

THROUGH THE BIBLE

2 PETER 1-3

Peter was a *pastor* – the word means “*shepherd.*” He had a shepherd’s heart for the flock of God.

Remember, by the Sea of Galilee, when Peter was re-commissioned, Jesus told His defeated disciple, “**Feed My lambs... Tend My sheep... Feed My sheep.**”

In other words, *be a shepherd*, and to that calling Peter remained true for the rest of his life. In fact, *that’s what he’s doing here in his two letters to the Church.*

As shepherds do - he feeds and warns the flock.

1 Peter dealt primarily with **persecution.**

Peter’s second letter deals with **false teachers.** The Church is attacked from both *outside* and from *inside*...

Peter doesn’t want us to deny the Lord as he did. He wants us to build a strong faith, and be a faithful, determined witnesses even in the midst of danger.

Chapter 1, “**Simon Peter, a bondservant...**” Literally, “**a love-slave.**” Peter served the Lord Jesus out of love.

Not out of *obligation*, but out of *adoration.*

“**And (he was an) apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ...**”

Realize faith alone is worthless. Faith is only as good as its object. People of all religions believe in their gods, but believing a lie doesn't make it so.

Our faith proves precious because it's in the righteousness of Jesus. He's achieved a right standing with God, and passes it on to those who trust in Him.

Notice too, Jesus is referred to as both "*God and Savior.*" Once, I had a muslim lady approach me after a Bible Study. She remarked, "*I really enjoyed what you had to say about God, but I got confused when you mentioned Jesus. You talked about Him as if He were God.*" *And she was accurate in her perception!*

Jesus is God! He is God incarnate - or "*in the flesh.*"

The deity of Christ is what sets Him apart from all other religious leaders. Jesus was not simply a rabbi, or a prophet, or a holy man... It's not even enough to call Jesus "*the greatest man who ever lived.*" He was more than man! Jesus Christ was "*God and Savior.*"

"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue..." All that produces a satisfied life - that enables God-pleasing conduct - is ours in Christ.

Jesus is the key that unlocks *the peace and power and presence of the living God.* If life were a treasure map Jesus would be the **X** that marked the spot!

It reminds me of Jeff Ferrera. He was reconciling his checkbook when he called the First National Bank of Chicago to verify his balance. The electronic voice announced, “You have a balance of \$924,844,204.32.”

Ferrera was one of 826 customers who became instant millionaires due to a computer error. Of course, none of the 826 folks were allowed to keep the money.

Yet in Christ we’ve become instant billionaires, and *it’s no glitch - it’s grace!* Your account gets credited with His merit. You’re now entitled to all that Jesus earned!

Verse 4, “by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises...”

Have you noticed “*precious*” is one of Peter’s favorite words in referring to the things of God. He speaks of our *precious faith - precious promises - the precious blood of Jesus - the precious cornerstone.*

The blessings of God were Peter’s treasure.

And notice it’s through these precious promises we become “*partakers of the divine nature...*” When you come to Christ God implants in you His nature.

His Holy Spirit writes God’s Law on your heart.

You could say, God’s desires, His intents, are downloaded into your basic nature. He installs a love for Him and for others onto your spiritual hard drive!

This is what enables us to “*escape the corruption that is in the world through lust.*” The wickedness and violence of society is a direct result of people’s lust.

They're driven to evil by the craving for what they don't have - the hunger for increased pleasure and more things fuels the drive for the forbidden fruit.

We escape the clutches of this lustful living only when we're filled with the joy and peace Jesus brings.

Verse 5, “**But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue...**” All of God's precious blessings are receive by faith alone, but faith needs to be fed and fortified for it to become strong.

That's why we need to add to faith the qualities that *help it focus, and keep it pure, and enable it to grow.*

And this is what Peter tells us... “**add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**” We've saved by faith alone, but faith needs to be propped up. It needs to be nourished and protected for it to grow.

When you grow tomatoes you tie the stalks to a stake to support and guide their growth. Here Peter lists seven stakes that support the growth of our faith...

Virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness (a love for godly things), *brotherly kindness, and love.*

And then read verse 9, “**For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.**”

I heard a great definition for the word “*nostalgia*.” “It’s remembering the pleasures of sitting in front of the fire - without remembering you had to cut the wood.”

We can get so use to the blessings that are ours in Christ, that we forget what life was like without them.

