

Exhortation 2 Peter 3

Introduction

The second epistle that the Apostle Peter wrote was written just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. Not only was the era a dark hour for the nation of Israel, but it was likewise for the Jerusalem and nearby ecclesias. The persecutions of the Christians by Emperor Nero over the past decade had tested the faith of Christians right throughout the Empire, but more significantly, now that these were over, the spirit of the Patriotic Jews desiring to rebel against Roman rule over their homeland was exerting pressures specifically on these ecclesias.

Christ had prophesied that "*the love of many would wax cold*" (Matt.24:11-13) in the ecclesia around this time, and it was. The patriotic Jews steeped in the law of Moses were pressuring those in the ecclesia to "*draw back*" (Heb.10:38-39) from their Christian faith and return to their former beliefs. Be united with your people, and join the rebellion against the Roman oppressor!

Not only were the pressures from without, but inside the ecclesias right throughout Judea, and Asia, false teachers had entered within the believers and were turning many from the truth of the Gospel. In Asia Minor "*all*" (2Tim.1:15) had turned from the teachings of the Apostle Paul and followed Phygellus and Hermogenes. In Macedonia the "*mystery of iniquity*" (2Thess.2:7) was already at work, corrupting the truth and deceiving many.

Now was the time like no other, with the challenge to the truth equally strong far and wide, for the Apostle Peter to take up his Lord's challenge, and "*strengthen his brethren*" (Luke 22:32).

How do we strengthen our Brethren?

This second epistle of Peter provides three stirring exhortations for us who live in a world that scoffs at God, and therefore is ripe to be judged at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. However, as we consider this exhort let us not be fooled that the only danger from the world comes from outside the ecclesia, because equally as strong is the pressure put on our ecclesias by the world being found within its walls.

Could there be false teachers in our gatherings? Are there some of us who have lost the discipline to fight our sinful lusts? Is there pride amongst fellow believers? Do any scoff at the thought of Christ's return? Is it possible that you personally are weakening the ecclesia's faith?

The Apostle Peter was faced with exactly this in the ecclesia, and this epistle was written to combat the falling away, and to "*stir up*" (2Pet.1:13; 3:1) those who faltered. As we gather together to renew our covenant with our Heavenly Father and His Son, let us spend a few moments examining our resolve to be faithful to our Lord, and strengthen our Brethren.

Beloved, GROW...

2 Peter 1:1-11

There are many reasons that cause us not to put much effort into our personal spiritual growth, and often we can pass over its effect on our faith. There is no such thing as a stagnant faith, our faith is either living, or dying. As followers of Christ we cannot stop for a rest, and disassociate ourselves from him for a moment. If we leave him our faith is dying, if we are with him our faith is living and God is working with us.

Peter declares: *"God's power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and Godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue"* (2Peter1:3)

God has given us *"all things"* to help us in our spiritual growth. It is God's power that He gives to work in us and strengthen our will to do His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). It is God's power that encourages us further when we stand for the conscience He has created in us through His word (Romans 1:16). It is God's power that strengthens our faith when we give time to *"hearing the word of God"* (Rom.10:17). It is God's power that ensures we grow if we diligently develop our characters. *"For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren (unemployed) nor unfruitful (barren) in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus"* (2Peter 1:8)

But if we fail to grow, then we will lack the power of God's word in our lives, and are *"blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that we were purged from our old sins"* (2Pet.1:9). Not growing is a sure way to lose touch with God, and to discount the precious promises we have been given. If our faith is alive and growing, then our heart's desire will be to know our God, to understand His ways, His wisdom and His love

Peter reminds us that we will be *"partakers of divine nature"* 2Pet.1:4, and divine nature will set us free from this world of corruption and lust, and take us into the presence of God and His Son. *"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent"* (John 17:3). This is our hope! Do you long to meet God? Do you love learning about Him? Do you enjoy meditating about how he has worked in times past? Do you look for Him working in the world today? Are you confident that He is watching over you every moment of the day? Do you find peace in knowing he understands your needs? Is there comfort that he knows your innermost thoughts? Do you find strength with Him in times of trial?

Peter's exhortation is that our faith will die unless you give it a reason to live, but if it lives *"ye shall never fall"* (2Peter 1:10).

Beloved, PROVE...

2 Peter 2:1-3

The middle section of Peter's letter revolves around the tragedy of false teachers entering the ecclesias and leading believers away from the truth of the Gospel message. To such an extent were believers deceived that they were *"even denying the Lord that bought them"* (2Peter 2:1-3) with his *"precious blood"* (1Pet.1:18-19). The spirit leaves no doubt as to God's feelings towards false teachers, having destroyed them before, He will do so again (2Pet.2:4-6,9).

It might seem at times that popular charismatic teachers and religions are actually appealing to us because of the numbers that follow them. Peter assures us we should never think that false teachers are stronger than the Word of God. It isn't numbers that proves truth, it is your individual understanding of the Word of God, and of this Peter reassures us.

