely. The issue is what is contained in verse 9.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

God has extended this "time of grace" because He is long suffering and *not willing that any should perish*. Peter said that

the Lord is not slack (delaying or tarrying) concerning His promise. God is never delayed by circumstances or by others. His only motive with regard to time is His love for us. Because He loves us so much, He has refrained Jesus from returning. His love is enduring, patient, and forbearing.

1 Peter 3:20 because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

What is so often missed in this is the fact that God doesn't even want the false teachers to suffer the end they're heading toward. Listen to Ezekiel:

Ezek 18:23 Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?

That is agape love! We hear the same thing from Timothy and Paul:

1 Tim 2:3-4 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Rom 11:32 For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

The bottom line is simply that Jesus has not yet returned because it is not His time and the reason is because God is not willing that any should perish but come to repentance.

So, Peter has spent a great deal of time describing those that we are not to listen to and fall under their lies. Now he addresses what sort of people we should be because Jesus' promised His second coming and it's not a matter of "if" but "when."

CHAPTER 5

WHAT SORT OF PEOPLE?

2 Peter 3:10-16

False teachers scoff and the whole world may doubt that He is coming again to judge the world, but it doesn't matter and it isn't going to change anything. Jesus is coming again, it's just a matter of when.

Matt 24:44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

In this chapter we're going to take a look at what God expects of us in the face of false teaching and why. Let's begin with Peter's affirmation of *Matt 24:44* and what that is going to mean for the world.

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

First, he makes it plain that Christ is coming again and then asks us the question: In light of that what sort of people should we be?

2 Peter 3:11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,

Matt 24:43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into.

We should be those who “watch” (awake, vigilant) for Jesus’ second coming. We are to be *looking for and hastening unto the coming day of God*. This is the day of judgment and not the day of the Lord.

Let’s pause for a moment and clarify some terms that get confused with each other and consider God’s conclusion of the world as we know it.

The Day of Man

Gen 2:15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

The Day of Christ

1 Thess 4:17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

The Day of the Lord

Joel 2:1-2 Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming; it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness!

Rev 6:15-17 Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, 16 calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

First comes “the day of Christ” when the church is raptured (*1 Cor 1:8; 3:13; 2 Cor 1:14; Phil 1:6; 2:16; 1 Thess 4:13-18*). This coincides with the day of Jacob’s trouble when God enters into the judgment of Israel. After that comes “the day of the Lord” or “the day of God” (the battle of Armageddon; *Rev 16:16*), which terminates the millennial reign of Christ and ushers in the new heaven and the new earth and eternity.

2 Peter 3:12 ... waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!

Peter mentions the heavens (the sky) five times in his letter. In verse 12 he tells us that the heavens will be dissolved by fire when Christ returns. In addition, the elements (*stoicheia*; the fundamental elements, the components into which matter is divided) will melt (liquefy). The Greeks thought that there were four fundamental elements: earth, air, fire, and water. Today we interpret *stoicheia* simply as atoms, the component parts of the elements. In verse 11 Peter says that *all these things shall be dissolved*; (to break up or unloose).

At the end of the age, all that has been bound is going to be set free; atoms will be unloosed *with a great noise*. Jesus, who holds everything together, will simply let go! Take a moment and view this clip from Louis Giglio that puts God's mighty creation in perspective. There is only One who holds all the atoms together.



This link has sometimes been changed. If it is not working go to YouTube and search on Louis Giglio Laminin

The expression *a great noise* comes from a single Greek word *rhoizedon* that refers to the “whizzing” of an arrow rushing toward its target. Vines says that it signifies a rushing sound as of roaring flames. What Peter described in plain terms is the separating of the atom and the resulting rushing, fiery destruction that follows, which he placed at the end of the millennial age; the day of God when Jesus lets go and no longer holds it all together.

So, in light of the end that is sure to come, Peter asks us what sort of people should we be. In 3:11 he challenges our behavior (lifestyle); *what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness*

and godliness. Our lives ought to be characterized by the holiness, purity, and godliness we have in the Holy Spirit. He goes on to reinforce that statement in verse 12 and drives it all home once again by telling us that we need to be *waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God*. Waiting for means to expect, watch, or tarry. We are not to look for that terrible day but to look beyond it to eternity when, as John Phillips says, “God is all and in all.” We should be people who are hasting unto (desiring earnestly).