There are two truths I should always keep in mind... “Who I am in Christ,” and “Who I am without Him.”

The best motivation to add to your life what will build a strong faith is the recognition that a weak faith might lead to your falling away. That you’ll avoid at all costs!

“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble...” The more you add virtue and the like to faith, the least likely you’ll be to stumble.

“For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Rather than stumble into the kingdom, wouldn’t you prefer an abundant entrance?

Notice the words in verse 10, “*to make your calling and election sure.*” That’s a strange sounding phrase.

A “*calling*” implies we did nothing to initiate the call. God calls - we answer. “*Election*” implies we’re chosen, *not that we choose*. So how do you *make certain* something you had nothing to do with in the first place?

Here's another example of the Bible's mysterious blending of free will and predestination.

God chose you, but you had to choose God - and you chose God by faith; therefore to make your salvation sure you need to continue in a growing faith.

And you do that by adding to your faith what will support it - and build *a strong faith that never falters*.

Verse 12, **“For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.”**

Remember Peter is a pastor, and this is a pastor's job - to remind you of God's truth. We live in fallen flesh and in a fallen world, and our tendency is to forget. In a temporal world even eternal truth can grow fuzzy.

When we come to church we need the pastor to twist the lens and bring the spiritual realities back into focus.

Peter writes in verse 13, **“Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent...”** Note, he refers to his physical body as a tent, in contrast to a house. A tent is temporary. Our earthly bodies are like a tent - a *“pop-up.”* They *pop up* for a time, then they get *folded away*.

We're all **“here today and gone tomorrow.”**

And so while Peter has the opportunity, he considers it his duty, to remind the Church of spiritual truths. **“I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.”**

Roselyn Aranson has a wonderful piece she's entitled, "Oh, Mr. Tentmaker." Here's a portion, "It was nice living in this tent when it was strong and secure. But, Mr. Tentmaker, it's scary now. My tent is acting like it's not going to hold together. The poles seem weak, and the canvas has a rip. It's scary in here, Mr. Tentmaker, why did you give me such a flimsy tent?"

The Tentmaker replies, "As the Creator and Provider of tents, I know all about you and your tent, and I love you. I made a tent for myself once. It too was vulnerable, and attackers ripped it to pieces while I was still in it - but you'll be glad to know they couldn't hurt me. The experience now prepares Me to live in your tent with you if you invite me. You'll learn, as we dwell together, that real security comes from me being in your tent with you. When storms come, I'll hold you.

Someday your tent will collapse (*it's only for temporary use*). And when it does, you and I will leave together. (*I promise not to leave before you do.*)" Our bodies are but a tent. We await the heavenly model.

Verse 15, "Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease." This was why it was so important that Peter put his reminders down in ink and on parchment.

Most Bible scholars believe Mark's Gospel was actually the recollections of Peter. Mark was Peter's disciple, and no doubt a primary source of information.

“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ...” *We didn't make up the Gospel we preach. This is not some orchestrated ruse or hoax!*

Peter speaks for all the Gospel writers in insisting that he simply reported what he saw and heard. He goes on to say, we “**were eyewitnesses of His majesty.**”

On the top of Mount Hermon, when Jesus appeared in all His glory, Peter saw “**His majesty!**” He saw first-hand and up-close the *glory of God* radiating from the *Son of God*. It was a moment that Peter never forgot!

And it wasn't just what he saw, but what he heard...

Verse 17, “**For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.**” It wasn't just Peter - “**we heard**” - 3 men, Peter, James, and John - all heard the heavenly voice.

God Himself audibly identified His Son, and testified of His sinless life. In Jesus the Father is “**well pleased.**”

There are two great apologetical proofs for the claims of Christ. First, are **the eye-witness accounts.**

Never forget, the Gospel writers all suffered for the truths they recorded. If they got rich off the story they might've had a motive to lie, but it's hard to imagine men martyred for what they knew to be a deception.

And the second great proof of His claims were **the fulfilled prophecies**. Over 300 OT prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus' first coming - details relating to where, when, how, and why Messiah would come.

They were all amazingly fulfilled in Jesus.

This is Peter's next point, verse 19, "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts..."

Prior to our seeing Jesus we rest in His Word! And He says about God's word, "knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation..."

I often hear folks say, "The Bible has a different meaning for everyone. You interpret the Bible your way, and I'll interpret the Bible my way." Not so! The Scriptures are of no "private interpretation." That means there is an objective understanding of the Bible.

