

- Alright guys, by now you should know what book of the Bible we are going to teach next, but if you don't – it's 2 Peter.
 - People always ask me – how do you decide what book of the Bible to teach next?
 - Do you wait to hear from God?
 - Do you spend time in mediation, slowly and patiently waiting for the Spirit to direct you?
 - The answer is - kind of sort of, but not really and the reason for my answer is:
 - My goal is to teach the entire Counsel of God,
 - And then of course, I don't care what I teach, because all of God's Word is good!
 - So – it doesn't necessarily matter to me, where I go next.
- Having said that - I don't just close my eyes and spin the pages and wherever it lands is where I go next.
 - No - I pray and ask the Lord for guidance and direction
 - In the end - it's not that hard of a decision to make – because, as I said – I want to teach it all before I go home to be with the Lord.
 - Which brings me to a recap, to date - I have taught:
 - Genesis – Revelation – Daniel – 1 Corinthians – 2 Corinthians – Acts – Colossians – Ephesians – Galatians – Hebrews – John – Jonah – Romans – Ruth – Ezra – Nehemiah – Part of Isaiah (we stalled out during the Pandemic) – and then 1 Peter and now 2 Peter
 - So roughly – 17 books of the Bible have been taught in depth, 6 OT & 11 NT.
- There 66 Books of God's Holy Manuscript.
 - Which means – we have been through roughly 25% of the Bible.
 - We could be much further down the road than we are, but the whole point of teaching God's Word is not to see how fast you can complete it, but to extract every ounce of Spiritual Wisdom available from the text.
 - This means – we must take our time, essentially it means – Quality over Quantity – that's the theme!
 - That is a re-cap of where we've been over this past 10 plus years.
- Now having said all that, if you've ever been here for “opening day”, you know – that the introduction of any new Book of the Bible is my favorite, and you also know – I always say the same thing.
 - I love the introduction because I love the history part – studying the background and giving you the setting for context – that is one of the most enjoyable parts of teaching for me.
 - Primarily because it's the most crucial part – context is key, that's why I always bring us back to that purpose – even when we are closing out the book.
 - We must stay in line with the purpose and or context of the Book or letter.
 - Without further ado – lets venture into our 18th Book of God's Word – and

segway into 2 Peter this morning.

- First and foremost – let me say this before we begin. We must start out by asking the question: Who wrote 2 Peter?
 - Well – the obvious answer would be Peter, and that is what we will go with, but I will tell you there has been some debate over that question.
 - It started somewhere around the 3rd Century, it was then that some scholars began questioning Peter as the author, even though there is a lot of evidence to the contrary.
 - Examples of that being, references inside 2 Peter itself, which point back to 1 Peter which most scholars agree – Peter did write,
- There is also other evidence pointing to Peter as the author of 2 Peter as well, one being, in that time, it was frowned upon by the church when someone tried to write in another Apostle's name.
 - Other evidence of Peter's authorship lies in specific references from 2 Peter – which tie Peter back to the book itself.
 - References such as specific details – where Jesus predicted His own death in John 21:18 – words He spoke directly to Peter.
 - And then – Peter recounts that conversation in 2 Peter 1:14
 - There are other details tying Peter to 2 Peter as well, we won't get into all of them this morning. I would just say, if you are interested in what those might be then go and study them for yourself, but for me, regardless of what some scholars have tried to say, I believe it's very clear that Peter wrote 2 Peter and so – we will assume this to be the case.
- Now let's move on– let me give you a little more information on this letter before we begin:
 - 2 Peter is only 3 Chapters long, which means we will be doing a minimum of 2 letters or books this year. (Maybe? – who knows)
 - It's a short epistle, but regardless of its size, we must first begin any book by asking the all-important question: which is, what is the context on this letter?
 - Which includes the question: Who did Peter write it to?
 - And then – when was it written?
 - Most scholars agree – that Peter wrote this letter somewhere in or around the early part of the 2 Century, and many believe it was the last NT book to have been written – which is interesting.
 - But back to the question – Who was Peter writing to?
- Assuming Peter's reference to his former letter (2 Peter 3:1) is to 1 Peter, he seems to have sent this second epistle to the same general audience, which was an audience made up of primarily Gentile believers, but also some Jew's, and Christians living in northern Asia Minor (Modern Day Turkey) (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1).
 - This makes sense because the background of the readers and the situation they faced, fit such an audience.

- Now - this was not a "catholic" epistle, meaning, a general epistle sent originally to all Christians at large.
- Next – let's look at the DATE AND GENRE it was written to:
 - Peter's reference to his imminent departure from this life (2 Peter 1:13-15) suggests that the time of its composition may have been just before Peter suffered martyrdom.
 - Reason being - Second Peter bears some of the marks of a last will and testament (cf. 1:3-11; 2:1-3; 3:1-4) as well as marks of a letter: with two literary genres (meaning types of literature).
 - By framing a 'farewell testament' within features of an ancient letter, the author of 2 Peter created a novel form, with no real analogies either in the New Testament or ancient Jewish/Christian literature."
 - The writings of church fathers place Peter's death at A.D. 67-68 in Rome which consequently, gives us a date of composition – in or around about A.D. 67-68 – which seems most likely.
 - Early church tradition also says that Peter spent the last decade of his life in Rome.
 - John Calvin, however, argued that he probably did not live that long in Rome, since Nero began persecuting Christians in Rome in A.D. 64.
 - Which led Dr. Kenneth Hanna (Professor at DTS) dating the writing to somewhere around A.D. 65.
- Second Peter is known as the swan song of Peter, just as 2 Timothy is the swan song of Paul, and there are striking similarities between the two books.
 - For example - both epistles put up a warning sign along the pilgrim pathway that the church is traveling so that they could identify the awful apostasy that was on the way at some point in time – (a time which has now arrived in our day and age).
 - What was then like a cloud the size of a man's hand today envelops the sky and produces a storm of hurricane proportions.
 - Peter warns of heresy among teachers and Paul warns of heresy among the laity."
- Next to The PURPOSE of 2 Peter:
 - 'The purpose of 2 Peter is to call Christians to spiritual growth so that they can combat apostasy as they look forward to the Lord's return.'
 - "Second Peter is best understood as a document of polemical or hostile defense and moral exhortation."
 - Let me say, Peter's purpose in this letter is so relevant to today's church - it's somewhat scary.
 - Scary – because it lines up exactly with where Christians are today.
 - And to be honest – 2 Peter's purpose – has grown to become the center piece of my ministry: Maturity & Spiritual Growth after Salvation!
 - All this started for me over 20 years ago when I began to look around and examine the church, my Christian brothers and sisters, the result of which led me down a

path of discouragement.

- I was confused – and didn't know why Christians conducted themselves the way they did.
 - I mean after all – I thought they were saved, so what's the deal?
- What's the deal is the next step after Salvation, which is called Sanctification, and because the church abandoned this step, we have ended up with immature Christians.
- People who have been saved for 10-15 and 20 plus years – seemingly clueless, and I couldn't understand why, until one day God revealed it to me.
 - It all revolved around a lack of maturity.
 - Really – even more than that, in some cases – even a lack of conviction, which really bothered me.
- You know - it's one thing to mess up and sin (we all do that) – but it's another to have no conviction about it.
 - And today – I see this all time, so much so it seems to be an epidemic.
 - Now – this may sound like a judgmental statement to you, and I understand that, after all who am I to say whether someone is convicted or not, but before your mind goes there, let me start by saying, I am no one! And someone's else's conviction is not my responsibility.
 - But having said that, it is my concern, wholistically, as a Bible Teacher and Pastor, especially – when I am trying to work all this out.
- When I'm trying to apply reasoning alongside my faith, and when I see so much confusion surrounding the lives of believers, it causes me to ask why?
 - It's not me judging someone – It has nothing to do with an individual, but rather everything thing to do with me and my journey, and my pursuit of helping Christian men and women live out their Christian lives – as close to God's Will as they can, and to do that in the most God Glorifying way!
 - And of course, this has all been precipitated by the fact – that I cannot let well enough alone,
 - So, I study – and I dig – I continue to study and dig, and pray about the answers
- I began my quest – by asking myself the same question, repeatedly, How can someone attend church for years, but be so clueless about God?
 - About the detail of who He is.
 - His Character – and what He expects from us.
 - Then, of course, I had to ask myself the age-old question: What's my purpose on this earth? By the way – I start this line of questioning by focusing on me first by asking myself these questions, every week as I prepare. I can assure you that I am the first person convicted.
 - And sometimes, that conviction is so strong – I am almost embarrassed to get up here and teach it to you!
 - It's in those moments that I must remind myself, that as I study, God's Word is

supposed to convict me just like it convicts everyone else

- Just FYI, being convicted is one of the ways I know I am on track.
- My point is, spiritual growth and maturity in our faith is front and center for me primarily because, we cannot begin to live out Gods Will in our life, until we begin to travel down the road of Sanctification.
 - It really bothers me to see so many Christian people struggling in life, especially
 - With their faith
 - With their marriage
 - With their children
 - Many times – without any sort of moral compass or Personal Constitution – that should be grounded in a fundamental understanding of God, by way of His Word,
 - And so, Faith Bible Fellowship – was founded on the principal/concept and understanding. That we will teach the manuscript.
 - Because God's Word is what convicts people, and conviction is the first step in the “Salvation Process.”
 - And once conviction sets in - we will pray and ask God to do exactly what He said He would do. Which was what?
- That when someone is convicted, and they repent, He will be faithful and just to forgive them, and save them, and give them a new heart – one that will guide them in the paths of righteousness,
 - From there, once they are saved, we will continue to teach you His Word, so that, you can begin the process of “Sanctification.”
 - Which is simply the process of growing and become more like Jesus and less like the world!
 - Once that process begins to take hold in your life, it will cause you to align with Gods will, and when you get in alignment with His will, that’s where the magic happens in the life of a believer!
 - That’s where (even though) – the “storms of life” may be raging you will tap into the peace that Paul speaks of – which is:
 - That Philipians Peace – a “peace that surpasses all understanding”
 - Once you walk around with that type of Peace encompassing your life it becomes much like a Glow, and it will be evident to everyone around you, and that’s what causes you to become an instrument that God uses to draw other men and women to Himself!
 - It is also what causes you to become content and satisfied with yourself, and your life.
 - Which by the way is simply a derivative of understanding your purpose on this earth.
- And so – with all this said, let’s dive into 2 Peter 1:1-11. My NASB entitles this section, Growth in Christian Virtue:

2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

2 Peter 1:3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

2 Peter 1:4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

2 Peter 1:5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge,

2 Peter 1:6 and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *yourself*-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness,

2 Peter 1:7 and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love.

2 Peter 1:8 For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:9 For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind *or* short-sighted, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins.

2 Peter 1:10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

2 Peter 1:11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

- Now, this is a pretty lengthy section of scripture for us to begin with, but it has to be this way because its one long dissertation, and therefore, the scripture demands we read it all together.
 - So, let's see how far we get with it, because there is a whole lot being said here.
 - First – before I start, I want to remind you of something.
 - 2 Peter – along with all the letters in the Bible, were written by certain men of God, to a certain group of people.
 - People in a church – a church they founded or had something to do with!
 - Certainly, a group of people they cared about.
 - These letters were written, because it had been brought to these men's attention that a church or group of believers were doing something they weren't supposed to do.
 - Or they had allowed something inside their church that they shouldn't have allowed.

- Or they were being delivered a warning about an approaching issue of some sort.
- I want you to think about what I am saying here: Our Bible is nothing more than a compilation of letters.
 - And in those letters, these people would receive instruction, exhortation, rebuke, and or admonishment (urging) them to quit doing something.
 - Or to quit allowing something inside their fellowship.
 - Or to begin doing something – something they should have been doing in the first place.
 - And without these letters, these folks were simply flapping in the wind somewhat.
 - The gathering of those letters, and the placing of them, into one Book, which created the Canon of Scripture, was a supernatural event - One that God orchestrated perfectly.
 - The entire Canonized book of the Bible, Old Testament through the New Testament, took roughly 2000 years to complete.
 - Obviously, only God could have pulled something like that together.
- The New Testament – consisting of 27 Books or letters / epistles, was written over a span of about 70 years or so,
 - Starting with Paul's letters, written in the 40's and 50 AD, to 2 Peter, the book we are studying today, which was completed around 120 AD.
 - At that time the New Testament could not be gathered into one volume until the codex book format was created.
 - Codex format meaning: A volume in book form, of manuscripts of ancient text.
 - Taking the original scrolls – from one long scroll format, and copying it, then dividing it up into books or letters.
 - This process was much like binding a book together!
 - Anyways, I say all this to say – these letters we study in the Bible set the standard by which we are to live. The dos and the don'ts if you will.
 - I wanted to bring all this to your attention because sometimes, I don't think most Christians understand how we got our Bible.
 - They think we just went down to Lifeway Bookstore and there it was.
 - Your Bible is the most fascinating book of antiquity that has ever been created.
- Think about it, as I said - The Old Testament & New Testament combined took over 2000 years to complete, and then somehow, it was gathered back to gather.
 - (Which was) – a feat – in and of itself, because Satan tried to destroy it at every turn.
 - But God preserved it until man was able to collect it all, and then one day, canonized it – which means to declare each book written by Saint.
- In other words, men would read these letters and books and decide if the person who wrote it – was God's chosen man (A Saint), or not.

- And then – and only then - would it be voted on – to be included in the Book we have today – the one we call the Bible.
- This doesn't have a lot to do with today's teaching of 2 Peter, but for some reason I felt compelled to tell you all this!
- When we read our Bible, we aren't just reading another book. We are reading the Words of God Himself.
 - And if you study the history of God's Holy Manuscript, you will discover that had it not been but for a supernatural act of God, we would not have a Bible!
 - Study it sometime and you will be amazed!
- Anyways, back to 2 Peter:
 - Verse 1 starts out like many of, if not all, of Paul's letters, let's read it again:

2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

- To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:
 - Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ:
 - Believe or not – Peter is saying a whole lot here when he identifies Himself as a “bond-servant.”
 - We have talked about this many times through-out the years, but let's talk about it again. A Bond-Servant – the Greek word is “Doulos.”
 - A bond-servant – also known as a bond slave – is someone who belongs to another person, and that slave has no ownership rights of their own!
- Now, what's ironic is a doulos “bond-slave” is used in the way that denotes the highest dignity in the NT, namely, of believers who willingly choose to live under Christ's authority as one His devoted followers.
 - The reason this type of slave receives the highest dignity is because
 - A bond servant was a slave who had earned their freedom, but choose to stay a slave to the master
 - That is the sense of who Peter and Paul were, and guess what? We too are bond servants!
 - If you are saved, you are a bond-servant of Jesus Christ.
 - You are a slave – of the God most High.
 - The question is, as far as slaves go, how are you doing with that?
 - Do you even view yourself this way?
 - Do you understand what this means?
 - That your life – is not your own?
 - That you have been bought with a price?

- Or do you view yourself in the good ole American christianity way, where you are the center of attention.
 - Where you the center of God's Universe!
 - Where your wants and desires on this planet are the most important thing.
 - And that's not only to you but to God as well!
- Much different way of looking at things,
 - Don't you think?
- If we are slaves to the God most high, then guess what? We must act like it!
 - We must act like a slave, think like a slave, react like a slave, see ourselves in the way slaves would have seen themselves.
 - Which was not and is not, the center of all things, but rather through the lens of a servant, on bended knee as we honor and revere the God of Creation!
 - Unfortunately, in the Church of today, as well as the society of today, this is simply not the case!
 - Everything around us – screams me, me, me!
 - Customer service is key, and the center of customer service is the customer – us!
 - Which means, if they put pickles on our hamburger, when I clearly told them not to, then O my word – Heaven help us!
- I want to challenge you to do something this week. As you roam about the country over the next 5-6 days, think about what I am saying. Look around you, at everything you do and say, and see if you can identify what I am trying to convey.
 - Even the most humble and non-selfish of us, are self-centered at the core!
 - Large in part – because that is exactly how our society is set up, which is a result of Capitalism. Capitalism demands it!
- I'll digress on this point and move on. Next, in the second half of verse 1 – Peter says something interesting. At least something I think is interesting. He says:

2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

- Interesting how Peter slips that in there. It's his way of saying, If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, if you have the same faith we do, then you are, you should be – you will do etc. so on, and so forth.
 - In other words, if you are declaring yourself to be a believer, but you are living another life, another set of values or morals or whatever it is, you may want to check yourself, because you and I may not be working for the same boss!
 - Interesting – how Peter slips that in, it's as if he doesn't want to offend someone, at least not right out the gate. So, he softly and subtly says: If you have received the same faith we have, then guess what? You will act like we do!

- So, believe what we say, and follow our commands.
- Once again, we must ask ourselves the question, Do we, by our behavior, run the risk of anyone mistaking us for Christ followers.
 - In other words – if we couldn't tell someone we were Christ followers – we couldn't speak, then would anyone ever say, I know, (by their behavior and actions) they must be a Christian.
 - It's just a thought – something to ponder, but I think a good one.
 - Remove our ability to speak and then see how we are viewed by the world around us!
- Moving on, verse 2 – and this is where we will close.

2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

- Once again, we see a blessing of sorts being pronounced on this group, which is just an extension of Peter and Paul's prayer.
 - Paul always prays for wisdom for the people,
 - Notice – Peter doesn't say, may God bless you so that you may be healthy or wealthy.
 - He doesn't even pray for what they may be going through
 - Not at all – He prays for their wisdom, but it's not just any ole wisdom. It's not wisdom in the ways of the world. It's not wisdom as it relates to wealth or health.
 - No! It's wisdom in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.
- Now what exactly does that mean, if we aren't careful, we will just blow right by this but we shouldn't, because in this statement lies the keys to so many things.
 - First, in this statement lies the key to your salvation.
 - You cannot be saved unless you know Him. Specifically, you know and understand what He did for you!
 - And then secondly, you cannot mature unless you know Him.
 - And what's interesting is, one of these is quick – it comes by way of the Revelation of God – in a moment.
 - It's that moment, when you hear God's Word, i.e. you hear His voice through His Word, and then you are convicted about your sin, at which time, you respond in the affirmative with repentance, salvation then ensues!
 - From there, we then move into the next phase - which is maturity, and maturity does not arrive in any other form then through a deeper understanding of God!
 - Specifically, through knowledge as it relates to God and Jesus Christ. I am going to touch more on this next week, so I don't want to belabor the point this morning.
 - Only to say this – Peter and Paul both pray the exact same thing for the people over

and over again, and by extension the same prayer applies to you and I.

- Their prayer is always the same - that you and I may increase in the knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus Christ!
- But why? Because in that knowledge lies the key to your peace, your gratitude, your thankfulness, your attitude, and ultimately your contentment!
- Now - I'm going to stop here this morning because I really want to spend more time on this concept. More time than we have on our introduction day of a new book!
 - But do me a favor:
 - Go do a word study this week and see how many times the prayer for knowledge and wisdom is prayed for the people!
 - Also, see if you can find, anywhere in scriptures, where the types of prayers that we often pray are prayed by these men of God!
 - Just think about how you pray, and think about how preachers and other Christian brothers and sisters pray, and see if you can find those prayers anywhere in scripture!
 - I think you will be stunned at what you discover! Amen Amen.

- Good morning, everyone – and welcome back to our 2nd teaching of 2 Peter.
 - Last week was our introduction week, where we set the stage for the entire letter, and just in case you weren't here last week, I would like to touch on the introduction one more time.
 - At a high level, so that we can remain in context as we move forward. I won't spend a lot of time on this, but just run through it real quick, and of course - as usual – we started the introduction:
 - By identifying, who wrote 2 Peter.
- As I said last week – in my opinion and through my studies – Peter is the one who wrote 2 Peter – even though some have debated this question.
- Next we answered the question – when was it written – and how does it fall chronologically in the line of New Testament books written?
 - It was believed to be written by Peter – while he was staying in Rome
 - Somewhere between the early part of the 2nd Century
 - The date range being somewhere between – A.D. 67-68.
 - Most scholars agree it was the last letter written in the New Testament.
 - From here we need to ask ourselves – maybe the most important question of all, which is – who was Peter writing the letter to?
 - He was writing it to (primarily) – Gentile believer's – but also some Jews and other Christians living in or around Asia Minor – also known as Modern day turkey.
 - Then finally, what was the intent of the letter?
 - And that question – can be somewhat confusing.
- Because as with all letters or books of the Bible – they have multiple points they accomplish – But having said that they almost always begin with a main intent or objective.
 - And 2 Peter's main objective, is to encourage this group of believers to press on to Spiritual Maturity.
 - And as I said last week – I am not sure there is a more important topic facing our Christian society today than that of Spiritual Maturity.
 - What's interesting is even though Peter wrote 2 Peter with this particular group in mind:
 - He had no idea how God would use his writings 2000 years later – or for that matter how imperative that topic would become 2000 years later.
 - And this fact, once again highlights God's Sovereignty along with His plan for mankind.
 - Anyways, there's a little background on the 2 Peter – so let's press on...
- Back to our teaching of 2 Peter, last week we only completed 2 verses and I would like to re-read those verses along with verses 3&4 – as we segway back into today's teaching.
 - And here is what Peter wrote – one more time, 2 Peter 1:1-4

2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

2 Peter 1:3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

2 Peter 1:4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

- Now - as I stated last week, there is a whole lot being said here and we are not going to re-hash all of it.
 - But I did want to hone in on verse 2 – then tie it into verses 3&4.
 - Follow with me – one more time.

2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

- This statement is a recurring statement – one made by Paul and now by Peter as well.
 - And it often shows up as a prayer, where Paul will say – for example,
 - My prayer is that you will increase in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,
 - Or – where he says, may your knowledge increase as it relates to the Will of God.
- I want to encourage you to get a Bible highlighter – and keep it with you – And every time you see anyone in scripture make that statement, or include it in a prayer – make note of it.
 - I have not done (what I would call) an exhaustive study of this statement or prayer.
 - But I will tell you I would be willing to bet it might be the most common prayer in scripture.
 - But why?
 - Because of what Peter just said in verses 3&4. Listen to it one more time:

2 Peter 1:3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

2 Peter 1:4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature,

having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

- There is a cause-and-effect process happening here:
 - Knowledge is the key.
 - That's if it is received and accepted – it is the key to changing everything in your life.
 - Think about it, the more knowledge I have of anything, or any topic the more likely I will master that topic.
 - And why is that the case?
 - Because – knowledge truly is power.
 - But only if you listen, learn, heed, and apply it.
 - It's useless outside of that process.
 - And so – everything begins and ends with knowledge.
 - And that's why the Apostles prayed this prayer for the people.
 - Because they knew the more you learn about God the more likely it is you will mature.
 - Wisdom & Knowledge coupled with application are the keys.
 - And unfortunately the Church has abandoned this the mechanism that increases knowledge:
 - Which is the exegetical teaching of God's Word, rightly dividing it – in context.
- We have however, done a fantastic job of coming up with a myriad of creative ways to introduce people to the Gospel (to lead people to Christ).
 - But from there, you're "kind of" on your own! And why is this the case?
 - Because telling people about Jesus is easy, it's real easy.
 - But maturing to a place where your life tells people about Jesus, it is difficult!
 - There is simply no short cut through the process of Spiritual Maturity:
 - "Sanctification" – it requires study – study – study and more study.
 - And as I said - it isn't quick! It takes a lot of time!
- Last week, I left you with a challenge – one that probably won't make me very popular – at least to some, but that's okay. I'm pretty much use to it by now.
 - The challenge was for you to think about how you pray – what you pray for – and then see if you can find those types of prayers in scripture.
- Now I got on this topic a few years ago as I was studying the scriptures I noticed prayers in the Bible didn't seem to be anything like the prayers we have been taught to pray.
 - So this morning, I want to do something – something I have never done before.
 - And that is I want to spend the rest of our time reading through some prayers – both from the Old Testament and the New Testament – and I want to see, if

you can find (what we will call), the common theme!

- And I would like to begin our review of prayers with the OT.
- And I am going to read from an article written by an organization called “Open the Bible!”
- Let me say I have studied their commentary thoroughly, and find them to be a trustworthy source.
- So – let's delve into some prayers of the Bible, beginning with the OT, and remember to compare what they pray to what we pray – and as I said earlier also look for the common theme in these prayers!
- Prayers of the Old Testament
- 1. *Numbers 6:24–26* – Aaron’s Priestly Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

- Ever since creation, God has wanted His people to enjoy His blessing (Genesis 1:28).
 - Sin brought the curse into the world, but God promised to bless the whole world through Abraham’s seed, a promise fully realized in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3).
 - When we pray this blessing for ourselves or others, we ask God to fulfill His purposes in blessing His people with His peace and presence.
- 2. Psalm 19 – David’s Prayer in Response to God’s Glorious Self-Revelation

Keep back your servant also from willful sins.

Let them not have dominion over me.

Then I will be upright.

I will be blameless and innocent

of great transgression.

Let the words of my mouth and

the meditation of my heart

be acceptable in your sight,

Lord, my rock, and my redeemer. (verses 13–14)

- The first section of Psalm 19 (verses 1–6) praises God for revealing Himself in creation. “The heavens declare the glory of God” (verse 1).
 - The second section praises God for revealing Himself in His Word, explaining that God’s Word revives the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes, and is greater than gold and sweeter than honey (verses 7–11).
 - David closes the Psalm in a surprising way: a prayer for protection against sin.
 - Just like nothing is hidden from the heat and light of the sun (verse 6), the Word of

God shines light that exposes the dark corners of our souls (verses 7–11).

- David pleads for God to help him to live a God-honoring life.
- 3. Psalm 23 – David’s Prayer for Comfort, Peace, and Trust

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. ([verses 4–6](#))

- Praying Psalm 23, one of the most beloved portions of Scripture, will comfort your heart and instill confidence in our Good Shepherd as you meditate on His gracious dealings in every area of your life.
- 4. Psalm 25 – David’s Prayer for Help, Guidance, and Forgiveness

Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long. ([verses 4–5](#))

- We don’t know what troubling situation drove David to pen Psalm 25.
 - We do know it involved his enemies, a need for God’s guidance, and sin in his life
- 5. Psalm 37 – David’s Prayer for When the Wicked Prosper

Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. ([verses 1–4](#))

- Psalm 37 presents commands “Fret not yourself because of evil doers” (verse 1).
 - “Trust in the Lord and do good” (verse 3),
 - and “Delight yourself in the Lord” (verse 4)
 - and also provides the results of following the commands: “fret not yourself” because the wicked will “soon fade like the grass” (verse 2),
 - “Delight yourself in the Lord” and “he will give you the desires of your heart” (verse 4).
 - The Psalm repeatedly contrasts the fate of the righteous (they shall inherit the land) with that of the wicked (they will be no more).
 - Martyn Lloyd-Jones pointed to this Psalm as a key reason why he did not fear Hitler

during World War II.

- Lloyd-Jones knew that even as a wicked man spread himself like a green laurel tree, he would pass away and be no more (verses 35–36).
- 6. Psalm 42–43 – A Prayer for Hope During a Dry Season
 - If you have ever felt depressed, longing for better days when God seemed so close, this Psalm is for you.
 - The Psalmist cries out in a desert land thirsty for God (verses 1–2).
 - He is far from Jerusalem, hearing his enemies cry out “Where is your God?” (verse 3, 10),
 - and remembering the good times he had experienced with the people of God (verse 4).
 - How does the Psalmist keep from despair? By preaching this key refrain to himself:

**Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my salvation and my God. (42:5–6, 11; 43:5)**

- If you feel like you’re spiritually dying of thirst, take heart.
 - There is ALWAYS hope in God, our salvation.
 - When you feel depressed, preach that to yourself.
 - And cry out to God to satisfy your famished soul.
- 7. Psalm 51 – David’s Prayer for Mercy from a Broken and Sinful Heart

**Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! (verses 1–2)**

- David prayed this prayer after the prophet Nathan confronted him about his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah.
 - (Read 2 Samuel 11–12.)
 - David knew that he sinned first against God.
 - “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight” (4), and casts himself on the mercy of God for mercy and a clean heart.

**Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.
(verses 10, 12)**

- 8. Psalm 77 – Asaph’s Lament for the Day of Trouble
 - Asaph (A-saf) opens this Psalm crying aloud to God (1).
 - “In the day of my trouble I will seek the Lord...my soul refuses to be comforted” (2).
 - Asaph (A-saf) then confesses the depth of his anguish: “I am so troubled that I cannot speak” (4).
 - Has God removed His favor, abandoned His promises, and shut up His compassion? Asaph (A-saf) wonders (7–9).
 - The turning point for Asaph comes when he takes his eyes off of his situation and sets them on the glorious works of God in the past:

I will remember the deeds of the Lord, yes, I will remember your wonders of old.
(verse 11)

- Asaph brought to mind God’s glorious work in redeeming His people from slavery in Egypt, parting the Red Sea and caring for His people in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land.
 - Often during bouts with great anxiety, our heart can’t stop meditating on our anxieties.
 - What we need is a fresh perspective, a reason to worship God instead of question His goodness.
 - When you battle troubling situations, look to God’s mighty works in the past, don’t just focus on your little world.
 - Look especially to the death and resurrection of Jesus, who is a new and better Moses leading the redemption of God’s children from slavery to sin to the Promised Land of heaven (see Hebrews 3:1–6).
- 9. Proverbs 30:7–9 – Agur’s (A-gur) Prayer for Godliness and Contentment

Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, “Who is the Lord?” or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.

- Agur’s (A-gur) prayer—the only prayer in the book of Proverbs—is easy to miss, but packs great wisdom in only three verses.
 - Agur prays with death in mind (“deny them not to me before I die”), asking God to clear his path of any real or potential hindrance to godliness (falsehood, lying, riches, poverty) and asks for God to meet his daily needs (“feed me with the food that is needful for me”).
 - We benefit from contemplating Agur’s petitions as well as his heart: he truly desires a life of holiness that honors the name of his God.

- 10. 1 Kings 3:3–9 – Solomon’s Prayer for Wisdom
 - Early in King Solomon’s reign, God appeared to him in a dream, saying “Ask what I shall give you.” What an offer!
 - Solomon’s response reflected a heart that both knew God’s grace to his father, David, and his own desperate need:

And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people? (verses 7-9)

- The result? “It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. And God said to him,

‘Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you’” (1 Kings 3:10–12).

- Like Solomon, we can pray for wisdom, expectant of an answer, for as

James 1:5 “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.”

- Take that promise to the bank!
- 11. 1 Chronicles 4:10 – Jabez’s Prayer for Blessing and Protection

Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, “Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain!” And God granted what he asked.

- The Prayer of Jabez has stirred controversy since some use it in a name-it-claim it way that aligns with the unbiblical prosperity gospel.
 - As a result, many dismiss it altogether.
 - But to dismiss it is to dismiss a prayer God wanted us to have.

