

**A Daily Devotional
on 2 Peter**
By Ken Miller



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

2 Peter 1:1-4: All You Need	5
2 Peter 1:5-7: Spiritual Supplements	9
2 Peter 1:8-11: If You Believe, Prove It	13
2 Peter 1:12-15: These Things	17
2 Peter 1:16-21: Listen to Him	21
2 Peter 2:1-3: Falsely Appealing	25
2 Peter 2:4-10a: It Pays to Obey	29
2 Peter 2:10b-16: Blots and Blemishes	33
2 Peter 2:17-22: Avoid at All Costs	37
2 Peter 3:1-7: No Doubt About It	41
2 Peter 3:8-13: What Sort of People Ought You to Be?	45
2 Peter 14-18: How Will He Find You?	49

All You Need

2 Peter 1:1-4

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:

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

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, 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. –*

2 Peter 1:1-4 ESV

In verse one of chapter three, Peter refers to a previous letter he had written: “This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved.” It is assumed that this second letter was written to the very same group he addressed in 1 Peter. This was a mixed congregation of both Gentiles and Jews who were spread throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. And Peter states his reason for having written both letters: “I have tried to stimulate your wholesome thinking and refresh your memory. I want you to remember what the holy prophets said long ago and what our Lord and Savior commanded through your apostles” (2 Peter 3:1-2 NLT). We’ll unpack that passage when we come to it, but suffice it to say, that Peter was trying to foster a deeper understanding of who Jesus was and how He had fulfilled all that the prophets had written concerning Him. He really *was* the Son of God, the long-awaited Messiah and the Savior of the world. And, once again, Peter refers to himself as one of His apostles. He had personally called and commissioned by the resurrected Christ, and given the task of taking the good news concerning Jesus to the Gentiles.

Peter addresses his letter to “those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours” (2 Peter 1:1 ESV). Paul is setting himself up as the standard of faith, but simply stating that faith is the common bond we all share. His faith, as an apostle, is no better or greater than that of anyone else. His audience shared a common faith, the same as himself and all the other apostles. And Peter makes it clear that this faith was made possible “by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1 ESV). The apostle Paul provides us with insight into what Peter is saying.

*I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, **I become righteous through faith in Christ.** For God’s way of making us right with himself depends on faith. – Philippians 3:9 NLT*

*For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, **they did not submit to God's righteousness.** For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. – Romans 10:3-4 ESV*

Peter wants his readers to know that their faith is in the righteousness of Christ, not their own poor attempt at living righteous lives. They must continue to believe that their right standing with God is not based on their own human effort, but on what Christ accomplished for them on the cross.

And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption... – 1 Corinthians 1:30 ESV

Our faith is in the righteousness of Christ. And Peter, Paul, the rest of the apostles, the recipients of Peter's letter, and every other individual who has placed their faith in Christ has no reason to think they earned their right standing with God. Paul went on to write, "so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord'" (1 Corinthians 1:31 ESV). And it is our growing understanding of the incredible gift we have received that will result in increased grace and peace. And that was Peter's prayer.

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

That grace and peace grows as our comprehension of God and the gift of His Son, increases in our lives. Rather than worrying and wondering about all that we must do for God, we are to be focused on what He has done for us through Christ. Our salvation was by faith, so is our sanctification – our growth in Christ-likeness. We don't become more like Christ through human effort, but by faith in the transforming power of God made possible by His indwelling Holy Spirit. And Peter speaks of this power.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. – 2 Peter 1:3 ESV

Let that sink in. God has done it all. In his first letter, Peter pointed out that God had chosen them. Their salvation had been His doing, not theirs. God had sent His Son to die for them and God is the one who had chosen them to receive eternal life through His Son. And now, Peter reminds them that all that they will need for living godly lives on this planet comes from God. It comes "through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence" (2 Peter 1:3 ESV). Godly living is directly tied to our knowledge of Christ. Paul writes, "For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. So, you also **are complete** through your union with Christ" (Colossians 2:9-10 NLT). In Christ, we have all we need for living godly lives. We don't have to manufacture anything. We don't have to muster up the strength to follow Christ's example. All that we need comes from and through Christ, which is why Paul could say, "For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13 NLT). Paul fully

believed that reality. He lived by it. And he would not allow himself to fall back into the trap of trying to live out the Christian life through human effort.

²⁰ My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die. – Galatians 2:20-21 NLT

And Peter says virtually the same thing, reminding his readers that God “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” (2 Peter 1:4 ESV).

But what are those “precious and very great promises”? What has God communicated through His prophets and apostles that we can count on and place our hope in when it comes to experiencing an ever-increasing divine nature? One of those promises can be found in Peter’s earlier letter:

³ ...because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, ⁴ and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. – 1 Peter 1:3-4 NLT

We have the promise of an eternal inheritance. It is based on the righteousness of Christ, not our own feeble attempts at living godly lives on our own. Not only that, God has promised to protect us by His power until that inheritance is fully realized.

God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. – 1 Peter 1:5 NLT

God has promised to give us the “divine nature” of His Son. But it is a gift to be received, not to be earned. The only way we can become more like Christ is because we have “escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire”. In other words, we have been freed from captivity to sin. We are free *not* to sin, for the first time in our lives, because of what Christ has done for us. We *can* live godly lives. We *are* capable of living like Christ. “By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life” (2 Peter 1:3 NLT). The point that Peter is trying to make is that our dependency upon God increases over time. He didn’t send His Son to die for us, so that we might then try to live for Him according to our own human effort. His power has been and always will be the key to our spiritual transformation. The apostle Paul points out the non-negotiable nature of this Christ-dependent life:

¹⁰ And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. ¹¹ The Spirit of God, who

raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

¹² Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. ¹³ For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. – Romans 8:10-13 NLT

The Spirit of God lives in you. The same incredible power that raised Jesus back to life is available to us each and every day of our lives. But we must live according to that power, not the feeble, sin-marred power of our flesh. Peter wants his readers to look for God for everything they need. It has already been given to them in the form of the Holy Spirit. And it is theirs because of the righteousness imputed to them by Christ that led to their full acceptance by God. The Christian life is not about sinful man attempting to live up to some moral standard on his own in an ill-fated attempt to achieve divine status. It is the work of God. He called us. He saved us. And He is the one who will transform us. All by His divine power. As Paul put it, “I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20 NLT).

Spiritual Supplements

2 Peter 1:5-7

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement 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, and brotherly affection with love. – 2 Peter 1:5-7 ESV

If God has supplied everything we need for living the godly life to which He has called us, are we free from having to bring anything to the table? Do we play any part at all? Peter quickly eliminates any notion that we have no responsibility in our own spiritual growth. He has just reminded his readers that they have “escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire” (2 Peter 1:4 ESV). This is because God “has granted to us his precious and very great promises” (2 Peter 1:4 ESV). And it is through those promises that we “may become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4 ESV). So, with that reality in mind, Peter encourages his audience to “make every effort”. The Greek could be translated, “giving all diligence”. They are to contribute something, in addition to or alongside of, that which God has supplied. And they are to do so diligently and earnestly. There is a sense of urgency to Peter’s words. He is not making a suggestion, but communicating a non-optional necessity. This is something they must do and the sooner, the better. He is going to provide them with a list of seven character qualities that should mark the life of every believer. And Peter points out that we are not born with them. We are not even “born again” with them. He says that we are to “supplement” our faith with them. The Greek word Peter uses is interesting. It is *epichorēgeō*, and it comes from another Greek word, *chorēgeō*, that means, “to furnish the chorus at one’s own expense”. The preposition, *epi*, seems to convey the idea of time, place or order. Faith is the necessary ingredient and the only prerequisite for salvation, but it is to be followed in close order by this chorus of qualities, and they are to be added “at one’s own expense”. This doesn’t mean we self-manufacture them or develop them out of thin air based on our own human effort. But we must strive, alongside the Spirit and with His help, to see that these things are added to our faith. In essence, our faith is to grow and produce fruit in the form of tangible, visible character traits.

Peter begins with virtue. The New Living Translation calls it “moral excellence”. Thayer’s Greek Lexicon defines it as “a virtuous course of thought, feeling and action”. This ties back to Peter’s admonition in his first letter, “be holy in all your conduct” (1 Peter 1:15 ESV). This moral purity or excellence of character is to show up in every area of life. It is to be internal as well as external. Virtue is not to be a facade we manufacture to fool those around us. It is to flow from the inside-out. Next, Peter adds knowledge. His idea here seems to be moral wisdom, the ability to know what is right and wrong. Good behavior is dependent on a solid understanding of what God demands and expects. Paul talks about this very thing in his letter to the Romans.

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. – Romans 12:2 NLT

God wants to change the way you think. The word, orthodoxy, refers to right beliefs. But the word, orthopraxy, refers to right behavior. Moral knowledge or wisdom that does not show up in moral purity is worthless.

Next on Peter's list is self-control. This has to do with temperance or moderation. It is the ability to master one's desires and passions, especially sensual desires. Paul put it this way:

*¹⁵ So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. ¹⁶ Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. ¹⁷ **Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do.** ¹⁸ Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit... – Ephesians 5:15-18 NLT*

Knowing what to do is of no use if we lack the self-control to follow through on that knowledge. The night that Jesus was going to be betrayed, he prayed in the garden and was forced to confront His disciples about their inability to stay awake. They lacked self-control, so He said to them, "Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak!" (Matthew 26:41 NLT). Paul confessed, "I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should" (1 Corinthians 9:27 NLT).