2 Peter 3:13-15 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 14 Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. 15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,

We need to allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse us and make us *pure and clean* (1 John 1:7). Blameless means not being open to censure or adverse criticism. We are to be at peace with God and man; clean and blameless in His sight. We are to be diligent (to live without sinning), to be found in peace without fault, and blameless when the Lord comes. To that end Peter comes once again to the theme of his letter in referencing Paul:

2 Peter 3:15-16 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

The unlearned and unstable are those who are not fully established or are unbalanced. Peter says that they “twist” with the scriptures (torture by twisting or straining). They either ignore sin or justify themselves by rationalizing that they are as good as or even better than others. So, what are we to do? John Phillips provides us with a great starting point with respect to the Word of God:

“The antidote to handling of the Scriptures is to learn to interpret them properly. The Bible should be interpreted literally, keeping in mind grammatical, cultural and historical factors that bear on the process. Its poetic and symbolic features should be handled in the same way we handle such colorful writing in the secular sphere. No passage should be divorced from its content. The larger view of a passage should be grasped before attempting to come to grips with its detail. Attention should be paid to the structure of a given passage and to the scope and purpose of the book in which it is found ... there is a danger of wresting the Scriptures to one’s own destruction. All of the cults do this.”

We are not to fall prey to these teachers and their false doctrines. They are a subtle part of the enemy’s plan. They are wicked and Peter warns us not to *fall from our own steadfastness*; not to lose our foothold on the truth. We are not to submit ourselves, as did Lot, to the false teachings and doctrines that surrounded him and his family. We are not to go there, on the contrary we are to go to Christ and grow in His grace and the knowledge of Him. It is His saving grace that planned for our redemption before creation and to deny that grace by submitting to false teaching puts us in great peril at the hands of the enemy. Think of John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* and all of the false paths the enemy laid out before him

on his journey. We need the grace of God to keep us on the straight path and out from under the false doctrines and teachings that are so pervasive. We are to be watchmen on the wall of our heart.

Here are some guidelines from the Holy Spirit that show us how the bride of Christ is to live; not just IN Christ but to live OF Christ.

Live lives of holy conduct. God has called us to be holy because He is holy.

1 Peter 1:15-16 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Live lives of godliness. If we are to live godly lives, we need to live like Him and not live after the flesh.

2 Peter 2:20; 3:3 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first... knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

Be faithful. We are to follow after God with faithfulness, looking for, expecting, and desiring His second coming.

Matt 25:13; 24:42 ... Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour... Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

Hasten His coming. To hasten His coming we need to be actively about the business of His kingdom, developing and using our gift(s) to be about His harvest.

Matt 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

Remember what we know. We are to live our life reflecting what we know of the Scriptures in our lifestyle.

1 John 2:3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.

Beware lest we fall from our steadfastness. We are to ever beware of the plans and attacks of the enemy that would pull us off the narrow path; beware of the false teaching and doctrines he proposes.

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Grow in His grace and the knowledge of Jesus. When we're following Christ — growing in His grace — we're going in the opposite direction of all false teachings and as we grow in His grace. To know Jesus is to fully understand the truth, and to fully understand the truth is to turn from false teaching.

Phil 3:8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For

his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

The bottom line: we need to spend our time getting to know Jesus and in so doing the Holy Spirit will keep us from false teachers and false doctrines. He is the Spirit of Truth and He resides in every believer. One only need focus on Him and listen for His voice. That is the secret of being **OF** Christ.

We effectively moved past the outer court of the temple the moment we were saved. We were ushered into the Holy Place, the place of salvation. That is the moment we became **IN** Christ. The next move is all up to us. Will we choose to move into the Holy of Holies? The decision is ours, and when we do choose to enter in, we find ourselves on the doorstep of being **OF** Christ.

In the next chapter we take a look at Peter's caution concerning what it means to be OF Christ and what that could mean going forward the rest of our life down here if we are obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit; spiritual maturity.

CHAPTER SIX

A FINAL WORD ABOUT GROWING

2 Peter 3:17-18

As Peter builds to the climax of his message in verses 17 and 18, we are clearly presented with the challenge of being **IN** Christ or being **OF** Christ. In chapter 2 of his letter we saw that in verses 14-16 Peter underlined the challenge of moving on from the Cross into a deeper relationship with Jesus. We need to *be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace*. This can only be achieved by the leading of the Holy Spirit as we follow His path to spiritual maturity, a journey that requires patience on our part.

How gracious, patient, and longsuffering our Lord is with us. His love is steadfast and His forgiveness is eternal. Through Him has come our salvation, but that is only the beginning. Our journey to spiritual maturity, with the goal of being found at His Judgment Seat without spot or blemish, will challenge us all along the way to cease from walking after the flesh. That is Peter's message, and in the final verses he presents us with the key to being ready for Jesus soon coming return.