- The key to praying the Prayer of Jabez is understanding its context when praying.
 - The books of Chronicles were written after Israel had returned from exile in Babylon.
 - The books' purpose was to encourage God's people that He had not abandoned them nor His promises to them.
- Thus, Jabez and his prayer reminded God's people of His grace and blessing to His people, encouraging them to believe and pray in a similar fashion.
- We pray the Prayer of Jabez when we pray not according to our fleshly desires, but rather for His purposes and glory.
 - Like all prayer, God won't always answer in the way we want.
 - We often think of blessing as the addition of material goods, whereas God may bless us by subtracting material goods to add more of Himself, the greatest blessing (Philippians 4:11-13).
- 12. 2 Chronicles 20:6-12 – Jehoshaphat's Prayer of Faith in Crisis
 - With the impending invasion of the enemy, King Jehoshaphat called upon the people of Judah to seek God.
 - Then in front of the great assembly, Jehoshaphat prayed, reminding God of His character and His promises to give Israel the land they inhabited:

“O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” (verse 12)

- God responded, “Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's” (verse 15).
 - Filled with joy at this response, the people of God worshipped by singing loudly (verses 18, 19, 22).
 - Then God gave the victory.
 - When we feel trapped in darkness, look to God in faith and ask Him to act.
 - Living by faith is like following a rope that leads us out of the darkness.
- Now – let's move to prayers in the New Testament!
- 13. Matthew 6:9-13 – Jesus's Model Prayer for His Disciples (the Lord's Prayer)

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

- In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus shares a Masterclass on prayer and the Christian life in just 52 words.
 - J.I. Packer even says of the Lord's Prayer, "What it means to be a Christian is nowhere clearer than here."
 - The Lord's Prayer can also help us overcome many of our struggles in prayer.
- 14. John 17 – Jesus's High Priestly Prayer

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. ([verses 20–24](#))

- Jesus' High Priestly Prayer comes right before His arrest and shows us the priorities on His heart as He anticipated the cross.
 - He prayed for Himself (1–5), His disciples (6–19), and future generations of believers (20–26).
 - Key petitions include "Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you" (verse 1),
 - "sanctify [my disciples] in the truth" (verse 17),
 - and that they "may be one" (verses 11, 22, 23).
- 15. Luke 23:34 – Jesus's Cry for the Forgiveness of His Executioners from the Cross

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

- Many in our world say, "hate your enemies and destroy their lives."
 - Jesus says, "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).
 - He models this in His dying moments as He petitions God to forgive His executioners.
 - Moments later, after the death of Jesus, the earth shook.
 - The Gospel of Matthew records:

"When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God!'" ([Matthew 27:54](#)).

- God the Father opened the eyes of the centurion and others to see the identity of Christ, thus showing how God answered Jesus's prayer.
 - Who can you ask God to forgive?
- Prayers of the Apostle Paul
- 16. Ephesians 1:15–23 – Paul's Prayer for a Deeper Experience of the Gospel

I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might. ([verses 16–19](#))

- The context helps us understand how this prayer functions in Ephesians.
 - Ephesians 1:3-14 is a glorious unpacking of so many benefits that we enjoy in Christ: every spiritual blessing, beginning with election from before the foundation of the world, adoption into God's family, forgiveness of sins, and the seal of the Holy Spirit.
 - The prayer of 1:15–23 is simply to connect the Ephesians' head knowledge of those glorious truths with their heart knowledge, their everyday life experience.
 - In verses 17–18, it says Paul wants them to have a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ and to have the eyes of their hearts enlightened to know three specific things in their everyday lives:
 - “what is the hope to which he has called you”, “what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints”, “what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe”
- 17. Ephesians 3:14–21 – Paul's Prayer for Increasing Strength and Fullness

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ([verses 14–19](#))

- John Stott provides a helpful summary of the four key petitions of this prayer:
 - “[Paul’s] prayer is like a staircase by which he ascends higher and higher in his aspiration for them... [It] has four steps whose keywords are ‘strength’ (that they might be strengthened by Christ’s indwelling through the Spirit), secondly ‘love’

(that they might be rooted and grounded in love), thirdly ‘knowledge’ (that they might know Christ’s love in all its dimensions, although it is beyond knowledge), and fourthly ‘fullness’ (that they might be filled up to the very fullness of God).”²

- Each of the four key petitions is something we need more of in our lives, and is something we can ask God for.
- After asking God for these things to be true in the lives of the Ephesian church, Paul ends his prayer in praise:

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (verses 20–21)

- 18. Romans 11:33–36 – Paul’s Doxology Extolling the Riches, Wisdom, and Knowledge of God
 - Romans 1–11 is regarded by many as the most detailed and glorious explanation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - Before transitioning to a practical application of the gospel in Romans 12–16, the apostle Paul ends his explanation of the gospel with a glorious doxology:

**Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!
 “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”
 “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?”
 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.**

- My soul soars when I read this passage—there is no one like our God!
 - I love how verse 36 answers all of life’s biggest questions in twelve short words—For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things:
 - *Where did we come from?* God is the Maker of all things (‘from Him’).
 - *What holds the universe together?* God is the Sustainer of all things (‘through Him’).
 - *What is the purpose of life?* God is the Goal of all things (‘to Him’).
 - He alone deserves the glory forever!
- 19. Romans 15:13 – Paul’s Prayer for Joy, Peace, and Hope

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

- This short prayer of the apostle Paul is rich. We learn that the fountain of joy and peace

is our God of hope.

- This God of hope is able to give us not a little joy and peace, but all joy and peace.
- And the result of filling us with peace and joy in believing is that we abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - One gentleman said – “As my mother battled the cancer that eventually took her life, she meditated on this verse, writing it on the whiteboard of her hospital room to anchor her soul in our God of hope. Her hope has been realized, and she now enjoys all joy and peace in God’s presence. In Christ, we await the same glorious future.”
- 20. Colossians 1:9–12 – Paul’s Prayer for Spiritual Wisdom and Understanding

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

- Dr. David Garland commented on this passage in the *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*:
 - “Paul describes four elements of a life that is worthy of and fully pleasing to the Lord: bearing fruit, growing in knowledge of God, being strengthened for endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks.
 - These fundamentals will fend off the harmful pressures from false teachers.”
 - Pray these petitions to ground yourself in Christ and root yourself in sound doctrine.
- 21. Philippians 1:9-11 – Paul’s Prayer for Love, Knowledge, and Discernment

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

- If you’ve ever wondered how to pray and live in confusing situations filled with divisions and relational tensions, Philippians 1:9–11 gives us an answer.
 - Paul wants the Philippians to grow in love, and for their love “to abound more and more.”
 - This love is to be accompanied by knowledge and all discernment.
 - We need to know God and His ways.
 - We also need to discern right from wrong and wisdom from folly when faced

with challenging situations.

- When God equips us with love, knowledge, and discernment, we will be “pure and blameless for the day of Christ” and “filled with the fruit of righteousness”—two glorious outcomes!
- 22. 2 Thessalonians 3:1–2 – Paul’s Prayer for Gospel Advance

Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.

- If you find yourself perpetually discouraged as you think about the wicked, go on the offensive by praying for the word of the Lord to speed ahead and be honored in your life, your family, your church, your community, and among evil doers.
 - The word of God sped ahead in Paul’s life, transforming him from a violent persecutor to a gospel preacher, and sped ahead in the Thessalonian church who formerly had worshipped idols (1 Thessalonians 1:9, 2:13).
 - He can do it again!
 - Also pray on the defensive, that believers and ministry leaders would be “delivered from wicked and evil men” (verse 2) so they can continue to proclaim the gospel without hindrance.
- Other Prayers from the New Testament
- 23. Acts 4:24–30 – A Prayer for Boldness in Sharing the Gospel of Jesus
 - After preaching Jesus as the risen Messiah, Peter and John were apprehended by authorities who “charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus” (Acts 4:18).
 - After their release, they gathered with their friends and prayed together. What they asked for—and didn’t ask for—might surprise you:

Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit [in Psalm 2], ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’ — for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness... (Acts 4:24–29)

- Instead of asking for freedom from continued persecution, they prayed for boldness in

sharing the gospel (see also Ephesians 6:18–20).

- God responded immediately to their prayer, “And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness” (verse 31).
- 24. Jude 24–25 – A Doxology Praising God for His Ability to Keep Us from Stumbling

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

- Jude opens his short epistle basically saying, “This isn’t what I wanted to write.”
 - In verse 3 he explains, “I was very eager to write to you about *our common salvation*, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”
 - Internal and external threats attacked the church and lured her toward ungodliness.
 - Two key commands of the book are to “contend for the faith” (3) and “keep yourselves in the love of God” (21)—a difficult task!
- Jude closes his short epistle in praise.
 - While we labor to keep ourselves in the love of God and free from stumbling into sin, God is able to keep us.
 - As Charles Spurgeon said, “You can never make yourself faultless, but Christ can. He wants to do it: He has opened a fountain for sin and for uncleanness: wash and be clean.”³
 - As you persevere in following Jesus, ask God to keep you.
 - Ask Him to present you blameless before His presence with great joy. He is able!
- And then finally – we will close with Rev. 22:20
- 25. Revelation 22:20 – The Prayer to End All Prayers

“Come, Lord Jesus!”

- There’s no better way to end this list than to share the prayer the Bible ends with: “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20).
 - It’s common to hear cries like “*End Injustice!*” “*End Trafficking!*” “*End Racism!*”.
 - And we as believers should agree whole-heartedly with these cries.
 - And yet, praying “Come, Lord Jesus!” raises the bar as high as possible.
 - It includes those cries and several more that are much greater: “*End sin!*” “*End all suffering!*” “*End death!*”

- Praying “Come, Lord Jesus!” asks God to end everything that makes the world broken and asks Him to make all things new.
- It’s the prayer to end all prayers because when Jesus returns, our faith will turn to sight and prayer will no longer be necessary since we will enjoy the presence of our God forever (Revelation 21:3–8).
- These are just a few prayers I pulled out from a search, but as you can see – they looking nothing like – the prayers most of us have been taught to pray.
 - Primarily because at the center of our prayers is always us or the people we love and or care about.
 - Example being –
 - Lord Heal this person
 - Fix this problem
 - Help me out – help them out
 - Generally, for reasons unrelated to God’s Will, but rather, so that I can – do away with some worldly issue or for my betterment here on this planet!
- Now, before I began reading those prayers I said I wanted to see if you could pick out the common theme?
 - And what was it?
 - It's really pretty simple
 - Whatever God does for us, it's for His Glory
 - Which means – it was all about Him and not about them, or us
 - And this makes sense, especially – when Paul and Peter call themselves bond-slaves.
 - In the world of slavery, slaves were the doers – not the director's slaves.
 - Where executors of the Masters instructions – for His purposes and His Will!
- Now am I saying don’t pray for ourselves?
 - Nope – not saying that – I am saying, when you pray for yourself begin by asking yourself the question:
 - Is what I am about to pray – will it bring Glory to God or to myself?
 - Is my prayer all about me or Him!
 - Let me give you an example of what I mean:
 - If I am diagnosed with a sickness – my prayer should be
 - Lord, if it is your will to heal me, please do so, and may my healing be for your Glory!
 - In other words, may my healing point people back to you!
- That is the sense of the prayers I have shared with you this morning, and my hope – is as always – that you may see things from an eternal perspective and not from an earthly one!

- Amen – Amen !

- As we continue our journey into our 3rd teaching of 2 Peter
 - Remember – Peter wrote this letter to a group of Gentile believers living in Asia Minor or what's known as Modern Day Turkey.
 - Two weeks ago, we began this letter – and we did it as we always do – with an introduction to the letter, we answered the basic questions of who wrote the letter;
 - when it was written and of course,
 - who it was written to etc..
 - And from there, we ventured into Peter's opening words – where he called himself a bond-servant (a *doulos* in the greek) of Jesus Christ, and then immediately following those words Peter opens by making another statement of sorts where he said this in verses 2&3:

2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

2 Peter 1:3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

- Last week we dug in – and went in *depth*, highlighting – Peter's words, which also happened to be – the same words Paul uses as a prayer for the people he was writing to.
 - In our last teaching, we talked in depth about prayer and how it was – that the prayers that we often pray, don't seem to line up – with the prayers – that the men of the Bible prayed.
 - I gave you multiple examples of prayers in the Bible,
 - I also challenged you to find the central theme of those Biblical prayers,
 - And what we discovered – was that – the central theme didn't really line up with the central theme of the prayers most of us pray.
 - And what was the Biblical Central Theme of all the prayers we covered last week.
 - It was that God and His Son Jesus Christ are the focus
 - God is the central theme – He is the point
 - And most if not all the prayers of the Bible were all about God – meaning, with each prayer we read we noticed that, yes – people are part of the prayers but – the prayers they pray, are either
 - all about the betterment of the people they would pray for (as it related to God), or
 - the prayers were for the betterment of that individual (as it related to God),
 - They were not for their betterment as it related to their current life here on this earth,
 - It was always for their betterment – (as it related to them serving God),

- Specifically, how it would be - that they might become instruments of God and arrive at a place spiritually where He would use them for His own Glory.
- And what we discovered was, for a person, or a group of believers to accomplish this goal, there was a common link to that process a direct correlation – between the individual believer and that of his or her increased knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ.
 - And then – from there Peter tied the increasing of their knowledge directly back to something else.
 - Something I didn't touch on last week – but something I'd like to point out this morning.
- And that showed up in the form of, two words –
 - Grace and Peace!
- The words Grace and Peace are often used together –
 - They are repeated throughout the scriptures, and almost always tie directly back to an increase in the knowledge of God.
 - So, the formula is always the same:
 - The more you come to know God not just know Him – as in the traditional sense – as in the "I am saved sense",
 - But know Him, in an intimate way sense, as in – the more we come to deeply know Him – specifically know His truths
 - The more Grace and Peace will enter our lives, and the way that process works, is through the process of “Progressive Revelation”
 - I call it those uhuh moments
 - When you study something in the manuscripts, and it hits you in a deep, systemic way, causing you to pause and take note.
- Let me ask you a question: Does what I am saying resonate with you in any way?
 - Have you personally had any of those moments in your Christian life?
 - Meaning: Have you ever studied God's Word, and had a revelation hit you out of nowhere?
 - Do you know what I am talking about?
 - I am speaking specifically about when you study something in God's Holy Manuscript, and you see something you have never seen before.
 - You read something, and it hits you in a way that causes you pause – which then causes you to do a double take as you process what you just read.
 - Let me say, if you've never experienced that, you are missing out on one of the greatest blessings God has ever made available to the believer, and I will tell you - those moments are not just random or rare moments.
 - They happen every time I study the Bible, and they aren't just reserved for the Pastor/Teachers.
 - They are available to you as well, and it's in these times, that the Grace and

Peace of God are made manifest in your life.

- And this is what Peter and Paul repeatedly speak and pray about.
- But why is Grace and Peace so important?
 - They are important because of this fallen, God-forsaken world we live in where something is always “Taking the joy out of living”
 - Where life is constantly draining us, wreaking havoc on us, dragging us down – pressing in on us – causing us to feel depressed, causing us to lose our joy
 - And this by the way is a primary tool of the enemy.
 - If he can get us down and depressed about our circumstance, he can cause us to become disconnected from God's People – from the Church, which is our primary support system!
 - And then, from there – overtime – once depression and discontentment take root.
 - The enemy can slowly rob us of our effectiveness in the work of ministry, causing us to refrain or have any desire to participate in what God is doing in and around us.
 - Essentially sidelining us – you see when we are happy and content with our life and our journey with God, that's what emboldens and empowers us to do more. It creates a desire in us – compels us to ask God to put us in the game.
 - And that is all a byproduct of the Grace and Peace – that God makes available to us when His Word brings Progressive Revelation into our lives!
- Moving on, next we pick back up with verses 4-11 and before we read those verses let me back up and re-read the first 3 verses again – keeping us in context.
 - And here's what Peter wrote – one more time:

2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

2 Peter 1:3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

2 Peter 1:4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

2 Peter 1:5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge,

2 Peter 1:6 and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness,

2 Peter 1:7 and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love.

2 Peter 1:8 For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:9 For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind *or* short-sighted, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins.

2 Peter 1:10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

2 Peter 1:11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

- As I said a couple weeks ago in our introduction, there is a lot being put forth here. I am going to try and get through most of it this morning. So, let's get started.
 - In verses 3-4, we are given what I would call a promise or guarantee, along with an outline of how it works.
 - Listen to it one more time:

2 Peter 1:3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

2 Peter 1:4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

- Alright – so Peter, as I said, has given us a road map of sorts in his writings, and he does so when he lays out and or defines for us “a cause and effect”, situation of sorts.
 - In this cause and effect situation he clearly defines for us how we can obtain access to everything – pertaining to life and Godliness and how that access is clearly granted – through the true knowledge of Him, who called us by His own Glory and Excellence.
- Let me break this down for you really quick: Are you confused about life? Are you confused about Godliness?
 - What Peter tells us is that once we come to grips with the true knowledge of God, all that confusion begins to fade away. The clouds begin to roll away!
 - Another way to say this is, once we come to grips with the character, intent, and ways of “The God” of scripture, then – through His eyes – your confusion will begin to dissipate.
- Now this process tends to be a little more complicated than it sounds because the believers of today, which includes, every single one of us who came to church this morning.
 - When we arrived at church this morning – we came with a set of presuppositions, meaning we are pre-supposed to look at something – based on what we have been told or taught.

- And this is true, regardless – if what we were taught was backed up by proof, fact, or even evidence.
- You see early in our life, or in our walk with God, we placed our trust in someone to lead us and tell us what we believed, and therefore whatever that person said, more than likely we just went with it!
 - And we did this – not because we were lazy, but because that is what the institution of church has evolved into.
 - Therefore – we didn't know we were doing it!
 - And if what the Pastor said seemed to make sense – then, that just served to reinforce our belief system.
 - This statement applies to almost everything in our life, but it certainly applies to religion.
 - What I mean is, each one of us came to church this morning with an idea of who God is, how He works, what His intent is, and hopefully – what His expectations of us are.
 - And almost 100% of us arrived at our conclusions by and through what we have been told. Which then, is what formed our paradigm!
- So, that means if what we were taught was wrong, then by default there will not be any progressive revelation of God to speak of.
 - Because – when His Word is twisted or taken out of context then it loses its ability to deliver those revelatory moments. Essentially – it loses its power!
 - That's the sense of what I am trying to relay here, when Peter says:
 - Grace and Peace, be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - That Grace and Peace – is available – but only when it's coupled with an increase in the “true knowledge” of God
 - The concept of “True Knowledge” – is also another reoccurring theme, and why do you think that is?
 - Because it was an issue – the twisting of God's Word and the twisting of His Character was an issue.
 - And guess what? It's more of an issue today.
 - And why? Today – unlike any other time in Church History, we are living in an era where everyone one has 24 hour access to the Bible, yet most believers don't read it, much less study it.
 - Instead, they rely on the Regal Cinema Model, The Movie Model:
 - Where they go to church – much like going to the Movies – and listen and then head home.
 - And they do so, never really knowing whether what the Preacher said was right or wrong. Hence the problem!
- Anyways, if we want to access the power God, we don't do that through an emotional music filled service

- And it doesn't happen when the preacher tells us jokes or recites a sad story – causing us to become emotional.
- Gods' prescription for accessing this type of power begins by increasing a true knowledge of Him. And if when we do that, Peter says – our eyes will be opened:

2 Peter 1:3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

2 Peter 1:4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

- By the way this process is transforming from the inside out, and it reminds us of Romans 12:1-2 – where Paul says:

Romans 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- Moving on, next let's reread verses 5-11 one more time:

2 Peter 1:5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge,

2 Peter 1:6 and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness,

2 Peter 1:7 and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love.

2 Peter 1:8 For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:9 For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind *or* short-sighted, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins.

2 Peter 1:10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

2 Peter 1:11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

- You know there is a Great Debate that has been raging since theologians became

theologians, and that debate is over the Sovereignty of God vs. Man's Freewill.

- In other words – the question to ponder is, who is in control – is it God or is it left up to the freewill of man to decide?
- The Sovereignty View – often referred to as Calvinism (which isn't technically correct) – but for our purposes here today – we will go with it.
 - Calvinism earned this name because of a 15th Century Reformer and Theologian – a man named John Calvin who emphasized the complete Sovereignty of God in the Bible.
 - But then he took it to a whole other level which created a whole lot of controversy. Which by the way is still controversial today!
 - Anyways, the Calvinist view says – all things are controlled by God.
 - And then they try and prove this point through an Acronym called T.U.L.I.P
 - Total Depravity
 - Unconditional Election
 - Limited Atonement
 - Irresistible Grace
 - Perseverance of the Saints
 - We don't have time to get into all that this morning, but I encourage you to go study it for yourself, because it is fascinating!
- Anyways – so we have Calvinism – and then 2 centuries later we saw the emergence of another theory, called Arminianism – named after Jacobus Arminius – a Dutch Reformed Theologian who found fault with the Calvinist view.
 - Arminianism is what we would call the flip side of the coin – and it emerged as a counterbalance to Calvinism in the 17th Century.
 - The Arminian would say Man has Free Will – and has a choice to do what he pleases. Let me say that description of the Arminian view is not 100% technically correct either, but for today's purposes, once again, we will go with it!
 - The Arminian theory says – If someone does the God Honoring thing, God will honor them.
 - If they do the world honoring thing, God will not honor them.
- Both views seemingly show up in the scripture, and the verses we just read prove this to be the case.
 - Let me show you:
 - Back in verses 3-4 – we see the language which lends itself to the Calvinist view – listen for it.

2 Peter 1:3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

2 Peter 1:4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

- But from there we now move into the Arminian view of the equation where we clearly see a command for the individual believer to do something – to participate in their own spiritual development – and this shows up in a crescendo or cascading progression of sorts.
 - Listen to it one more time:

2 Peter 1:5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge,

2 Peter 1:6 and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness,

2 Peter 1:7 and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love.

2 Peter 1:8 For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- In these verses we can distinctly see where man has responsibility for his own spiritual growth and maturity.
 - Which tells us – that you cannot outsource your personal spiritual maturity to anyone else. YOU MUST DO IT YOURSELF!
 - This also tells us that the Regal Cinema or Movie Model won't work!
 - Just because the Pastor teaches you something – you must do something with it – you must apply it!
 - And that is exactly what Peter is telling this group and (by extension) this is what he is telling us as well.
- In verse 5 he says, "applying all diligence" meaning you must put forth the effort.
 - You can't just show up to church – absorb what you can through hearing – and God will take care of the rest
 - No – you must apply what you learn – and do so diligently.
- Diligently means to zealously seek for something with all your heart, strength and might.
 - And so the question we should be asking ourselves is: How are we doing with this?
 - If we are truly honest with ourselves – are we doing good, or not so much?
 - If not, the next question would be – why?
 - And are we willing to begin doing something about it?
 - And then of course – how do we do it?
 - We do it the same way we lose weight, one step at a time and one bite at a time.

- Maybe – in the morning – you begin by giving God your “First Fruits”
 - Your First Fruits being giving first, of what’s most important in your life.
 - And top of that list is time!
- So, maybe your first step of applying diligence begins by giving God 15 minutes in the morning – prayer – study – and do this before you do anything else.
 - Don’t check your phone – watch TV etc...
 - That would be a good start, and then simply improve from there!
- But time isn’t necessarily what Peter is talking about when he says applying diligence – so from there he proceeds to give us a list. A cascading list of sorts.
 - And it begins in verse 5 with Peter saying:

2 Peter 1:5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge, **2 Peter 1:6** and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness, **2 Peter 1:7** and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love.

2 Peter 1:8 For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Moral Excellence – what in the world is that?
 - Now before we dig deeper into this topic let me say:
 - I (Pastor Greg Driver) am not your “convictor” and it’s not my job to intervene on behalf of the Holy Spirit –
 - And – let me say, I don’t personally make the news – I simply report it!
 - I will teach you what it says – and it’s between you and God what you do with it.
 - So, that’s my caveat before teaching on this.
- Anyways – on this topic of Moral Excellence:
 - The actual word used in the Greek is “virtue” which simply means behavior showing high moral standards, which tells us why the translators translated it “Moral Excellence”.
 - So Peter says apply all diligence, in your faith supply “moral excellence” and in your moral excellence, knowledge
- Now “Moral Excellence” – is exactly what you probably suspect it to be, but to simplify it, let me tell you how you can know if what you're doing is Morally Excellent or Not.
 - In this life when we make decisions – and those decisions do one of two things, they either:
 - A – Glorify God or

- B – Crucify Him
- And this applies to both our actions and our words, and I'll take it a step further and say it also applies to our demeanor and or attitude.
- Now if you are confused about this and don't know when a decision is God Glorifying or God Crucifying, simply ask yourself the question – is this a God Glorifying decision or is it a “flesh” Glorifying decision?
 - If you are saved you will immediately know which one it is because the Holy Spirit will convict you about it.
 - So Peter says, apply all diligence in Moral Excellence –
 - Which means – in everything you do, in every choice you make – seek earnestly to Glorify God with your choices
 - And only you and you alone know what you are or are not doing that meets, or falls short of this standard.
 - Then Peter says:

2 Peter 1:5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge,

- This is interesting – and it gave me pause.
 - Generally speaking – knowledge is the first step to anything.
 - Example – learn how to change the alternator – and then go change it!
 - But in Peter's list of cascading virtues, he lists knowledge second – after applying all diligence in Moral Excellence.
- Normally, you would learn what's right and wrong and then go apply it, but in this verse – that's not the case.
 - So, we wonder why?
 - Well – I believe there is a reason – and one that applies to all of us sitting here today.
 - One that leaves all of us without excuse, at least as it relates to this sequence of virtues!
- Let me explain. You see this letter was written to believers, which means they have something inside of them that lets them know, if what they are doing is right or wrong.
 - That something is called the Holy Spirit.
 - Regardless of whether you have been taught – that drunkenness is wrong, or adultery is wrong, or lying is wrong or murder etc...
 - Once the Holy Spirit takes us residence inside your body, you have a built in Convictor
 - And you don't have to have the knowledge to know when you are not Glorifying God.
 - Which means – Peter assumes these believers don't need knowledge to know God's

right from wrong so – I believe (and by the way) – me saying, I believe – doesn't make it so. Go study it for yourself!

- Having said that, it does, however, make sense and lines up with the testimony of scripture!
- So, Peter says: apply all diligence Moral Excellence – and in your moral excellence knowledge.
 - The way this reads – it's a little confusing because of our English Translation.
 - It should combine moral excellence and knowledge together.
 - That is not the way it reads in the Greek. Let me read it to you in the Greek –
 - And [very reason] for this now, earnestness all having brought in, supplement into the faith of your virtue, into and virtue knowledge
 - In other words, we move from virtue or moral excellence as a topic and then move into knowledge as its own topic.
 - The two are separate – they are not run together
- Moving on, and we will close quick here:

2 Peter 1:6 and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness,

2 Peter 1:7 and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love.

2 Peter 1:8 For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- I am going to stop right here, and leave you with a little homework of sorts: I want you this week to go study these verses for yourself, and I want you to meditate on, and study what and why Peter is beginning his letter this way.
 - There is a reason – and the reason applies to us – so study it!
- Now, before finishing up this morning, I want to leave you with the application. So - what have we learned?
 - We learned that if we want to access the power of God as it relates to Grace and Peace in our life – we must increase our knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ.
 - And we must pursue this – it doesn't just happen.
 - And that pursuit is a constant – it never goes away, which means – you don't just arrive
 - And then of course we must apply this same diligence in our pursuit of virtue and moral excellence in our life.
 - This means – resisting the things of the enemy and being intentional in our pause.
 - Meaning – being intentional about pausing when it comes to how we act – what we say – and how we react.

- Spiritual Maturity is front and center of Peter's letter, and as I said last week – nothing could be more applicable to the believer of the 21st Century!
 - Amen – Amen !

- Today we resume our journey through 2 Peter, and as we discovered in the introduction, Peter wrote 2 Peter – which I know may seem obvious – but, some scholars have said they thought someone else may have written the letter. Based on my study – I think it's clear Peter wrote it.
 - So, Peter wrote the letter
 - And it's only 3 chapters
 - And it was the last letter ever penned in the New Testament
 - Also, Peter wrote this letter at the end of his life
- What is the letter's "Main Theme"?
 - It is Spiritual Maturity – another way you could say it is "Progressive Fruit"
 - An increase in the fruit in the life of the believer!
 - And I am not sure if there has ever been a time in the History of the Church, where a specific topic was more needed than today!
- Spiritual growth in the life of the believer is such an overlooked topic. And why?
 - Because it's tough – it's a grind of study, prayer and then putting it into action.
 - That is why it's such an overlooked topic, because it requires daily discipline
 - Anyways – I'll digress on the subject and let Peter do the talking:

2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

2 Peter 1:3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

2 Peter 1:4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

2 Peter 1:5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge,

2 Peter 1:6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness,

2 Peter 1:7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.

2 Peter 1:8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:9 For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.

2 Peter 1:10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His

calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

2 Peter 1:11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

- Peter starts the letter by acknowledging who he is – which was a Bond Servant
 - Then he says -

2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in “the knowledge” of God and of Jesus our Lord;

- In verse 3-5 he identifies God's Promises – He actually calls them His Precious and Magnificent Promises
 - And he says we are partakers of this divine nature.
 - And then he says something interesting at the end of verse 4 when He says – We have become partakers of God’s magnificent promises having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust
- Peter is saying, if you are saved – you are now a partaker of the divine nature.
 - And you have escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.
 - Meaning, once you are saved:
 - You have immediately overcome sin.
 - You are victorious over every sin that so beseeches you.
 - Which tells us something:
 - It tells us that when someone says that a believer was delivered from some sin that is not a true biblical statement.
 - Because, when someone is saved – they are automatically delivered!
 - That’s it - the end!
 - In 2 Corinthians 5:17 – Paul said it this way:

2 Cor. 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

- The words we are looking for here, are “wiped clean” – declared righteous!
 - So – this means when someone sins or becomes entangled in a life of repeated sin of some sort.
 - They don’t need deliverance!
 - They need repentance!