The next characteristic on Peter's list is steadfastness. It is a word that conveys patient endurance and perseverance, even in the face of difficulties and trials. The journey of faith is a long-term, life-long commitment. Knowing what is right and having the self-control to do it is great, but not if it cannot be maintained over an extended period of time. Jesus described this kind of short-term, impatient person in a parable He told to the disciples.

²⁰ The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. ²¹ But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word. – Matthew 13:20-21 NLT

No endurance. As soon as the trials of life show up, they give up. But our faith is going to require an ongoing, steadfast, never-give-up-no-matter-what kind of endurance that lasts to the end. Jesus told us "the one who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 24:13 NLT). He was not inferring that some will lose their salvation. But He was stressing that endurance is a hallmark characteristic of those who have placed their faith in Him, and within whom He has placed His Spirit.

It should come as no surprise that Peter adds godliness to the mix. After all, he clearly stated in his first letter, "But now you must be holy **in everything you do**, just as God who chose you is holy" (1 Peter 1:15 NLT). Godliness is nothing more than behavior that reflects the character of

God. As His children, we should emulate His nature. We are sons and daughters of God, so our behavior should reflect that reality. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul warned him of the state of affairs that would mark the end times.

² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God... – 2 Timothy 3:2-4 ESV

What's interesting is that Paul goes on to say that these very same people will have "the appearance of godliness" but will deny its power. What a minute? Look at that list again. Do any of those characteristics even remotely come across as godly? No. But we have to keep in mind that they are qualities that issue from the heart. They can remain hidden from view. So, these people were capable of appearing one way, but on the inside, they were something completely different. Godliness is not just an outward action, but it stems from an inward disposition that is determined to do what God desires. It stems from a desire to please God in every area of life.

What does Peter mean by "brotherly affection"? It is the Greek word, *philadelphia*, and it literally refers to the love of one brother for another. Jesus matter-of-factly stated, "Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples" (John 13:35 NLT). John expands on the words of Jesus, providing us with even further insight into what this kind of love entails.

⁹ If anyone claims, "I am living in the light," but hates a fellow believer, that person is still living in darkness. ¹⁰ Anyone who loves a fellow believer is living in the light and does not cause others to stumble. ¹¹ But anyone who hates a fellow believer is still living and walking in darkness. Such a person does not know the way to go, having been blinded by the darkness. – 1 John 2:9-11 NLT

The kind of love John and Jesus are describing is a tangible expression of love that can be seen and felt. It is not a sentimental, Hallmark-card kind of love that shows up in words only. It gets fleshed out in acts of mercy, compassion, and kindness.

And on top of this brotherly-focused love is to be added *agape* love. That's the Greek word Peter uses. And it is the highest expression of love. It is the way in which God has loved us. It entails selfless sacrifice. It is a love that expects nothing in return. In other words, it is not self-serving. This is not a you-scratch-my-back-and-I'll-scratch-yours kind of love. Jesus described this kind of love in stark terms.

¹² This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. ¹³ There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. – John 15:12-13 NLT

Jesus loved us enough to die for us. He gave His life for us. And that is the kind of love that is to characterize our lives. Jesus came to serve, not be served. He came to sacrifice His life for those

who hated Him. Jesus didn't love the lovely, the lovable, or those who loved Him back. And John reminds us that our love should emulate that of Jesus.

¹⁶ We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person?

¹⁸ Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. – 1 John 3:16-18 NLT

These things are essential to healthy spiritual life. They are like supplements to aid in our spiritual development and formation. Like vitamins and minerals are necessary for our physical well-being, these seven characteristics need to be added to our faith on a daily basis, so that we might grow stronger and more vibrant in our faith. Having a bottle of vitamins in the cabinet will not make you healthier. You have to take them, regularly and over the long-term. Having these seven characteristics pointed out to you is pointless if you are not going to add them to your spiritual life. Which is why Peter said we are to make every effort to supplement our faith with these things. They don't replace our faith. And we do not add them apart from faith. But they are the fruit of our faith. We must believe that God desires these things for us and that He will empower us as we strive to make them a permanent part of our lives.

If You Believe, Prove It

2 Peter 1:8-11

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

¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. ¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. – 2 Peter 1:8-11 ESV

Virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. Seven characteristics that should mark the life of each and every child of God. They reflect what Peter means when he says, “as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct” (1 Peter 1:15 ESV). These are character qualities found in the life of Jesus and, as the author of Hebrews puts it, “the Son radiates God’s own glory and expresses the very character of God” (Hebrews 1:3 NLT). To be holy as God is holy, is to reflect His nature, just as Jesus did. It is to live a life that is set apart and distinctly different from all those who don’t know Him, who don’t have His Spirit living within them. These seven qualities are Spirit-induced and empowered, not man-made and self-produced. But if someone has placed his faith in Christ, these qualities should be a part of his life. That is why Peter says, “if these qualities are yours and are increasing” (2 Peter 1:8 ESV). He is not suggesting that his readers do not have these qualities. He is simply separating those who do from those who don’t. Peter knew there were those in his audience who had failed to supplement their faith with these virtues. Some of them were not even believers. They had never placed their faith in Christ. Their lives would not be marked by these characteristics, because they are essentially spiritual in nature.

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. – 1 Corinthians 2:14 ESV

So, Peter is addressing believers, reminding them that these qualities *are* theirs and *should be* increasing. That is to be the norm. That is what God intended. And their very presence in a believer’s life, and that believer’s determination to see these constantly added and increased will result in an extremely positive outcome: “they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:8 ESV). The Greek word Peter uses that is translated “ineffective” is *argos*, and it refers to someone who is lazy, shunning their responsibilities or assigned duties. The Greek word for “unfruitful” is *akarpous*, and it refers to a tree that is not yielding fruit as it should. Like a barren tree, the believer whose life lacks the “fruit” of these seven qualities, is abnormal and unnatural. His life is not as God intended. It doesn’t take a high IQ to figure out that the opposites of these two negative words would be diligence and fruitfulness. But notice what Peter states is to be our focus: the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The seven characteristics Peter has outlined are to be a means to an end, a very specific end. As the NET Bible puts it: “they will keep you from becoming ineffective and

unproductive in your pursuit of knowing our Lord Jesus Christ more intimately” (2 Peter 1:8 NET). That is the end game, the final goal, an intimate knowledge of Christ. And we get there, Peter suggests, by diligently adding these seven virtues to our life. When we supplement our faith in Christ with the attitudes of Christ, we grow to know Him better. We grow in our understanding of who He was and how He has called us to live. Because we can add these seven virtues only with the help of the Holy Spirit, we become increasingly more dependent upon Him. And it is He who makes Christ known to us. Jesus told His disciples regarding the Holy Spirit, “he will bear witness about me” (John 15:26 ESV). He also told them, “he will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13 ESV) and “He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (John 16:14 ESV).

So, as we diligently add these virtues to our lives, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we grow in our knowledge of Christ. We become more like Him. We begin to see life the way He does. And our lives begin to take on His very same character and truly become Christians, not just in name, but in action and attitude.

But Peter knows that there are believers in his audience whose lives are not marked by these seven attributes. Which is why he states, “For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins” (2 Peter 1:9 ESV). Think about it. A believer who lacks virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love, is missing the whole point behind being a believer. He is living as if he was still enslaved to sin and incapable of exhibiting Christ-likeness. He is nearsighted, living with a stunted perspective on life, that never allows him to see his true identity as a child of God. He forgets that he has been chosen by God. He can’t see that he has been set apart for God’s glory and purposes. His ability to see that he is a new creation and has a new capacity to live out his faith in everyday life is cloudy and lacks focus. And he comes across as lazy and unfruitful.

Which is why Peter so strongly admonishes his readers: “Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election” (2 Peter 1:10 ESV). He encourages them to get busy, to make every effort to prove their new identity in Christ by purposefully and diligently adding these seven virtues to their faith. Their presence proves our calling. They give outward evidence of our new nature and our status as sons and daughters of God. Peter promises, “if you practice these qualities you will never fall” (2 Peter 1:10 ESV). Peter is not suggesting that it is our practice of these seven virtues that keeps us saved. No, our eternal salvation has been secured by God’s grace through His Son’s death on the cross. We don’t save ourselves and we don’t *keep* ourselves saved by doing good works. Peter made this clear in his first letter.

*...he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,⁵ **who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time...** – 1 Peter 1:3-5 ESV*

What Peter is trying to say is that when you “make every effort to supplement your faith” (2 Peter 1:5 ESV) with these seven character qualities, you give evidence of your new life in Christ. This evidence is not for your benefit. In other words, it isn’t intended to prove to you that you are saved, but it does reveal to the lost world around you that faith in Christ is truly life-changing. It is marked by diligent, obedient effort and fruitfulness. Jesus spoke of this very thing.

“Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” – John 15:5 ESV

And He went on to say:

“By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.” – John 15:8 ESV

Those who are believers in Christ are to live lives of fruitfulness. They are to be marked by these seven characteristics that emulate the very life of Christ. And their lives will have an impact on all those around them, both saved and unsaved. And we do so with the confident assurance that our eternity has been permanently secured for us by Christ.

For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. – 2 Peter 1:11 ESV

Our reward is in the life to come. We live in this life in order to obey and portray Christ to a lost and dying world. We will face rejection and persecution for our efforts, just as He did. But we are willing to endure the suffering because we anticipate the reward to come.

These Things

2 Peter 1:12-15

¹² Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. ¹³ I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, ¹⁴ since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. ¹⁵ And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. – 2 Peter 1:12-15 ESV

Peter is dead serious about the seven virtues he has just brought up. They weren't just friendly suggestions that the readers of his letter were free to take or leave. No, Peter saw them as indispensable and unavoidable necessities for living the Christian life. They were the attributes of Christ Himself. And since growing in their knowledge of and intimacy with Christ was to be an objective of their relationship with Him, they should also grow in the likeness to Him. Their character of their lives should emulate His. So, Peter warns them that he is going to continue to lovingly nag them about these things. He knows that he has not told them anything they have not heard before. This was basic Christianity 101. But, he knew that they needed constant reminding because these things were easy to lose sight of in the midst of all the pressures of life and the temptations that come with living in a fallen world. Other things take precedence. Each of the seven virtues have competing alternatives that can tempt believers to display opposite character qualities that are destructive, rather than constructive. Instead of virtue or moral excellence, there is always the temptation to live in moral compromise or mediocrity. In other words, to live a slightly-less-than holy life. This usually happens when we begin to live according to human, rather godly standards.

If knowledge is the Spirit-empowered capacity to know right from wrong, how simple it is to silence that still, small voice of the Spirit and listen to the wisdom of this world. When we do, we begin to call good evil and evil good. Our sense of perspective becomes corrupted by the passions associated with our old sin nature. And instead of displaying wisdom based on a knowledge of God's will and ways, we begin to act like fools, operating in ignorance, and all the while thinking we are wise.

Self-control is the ability to master one's desires and passions. So, it doesn't take a genius to understand what a lack of self-control looks like. When we stop adding self-control to our faith, we fall into the trap of operating according to our own fleshly desires. For the Christian, self-control is really about being controlled by the Spirit and not by our own flesh. And the apostle Paul makes it clear what happens when we let our old nature take back over the reins of our life.

¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. – Galatians 5:19-21 NLT

Steadfastness is patient endurance and perseverance, even in the face of difficulties and trials. The obvious alternative is impatience and impulsiveness. We find ourselves quickly running out of endurance and the stamina it takes to live Christ-like lives in this fallen and sin-filled world. The pressures of life mount up and we find ourselves giving up.

The opposite of godliness is ungodliness. But that doesn't necessarily mean totally depraved, sinful behavior. Godliness is nothing more than behavior that reflects the character of God, so ungodliness is any and all behavior that fails to reflect His character. You don't have to hate someone else to fail to reflect God's character. You just have to refuse to love those He has called you to love. You can simply ignore others and refuse to give them the time of day. You don't have to murder someone to reflect ungodly character. You simply have to slander them or spread damaging rumors about them. Even despising them in your heart is ungodly in the eyes of God. So, if we are not constantly adding godliness to our lives, the opposite will show up.

Brotherly affection is nothing more than love for a brother or sister in Christ. But it is more than a feeling of affection for them. It is an outward display of tangible care and concern. It is the "one another" passages of Scripture lived out in real life. We are to encourage one another, admonish one another, carry one another's burdens, accept one another, forgive one another, and patiently tolerate one another. You can easily see what the opposite of brotherly affection would look like.

Finally, there's love – agape love – the kind of love by which God loved us. It is selfless and sacrificial, expecting nothing in return. It is other-oriented, not me-focused. And when our love of self overshadows our love for others, we are not living out this non-negotiable character quality of Christ Himself. We are not loving as He has loved us.

So, Peter tells his readers that he is going to continue to bring these attributes up, even though he knows they are already familiar with them. Knowing them and living them out are two different things. Having a cognitive understanding of them is of no use if our lives fail to display a visible application of them.

In this passage, Peter says that he feels it is only right that he reminds them of these things, and that he will do so as long as he is alive. Then he makes an interesting statement: "since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me" (2 Peter 1:14 ESV). What is he talking about? What did Jesus make clear to him regarding the putting off of his body or his death? If you recall, after the resurrection of Jesus, when He had made numerous appearances to the disciples, He had a particularly memorable encounter with Peter. Three separate times, Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him. It is important to recall that Peter had denied Jesus three different times on the night that He had been betrayed and was being tried. The three questions Jesus asked Peter had been difficult for him to hear and answer. But each time, Peter answered in the affirmative. "Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' and he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you'" (John 21:17 ESV). And, it was right after this that Jesus said to Peter:

¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.”¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.” – John 21:18-19 ESV

Notice that last two words, “follow me”. Those were the same two words that had started Peter’s journey with Christ more than three years earlier. But this time, Jesus was indicating that Peter was going to follow Jesus in death. Tradition states that Peter was eventually crucified. His hands were stretched out and he was carried where he did not want to go. But at the time Peter wrote this letter, he had no idea when his fate would come. He simply knew that he was going to one day follow Jesus in death. So, he was driven by a sense of timeliness and urgency. And he tells his readers, “I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things” (2 Peter 2:15 ESV). In other words, Peter was going to leave them some form of written encouragement to continue to remind them about these seven character qualities.

Peter made “every effort” – he wrote down his thoughts, making them a permanent record of his feelings concerning these things. And that letter not only encouraged those who received it initially, it became a permanent part of Holy Scripture, providing all of us who have come to faith in Christ with words of encouragement and admonition. These seven virtues are as necessary today as they were the day Peter penned his letter. “These things”, as Peter calls them, are still a vital part of living the Christian life. Times have changed. Cultures have evolved and adapted themselves to new conditions. But there is still a need for virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. And only the body of Christ can display these characteristics, because they are spiritual in nature. They are Spirit-empowered. Apart from the indwelling presence and power of the Spirit of God, no man is capable of producing these qualities. We can fake it. We can display poor imitations of them. But these Christ-like character qualities begin with faith in Christ and are supplements to that faith. They are the marks of those who have been chosen by God and who have received new natures and a new capacity to live as His children in a lost and dying world.

Listen To Him

2 Peter 1:16-21

¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," ¹⁸ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, 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. – 2 Peter 1:16-21 ESV

Peter begins to make a transition in the content of his letter. He has been encouraging his readers to see to it that they supplement their initial faith in Christ with the characteristics of Christ. Peter had evidently played a part in preaching of the gospel that had led to the salvation of the believers to whom he is writing. And, as a faithful shepherd, he is concerned that their faith increases as they submit their lives to the indwelling presence and power of the Spirit and pursue the will of God for their lives: Holiness. Now, Peter begins to establish his qualifications as an apostle of Jesus, defending the nature of the gospel he had preached, and establishing his intimate relationship with Jesus Himself. There is a reason Peter is having to do this. As we will see in the very next chapter, Peter is having to deal with a problem that has impacted the churches receiving his letter. In his absence, false teachers have appeared within these churches, causing confusion and attacking the integrity of Peter's message.

So, Peter wants to remind his readers that the gospel he had preached and which they had believed was not some man-made, cleverly concocted story that had no basis in reality. Peter had not made this stuff up. What he had told them regarding Jesus, including His life, ministry, miracles, messages, death, burial and resurrection, were true. Peter had been there. He had been an eyewitness of each and every thing regarding Jesus' life, all the way to the bitter end. Peter makes special reference to the special occasion on which he had seen Jesus transfigured on the mountaintop and heard the voice of God. Mark records this event in his gospel.

² Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone. As the men watched, Jesus' appearance was transformed, ³ and his clothes became dazzling white, far whiter than any earthly bleach could ever make them. ⁴ Then Elijah and Moses appeared and began talking with Jesus. – Mark 9:2-4 NLT

Mark provides us with further insight into the reaction of the three disciples as they viewed this extraordinary event. As usual, Peter was the first to speak up.

⁵ Peter exclaimed, “Rabbi, it’s wonderful for us to be here! Let’s make three shelters as memorials—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁶ He said this because he didn’t really know what else to say, for they were all terrified. – Mark 9:5-6 NLT

Peter tells his readers, “we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16 NLT). They had seen His transfiguration. They had watched as Jesus spoke with Elijah and Moses, two long-dead patriarchs of the faith. These two men were especially chosen by God for this occasion, because they represented the prophets and the law respectively. Jesus had come to fulfill both. All that the prophets wrote about in their books was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. And the Old Testament Mosaic Law was also fulfilled in Jesus because He was the only man who had ever kept the law in its entirety. He had not disobeyed a single part of God’s commands, which is what made Him the perfect sacrifice, the sinless lamb who could give His life as a substitute and as an atonement for the sins of mankind.

Mark’s gospel tells us what happened after Peter made his hasty, fear-driven offer to build three tabernacles for Jesus, Moses and Elijah.

