

## *A Study of Second Peter*

### How to Grow Spiritually (2 Peter 3:14-18)

*"We have been so concerned about trying to make the world a better place through the Gospel that we have ceased to become better men and women ourselves."  
~ Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

#### **I. Introduction**

Peter closes his second epistle with a series of commands. These final words of wisdom summarize themes throughout the letter and highlight what is important. Similar to a prophet, Peter exposes the dangers that the Church faces and exhorts his readers to persevere. The apostle then closes with a doxology—an ascription to Christ's glory and His future coming.

#### **II. Final Instruction (3:14-18)**

##### A. Be Right with God (v. 14)

A life that is "spotless and blameless" contrasts with the false teachers who were "blots" and "blemishes" in the church (2:13). Ultimately, a believer is to imitate Christ—the lamb without defect or blemish (1 Peter 1:19).

As aptly noted by one commentator, "This 'peace' is not some form of emotional tranquility but rather the objective condition of being reconciled with God (Rom 5:1) and being found acceptable before him (1 Pet. 1:2; 5:14; 2 Pet 1:2)" (Green, *Jude & 2 Peter*, 337).

##### B. Be Aware of God's Plan (vv. 15-16)

v. 15 - Once again, Peter reminds his audience to think about the Lord's patience for the purpose of salvation, rather than, dismissing the Lord as incompetent or untruthful (see 3:9).

Why does Peter appeal to Paul? Most likely, "the opponents latched on to Paul's statements about freedom from the law to advance libertinism (cf. Rom 3:20, 28; 4:15; 5:20; 7:5, 7; 1 Col 15:56; Gal 5:1)" (Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter and Jude*, 395). This view certainly fits with the false teachers' "free" lifestyle.

v. 16 - Observe what Peter states concerning Paul and his letters.

Note that the false teachers cannot claim they misinterpreted Paul's letters. Nor can they declare they were ignorant. The reference to "destruction" clearly indicates their culpability. Their actions are wicked and deserving of God's judgment (2:1, 3; 3:6-7, 9).

### C. Be Cautious of Falling (v. 17)

“led astray” - The term refers to apostasy (see Rom 11:11, 22; Heb 4:11; Rev 2:5). To turn aside and fall away from truth ultimately reveals that such an individual was never part of the people of God (see 1 Col 11:19; 1 John 2:19).

“Peter is concerned that believers not view their ‘security’ in Christ (however understood) to condone a careless attitude toward the struggle with sin. Confidence in our status with Christ should never lead to a presumption on God’s grace that leads us to toy with the danger of false teachers or negates serious striving after holiness” (Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 213).

Interestingly, Peter labels these false teachers as “unprincipled men.” It is the same description given of the wicked men of Sodom earlier in this letter (2:7).

### D. Be Growing in Grace and Knowledge (v. 18a)

Peter’s command to “grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord” raises the following questions:

- *What does Peter mean by “growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”?* To increase in grace “suggests advances in the appropriation or experience of the benefits of salvation” (Green, 343; also, see 2 Peter 1:2; Jude 4). Grace is never seen as a static reality. Whereas to grow in knowledge implies personal knowledge of Christ—a knowledge that produces godly virtues (1:2, 5-6).

Note that growth assumes there is life. Indeed, “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” Second, growth is essential and vital. Growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ are not optional for the believer.

- *How does one grow “in grace and in knowledge”?* The recipe for spiritual growth requires several important ingredients. They include: time in the Word, fellowship with fellow believers, active Christian service and discipline, and an avoidance of that which is harmful to life and growth. We must remember that growth is never sudden. Rather, it is gradual and progressive.
- *How does one determine whether one is growing?* Christian activities, even ministries, are not the best tests (just look at Martha in Luke 10). A far better assessment is one’s response to the following questions: (1.) what is your understanding of your own sin? (2.) what is your attitude towards the world? and (3.) are you growing in a deeper desire to love God?

### E. Doxology (v. 18b)

Peter’s doxology differs slightly from the norm. First, it is directed towards Jesus Christ, not the Father (2 Tim 4:18; Rev 1:5-6). Second, the reference to the “day of eternity” is unusual wording. Rather than utilizing the normal phrase of “forever and ever,” Peter reiterates the anticipated Day of the Lord (3:10,12).

### III. The Intersect

John Fletcher of Madeley in the 18th century provides a series of questions we should ask ourselves:

1. Did I wake up this morning with my mind on the things of the Lord? Was I watchful in keeping my mind from wandering this morning when I was rising?
2. Have I this day grown nearer to God in times of prayer, or have I given way to a lazy, idle spirit?
3. Has my faith been weakened by unwatchfulness, or quickened by diligence this day?
4. Have I this day walked by faith and eyed God in all things?
5. Have I denied myself in all unkind words and thoughts? Have I sought the well-being of others before myself?
6. Have I made the most of my precious time, as far as I had life, strength, and opportunity?
7. What have I done this day for the souls and bodies of God's dear saints?
8. Have I laid out anything to please myself when I might have saved the money for the cause of God?
9. Have I governed well my tongue this day, remembering that in a multitude of words there wanted not sin?
10. In how many instances have I denied myself this day?
11. Does my life and conversation adorn the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

*"...I want nothing but more grace." ~ John Fletcher*

**For further thought . . .**

*Based upon our study this morning, I invite you to spend some additional time this week reflecting on the following:*

How has the grace and knowledge of Christ shaped your life practically?

What are some areas of spiritual growth you feel the need to address? Where does growth need to take place?

Take these areas before God right now. Don't put it off. Explore with your spouse or a friend specific ways you can grow in these areas. In so doing, be sure to identify steps that are measurable, specific, time-determined, and realistic. Remember, spiritual growth is gradual, and it involves hard work!