- Which is between that individual and God alone.
- It doesn't require the participation of other people.
- Now, I know this may seem like I'm splitting hairs. And it would be – if deliverance was defined as a believer asking God to forgive them (which is repentance) – and at that point God would and will cleanse them of all unrighteousness.
 - In that scenario – God would be (delivering them in a sense). Which would be like splitting hairs! But generally speaking – that's not the way churches mean it.
- Most of the time, they believe deliverance is some type of ritual of some sorts. With some sort of ceremonial act – one designed to deliver that person from whatever sin they are mixed up in!
 - These two definitions are obviously on two opposite ends of the spectrum. So, they are not the same.
 - One meets the Biblical definition of deliverance, and the other does not!
- Now, let me clarify one thing before moving on. I am not talking about someone who is not a believer being delivered in some sort of way,
 - 12 step programs
 - Celebrate Recovery
 - Or even in very rare cases, someone being delivered by the laying on of hands or through exorcism!
 - And yes, those are real! but that's another message for another day!
 - Anyways, so, Peter says:
 - “You have” been delivered.
 - You are partakers of the “Divine Nature”,
 - Which means you are a believer and therefore act like it!
 - In other words, claim what is yours – which is righteousness and forgiveness of your sin. Then move on!
 - And let me say – this applies to every believer.
 - If you are dealing with regret or guilt or something you have done or should have done and you can't seem to let it go, I just want you to know that God has forgiven you – if you have asked Him.
 - Therefore – it's time to quit allowing the enemy – to live rent free in your head.
 - God forgave you – and for this reason it is time to do what Peter is telling these believers to do.
- Which is what? – Verse 5 – 8:

2 Peter 1:5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge,
2 Peter 1:6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness,

2 Peter 1:7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.

2 Peter 1:8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- As previously stated, Peter gives us this list of cascading qualities or virtues that every believer should display.
 - And He starts out with moral excellence.
 - We talked about this in our last teaching, how “moral excellence” – isn’t just something immoral (as we think of immoral – such as adultery)
 - The word moral in the Greek is the word “virtue”.
 - Which simply means – behavior showing high moral standards
 - Moral excellence – would apply to anything God honoring.
 - When we honor God – we are achieving moral excellence.
- Next up, is knowledge – Peter said:

2 Peter 1:5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge,

- I touched on this last time we were together – but it’s worth mentioning one more time,
 - Once we learn something (knowledge), it’s at that point - we are to apply whatever it is that we’ve learned.
 - But in Peter’s list – here we see – moral excellence as being listed first and then knowledge.
 - I gave you a theory – on why this was possibly the case, and if you want to hear more on this theory, just go back – to our last teaching.
 - But for now – it’s an interesting proposition – the way it is laid out and listed,
- Anyways, so moral excellence gives way to knowledge.
 - The word knowledge in the Greek is gnosis (“nose-is”) – and it refers to information – and not just any ole information.
 - The word empathizes the Christian’s need to know all that God has revealed in His Word, not just the gospel!
 - Which, by the way, the correlation between His Word and the Gospel have almost become synonyms
 - Meaning – when people talk about God’s Word – they almost always equate it to the Gospel of Jesus Christ
 - The Gospel of Jesus Christ is in His Word
 - But so are a lot of other things,

- And it's those other things – that you must become knowledgeable about.
- And why – because Knowledge is truly power and that power – can only be unlocked when His Word sets up residency in your Heart and Mind.
- So, Knowledge is key if we are to fulfill all these other Moral Excellencies / Virtues
 - And let me show you what I mean – As Peter moves from Knowledge to Self Control to Perseverance to Godliness
- Beginning with Self-Control: What is the Biblical definition of this word, we have our understanding of self-control, but what is the Bible's definition of this word?
 - Self-Control in the Greek is egkrates (eng-krat-i-ah) – means “mastery of self”, disciplined moderation – controlling one's desires and passions.
 - I love this concept of “Mastery of self”, but this is not mastery of self in the way we think of mastery of self.
 - Mastery of self – by the world's definition – is you as an individual, by your self, putting yourself under submission to whatever it is.
 - Meaning – if you are not healthy – you grab ahold of your eating habits – you clean up your diet – and you force yourself to become disciplined with your eating.
 - Same holds true for exercise,
 - Or work life balance
 - Spending time with God etc..
- Nothing necessarily wrong with this – but what Peter is talking about is Mastery of Self – with the help of the Holy Spirit – which is great news, because you are not alone in this fight!
 - In other words – you are partnered with the Holy Spirit
 - Problem is – most of us – do not know how to tap into the Holy Spirit's help!
 - And the best way I can tell you how to do it is through Prayer – requesting God give you the help
 - By way of the comforter – ie... the Holy Spirit
 - And then by reaching into God's Word – and accessing the knowledge – found in the pages of His Holy Manuscript
- Once again – we are right back to learning, and once we learn and apply –
 - It's at that point – we can begin to tap into the virtues Peter is speaking about
 - Having said all of this, make no mistake about it – this process will not happen through sheer intestinal fortitude!
 - It begins through the power of God,
 - And guys – let me testify for just a moment, throughout my life – I have found myself lost in decisions.
 - Not knowing what to do.
 - And so – I prayed for wisdom – and God gave it to me.

- I quit praying for a specific thing.
- Meaning – I quit praying - Lord help this or that specific thing or issue.
- Instead – I said – Lord, please give me eyes to see and ears to hear and when I began praying that prayer that’s when everything changed, and that’s when I was able to access the answers.
- The same holds true for “Self-control” or “Mastery of Self”.
- If you want to bring yourself into submission with God, you must “Master Yourself” – and by biblical definition
 - This cannot take place without the help of the Holy Spirit!
 - Which means – if you have a drinking problem, God will help you through the knowledge of Him.
- A Knowledge by the way that leads to revelation.
 - It produces a change – through what I call those “awe ha” moments.
 - And so if you are struggling in your marriage, knowledge – as it relates to God – is the key.
 - Are you eating poorly – desperately desiring to clean up your diet – but you just can’t seem to grab control of it – same thing applies
 - Just fill in the blank - it applies to everything: Poor overall health, finances etc. – anything you struggle with.
- Next on this list is – Perseverance.
 - Perseverance is an interesting one – and is yet another recurring theme of Paul’s ministry (along with some of the other Apostles as well) – all throughout God’s Holy Manuscript.
 - Perseverance is emphasized – perseverance is the need to keep on keeping on – in the face of adversity.
 - By definition – it is patient endurance in holiness when we encounter temptation to give in or to give up (cf. Rom. 5:3-4; 15:4-5; 2 Cor. 1:6; 6:4; Col. 1:11; 1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 1:4; James 1:3).
 - The Greek word (*hypomonen*) literally means to remain under something, such as a heavy load.
 - The key to tapping into perseverance (once again) – lies in your understanding of God – and His ability to keep you.
 - And this reality can only be realized in your life when you understand what the scriptures have to say on this topic.
- Let me give you an example of what I mean.

John 10:26 “But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep.

John 10:27 “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

John 10:28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

John 10:29 “My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.

John 10:30 “I and the Father are one.”

- Notice who’s in control here – God is!

Phil. 1:6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus

Rom. 11:29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

1 John 3:9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

- My point is your perseverance is a work of God
 - But God requires you participate
 - He isn’t just going to do it for you
 - Kind of like the time when I had come across a lady whose car was stuck in the mud. I stopped to help her – I got behind the car and began pushing, and from what I could see she just needed a little nudge – but the car wouldn’t budge. After about 5 minutes of trying, I said – “Ma’am - do you have the break on?”
 - She said – “oops – sorry my bad.”
 - We have a responsibility to participate – to work on it.
 - We can’t ask God to help and then put our foot on the break.
- Next on the list – is Godliness.
 - What does it mean to obtain or increase in Godliness
 - Godliness (Gr. *eusebeia*) refers to behavior that reflects the character of God (cf. v. 3; 3:11; et al.).
 - It presupposes a desire to please God in all the relationships of life.
- Here’s a question for you this morning, do you – in everything you do – have a desire to please God?
- Or – Do you have a desire to become more like God?
 - I would hope the answer would be yes!
 - If it’s not – then you and I need to talk – catch me after the service.
 - If you are a believer – you must pursue Godliness.
 - You must desire to become more like him and less like – you!
 - And that desire cannot be manufactured through the power of “Positive

thinking” – this is a spiritual transformation.

- It can only be achieved when you understand who God is – how He operates and what he expects.
 - In essence – it can only be achieved when you understand what Godliness looks like.
- Now believe it or not, this may seem like a simple thing to understand but I will tell you – based on the world we live in, where evil is called good – and good is called evil.
 - Which by the way is (in my opinion) – one of the greatest markers of the End of Times.
 - In my opinion, people have drifted so far from the Truth of God that they do not know what Godliness even looks like.
 - So, what’s a Christian to do – if they don’t know?
 - Study and learn – go back to the basics!
- Next up, brotherly kindness.
 - Brotherly kindness (Gr. *philadelphia*) is thoughtful consideration of fellow believers (cf. 1 Pet. 1:22; 3:8; Rom. 12:10; 1 Cor. 12:25-26; 1 Thess. 4:9; Heb. 13:1).
 - It includes overt acts of kindness which manifest this characteristic (Gal. 6:10).
 - Basically – it's thinking of your Christian brothers and sisters and doing something for them.
 - And I would ask, once again – how are we doing in this area of our Christian life?
 - This is a question we all must contemplate, because it’s not just saying hi to someone on Sunday morning.
 - It’s literally doing something to show you care.
- And then finally, we have Love.
 - And – as you might imagine – this isn’t just any old Love
 - In the Bible there are several meanings for the word Love
- There is: *Eros, Storge, Phillia, and Agape*
 - Eros (Pronounced: AIR-ohs) is the Greek word for sensual or romantic love.
 - The term originated from the mythological Greek god of love, sexual desire, physical attraction, and physical love, Eros, Roman counterpart was Cupid.
 - Then we have – Storge (stor-kay) & Philia (Fill-ee-uh),
 - Storge (Pronounced: STOR-kay) is a term for love in the Bible that you may not be familiar with.
 - This Greek word describes family love, the affectionate bond that develops naturally between parents and children, and brothers and sisters.
 - Philia (Pronounced: FILL-ee-uh) is the type of intimate love in the Bible that most Christians practice toward each other.
 - This Greek term describes the powerful emotional bond seen in deep

friendships.

- And finally, we have Love (Gr. agape).
 - Which is the highest form of love, God's kind, that seeks the welfare of the person loved above its own welfare (John 3:16; 13:35; Gal. 5:22; 1 Pet. 4:8; et al.).
 - Agape reaches out to all people, not just fellow believers.
- Now which type of love do you think Peter is talking about here when he says brotherly kindness?
 - You might tend to think it would be Phillia (Fill-ee-uh) – since Phillia means brotherly love, but that's not it.
 - It's Agape – it's a self-sacrificial love – one that transcends one's own interest and desires.
 - And this type of love is impossible to obtain without help from God.
- James echoes Peter's same words when he says this.

James 4:7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

James 4:8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

James 4:9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.

James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

- See the corollary here?
 - The process is:
 - You do and God does
 - You Submit yourself to God and He will help you flee the enemy!
 - Draw near to God and He will draw near to you
 - Cleanse your hands, you sinners and purify your hearts
- And then finally – Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.
 - Another way to say it is, you take one step toward God and He will take one or more steps toward you!
 - So, once again Peter's words clearly model for us how we are responsible for our own individual spiritual growth and maturity.
 - Which means you can't outsource your Spiritual Growth!
 - You must participate!
- Moving on, and let us end our teaching with verses 9-1:

2 Peter 1:9 For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.

2 Peter 1:10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

2 Peter 1:11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

- So, Peter says:
 - Because you have been freed from sin.
 - Because you have been delivered.
 - You should work on those lists of virtues.
 - And anyone – verse 9

“Who lacks these qualities is blind, or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins”.

- So, the question is: Do you lack these qualities? How are you doing with:
 - Moral Excellence – Yes / No?
 - Knowledge -??
 - Self – Control -??
 - Perseverance –??
 - Godliness -??
 - Brotherly Kindness -??
- If you aren’t doing so well, Peter tell us we are blind and short sighted and you have forgotten – paraphrasing here – you have forgotten what God did for you!
 - And then in verse 10 He says – and “Oh by the way”:

2 Peter 1:10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

- I don’t want to read right through this verse, because there is something – that everyone sitting here today needs to hear.
 - And here it is – God chose you. You didn’t choose Him.
 - Now, you might be sitting here thinking, – Well – I know that.
 - You might be thinking, No I choose Him. I asked Him into my heart.
 - And yes - you may have prayed an asked God to forgive you and to save you!
 - But the step preceding your acceptance of Him had zero to do with you!

- But what do I mean – I mean?
- There is no man – who seeks God.
- Romans 3 – tells us this exact thing. Listen to what Paul wrote.

Romans 3:9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;

Romans 3:10 as it is written,

“THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

Romans 3:11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,

THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

- God is the one who pricks the heart first and then – we answer His call.
 - That is why it’s called “a Call”.
 - God initiates “the call”.
 - And man answers.
 - That’s the sequence of events - and that’s how it works!
 - That’s why Peter says you were chosen.
 - The word in Greek isn’t actually chosen – it's elected
- If you are a believer – you are the elect, which means you have been given a gift.
 - Which also means, when we don’t work on our spiritual growth and maturity, we are essentially thumbing our nose at God.
 - And that’s why Peter says, if you don’t improve in these virtues you are blind & short sighted, and you have forgotten the call with which you have been called!
 - You have forgotten He elected or chose you!
 - But Peter says something else, something that I would like to end with, and that shows up in the first part of verse 10.
 - Let me read it – one more time:

2 Peter 1:10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

- “To make certain about His calling and choosing you”.
 - The sentiment here – is that of checking yourself – to see how you are doing in the mentioned list of virtues.
- In other words, It is not saying – check yourself – to see if you are saved, but rather, check yourself back against this list as a measuring tool of sorts, to see how you measure up with Gods expectation.

- In other words, are you living up to your calling and His choosing of you?
- Let me say this as we close, your walk with the Lord is not a feeling.
 - Just like love is not a feeling
 - It's a verb – an action.
- So, what Peter is telling us is, we must examine ourselves – and look at this list (among others), and from that list – determine how we are doing!
 - We should never do this – by what someone might say about us, or even how we feel about ourselves.
 - But rather how are we doing – measuring ourselves back against Gods measurement tool!
 - And so – that is the question we all must ponder this morning.
 - And my hope and prayer is that we leave here doing just that!
 - Amen – Amen!

- Welcome back folks. It's good to see everybody. I would ask that everyone turn to 2 Peter the 1st Chapter. As we continue our journey through the last letter pinned in the New Testament.
 - When we last left off we studied (in depth) Peter's list of cascading virtues.
 - These were a list of virtues that Peter said every believer should pursue.
- Now let me say this before moving forward. That list is not an exhaustive list.
 - Rather it's one list – of a few different lists – that are mentioned in the New Testament.
 - And all those lists contain a list of characteristics and or virtues, that we (as children of God) are supposed to work towards – in our pursuit of perfect sanctification.
 - And perfect sanctification is much a kin to a perfect round of golf.
 - It's something that exists and it's something we should constantly be trying to pursue – but ultimately it's not attainable – at least this side of Heaven.
- But having said that, even though this effort may seem futile or a wasted effort! I get it, because honestly, what's the point of trying to achieve something that's not attainable – right?
 - Well if that is where your mind goes when you begin thinking about this topic, I would like to let you know, that it's okay to feel somewhat that way, and if I can be honest, I personally have felt that way many times throughout my Christian walk! I have thought the same thing.
 - But having said that I want to give you the reason why every believer should strive for “perfect sanctification” – regardless of how achievable it is.
- You see, anytime we glorify God in our life – we receive something in return. What is it that we receive?
 - We receive – peace – satisfaction – comfort, and sense of accomplishment.
 - Which is all delivered by a mechanism or the act of knowing we have pleased our father that is in Heaven.
 - Same feeling we receive when we please our earthly fathers and or mothers – or anyone who we are accountable to for that matter, even a boss!
 - We also receive something else.
 - We receive a sense of internal satisfaction – a satisfaction - that allows us to feel content – happy – and fulfilled. Which in turn – improves our life.
- But not in the worldly or earthly sense – but rather in a spiritual sense – causing us a sense of overwhelming joy to well up inside us – all by way of giving us a sense of belonging to the family of God – (not to mention God Himself).
 - What I am talking about is finding happiness in fulfilling your calling.
 - And what is your calling? Well Jesus told us in Matthew 28:16-20 when he said The Great Commission:

Matt. 28:16 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which

Jesus had designated.

Matt. 28:17 When they saw Him, they worshiped *Him*; but some were doubtful.

Matt. 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Matt. 28:19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

Matt. 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

- So, there it is – your calling. If you are a believer (if you are saved), everyone is in full time ministry!
 - And being in ministry isn’t just the act of telling people about Jesus.
 - It's living our lives in a way that God uses us to draw men to Himself.
- Which leads me to a question. Have you personally ever invested in another’s person’s life?
 - Meaning, have you ever taken someone under your wing and mentored them?
 - Walked with them through all their problems?
 - Have you put others first – above yourself?
 - Or is it always pretty much about you!
 - Your wants - Your desires - Your aggravation - Your earthly ambitions.
 - If you have ever mentored someone – then you know the personal feeling of satisfaction, you get when investing in someone else.
 - You see, after we answer God's call to become a believer, every believer is immediately “commissioned”.
 - Which is why it’s called the “Great Commission”.
 - Which simply means we have all been given a duty!
 - We are all commissioned and called to begin participating in the work of God.
- It’s that simple – and no-one is exempt, and the desire to fulfill that calling is a by-product that begins with an understanding of the salvation God has given you!
 - Meaning an understanding of what God did for you, and when that is realized internally for the believer – it creates a sense of appreciation or better said, a sense of Gratitude toward God!
 - Which then, should lead you into a place where you want to draw closer to Him!
 - And this process of drawing closer to God is called “Sanctification”!
 - And even though, we will never achieve nor complete “perfect sanctification”, because it’s simply not achievable, we still must strive to achieve it or as Paul describes it in 1 Cor. 9:24-26, we should all run the race and keep our eye on the prize. Listen to Paul’s words:

1 Cor. 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

1 Cor. 9:25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

1 Cor. 9:26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air;

1 Cor. 9:27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

- The main sentences we should all pay close attention to in these verses are in verse 24 – when he says, Run in such a way that you may win!
 - That’s a novel concept – it reminds me of the Oak Barrel race in Lynchburg. It’s a 5K and it comes right in front of my driveway – and let me tell you, most of these people aren’t running a race in effort to win! (Expound)
 - Paul is saying – if you are saved, then work at it.
 - Give it everything you have.
 - Pursue Sanctification and Godliness.
 - And do it in a way – that you are intentionally trying to earn your crown in heaven.
 - In other words, don’t simply be another sidelined Christian, one that sits over in the corner as an absent participant – one who does nothing with the Gift that God has given them!
- Next, verse 25 – Paul says, we must understand what we are trying to achieve.
 - Meaning – Our pursuit of godliness and sanctification has zero to do with anything this earth has to offer and everything to do with what God has waiting on us in Heaven.
 - Which Paul references as a wreath or crown!
 - Paul’s words tell us something. That our work here on earth for our Lord matters immensely in the next life to come, and this life is simply your proving ground or earning ground!
- And then he says in verse 27:

1 Cor. 9:27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

- Paul’s words are an essential writing of my ministry. We are to discipline our bodies, meaning we are to pray and study, spending time in God’s Word.
 - So that, we can go through the process of Sanctification and mature as believers, and then emerge from the other side of that process in a way that does not disqualify me.

- Meaning – we cannot mentor someone or even tell someone about Christ if we have put zero effort in – as it relates to growing to and becoming more like Christ.
 - And why?
 - Because of the possibility of the inverse of what Paul just said, which was that we might be disqualified.
- Meaning – what we do in the name of Christ will not apply towards our wreath or crown in Heaven.
- And even worse than that – it is also possible it could have the opposite effect on the individual person hearing your words.
 - In fact, I would tell you – you could cause more damage than Good!
- Moving on. So, Peter gave us a list of cascading virtues – ones we all should pursue, and as I said, those virtues don't cover the entire gambit, but they are a good start.
- And now Peter finishes the chapter with the verses 12-15, and here is what he says:

2 Peter 1:12 Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you *already* know *them*, and have been established in the truth which is present with *you*.

2 Peter 1:13 I consider it right, as long as I am in this *earthly* dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder,

2 Peter 1:14 knowing that the laying aside of my *earthly* dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

2 Peter 1:15 And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.

- What a great set of verses, and of course – you know me – I say that about all the scriptures. But it's true.
 - Peter begins with the word “therefore”, and when we see that word, we should automatically ask – “what's the therefore, there for”?
 - When Peter or anyone else for that matter uses the word “therefore”, it means considering everything I just told you, you should now do this!
 - And sure enough – Peter does exactly that when he says, “Therefore, I will always be ready”
 - In other words, because of what I just told you I will always be ready.
 - But in this case the question is, Ready for what?
 - Ready to remind you of everything I just told you.
 - And then he says, and I will continue doing this even though you already know what I am telling you!
 - I find that interesting. It sounds like my wife, mother or grandmother you know what I mean?
 - When they tell you something over and over again. Even though they know they

have told you 100 times before.

- Well – evidently this is an important part of the process – so much so, that Peter felt the need to consistently remind them.
 - Which tells me, when I hear something over and over again in scripture, I shouldn't get an attitude about it.
 - An attitude like I might get toward my wife or mother or grandmother: You know, where I roll my eyes and say, "Okay I get it – I get!"
- Instead, we must embrace those reminders and understand it's important that we are continually reminded, and then also be thankful about it – knowing that God knows us better than we know ourselves – and He knows what we need even before we need it.
 - Next, he says this in verse 13:

2 Peter 1:13 I consider it right, as long as I am in this *earthly* dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder,

- Once again, he says its important – matter a fact, I consider it right, as long as I live – to stir you up by way of reminder.
 - Two things really quick about this verse:
 - One – evidently, we need reminding.
 - And two – that reminder should “stir us up”.
 - If it doesn't – that's not good.
 - In other words, if you are not convicted by what you hear coming from God's Holy Manuscript, that is not good!
 - And that is simply a fact of scripture.
 - A fact – that cannot be denied!
 - And why is that?
 - Because God's Word – are the Words of God!
 - Which will always stir up His Children!
- Moving on, verse 14&15 – and I am going to close here today, and let you out early for Mother's Day!
 - Peter says:

2 Peter 1:14 knowing that the laying aside of my *earthly* dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

2 Peter 1:15 And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.

- In these verses Peter gives us a truth of life.

- One that I don't think any of us do a very good job of grasping!
- Peter reminds us that we are all going to die! No one lives forever!
 - This is an important reality for us to embrace – and this is an issue, because people in their minds – actually (if not consciously but subconsciously) – “somewhat” believe they may live forever.
 - Especially, if modern medicine finds new ways to extend our lives.
- Now you may say, well – that's ridiculous – I can't believe anyone really believes that. I am here to tell you, we all somewhat “subconsciously” believe it.
 - And proof of this shows up in the way we carry out our existence on this planet.
 - We are always planning and figuring, and many people go as far as putting it in writing.
 - But if not in writing – it's certainly top of all our minds, and that's okay because we are all human!
- Just think about it. Generally, our plans, revolve around this life – not the life after (For the most part) – most of us are planning retirement.
 - Planning for this – thinking to ourselves – well if I tried this health remedy or exercised this many times per week or consumed some herb – which gave me some type of benefit– I might have “x” amount of time left on the earth!
 - I remember a few months back, I was talking to guy and he told me that he had done a lot of research on life longevity!
 - And how that, based on His new diet, if he were correct, he could live to be 120 plus years old.
 - This man was not a believer; therefore, he did not have, what Paul calls “The Blessed Hope”.
 - Which is the hope and guarantee every believer has received from God.
 - A hope that says, this earth will soon be gone, but we will have eternity in Heaven forever!
- So – instead of the Blessed Hope that you and I have, his hope was placed in this new diet.
 - And by the way just a side bar, who wants to live to 120?
 - Someone who has nothing to look forward to in the next life, that's who!
 - I don't know why anyone would want to live that long – I mean seriously, your body is wearing out!
 - Even if you could live that long, you'd be lucky to still be moving. Therefore – what would be the point!
- Anyways, as Christians, we know we don't live forever. So we should do what Paul and Peter do; Live this life for God and do it to its fullest.
 - I didn't say go hide out and disconnect yourself from the world.
 - No – we should live it to the fullest as we work and live out our lives in the highways and byways of life!

- One more thing, I am not saying don't be healthy. I am saying – forecasting your life expectancy is a futile effort because our lives are on a countdown timer, and some of us have a little time left on this planet, and others not so much.
- And once again – my proof of this finds its origin in God's Word. Specifically when the writer of Hebrews says, "Our death is an appointment!"

Hebrews 9:27 **It's appointed man once to die and then the judgement**

- Pressing on let's finish up with verse 15.

2 Peter 1:15 **And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.**

- Verse 15 is telling us the whole purpose or reason we are to be reminded is so that when you are alone, confused, drifting far way, that you will think back and recall what you have been taught.
 - There is an ole saying in leadership and business.
 - That it takes 21 days to form a habit and 21 days to break a habit.
 - I am not sure if this is true. It's just what they say. However, what I can say is that for you as an individual believer to become filled up with God in the Holy Spirit, you must read, and study, and pray, and be consistently reminded of Gods Words.
 - If not, you will fade away.
- Peter says, I have told you these things – reminded you of these things – and I have done so, even though you already know them.
 - All so that when I am gone, you will be able to call these to mind!
 - Guys, if we weren't careful, we could blow right by this because on the surface, we would say, okay – he has constantly reminded us so we don't forget, I got it – so let's move on.
 - And if you think that, you would be making a big mistake!
- What Peter is actually saying is, and I am going to paraphrase here: In your Christian life you will experience many ups and down's. And the enemy will be constantly tempting you.
 - And not only you – but your kids – your husband and your wife.
 - And when the enemy comes calling, and you're all alone, many times the only thing that will get you through it is a recalling of Gods Word!
- The word call by the way isn't what it says in the Greek translation.
 - The Greek says – "a lasting remembrance to make" which means it isn't just something to remember.
 - No – this memory makes an edible mark, so much so that it gives you strength when

you are weak, and it gives you hope when there is no hope!

- That is the sense here.
 - God's Word isn't simply something to read.
 - It is something to ingest and marinate on.
 - It's something that gets inside of you and really messes you up.
 - And it's something – you should never forget, and we should carry it with us all the days of our lives!
- It's our lifeline – in troubled waters.
- It's anti-depressant in depressing times.
- It's joy – when there is nothing to be joyful about.
 - And all this is made available for every believer if we simply call on what we have learned.
 - Especially when there seems to be no Hope!
- I'll leave you with one of my favorite verses in all of scripture, and I think this verse best describes what Peter and Paul and all the other great men in the Bible are trying to convey about consuming God's Word. We read in Hebrews 4:12.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

- What Heb. 4:12 is telling us is that God's Word isn't just another ancient document of antiquity. It is God in Word Form!
 - And therefore, when the individual believer studies it correctly, it possesses supernatural power that can transform your life!
 - There is no other document that can say the same, and for that reason Peter says, I remind you – so that you may recall!
 - Amen – Amen!!

- Alright guys – good morning, everyone. Today is the day – we pick back up – with our journey through 2 Peter, and – I can officially say – we will finish Chapter 1.
 - Last week, we finished our teaching with verses 14 -15, where Peter made 2 things abundantly clear. And what were they?
 - Well, let's recap – and read those verses one more time for context – and here is what Peter said:

2 Peter 1:14 knowing that the laying aside of my *earthly* dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

2 Peter 1:15 And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.

- Peter tells us that:
 - Our time on this earth is limited – He said – “The laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent”, and that, the Lord Jesus Christ has confirmed that very fact.
 - Which means – 100 percent of all people will one day pass away.
 - Which means, no one lives forever.
- Then, Peter makes a second point, which was what?
 - Well – Peter said – that while he was still alive, he wants to constantly remind these folks, (or as he said in Verse 13), he wants to “Stir them up by way of reminder.”
 - But stir them up and remind them of what?
 - The truth, or as he said, he wants to stir them up about a truth that has already been established in them.
 - In other words, remind them of a truth – they already know!
 - And what was that truth they already knew?
 - Well – it was a list of truths which were derived from a list of virtues that Peter just finished giving us back in verses 5-7.
 - Truths – that he said, established something in the life of a believer.
 - And what was it?
 - Let me read verse 11 to you again:

2 Peter 1:11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

- What Peter was saying was, if an individual believer would like to receive a “warm” welcome into the Kingdom of God, he or she should work on godliness and righteousness while they live out their lives on earth.
 - And Peter's list of virtues, will aid you and I in the pursuit of that endeavor.

- The sense of Peter is trying to convey here is that some, will slide into Heaven by the “skin of their teeth”.
- Where others (those who work on their Godliness – while still living on this earth), will receive rewards, compensatory to that of an athlete receiving their prize at the end of a race.
- Now, let me say something as it relates to Holiness and Godliness.
 - Holiness and Godliness aren’t things that you can just “will” into existence.
 - Meaning, you can’t just make a statement to yourself like, “Today I am going to become Godlier”, and just like that you begin your accent toward Righteousness.
 - On the contrary – the pursuit of godliness and righteousness is something you “become”.
 - It’s not something you can just “be”.
 - And just like anything worth having in life the only way to become that type of believer is by working on it!!
 - It requires study everyday followed by prayer and more study.
 - And it’s at that point, when God enters your body – through your mind.
 - It's then and only then you can begin the process of sanctification and spiritual growth, or holiness and godliness
 - And so, when Peter says:

2 Peter 1:11 for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

- He is referencing how believers will be received into the Kingdom of Heaven.
 - One will be, (as I said), “by the skin of their teeth”,
 - And the other is, as an athlete who receives a reward for a work well done.
 - The question is, which one do you want to be?
 - Years ago – I worked for a man here in town, and this man had once been involved in his church. He attended regularly – was involved – plugged in – but had long since fallen away.
 - This gentleman knew that I was a believer, and he also knew I surrendered into the ministry.
 - He would often take little jabs at me, simply because I was passionate about my faith.
 - He would say things like, “Well, I know I am not much of a Christian, but I am saved.”
 - And I know I probably won’t be receiving any great rewards in Heaven, but as long as I get there - I’m good!
 - I remember he also said, “Now Greg you might hold a much higher position than me

in Heaven, but I don't care – cause I'm good!