⁷ Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my dearly loved Son. Listen to him.” ⁸ Suddenly, when they looked around, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus with them. – Mark 9:7-8 NLT

God spoke, and all He expressed to the disciples was His love for His Son and His desire that they listen to Him. And as they walked away from this one-of-a-kind encounter, Jesus had further instructions for Peter and two companions.

⁹ As they went back down the mountain, he told them not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰ So they kept it to themselves, but they often asked each other what he meant by “rising from the dead.” – Mark 9:9-10 NLT

As Peter penned the words of his letter, it was long after the events described in Mark’s gospel. Jesus had gone to Jerusalem. He had made His triumphal entry. The disciples had celebrated what would be their last Passover meal with Jesus. They had stood by and watched Him be arrested and dragged off to be tried. Peter had denied Him three times. They had each been forced to watch Jesus crucified, buried and left for dead. But they had also been eye-witnesses to His resurrection, the very thing Jesus had mentioned to Peter, James and John that day as they descended the mountain. These men, along with the other disciples, had seen Jesus in His glorified, resurrected state. He had visited with them, ate a meal with them, and commissioned them to take the news of His death, burial and resurrection to the world. And they had.

For Peter, what he had seen on the mountaintop that day and what his post-resurrection encounters with Jesus were more than enough to convince him of the validity of Jesus’ claim to be the Messiah. He was completely convinced that Jesus was the long-awaited Savior of whom the prophets had written. Which is what prompts him to write:

“Because of that experience, we have even greater confidence in the message proclaimed by the prophets. You must pay close attention to what they wrote, for their words are like a lamp shining in a dark place—until the Day dawns, and Christ the Morning Star shines in your hearts.” – 2 Peter 1:19 NLT

Peter knew, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the message he preached was true because it was in fulfillment of all that the prophets had written regarding Jesus. The words of the prophets, written hundreds of years earlier, were “like a lamp shining in a dark place” and they will keep on shining until the day the Lord returns. These men not only predicted the first coming of Jesus, but His second coming. Their words still carry weight and significance. And Peter reaffirms that the writings of the prophets were not their own words, but had been given to them by God through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

²⁰ Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet’s own understanding, ²¹ or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God. – 2 Peter 1:20-21 NLT

The Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles combined to create a God-ordained message of revelation and salvation based on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. He was God incarnate, the Son of God in human flesh. He was the God-Man, who lived a sinless life and performed never-before-seen miracles and spoke God-ordained words of truth. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, cast out demons, controlled the wind and the waves, turned water into wine, and raised the dead. He confounded the religious leaders with His wisdom. He comforted the sinful with His words. Peter and the apostles walked with Him, learned from Him, were astonished by Him, and convinced by the words He spoke to them. Their lives had been radically transformed as a result of their encounter with Him. And Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit fell on them, as the icing on the cake, a final proof that He was who He claimed to be. That fateful day had brought a new energy and enthusiasm to the disciples as they were filled with the power of the Spirit and began to preach the gospel given to them by Christ. They stood back and watched in awe and thousands of lives were changed at the hearing of the good news regarding Jesus, the Savior. And Peter, writing to believers who found themselves tempted to turn from the gospel by the misleading words of false teachers, pleads with them to keep their eyes focused on the reality of who Jesus was and what He came to do. In essence, Peter is repeating the words of God spoken to him, James and John. He is calling his readers to recall who Jesus is and to hear God say, “This is my dearly loved Son. Listen to him.”

Falsely Appealing

2 Peter 2:1-3

¹But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. ²And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. – 2 Peter 2:1-3 ESV

Wherever there is truth, you will always find falsehood. They are inseparable. When the truth of God shows up, the lies of the enemy are sure to follow. It has always been that way. Even in the earliest days of man's existence, this battle between truth and falsehood was evident, as Adam and Eve were forced to decide between the words of God and those of Satan. Disguised as a serpent, Satan lured the first couple into questioning the veracity of God's command concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He said, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1 ESV). Notice his strategy. He begins by attempting to confuse Eve over what God had actually said. She corrects Satan's misrepresentation of God's words by responding, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die'" (Genesis 3:2-3 ESV). But then, Satan begins his clever and crafty deception of the two innocent creatures God had created. He flatly states, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5 ESV). First of all, he contradicts the words of God, for God had clearly said, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it **you shall surely die**" (Genesis 2:16-17 ESV).

First, he rejected the word of God. Then he accused God of attempting to keep them from being like Him. He tried to convince them that God was denying them something that was rightfully theirs. He painted God as nothing more than a divine spoil sport who wanted to prevent them from being gods themselves. And the appeal of the fruit, mixed with the false promise of the enemy, was too much for Adam and Eve.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. – Genesis 3:6 ESV

They bought into the lie of the enemy, but rather than becoming like God, they became filled with guilt, shame, and fear. With their newfound knowledge of good and evil, they became aware of the reality of sin and all the baggage that came with it. Instead of the unbroken fellowship they had enjoyed with God, they now found themselves hiding from Him. They tried to cover their sin, blaming one another and, ultimately, blaming Satan. But God held them

responsible for their sin, placing a curse on the two of them for having listened to the lies of the enemy and rejecting the truth of His words.

Peter fast-forwards to the days of the Israelites, long after the exodus, when they were living in the promised land given to them by God. He provides some historical context, indicating that “false prophets also arose among the people” of that day. During the Old Testament period, God spoke through prophets, providing them with His words to deliver to the people of Israel. But each and every time a prophet of God appeared on the scene, Satan sent a false prophet, who delivered a contradictory, yet highly appealing message. And the one common denominator found in the messages each of these false prophets declared was falsehood. They claimed to speak for God. They tried to get the people to believe that they had received their message directly from God. But they were lying. Whatever the prophet of God said, they would counter with contradictory messages, declaring, “Surely, God has not said”. False prophets have to discredit the true prophets of God. For their message to be received, false prophets must first undermine the credibility of God’s prophets, by causing the people to reject their message. And one of the main ways they did this was by telling the people what they wanted to hear. When God’s prophets spoke of judgment and discipline from the hand of God, the false prophets declared just the opposite: God’s blessing and mercy.

This tactic of twisting the words of God or presenting a more palatable alternative was still going on in Peter’s day. But rather than false prophets, it was being done by false teachers. Which is why Peter warns his readers, “there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Peter 2:1 ESV). And notice that Peter indicates that these false teachers would come from among them. Jesus had warned against this very danger.

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. ¹⁶ You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act.” – Matthew 7:15-16 NLT

In the book that bears his name, Jude provides a similar warning.

...some ungodly people have wormed their way into your churches, saying that God’s marvelous grace allows us to live immoral lives. The condemnation of such people was recorded long ago, for they have denied our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. – Jude 1:4 NLT

False teachers do their best work on the inside, disguising themselves as part of the family of God and giving every appearance of having been sent by God. That is what makes them so dangerous. And Peter warns, “Many will follow their evil teaching and shameful immorality. And because of these teachers, the way of truth will be slandered” (2 Peter 2:2 NLT). False teachers will always find an audience to listen to their lies. There will always be those who are ready to hear what they have to say, regardless of the fact that what they say is not from God.

Paul warned Timothy that a day was coming when people would seek out teachers who told them exactly what they wanted to hear.

For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. – 2 Timothy 4:3 NLT

But what Peter wants us to understand is that there is a deadly danger associated with listening to the false teachers. What they have to say may sound appealing. Their words may come across as godly and spiritual, but the end result of listening to their falsehood is deadly. Jude describes them in very blunt terms.

¹² ...they are like dangerous reefs that can shipwreck you. They are like shameless shepherds who care only for themselves. They are like clouds blowing over the land without giving any rain. They are like trees in autumn that are doubly dead, for they bear no fruit and have been pulled up by the roots. ¹³ They are like wild waves of the sea, churning up the foam of their shameful deeds. They are like wandering stars, doomed forever to blackest darkness. – Jude 1:12-13 NLT

Peter warns that many of these individuals are in it for the money. “In their greed they will make up clever lies to get hold of your money” (2 Peter 2:3 NLT). They are not out for the spiritual good of the people. Their motivation is purely selfish, aimed at amassing a large following, developing a powerful reputation, and lining their own pockets. In our day and age, they sell books, hold conferences, produce TV shows, and hawk their message to any and all who will hear it. And, sadly, they usually find a ready and receptive audience within the church. But Peter warns that “God condemned them long ago, and their destruction will not be delayed” (2 Peter 2:3 NLT). God will not tolerate false teachers, so neither should we. We must see them as He does, as dangerously deceptive purveyors of pious-sounding platitudes that subtly contradict the Word of God. In Peter’s day, they were denying the reality of sin. They were promoting promiscuity and immoral behavior, stating that the body and the soul were separate, so whatever you did in the body didn’t matter. There were those who denied the resurrection of Jesus, stating that it was unnecessary. Others, who were Hebrews, were teaching that salvation was incomplete unless it included circumcision and adherence to the Mosaic law. False teachers come in all shapes and sizes and promote ideas of all kinds. Yet, what they all share in common is that their messages sound appealing and convincing. But they are lies. They deny the truth of God. They reject the gospel in its God-ordained form. And they all share that very basic tactic pioneered by Satan in the garden: Casting doubt on the Word of God. When Satan asked his questions, “Did God actually say?”, he was placing a seed of doubt in the minds of Adam and Eve, causing them to question the veracity of God’s word. And doubt leads to disbelief. Disbelief results in disobedience. And disobedience brings the discipline of God.