It's not what you think it means, or what I think it means - but what God intended it to mean! And that meaning applies to us all. The Bible is universal truth!

Verse 21, "For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." Here's the genius of the Bible.

Human authors penned the message so it comes across in a vernacular humans can understand.

But those authors wrote only as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. The end result is a book that *relates* to the *human mind*, but also *reveals* the *mind of God*.

The Bible is God's authoritative Word! But there are people who dare to twist and cloud God's Word...

Chapter 2, "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction." *Holy men* were moved by the *Holy Spirit* to bring us God's Word, but there're also *unholy men* moved by *unholy spirits* like pride, lust, greed, fame, Satan - to distort God's Word.

Beware of false teachers and destructive heresies. They twist the truth to the point of denying the Lord!

Take the Mormons for example. They support biblical morality, and promote family values. Most Mormons are respectable folks - they make nice neighbors.

There's only one problem - they deny the uniqueness of Jesus and His atonement for our sins.

And these are the most dangerous type of false teachers. Sweet people with poisonous heresy. Good on the periphery, but dead wrong on the central issue of Jesus' deity. These folks are sending millions to hell.

Peter comments on the popularity of these false teachers, "And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed."

"*Many will follow*" - In the last 50 years Jehovah Witnesses have grown from 100,000 to 7.5 million...

Mormons have gone from 1 million in 1957 to 15 million in 2013... And those are just two of countless forms of spiritual deceptions. *“Many will follow”* indeed!

Peter explains in verse 3, *“By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words...”* People longing for a following - *energized by ego - greedy for gain* - will twist the truth to appeal to larger and larger numbers.

Peter says, *“for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.”*

Judgment will come to the spiritual deceivers - and in the next several verses Peter gives three examples of how God will judge these wicked false teachers...

“For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly...” Here’s the first example of God’s judgement - the flood of Noah’s day.

Remember, the destruction was necessitated by an angelic *“apostasy”* or *“a falling away.”* Jude 6 tells us the angels *“did not keep their proper domain.”*

Some Bible scholars believe the demons crossed the God-imposed boundary between celestial and terrestrial. They took human bodies and had intercourse with the daughters of men. This resulted in a perversion of the human race - thus, the severity of the judgment. God had to purify a polluted gene pool.

And according to Peter, God took the demons who were involved and chained them in the darkest part of hell. The Greek word translated “hell” is “*Tartarus*.” This is the only place in the NT where this term is used.

Apparently, God created a special holding cell for these vile demons who vexed and perverted humanity.

Another example of God’s judgment takes place later in Genesis. “And (God) turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly...” Sodom was notorious for its sexual perversions and rampant homosexuality - which was part of the reason God torched the city of Sodom...

But Ezekiel 16:49 tells us more. “Look, this was the iniquity of... Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.”

Lest we get haughty, and think we’re above the sin of Sodom, realize it wasn’t just for sexual sin that God condemned Sodom. She was proud, selfish, apathetic, uncharitable - sins with which we may be more familiar.

God judged Sodom, but Peter reminds us, He “delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)” Lot was righteous by faith. Lot knew God, and apparently tried to follow His ways - but his close associations in Sodom made him a miserable man.

Here's the sad plight of a Christian who refuses to separate himself from the influences of the world - he or she ends up an oppressed and tormented person.

Lot was a backslidden believer. **He had enough of the Lord not to be happy in the world, but enough of the world not to be happy in the Lord.** Lot was the classic fence-straddler. Be hot or cold - not lukewarm.

Verse 9 tells us Sodom proved, **“the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority.”**

God knows how to judge people who snub the clear commands of Scripture, and deliver those who submit.

The citizens of Sodom renamed sexual perversions as **“*alternative lifestyles.*”** They thought that by renaming their sin they could avoid its judgment.

Peter says, **“They are presumptuous and self-willed.”**

The people of Sodom learned the hard way God doesn't update His morality and enforces His authority.

And notice how arrogant the Sodomites were **“They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries...”** They had no respect for authority of any kind - let alone God's...

Verse 11, **“whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.”** Peter is saying even angels respect

the authorities God establishes. Men alone are arrogant enough to buck God's chain of command.

“But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand...” Here's modern society in a nutshell.

We've tossed out male authority in the home and church... We've defied God's plan for the sexes and his definition of gender... We scoff at God's authority over sexual relations... We mock God's authority over government... and turn a deaf ear to God's morality.