- Even if I hold a lower position – like a janitor – where I sweep the gold dust off the streets.
- Guys, let me just say something – as it pertains to this man's comments.
 - The Bible tells us, that when we die, we immediately will enter the presences of the Lord.
 - This according to Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:8 – where he said:

“To be absent the body – is to be present with the Lord”

- And when that happens, let me assure you, you won't be saying to yourself, "Well I'm here – I'm good."
 - That's not going to be the case.
 - Our judgement as believers, will be a serious matter.
 - It won't be a judgement unto salvation,
 - Because – if you are saved – you are saved.
 - But it will be a judgement that examines your life as a believer on this earth.
 - It will be a reconciliation of the things you've done for Christ versus the things done in your flesh.
 - And you will not be saying to yourself, “Oh well – I made it!”
 - Or who cares what my rewards are.
 - If that's your mentality – you're in for a rude awaking.
- So Peter finishes verse 14 & 15 by saying:

2 Peter 1:14 knowing that the laying aside of my *earthly* dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

2 Peter 1:15 And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.

- The words for the day are – as it relates to these verses are...
 - Do not forget!
 - Peter wanted them to remember!
 - The same message still holds true for you and I sitting here today – don't forget what Jesus did for you.
 - Don't forget you have been called unto salvation.
 - You have been chosen and bought with a price.
 - Which is the highest of calling you could ever receive.

- Don't forget it – because God has an expectation for your life!
- Moving on – my NASB Bible calls this next section of scripture Eyewitnesses. Let's see why it's entitled that way!

2 Peter 1:16 For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

2 Peter 1:17 For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such a declaration as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory: “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased”—

2 Peter 1:18 and we ourselves heard this declaration made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

2 Peter 1:19 And *so* we have the prophetic word *made* more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

2 Peter 1:20 *But* know this first *of all*, that no prophecy of Scripture becomes a *matter of someone's own interpretation*,

2 Peter 1:21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

- Peter is saying, listen up guys, what I am telling you is the truth.
 - And then in verse 16, he reinforces what he is trying to say by saying:

2 Peter 1:16 For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

- In other words, we aren't just telling you this stuff, and we aren't just following “cleverly devised tales”
 - No, we have witnessed it for ourselves!
 - This section of scripture begins (what is commonly referred to) as Peter's defense of his faith, which was being challenged by a host of False Teachers.
 - And by the way – false teachers were a real issue in those days.
 - But maybe a bigger issue today – albeit in a much different way.
 - All sorts of men and women in our era, claim to have received a new message or revelation from God.
 - Revelations outside God's Word.
 - And to be honest it's not just a slight issue.
 - It's rampant and for most believers, in our day an age, they don't know the difference between God's truth and false teaching.

- Now as I said, this problem is still very much present today, but in a very different way.
 - In Peter's day, many of the false teachers were outright heretics.
 - Meaning, their teachings were totally contrary to God's Word.
 - In many cases, they simply taught another religion all together!
 - Today, many of the false teachers find their home inside our churches.
 - For the most part, they don't teach outright, in your face, heresy.
 - Rather – it's a subtle and familiar form of Christianity.
 - Let me give you explanation of what I mean.
 - I did a little research on this topic and found an article that I feel kind of hits home on what Peter is trying to convey.
 - At least as it relates to the false teachers of our day an age.
 - The article was written by a man named, Tim Challies – Canadian Theologian and Pastor.
 - And he did a great job identifying what are 7 different types of false teachers present in our modern-day church, and here is what he wrote:
 - The history of Christ's church is inseparable from the history of Satan's attempts to destroy her.
 - While difficult challenges have arisen from outside the church, the most dangerous have always been from within.
 - For from within arise the false teachers, the peddlers of error who masquerade as teachers of truth.
 - False teachers take on many forms, custom-crafted to times, cultures, and contexts.
 - Here are seven of them you will find carrying out their deceptive, destructive work in the church today.
- Challies said - Please note that while I have followed the biblical texts in describing them in masculine terms, each of these false teachers can as easily be female as well:
 - The 1st type of False teacher is the "Heretic",
 - The Heretic is the most prominent and perhaps the most dangerous of the false teachers.
 - Peter warned against them in his second letter – when he said:

“But 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” (2 Peter 2:1).

- The Heretic is the person who teaches and blatantly contradicts an essential teaching of the Christian faith.

- He is a gregarious figure, a natural leader teaching just enough truth to mask his deadly error.
- Yet in denying the faith and celebrating what is false, he leads his followers from the safety of orthodoxy to the peril of heresy.
- From the church's earliest days, she has been afflicted by the Heretic in his various forms.
- And he or she continues their evil work today, sometimes by contradicting the truth and sometimes by adding to it.
 - For example – He or she may reframe the doctrine of the Trinity, as Arius (air-ree-us) did in the third century or as Oneness teaching Churches do today.
 - He may also, like Marcus Borg and other prominent scholars, deny the virgin birth or even “the resurrection” of Jesus Christ.
 - Or like Jehovah's Witnesses, he or she may alter God's finished word, or like Mormons, they may add to it, by
 - Boldly tampering with “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3).
- Next up – is the “Charlatan”:
 - “The Charlatan” is only interested in the Christian faith to the extent that it can fill his or her wallet.
 - The Charlatan is the person who uses Christianity as a means of personal enrichment.
 - Paul charged Timothy to be on guard against these people when he said,
 - “If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.
 - He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, *imagining that godliness is a means of gain*” (1 Timothy 6:3-5).
 - As previously stated, the Charlatan is only interested in the Christian faith to the extent that it can fill his wallet. He uses his leadership position to benefit from others' wealth.
- From the Charlatan – we move to “The Prophet”
 - The Prophet claims to be gifted by God to speak fresh revelation outside of Scripture —new, authoritative words of prediction, teaching, rebuke, or encouragement.
 - When in reality, he has been commissioned and empowered by Satan for the purpose of misleading and disrupting Christ's church.
 - John offered an urgent warning about this individual when he said,

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

- Christians must “test the spirits” to determine if they originate with the Holy Spirit or with a demonic spirit.
- Later on in his writings John declared that God has spoken fully and finally in Scripture and offered the most solemn warning against anyone who claims to bring revelation equal or contrary to Scripture – when he said this in Rev. 22:18-19

“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19).

- Moving on – I found this next type of false teacher – somewhat interesting. He is called “The Abuser”.
 - The Abuser uses his position of leadership to take advantage of other people.
 - Usually, he takes advantage of women – in a sexual and perverse way – this person may also desire power.
 - Both Peter and Jude were aware of the Abuser’s lechery:
 - And Peter spoke about it in 2 Peter 2:2 – where he said,

“And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed” (2 Peter 2:2)

- Jude said this in Jude 4,

“For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 4)

- The Abuser claims he is tending souls, but his true interest is ravishing bodies. He is manipulative – and works his way into women’s lives, building confidence with them as he eases into their homes.
- Next on this list is – “The Divider”
 - The Divider uses false doctrine to disrupt or destroy a church. He gleefully divides brother from brother and sister from sister.
 - Jude warned about him as well – when he said this in Jude 18-21

“In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions.’ It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy

Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life” ([Jude 18-21](#)).

- The Divider is devoid of the Holy Spirit whose first fruit is love and whose special work is holding believers together in the bond of peace (Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 4:3).
 - This false teacher brings strife, not love. He generates factions, not unity. He desires discord, not harmony.
- And finally, we have “The Tickler” and “The Speculator”
 - First “The Tickler” is the false teacher who cares nothing for what God wants and everything for what men want.
 - He is the man-pleaser rather than the God-pleaser.
 - Paul thought of him as the ear-tickler:
 - And wrote specifically about Him in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 – where he wrote the following,

“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but, having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths” ([2 Timothy 4:3-4](#)).

- The Tickler craves popularity and praise from the world.
 - And to maintain his follower’s respect, he preaches only the parts of the Bible they deem acceptable.
 - Therefore, he speaks much of happiness but little of sin, much of heaven but nothing of hell.
 - He gives the church only what they want to hear, and he preaches a partial gospel which is no gospel at all.
 - The Tickler preaches an empty gospel to a packed-out church.
 - And He is as old as the church itself.
 - In the nineteenth century he was Henry Ward Beecher, and in the twentieth he was Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller.
 - Today he is Joel Osteen, pastor of one the largest church in America, who is known equally for his toothy smile and his vacuous or mindless content.
 - As I said - He preaches an empty gospel to a packed out church.
 - Just like the false prophets of Jeremiah’s day, he and the thousands like him say, “Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:14).
- And last but not least – we have “The Speculator”, one obsessed with novelty, originality, or speculation.
 - The author of Hebrews warned his church of these “strange teachings,” while Paul

told Timothy to protect the church against any “different doctrine” (Hebrews 13:9, 1 Timothy 1:3).

- Teaching focused on speculation displaces the sure and steady doctrine of Scripture.
 - The Speculator tosses aside the bulk of the Bible’s content and the weight of the Bible’s emphasis in order to obsess about matters that are trivial or novel.
 - He grows weary of the old truths and pursues respectability through originality.
- Today, as in every age, the Speculator obsesses about the End Times, and somehow his failed predictions dissuade neither himself nor his followers.
- Often – he or she can be seen obscuring the clear message of the Scriptures to search for hidden codes in the Manuscript.
 - Sometimes he plants himself in academia, where one of his recent masterpieces is a re-imagined God who is unable to see and know the future.
 - Paul labels the Speculator a contradictory, irreverent babbler (1 Timothy 6:20-21).
- In conclusion – Pastor Chillies said, Satan’s greatest ambassadors are not pimps, politicians, or power-brokers, but pastors.
 - His priests do not peddle a different religion, but a deadly perversion of the true one.
 - His troops do not make a full-out frontal assault, but work as agents, sneaking in, ever so slowly from the side.
 - Satan’s tactics are studied, clever, predictable, and effective.
 - Therefore, we must always remain vigilant – just as Jesus warned us in Matt. 7:15-16 when he said “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:15-16a).
- So there you have it – a snapshot of just a few of the types of false teachers who are alive and well today.
 - And the most unnerving part of all of this is, for most Christians, is they simply do not know the difference between a real teacher – teaching the truth of God’s Word – and a false teacher – peddling a false narrative.
 - And why is this the case?
 - Because of what the church has evolved into!
 - Which is what?
 - A place where the pastor tells you what you believe!
 - Instead of a place, where the church takes on the personality of the Bereans –
 - Yea know - where people study for themselves to find that these things might be true!
 - You get the point – so I’ll digress on this topic.
- Let’s move on – back to our focus verses – 2 Peter 1:17-21:

2 Peter 1:17 For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such a declaration as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory: “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased”—

2 Peter 1:18 and we ourselves heard this declaration made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

2 Peter 1:19 And *so* we have the prophetic word *made* more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

2 Peter 1:20 *But* know this first *of all*, that no prophecy of Scripture becomes a *matter of someone’s own interpretation*,

2 Peter 1:21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

- In verses 17 – 18, Peter recounts what’s referred to as “The transfiguration” of Jesus Christ.
 - Where Peter, James and John witnessed and or heard Gods declaration about Jesus.
 - How that He was God’s Son – whom He was well pleased!
 - And then he recounts – where all this took place, On Gods “Holy Mountain”.
 - Which is a reference to Mt. Zion – the Holy Hill of Jerusalem – which is later referred to as the Temple Mount.
 - This was and is the place which God chose – for His Holy Presence to reside and rule!
 - And then finally, Peter ends the chapter with a warning of sorts – when he said this – one more time – verses 19-21:

2 Peter 1:19 And *so* we have the prophetic word *made* more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

2 Peter 1:20 *But* know this first *of all*, that no prophecy of Scripture becomes a *matter of someone’s own interpretation*,

2 Peter 1:21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

- In these final verses of 2 Peter 1, Peter (as I said) – gives them a warning.
 - A “heads up” if you will, when he says – “you do well”,
 - The actual Greek interpretation of this phrase is – please.
 - As in please pay attention.
- Peter expounds on this – by comparing God's Prophetic Word.

- Which by the way is the Bible!
- He says, you will do well – to pay attention to it – He goes on to say, It's like a lamp shining in a dark place!
 - Which simply means – it's like a flashing neon sign.
 - Therefore, don't ignore it people!
- And remember God's promises – until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.
 - Another way to say it is – hold onto the promises of God.
 - Especially – as it relates to the return of Christ.
 - Until the day it happens!
- And then finally – Peter closes this section of his letter by saying, no prophecy of scripture is a matter of someone's own interpretation.
 - Now this may seem a little confusing.
 - It would appear Peter is saying no one can interpret scripture.
 - Which would mean – what would be the point of a Pastor Teacher – but that's not the case.
 - What he is saying is, do not interpret scripture without a firm grasp of all the scriptures.
 - Meaning – scripture cannot be interpreted separately or individually by itself.
 - My favorite way of saying the same thing is, “The Sum of thy Word is Whole”
- And this is important folks, because – when you take one verse of scripture and try to interpret it – without a complete understanding of the whole, you end up with misinterpretations!
 - Remember – God is consistent – and His messaging is the same from beginning to end.
 - Therefore – if one scripture appears to contradict another passage of scripture you must dig deeper – usually into the Greek or Hebrew interpretation – and generally speaking you will find a translation issue in the way your English translation translates the meaning of the text.
 - I've personally found this to be true on a few occasions.
 - So, Peter is saying, do not interpret scripture in isolation from the “Sum of the whole book”.
- Let me close out today's teaching with this statement – as further commentary on what Peter is saying.
 - Peter along with many other men of the Bible, makes it clear there is no new prophecy –
 - The Canon of Scripture was closed 100's of years ago,
 - And God made that clear at the end of Revelation – when He said that no one should add too or take away from the Book!

- And this makes total sense – when you think about it, who in their right mind would want to follow Jesus Christ if sporadically and periodically a new person popped up saying, well guess what – God gave me a new Revelation!
 - Today, we have Pastors and self-proclaimed Prophets and Apostles – who try and do exactly that.
 - Listen to me when I tell you this it is pure and outright heresy when someone does this.
- So, if you ever hear someone say they have a new word from God – RUN!!!
 - Because it's a lie – and this may sound judgmental, but it's not – I am not judging - that would be an opinion based on perception.
 - It's not judging when we line up what someone is saying back against God's Word.
 - It's inspecting fruit.
 - And the fruit coming from those trees – is rotten!
 - And how do I know that, because God's Word says, there is no New Prophecy!
 - That's how I know it! Amen – Amen!

- Welcome back and good to see everyone this morning. Today we will begin our journey through 2 Peter – the 2nd Chapter.
 - We spent several weeks in 2 Peter 1 – and I believe we extracted just about all the juice out of that chapter we could possibly squeeze.
 - Anyways, when we last left off, we finished our teaching last week by focusing on verses 16-21 of Chapter 1.
 - And my NASB Bible entitled this section of Scripture – Eyewitnesses.
 - Which made sense since it highlighted how it was that Peter James and John were eyewitness to Jesus and the transfiguration.
 - In this section of scripture Peter was trying to say, look we aren't telling you this stuff because someone told us about it. No – we saw it with our own eyes, we lived it.
 - We stood with Jesus on the Holy Mountain, and saw Him transfigured into a radiant bright light.
 - Therefore – you can trust our word, or as he said in verse 16:

2 Peter 1:16 For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

- From there Peter finishes out the chapter by letting the readers know there is but only 1 prophetic word.
 - It came from God through the Prophets in Old Testament.
 - And then through the Apostles in the New Testament.
 - And once God had completed His work of inspiring each book or letter of the Bible, it was canonized into 66 books with roughly 44 Authors.
 - And so – with that, Peter's message was crystal clear –
 - There is no new prophecy of scripture
 - Which means – if someone says they have a new prophetic word, I would be leery of that individual, because it's simply not true!
- Now – why is this important?
 - It's important – because if you believe what Peter said, then you can find great peace and comfort in knowing that all you will ever need to know about life – it's situations, circumstances and God (i.e. His character) who he truly is – has been recorded once and for all in this thing we all have access to – the Book we call the Bible.
 - Which means in a world of uncertainty, where you can't count on anything – the Bible is the one thing you can depend on.
 - And if you think about that for just a minute, you should obtain (as I said earlier), a great peace and solitude.

- Knowing this, it's very important we don't have people popping up with New Revelations of God, because if we did there would be no peace or solitude found in a Word that is always changing.
 - And why? Because we would always be wondering.
 - Wondering – if what that person is saying is from God or not!
 - And this was and is the problem with Mormons and the Church of Latter-day Saints.
- In the 1800's a man by the name of Joseph Smith showed up on the scene, proclaiming to have a new revelation from God.
 - And from those revelations He published a book at the age of 24 – called the book of Mormon
 - Now according to Smith he was visited by two Angels whom he said were God and Jesus Christ.
 - And those angels directed him to a buried book of Golden Plates which were inscribed with the Judeo-Christian history of an Ancient American civilization.
 - In 1830 Smith published the Book of Mormon – which he described as an English Translation of those plates.
- Without turning today's lesson into a study on the history of Mormonism, some of what you should know (at a high level) about the LDS Church is:
 - A – The book of Mormon contradicts teachings in the Bible.
 - B – Joseph Smith said there was nothing wrong with polygamy (multiple wives).
 - C – His cultic religion adopted many other anti-biblical rituals as well.
 - To be honest, when you study Mormonism – you will see close similarities to many of the paganistic and other types of anti-biblical rituals throughout His teachings.
 - And just a side note, I find it interesting how all these other religions seem to somehow squeeze in sexual perversions into their commonly accepted practices.
 - Practices by the way that don't seem to benefit women at all – just men!
 - Strange – how it works out that way. Sorry ladies!
- Anyways, my point is, if God allowed new revelation to be introduced sporadically and periodically – how would you know what to trust?
 - The answer is – you wouldn't, and that's why the scripture makes it clear that there is no new Prophecy!
 - All that God wanted us to know is in your Bible – and that's it, the end!
- Moving on. Next, we move into Chapter 2 of 2 Peter and let's see what he has to say:

2 Peter 2:1 But false prophets also appeared among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will

secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

2 Peter 2:2 Many will follow their indecent behavior, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned.

2 Peter 2:3 and in *their* greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

- So, Peters' words here in Chapter 2 pretty much fall in line with Mormonism/Islam/Jehovah's Witness/Hinduism.
 - And these are just a few of the religions we are all familiar with but there are many more.
 - Some of which have long since died, but many of which still exist today.
- Now before I get into this too deep, let me speak a disclaimer. There was a time in this country when a Pastor could stand in a pulpit and denounce other religions – but not today, because if you do, people tend to get upset.
 - Now I am going to assume no one is going to get upset with what I am about to say this morning, but just in case you do – please remember, once again “I am not making the news, I am simply reporting it”
 - Some might say, Yea – reporting it the way you see it.
 - And to them – I would say “Touche”. You are correct – How else would I report it? Would I report it as someone else sees it, obviously not!
 - So yes – I am reporting this information based on what God's Word says.
 - No – I don't believe there are multiple versions of religion.
 - Or multiple ways to get to Heaven
 - Or that God accepts them all!
 - I do not believe that to be the case!
 - And why – because I have studied the scriptures for 20 years.
 - And I have studied many other religions for over the past 20 plus years as well.
 - And when you line up the historical accuracy of the Bible, and when I say historical accuracy I mean how it is that other books (non-Biblical books), how they testify and validate much of what the Bible says.
 - There is no way I would put my money on any other revelation of man – much less an entirely new religion that came long after the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts we created.
- Now, having said that, let me say, the gravest danger to the Christian Church isn't necessarily Mormonism or Jehovah's Witness or Islam
 - It's biblical deviation from within the walls of the church
 - Meaning a Biblical deviation (which is sometimes slight and sometimes large), this is the biggest danger facing the church today.

- What I find interesting is, how Peter writes about this deviation thousands of years before it became the extreme issue it is today.
 - Don't get me wrong – false teachers and religions have always been around – especially in Peter's day, but believe it or not his words are more relevant today than ever before.
 - Specifically – when we think about what he was saying in verse 1 of 2 Peter 2 where it says:

2 Peter 2:1 But false prophets also appeared among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

- Now, when Peter mentions False prophets and False Teachers, he is speaking about two different types of people.
 - False Prophets refer to people in the Old Testament who many times taught a different religion of the True Prophets – men and or women who tried to lead people away from the true prophets' words, God's words.
 - Whereas False teachers refer to people within the church who rise and begin teaching some version or perversion of God's Word.
 - Let me give you an example of what I mean.
 - Asian Mysticism was rampant during Paul and Peter's time, and it runs contrary to Christianity.
 - Asian Mysticism doesn't confirm Christianity or the existence of Jesus – rather it teaches something altogether different.
 - That would be an example of something False Prophets would teach.
 - Whereas False Teachers may teach a heresy but they do so while being a part of the church.
- Which brings me back to verse 1 where the key to that verse – especially as it relates to where we are today – lies in the words:

“Who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them”

- I want to highlight a few of those heresies for you here today but remember – don't take my word for it. I want you to study it for yourself and decide if what I am saying is true!
- First on the list is – Oneness, which denies the existence of the “Trinity”.
 - Proponents of the oneness philosophy say there is no God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit
 - They say there is only one God, not a triune God!

- They even take it step further and say, if you were baptized in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost – your baptism is no good.
- And you must be re-baptized in Jesus' Name only.
- First let me say, this teaching is so far off track and so weak that it's not even debated among serious theologians (nor has it ever been). And why is that?
 - Well first when we read the Great Commission in Matthew 25:18-19 it clearly says, and I quote:

Matt 25:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Matt 25:19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

- Preachers who teach oneness agree with what Matthew says. They don't deny that it clearly states we are to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
 - But they then come back and ask those whom they debate a question – which is: Who is The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?
 - At which point they then ask and answer their own question, when they say – it's Jesus.
 - Jesus – is the Father – Son and Holy Ghost.
- Now – there are at least two problems with this teaching, and it begins with the purpose of Baptism.
 - If you believe Baptism saves you then I would encourage you need to go do an exhaustive study on Baptism – specifically its origin and purposes.
 - Then two – obviously Matthew clearly says go ye therefore, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
 - And just in case you are wondering what the Greek says. That's exactly what the Greek says as well.
- But that leads us to a dilemma, a dilemma that says:
 - Either A – God is trying to trick us.
 - Or B – someone came up with oneness for some alternate reason!
 - And guess what? If you guessed “B” – you would be correct.
 - Where did this theory of oneness come from?
 - The oneness theory is a relatively new teaching.
 - It was developed in or around 1914 – it was part of a movement that first emerged in North America because of a schism (a split or division) following doctrinal disputes within the nascent (Nay-snt) – finished work – of the *Pentecostal* Church.
 - Nascent simply means a coming or having recently come into existence, the beginning development –

- As I said, this emerged out of the Pentecostal Movement which had broken off from the Holiness Pentecostalism – specifically within the Assemblies of God.
- This all came about when:
 - In April of 1913 – at an Apostolic Faith Worldwide Camp Meeting which was held in California, a Canadian Preacher named R.E. McAlister preached a “New Revelation”.
 - He said that his new revelation revealed to him a new baptismal formula.
 - One that said being baptized in Jesus Name was preferred over the 3-part formula of God the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost.
 - Which is found as a command by Jesus in Matt. 28:19
 - This man pointed to Acts 2:38 as his proof text, where Luke wrote the following.

Acts 2:37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what are we to do?”

Acts 2:38 Peter *said* to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- Now in Acts 2:38 it clearly says:

“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”,

- So now what do we do?
 - Matthew says – go ye therefore baptizing them in the name of the Father – Son and Holy Ghost.
 - And Acts says baptizing them in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins.
 - Well either A – our Bible has a conflict or B – it does not.
 - And if we go with B, then we must simply refer to a favorite saying of my mentor and dear friend Stephen Armstrong.
 - Who said – when the plain sense makes common sense, we seek no other sense and when it doesn’t, we must dig deeper.
 - And sure enough, if we dig deeper – we will find our answer.
- Now – before I give you the answer – let me say one more time:
 - If you do an exhaustive study of baptism and answer the question “why” did God choose baptism as a sacrament of our faith?
 - You will automatically answer the question as to why it doesn’t matter which name or names a person is baptized in.
 - Having said that, to reconcile this issue, we must first understand the context of Matt. 28:19 – The Great Commission and line it up to Acts 2:38.

- Basically, when Jesus gave the Great Commission, He was sending His followers into all the world to make disciples “of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).
 - In the pagan world that they would encounter, many knew absolutely nothing about One True God – they were an idolatrous people who were “without hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12).
 - In preaching the gospel to such people, the apostles would necessarily have to include teaching on what God is like, including His triune nature. (Example being the basic information Paul addresses the Athenians with in Acts 17.)
 - For those who received the gospel and were baptized – they would be converting to an entirely different religious system and would be embracing a new understanding of who God is.
 - In contrast, when Peter was speaking on the Day of Pentecost to faithful Jewish people – they already understood God the Father and God’s Spirit.
 - The part of the equation they were missing was Jesus, the Son of God—and without Jesus, they could not be saved (Acts 4:12).
- In presenting the gospel to the Jews, Peter commands them to be baptized in Jesus’ name; that is, to exercise faith in the One they had crucified.
 - They had already professed God as the Father and the Spirit, but they needed to profess His Son.
 - Those who received the gospel that day devoted themselves to the lordship of Jesus.
 - As they no longer rejected Him but acknowledged Him as their Messiah – the only one who could deliver Hope for salvation.
- This is a high-level understanding of the two differences, but having said that, let me say – I have a book at home called the Book of Denominations.
 - It lists every registered church denomination in the United States – at least those who have applied for 501C3 tax exempt status.
 - This book is several years old – but at the time it was published there were over 4000 plus registered denominations in the U.S.
 - In that book you can read the history and formation of the denomination, and what I can tell you is, most of them broke off from another denomination.
 - And they did so – over some New Revelation.
 - A supposedly New Revelation of God given to one individual.
 - That is how all these denominations were formed, and this oneness teaching is a prime example of what I am talking about.
- Now what I can tell you is this, if we stick with what Peter is telling us – along with other Authors of Scripture – we would never have over 4000 denominations in our country, and we would never entertain such a teaching as Oneness.
 - There is no new revelation!
- Now, I have a question for you – Have you ever wondered why New Revelations are such a thing?

- The answer is Pride – Pride!
- At its core – it's the Ole "I know something you don't know mentality"
 - God has revealed something to me that the others don't know!
 - That is what it all boils down to!
- Let me say one more thing before moving on to another destructive teaching of our modern day era – and that is (once again), "The Sum of Thy Word Is Whole"!
 - I said this last week – scripture must be interpreted wholistically.
 - Not separately or individually!
 - Throughout the years, when I have debated people on various topics, they always seem to isolate their debate to a few scriptures.
 - They hone in on a few verses –
 - They eat them, drink them, sleep them, and believe them.
 - But they don't know the rest of the Bible.
 - Which causes a serious issue, because you cannot interpret scripture on the testimony of one or two single verses.
 - It just won't work!
 - So just remember that when you enter a debate on a particular Bible topic!
- Moving on. Before we close this morning I want to highlight one more heresy of scripture – one that poses what I believe the "Greatest Threat" to the modern church.
 - And that is "Easy beliefism".
 - Now let me say this about this issue, easy beliefism isn't really something that is taught outright.
 - Meaning, it isn't an actual identified and labeled teaching.
 - Easy beliefism, is a culture – a way of life – so to speak.
 - Meaning – it's a teaching, but it's not identified as a stand-alone teaching.
 - Easy beliefism says, just walk down an aisle – repeat the words that the preacher tells you to repeat, and you will be saved!
 - It's that simple – hence, why it's called easy beliefism!
 - "Easy Beliefism" emerged as part of the evangelical movement in America, that was Great in and of itself. At least it was great until someone said, well if one is good then two must be better!
 - Meaning, if we saw one person surrender their life to Christ, then we should do an evaluation on what caused that person to make their decision.
 - Meaning, evaluate the preacher's message – how what he said may have had influence into that person's decision
 - And if we can identify what he said then we can improve upon it.
 - And next time – maybe we will see two people surrender their life to Christ.

- Once again – at the core of “Easy Beliefism” is none other than Pride.
- Some might try and argue against this point – but it’s the truth.
- When Easy Beliefism began it was pure in its intent, but later it evolved into a place where church services had as their focus manipulation tactics, which influenced people's reasoning for why they should make a decision for Christ.
 - Which is what led to where we are today as a church.
 - The problem with all this is, the Church has subconsciously said to God "Stand back – we got this".
 - They have intervened – and began counterfeiting the work of the Holy Spirit!
 - They have done this all in the name of, or the Spirit of, Evangelism! – or in the name of getting people saved!
 - Problem is, when you (once again) do an exhaustive study on Soteriology, which is the study of Salvation (specifically, how people are truly saved), you will discover there is no need to manipulate anything, because God is the one who saves.
 - He is the one who initiates the “pricking of the heart”.
 - And He is the one who finishes that work in the heart of an individual.
 - Just as Paul said in Philippians 1:6 – when he said:

Phil. 1:6 *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work among you will complete it by the day of Christ Jesus.*

- Easy Beliefism takes God out of the center of the equation and replaces Him with man!
 - Which means if I (as the preacher) can craft my message in a way that moves you emotionally, or if I can amp up the service with high powered music, then maybe I can influence you, and or move you into a decision for Christ!
 - But as I said – look who is at the center of all of this. It’s not God – it's man!
 - And of course – the result of this practice or method, leads to confusion and false conversion!
 - These examples, line up perfectly with what Peter is saying in verse 1 when he says:

2 Peter 2:1 *But false prophets also appeared among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.*

- False teachers are a serious issue in our day, and I would say – more so than at any other time in history.
 - Now let me close our service today by saying I gave you just two teachings that line

up with what Peter is saying but there are 100's more.

- And each one of them serves to damage the underlying fabric of our faith.
- It is imperative that we question everything that we are being told and then line it back up against scripture.
- And guys that is my prayer this morning – for everyone sitting here that we would become a church that would increase in the knowledge of God – so that we can join together and eliminate confusion in the mind of the believer – and that we would become bold in our faith.
 - Because we are confident in what we believe!
 - And the byproduct of our increased knowledge of God would be, that God would use us in the work he is doing in and around us everyday.
 - That's my prayer! Amen – Amen!

- Welcome back. Today we are going to pick back up with our journey through 2 Peter.
 - As I often do, I would ask that you turn to 2 Peter:1-3 and follow along with me if you will as we re-read our focus verses from last week, so we can move forward in context.
 - Last week we spent most of our time talking about the differences between False Prophets and False Teachers
 - False Prophets – as we discovered were men or women who not only taught a different type of doctrine, but honestly they professed a different type of religion altogether
 - Generally speaking they were people who would try and lead God’s children astray – with different philosophies and theories of how the world and the universe works
 - In Peter’s Day there were many, many different types of False Prophets and religions and that makes sense.
 - You must remember Jesus Christ and Christianity were a relatively new religion at that time in history.
 - Having said that though, following God was nothing new.
 - It was just new as it related to Jesus Christ and His fulfillment of what the Old Testament forecasted
 - If you remember, (in the Old Testament) the only way an individual could be saved was if he or she was a Jew.
 - And simply put – if you weren’t a Jew, then you were not one of God’s children.
 - Having said that, even if you weren’t born a Jew by birth you could convert over to Judaism.
 - And Judaism (at that time) had been around for some 2000 years.
- But as I said – Jesus Christ and Christianity was relatively new, and so you can see why there were so many false prophets popping up during Peter and Paul’s era.
 - Because to be honest with you, at the core of every individual, is the desire to believe in something.
 - Even when there isn’t anything to believe in.
 - Which means it would make no difference if you knew about Jesus or not.
 - Matter a fact, it made no difference if you’ve ever even heard of Jesus or not!
 - People are always going to find something or someone to connect to or believe in!
- But Peter didn’t just highlight False Prophets in his writings. He mentioned False Teachers as well.
 - And as I stated last week, the words “false teacher” here are a combination of two Greek words that don’t show up in any other place of scripture.
 - And those words speak specifically to individuals inside the church – who have discovered some “New Revelation” of God.