It Pays to Obey

2 Peter 2:4-10a

⁴ 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; ⁵ 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; ⁶ 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; ⁷ and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked ⁸ (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); ⁹ then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, ¹⁰ and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. – 2 Peter 2:4-10a ESV

False teachers, they are an ever-present reality in the world. Wherever God's truth exists, there will be false representations or variations of it. Those, like Peter, who speak on behalf of God, will always be opposed by others who contradict them, while claiming to be presenting the truth of God. But the truth of God is not up for debate and does not come in a variety of forms. God doesn't send mixed messages. He is not a God of confusion and disorder. That is why Peter stresses the truth and the need for the people of God to know it well. It is extremely difficult to spot falsehood if you don't have any idea what the truth really is. But Peter, as one of the original disciples of Jesus, and as a commissioned apostle of the risen Lord, knows false teaching when he sees it and he has strong feelings about those who propagate it. "God condemned them long ago, and their destruction will not be delayed" (2 Peter 2:4 NLT). There was no tolerance on God's part toward false teachers. They were dangerously deceptive and destined to destruction.

And we should not be shocked or surprised that God would react so strongly to these individuals and their false messages. Peter brings up a series of examples from history revealing God's past dealings with rebellious angels and humans. Jude uses many of these same examples in his book.

⁵ So I want to remind you, though you already know these things, that Jesus first rescued the nation of Israel from Egypt, but later he destroyed those who did not remain faithful. ⁶ And I remind you of the angels who did not stay within the limits of authority God gave them but left the place where they belonged. God has kept them securely chained in prisons of darkness, waiting for the great day of judgment. ⁷ And don't forget Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighboring towns, which were filled with immorality and every kind of sexual perversion. Those cities were destroyed by fire and serve as a warning of the eternal fire of God's judgment. – Jude 1:5-7 NLT

Who were the angels that Peter and Jude refer to and what was their crime? They evidently participated in a rebellion against God's authority. These were most likely the same angels who followed the lead of Satan himself, when he attempted to dethrone God and take His place. The prophet Isaiah gives a metaphorical glimpse into that event.

¹² *"How you are fallen from heaven,
O shining star, son of the morning!
You have been thrown down to the earth,
you who destroyed the nations of the world.*
¹³ *For you said to yourself,
'I will ascend to heaven and set my throne above God's stars.
I will preside on the mountain of the gods
far away in the north.*
¹⁴ *I will climb to the highest heavens
and be like the Most High."* – Isaiah 14:12-14 NLT

Satan led a rebellion against God, that was easily thwarted and resulted in the casting out of heaven of every angelic being that participated in it. Peter indicates that God "cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment" (2 Peter 2:4 ESV). Jude states that "God has kept them securely chained in prisons of darkness, waiting for the great day of judgment" (Jude 1:6 NLT). The actual word that Peter uses, which is translated in the ESV as "hell", is the Greek word, *tartaroō*. *The Outline of Biblical Usage* states that this was "the name of the subterranean region, doleful and dark, regarded by the ancient Greeks as the abode of the wicked dead, where they suffer punishment for their evil deeds; it answers to Gehenna of the Jews." This is the only place in the entire New Testament where this word is used. While we cannot be sure of the exact nature of the event to which Peter and Jude refer, we do know that they stress God's evident delay in fully judging the guilty parties involved. That seems to be the point. Whether these angels are chained in actual hell or are relegated to an earthly existence, totally subjugated to God's authority. The *tartaroō* to which these angels have been sent could be referring to their existence as demons, serving the wishes of Satan, and doomed to wait for their final judgment by God. Either way, these angels sinned against God and are waiting for God to mete out His full and just judgment.

Next, Peter brings up our antediluvian ancestors, who also sinned against God, and were ultimately destroyed by God in a great world-wide flood. Only Noah and his family were preserved from destruction by God. The book of Genesis describes just how bad things had gotten.

¹¹ *Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence.* ¹² *God observed all this corruption in the world, for everyone on earth was corrupt.* – Genesis 6:11-12 NLT

God had put up with the sins of mankind for some time before He finally destroyed them. And He showed mercy by sparing the lives of Noah and his family, giving them an opportunity to

start over. But the bottom line was that God did not spare the sinners in Noah's day, so He would not spare the false teachers in Peter's day. They too, would face the judgment of God.

Then there were the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah. These two wicked cities were destroyed by God for their rampant and willful sins against God. When God sent angels to rescue Lot and his family from Sodom, they told Lot, "Do you have any other relatives here in the city? Get them out of this place—your sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone else. For we are about to destroy this city completely. The outcry against this place is so great it has reached the Lord, and he has sent us to destroy it" (Genesis 19:12-13 NLT). And God did destroy Sodom, along with its neighboring city, and all the residents who resided in them. God had put up with the sins of the two cities for a long time, but judgment finally came, "making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly" (2 Peter 2:6 ESV).

And interestingly enough, Peter uses Lot, the nephew of Abraham, as an example of the godly. He refers to him as "righteous Lot" and describes his condition as "greatly distressed 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)" (2 Peter 2:7-8 ESV). While Lot had made the decision to move his family into the city of Sodom and expose them to the rampant wickedness of its inhabitants, he was still considered righteous by God. He still had a heart for God. So, God rescued him. And Peter uses Lot as an example of how God will "rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment" (2 Peter 2:9 ESV). These were meant to be words of encouragement to the recipients of Peter's letter, providing them with incentive to stay faithful to God, even in the face of growing persecution and in spite of the confusing and misleading teaching of the false teachers. Peter used Noah and Lot as examples of how God rescues the righteous. God completely destroyed the world, but spared Noah. He completely annihilated Sodom and Gomorrah and everyone in them, but spared Lot. God will one day judge the false teachers, and treat them as what they are, sinners and rebels against Him. But He will spare the righteous. So, Peter appeals to his readers to remain faithful to God. He wants them to reject the lies of the false teachers. He wants them to adhere to the truth of God's Word, regardless of the pressures they may face to cave in. Their endurance would be well rewarded. They would not be disappointed in the end. It pays to obey. The rebellious angels fell. The wicked of Noah's day drowned. The immoral and perverse of Sodom and Gomorrah died. But God spared the righteous.

Blots and Blemishes

2 Peter 2:10b-16

¹⁰ Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, ¹¹ whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. 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, 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. ¹⁴ They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! ¹⁵ Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, ¹⁶ but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. – 2 Peter 2:10b-16 ESV

So, what is it that these false teachers are guilty of? What is their primary crime? For Peter, it was not one particular thing that indicted these individuals. It was a plethora of actions and attitudes that condemned them and set them up for the judgment of God. First of all, Peter describes them as “bold and willful”. They are daringly presumptuous, saying and doing things that are unheard of. They are arrogantly self-willed, doing what they do in order to please themselves, and not God. These individuals have no regard for the will of God, but do what will best benefit themselves. And they show no fear or apprehension when it comes to speaking disrespectfully of those things closely associated with God. The word Peter uses is *doxa*, and it can refer to that which belongs to God, such as His majesty or glory. These people have no reservations whatsoever, speaking words of dishonor and disrespect about those things that God considers holy and righteous. The vast majority of places this word is used in the New Testament, it is used to refer to the glory associated with God. While it can mean “angels”, it seems unlikely that this is what Peter is talking about. In fact, when referring to angels in these verses, he uses the Greek word, *aggelos*. While it is possible that these false teachers were denying the existence of angels, it seems much more likely that Peter is accusing these men of diminishing the glory of God by treating with disdain those truths associated with God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Peter accuses them of “blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant” (2 Peter 2:12 ESV). And yet, angels, who are much more powerful and majestic than these false teachers, do not dare to come before God and say a negative word against those whom God has created. They show restraint and do not dare step into God’s presence and utter disparaging words against these men – in spite of the fact that they are “like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed” (2 Peter 2:12 ESV).

And it is not as if these people are guiltless and undeserving of judgment. Peter pulls no punches in describing their true nature.

¹³ Their destruction is their reward for the harm they have done. They love to indulge in evil pleasures in broad daylight. They are a disgrace and a stain among you. They delight

in deception even as they eat with you in your fellowship meals. ¹⁴ They commit adultery with their eyes, and their desire for sin is never satisfied. – 2 Peter 2:13-14 NLT

They have done damage to the body of Christ and deserve the just judgment of God. Their very presence in the body of Christ has left an indelible mark. Peter describes them as *spilos* and *mōmos*, two Greek words that convey the stain and blemish they have caused to God's reputation by sullying the holiness of His people. *The Message* paraphrases verses 13-14 as follows:

They're so despicable and addicted to pleasure that they indulge in wild parties, carousing in broad daylight. They're obsessed with adultery, compulsive in sin, seducing every vulnerable soul they come upon. Their specialty is greed, and they're experts at it. Dead souls!