We ignore God's order without realizing His will is for our protection and betterment - and there are negative consequences if we disobey. We're like brute beasts who run roughshod over matters we don't understand.

“And (vs 12) will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime.”

Folks who *“carouse in the daytime”* are people with no shame. It's one thing to sin in seclusion, under the cover of darkness. It's another thing to sin openly and publicly, with no squint of conscience. This was the case in Sodom. It was Gay Pride Day all the time.

Peter says of the conscience-less, **“They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you...”** His readers had accepted the false teachers as part of the Christian family. And this had created a spot or a blemish on their worship. It was as if they were offering to God a tainted sacrifice.

In essence, they had become guilty by association.

Verse 14, “having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls.”

You don't let a rabid dog into the backyard with your kids -somebody will get hurt. Neither do you tolerate a false teacher in the Church. A deceiver knows who's most vulnerable and preys on the weakest saints.

“They have a heart trained in covetous practices...”

False teachers are skilled manipulators. They play on emotions - use circular reasoning - employ familiar phrases while redefining the terms. These men take verses out of context to fit nicely into their argument.

They're shrewd. They're called “accursed children.”

Verse 15, “They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness...”

God warned Balaam not to go and curse the Israelites, but the King of Moab kept upping the ante, raising his offer, bribing the soothsayer with riches. It was greed that finally pushed Balaam to disobey God.

“But he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.” And the same phenomena happens every Sunday here at CC... *God speaks through the voice of a donkey...* God rebuked Balaam through his donkey.

Balaam's story reminds me of a businessman who offered his accountant \$100,000 to doctor the books.

The accountant agreed. But then the businessman asked if he'd do it for a penny. The accountant was upset. "Of course not, what do you think I am, a thief?"

The businessman replied, "I've already established that, all that's undecided is your price." It's been said, "Every man has a price!" I hope that's not true.

The false teacher sells out the truth for material gain, but the true man of God will remain faithful!

Verse 17, "These are wells without water, It's been said, "Empty barrels make the most noise." False teachers specialize in proclaiming empty promises.

Their mouths are full of words that carry no weight.

They're "clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." The false teachers are like a clouds passing off into oblivion.

Verse 18, "For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error." Realize, there's always a waiting audience for anyone who will provide a religious justification for a person's lusts and greed.

People get lured into the notion they can please God and satisfy their flesh simultaneously. This is spirituality without morality - believing without behaving...

"While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage."

Here's the preacher who trumpets the evils of sin and adultery - all the while he carries on an affair with the church secretary - or has a secret life on the internet. He promises freedom, but is caught in a web.

Some teachers who promise the secrets of victory - have secrets alright... secret lives of sin and bondage.

“For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.” The saddest man on earth is the one who has tasted the joys of Jesus, and then walked away.

He can never really enjoy his sin because he knows how it pales in comparison to the blessings of Christ.

“For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.

But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.”

It's like the prisoner who's sentence is commuted, yet he's lazy and lost so he returns to prison because its easier... At least in jail he's got a bed and meals.

Jesus sets us free from sin, but some Christians are just too lazy to add to their faith virtue and self-control and endurance, etc... Thus, they fall right back into the very mess from which they were delivered. *It's sad!*

I've met Christians who sob and bemoan the spiritual shackles that hold them back. But if the truth were known, they're not free because they don't want to be... at least not enough to do what it takes to add to their faith... They're too use to the slop to climb out.

They just don't want to change. It sounds strange, but people can cultivate a taste for spam to the point that they'd rather eat *spam* than *steak*. It's insane!

Chapter 3, "Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior..." It's said, "Repetition is the best teacher."

Peter and Jesus would agree - both repeated truths.

Peter writes, "knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? "Ah, you Christians are alarmists. You're always talking about the end of the world - the final judgment - the Second Coming. *Well, we're waiting?*"

They say, "For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

Here's a theory that today goes by the name, "uniformitarianism." It was first espoused by Charles Lyell, an English geologist who lived in the 1800s.

Lyell's doctrine is the foundation for Darwinian evolution, and the dominant view of scientists today. It's interesting Peter predicted it over 1950 years ago.

Simply put, **uniformitarianism** is the belief that the Earth has been shaped through history by the same natural laws and processes that are at work today.

A uniformitarian would stand on the edge of the Grand Canyon, look down at the slender blue thread called the Colorado River five miles below, and claim that the tiny river is what cut out that giant canyon.