In the face of *"cunningly devised fables"* (2Peter 1:16) the apostle Peter affirmed he was an *"eyewitness to the majesty"* of the power that will be revealed in the coming of our Lord (2Pet.1:16). He then recounts how he personally heard the voice of God single out our Saviour saying, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (2Pet.1:17). Finally he reaffirms to all believers that the Gospel in Jesus Christ isn't a cunningly devised fable to get popularity, rather this is the *"sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that you **take heed**, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place,*

until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”(2Pet.1:19-21)

In exhorting the believers to *"take heed"* Peter meant them to make sure the word of God *"held their attention"*. The Word of God is like a candle illuminating the darkness of the world and revealing the purpose of its Creator. Focus your mind on that purpose. Be obsessive in your desire to learn of truth, proving all things and holding fast that which is in agreement with the scriptures (1Thess.5:21).

Beloved, LOOK...

2 Peter 3:8-14

The last message of Peter is clear, God will not break His promise, the Lord Jesus Christ will return to earth, and just as the political Heavens of Jerusalem were destroyed in AD70, so will be the Governments of this world at his return!

Don't ignore the Lord's warning based on Noah's generation (2Pet.3:5) and do not think for a moment that the Lord has forgotten the righteous, but rather understand that it is His mercy, giving the opportunity of salvation, that is delaying His Son's return (2Pet.3:15).

Believing this, then the challenge to us is, having come to a knowledge of the truth, and with our faith enlivened and our minds guarded, how should we be living?

It's not really a question, as the Apostle put it, it's a statement of exclamation. *"Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought ye to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire!"*RSV 2Pet.3:11-12

There is no doubt that we must be living lives that separate us from the world and show us as followers of God. We need a real commitment to improve. How do we add to our knowledge? How do we strength our faith? Where do we get the motivation to excel? The Spirit's answer...

"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."(2Pet.3:13-14)

The more we look for the day of his coming, the more we will believe it, desire it, and live for it. A belief is not merely an idea that the mind possesses, rather it is an idea that possesses the mind!

Conclusion...

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things (teachings) before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." (2Peter 3:17-18)

Bro Phil Gore

Speaking Notes

Introduction

- The 2 Epistle of Peter was written just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70
- The current Events of the age
 - Emperor Nero
 - Patriotic Jews to rebel against Rome
- In the Ecclesia, *"the love of many was waxing cold"* Matt.24:11-13
 - Heb.10:26-39 Judea
 - 2Tim.1:15 Asia Minor
 - 2Thess 2:7 Macedonia
- The Apostle Peter to *"strengthen his brethren"* Luke 22:32

How do we strengthen our Brethren?

- The Epistle of Peter provides three stirring exhortations

Beloved, GROW...

- There is no such thing as a stagnant faith, it is either living or dying.
- Reminder of the energy that enlivens us. 2Pet.1:3
- See also Php.2:13; Rom.1:16; 10:17;
- It is His power that ensures we grow 2Pet.1:8
- If we aren't adding, then we will lack the enlivening power of God, 2Pet.1:9.
- Not growing is a sure way to lose touch with God, and precious promises
- The Promises that we have received in baptism, grant us to be *"partakers of divine nature"* 2Pet.1:4; John 17:3
- Faith will die unless you give it a reason to live, but if it lives *"ye shall never fall"* 2Pet.1:10

Beloved, PROVE...

- The middle section reveals the tragedy of false teachers 2Pet.2:1-3
- God's feelings, having destroyed them before He will do so again (2Pet.2:4-6,9)
- Never think that false teachers are stronger than the Word of God (2Pet.2:9)
- The Apostle Peter was an *"eyewitness to the majesty"* (2Pet.1:16)
- He heard the voice of God single out our Saviour, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* 2Pet.1:17
- Reaffirms the Gospel in Jesus Christ is the *"sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that you take heed"* 2Pet.1:19-21
- Hold fast that which is proven to agree with the scriptures 1Thess.5:21.

Beloved, LOOK...

- God will not break His promise, the Lord Jesus Christ will return to earth, and just as the political Heavens of Jerusalem were destroyed in AD70, so will be the Governments of this world at his return!
- Don't choose to be ignorant of the Lord's warning as Noah's generation 2Pet.3:5,8
- Neither think for a moment that the Lord has forgotten the righteous. 2Pet.3:9

- That longsuffering to us has been our salvation 2Pet.3:15
- The challenge to us is how should we be living?
- Its not really a question, as the Apostle put it, it's a statement of exclamation! 2Pet.3:11-12
- How do we add to our knowledge? How do we strength our faith? Where do we get the motivation to excel? 2Pet.3:13-14
- A belief is not merely an idea that the mind possesses, rather it is an idea that possesses the mind.

Conclusion...

- 2Pet.3:17-18 *"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know there things (teachings) before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."*