Not exactly a flattering description. And Peter is far from done. He compares them to an Old Testament character named Balaam. His story is covered in the book of Numbers. He was a pagan prophet and, therefore, a false prophet, who, Balak, king of Moab hired to curse the people of Israel. God, speaking to and through this false prophet, forbade him from issuing a curse against the people of God. And God did this on three separate occasions. But King Balak kept asking Balaam to curse the people and he had to keep turning the king down. But we learn from the New Testament writers, that Balaam tried to circumvent God's express command not to curse Israel by giving Balak some helpful advice. He evidently told the king that if he could get the people of Israel to intermarry with the Moabites, they would end up worshiping the Moabite gods and practicing the ritual immorality associated with those gods. And it worked. Jesus, speaking to the apostle John on the island of Patmos, spoke of Balaam's sin, using him as a representation of the sin of the church in Pergamum.

But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. – Revelation 2:14 ESV

Balaam, like the false teachers in Peter's day, knew that the people of God were susceptible to committing iniquity in the form of immoral behavior. If he could get them to break God's law by worshiping false gods and committing immoral acts, they would prove to be a weaker enemy. They would lose the blessing of God. And that is exactly what the false teachers were doing that Peter is attempting to expose. They were tempting the people of God to sin against God. It had worked for Balaam, so why wouldn't it work for them? This strategy is not new. It has been around along as Satan himself. And he is still implementing this tactic in an attempt to disqualify and defeat the people of God. The book of Numbers tells us that Balaam's advice to Balak proved successful.

¹ While the Israelites were camped at Acacia Grove, some of the men defiled themselves by having sexual relations with local Moabite women. ² These women invited them to attend sacrifices to their gods, so the Israelites feasted with them and worshiped the

gods of Moab. ³ In this way, Israel joined in the worship of Baal of Peor, causing the Lord's anger to blaze against his people. – Numbers 25:1-3 NLT

Balaam didn't have to curse Israel. In essence, they cursed themselves by giving in to the temptations of the Moabite women. It started out with false worship and ended with immoral behavior. And it resulted in God's judgment against them.

God had made it perfectly clear to Balaam that he was not to do what Balak had requested. He was not to curse the people of God.

"You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." – Numbers 22:12 ESV

And Balaam listened to God. He informed Balak's emissaries that he was not going to be able to return with them to Moab. He even turned down their very tempting offer of treasure. So, Balak sent even more emissaries, hoping to sweeten the pot and put even more pressure on Balaam. And this time, God gave him permission to go. But something interesting happened.

²⁰ And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, "If the men have come to call you, rise, go with them; but only do what I tell you." ²¹ So Balaam rose in the morning and saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moab. – Numbers 22:20-21 ESV

Yet, the text tells us that God became angry with Balaam.

But God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the Lord took his stand in the way as his adversary. – Numbers 22:22 ESV

God knew Balaam's heart. He knew full well that Balaam was going to because he planned to aid Balak and get the treasure he had offered. So, God positioned an armed angel in the path. And while Balaam failed to see the angel, the donkey did not. And it drew back in fear, refusing to move forward. So, Balaam beat and cursed the donkey, attempting to make it proceed. But the donkey stubbornly refused. So, Balaam intensified his attack on the donkey, until something remarkable happened. The donkey spoke.

"Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way?" – Numbers 22:30 ESV

Then, miraculously, Balaam's eyes were opened and he was able to see the angel standing in front of him and he became deathly afraid.

³² And the angel of the Lord said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to oppose you because your way is perverse before me.

³³ The donkey saw me and turned aside before me these three times. If she had not

*turned aside from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let her live.” –
Numbers 22:32-33 ESV*

Balaam is convicted of his sin and confesses it to the angel, offering to return home instead of proceeding to Moab. The angel gives him permission to continue his journey, but reiterates that Balaam is only to say what God tells him to say. And yet, we know that somewhere along the way, Balaam disobeyed God and gave Balak advice that led to the men of Israel having sexual relationships with the women of Moab.

Peter compares the false teachers of his day with Balaam. They are liars. They are in it for themselves. They have no real concern for the people of God and no fear of disobeying the will of God. Balaam sought treasure. So did they. And while Balaam appeared to be doing the right thing, in his heart he was planning to do the wrong thing. So were the false teachers. And while Balaam got rebuked by a speechless donkey, the false teachers were being rebuked by an apostle of God – Peter. When all is said and done, the real sin of these people was that “They lure unstable people into sin, and they are well trained in greed” (2 Peter 2:14 NLT). They preyed on the spiritually weak and morally vulnerable. And they did it all for personal gain. And they were leaving the body of Christ stained and soiled by their efforts.

Avoid at All Costs

2 Peter 2:17-22

¹⁷ These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. ¹⁸ For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. ¹⁹ They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. 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. ²² What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire." – 2 Peter 2:17-22 ESV

In describing the false teachers who were negatively impacting the believers to whom he is writing, Peter uses some comparisons that are reminiscent of Jude.

...they are like dangerous reefs that can shipwreck you. They are like shameless shepherds who care only for themselves. They are like clouds blowing over the land without giving any rain. They are like trees in autumn that are doubly dead, for they bear no fruit and have been pulled up by the roots. They are like wild waves of the sea, churning up the foam of their shameful deeds. They are like wandering stars, doomed forever to blackest darkness. – Jude 1:12-13 NLT

They are not what they appear to be, and they don't deliver on what they promise. Like a waterless spring, they can only offer the *hope* of refreshment, but they lack the *means* to make it happen. Like a reef lying just below the surface of the water, they are a hidden danger, waiting to wreak havoc on and all who come into contact with them. They are cloudless rains, suggesting the hope of much-needed rain, but failing to deliver. They are as unreliable as a wandering star. In a day when people used the stars to direct their paths by focusing on their location in the night sky, a wandering star would be a pathetically poor marker on which to base one's journey. You would only end up lost and nowhere near your intended destination. And that is exactly what Peter is trying to say about these false teachers.

They were proud and arrogant, filled with boastful words that were little more than proof of their own foolishness. These men were ignorant, not knowing what they were talking about, but putting up a good front. They were persuasive and able to convince others that what they were saying was true. But Peter exposes them for what they really were: Liars and deceivers. "They promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves of sin and corruption. For you are a slave to whatever controls you" (2 Peter 2:19 NLT). Like a blind person describing the beauty of a sunset he has never seen, these men were speaking about things they were incapable of

knowing. They could talk a good game, but it was meaningless, because they had no idea what they were talking about. These men were prisoners of their own lustful desires,

One of the things that makes false teachers so dangerous is their appeal. They have this innate ability to entice others into falling for their lies by appealing to their base desires. That's why Peter says, "With an appeal to twisted sexual desires, they lure back into sin those who have barely escaped from a lifestyle of deception" (2 Peter 2:18 NLT). New and relatively immature Christians are susceptible to their rhetoric. Those who have just recently come to faith in Christ, having walked away from a lifestyle of sin and immorality are especially easy prey to the words of these deceivers. False teachers appeal to the senses, preying on feelings and emotions. They use man's base passions like a bait to lure immature believers back into a lifestyle they had once left behind – all under the guise of spirituality. We can see it today in the messages of those who preach the prosperity gospel message. They appeal to men's desire for material things, promising that God wants to make them healthy, wealthy and wise. They promise your best life now, complete with all the trappings of material success and financial reward. And people are drawn to these messages like a fish to a lure, not knowing that death, not life, awaits them.

Verses 20-21 have caused many to assume that Peter is teaching that those who place their faith in Christ can fall away from that faith. In other words, they can lose their salvation, "the last state has become worse for them than the first" (2 Peter 2:20 ESV). But if Peter has been pointing out the falsehood of these teachers, it would seem that he is once again addressing them. He describes them as those who have been exposed to "the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ", and appear to "have escaped the defilements of the world" (2 Peter 2:20 ESV). In other words, they look like Christians. They talk as if they have become followers of Christ, but "they are again entangled in them and overcome" (2 Peter 2:20 ESV). And, as a result, they are in a worse state than before. Why? Because they have been exposed to the truth of the gospel, but have rejected it. They never became true Christ-followers. In fact, they ended up preaching a different gospel. Paul spoke of these kinds of people in not-so-flattering terms.

Let God's curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you. – Galatians 1:8 NLT

And he accused the believers in Corinth of willingly putting up with and buying into the message of these people.

You happily put up with whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach a different Jesus than the one we preach, or a different kind of Spirit than the one you received, or a different kind of gospel than the one you believed. – 2 Corinthians 11:4 NLT

The people Peter refers to as false teachers were not true believers. They were wolves in sheep's clothing. Jesus warned about these kinds of people. "Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves" (Matthew 7:15 NLT). He went

on to say that you have to judge these people by their fruit, not their fur. They may look the part, they may say all the right things, and they may fool you into thinking they belong to the body of Christ, but “You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act” (Matthew 7:16 NLT).

Peter makes a sobering assessment of the state of these false teachers, saying, “It would be better if they had never known the way to righteousness than to know it and then reject the command they were given to live a holy life” (2 Peter 2:21 NLT). In other words, they would have been better off if they had never heard the truth of the gospel and the salvation from sin made possible by Jesus Christ’s death on the cross. But to have heard it and then, ultimately to have rejected it, only makes their immoral lifestyle that much worse. Peter makes an interesting, yet often overlooked observation in this verse. To know the way to righteousness is a reference to understanding justification or a right relationship with God is only possible through faith alone in Christ alone. In other words, we don’t earn salvation by our good works. But Peter points out that our faith is to be followed by an obedience to the command of God that we live a holy life. That is the predominant message of Peter’s first letter.

