

Peter's final exhortations

1 **Peter's final exhortation**

2 PETER 3:17-18

2 **What is exhortation?**

- ▶ Exhortation is not a word that we use a great deal anymore. Since we will be talking about it so much this morning, we need to make sure that we understand what it is.
 - ▶ It is language designed to incite positive behavior or to encourage
- ▶ Spiritual exhortation is given to others to encourage them to live a life that glorifies God the father and our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - ▶ It remembers that whatever glorifies the Lord is for our best good.

3 **Remembering the context**

- ▶ In most of this epistle, Peter has focused on the danger of false teachers.
- ▶ In the preceding verses, Peter has reminded us that God is independent of time and therefore His plan seldom conforms to our sense of when things should happen.
- ▶ Still, God is always faithful to keep His promises. So we are to take courage to remain faithful knowing that our Savior is coming soon and will destroy all that is temporary and bring us into His eternal presence to enjoy eternal rewards.

4 5 **Remembering the context (2)**

- ▶ Peter now concludes his epistle (letter) with two exhortations or parting words of encouragement.
- ▶ It is like a parent giving some final instructions before being parted from his or her child.
 - ▶ When I was about to leave on a trip as a teenage young man, my own mother would always give me the same two pieces of advice:
 - ▶ Don't jump out of a plane without a parachute (Jumping Jack)
 - ▶ Don't jump into a swimming pool without water (Tadpole Jim)

6 **2 Peter 3:13-18**

But according to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness resides. Therefore, dear friends, because you are waiting for these things, make every effort to be found at peace, spotless and unblemished in him. And regard the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as also our dear brother Paul wrote to you, according to the wisdom that was given to him, as he does also in all his letters, speaking in them about these things, in which there are some things hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable distort to their own destruction, as they also do the rest of the scriptures. Therefore, dear friends, because you know this beforehand, guard yourselves so that you do not lose your own safe position because you have been led away by the error of lawless persons. 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.

7 **Negative Exhortation**

- ▶ The negative exhortation—*Do not let the false teachers lead you astray in doctrine and in conduct* (3:17)
 - ▶ The heretics are unstable, 3:16
 - ▶ Some of the new converts among the readers are unstable, 2:14, 18;
 - ▶ The readers as a whole are stable, 1:12.
 - ▶ The stable readers are now admonished to beware of being led astray in doctrine and morals by the heretics and so fall from their steadfastness.

▶ *Do not listen to the heresy of the false teachers or copy their conduct. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.*

8 **Positive Exhortation**

▶ The positive exhortation—*Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (3:18)

▶ We grow in grace and knowledge as we receive and use the grace and knowledge given to us. When we use what we have the Lord will give us more.

▶ Growth in truth and righteousness is the best prophylaxis (preventive) against heresy and immorality. If we are filled with the things above us, we will not be filled with the things beneath the children of God.

9 **Security maintained by heeding warnings**

▶ Ignored warnings to us no good.

▶ Experienced mountain climbers ensure their safety by studying their climb, taking necessary precautions, and knowing their climbing partners. Paying attention to warnings does not quench confidence but is the means to it.

▶ Same for scuba diving.

▶ Peter is not putting a damper on the assurance of his readers. He knew that assurance becomes a reality by heeding warnings.

10

11 **Exhortations are based in love**

▶ Peter refers to his readers as "beloved" or as "dear friends." This is the fourth time in this chapter that he has done so (previous times are in verses 1, 8, and 14)

▶ When you are leaving the presence of a casual acquaintance, it is uncommon and would be awkward to give them any parting advice other than, "Have a nice day."

▶ But when your children are leaving and you will not see them again for a while, you often check to make sure that they have everything that they need and that you give them any words of encouragement or wisdom that you know might be helpful to them.

12 **Exhortation is a spiritual prognosis**

▶ *Seeing that you know these things before* (3:17)

▶ These words translate one Greek word (*proginōskontes*), from which comes the English word "prognosis."

▶ When a medical prognosis is made, a patient is better able to prepare himself for what is ahead and if possible, to correct himself.

▶ When a doctor says, "If you continue to eat as much as you do now, you will have serious heart problems in a few years," the patient "knows beforehand" and can therefore change his life in accord with the information he has.

13 **Two concepts of prognosis**

▶ It can mean "knowing in advance"

▶ Peter's readers already had Old Testament Scriptures, the teaching of the apostles (3:2) and what Peter had written in his first letter. Therefore, they had no excuse for falling away from the truth – any plea of ignorance would be rejected.