- They act as if they are men and women who God has chosen to be the keepers of the secrets.
 - Which of course makes no sense, because God would never elevate an individual to that type of status.
- And why – because of pride.
 - God knows we as humans can't handle it.
- And let me say, for most people, they would equate False Prophets and False Teachers as being the same or similar.
- But that's not the case – at least as it pertains to Peter's words here in 2 Peter Chapter 2
- A False Prophet (as mentioned here) refers to the Old Testament where people tried to lead God's people completely away from the one true God
 - Whereas False Teachers are speaking more about believers, or those who called themselves believers.
 - Individuals inside the body who try and lead people astray with a perverse type of Christian Teaching.
 - A modification if you will, on the teachings of God's Word.
- Last week I highlighted two types of those teachings. Teachings that are alive and well in our present and modern-day church age.
 - The first was Mormonism.
 - And the second was a concept known as “Easy beliefism”.
 - And as I explained to you last week, “Easy beliefism” was and is the most dangerous of these two types of false teachings.
 - After last week's service – I had a conversation with someone about that concept, and they had questions about what I was saying. So, I want to clarify the topic a little bit more this morning.
 - Real quick – as I stated last week – “Easy Beliefism” is an ancestor or predecessor to the evangelical movement.
 - For the most part it began with pure intention – and it still has pure intentions as it seeks as its goal to see people saved.
 - We would all agree that is a good thing.
 - Problem is, Easy Beliefism circumvents the Salvation Process.
 - Or it circumvents the Mechanism by which someone is saved.
 - Which is what?
 - The conviction of God which comes by way of His Word
 - And that's not my opinion. That's exactly what God's Word says.

Romans 10:17 “Faith come by hearing and hearing by the Word of God”

- “Easy Beliefism” says, if you just repeat some words after a preacher you are saved.
 - And I want to clarify that a little bit further, I am not saying, that praying with the pastor or anyone else for that matter – in the matter of Salvation – is a bad thing
 - Or, that if you were saved in that manner – you are not saved.
 - That is not what I meant, and there is nothing wrong with that – Salvation can be obtained that way.
 - Praying with a Pastor or someone else, isn’t the issue.
 - It’s the step before that step – that’s the issue!
- Let me explain what I mean – and I’ll do that by describing to you, how the Salvation process works.
 - True Salvation manifests itself when God convicts an individual by and through His Word.
 - It’s that “moment” – when a man or women or child realize who God is and who they are without Him.
 - It’s in that moment that conviction sets in, and from there that individual acknowledges they are a sinner.
 - That Jesus came and died for their sins.
 - At which point they repent, ask for forgiveness, and follow that up with a public profession of faith through baptism.
 - Which lets the world know they have made a decision for Christ.
 - That process completes what is the Salvation experience in the life of an individual.
- But here’s the issue: If the Conviction part of the equation is manipulated by men or women in anyway, if we try to speed up or fast forward the work of the “Holy Spirit” or
 - Maybe better said, if we try subconsciously or consciously to counterfeit the work of the Holy Spirit – through whatever means:
 - which could be through amped up music service or through some emotional story or joke or whatever it is outside the conviction of God’s Word...
 - Then we have removed the Holy Spirit out of the equation, and instead injected ourselves into it!
 - We cannot re-create a conviction experience, or it will lead to false conversion.
 - And this was and continues to be an issue.
 - But why? Why is this such a problem?
 - Because seeing people saved (leads presumably to Church Growth), and church growth (attendance) is the church’s primary measure of success.
 - And so the pressure is always looming for the Preacher to try and help God out in the convicting process.
 - And that’s where the easy beliefism enters the equation.
 - The thought is this, let’s not make the salvation process too complicated. Let’s

dumb it down – water it down so people can get it!

- Problem is – God doesn’t need our help in the area.
- I’ll give you a real-life example of what I mean – using two churches I once was a part of. One where I was a deacon and the other where I was an Associate Pastor.
 - Pertaining to the one where I was a deacon, we had a Pastor who told a story from the pulpit one time about a little boy who was either dying or his mother was dying (I can’t remember).
 - In the story he told how the little boy wanted to buy his mother a gift of some sort – but he only had a little bit of money.
 - And so, he bought her some perfume.
 - The story was a real tearjerker – it was an emotional story and a good one.
 - Problem was that the preacher told the story as if he was a party of the story – which made it even more of a tearjerker –
 - The point of his story was to get an emotional rise out of people, and sure enough – it worked. People were emotional and crying all over the place.
 - But guess what? The preacher lied – it wasn’t a story that he was personally involved with. Because someone found that exact story on the internet, but told it as if he had personally experienced it, as if he knew the little boy.
- Now the question that should be lingering in everyone’s mind at this point is – should be, why? Why would he do such a thing?
 - The answer is – Results
 - For most preachers they feel an extreme amount of pressure to produce and when they run out of stories to tell, or things to do, or a new way to entertain, they sometimes just make it up!
- I also had this same type of experience at another church, but in a different way – when I became an Associate Pastor at another church later in my career.
 - At that church the preacher was a master at coming up with new and creative shock factor scenarios that he felt might convict people into deciding for Christ
 - Once again, let me say – his intent was pure and noble. But the results produced (what I believe) were many false conversion experiences.
 - I remember one time he had me ride a motorcycle down the aisle – and then somehow tied that into his message.
- Now once again, I want to go on record and say – there is nothing wrong with praying with the Pastor or anyone else to receive Salvation.
 - That’s not what I mean when I say “Easy Beliefism”. Easy beliefism is when the Preacher or the church tries to manipulate the message – and get an emotional reaction out of the crowd
 - And as I said, they do it all in the spirit of seeing people saved, but it’s wrong – it’s wrong anytime we try and intervene and counterfeit the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - Remember Salvation is a work of the Lord!

- And all we must do to see people saved is to stay faithful in the teaching of God's Word. And God will do the rest!
- Moving on, back to, today's teaching. Let me read last week's verses one more time for context and reference.

2 Peter 2:1 But false prophets also appeared among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

2 Peter 2:2 Many will follow their indecent behavior, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;

2 Peter 2:3 and in *their* greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

- The crux of Peter's words here are simple – and they apply to all of us sitting here today.
 - There will be people – who will infiltrate the church and begin teaching something contrary to God's Word.
 - There will also be people who have been in church for a long time, who hear something or read something and believe they have received a New Revelation from God.
 - And when that happens, (not if it happens, but when it happens), you (as a believer) must be prepared to deal with.
 - You must have a deep enough understanding of the Bible that you can call it out and push it aside.
 - And by the way – before moving on I want you to notice something about verse 2, where Peter says many will follow their indecent behavior.
 - Then he says in verse 3 “in their greed they will exploit you with false words”.
- Let me say this: If you don't know if someone is a False Teacher or not, watch for their indecent behavior and greed, i.e. the money.
 - Inevitably – these two will become front and center of their “New Revelation”. Maybe not both at the same time, but certainly one of them will rise to the surface
- Enough on this, let's press on – and we will close with 2 Peter 2:4-10:

2 Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment.

2 Peter 2:5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

2 Peter 2:6 and *if* He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing *them* to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly *lives* thereafter.

2 Peter 2:7 and *if* He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men

2 Peter 2:8 (for by what he saw and heard *that* righteous man, while living among them, felt *his* righteous soul tormented day after day by *their* lawless deeds),

2 Peter 2:9 *then* the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

2 Peter 2:10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority.

- So guys, let me try and sum up what Peter is saying here.
 - If we back up to our previous verses for context, Peter just got through mentioning two types of individuals who historically worked diligently to drag the church off course – which would be the False Prophets of old.
 - And then he followed that up by saying there would be men who would show up as False Teachers in the future.
 - Peter wanted the church to look back and remember those False Prophets – remember what they did and then be vigilant – for those False Teachers who will be easing their way into their fellowships in the future.
 - And then – from there he enters a dissertation of examples using Fallen Angels (which became Demons), Noah and the flood, as well as Sodom and Gomorrah for his case studies.
- Peter also does something else by combining these two examples – and to understand this a little better I want you to notice what the two situations mentioned (Noah, and Sodom and Gomorrah – what they both have in common).
 - Sexual Sin and immorality
 - And what did I just say, if you don't know if the person is a False Teacher or not, watch out for the indecent behavior and the greed, i.e. the money!
 - And sure enough – the two situations' Peter cites revolve around exactly that!
 - Just read it. Why did God destroy the earth the first time?

Genesis 6:1 Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them,

Genesis 6:2 that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.

- Then in verse 5 he said:

Genesis 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

- Now immorality wasn't the only problem man had at that point, but it was the only one highlighted!
 - And I find it interesting how that even though no sin is worse than any other...sexual sins seem to carry a harsher punishment on earth than other sins.
 - Meaning – we never saw God destroy an entire group of people for say “Gluttony or for coveting or gossiping”.
 - But He does for Sexual Sin.
- The most glaring example of that shows up in Genesis 19 – with the story of Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - I believe most of us probably know this story, but in case you've never heard of it...
 - Sodom and Gomorrah were two cities where the sexual sin had gotten so bad – that God had to send in two Angels to rescue Lot and his family).
 - When I say the sexual sin had gotten so bad in these cities, it wasn't just bad it was really bad.
 - So bad that when the two Angels went in to rescue Lot, the people in those cities tried to have sex with the Angels.
 - Which led to the ultimate demise of these places
 - Because God as we know leveled the place!
 - Which is why I say all sin is the same as it relates to Salvation.
 - But sexual sins seem to carry a harsher punishment here on earth.
- Now having said that these corollaries are not what's most important about Peter's words. Well – that's true but it isn't.
 - It is as Peter uses these stories to highlight his point.
 - But that isn't the gold that believers should be mining out of these verses.
 - Look at it closer – I want you to notice how Peter lets us know that there is one person or one group of people who will make it through those trying times.
 - And who is it? The Righteous!
 - Which begs the question – who are the righteous?
 - You are! If you are saved – you have been declared righteous!
 - You are righteous because in the sight of God you have been completely wiped clean of sin.
 - The only ones who are completely wiped clean of sin are those who are covered by the blood of Jesus.
 - Righteousness is just a synonym for salvation. And this is good news for all believers!
 - Because – we are all faced with temptation. Especially that of an immoral sort.
 - But God can deliver you from all of it.
 - Matter a fact, He will deliver you from it – if you ask Him and allow him to do so!
 - Listen to it one more time:

2 Peter 2:9 *then* the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,
2 Peter 2:10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority.

- And so, God know us better than we know ourselves. He knows sexual sin is alive and well on the earth – and for that reason, He provided a way out.
 - When I think of this statement I think of James 4:7-10:

James 4:7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

James 4:8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

James 4:9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.

James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

- The key to activating Gods help (as it relates to temptation), lies in the words Submit and Resist.
 - God knows what we struggle with, and He is always faithful in supporting and lifting His children in those trying times.
 - But He doesn't help us in temptation, without us doing something – we must first take one step toward Him. And He will take two towards us!
 - That's the proposition here. You do – and God does.
 - You submit and resist, and God says the devil will flee.
 - Draw near to Him and He will draw near to you.
 - Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep, let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.
 - And then here is the final key in verse 10: Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you!
- For every believer sitting here today, I want to say one thing – as it relates to all the struggles we face daily: God is with you!
 - He isn't just with you – as in some bumper sticker saying sense.
 - He is truly with you, and He is in control.
 - All we must do is humble ourselves and take one step toward Him – and He will do the rest! He is with you!
 - King David said it best when he said it this way!

Psalm 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd,

I will not be in need.

Psalm 23:2 He lets me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside quiet waters.

Psalm 23:3 He restores my soul;
He guides me in the paths of righteousness
For the sake of His name.

Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

Psalm 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You have anointed my head with oil;
My cup overflows.

Psalm 23:6 Certainly goodness and faithfulness will follow me all the days of my
life,
And my dwelling *will be* in the house of the LORD forever.

- Amen – Amen!

- Good morning, everyone and welcome back. Today we pick back up with our journey through 2 Peter.
 - Last week we finished our teaching by focusing in on Chapter 2 verses 4-10, and today – believe it or not – we are going to do more of the same.
 - In those verses, Peter made a couple of statements that I feel are critical for every believer.
 - For context - I want us to back up and re-read those verses as we segway into our next set of verses at the end of today's lesson and here is what Peter wrote:

2 Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;

2 Peter 2:5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

2 Peter 2:6 and *if* He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing *them* to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly *lives* thereafter;

2 Peter 2:7 and *if* He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men

2 Peter 2:8 (for by what he saw and heard *that* righteous man, while living among them, felt *his* righteous soul tormented day after day by *their* lawless deeds),

2 Peter 2:9 *then* the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

2 Peter 2:10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority.

- Now – if you read these verses separately - by themselves – apart from the context of the previous verses, Peter's words might seem kind of odd.
 - Fortunately for us – we know the context from which these verses were written.
 - Peter wrote these words on the heels of a warning.
 - And what was the warning?
- It was, that any believer who might read this section of scripture should be vigilant and weary of a certain set of individuals who had and will be infiltrating the church.
 - And who were those individuals?
 - Peter labeled them as False Teachers – and just to give the readers a clue as to who it is they are watching out for; he refers them back to false prophets of old.
 - Those men and women who had previously tried (and succeeded in some cases) in leading God's people off track.
 - But as we learned over the past few weeks false prophets and false teachers were different (at least as they are described here in 2 Peter).

- Where the false prophets tried to lead God's people off track to other religions and beliefs.
 - Religions and beliefs totally contrary to God's Word.
 - Totally contrary to the one true God all together.
- These False teachers would use different methods from those of the Old Testament False Prophets.
 - The biggest difference being in who they say they serve.
 - These false teachers will call themselves believers – matter a fact, many of them will be believers...
 - Believers who through their own logic and intellect – (which by the way is guided by none other than the enemy himself).
 - They will slowly begin to twist and or slightly change God's Word.
 - Their behavior will produce the same type of results as the false prophets were able to produce.
- But as we know – God knew that would be the case.
- So He moved Peter to write about it here in 2 Peter.
 - Which leads him to expound on this issue a little bit further.
 - He does so using a method I like to call the “Stick and Carrot” method.
 - Have you ever heard of that concept? Or this method?
 - It's simple to understand.
 - The theory goes like this, when trying to motivate someone – you can either use a stick or a carrot.
- Now, the stick side of the equation is exactly what it sounds like, its motivation is through negative reinforcement.
 - Throughout the years this method has been a popular method used in business, and it captures the essence of the old saying “The beatings will persist until the morale improves”.
 - And believe it or not, this method was, and still is the preferred method of motivation inside some business organizations.
 - And it seeks as its intent to change people's behavior by beating them down until they eventually do what they are supposed to do.
 - This method worked at one point but today, it's not very effective – primarily because employees have options. And the same goes for church.
 - People can attend church anywhere – therefore they don't want to go to a church that makes them feel bad about themselves.
 - Which is one sign of the end of times by the way.
 - Where (in 2 Tim. 4:3) Timothy says:

2 Tim. 4:3 For *the* time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires,

- Next – we have the carrot method. Which (as you can imagine) is polar opposite of the stick method.
 - The carrot method seeks to motivate people with positive reinforcement – instead of negative reinforcement
 - Companies (for example) who adopt this method in its extreme form, take it over the top – by giving people bonuses and incentives for doing the job they were paid to do in the first place.
 - In these organizations the employee is number 1.
 - Proponents of this method say the customer isn't number 1 – rather it's the employee who is the focus.
 - The theory is, if you take care of the employee – the employee will take care of the customer.
- Now – the question is – are either one of these true?
 - Maybe a better way to say it – is one of these more effective than the other?
 - The answer is yes and no – which I know makes me sound like my lawyer.
- In Peter's writings here in 2 Peter 2 he begins the verses by using the stick – in the form of a warning.
 - And he does so by following it up with examples from the Old Testament. Specifically by using Noah & the flood, along with Sodom and Gomorrah as examples.
- But inside those stories is also another story of hope for every believer – where God gives us the “Carrot Side” of the story as well.
 - Our hope lies in the “Why” of the story.
 - As in why did God destroy everyone on the earth besides Noah along with 7 other members of his family?
 - And FYI – it was same the reason He destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - And let me say, in both those stories God was consistent.
 - He destroyed the earth and the cities because the unrighteous and the ungodly had taken over – leaving just a few righteous.
- Now – most of us know these stories.
 - What's most important for believers in these stories is how God pulled out the righteous (the saved people) before He destroyed the ungodly.
- This is a fact –
 - God destroyed the entire earth and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah – but not

before he removed the saved people from the planet.

- And we know this to be the case – because that’s exactly what Genesis tells us.
- And it’s also reinforced by what Peter said in these verses as well.

2 Peter 2:5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

2 Peter 2:6 and *if* He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing *them* to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly *lives* thereafter;

2 Peter 2:7 and *if* He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men

2 Peter 2:8 (for by what he saw and heard *that* righteous man, while living among them, felt *his* righteous soul tormented day after day by *their* lawless deeds),

2 Peter 2:9 *then* the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

- And so in Peter's example we have the “Stick and Carrot” method being used – where God makes it clear He will take care of the unrighteous people.
 - And the example He uses is a pretty scary one.
 - Which (as I said) gives us the stick side or the negative reinforcement side of the equation – and it should motivate us to pay attention and work hard to stay on track.
 - But then in those same verses He also lets us know that He will also preserve the righteous.
 - Which paints a picture of the security that we as believers have in Christ (as it relates to matters of Salvation).
 - Matter a fact, Peter says – in verse 9 – that the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation (which is Great News: there you have the Carrot – the positive reinforcement side of things).
 - While at the same time keeping the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgement (which is bad news for those who are not saved – which show us the negative side of things).
- Now having said all of this, there is something quite interesting about the story of Noah and Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - At least as it ties back to the concept of “The Eternal Security of the Believer”.
 - It shows up after Lot and his family were removed from those cities.
- What do you think it is?
 - It has to do with – Lot's wife?
 - The question we should all be asking ourselves is, was she saved?

- The answer to that question is important as it relates to the guarantee you have in your salvation.
- The Bible says, God removed the righteous before destroying Sodom and Gomorrah and the same held true for Noah and the flood.
 - But God also turned Lot's wife into a pillar of salt!
 - And why did he do that?
 - Because He told the family not to look back after leaving the city. And – she looked back anyway!
 - So, God punished her – by turning her into a pillar of salt.
 - Another way to say it is, He eliminated her from the face of the earth!
- So, how about that loving God? The one we all want to romanticize about.
 - God took her out – but good news, guess where she is today?
 - Heaven!
 - And how do I know that?
 - I know it because of what 2 Peter told us and I know it because of the testimony of the Salvation process in the scriptures.
- And so, all of this tells us something folks.
 - It tells us that we might be saved – but we are not outside the reach of God's wrath and punishment.
 - At least as it relates to our spiritual discipline here on earth!
 - And so there it is – God clearly showing us both sides of His character in these stories, where He gives us the positive and negative results – or as I said – where He uses the Carrot and the Stick.
- Now one question I have when studying both sides of God's Character is...
 - Do these methods work?
 - And or, which ones works the best?
 - The answer is both methods work to a degree.
 - But focusing on one without the other won't work.
- Which leads me to the words of the day – “Balance and Moderation”
 - Meaning – God uses both methods in His handling of us and we are to do the same in our everyday lives – balance is “key”.
 - Just like with all things in our lives, even too much of a good thing is bad.
- I'll give you an example of what I mean – by using a super spiritual analogy or object – one that we all know and love... Cheesecake.
 - I love Cheesecake and just so you know – it loves me as well!
 - I guess you could say – we have a relationship.
 - Obviously having a little cheesecake from time to time – or even having two pieces

from time to time is not bad at all.

- Eating it every day, well – not so good!
- So, as I said – the words of the day are...“Balance and Moderation”.
- And God is the one who invented this concept.
- All throughout the scriptures we see places where God gives us liberty to do certain things – but then follows that verse with another verse that brings balance and or moderation to the equation.
 - An example of that would be drinking.
- Now – before I delve too deep into this topic this morning, I would ask that you don’t leave here today and say – Brother Greg was promoting drinking in today’s sermon. (Not that you would – but I mention it – just in case!)
 - Because I am not doing that.
 - Drinking is very dangerous – but it’s not prohibited.
 - Drunkenness on the other hand is prohibited.
 - Having said that, even though we are not prohibited from drinking it is one the most dangerous liberties we have.
 - Primarily because too much of it excites the flesh – which then causes it to become a lifestyle.
 - A lifestyle that some individuals can’t live without – and if it ever grabs ahold of a person, it will absolutely destroy them.
- And so, although the scripture doesn’t prohibit the believer from consuming alcohol – it does issue a warning relating to this liberty. When I read those warnings, I think of it like this:
 - If you had a headache for a week – and I told you I had a pill that would eliminate your headache, you would probably, (if you trusted me), grab it out of my hand and take it.
 - But what if (right before you took it) – I said, before you take this – please know – if you don’t let this pill sit under your tongue for at least 15 minutes it will kill you instantly.
 - You would probably hesitate – and not be so anxious to take it.
 - I bet you would pause and think about it – and probably say to yourself hold on, wait a minute – I may need to research this a little bit more.
 - You might even say, thanks for the offer but I believe I will just ride it out – I am sure the headache will eventually subside.
 - This same analogy could be applied to alcohol or cheesecake.
 - If someone has a drink or two every so often – no big deal.
 - But alcohol has a way of sucking you in and becoming master over your psyche!
 - Which makes it very dangerous.
- Now – let me speak a disclaimer.

- “What you do or do not do – is between you and God”
- I will teach you God's Word – and the rest is between you and him.
- I will never step in and try to counterfeit the work of the Holy Spirit (and try to convict someone).
 - That is not my responsibility, and I am not telling you what to do.
 - I am just giving you an example of balance and moderation
 - And I am doing so using a substance that the Bible clearly doesn't prohibit – but a substance that has (at its core) – the potential to ruin your life and the lives of others around you.
- Alcohol isn't the only one.
- There are many others – such as gluttony/overeating etc....
 - Having said that, alcohol is a substance that carries with it much higher consequences if it gets out of control.
 - And some people can handle it – where others cannot.
- But before I wander too far of track, I want to get back to this balance/moderation thing for just a minute. More specifically how the Bible promotes balance and moderation in its language.
 - And I want to do so by calling this “Balance and Moderation” concept the same thing the Bible calls it: It's called Freedom or Liberty – Christian men and women we have Freedom and Liberty in Christ.
 - That liberty was given to us when Jesus died for our sins on the Cross of Calvary.
 - Paul himself references this (Freedom/Liberty) slash (Balance & Moderation) in Galatians 5 – and I want to read it to you quick.
 - Galatians 5:1 and then I want to skip forward to Gal. 5:13
 - Listen to what Paul wrote Galatians 5:1: Walk by the Spirit

Galatians 5:1 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

- The freedom Paul is referencing here relates to how the Jews were slaves – held under bondage by the Law of Moses along with all its rules.
 - But now after their acceptance of Christ they've been set free from all those rules and regulations.
 - These Jews are known as Messianic Jews – because they have accepted the Messiah!
 - Paul is telling them – if you think following the rules will save you, you would be wrong.
 - And so we have freedom, and or liberty in Christ.
- But then in verse 13 we get the counterbalance to Paul's words.

- And this is where the words balance, and moderation enter into the equation – at least as it relates to our liberty.
- Listen to what he says:

Gal. 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

- And so there you have it, Paul says you have Freedom/Liberty – but do not turn your freedom or liberty into opportunity for your flesh.
 - Pretty powerful statement when you stop to think about it.
 - Just remember, your flesh is looking for any and every opportunity to take over your life.
 - Hence the words Balance and Moderation.
 - So, we must always be on guard and be vigilant in protecting ourselves and our families!
- Back to the focus of today's teaching. In verses 4-10, Peter sends the church and every believer a clear message.
 - I would call his statement a heads up for the church. A negative reinforcement of sorts, in trying to keep God's Children from sin.
 - That heads up or warning was stated as an overarching theme in the entirety of these verses.
 - Listen to it one more time – 2 Peter 2:4-10:

2 Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;

2 Peter 2:5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

2 Peter 2:6 and *if* He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing *them* to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly *lives* thereafter;

2 Peter 2:7 and *if* He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men

2 Peter 2:8 (for by what he saw and heard *that* righteous man, while living among them, felt *his* righteous soul tormented day after day by *their* lawless deeds),

2 Peter 2:9 *then* the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

2 Peter 2:10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority.

- The way you should understand these verses is simple but unfortunately, its theme or message isn't a theme or message our society likes hearing anymore.
 - Matter a fact, our society detests the message of these verses
 - So much so, that they work extremely hard not to allow this type of talk to even enter our adult minds.
 - And we work even harder not to allow it to enter the minds of our children.
 - And so, what is the message of 2 Peter 2?
 - Well – before I tell you – you might want to lean in on what I am about to say here for just a moment because it's very profound.
 - I am not sure there are too many people on the planet who could have picked up on what I am about to tell you.
 - And so - what is it?
- Well here it is – Sin has consequences. But that's not the most disturbing part of the message hidden in these verses. The most disturbing part and or the most bothersome part of Peter's words come from its underlying meaning – which is God is Just, and He is Holy and Righteous.
 - And nothing unholy or unrighteous will escape His wrath and judgement.
 - Which means Peter is making it crystal clear to all of us sitting here today.
 - God will punish the ungodly and He will preserve the righteous until the end!
 - Which tells us that what we must never, take God's Grace and Mercy and Love for granted.
 - Because if you do you will pay the price – and if it's not in this life, certainly it will be in the one to come
- Now I said no one wants to hear this and let me clarify what I mean.
 - No one wants anyone to paint God in the light of His wrath, we instead want to talk about His Love.
 - Which is fine, but our God is a God of balance
 - He is a God of both Love and Wrath. If you remove the wrath side of His character from the equation, you end up with a God who is much like Santa Clause, the Tooth Ferry or the Easter Bunny –
 - A God Who is all loving and would never punish anyone, much less allow someone to enter the gates of hell.
 - But let me expound on this concept or view of God for just a moment, because it has become a real issue in our church society today.
 - Reason being, that description of God's Character is simply not an accurate description of the God of the Bible.
 - Let me say one more thing related to this topic, a healthy fear of God or authority in general is extremely important.
 - And I am not the one who made that up. This is a God concept.

- Listen to Proverbs

Proverbs 3:7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Proverbs 14:27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,
That one may avoid the snares of death.

Proverbs 28:14 How blessed is the man who fears always,
But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.

- Now if you have never heard this description of fear as it relates to God, and how we should view Him, then you can say you heard it here first.
 - Fear is a good thing, and if you don't have it – and if your children don't have it, you are living in a very dangerous and unhealthy place.
 - But why is that? Why is Fear a Good thing?
 - Because it causes us to pause, to think and count the cost.
 - Without it we run a very high risk of doing whatever we want to do. Which then of course leads to mistakes and regret.
 - Listen to those descriptors one more time.
- The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom
- The Fear of the Lord is the Fountain of Life
 - That's what Proverbs tells us.
 - Fear is not only a good thing. It is essential if we want to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ.
 - By the way – you know the number one byproduct of fear is Humility!
- Now before we move on from this topic this morning, I would like to bring your attention to the fact that there are two types of fear.
 - One is a derivative of being afraid of something. As in – “I'm scared I will get in trouble”
 - The other is a fear out of respect – which leads a person to act or react out of reverence.
 - You would think that fear is fear, and who really cares if it accomplishes the result.
 - That is true somewhat – but not really.

- Yes – having a fear of something just so you don't get in trouble is better than no fear at all.
- It is totally different than fear out of respect.
 - One is healthy and the other is not.
- Unfortunately in our society today, we have worked hard to eliminate any type of fear from the minds of adults and our children.
 - This has now led us into a society where young people walk into movie theaters and schools and shoot people.
 - And they do so with zero visible signs of regret.
 - And how crazy is that, how could an individual who has never been in trouble simply walk into a crowd of people and begin shooting?
 - It's all due to a lack of fear.
 - Obviously Prison isn't a bad place anymore because we've made our prisons comfortable.
 - Even if you commit mass murder it's highly unlikely you will ever get the death penalty.
 - If you do get the death penalty, more than likely you will die before you're ever executed.
- Just remember this as it relates to fear – The lack of fear removes the suppression of the flesh.
 - Sure enough that is exactly what Peter tells us in the next set of verses.
 - And that's where we will close – 2 Peter 2:11-16

2 Peter 2:10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority.

Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties,

2 Peter 2:11 whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord.

2 Peter 2:12 But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed,

2 Peter 2:13 suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you,

2 Peter 2:14 having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children;

2 Peter 2:15 forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

2 Peter 2:16 but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, *for* a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

- As I said, we will close here because as you can see there is a whole lot being said.
 - I read these verses because they tied in perfectly with what I said about fear, and I want to encourage each one of you to study these verses this week, because Peter's words run extremely deep and there is a whole lot being said here as it relates to a warning for the church!
 - Amen – Amen!