*¹⁴ **As obedient children**, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,
¹⁵ 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.” – 1 Peter 1:14-16 ESV*

Had these false teachers been truly saved, their faith in Christ would have been followed by a change in behavior. But their actions had not changed because they had never accepted Christ as their Savior. As a result, they were conformed to the passions of their former ignorance. They had heard the message of justification, but had not accepted the free gift of salvation made possible through Jesus. And having heard, but rejected the offer, they stood doubly condemned. And Peter describes their state in fairly graphic and memorable terms: “They prove the truth of this proverb: ‘A dog returns to its vomit.’ And another says, ‘A washed pig returns to the mud’” (2 Peter 2:22 NLT). Notice that he refers to them as dogs and pigs. These are not terms Peter would have used of fellow believers. He sees them as what they are: Unsaved, unregenerate individuals who have turned up their noses at the true gospel and created their own version, which they use to justify their sinful passions and to lure others into their same false sense of security.

So, what is Peter’s point? Avoid these people at all costs. Stay away from them. Learn to spot them and then keep your distance from them. Be aware that they are an ever-present danger in the church. They will always show up in a local fellowship, like wolves in sheep’s clothing, infiltrating the flock and attempting to lead the weak and immature astray. The words of Paul to the elders at Ephesus would be wise for us to hear and heed.

*²⁸ “So guard yourselves and God’s people. Feed and shepherd God’s flock—his church, purchased with his own blood—over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as leaders.
²⁹ I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave,*

not sparing the flock.³⁰ Even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following.³¹ Watch out! – Acts 20:28-30 NLT

No Doubt About It

2 Peter 3:1-7

¹ 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." ⁵ 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. – 2 Peter 3:1-7 ESV

In these verses, Peter is going to deal with some specifics regarding the dangerous content of the message of the false teachers. First of all, they were disparaging the whole idea of Christ's eventual return. In their estimation, the second coming of Christ was not going to take place. As far as they could tell, if it was going to happen, it already would have by this point. They took a look around and concluded, "From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created" (2 Peter 3:4 NLT). In other words, nothing had changed. This was a case of overstatement, but as far as they could tell, the world just kept rolling along just like usual, with no indication that Christ's return was eminent or even necessary. Their assessment led them to deny that Jesus was ever going to come back to earth. It was nothing more than wishful thinking propagated by the apostles. But Peter flatly denied this assertion and labeled these false teachers as scoffers or mockers. They were guilty of making fun of the whole concept of the second coming.

But Peter wants his readers to know that these false teachers were contradicting the very words of the prophets of God. These men had predicted the incarnation of Jesus, but also His return.

¹³ As my vision continued that night, I saw someone like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed. – Daniel 7:13-14 NLT

⁴⁴ "During the reigns of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed or conquered. It will crush all these kingdoms into nothingness, and it will stand forever. ⁴⁵ That is the meaning of the rock cut from the mountain, though not by human hands, that crushed to pieces the statue of iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold.

The great God was showing the king what will happen in the future. – Daniel 2:44-45 NLT

³ *Look! The Lord is coming!
He leaves his throne in heaven
and tramples the heights of the earth.*

⁴ *The mountains melt beneath his feet
and flow into the valleys
like wax in a fire,
like water pouring down a hill. – Micah 1:3-4 NLT*

⁴ *On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. And the Mount of Olives will split apart, making a wide valley running from east to west. Half the mountain will move toward the north and half toward the south. ⁵ You will flee through this valley, for it will reach across to Azal. Yes, you will flee as you did from the earthquake in the days of King Uzziah of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come, and all his holy ones with him. – Isaiah 14:4-5 NLT*

Not only does the Old Testament repeatedly speak of the return of Christ, so did the apostles.

¹² *And may the Lord make your love for one another and for all people grow and overflow, just as our love for you overflows. ¹³ May he, as a result, make your hearts strong, blameless, and holy as you stand before God our Father when our Lord Jesus comes again with all his holy people. Amen. – 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 NLT*

Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. – Revelation 1: 7 ESV

Jesus Himself predicted His own return and promised the disciples that it was going to happen.

² *“Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. ² There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? ³ When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. – John 14:2-3 NLT*

²⁹ *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. – Matthew 24:29-31 ESV*

In spite of all of this, these “scoffers” sarcastically ask, “Where is the promise of his coming?” “If He’s going to return, where is He?”, they mockingly ask. But Peter warns them that just because they don’t see any sign of His return, doesn’t mean it isn’t going to happen. They can mock and scoff, but that doesn’t eliminate the reality of Christ’s second coming. They can doubt it’s validity, but it won’t do anything to lessen its inevitability. And Peter gives them a convincing illustration. In terms of the creation of the world, God used two essential things: His word and water. Genesis 1:2 tells us, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.” Genesis goes on to tell us that God separated the waters in order to create the sky.

⁶ Then God said, “Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth.” ⁷ And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. ⁸ God called the space “sky.” – Genesis 1:6-8 NLT

Then He formed dry land *out of* the waters.

⁹ Then God said, “Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear.” And that is what happened. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground “land” and the waters “seas.” And God saw that it was good. – Genesis 1:9-10 NLT

Then Peter fast-forwards to the flood. Once again, God used means to accomplish His will. He used His word and water. But this time, rather than using these two things to create, He used them to destroy. God reversed what He had done at creation, and covered the dry land with water. He spoke, and it happened. And Peter warns that, one day, God is going to speak again. He will utter the word and the world, as we know it, will come to an end.

And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed. – 2 Peter 3:7 NLT

This time, His word will be accompanied by fire, not water. This future judgment will take place after the second coming of Christ. The old earth will be replaced with a new and improved earth. God will make all things new. The creation, which is now groaning because of the curse of sin, will be made new.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. – Revelation 21:1 NLT

²⁰ Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope, ²¹ the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. – Romans 8:20-21 NLT

These false teachers could mock the return of Christ, but it wasn't going to keep it from happening. And Peter wants his readers to rest in the reality that Jesus was going to come back and that the redemption of mankind and creation would be finally completed. They could doubt it and even deny it, but they could do nothing to prevent it. And for us as believers, we hope in the return of Christ. And the apostle Paul tells us why we should.

²³ And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us. ²⁴ We were given this hope when we were saved. (If we already have something, we don't need to hope for it. ²⁵ But if we look forward to something we don't yet have, we must wait patiently and confidently.) – Romans 8:23-25 NLT

What Sort of People Ought You to Be?

2 Peter 3:8-13

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. 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. 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.

¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 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! ¹³ But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. – 2 Peter 3:8-13 ESV

The false teachers Peter has been exposing were guilty of denying the promise of Jesus' second coming. Because it hadn't happened yet, they assumed it wasn't going to happen at all. And they had been purposefully contradicting the teaching of Peter and the other apostles, trying to persuade the believers to whom Peter was writing that waiting for Christ to return was pointless. He wasn't coming back. Which is what led Peter to point out that God's seeming delays are not to be interpreted as proof that His lack of involvement in the lives of men. Just because God had allowed sin to run rampant on the earth during the days of Noah, didn't mean He was approving of it or indifferent to it. Because He eventually brought judgment in the form of a devastating, world-wide flood. To deny that "the day of the Lord", as Peter refers to it, even exists, is a risky proposition. Jesus return is going to be associated with judgment. The apostle John, in his Book of the Revelation, gives a powerful description of Jesus as He appears at His second coming.

¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. – Revelation 19:11-16 ESV

He is coming again. And this time, He won't be coming in the form of a helpless baby, born in obscurity in some backwater village in the land of Israel. No, He will be coming in might and power, and as a powerful, conquering King. He will come as the Judge of the world. And just because it hasn't happened yet does not mean it is never going to happen. God has His timing,

and He has not divulged it to anyone, including His own Son. Jesus made this point clear when speaking to the disciples regarding His return for the church.

“However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows.” – Matthew 24:36 NLT

Even after His resurrection, on one of the numerous occasions when He had appeared to His disciples, they asked Him, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?” (Acts 1:6 NLT). They were thinking that this must be the day. He had been murdered, but had come back to life. Surely, this was a significant sign that He was truly the Messiah and was going to set up His Kingdom on earth. But Jesus simply replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know” (Acts 1:7 NLT). They were worrying about things that were above their pay grade. So, Jesus told them to set their minds on what was going to happen next. He wanted them to know that they had work to do. Rather than worry about when He was coming back, they needed to prepare themselves for what was about to take place. So He told them, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8 NLT).

God has a plan and He is working that plan to perfection. There are things that must happen and they must take place in the order God has established for them. Jesus was soon to leave and the Holy Spirit was to come in His place. And it was the coming of the Spirit that empowered the apostles to become the men who radically changed the world through their spreading of the gospel “to the ends of the earth”.

The coming of the Holy Spirit inaugurated the beginning of the church age. We are living in the last days, as Peter and the apostles referred to them. How long will they last? We have no idea. Peter and his compatriots lived as though Christ could return at any moment. So should we. But the longer time goes on and we don’t see Him coming back, it becomes easy to doubt whether He is ever going to do so. And there will always be those who will try to convince us that His return is neither eminent or relevant. They will present this life as the only life. They will try to sell ideas like “Your Best Life Now” when Jesus talked about the abundant life to come, life everlasting.