2 Peter 3:17-18 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

In these final two verses, Peter concludes that we need to take the initiative in three measurable ways.

Remember What We Know

2 Peter 3:17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand ...

From the very beginning of this letter Peter tells us that he is writing to remind us of what we already know:

2 Peter 1:12 Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.

His intent is to stir up our pure minds (3:1) as a way of not only remembering but translating those reminders into action. That means to live what we remember, what we believe. The truth is that we really don't need to know more until we begin to apply what we already know. Being **OF** Christ is translating what we know into our lifestyle under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit ... the process of being conformed into the image (character) of Jesus.

Beware That We Don't Lose Our Steadfastness

2 Peter 3:17 ... take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability ...

This letter was written to Christians who were stable in their faith, many of whom had suffered greatly because of their faith in Jesus.

He is warning them of Satan's attack via his false teachers who are within the church itself. He warns us today that, more than ever, we need to be built solidly on the rock; Jesus Christ (*Matt 7:24*). We need to constantly live by faith in our Rock and be careful that we are not led astray and fall from our own steadfastness (*stability*). He echoes what Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

1 Cor 10:12 Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

Throughout his entire second letter Peter has shouts out a warning to us. Watch out! Be on guard! Beware! Resist the devil! Flee from false teaching! His warnings equally shout out the solution of ensuring that we are **OF** Christ... *the best defense is an active offense.*

Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of Jesus

2 Peter 3:18 ... But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It's a fact that when we're resisting the enemy, we're "growing in Christ. When we're following Jesus, we are going in the opposite direction of Satan's lies. When we seek after the truth we are moving from milk to the meat of the Word (*1 Pet 2:2*). Paul encourages us in the same way when he writes about growing up *into the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord ... and grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ (Eph 2:21; 4:15).*

Peter also challenges us to *grow in grace*. In essence he is saying: Show me a person who is walking closely with God and is growing

spiritually as they draw on the Holy Spirit and I'll show you a person who is not only experiencing God's grace but who is sharing it with others.

He also encourages us to *grow in knowledge*. This is not natural knowledge (*gnosis*), it is the knowledge of Jesus that brings unity and growth to His bride in becoming more like Him. This stands in stark contrast to those who are untaught, unstable, and who twist the truth to their own benefit. John tells us that *to know Jesus is to know the truth (John 14:6)*.

Jesus is Peter's focus in this letter from beginning to end and it is to Him that he leads us. He challenges us to move on from the Cross, to move on from just being **IN** Jesus to being **OF** Jesus. When we begin to make that transition in our walk, Peter's final words will ring loud and clear in our life... *To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

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Thomas M. Mitchell has spent the better part of his ministry exhorting, challenging, and encouraging the bride of Christ to move ever deeper into her relationship with her bridegroom. Over the past 30 years through Walk With God Ministries he has authored 15 books, written numerous articles, and has taught the Word of God from the pulpit, in the classroom, and through his weekly blog at WalkWithGod.org.

His published works include *Wake Up and Rest – The Bride of Christ Sleeps at Her Own Peril*, along with its four companion books: *The Doorway to Rest*, *The Pathway to Rest*, *The Dangers to Rest*, and *The Battle for Rest*. This series challenges Jesus' bride to wake up and fulfill the role He has given her in preparing the way for His Kingdom. By anyone's clock, the time until His return is growing very short. *Wake Up and Rest* is a timely challenge the bride can ill afford to ignore, for if she does, she does so at her own peril. These five books reflect the urgency of the message the Lord has impressed upon Thomas for His bride, to wake up and remember to whom she has committed herself and make herself ready for His soon return. The hour grows short and there is much at stake, both here and now and for all eternity. The question is... will she wake up?

His most recent work is the eight-volume series, *The Way of Enoch*, which explores the foundation and sound scriptural doctrine that underlies God's plan for our lives. It is a journey that begins with learning who God really is and culminates in discovering how we are to walk out a loving and obedient relationship with our bridegroom.

WAKE UP AND REST

Volume 1 – *Wake Up and Rest – The Bride of Christ Sleeps at Her Own Peril*



This series is a wakeup call to those who have made their personal commitment to their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We hold the key to survival the world is looking for and we cannot fail to share it. But to do so we have to overcome our human side and allow our spirit to take charge and lead us through this “wilderness” we find ourselves in. And the key to that is to stop and take a long hard look at our relationship with the One to whom we are engaged to be married. Do we really know Him? What is He expecting of us? How can we find the answers? These questions and many more have to be answered if we’re going to be able to step up and become all that He created us to be.