- Good morning, guys it's good to be back – glad to see everyone. Now when we last left off we were in 2 Peter where we specifically focused in on verses 4-10.
 - Just to set the context for you – I want you to remember, that Peter is the one who wrote 2 Peter. He did so at the end of his life.
 - It was the last letter pinned in the New Testament. Peter wrote this letter to a group of Gentile believers, mixed in with some Jewish believers.
 - This group – was residing somewhere in Northern Asia Minor or what is known today as Modern Day Turkey.
- Now, the overall context or message of this letter revolves around maturity (sanctification).
 - Christian and or Spiritual Maturity, which as we know is key in our overall development as believers.
 - Spiritual Maturity is something we are all commanded to strive for.
 - That's if we desire to become a more fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ.
 - Spiritual Maturity is also the next step of our Christian Walk after we are saved.
 - It's also the step that the modern-day church has lost its way on.
 - I won't get into all that this morning, because you guys know where I stand on the issue, and so for the sake of time, let me just simplify it for you.
 - The church, to reach people for Christ – Which by the way let me just say is the easier part of the two-step process of the Christian life.
- And so the Church, in its desire and or effort to see people come to know Christ slowly begins to abandon, what is the second part of the Christian life or Christian Walk – that spiritual growth or maturity part (sanctification).
 - And why has that happened? Well – first because God said it would happen in the end times.
 - Second, as I previously stated, because telling people about Jesus – or creating programs that will reach people for Christ – is the easier part of the Christian equation.
 - Another way to say it is – it's the fun part. I mean after all – who doesn't want to see people saved – right?
- Anyways, Peter wrote this letter to a group of Gentile Believers in Northern Asia minor – and his emphasis was Spiritual growth and maturity in the life of the believer. But that wasn't the only point of his letter!
 - Last time we were together – we began by studying the second chapter of 2 Peter. And in that section of the chapter we read (what were – in my opinion) some somewhat strange set of verses.
 - But before we get into those verses this morning let me back up and re-read our focus verses from our last teaching, so we can move forward in context.

2 Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;

2 Peter 2:5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

2 Peter 2:6 and *if* He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing *them* to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly *lives* thereafter;

2 Peter 2:7 and *if* He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men

2 Peter 2:8 (for by what he saw and heard *that* righteous man, while living among them, felt *his* righteous soul tormented day after day by *their* lawless deeds),

2 Peter 2:9 *then* the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

2 Peter 2:10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority.

- So, in Chapter 1 Peter encourages these believers to grab a hold of what's theirs, and to embrace who they are – so they can ward off the wiles of the enemy.
 - Then as we move deeper into the Chapter Peter warns his readers about False Teachers who have and will be infiltrating the Church.
 - Just for a point of reference, so that they could recognize those false teachers when they arrive on the scene, he tells his readers that these false teachers will look much like the False Prophets of the Old Testament
 - Men who worked diligently to lead God's people off track.
 - The difference between these two: being where the false prophets of the Old Testament showed up from outside the church and took God's children off into all kinds of other false religions.
 - These false teachers would emerge from within the Church – slowly leading God's people astray but doing so (as I said) from within the confines of the Church.
 - From inside Christianity itself!
 - And don't get me wrong, both have the same goal – which was to lead God's people astray.
 - But they use very different methods.
- From there Peter then escalates the warning, using examples of Noah and the flood, and Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - Which also highlighted a side of God that no one wants to see or talk about. The side of His character we call wrath.
 - He doesn't do that without first giving them a word of encouragement – where he says this in verse 9:

2 Peter 2:9 *then* the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to

keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

- I'll paraphrase this for you quickly. Peter says God will protect you – but we must do our part.
 - We must invest and work hard and be diligent to seek him in all things – especially in temptation.
 - We must remember that no matter how hard it gets, we should Hold on – Hold on!
 - When things get tough hold on.
 - When temptation leans in on you – hold on.
 - And if you honor God, He will rescue you.
 - Another way to say it is, put in a little effort – and God will take care of the rest.
 - And by the way that statement is 100% true.
 - God is not blind, nor is He an absent sidelined observer in your life!
 - On the contrary, He is very much an active participant in the lives of all His Children and His Creation.
 - You may not see it in the moment, but if you honor Him in all you do, He will honor you!
 - And let me also say that this rescuing process if you will, is not always immediate because our timing is not His timing.
 - Sometimes God moves slower than we would like.
 - But having said that – I can personally testify that if you do the God honor thing, God will rescue you.
 - And that's not just something I'm saying to make you feel better.
 - That is a promise from Him – to you!
 - So, remember that – hold on, because God is with you!
- Pressing on, next, we move into what I believe are some (somewhat) odd sets of verses. At least when you just read them on the surface.
 - And the last time we were last together, I asked you to read those verses and study them for yourself and see if you couldn't make heads or tails out of what Peter is saying.
 - If you didn't that's okay, because we are going to break them down together this morning.
 - So, let's jump into it. Here is what Peter wrote.

2 Peter 2:9 *then* the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,
2 Peter 2:10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority.

Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties,
 2 Peter 2:11 whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a
 reviling judgment against them before the Lord.

2 Peter 2:12 But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be
 captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the
 destruction of those creatures also be destroyed,

2 Peter 2:13 suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure
 to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their
 deceptions, as they carouse with you,

2 Peter 2:14 having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing
 unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children;

2 Peter 2:15 forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the
 way of Balaam, the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

2 Peter 2:16 but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, *for* a mute donkey,
 speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

- Now, as you read these verses, I think you can see why I say these verses are strange – I think it's fairly obvious
 - I mean – one minute we are talking about the Christian refraining from sin and temptation and how God promises to rescue them, then we move into a long dissertation about angels and some other group of people who are like unreasoning animals.
 - Coupled with how they will be destroyed, and then Peter moves into a comparison of those people – to someone who received rebuke for his own transgression.
 - Which then parlays into something about a mute donkey – who speaks with a voice of a man – restrained the madness of the prophet.
 - And so now you see why I say it's a strange set of verses.
 - But guess what, as strange as these verses may seem, we know that God didn't just place those verses in there to throw us off.
 - Matter a fact these verses are no different than the rest of God's Word – these words are God's Words – and they too have purpose and meaning.
 - It's simply up to us to mine the gold that lies beneath the pages of God's Holy Manuscript!!
- First, before digging too deep, let me say that there are two groups of people in view here.
 - The first are believers – also known as the righteousness.
 - The others are non-believers – the unrighteous, and they are referenced by their behavior.
 - Then of course mixed in with all of this is a reference to Angels – and how these unbelievers (which are the false teachers Peter is warning about) do not tremble when they revile against Angels.

- Revile simply means “to criticize in an abusive or angrily insulting manner”
- "The main idea in these verses comes across clearly: God judges those who obstinately disregard His commands, while He protects those who stay faithful to Him."
- Now before delving too far into this I want you to remember that Peter’s warning is in reference to false teachers and his mentioning of this is very important.
 - He devotes roughly 33 percent of his letter toward them.
 - Once again, Peter is warning this group of believers to be vigilant and to be on the lookout for these people and he is using examples from the past and future to reinforce what he is trying to say.
- Now there is something I want you to recognize about both these groups.
 - First – when Peter mentions Lot in the previous verses he is using him as an example of a man who is living his life in a way that is way too close to the fray of sin.
 - Meaning how it is that Lot is a righteous man – but he has taken up residency in Sodom and Gomorrah, which tells us something.
 - And what does it tell us –
 - It tells us that many times we cannot tell the difference between the saved and the unsaved.
 - The bible references this type of Christian as the “Carnal Believer”.
 - Which means (it is simply a waste of time) when we try to figure out if someone is truly saved or not.
 - Because the Carnal Believer is still a believer but his or her life so closely mirrors the life of an unbeliever – you really cannot tell the difference.
 - So, as I said don’t waste your time passing judgement on someone!
 - The next group is the non-believers/the unrighteous – and they are obviously not saved.
 - Based on Peter's examples where he uses Noah and Lot – we know they will never be saved.
 - They are in fact reprobate, meaning permanently separated from God – just listen to verse 9-10 one more time.

2 Peter 2:9 *then* the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

2 Peter 2:10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority.

Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties,

- The word Godly here in the Greek – is the word devout.
 - And the words “Angelic Majesties” is actually the word “Glories” in the Greek

- But it is a reference back to Angels which is why the translators added Angelic to the translations.
 - To sum it all up these false teachers/unbelievers revile back against the Angels.
- They are bold about it – that’s what it means when it says “they do not tremble”. They are arrogant and self-centered, and they are only concerned about doing it their way.
- They do that with zero regard to what the Apostles are saying and teaching – they could care less.
- Now from here I am going to slow it down just for a minute and try to clarify what he is saying, because it is somewhat confusing.
 - To do that – I will use commentary from Dr. Thomas Constable of Dallas Theological Seminary. Who (in my opinion) is one of the great teachers and theologians of our modern era.
 - In verse 11 Peter says,

2 Peter 2:11 whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord.

- Peter is saying, even though "angels" are "greater in might and power" than human beings, they "do not bring a demanding judgment against them before the Lord."
 - Now the question here is, who is the "them" he is talking about?
 - Some commentators believed that they are angels, or, more particularly, evil angels (demons).
 - But the antecedent of "them" is "the unrighteous".
 - Verse 9 specifically is a reference to the false teachers and how their behavior was totally inappropriate.
 - From there Peter then moves into what is an even more confusing set of verses, when he says:

2 Peter 2:12 But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed,

2 Peter 2:13 suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you,

2 Peter 2:14 having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children;

2 Peter 2:15 forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

2 Peter 2:16 but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, *for* a mute donkey,

speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

- Once again – who is Peter referencing here? It's these false teachers and their behavior.
 - But what in the world does he mean when he says – “but these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed,”
 - What he means is these false teachers are men and women who will seek to destroy the church from inside out.
 - They, rather than behaving like angels do, will act like "unreasoning animals."
 - They (like animals) will follow their lower instincts, and their natural desires, instead of their reasons.
 - Just like animals who live mainly by "instinct."
 - Peter says these “false teachers” deserve treatment like animals ("to be captured and killed").
- The last clause in verse 12, which says ("will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed") involves a play on words in Greek.
 - The idea is that they will perish like beasts since they behaved like beasts (cf. Jude 10).
 - Peter did not mean that they would escape eternal condemnation, as animals will.
 - According to ancient thought, wild animals were placed in this world in order to be 'captured and killed.'
 - And these teachers have a similar predetermined destiny."
 - Meaning - "As the animals they are – they will be trapped through their eagerness to satisfy their own appetite, so self-indulgence betrays these men to their ruin."
- Moving on to verse 13 & 14 – he then says:

2 Peter 2:13 suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you,

2 Peter 2:14 having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children;

- What Peter is saying in verse 13 is that God will give them punishment in keeping with their crimes (Rom. 6:23; Gal. 6:7).
 - Rather than concealing their carousing under the cover of darkness, they shamelessly practice immorality in broad daylight.
 - The pagans did this in their worship of false gods, and Pagan worship often involved sexual prostitution.
 - These ungodly practices were like "stains" on the clean fabric of the church and "blemishes" on its countenance (reputation) since the practitioners evidently

professed to be Christians ("they feast with you"; cf. Eph. 5:27).

- The faithful Christians did not carouse. The false teachers did the carousing, but they did it as members of the Christian community.
- Peter could say that they reveled "in their deceptions" since they extravagantly practiced immoral carousing while claiming to be followers of Christ.
- Much like the blemishes on an animal – they were not fit for sacrifice (Lev 1:3) or on a man not fit for priestly service (Lev 21:21), these immoral people were frustrating the church's aim of holiness and could make the church unfit to be presented as a sacrifice to God.
- Next let's move on to verse 14 -16 – and let me re-read it one more time and this is where we will close.

2 Peter 2:14 having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children;
2 Peter 2:15 forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;
2 Peter 2:16 but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, *for* a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

- Once again I am going to use commentary from Dr. Constable in explaining these verses.
 - In 2:14 Constable says: The person who has "eyes full of adultery" is one who thinks only of sexual immorality when he or she sees members of the opposite (or the same) sex (cf. Matt. 5:28).
 - These false teachers sinned without restraint.
 - Furthermore, they lured people not firmly committed to Jesus Christ to join them, much like a fisherman lures his prey.
 - Many scholars believe that Peter's use of the Greek word translated "enticing", here and in verse 18, is a reference back to Peter's fishing days.
 - These false teachers had considerable experience lusting and practicing greed, always angling for more wealth, power, and illicit pleasures.
 - They were in fact experts in feeding their "greed."
 - And they behaved like undisciplined and self-centered "children" and were under God's judgment – they were ("accursed").
- From verse 14 to verse 15, we get more of the same – Meaning Peter gives us further description and examples of who these false teachers were, and how they acted.
 - And in verse 15 he references a person named Balaam.
 - Balaam was a false prophet in the Old Testament – a man who counseled Balak, King of the Moabites
 - The Moabites were Pagans.
 - Balaam the false Prophet counseled King Balak on inviting God's Children into

their Pagan worship practices.

- I'm not going to expound on this too much, I'll just say – go study the Moabites and their Pagan worship practices. They were very evil and immoral.
 - And once again, Peter compares these false teachers to this King and the Moabite people
 - In particular what they did in their Pagan worship – go study it for yourself. It will turn your stomach.
- And then finally, we get a reference to a mute donkey and a restrained Prophet in verse 16.
 - Whenever a person rejects God's Word and His will – inevitably he or she begins to act irrationally, because God's Word reveals true reality.
 - Eventually right becomes wrong, and wrong becomes right for him or her.
 - That is what happened to Balaam. He became so insensitive that God had to use "a mute donkey" to rebuke him.
 - The ancients regarded animals as mute because they did not speak human language.
 - Peter was saying that donkey (a proverbially obstinate animal) "restrained" the prophet's madness ("insanity") and was wiser than Balaam was (cf. Jude 11).
- Now at this point, you may be thinking – what in the world does all of this have to do with us?
 - Or what in the world does it have to do with our Modern Church era? I mean afterall I don't know of any "False Teachers" who act this way.
 - Well – that's not true, you do. You just aren't thinking about it in today's terms!
 - And let me tell you what I mean –
 - This past week we had yet another Preacher exposed in an immoral act. We had two preachers exposed – we just don't know yet what one of them was exposed for because it hasn't been revealed.
 - These men were very high-profile men. And the one who was exposed was exposed for inappropriate acts against a 12-year-old girl.
 - But don't worry, it's okay because it was 35 years ago. And he received counseling for it – and after sitting out of ministry for 2 years he was restored by the elders and approved to return to ministry.
 - This man pastors a church with multiple campuses – and according to the Christian Post – the average attendance for his church is around 100,000 per week.
 - The man also wrote a book on the topic of what he did.
 - According to a few articles I read – his net worth is somewhere around 117 million.
 - And this isn't just an isolated instance of one lone Pastor doing something like this.
 - Over the past couple of years this has been the case with several Pastors
- So, let's think about this for just a minute. Peter is warning believers about false

teachers who will rise from within the church, lead God's people astray with false teaching (a distortion and twisting of the truth). And some of their characteristics include:

- Preying on weaker immature Christians.
- Immoral acts.
- And last, but not least – money.
 - Sound familiar! And by the way just in case you think this only happens in faraway places. It happened in this town – in the last 24-36 months. (Minus the 117-million-dollar net worth part).
- But what's most disturbing about all of this is how the church leadership handled these situations.
 - This man molested a 12-year old girl – and the elders decided that he should sit out of ministry for 2 years. Then after 24 months the elders deemed him restored!
 - Seriously – Are you kidding me?!
 - And that's the same thing that happened here in our own hometown as well.
 - Folks, I am sorry – but has the church lost its mind?
 - These men should have been put in prison.
- And so the question looming for me this morning is – and I'll leave you with this – How in the world could a group of so called “Elders” do such a thing?
 - How in the good Lord's name could they possibly think that was what God would want?
 - And furthermore how could they think that any Pastor who committed such a crime would be okay to enter back into the ministry?
 - It is mind blowing.
 - And inevitably every time this happens – I will be asked by someone what I think about it.
 - Or do I think it's okay for that person to return to ministry?
 - Or someone will make the statement, wouldn't it be okay for them to return to ministry if they repent. I mean doesn't God forgive.
 - Once again people – are we that clueless about God and His Word?
 - I mean – even the world knows better than that.
 - Because when someone does something like that outside the church, they are prosecuted and then added to the sex offenders list – which means they can't live within so many miles of a school.
 - They even must report themselves to the authorities when they move into a new town.
 - So the world isn't confused, and they do a better job at protecting our children than the church does.
 - And they certainly don't question whether it would be okay for that person to

be back around children.

- So why – why is this happening?
 - Because the church is clueless.
 - They DO NOT KNOW GOD or HIS WORD!
- I mean think about it – if I worked at a bank and I embezzled money from them, do you think after 24 months of counseling I would be allowed to re-enter the banking world? NO
 - So why in the world would people think that a Pastor could re-enter ministry after doing such a thing? This is insane!
- And you can believe me or not, but this happens because – we do not know the God of the Bible anymore.
- And we don't know God – because we don't know His Word.
- The God of the Bible detests this type of stuff – so much so that he destroys entire cities over it.
 - Matter a fact – he destroyed everyone on the earth because of it, except for 8 people.
 - This is a fact, but for some reason we seem to forget that!
- I want to read something to you quickly– from the Pastoral Epistle. We have the qualifications of an Elder. And here is what it says:

1 Timothy 3:1 It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do*.

1 Timothy 3:2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

1 Timothy 3:3 not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.

1 Timothy 3:4 He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity

1 Timothy 3:5 (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),

1 Timothy 3:6 *and* not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.

1 Timothy 3:7 And he must have a good reputation with those outside *the church*, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

- Welcome back everyone and good to see you!
 - Last week, we broke down and studied 2 Peter 2:9-16 where we unpacked and unraveled a strange set of verses.
 - The central theme of those verses revolved around certain men and or women who Peter called “false teachers”.
 - In verses 9:16 Peter introduced us to a description of these people which is what led to those strange set of verses.
- What’s interesting is, when we dug deep into those verses and began to truly understand what those descriptors were, we could see where Peter’s words were just as applicable to the church of today (I would say, maybe even more applicable today) – than it was back then.
 - And I gave you some examples of what I meant last week.
 - Churches – and church leadership – who have made insane decisions to allow preachers to continue preaching, but only after they had proven themselves to be “rehabilitated”.
 - Even after abusing children
- Now, throughout the years, I have thought hard about this type of thing – and last week I actually had a discussion with another Pastor friend of mine, and it was in that discussion that it became apparent to me, how it is that this type of thing happens.
 - Meaning why it would be that anyone in church leadership would ever be in agreeance with allowing someone to remain in ministry after committing such a crime.
 - Well I think I may have finally figured it out, and I could be wrong but I don’t think so.
 - I would like to share my theory and thoughts with you this morning, because (as I said) this revelation came to light when I began talking to this Pastor friend of mine this week – specifically as it relates to the qualifications of Elders and or Overseers.
 - Which just in case you didn’t know, the Pastor is an Elder – he is simply a teaching Elder.
 - And the church (according to Paul), is supposed to be overseen by a plurality of Elders.
- By the way, let me just expound on this for just a minute on the word Elder – the word itself speaks to AGE!!
 - To be an Elder, you must be older.
 - How old? Well, we are not told – but we do know however that the youngest Pastor we see in scripture is Timothy. And according to Biblical scholars and theologians alike, Timothy was somewhere around 37-38 when he began to Pastor.
 - And of course a 37–38-year-old then is probably more like a 60-65 years-old now.
 - Mainly because people married young then, and they experienced hardship at a level that our generation has never known

- Also – they did not live very long back then, so they matured a lot faster!
- Anyways, back to this concept of Elders – the word "Elder" derives its name from the Greek word "Presbyterous".
 - And you can probably guess, Presbyterous is where the Presbyterians take their name from.
- Now – what's interesting about this concept of Elders is Elders have qualifications – and those qualifications are clearly laid out in the Pastoral Epistles, namely 1 Timothy and Titus.
 - Also, in the Pastoral Epistles we have another group of church leaders who are identified as well, and the Bible calls them Deacons.
- Now just for the record, Deacons have a different set of qualifications along with a different job description (for a lack of better words).
 - Which means they are two totally separate positions held in church leadership – and I bring this up because there are some denominations who try and blend the two positions together.
 - I am not sure why, but they do, and I was a part of one of those denominations for years.
 - I remember when I served in that church as a Deacon, I was never able to get a straight answer as to why they didn't acknowledge the separation of the two.
 - Anyways, that's neither here nor there, but it's noteworthy.
- Now I'm drifting off track a little bit so let me get back to the point which includes my "revelation" on why Church leadership makes some of the most insane decisions as it relates to reinstating a Preacher back in the pulpit – and to get to that revelation I want to read to you from Titus 1:5 where Paul instructs Titus to do something in his absence.
 - And what is it? Well here's what he wrote –

Titus 1:5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you,

Titus 1:6 *namely*, if any man is beyond reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of indecent behavior or rebellion.

Titus 1:7 For the overseer must be beyond reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not overindulging in wine, not a bully, not greedy for money,

Titus 1:8 but hospitable, loving what is good, self-controlled, righteous, holy, disciplined,

Titus 1:9 holding firmly the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict *it*.

- So, there you have it – a list and or descriptors of the qualifications of Elder.
 - Now let me say this is not an exhaustive list. It's one list and there is another one in 1

Timothy.

- Anyways, after reading Titus with my Pastor friend he said, wait a minute – you must be careful because you are entering a slippery slope because honestly can you personally say you have always been above reproach?
 - Now hang with me here for just a minute. I want you to follow me on this – my Pastor friend said (Paraphrasing my conversation for just a minute) – once you start going down that road you open Pandora's box.
 - At which point I said, really – do you open Pandora's Box?
 - He said yea you do – Because I believe we all fall short and no one can say they have always been above reproach.
- Now throughout the years when I have conversations like this, I always end up taking the opposite view – primarily because of the old saying that says: “When the plain sense makes common sense – we seek no other sense. But if it doesn't make sense – we dig deeper”.
 - When we apply that saying to these qualifications, we take them for what they are.
 - Or we go to the opposite end of the extreme and say a man cannot be an Elder unless he has lived a 100 percent perfect life “above reproach”.
 - Now I know that 100% perfection cannot be the case. I mean seriously, does that make sense at all?
 - I don't think so because if it is, well then right out of the gate that would eliminate every single human being from the office of Elder except for 1 – and that person would be Jesus Christ.
 - So because we know that can't be what Paul meant, then we know this doesn't make sense – and therefore, that can't be the case.
 - And so, if that's not the case then what is the answer?
 - Well to get to the heart of Paul's statement you first must ask yourself some basic questions. And what would that be?
 - What is the context of 1 Titus?
 - Why did Paul write the letter in the first place?
 - And who was he writing it to?
 - And so, this morning, since we don't have anything better to do why don't we answer those questions.
 - I say we get to the bottom of the “who” and “why” of why Paul wrote Titus, and to begin this journey we must first ask ourselves the question:
- Who was the letter of Titus written to?
 - If you guess Titus – you would be correct.
 - But who in the world was Titus?
 - He was a man led to faith by Paul. Which led him to become one of Paul's early Church Leaders.
 - He was also a Gentile Convert rather than a Jew.

- Later in Paul's ministry, Titus and Paul traveled together to the Island of Crete, which is the largest island of Greece – located in the Mediterranean Sea.
 - Crete is also the 5th largest Island in the Mediterranean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea also connects with Israel.
 - Crete is roughly some 600 plus miles away from the shore of Israel.
- So, Paul and Titus travel to Crete where Paul leaves Titus to carry on the ministry.
 - Which is what led him to write the letter of Titus where he specifically addresses some issues.
 - One of which was how to set up the church, all for the purpose of setting things in order!
- So – what does that tell us?
 - It tells us that the Church has an established order.
 - If we want to know what it is, all we must do is read 1 Timothy and Titus which are as I said, known as the Pastoral Epistles.
- Anyways, moving on – so there you have some context for our study.
- Remember, Paul was an Apostle and he traveled extensively setting up Churches all throughout the region of Israel – Asia Minor and Greece and Rome and Spain.
 - And once he established or planted a church – he had to put a leader in place. Which (in this case) was Titus.
 - And of course as with any good leader, he must leave instructions that will help guide this new church leader.
 - Because Paul knows, trouble is waiting right around the corner for Titus – therefore, he wants him to have support!
- Now – back to my point, or my revelation if you will. Paul writes to Titus and tells him to Appoint Elders.
 - Not wait on them to step up, but appoint them.
 - And just in case he is confused about who to appoint he gives him a set of criteria that will guide him in deciding who to appoint.
 - And one more time – what is the criteria?
 - Let me read them off for you: An Elder must be:
 - Above Reproach
 - Husband of one wife
 - Children who believe
 - Not accused of indecent behavior nor rebellion
 - Not self-willed
 - Not quick tempered
 - Not overindulging in wine
 - Not a bully

- Not greedy for money
 - Hospitable
 - Loving what is good
 - Self-Controlled
 - Righteous
 - Holy
 - Disciplined
 - Holding firmly the faithful word which is accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able to both exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it
- Now – for the sake of time, I am not going to address each one of these. I am simply going to go take you through an exercise that will help you understand what he is saying – as it relates to each one of these.
 - And to do that, this morning I am going to break down the concept of being “Above Reproach. The main reason for this being this is the topic that my friend and I debated over this past week.
- Now, to address the issue of who and who can’t be an Elder we must first start with a basis or standard. And the one my friend chose was that of perfection! In other words, he said – are any of us above reproach?
 - He was saying, because none of us are 100% above reproach we cannot have an opinion.
 - Which leaves me asking the question, is perfection what Paul is striving for? Is Paul saying the individual being considered for Eldership must be perfect in every category?
 - One more time – the obvious answer is no. But if what I just said is true, then how in the world can we know what the standard is?
 - Well first, you know it’s not perfection. So, what is it?
- Well to answer that question, let’s begin by studying the words “Above reproach”. Which is also translated “Beyond Reproach” – in the Greek it’s the word blameless.
 - Which in my mind, based on perfection being the standard, makes our question an even harder one to answer.
- Now, to kind of bring a little more context to all of this I want you to remember – Crete wasn’t a good place. And the people of Crete weren’t very good people.
 - They were Pagan. They were known to be liars, even referred to as Evil Beast. They were also known to be lazy and gluttons.
- The concepts found in Paul’s writings to Titus and Timothy are simple to understand: We as Christians should hold a standard opposite of those in Crete, opposite of those in the world.
 - If the world is a liar – we should tell the truth.
 - If the world is lazy – we should be hard working.

- If the world loves evil – we should hate it.
 - You get the point!
- But let me say one more thing about Paul’s words before we move on. And that is the central theme behind this letter revolves around Spiritual Maturity in the life of the believer. Which comes from protecting and adhering to Gods Word of Truth – i.e... His Word.
 - Paul is consistently and constantly emphasizing this point. That above all things we are to hold His Word in the highest esteem.
 - And if we do the byproduct of this will be our continual conforming to the image of God.
 - Which is opposite to conforming to the image of the world.
 - So – what does that tell us? It tells us that we better be students and lovers of His Word!
 - But back to this whole above or beyond reproach thing.
- What is the standard or level an Elder should achieve so that he may fulfill that office inside the church? Well before we answer that question, let me mention one other requirement of Elder that shows up in 1 Timothy. Which is the elder must not be a new believer.
 - And why is that important? Because of this thing we call T.O.P. “Time on the Planet”.
 - The concept here is that of a seasoned veteran. Someone who is battle tested – someone who is older and mature (hence the word Elder).
- So with that context in mind, Paul is not saying an elder must be perfect.
 - He is saying at the time of His appointment he must be blameless in the eyes of the society around him.
 - He must appear and be opposite the world he lives in!
 - Meaning there shouldn’t be a black cloud following him around
 - Another way to say it is he has established a standard in his life, and he is trying hard to live up to it!
 - Which means he doesn’t show up one way throughout the week and another way on Sunday.
 - The result of which is – NOT PERFECTION – But in the eyes of the world around him he does appear to be blameless.
 - Where the people around him say for example:
 - He is not a crook
 - He is not a drunk
 - Greedy – lover of money
 - He is not a thief
 - An adulterer

- He is not a liar
- Lazy
- The sense here is that of a consensus. Meaning if you polled 100 people the majority would say that man is a candidate for Elder.
 - And of course once again, Perfection is not the key. Although to the world around him he might appear perfect, but of course we know he is not.
- Now I'm sure all of you by now know, I have been self-employed for as long as I have been in ministry. And for years the old school of thought was you cannot be in business and be in ministry at the same time.
 - That these two are mutually exclusive. And why is that the case?
 - Because, in some cases (not all), but in some cases businesspeople are considered greedy.
 - Lovers of self and money.
 - And trust me, this description of some businesspeople has been a true characterization of their character
- Throughout my career I have been in many tough situations. Situations where the lines of truth could be blurred.
 - And I will tell you there are some out there who might say that my choice in certain matters may have appeared not to be the right one, simply because the person on the other side of the business transaction didn't like the outcome of their situation.
 - Even when I made the right decision!
- This issue in business has pushed me and my people to do something, something that will help keep me and my organization above reproach. And that is – we try our very best to put everything in writing.
 - And we even have taken that a step further and say to ourselves, if it isn't in writing it doesn't exist. And if it doesn't exist – well then, it's automatically our fault.
 - Which means we will always err on the side of the other individual. And this is just one way that I hold myself accountable.
 - Matter a fact, living this way in business has helped protect us and keep us from looking like Crooked Businesspeople.
- What has also helped me in business is the fact that I don't care that much about money. On the contrary, what drives me in business is understanding business as a whole.
 - Solving problems – and developing systems and processes that help ensure the result we are looking for.
 - So – why am I telling you all this.
 - Because I feel 100% confident that if you contacted all the people who have done business with me over this past 30 years, they wouldn't tell you I was perfect.
 - But they would tell you I had been above reproach in my business dealings.
 - You can talk to my bankers, past employees (even the ones that we had to let go)

and if they were honest with themselves, they would concur with what I am saying.

- Now – does this mean I was perfect and that everyone liked me? No, it doesn't – but if someone says I was dishonest, I will ask them what was I dishonest about? And they won't be able to give you a good answer.
 - Once again, I am not telling you this so I can say I am or was perfect.
 - I am telling you that when Daffney and I went through extreme financial hardship we stood on God's Word.
 - We didn't shun our responsibility.
 - We didn't blame our situation on others.
 - Instead, we prayed and asked God to lead us out of it – All for His Glory.
 - And He did exactly that!
- So – back to the revelation that came from my conversation. I believe we have come to place in this country where we now struggle to call an ace an ace, and a spade a spade.
 - All because when faced with the question, do we feel this or that individual is qualified to be an Elder? Or is he (for example) "above reproach"?
 - We automatically begin to examine ourselves first (which by the way we should do) nothing wrong with that.
 - And so, we asked ourselves the question: Do I personally hold up to this standard?
 - And if I am not perfect in that category, or if any part of life is not 100 percent meeting that standard – then I really can't give my opinion.
 - Which leads us to a place where there is no standard. You see the problem with this type of thinking?
- Also I think many times we also say to ourselves, what happens if "I" at some point fail in the future in whatever category it may be, the I will be looked at as a hypocrite.
 - Therefore in the Spirit of Tolerance, which by the way that phrase is killing this country, but in the Spirit of Tolerance, we must be Tolerant and keep our mouth shut!
 - And I agree – but not totally.
 - I agree we should judge ourselves first and love everyone. But that doesn't mean we cannot hold a standard of conduct in our lives. That would be ridiculous!
 - Because if we do that we will end up with a society where anything goes.
 - Wait – that is where we are as a society.
- Getting back to my point, let me say I personally have no standard – I only have the standard God gave me. He is absolute truth, and without His guidance, without His standard, we will be a people no different than that of the Cretans (or Ephesians or Corinthians).
 - OR the people of Sodom and Gomorrah!
- Let me also say this before moving on this morning, I am no man's judge. What a person does or does not do – is not between me and them. It's between them and God!