Peter pointed out an aspect concerning God that we must never fail to remember. God is not bound by space and time. He is eternal. So, time as we know it, means nothing to Him. Which is why Peter states: “A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day” (2 Peter 3:8 NLT). What appears to us as a lengthy delay, is nothing more than the blink of an eye to God. This lengthy timeline on which we track the decades and centuries of mankind’s existence and see no sign of His Son’s return, is meaningless to God. He sees tomorrow just as we see today. Past, present and future are all one and the same to Him. In Psalm 90:4, Moses penned a prayer to God in which he too acknowledged God’s timelessness.

For you, a thousand years are as a passing day, as brief as a few night hours.

And Moses goes on in that same Psalm and expresses His desire that God would end what appears to be His delay.

¹³ *O Lord, come back to us!*

How long will you delay?

Take pity on your servants!

¹⁴ *Satisfy us each morning with your unfailing love,
so we may sing for joy to the end of our lives.*

¹⁵ *Give us gladness in proportion to our former misery!
Replace the evil years with good.*

¹⁶ *Let us, your servants, see you work again;
let our children see your glory.*

¹⁷ *And may the Lord our God show us his approval
and make our efforts successful.*

Yes, make our efforts successful! – Psalm 90:13-17 NLT

But Peter would tell Moses to stop worrying about when God is going to come back and start concentrating on how God would have him live in the meantime. God has left His people here for a reason. He has a divine purpose behind the seeming delay of His Son's the return. And here it is.

The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. – 2 Peter 3:9 NLT

What appears to us as a delay is really a sign of God's mercy. He is providing time for all those who are going to come to faith to do so. He is not going to send His Son back until all those who have been chosen by Him for salvation are gathered in. There seems to be two returns of the Lord mentioned in these verses. The first concerns Jesus' return for the church, which is referred to as the Rapture. This event will bring an end to the church age and usher in the period of the Tribulation. In his letter to the Romans, Paul states, "Some of the people of Israel have hard hearts, but this will last only until the full number of Gentiles comes to Christ" (Romans 11:25 NLT). Notice that it says, "the full number". There is evidently a quota or number of those who are going to come to faith and only God knows what that number is. In other words, there is a fixed number of individuals who will come to faith in Christ. And when that number is reached, Jesus will return for His bride, the church. Paul describes this day in his first letter to the Thessalonians.

¹⁶ *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. ¹⁷ Then, together with them, we who are still alive and*

remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. – 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 NLT

But there is a second coming of Christ. Peter refers to it in verse 10.

But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment.

This coming will take place at the end of the seven-year long period of the Tribulation. This return will be associated with judgment. But it will also involve Jesus gathering His chosen ones, the people of Israel, who have come to faith in Him during the days of the tribulation. He spoke of this day to His disciples.

³⁰ And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he will send out his angels with the mighty blast of a trumpet, and they will gather his chosen ones from all over the world—from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven. – Matthew 24:30-31 NLT

Then will come to final judgment of the world. “On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames” (2 Peter 3:12 NLT). But Peter tells his readers to not worry about all that. Instead, he encourages them, “But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God’s righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13 NLT). We don’t know when Jesus is coming back. We have no idea when the Rapture will be. We have no clue when His second coming will take place. And we don’t need to worry about either. We just need to trust God and rest in His promises. And in the meantime, keep our minds focused on what sort of people we ought to be.

How Will He Find You?

2 Peter 3:14-18

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, ¹⁶ as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. ¹⁷ 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. – 2 Peter 3:14-18 ESV

Peter has just stated that time is not an issue for God: “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8 ESV). So, if there appears to be a delay in the fulfillment of His promises, we have no reason to worry or doubt. God isn’t bound by time. Which means, we are to continue to wait, eagerly and expectantly, knowing that neither the circumstances around us or what appears to be a lack of activity on God’s part, are cause for concern. In fact, Peter reminds them, “the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment” (2 Peter 3:10 NLT). With that in mind, he says, “while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight” (2 Peter 3:14 NLT). In other words, leave the timing of “these things” up to God and spend more time concerned with how you live your lives. Let God do His job and do what He has commanded you to do. And what does God expect of us? Remember what Peter said:

⁶ ...make every effort to respond to God’s promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. – 2 Peter 1:5-7 NLT

Faith involves trusting God for what He has promised to do. He has promised to send His Son again, and we must rest in that promise, not allowing anyone to distract us from our reliance upon God’s Word. But as we wait, we are to be busy growing in our understanding of God and in likeness to His Son. “The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:8 NLT). This seeming delay on God’s part has a purpose. For one thing, we are to take advantage of the time in order to grow spiritually. We are to use the time wisely, supplementing our faith with the character qualities of Christ Himself.

In chapter 24 of the gospel of Matthew, we have recorded Jesus' words concerning the end times. He provides the disciples with a glimpse into future things, but then tells them, "no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows" (Matthew 24:36 NLT). Then, Jesus gave the disciples a series of parables concerning these end time events and their relationship to them. He wanted them to know how they were to live while they waited for these future events to take place. In the first parable, found in chapter five, he tells of 10 bridesmaids, who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. But the bridegroom was late. "When the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep" (Matthew 25:5 NLT). Now, the problem was that five of the bridesmaids had not brought extra oil for their lamps. So, at midnight, they were all awakened by the news that the bridegroom had arrived. When they went to prepare their lamps to meet him, five found that their lamps had run out of oil. They begged the other five to lend them oil so they too could greet the bridegroom, but they were refused and told to go to the store and buy more. While they were gone, the bridegroom came and they missed him. Not only that, when they arrived at the wedding feast, the doors were locked, with them on the outside. Jesus describes the scene:

¹¹ Later, when the other five bridesmaids returned, they stood outside, calling, 'Lord! Lord! Open the door for us!'

¹² "But he called back, 'Believe me, I don't know you!'" – Matthew 25:11-12 NLT

Then Jesus ends this parable with the words: "So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return" (Matthew 25:13 NLT).

Then, Jesus tells the parable of a man with three servants.

¹⁴ "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. ¹⁵ He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip." – Matthew 25:14-15 NLT

The first servant invested his silver and turned it into a healthy profit. The second servant did the same. But the third servant buried his silver in the ground and did nothing with it. He failed to invest it at all. And Jesus states, "After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money" (Matthew 25:19 NLT). Notice His words: "After a long time." There was a lengthy delay. The first two servants used that delay to invest what they had been given and turn it into something even greater. The third servant squandered the opportunity by doing nothing. To the first two servants, the master gave the same response: "Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!" (Matthew 25:23 NLT). But the third servant, rather than give the master a return for his money, gave him excuses. "I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is

your money back” (Matthew 25:25 NLT). And the master, more than a little put out by this man’s actions and attitudes, said: “You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn’t plant and gathered crops I didn’t cultivate, why didn’t you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it” (Matthew 25:26-27 NLT). What happens next is both disturbing and enlightening.

²⁸ “Then he ordered, ‘Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. ²⁹ To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. ³⁰ Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’” – Matthew 25:28-30 NLT

This man loses everything. And the inference seems to be that this servant had never really been a faithful servant at all. The absence of his master had only revealed his true heart. The delay of his master’s return exposed unreliable, unregenerate character. And he suffered as a result.

What these two parables reveal are the character qualities of those who claim to be children of God and members of the Kingdom of God. But notice that the delay involved in both stories, either reveals the faithfulness of some or the wickedness of the others. There are those who are prepared, ready and waiting for the return of the one to come, and there are those who are lazy and lacks in their preparation, acting as if the bridegroom and the master will never show up.

Peter emphasizes that the delay of Christ’s return not only gives His people time to prepare, but it creates an opportunity for others to come to faith. The longer Jesus delays His return, the more time we have to share the gospel with others. We get extra time to grow up in our salvation, while others get the opportunity to come to salvation.

And Peter reminds his audience that they had heard these very same words from the apostle Paul in a letter he had written them. Peter admits that some of what Paul wrote was difficult to understand and that some people had tried to twist the meaning of his words, but the bottom line was that Peter viewed the writings of Paul as equal in weight and authority as the Old Testament Scriptures. So, in essence, he was telling his readers that if they didn’t want to take his word on the matter, they should at least listen to Paul.

The bottom line for Peter was spiritual growth. He wanted those to whom he was writing to be ready for the coming of the Lord. He wanted them to live as if Jesus could come back any day, and he wanted them to be ready, having made the most of the time given to them by God. So, he ends his letter with these words:

“...be on guard; then you will not be carried away by the errors of these wicked people and lose your own secure footing. Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. – 2 Peter 3:17-18 NLT

He didn't want them to get lulled into a false sense of complacency, as if Jesus was never going to come back. He wanted them to be alert to those false messages that might distract them from their true calling and become more concerned with this life than the one to come. Peter wanted them to grow. He wanted them to understand that any delay in the Lord's return was really the grace of God, allowing them more time to grow in their knowledge of Christ and their likeness to Him. The question wasn't whether Jesus was coming back. It was whether or not He would find His people ready when He did. How will He find you?