▶ But it also means to *know that which is of primary importance*

▶ *Peter considers that of primary importance that his readers avoid apostasy and departing from the true essentials of the Christian faith.*

14 **Avoiding apostasy and backsliding**

- ▶ In other parts of second Peter, it is clear that Peter considers false teachers to be doomed to eternal judgment.
- ▶ However, believers cannot lose their salvation which is "kept by the power of God (1 Peter 1:5).
 - ▶ But a believer can fall away from the Lord and lose eternal rewards, their testimony, and their godly influence on others.
 - ▶ This same truth is affirmed again and again in the book of Hebrews

15 **God guards true believers**

- ▶ All that Peter had written, all that he had warned them of, was so that they would be vigilant.
- ▶ Elsewhere in the New Testament we are told that the Lord will "guard" (*phylassō*) those who are his, ensuring that they will not fall away irretrievably (2 Thessalonians 3:3; Jude 24).
 - ▶ *But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.* (2 Thessalonians 3:3, KJV 1900)
 - ▶ *Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,* (Jude 24, KJV 1900)

16 **Exhortations help avoid problems**

- ▶ Peter tells them that if they forget his instructions and exhortations in this epistle, they could be "carried away by the error of lawless men."
- ▶ Carried away (*synapachthentes*; trans. "led astray" in Gal. 2:13) emphasizes a group or corporate movement.
 - ▶ False teachers are not satisfied with ambushing one or two, now and then, here and there; they want to sweep large groups of people away from the correct doctrine of Christ.
 - ▶ Those who keep company with such people are in danger of being led astray (referred to as "falling"; cf. 2 Peter 1:10; Gal. 5:4). This does not refer to losing one's salvation.
- ▶ On the other hand, those who have paid attention to the warnings, carefully heeding the prognosis, can maintain their secure position in the truth.

17 **Spiritual exhortations keep us firm and faithful**

- ▶ Peter does not want his readers to fall from their "steadfastness" or "secure position." "Secure position" translates *stērigmou* ("firm position")
 - ▶ Peter several times uses the verb *stērizei* or a similar adjective or noun to emphasize "make strong or firm; firmness" (in 2 Peter 2:14; 3:16, and the verb in 1 Peter 5:10).
- ▶ By contrast, Peter refers to those who twist the Scriptures to their own purposes and destruction as being unstable (3:16, the adjective *astēriktos*, "unstable,")

18 **Exhortations encourage us to grow**

- ▶ Peter encourages his readers to grow spiritually.
 - ▶ However, this is not just a subjective exhortation to be based on emotional or ecstatic experience.
 - ▶ It is objectively related to Peter's key word knowledge (cf. 1:2–3, 5–6, 8, 20 ["understand"]; 2:20–21 [twice in v. 21]; 3:3).
 - ▶ This is not just any knowledge; it is knowledge about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (cf. 1:1–2, 11; 2:20) which is obtained by reading the Scriptures and experiencing Christ in the dynamic of prayers.
 - ▶ The verb "grow" is a present imperative, which could be rendered "be continually growing.

19 **Spiritual growth results from intentional action**

- ▶ We don't need to make effort to grow physically up to a certain point.
 - ▶ However, to grow stronger muscles, you must take intentional action.
 - ▶ To grow spiritually, you must also be intentional.
- ▶ Specifically, we are to grow in grace
 - ▶ Grace is the desire and ability to do God's will with a joyful heart

20 **2 Peter 1:5-7**

- ▶ *And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. (2 Peter 1:5-7, KJV 1900)*

21 **Growth is a process**

- ▶ This process of spiritual growth begins by knowing Christ initially in regeneration (cf. John 17:3).
- ▶ It continues in one's deepening relationship with Him (Eph. 4:15; Phil. 3:10; 1 Peter 2:2).
- ▶ Both are necessary.
 - ▶ Without the initial knowledge there is no opportunity for growth.
 - ▶ But if there is only that initial knowledge, the struggling new believer forgets *that he has been cleansed from his past sins* (2 Peter 1:9).

22 **Vigilance requires spiritual growth.**

- ▶ If someone receives Jesus Christ but then does not continue to learn more about Him and grow in a relationship with Him, they will not remain vigilant against doctrinal error and false teachers.
- ▶ An intentional and daily drawing near to Jesus Christ through His Word fuels us and supplements us in a way that makes us able to guard our souls against heresy and compromise.

23 **Exhortation should always glorify the Lord**

- ▶ Peter affirms the oneness of the Father and the Son in a splendid doxology.
 - ▶ The One who is "our Lord" is also "our Savior." And glory, which belongs only to God (Isa. 42:8), is also the Son's (cf. 2 Peter 1:17).
 - ▶ *I am the LORD: that is my name: And my glory will I not give to another, Neither my praise to graven images. (Isaiah 42:8, KJV 1900)*
 - ▶ *For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (2 Peter 1:17, KJV 1900)*

24 **Exhortation focuses on "the main thing"**

- ▶ To Him be glory (lit., "the glory") is Peter's praise and prayer (cf. 2 Tim. 4:18).
- ▶ The glory of redemption, the glory of spiritual growth, the glory of manifesting the symphony of grace, the glory of escape from the false teachers, and the glory of His ultimate return—all glory belongs to Jesus.
- ▶ And He receives that glory both now and forever. "Forever" is literally, "*to the day of the Age*"—from the moment of the Cross, on through the days of the New Testament, throughout the history of the church, to the present hour, and throughout eternity!
- ▶ No wonder Peter concluded with the affirmative word of praise, Amen!
- ▶