- And none of us will go to our judgement seat on the buddy program.
- Instead we will all stand alone one day, and we will answer for what we've done and have not done!
 - And I know when I meet our Savior I will not get a 100 on my examination!
 - But once again – perfection is not the standard.
- Now – one more thing as it relates to this issue, I can tell you that mixed into this equation is the heart of the believer and only God knows the heart!
 - I have known plenty of people throughout my life (including myself) who, out of anger, said or did things they shouldn't have done. But at the end of the day – God knows our heart!
- Last Sunday afternoon – I played golf with one of my oldest and dearest friends. He was my golfing buddy back in the day.
 - Anyways, he invited me to play with him and a couple of younger Christian brothers from his church. They were all reminiscing about a time when one of these men would – (when he hit a bad shot) – he would get mad on the golf course and throw his clubs and cuss a little.
 - But not say the cuss word, just an abbreviated version of it.
 - As this story was being told this young man turned and said to me – Speaking specifically about my buddy – He said, you know one day after we played golf my friend called him and said:
 - Hey man, I want you to know, you are better than that.
 - My buddy said to him, “People are watching, and you are better than that!”
- Guess what? That's exactly what the Bible says we should do: The older men should teach the younger men. And the older women should teach the younger women.
 - You see on that day this young man did not meet the requirements of being a Deacon or Elder because of his behavior and his behavior's reflection on the world around him!
 - But that's okay – life happens.
 - This young man told me last Sunday afternoon that he was thankful for my buddy, that he held him accountable and now he tries very hard not to act like that anymore.
 - He tries very hard to be “above reproach”, blameless.
- But that leads me to a question. Above Reproach about what?
 - Well it depends, what is the sin that so easily beseeches you? For me it's one thing – for you it's something else.
 - For me it might be number 6 on Paul's list – Not being quick tempered! And for you it's something else!
- So it's not about perfection, and it's not about previous or future perfection. It's about asking a question – has this man's life (as a whole and as a consensus) – is he working diligently in a way that his life shows up to the world around him as being “above reproach”?

- And if the answer is yes then you can check that off the list!
 - Once again, it's not about saying he has been 100 percent perfect. That line of thinking – is dangerous, and is what causes us to take pause.
 - And forget about holding any standard.
- So, there you have it – and there is my epiphany. And what does any of this have to do with 2 Peter?
- A lot, because Peter is giving us a description of those who will slip into the church, obtain leadership positions.
- And because we have no standard, they will be allowed to assume those positions – and begin teaching heresy right under our noses.
 - Which ultimately leads to them leading people astray – and ultimately away from God!
- By the way – let me say one more thing as it relates to this topic: The standard God set has zero to do with you!
 - Meaning, whether someone meets God's Standard is not contingent upon an examination of your life.
 - You might not be living in a way that allows you to be Elder, but that makes zero difference when evaluating someone else's life.
 - God's Standard is God's Standard!
 - And even though you may not feel you are living up to that standard, that doesn't disqualify you from having an opinion on the matter!
 - If someone said: I'm sorry, you're not qualified to read God's requirements and have an opinion on whether a man's life meets God's expectation – That would be ridiculous!
 - If that's the way it is, well then we might as well forget it!
 - It's okay – for you to have an opinion.
 - As I said, even though you may not feel you are personally living up to Paul's list of requirements it's okay – because you are not the one in question.
 - It would be like me saying, I cannot vote in the Presidential Election because I am not living up to the standard of being President.
 - Of course, I can – because I am not the one being considered for that office.
- Guys, it's not that hard to understand – we just make it hard. God's Standard is not Perfection.
 - It's about a thorough examination of the individual's life.
 - And it's okay to say – I just don't feel now is the time for this man to fulfill this role – nothing wrong with that.
- So once again, as we tie all this together, Church Leaders must be considered and chosen carefully – they must be prayed about.
 - And if I do that, and if we do that, we won't end up in a situation where a Pastor abuses a child, takes a 24-month sabbatical from ministry and then returns – with

the Elders' approval, because the Elders feel he has been rehabilitated.

- Now, using what we have learned today, and applying it to the situation of this Pastor, would you say that from the world's standpoint this man would be qualified to be an Elder in a church?
 - No – he wouldn't.
 - Does it mean God is done with him? Does it mean we should hate him? Cast him out, never speak to him again?
 - No – it simply means, he cannot enter back into Church Leadership!
 - He can however attend church.
 - He can even serve from behind the scenes. But not in front as the leader!
 - And why – because to the world around him, he is not above reproach or blameless!
 - And that is as simple as I can put it. And with that I digress!
 - Amen – Amen!!

- Alright folks, good to see everybody. I hope everyone had a good and enjoyable 4th of July.
 - The last time we were together I kind of went off script and addressed (what I believe) is a systemic issue that is plaguing this country. An issue I call – “The Spirit of Tolerance”.
 - Meaning in the “Spirit of Tolerance” we have decided as a country that taking a stand for something, or anything really, may in some way reflect negatively on us individually.
 - Therefore we just decide to keep our opinion to ourselves!
 - As I said last week that type of thinking is concerning (especially in the Church). Primarily because it leaves us in a paralyzed state, robbing us of the ability to take a stand.
 - I am not going to re-hash all that this morning, only to say – if you weren’t here last week and you would like to hear it, you can login and listen to the message on our website.
- Having said that, I would like to say one final thing as it relates to this topic of Tolerance – there is indeed a fine line between being or becoming judgmental and simply re-stating and affirming what God put in writing through the authors of His Manuscript.
 - Just in case you're confused about when it is that you are becoming judgmental and or simply standing behind what God said and outlined in scripture, just remember this – when you have an opinion about an issue, if you can’t speak from a place of love and concern on the topic then you are probably speaking from a place of “Pride”.
 - Which means, you are probably being judgmental!
 - And believe it or not, recognizing the difference in the two isn’t that hard to do.
 - All you must do is remember this when faced with a tough topic or issue. Just ask yourself a question.
 - Does what you are about to say excite your flesh – because if it does then your opinion will probably sound more like gossip and less like an opinion of concern.
 - If that’s the case then yes – you probably should keep your opinion to yourself.
 - But on the other hand, if your words come from a place of genuine concern then by all means – speak up.
 - That is a pretty simple litmus test when trying to determine your motivation for voicing your opinion.
 - And that’s where I will leave it as we pick back up with our teaching in 2 Peter.
- Now when we last left off, Peter was writing to a group of believers and sending them a clear warning. A warning about a group of people (could be men or women) who would slowly over time make their way into church.
 - He called these people – “False Teachers”.
 - He also took it a step further and told this group that these False Teachers of their day would act much like the False Prophets of the Old Testament.

- At least in the way they worked diligently to lead God's children astray.
- But then he went on to say that even though the False Teachers and False Prophets had the same goal, they had very different approaches and or techniques and methods in trying to achieve their goals.
 - Where the false prophets (in many cases) worshipped other Gods and tried to distort and twist God's Word.
- These false teachers would emerge from inside the fellowship – and not necessarily directly try to lead the people down another path or religion all together, but in contrast this group would work from within trying to slightly change God's Word – ever so slightly twisting things over time.
 - Obviously the result of which would be the same – leading people away from God!
- Essentially you could say, where the False Prophets worked from the outside in, the False Teachers would work from the inside out.
 - Then from there, to further explain what Peter was trying to convey, he then (in 2 Peter 2:9-16), went into a long dissertation of a strange set of verses where he gave his readers a description of what these False Teachers looked like.
 - As I said, he does this by using a strange set of verses and so, to keep us in context for today's teaching, I am going to back up and re-read our focus verses from 2 weeks ago.

2 Peter 2:9 *then* the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,
2 Peter 2:10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority.

Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties,
2 Peter 2:11 whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord.

2 Peter 2:12 But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed,

2 Peter 2:13 suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you,

2 Peter 2:14 having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children;

2 Peter 2:15 forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

2 Peter 2:16 but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, *for* a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

- Now the last time we were together I broke these down for you, so I am not going to re-

do them again. Mainly because this week, as we get into our next set of verses, we are going to see more of the same. So bear with me here as we go deeper.

2 Peter 2:17 These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved.

2 Peter 2:18 For speaking out arrogant *words* of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error,

2 Peter 2:19 promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.

2 Peter 2:20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

2 Peter 2:21 For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.

2 Peter 2:22 It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,” and, “A sow, after washing, *returns* to wallowing in the mire.”

- So as I said, here we have yet another set of strange verses.
 - We will handle these verses the same way we handled the last set of verses. We will exegete and expound on them in context! So, let's get going.
 - First before we begin, I want to do something I don't normally do – and that is I would like to jump to the end of these verses and highlight verses 21&22.
 - Because these verses are verses that have been consistently taken out of context. Taken out of context by certain church denominations all in an effort to support a certain view of Salvation.
 - And let me speak a disclaimer before I speak specifically on this view.
- My disclaimer is I have my view on most topics in scripture. Some of those topics, you may have heard before and some you may have not.
 - I want to speak this disclaimer because I do not want you leaving here today mad or irritated about what I am about to say.
 - I also want you to know that you do not have to believe what I say – once again I want to encourage you to go deeper in your study and follow the Berean Way.
 - Which says you won't just take what I say as the gospel, but rather you will study for yourself and find that these things might be true!
- Now I am jumping to the end of our focus verses and highlighting them first because as I teach you the preceding verses (in context), I want you to see why verses 21&22 don't apply to the view I am about to highlight.
 - And so, with all that said – what is this view? Does anyone know?

- Let me read it to you again – 2 Peter 2:21-22:

2 Peter 2:21 For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.

2 Peter 2:22 It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,” and, “A sow, after washing, *returns* to wallowing in the mire.”

- So here’s my question: What view of Salvation do you think these verses are used to support?
 - It’s the view that says your salvation is not assured! That you can lose your salvation.
 - The proponents of this view use verse 21&22 as proof texts that a person could be saved (i.e. be righteous) and lose their way – which could ultimately lead to them losing their Salvation.
 - Now, I am not going to expound on this too much. Instead I want you to follow today's teaching all the way through and see if you think these verses support that view!
 - By the way, if you believe you can lose your Salvation – it’s okay.
 - I personally don’t believe that, but that doesn’t mean we can’t attend church together. We will simply agree to disagree!
- I will say however that I don’t believe in Salvation the way a lot of people believe in it. Instead of saying – once saved always saved (for example), I say "if saved always saved!"
 - I bring this up because this has been one of the most highly debated topics throughout church history. So, just keep what I said in mind as we exegete these verses.
- Now because I “side barred” us last week, let me go back and re-read these verses one more time so we can stay on track.
 - It begins with "These". Who are these who Peter is speaking about? They are the false teachers who will rise up from within side the church.

2 Peter 2:17 These people are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved.

2 Peter 2:18 For speaking out arrogant *words* of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error,

2 Peter 2:19 promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.

2 Peter 2:20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the

first.

2 Peter 2:21 For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.

2 Peter 2:22 It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,” and, “A sow, after washing, *returns* to wallowing in the mire.”

- So, Peter continues his dissertation on identifying False Teachers who will rise up – from within the fellowship.
 - Those who will slowly try and distort and twist God's Word.
 - And then effectually begin to have influence over believers in Church!
 - As I stated last week, this issue wasn't just an issue of that day and age.
 - On the contrary, it is very much an issue (maybe even more of an issue) in our day and age. It simply takes on a different form.
 - So Peter says, these (speaking of False Teachers) – these are springs without water and mists driven by storm, for who the black darkness has been reserved.
- Now there are a few things I would like to point out about this verse. First, I want to deal with Peter's words as it relates to the False Teachers being like Springs without water and mists driven by storm. What in the world is Peter saying?
 - Well to answer the question we must first ask ourselves, what do springs without water and mists driven by storm have to do with False Teachers?
 - Well before I tell you, let me say in this exercise I am going to teach you how to critically think – and then use that process to study your Bible for yourself, specifically as it relates to expounding on scriptures.
 - So how do we do that? Well let's begin this process by asking or dealing with springs without water
 - What do you call a spring without water? A dry spring – right?
 - And a dry spring (at first glance) appears to be a good thing, and therefore it brings hope (i.e. the water).
 - But in reality – it's the opposite of hope. It's False Hope.
- So how would that relate to these False Teachers? Well just apply what I said – False Teachers will appear to bring deep teaching with New Revelation, a fresh new word. But in the end, it's just a dry hole – and rendered useless.
 - Next, we have the mist driven by storm. How does that relate to False Teachers?
 - Well upon further investigation, what I said about dry springs holds true for a mist driven by storm.
 - Here's the concept – just imagine you are a farmer and there has been no rain for months. But suddenly you see storm clouds forming.
 - In that moment as you feel a little mist in the air it once again brings about False

Hope.

- And so what Peter is saying is, just like a storm that appears and brings with it hope of a downpour, in the end it only produces a mist.
 - And so too are these False Teachers! Once again they appear to have strength in their words. But simply put – their words are empty.
 - Or as they say in Texas: they are “All Hat and No Cattle”.
 - Bloviators – is another way to put it.
- Which leads me to the second point I would like to make about these verses. And that point is found in the last part of verse 17 where Peter says, “for whom the black darkness has been reserved.”
 - This concept is a simple one. God knows there are those who will rise up inside the church as False Teachers.
 - He also knows who those False Teachers are. And as such, He has reserved for them a place that Peter calls – “The black darkness”.
 - Let me also say, God didn’t just set up this place (just in case these people did emerge inside the church).
 - He in fact knew they would be coming, therefore He reserved this special place for them.
 - But what is this place? Well if your first guess was hell – I believe you would be correct.
 - This is not some separate place reserved only for those who taught heresy.
 - Rather it’s just another description of the place that Revelation 20:14-15 calls “The Lake of Fire”
 - And just in case this bothers you (for some reason), because it didn’t say it was Hell! I want you to know that Hell is often described in various and vivid forms in the Bible.
 - From Darkness to Fire to the Grave to the Pit etc.
 - But regardless of how it’s described, we know it’s a place of eternal separation from God.
 - And so, essentially, Peter is telling us that God has reserved a place for those who would lead His children astray.
 - But as I also said it’s not a separate place, but rather the same place where all those who die in unbelief will find their final destination.
- Moving on. Next we pick up with verses 18 & 19 where Peter once again gives us a description of how these people will act and what they will be promising.
 - Listen to it one more time:

2 Peter 2:18 For speaking out arrogant *words* of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error,
2 Peter 2:19 promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of

corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.

- Now the sense of what Peter is trying to relay here is that of an individual/false teacher who will arrive on the scene, and they will talk a real good game.
 - Meaning they will be convincing and if you listen really close to their words they will use a lot of pronouns – in their world it's all about us, so they use words like:
 - I – me – we
 - They will speak arrogantly and proud – and they will lure you in by speaking of things that excite the flesh (fleshly desires), by sensuality.
 - Dr. Thomas Constable said -

"Grandiose sophistry is the hook, filthy lust is the bait, with which these men catch those whom the Lord had delivered or was delivering."

- He went on to say -

"It is unlikely that the false teachers told their listeners to indulge in carnal passions."

- More than likely the teachers were working hard to confuse their listeners about what moral conduct was appropriate to Christian believers.
 - What Peter is doing here is casting their teaching in the most negative terms to distinguish clearly between the moral conduct of the believing community and the behavior of the outside world.
 - But the fact that he was attempting to do so shows how unclear this distinction had actually been.
 - So here we are (once again), we are back to sexual things.
 - And if you are a young believer or a believer who doesn't know God's Word, these False Teachers will grab ahold of you. And do so in a way that you barely escape the same fate they face.
- Now let's pause here for a moment because in this scene Peter describes two types of people. The first is that of "False Teachers" which we know to be unbelievers.
 - And then the second is who? Their prey – which are who? Believers – right? They will be teaching heresy to believers.
 - But here's where it gets interesting, and this serves (in my opinion) as proof refuting the concept of a person losing their Salvation.
 - Listen closely – the false teachers speak with arrogant words enticing those whom they are teaching (the believers).
 - And they entice them with fleshly desires and sensuality.
 - And so clearly we have believers being taught by false teachers.

- And then Peter says they barely escape the fate that lies for those who live their lives in error.
- Just in case you're curious about what Peter just said, or maybe questioning whether Peter's words represent a minority of verses in the scripture, his writings here echo a consistent language found all throughout God's Holy Manuscript – especially in the New Testament.
 - Places like John 6:35-39:

John 6:35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.

John 6:36 “But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe.

John 6:37 “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

John 6:38 “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

John 6:39 “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

- Or in Philippians 1:6

Phil 1:6 *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

- You see the overarching theme in scripture tells us that God is the one who saves us – and He is the one who keeps us.
 - And these three sets of verses aren't just some isolated verses that speak to this being the case.
 - I can show you many other scriptures that say this same thing, but for the sake of time I am not going to do that – but I do want to encourage you to go study it for yourself
- Next in verse 19, Peter says these false teachers will promise freedom while they themselves are slaves to corruption.
 - Now the question looming in my head is, What kind of freedom are they promising?
 - I mean after all, these believers are saved – so what other type of freedom could these False Teachers be peddling?
 - Well, upon further research, and by keeping with the context of Peter's writings here in 2 Peter 2, clearly the Freedom they are speaking about is that of Moral Freedom.
 - Essentially what these false teachers are doing is redefining God's Standard of Morality. Which is truly appealing and or enticing by the way.
- So now – we kind of get a better picture of what's going on. These people, these false teachers are appealing to the believers' carnal desires.

- And they are using that as a method to pull God's people away from their faith.
- And they do a pretty good job of it, because Peter says they get close – but it doesn't happen. Basically, “No cigar” as it relates to them losing their Salvation.
 - And that is clearly articulated when Peter says “They barely escape the fate of those who live in error”
 - And what is their fate? Hell – i.e. Black Darkness.
- Now before we move on, let me point out one more thing. Look at what Peter writes at the end of verse 19 – “for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.” What does this tell us?
 - It tells us that anything in your life that consumes you; Sports, Work, Social, or in this case sensual desires.
 - You become a slave to it. You become trapped by your own mind.
- For us as believers there is only one thing we should be enslaved to, and that is God! Matter a fact, that is what Paul and many of the other Apostles call themselves.
 - They say they are “Dullios” in the Greek – slaves; bond servants of the God most high.
 - I want to encourage you to remember this, anything that consumes your time and interest, and replaces God, has enslaved you!
- Moving on, and this is where we will close. We started out our today's teaching at the end of today's focus verses and I told you why this was the case. I now want to move into those verses and see if you arrive at a conclusion that says that this verse relates to losing your Salvation!
 - We read Verses 21&22 one more time:

2 Peter 2:21 For it would be better for them...

- Now, let me pause here for just a moment and ask you the question – who is the “them” in view here?
 - It's the same people it has been from the beginning – it's the False Teachers. And so let me ask you a question, does Peter say the False Teachers are saved or no?
 - The answer is no – he does not!
 - So, Peter says, once again in verse 21:

2 Peter 2:21 For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.

- The thought process is this – “Ignorance is a very bad thing, but disobedience is always worse”.
 - But then when we didn't think Peter's words could be any more strange, he writes

the following in verse 22:

2 Peter 2:22 It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,” and, “A sow, after washing, *returns* to wallowing in the mire.”

- Peter is comparing these False Teachers with that of dogs and pigs.
 - And what he is saying is, and I find this next statement somewhat fascinating: “Conduct betrays nature, generally speaking”.
 - Dogs return to the corruption that comes from within them: “Vomit”
 - And pigs return to the filth that they find outside themselves: “Mire”
 - Another way to say it is this: Once a person is saved he or she has been given a new life and a new spirit and a new nature.
 - Yes – the old nature is still there, but God's Spirit becomes preeminent!
 - These False Teachers were able to fake it for a while, but ultimately – they returned to the people they truly were.
- Now I would tell you, this holds true for false conversions of salvation as well.
 - If an individual is moved into salvation by any other means than the conviction of the Holy Spirit, then they will experience what's known as “A False Conversion Experience”.
 - And as such, they will eventually end up right back where they started.

In that case – it would appear they lost their salvation, but in fact – they never were saved to begin with!

Hence – my belief that says, “If saved always saved”.

This morning – I want to ask each person in Gods House this morning –

- Are you saved?
- Have you made a profession of faith?
- Have you (at some point in your life) – been convicted about the sin in your life?
- Have you repented of that sin, and have you asked Jesus to forgive you – to save you?
- And then have you followed that up with Baptism?
- If you haven't – I want to ask you to do something this morning – please take out that connection card – and check the box – that says you would like to talk about salvation, and I will call you – before the day is out.
- I would love to walk you through the whole concept and reality of what Salvation is all about.

Also, if you have made a profession of faith – but have not yet been baptized, please allow me to do that for you as well.

We as a fellowship – would love to celebrate that special occasion with you

And then finally, if you are saved – and you have been baptized, and you would like to be re-baptized as a sign of a rededication of your life, I would love to do that with you as well!

Being re-baptized doesn't save you again.

- It's simply a way to make an outward symbol of a re-commitment of your life.

And once again – please write that on the card as well! Amen – Amen!

- This morning we are going to pick back up with our study of 2 Peter as we enter (what will be) the final Chapter of 2 Peter – 2 Peter Chapter 3.
 - Last week, our focus verses were 2 Peter 2:17-22.
 - We did something with those verses we don't normally do, which is we began our teaching at the end of our focus verses, specifically highlighting 2 Peter 2:21-22
- And I did this for a reason. My reason being I wanted to highlight how those verses were some of the favorite verses for those who ascribe to the concept of a person having the ability to lose their salvation.
 - If you weren't here this past week, I want to reiterate what I said before last week's teaching, and that is in no way was I, or am I, trying to convince you to believe or not believe in the concept of someone losing or maintaining their salvation.
 - I simply wanted to start with those focus verses in mind, and from there back up and teach you the preceding verses in context. And as we moved forward in context I wanted you to decide what you believe.
 - Specially if you agree or disagree that those verses (and for that matter the entire Chapter) are even dealing with matters of salvation.
 - By doing that it affords you the opportunity to form your own opinion on whether or not it's possible for someone to keep or lose their salvation.
- And because we are very careful to teach in context it gives you the ability to judge and know for yourself which way you should lean. Hence how and why context matters.
 - My other hope was that you learned how to exegete scripture and then expound on it.
 - Along with why it is critical not to play "Bible Bingo". Which is just a silly way of saying why it is critical not to eisegete the scripture.
 - And what is the difference between the two?
 - Exegeting is allowing the scripture to speak to you.
 - Eisegesis is where we approach the scriptures with a presupposition or belief system (which is generally derived by what we have been taught or told) – and from there we then find verses that seemingly support our belief system.
 - Basically we cram our beliefs into the verses much like that of cramming a square peg in a round hole.
 - Now if you weren't here last week and you would like to hear more about this topic, please go to the church's website and listen to it!
- Anyways, this week (as I said) we will venture into Chapter 3 of 2 Peter where we will see a slight shift of sorts in Peter's narrative.
 - Having said that, the context will remain same.
 - And what was the context? A warning!
 - A warning from Peter to believers about the "false teachers" who would begin emerging from within the church.
 - Peter then goes out of his way, not only to warn this group of believers about this issue, but by extension he also sends a clear warning to all believers – for the

present, as well as the future.

- A warning about a systemic problem that the church will be facing from then until Jesus returns.
- He also goes in depth describing in vivid detail how these men/these false teachers will act, as well as what they look like.
- Now as we move into Chapter 3, we are going to experience more of the same – simply a continuation of the warning, just in a different way.
 - So, pick back up with me if you will in 2 Peter 3, beginning with verse 1-2
 - Where my NASB entitles this section “Purpose of this letter”.

2 Peter 3:1 This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder,
2 Peter 3:2 that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior *spoken* by your apostles.

- I would like to pause here for just a minute and point out a few things. First, Peter says the purpose of this letter is to remind the readers of the dangers that are lurking from within the fellowship by the emerging of the False Teachers.
 - Before moving on this morning I would like to address something dealing with this topic and that is, how do “False Teachers” arise from within the fellowship?
 - Or maybe better said, what is it that these False Teachers will be teaching?
 - And then, how does that even begin to permeate the Church? In other words, how does this happen? How does it gain a foothold?
- Well first, let me say based on Peter's writings, the False Teachers who will emerge from within will be much like the False Prophets of old.
 - Difference being (as I said last week), The False Prophets move in on believers from outside the church.
 - And the False Teachers emerge from within the church.
 - Now even though we know they are similar in their goals, there is one notable difference between the two.
 - Where the False Prophets teach outright heresy and promote false religions.
 - These False Teachers will teach a slight and subtle variation to God's Word.
 - In other words, they aren't teaching or preaching about some other religion. On the contrary, they are simply twisting God's Word!
 - And so with that in mind, how do they emerge from within the fellowship? And what exactly will they be teaching?
 - I am not prepared this morning to tell you what specifically they taught in Peter's Day.

- Only to say they twisted the Word of God for their own personal agenda.
- However I will tell you whatever it was they taught, it was divisive – these men were dividers.
 - And that wasn't just something special for their day, these people are still alive and well today. Those who cause division and splits in churches and they are the worst kind! Meaning – they sow dissension among the ranks.
 - And I have personally experienced this.
- Men who have strong doctrinal beliefs and theories, many times they will find a church and move in ever so slowly. They begin to lay down roots around their theory or belief among other fellow believers or for that matter, anyone who will listen.
 - Eventually slowly overtime they do grab some people's attention, creating a divide inside the church.
 - And let me say this about the church. The church may have waived on a lot of issues throughout church history, but it has been consistent on one thing.
 - And that is, Christian people focusing in on doctrinal topic or issues, and then sowing dissension inside the fellowship.
 - Which then of course (many times), as it gains traction causes division inside God's house. And unfortunately sometimes that dissension leads to a church split.
 - And what I find interesting is how God anticipated this – which led Jesus to address this very thing in Matthew when He said:

Matt. 12:25 And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand.

- No truer verse has ever been spoken as it relates to church splits.
 - As I said, many church splits occur because of doctrinal issues.
 - Matter a fact, that is why we have over 4000 denominations in America today.
 - This is all a result of someone hearing something (that seems to make sense – at least in their head), and from there they take what they have heard and begin crafting a narrative around it.
 - Which then then of course leads to the old saying that “Misery loves company”.
- They key to what I just said is derived from my earlier statement, which is Christians many times will hear what someone says, and it seems to make sense to them, and so they then begin to run with it.
- Having said that, what they don't do is study it for themselves in context and find that these things might be true! You can see the issue with that?
 - By the way just in case you are wondering, this isn't just an issue that arises from within non-bible teaching churches.

- It can happen in all churches (maybe even more sometimes) with Bible teaching churches, and let me give you a quick example of what I mean.
- Many years ago, when we first started this church, I had a man who began attending – He was a devoted lover and devoted follower of Bible teaching.
 - One Sunday I noticed he stormed out after the service. I was concerned so I followed him out into the parking lot.
 - I asked him if he was okay and he said, Preacher have you ever read the 10 commandments. I said – yes.
 - He said – you may want to re-read the 2nd Commandment which says:

Exodus 20:4 “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

- I said OKAY – What’s this all about? He then said the 2nd commandment clearly states you shall not worship any graven images, and you have allowed someone to put up a cross in the church.
 - I was blown away, because I Had no clue where he was headed, but evidently he had a thing about crosses being worshipped by people. And therefore – he said we were displaying graven images inside the church and for that reason he never returned.
 - A few months later I was talking to someone who knew this man and he said, Yes I know him – and he has attended every church within a 50-mile radius at least once and some two and three times.
 - This person went on to say – he is never happy and always finds something to complain about.
 - I said OKAY – and let it go.
 - My point is, believe it or not this man (even though he Loved God and Loved God's Word) – he was a false teacher and he arose from within the fellowship.
 - And (it’s my understanding) that he has been part of church splits in the past.
 - Now I am not saying this is specifically what Peter is referencing, I am just saying this is one form of False Teachers who rise from inside the church.
- Let’s move on. Next Peter says he is writing this letter to stir them up, which he hopes will cause them to remember what he is warning them about.
 - And so, there is the purpose of the letter. And that same purpose still holds true today. We should study – and one of the main reasons for this is to help us to remember.
 - Which means, it’s simply not good enough to study one time and set your Bible on the shelf.
 - On the contrary we must never cease studying (lest we forget – as Peter says)
- Next, Peter makes a shift. "Where in Chapter 2 the writer delivered a fervid denunciation of the false teachers and their immorality, in this section he renews his pastoral concern to fortify his readers in regard to another aspect of the danger facing them, namely, the

heretical denial of Christ's return."

- Listen to what he wrote. 2 Peter 3:3-9 – this section is entitled “The Coming Day of the Lord”

2 Peter 3:3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts,

2 Peter 3:4 and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.”

2 Peter 3:5 For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water,

2 Peter 3:6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.

2 Peter 3:7 But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

2 Peter 3:8 But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

- Alright, so we have a whole lot to unpack here, and I will begin with the why – as in why Peter shifts his writings so abruptly.
 - Well obviously there were other issues facing believers at that time. Namely issues with mockers, those who were mocking believers about Christ return.
 - And this mocking, just like that of these false teachers, was and is a false narrative in and of itself.
 - It wasn't just some issue; it was a huge issue – and it's highlighted by Peter's words “First of all” in verse 3.
 - First of all, in the Greek means “Of the upmost importance”.
 - The reason for this being – If you take the death, burial, resurrection, and return of Christ out of the equation, do you know what you have?
 - A God that looks exactly like every other God.
 - A man who died.
 - “A being or God” who exists in the clouds somewhere.
- If you study any of the other religions in the world, you will see they are all very similar in the way their leader lived and died – but that is not the case with Jesus!
 - Jesus was born a virgin birth.
 - He lived some 32 years on this earth.
 - He was crucified. Raised again on the 3rd day.