That given enough time anything is possible.

The uniformitarian says that the Grand Canyon formed the same way the *gullies* in your yard form - through simple erosion. Sorry, I'm not that *gullible*.

Neither is Peter, he points out in verse 5, **“For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.”**

The historical truth most modern scientists omit from their thinking is that God flooded the earth with water.

Have you ever heard, **“The Top Ten Statements Made By Noah On The Ark...”**
10) Strange, we haven't seen another boat for weeks... 9) If only I'd brought along more rhino litter... 8) I'll never sleep in a waterbed again... 7) Fish for supper - again?...

6) Does anyone have more Dramamine?... 5) What? You don't have film to photograph the rainbow?... 4) Honey, please stop saying, “Into each life a little rain must fall.”... 3) How can I fish with just two worms?...

2) God, are you sure I don't need to keep the termites in a tin can?... 1) Noah is on the deck of the Ark, slapping his neck and mumbling, *“I should've killed those lousy mosquitoes while I had the chance!”*

Actually, catastrophic, global flood is a far better explanation for the earth's geological composition than natural processes over millions and millions of years.

For one thing, **fossils don't form over time.** A bird falls to the ground and either decomposes, or scavengers eat it. But the fossil of that bird forms when intense pressure follows the bird's immediate compaction... *the type of scenario caused by a flood!*

Understand the biblical flood isn't ignored because it lacks scientific credence. Peter says it's been "*willfully forgotten.*" Haughty, arrogant men can't admit to a flood, or they'll validate the judgment of God. They've chosen instead to deny any evidence for God and His judgment, and pretend to be their own authority.

"But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Admit God judged the Earth in the past, and you concede He can do it again. This scares wicked men - so they stick their head in the sand, and live in denial!

"But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." So it's been 2000 years since Jesus promised He would return. With God time is relative. Up against eternity 1000 years is as a day.

From God's perspective it hasn't been a long wait.

Peter assures us, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

God is not a slacker! He’s not in the habit of putting off obligations. He waits out of His love for people.

Verse 10, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” Some hear in verse 10 the sound of a missile, and the detonation of a nuclear warhead.

But I believe when God decides it’s time to retire this physical universe it will occur by a direct act of God.

Remember in Hebrews 1:3 we’re told that Jesus is “upholding all things by the word of His power.” He’s the unifying force - the atomic glue that binds the positive charges in the nucleus of every atom. Well, all He has to do is let go, and the universe will incinerate.

“Therefore (verse 11), since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness...” Certainly, not a materialistic person! Why live for stuff that eventually burns? Hey, every earthly thing will one day burn up!

Instead, “looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent

heat?” Here’s a provocative thought - that we can actually “*hasten*” or speed-up Christ’s coming.

How do you hasten or speed up the Lord’s return?

Romans 11:25 tells us the events of the end times won’t begin “*Until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*” Implied is that there’s a set number to be saved.

Apparently, when that number is reached the Father will say to the Son, “*Go get them.*” That means every person we lead to the Lord we’re one person closer to His return. Thus, the more we share our faith the more we can speed up - or “*hasten*” - the Lord’s return.

Verse 13, “*Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*” When man sinned the whole universe became subject to randomness and decay. But one day, this universe will melt with fervent heat, and God will form a new heaven and earth.

“*Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation...*” Oh, how we long to see Jesus!

But if He returned right now it would cut short the opportunity for other folks to be saved. Peter says, “*the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation.*” We can wait a *few more days* if it means a *few more souls* are saved.

Peter continues, “*As also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you...*” Paul had concurred with Peter’s conclusions.

Verse 16, “As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.” If you’ve ever read Romans 9-11, or 2 Thessalonians 2, or 1 Corinthians 11 you too may’ve concluded that Paul was difficult to understand. *Don’t worry, you’re in good company - Peter thought so too.*

It’s funny to me, one apostle thought another apostle was too complicated. *It was a little apostolic criticism.*

But notice Peter equates Paul’s writings to the rest of the Bible. Paul’s writings were inspired. He says in verse 16, “*as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.*”

This is important. Peter had no doubt Paul’s letters should be included in the sacred canon of Scripture.

Verse 17, “You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.” Peter closes with a two-fold plan for growth – *a good defense and a good offense.*

Beware of falling into error (*the defense*) and grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (*the offense*).