Volume 2 – *The Doorway to Rest – The Brides’ Invitation*



When we consider Solomon’s Song—the love relationship he had with one of his wives—we can easily see the relationship between Christ and His bride portrayed. This book is a detailed, verse by verse study of the *Song of Solomon*, revealing the true view of bride of Christ through the eyes of the bridegroom and a life changing view of the bridegroom through the eyes of the bride.

Volume 3 – *The Pathway to Rest - The Brides’ Purpose*



Jesus’ invitation opened the doorway to His Rest and now, as we walk out the days of our *ketubah*—our betrothal—we need to find out what that means and what it entails along the pathway to His Rest. For that

we turn to the book of *Hebrews*, where we learn through each verse what sewing our wedding dress means and how important it is for us to be ready and watching for His soon return as we move up the path to spiritual maturity.

Volume 4 – *The Dangers to Rest - The Bride's Warning*



We have been inundated the incessant worldly scream of pen ding disaster. Fear and panic have grabbed the headlines as the Middle East falls into chaos. The news is full of rampant pandemics, meteorological disasters, hopeless individuals committing tragic acts and families destroyed. The majority of the bride of Christ is not prepared for His return. This verse-by-verse study out of the book of *Revelation* concerning His letters to the church deal with why He is coming back and what His bride is to watch out for.

Volume 5 – *The Battle for Rest – The Bride's Armor*



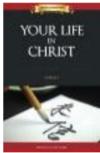
The bride is engaged in a spiritual war between light and darkness, good and evil, heaven and hell and Christ and Satan. But many aren't even aware of the fact that they are in a spiritual battle every day of their life. This war is a very personal one and, in this book, we have taken a detailed verse-by-verse study of the part of the book of *Ephesians* that deals with the battle orders we have been given from our commander-in-chief to ensure victory over those personal strongholds the enemy has established in our lives.

WALK WITH GOD

THE WAY OF ENOCH

In this series we open the door to a solid study of our foundation by looking at our Walk With God in eight volumes. Each volume takes a look at a key fundamental part of our walk. They were written with the goal of challenging the bride of Christ to firm up her underpinning and step into the Spirit-filled, victorious and abundant life that Jesus has for her. This series explores the foundation and sound scriptural doctrine that underlies God's plan for our lives. It is a journey beginning with learning who God really is and culminating with discovering how we are to walk out a loving and obedient relationship with our Creator.

Volume 1 – *Your Life in Christ*



Tom opens the series with some answers from the Word of God concerning who God is, what He does, and what does He require of us? He also explores what the Word has to say about who Jesus is, why He became one of us, and what are we to do about Him as we discover who He is in us.

Volume 2 – *The Spirit-Filled Christian*



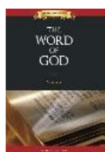
Discover the answers to who the Spirit of God is, what's His nature, why is He here, and many other questions concerning the Third Person of the Trinity. Explore what the Holy Spirit means to us and just how His gifts and fruit can impact our life if we understand just what our responsibilities are.

Volume 3 – *Foundations of Faith*



What does the Word of God say concerning Faith: what it is, what it does, how it's tested, all that it promises, and what is required of us to walk in Faith.

Volume 4 – *The Word of God*



Explore the seven editions of God's Word and its foundation as well as how it operates, its benefits, and our responsibility in relation to what it says.

Volume 5 – *Principles of Prayer*



Explore the two-way street, the conditions to successful prayer, the types of prayer and who and what do we pray for.

Volume 6 – *Authority of the Bride of Christ*



What is spiritual authority, who is our enemy, the weapons of our warfare, how do we exercise our authority, and what is our responsibility.

Volume 7 – *Walk the Walk*



Finding the will of God, guidelines to follow, and the importance of fellowship and harmony as we walk through this world with Jesus.

Volume 8 – *The Obedient Lifestyle*



Discover what obedience in our walk entails and take a close look at purity and integrity as the key elements in understanding how we are to live in obedience.

Our challenge is to allow the Holy Spirit to move us on from the cross along the path to spiritual maturity; to move us from just being IN Christ to becoming OF Christ.



We can't be satisfied with just being saved. There is a whole lifetime of growth that God has planned for us as we slowly become transformed into His image; His character. He has given us all of Himself and our life's purpose here on earth is to work with the Holy spirit to begin cleansing our wedding dress of all the spots and blemishes the world has brought us.

So, let's start there with Peter as he opens his letter by addressing it to those who have attained a faith of equal standing to his by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ... to us, His bride.

Thomas M Mitchell