- And one day He will return for His Bride – “The Church”.
 - And oh by the way, all of this was prophesied 2000 years before it ever happened.
 - No other religion has a story that even comes close to the story of Jesus.
- And I’ll mention one more thing about this topic – Other ancient writings such as Islam and its book, the Quran, mentions Jesus 25 times in its writings.
 - And Buddhism mentions Him as well.
 - But the Bible never mentions them. I found that interesting.
 - The mockers are saying – Jesus isn’t returning.
 - Then they say in verse 4, since the “father’s fell asleep”. He hasn’t returned, matter a fact, everything has stayed the same.
 - The fathers here is a reference to the patriarchs of old. Men such as Abraham, Issac and Jacob!
 - And the mockers accusations are hard to defend, especially when they say – If He is coming, then where is He?
 - Their mocking words then lead Peter to say this in verses 5-8:

2 Peter 3:5 For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water,

2 Peter 3:6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.

2 Peter 3:7 But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

2 Peter 3:8 But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

- Another way to say what Peter is trying to convey is, hey guys look around, where do you think all this came from?
 - I believe the Hebrew Bible/The Old Testament said, God breathed it into existence
 - Peter says this one fact has escaped their notice
 - That by the Word of God He breathed all this into existence, and not only that, in verse 7 he says God's Word is holding it altogether.
 - Both heaven and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgement and destruction of ungodly men.
 - And then he caps all of this off by saying, and oh yea one more thing (in verse 8).
 - Don’t let this one fact escape your notice either: “Beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.
- So, what does that tell us? It tells us that God is outside of space and time.

- What might seem like forever to us is nothing to God. Matter a fact – one thousand years is like one day.
- And so, what's Peter trying to convey to the believers then and believers now?
 - He's saying – Hold on folks. Keep your eye on the prize.
 - Don't look to the left or the right. Focus is the key here.
 - Regardless of what the mockers may say, remember what is true.
- God is coming back, which means it makes no difference what the mockers or any other people say – God is not lacking when it comes to His promises!
- But here's a question for you. What's taking Him so long (as we consider it long)? Anyone know?
 - Well lucky for you we teach verse by verse. So, I can tell you what's taking so long – it's in verse 9:

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

- So what's this all about? Now, this opens a can of worms for some of us.
 - Not really, but kind of sort of. Now why would I say this opens a can of worms?
 - Because contained in the language of these verses is the age-old argument of Calvinism versus Arminianism or Freewill.
 - The Calvinist says, God is Sovereign (which He is). And the people who are being saved are the elect – which is what saved people are called
 - But then here and in other places in the scriptures as well, the Bible clearly says that God is patient towards you.
 - Which means, He is waiting. And that His desire is that none would perish but for all to come to repentance.
- Now before we wade off into the water this morning, I want to focus on the main point of the context. And then deal with the Calvinism versus Freewill argument next week (so we can go more in depth on the topic)
 - And so with that thought in mind, the question is what is the reason God has not returned?
 - It's because all those who will be saved have not yet been saved.
 - Meaning there is a certain number of people who will be saved throughout the history of mankind.
 - Until all of those are saved – Jesus will not return.
 - Paul references this same thing in Romans 11:25 when he says:

Romans 11:25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—

so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

- The KJV says it this way:

Romans 11:25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.

- What is the “Fullness of the Gentiles”? That’s what’s key here.
 - The “Fullness of the Gentiles” refers to God's Sovereign Design and or Decree, which says, when every Gentile (which is you and I by the way, because if you’re not a Jew you are a Gentile).
 - Until every Gentile that will be, is saved – God will not return!
 - Another way to say it is – when the last man or woman or child is saved, that is the trigger for Jesus’ return.
 - So, wonder how many will be saved? No clue. Not even Jesus knows.
 - That’s what He said in Matthew 24:36 in the parable of the Fig:

Matt 24:36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

- So – what’s with all the delay? Well evidently God isn’t done yet.
 - And there is still time left for anyone who has not yet asked Jesus into their heart.
 - So if you haven’t asked Jesus for forgiveness. If you haven’t been saved, then mark that on your card – and let me know and let’s talk about it!
 - Because the Bible says God's desire is that everyone be saved.
 - But we know that’s not what happens, right? Not everyone gets saved.
 - Yet God desired that none will perish.
 - So how’s that work?
- Well here is where the water gets muddy for the Calvinist people versus the Arminianist or freewill people.
 - The Calvinist says His desire is that none will perish, and that God is speaking about the “Elect”; those whom God has elected or chosen unto Salvation.
 - If you’re a Calvinist, when you hear that you can simply say, “Works for Me” – I’ll just go with that!
 - But the question you should be asking is, is that what it means?
 - Once again we are back to exegeting versus eisegiting the scripture.

- If I am going to handle the text properly, I can't just make a statement like that and then walk away from it.
 - I must study it for myself and find that this might be true.
- On the other side of the equation, as it relates to the Arminianist or Freewill folks – they say, see Calvinist you are wrong.
 - It's God's desire for everyone to be saved.
 - But its man's choice or decision. He or she must make the decision and to be honest with you, that theory lines more closely with our Bible translation.
 - But the problem is, there are many other places in scripture that say the opposite of that! So – what gives?
 - Regardless of if we like it or not it's an issue – and it's an issue that has never been resolved.
 - Biblical scholars and brilliant minds all throughout history have debated this topic, and it's never truly been resolved.
 - And guess what – I'm not going to be able to resolve it either.
 - And if you try and cram things together to make them work you do a great injustice to the texts of scripture.
 - And so – I am not a go with the flow guy, which means I will present both points of view and let you decide.
- Scripture is crystal clear that we serve a Sovereign God who is in control. But it also says, Man has responsibility.
 - Scripture also makes it clear that God's Will is what will be done. Even despite man's choice, meaning God's Will does not hinge on man's decision! At the same time God says to His people, if you do this – then I will do that!
 - If you repent – I will withhold my punishment.
 - See the problem?
- Now if you are sitting here this morning and you are saying to yourself, I didn't know this was even a thing. Do me a favor and just stay in the dark on this issue. It will make you sleep better at night
 - But if you're like me and you can't leave well enough alone – and you find this topic fascinating and you are interested in studying the topic in depth – then just be prepared for it to be an unresolved scriptural issue in your life. Essentially just chalk it up as an unknown mystery of God.
 - But also, be rest assured that what I am not going to do is set up shop on one side of the other and disregard the verses that don't line up with my bend or leanings.
 - I will teach it to you in context – correctly, and you can do with it what you may!
 - Next week we are going to deal with this issue. I can assure you of one thing – when I am finished, you will be completely clear on what is the correct view. Which is, we cannot explain it!
 - I hate to leave you on a cliff hanger like this, but unfortunately that's how the verses are laid out, and I don't want to do this topic injustice by rushing through it.

- Amen – Amen!

- So – today is the day we have all been waiting for, or maybe not!
 - If you were here last week, you know we ended our teaching – with a verse that in and of itself spoke to the heart of an age-old controversial topic.
 - Which was the topic of Calvinism versus Arminianism or as some call it, Predestination and or Freewill.
 - These are just a couple of labels that have been given to these two opposing views but for the sake of time we will just call this topic: Calvinism vs. Arminianism
- Now before I start, let me say someone may be classified as a Calvinist – but may not hold to the entire doctrine that John Calvin espoused.
 - John Calvin was a French Theologian – and he was born on July 10th, 1509 and died on May 27, 1564.
 - Calvin was also one of the reformers, along with Martin Luther & William Tyndale among others.
 - These reformers stood up against the Catholic Church who tried hard to make it clear that no one needed a Bible to read for themselves. But rather, a Christian only needed a Catholic Priest to tell them what the Bible said.
 - Calvin was also known for such doctrines as that of Covenant Theology, as well as the theory of Replacement Theology.
 - Replacement Theology simply said that Israel was no longer distinct and separate in God's plan – but rather Israel and the Church had now been merged by God, into one entity.
 - Today many reform churches still teach this concept.
 - Having said all this, the primary belief that Calvin was credited with was that of election and or predestination.
 - Essentially saying that God chose you before the beginning of time – before you were even born – and you didn't choose Him!
 - Along with that, Calvin said man does not have the ability to desire Christ on his own.
 - It was and is a work of God – that God is the one who opens the eyes of the individual.
 - And let me say, that statement was and is not generally an issue for either the Calvinist or the Arminian.
- That's not where the rub comes in – primarily because God's Sovereign election is an undeniable truth of scripture. But Calvinism began to become contentious when the Calvinist took it a step further and said, God is the one who chooses but He doesn't choose everyone.
 - And furthermore, a human – before they were even born – was predestined to be saved or not to be saved.
 - In other words, without God's choosing of you, you will never become a Christian and therefore you will never be saved.
 - That's what got peoples' dander up!

- And so, it was that statement that caught the attention of a man named Jacob Arminius.
 - Arminius was born in 1560 and passed away October of 1609.
 - Arminius became a counterbalance to Calvinism (if you will), saying that God loves everyone – and therefore everyone gets a shot.
 - He agreed that yes God opens the eyes of the unbelieving sinner.
 - But Arminius said, it's up to the individual to choose.
- Now let me say, this is a high-level overview of this topic as a whole! I could probably teach on these two men and their beliefs for weeks – and still may not finish – so please just remember that.
 - Also let me say, this may not be a topic you are even interested in and if that's the case, then (as I said last week) just go with that – it will save you a lot of heart ache in the future.
 - It will also help keep your mind from becoming too overwhelmed with information.
 - But for those of you who are interested in the topic – just as I was so many years ago – you're in luck, today is your day!
- Now before we get started, let me speak some fine print into today's lesson and the fine print is this: I will in no way tell you what to believe.
 - Also, I am not going to teach you from a place or position that brings my own personal bend or belief system into the equation – and let me say that is a very difficult thing to do for any sound Bible Teacher.
 - And it's even harder to do for those who are not very well versed in the scriptures, which makes up many of today's Preachers.
- Anyways, so my last statement begs a question – and that is how can a teacher teach on any topic they are passionate about, without adding in his or her own personal bias?
 - The answer is – you must simply teach what it says in context.
 - When doing so, be careful to move ever so slowly through the Greek and or Hebrew manuscripts for the most accurate interpretation.
 - Also, when doing this you must be careful to examine the grammar:
 - The part of speech
 - The transliteration
 - The definition
 - And the usage
 - Another good way to stay in context is to use an Exhaustive Concordance – looking for other places in the scripture where the exact same word or words are being used.
 - Having said that, the one thing you don't want to do when interpreting any ancient document of antiquity, is try and bend the narrative to fit your own personal presupposition or bias or agenda.
- It is my job as an expositor of the scriptures to be consistent and to handle the text responsibly with great care and consideration.

- If I keep that in mind when studying I will have my best shot at teaching the scripture correctly.
- There is also one more thing I would like to point out in interpreting scripture or any other document of antiquity, and that is I recommend doing an exhaustive study of Hermeneutics.
 - Hermeneutics is the branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation, especially of the Bible or literary texts.
 - Hermeneutics simply provides a system or set of rules for interpretation – so that you can stay consistent in the way you proceed in your interpretation.
- This morning I would like to give a real quick overview of the rules of Hermeneutics. I am not going to spend a lot of time on each one of these rules, but I do want you to understand what I mean when I use the word Hermeneutics.
 - By the way, about once a year I try and teach a class on, [“How to study your Bible as if you are preparing to teach it to someone”](#)
 - If you have attended this class, this will be a recap for you. But if you haven’t, it will give you a sneak peek into what I am talking about.
 - So – Hermeneutics – What is it?
- Let me say this before we begin. Hermeneutics goes somewhat hand in hand with exegesis. Hermeneutics is more concerned about how you interpret a passage (specifically if you choose to do one process versus another), and exegesis means researching and discovering the meaning behind the text.
 - Usually, theologians pair hermeneutics with exegesis because you cannot have one without the other.
 - Exegesis (if you recall) is allowing the scripture to speak to the heart of exactly what it says and means.
 - Whereas eisegesis is the process of approaching the scriptures with biases or presuppositions, in which you speak your personal belief system into the text.
 - Let me give you an example of what I mean:

Isaiah 53:5 ...“By His stripes we are healed”

- Many charismatic churches will tell you that verse is speaking about healing in the physical sense.
 - But based on the rules of Hermeneutics – and solid exegesis coupled with good old sound logic – we know that is not what that verse means.
 - Obviously not all Christian people are healed all the time.
 - Matter a fact, many Christians get sick every day and eventually pass away from some sickness or disease.
 - Which tells us that verse is not speaking about some physical healing in our earthly bodies.
 - It also isn’t saying that there is some guaranteed healing promise for all

Christians.

- So, if that's not what it means – then what does it mean?
- It means when you are in Christ you have received ultimate healing; which is everlasting life.
 - The healing we received from the stripes of Christ refer specifically to His Work on the Cross of Calvary.
- So, what the writer of Hebrews is saying is because Christ was beaten and died for your sins, you now can receive the ultimate healing. Which is a Spiritual Healing in Salvation!
 - Let me just say I assure you, that interpretation is 100 percent correct – nothing more and nothing less!
 - And so, there is a small example of what I mean.
 - Now back to this topic of Hermeneutics. Let me read to you from 2 Peter 1:19-21 NASB

2 Peter 1:19 *So we have the prophetic word **made** more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.*

2 Peter 1:20 *But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is **a matter of one's own interpretation,***

2 Peter 1:21 *for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

- We can't have a "sure word" about the meaning of Scripture (or anything else) unless we have a sure method in which to interpret the words.
 - The following eight rules are the center of all grammatical interpretation. They have been accepted and used by scholars from Socrates to the present.
 - While my hope is that they will be used to "rightly divide the word of truth" of the Holy Bible, they are equally applicable to legal, historical, and other such language.
- Now, since the Bible teaches that God is not the author of confusion [1 Cor. 14:33], how can there be so many disagreements today between Christians and the proliferation of the cults since all, or nearly all, claim to use the Bible as the basis of their doctrines?
 - Nearly all false doctrines taught today by Christians and cultists alike can be traced to the distortion of the meaning of Biblical words.
 - The following eight rules are prayerfully offered in the hope that they may help many come to the truth of what God says in His Word.
 - The Rev. Guy Duty wrote:

"When two interpretations are claimed for a Scripture, the construction most in agreement with all the facts of the case should be adopted. When all the facts of

an interpretation are in agreement they sound together in harmony, like notes in a chord.

He went on to say, Biblical interpretation is more than knowing a set of rules, but it cannot be done without the rules. So learn the rules, and rightly apply them....”

- Here are the eight rules of Bible Interpretation:
- The rule of DEFINITION: What does the word mean? Any study of Scripture must begin with a study of words. Define your terms and then keep to the terms defined.
 - The interpreter should conscientiously abide by the plain meaning of the words. This quite often may require using a Hebrew/English or Greek/English lexicon in order to make sure that the sense of the English translation is understood. A couple of good examples of this are the Greek words “*allos*” and “*heteros*”. Both are usually translated as “another” in English – yet “*allos*” literally means “another of the same type” and “*heteros*” means “another of a different type.”
- The rule of USAGE: It must be remembered that the Old Testament was written originally by, to and for Jews. The words and idioms must have been intelligible to them – just as the words of Christ when talking to them must have been.
 - The majority of the New Testament likewise was written in a milieu of Greco-Roman (and to a lesser extent Jewish) culture and it is important to not impose our modern usage into our interpretation. It is not worth much to interpret a great many phrases and histories if one’s interpretations are shaded by pre-conceived notions and cultural biases, thereby rendering an inaccurate and ineffectual lesson.
- The rule of CONTEXT: The meaning must be gathered from the context.
 - Every word you read must be understood in the light of the words that come before and after it. Many passages will not be understood at all, or understood incorrectly, without the help afforded by the context. A good example of this is the Mormon practice of using 1 Cor. 8:5b: “...for there be gods many and lords many...” as a “proof text” of their doctrine of polytheism.
 - However, a simple reading of the whole verse in the context of the whole chapter (e.g. where Paul calls these gods “so-called”), plainly demonstrates that Paul is not teaching polytheism.
- The rule of HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: The interpreter must have some awareness of the life and society of the times in which the Scripture was written.
 - The spiritual principle will be timeless but often can’t be properly appreciated without some knowledge of the background.
 - If the interpreter can have in his mind what the writer had in his mind when he wrote – without adding any excess baggage from the interpreter’s own culture or society – then the true thought of the Scripture can be captured resulting in an accurate interpretation. Oliver Wendell Holmes said, “Our only interest in the past is for the light it throws upon the present.”
- The rule of LOGIC: Interpretation is merely logical reasoning.
 - When interpreting Scripture, the use of reason is everywhere to be assumed.

- Does the interpretation make sense? The Bible was given to us in the form of human language and therefore appeals to human reason – it invites investigation. It is to be interpreted as we would any other volume: applying the laws of language and grammatical analysis.
- As Bernard Ramm said:

“What is the control we use to weed out false theological speculation? Certainly, the control is logic and evidence... interpreters who have not had the sharpening experience of logic...may have improper notions of implication and evidence. Too frequently such a person uses a basis of appeal that is a notorious violation of the laws of logic and evidence.” (*Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, Boston: W. A. Wilde, 1956)

- The rule of PRECEDENT: We must not violate the known usage of a word and invent another for which there is no precedent.
 - Just as a judge’s chief occupation is the study of previous cases, so must the interpreter use precedents in order to determine whether they really support an alleged doctrine.
 - Consider the Bereans in Acts 17:10-12 who were called “noble” because they searched the Scriptures to determine if what Paul taught them was true.
- The rule of UNITY: The parts of Scripture being interpreted must be construed with reference to the significance of the whole.
 - An interpretation must be consistent with the rest of Scripture. An excellent example of this is the doctrine of the Trinity. No single passage teaches it, but it is consistent with the teaching of the whole of Scripture (e.g. the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are referred to individually as God; yet the Scriptures elsewhere teach there is only one God).
- The rule of INFERENCE: An inference is a fact reasonably implied from another fact.
 - It is a logical consequence. It derives a conclusion from a given fact or premise. It is the deduction of one proposition from another proposition.
 - Such inferential facts or propositions are sufficiently binding when their truth is established by competent and satisfactory evidence. Competent evidence means such evidence as the nature of the thing to be proved admits.
 - Satisfactory evidence means an amount of proof which would ordinarily satisfy an unprejudiced mind beyond a reasonable doubt.
 - Jesus used this rule when he proved the resurrection of the dead to the unbelieving Sadducees in Matt. 22:23-33.
- So there are a few of the rules of Hermeneutics. And if we stick to them, we have our very best shot and the correct interpretation.
 - And with that brief introduction of how to interpret scripture, let’s pick back up with our final focus verse of last week.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.

- Now – when we read this verse we clearly see where Peter’s statement teaches that God is not slow about His promise (as some count slowness), but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.
 - And so, traditionally speaking, the Arminians would say this verse (among others) serves as a proof text that God desires to see all people saved.
 - Which in turn tells us that the Calvinists are wrong as it relates to salvation being limited to those God has elected unto salvation!
 - On the other hand, the Calvinist would say there is no conflict with this verse as it relates to Calvinism because this verse is speaking to those who God has elected unto salvation before the foundation of the earth.
 - So, the question we must answer is who is the “any” and “all” that Peter is speaking of?
 - Is it the any and all of mankind or is it the elect?
- Well to arrive at our answer, we must first begin our journey by asking ourselves a question, and that is – what is the context of the verse? Meaning – what caused Peter to write such a thing?
 - Well – the answer is simple in the context of the letter.
 - Peter has been warning his readers about the False Teachers who arise from inside the church – slowly twisting God’s Word over time. But then he makes a shift as he moved into Chapter 3 – he begins speaking about another issue facing believers.
 - That was these mockers who are mocking them about their claim – that Jesus was going to return for His people one day.
 - But specifically, what is it that these mockers are saying about the subject of Jesus’ return?
 - Well – if you back up to verse 3, this is what it says – speaking about the Coming Day of The Lord!

2 Peter 3:3 Know this first *of all*, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts,
2 Peter 3:4 and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue just as *they were* from the beginning of creation.”

- So, these “mockers” are trying to create doubt in the minds of these believers – as it relates to the return of Christ.
 - And they do so by saying, where is He – you say He is coming, but nothing has changed since the fathers fell asleep.

- The fathers falling asleep is just a reference to the Old Testament Patriarchs
 - Men such as Abraham, Issac and Jacob.
 - Who at this point would have been dead for some roughly 2000 years,
- Obviously, you can see why the mockers would use that fact as their proof.
- Right it would make total sense for them to say exactly what they were saying, especially if you were trying to disprove what these believers were saying about Christ's return.
 - So Peter's warning is simple, don't listen to them!!!
 - Which is what led him to write verses 2 Peter 3:8-9:

2 Peter 3:8 But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.

- So, if we want to stay in context then the first question we should be asking ourselves is – What is this promise that the Lord is not slow about?
 - If we keep with the context, Peter is speaking about the promise of the Lord's Return.
 - That is the context of his writings, and we know this to be the case because that's exactly what the mockers have been mocking these believers about.
 - There simply cannot be any other interpretation of this promise.
 - So what Peter is saying is, The Lord is not slow about fulfilling this promise as some count slowness. Because a thousand years to him is like a day and a day like a thousand years.
 - And so, if we put what they're saying into today's language, we would say this to the mockers.
 - Hey mockers – you're wrong because God's timing is not our timing. He will return when He's ready.
 - Since our timeline is finite (limited), we can't compare how long it's been in our eyes to how long it's been in God's eyes.
 - Why is He taking so long? Because – He is patient
 - But patient about what? Obviously, there is something holding Him back, and so, what is it?
 - It's the fact that He's not done with what He's doing as it relates to salvation, meaning – everyone who is going to be saved has not yet been saved.
 - And last week, I took you to Romans – where Paul references this same thing:

Romans 11:25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

- So, the question was – what is the “Fullness of the Gentiles”? The Fullness of the Gentiles refers to all people who will eventually be saved – meaning (once again), when all those who are going to be saved are finally saved!
 - For a better understanding of this concept, think of it this way – when God created this world, He did so with a plan in mind and that plan began on time and it ends on time!
 - And you and I (the Gentiles) – are part of His plan.
 - So, until God's plan is complete, He will not send Jesus back to earth to retrieve His Bride. The Bride being “The Church”.
 - So, this patient waiting thing is in relation to all those who will be saved.
 - That is the correct context of this verse!
 - But having said that, and going back to verse 9 who is it that God wishes or desires not to perish? Who are the any and all?
- Well – before moving on, let’s jump into the Greek and see if we can get any clarification on who it might be.
 - And here’s what the Greek says: Not does delay the Lord the promise, as some slowness esteem, but is patient toward you, not willing (for) any to perish, but all to repentance to come.
 - So, there you have it – now things should be crystal clear! Lol!
 - Now – when you study the words (for) any and all in the Greek – you can break it down into:
 - Part of Speech
 - Transliteration
 - Phonetic Spelling
 - And definition
- So, let’s look at each one of these. First let’s look at the Part of Speech – the word “any” and “all” both creates what is known as an Indefinite Pronoun – which is a pronoun that refers to a person, thing, group or amount in a general way, without specifying exactly what or who is being referenced.
 - For example – “anything”, “everyone” “nobody” “few” “most” and “some”.
 - So what does that tell us – well it could tell us that the word “any” isn’t speaking to a specific group (say the elect) but rather to everyone collectively as a whole, and if we accept what I just read at face value (then you might stick with that statement).
 - But here’s a question for you, if God's not willing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance then why doesn’t that happen?
 - Well, the Arminians will say because they (Speaking of all people) didn’t make

the choice to receive Christ. On the contrary they denied Christ even though it was God's desire for them to be saved.

- The Calvinist on the other hand say God knows who's going to be saved. Therefore the any and all is speaking of those who are and will be saved.
- And by the way the Arminians say the same thing.
- If we stay in context there is no doubt that the subject of Peter's words are speaking to
 - A – God being patient and waiting for something to happen before Jesus returns.
 - B – What He is waiting on is for the last people on earth who will be saved to be saved.
- And it is true that God knows who will repent. That's not where the rub comes in. The rub comes in when the Calvinists say, God has predetermined who will be saved and some will get in while others will be left out.
 - Now – to make matters worse with all of this, are verses that back up this concept. Verses such as Romans 8:28-30:

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

Romans 8:29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

Romans 8:30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

- This passage – is often referred to as “The Golden Chain of Redemption”, and it gives us the progression of how Salvation works.
 - God causes all things to work for Good
 - For those whom He foreknew
 - He also predestined
 - Those He predestined – He also called
 - He also justified
 - And these whom He justified He also Glorified
 - The key word in this verse is He. He (speaking of God) – He is the one in view. He is the one doing the work.
- Having said all of this – believe it or not once again, neither side of the debate have a problem with Romans 8:28-30 – per se. The difference in the question between the two camps is:
 - Does everyone get a shot?

- The answer is – we simply do not know. There are scriptures that allude to yes. And there are scriptures that allude to no.
 - Yet neither officially or definitively come right out and say one way or the other, which causes this topic to be what is called a “Mystery of God”.
- Now, with all this said, I want to warn you of something. And that is – don’t get caught up in the emotion game when trying to interpret scripture.
 - Where you say things like, well – my God would never do this or that. Or I just don’t think God would do this or that because if you do you will find yourself on the outside looking in on that debate.
 - Example being – when someone says, God loves us therefore He would never punish us or allow someone to be put to death.
 - We know that’s not true because almost all the great men in the Bible died horrific deaths.
 - We know that God destroyed many cities in the Bible. Which included men, women and children.
 - He also flooded the earth and killed everyone – except for 8 people.
- So don’t be so arrogant as to think you can put God in your worldly emotional box because I assure you He won’t fit.
 - God is 100 percent Sovereign over His creation and that is a fact of both Scripture and Logic. He is the Creator, and we are His creation. He owes us no explanation for anything He does.
 - The Apostle Paul said it better when he said this in Romans 9:14-24:

Romans 9:14 What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!

Romans 9:15 For He says to Moses, “I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.”

Romans 9:16 So then it *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.

Romans 9:17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.”

Romans 9:18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

Romans 9:19 You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?”

Romans 9:20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it?

Romans 9:21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?

Romans 9:22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? .

Romans 9:23 And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

Romans 9:24 *even us*, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

- Let me say this – we have no clue what God is doing and if He did try and explain to us, we still wouldn't understand it.
 - Matter a fact, we can't even explain things we currently can see with our own eyes.
 - Things such as how does a hummingbird fly. The laws of aerodynamics say it's not possible.
 - Or how is it that our atmosphere is made of just the right mixture of Nitrogen and Oxygen. And if that mixture was off by just a slight percentage we would all instantly die.
 - What's even more confusing is how the world and everything in our universe is being held together.
 - We know how it's being held together – it's by God!!!
 - Because that's exactly what the Bible tells us in Colossians 1:17.
- So back to the question – Who is the “any” and “all” that Peter is writing about when he says:

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.

- Is it the Elect or everyone on the planet? It's neither. It's all those who will be saved.
 - Another way to say it is Yes – it is the Elect.
 - And Yes – it is everyone who will hear and receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - The answer is Yes.
 - Yes – it's the Elect (because that's what God calls those who are being Saved).
 - And Yes – it's everyone who hears and receives the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- But having said that I want you to remember the context of Peter's statement. It's in reference to the Lord's patience and how Jesus has not returned yet because something hasn't happened.
 - That thing that hasn't happened yet, is that all those who will be saved throughout the history of mankind – haven't yet been saved.
 - Hence the “Fullness of the Gentiles” has not yet been completed!

- That's the context of the statement.
- Peter's point has nothing to do with the Calvinist or Arminian views. On whom gets in and who doesn't. Or who gets a shot at salvation and who doesn't.
- Rather it has everything to do with what triggers Christ return.
 - It's we humans that have taken the verse out of context and tried to apply our label to it.
 - And the fact is, neither view applies – because that wasn't the point of the text.
- But let's not leave it there – let's jump back to our original topic of discussion which is that of, who gets a shot at salvation and who does not?
 - Does the Bible clearly articulate that God is the one doing the work in the life of a person as it relates to Salvation.
 - Absolutely it does!
 - But does it also say, man has responsibility in accepting Christ work?
 - Absolutely it does!
 - And so – if that's the case then what gives?
- Well, let me just say this as we close. For me I love the fact that God is totally sovereign and in control!
 - I love it, because it removes all the pressure off me.
 - Where I sit around and question all my choices and decisions.
 - Especially – when something doesn't work out.
 - Where I say, well I should have done this or I should have done that. Or if I would have made this choice, then maybe that wouldn't have happened.
 - That type of thinking is absolutely exhausting.
- On the other hand I also don't want to say, well – God's in control so I'll just lay in the middle of the road and see what happens.
 - If God wants me to live – I won't be run over by a truck.
 - You don't want to have that type of mentality because more than likely – you will be run over by a truck.
 - God is Sovereign but man also has responsibility as it relates to our faith.
 - And furthermore let me say, we are held accountable for our choices.
 - I think the verse that best describes what I am trying to convey is Proverbs 16:9:

**Proverbs 16:9 The mind of man plans his way,
But the LORD directs his steps.**

- So – with that thought in mind we are going to go deeper with that discussion next week as we continue our journey through 2 Peter, because there is a whole lot more that needs to be unpacked as it relates to this topic.

- And I am not saying you will be completely clear on how all this works after next week's lesson, but my prayer is you will be more at peace with it!
- So once again, come back next week – as we continue our journey through this very controversial and highly debated topic!
 - Amen – Amen!

- Good morning and welcome back to everyone. This morning, we pick back up with our study of 2 Peter 3.
 - Last week – we paused and set up shop on verse 9 as we dealt with an age-old debate between the concept of Calvinism verses Arminianism.
 - We did that because verse 9 is one of the proof texts that both the Calvinist and the Arminians use to back up their position.
 - That’s interesting because you wouldn’t think that two opposite views of salvation – could use the exact same text.
 - But they do because of one simple word – Presupposition – which simply means both sides approach the topic with a preset bias.
 - Which then allows them to read the verse from their own perspective.
- I want to continue our teaching on the topic this morning, but I want to do it from a different angle or maybe look at it in a different way.
 - Before we do that, I want to back up and re-read verse 9 – and then move forward in context from there.
 - And here is what Peter wrote, 2 Peter 3:9:

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

- Now – the context of that verse dealt with mockers. These people who were mocking believers.
 - Specifically saying – and I’ll paraphrase here for just a moment – they were saying “You guys keep about talking the return of Jesus but look around – as far as we can tell, Jesus has not returned – He is nowhere to be seen. Matter a fact, you guys have been saying He is returning forever, but He hasn’t – so obviously you must be wrong about your “Messiah”.
 - They said it this way in verse 4 of Chapter 3:

2 Peter 3:4 and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.”

- So, what’s the deal. Where is He?
 - As I told you last week, the fathers falling asleep was a reference to the Old Testament Patriarchs.
 - Men like Abraham, Issac & Jacob.
 - It had been roughly 2000 years since they passed so essentially, they are saying (Speaking of the mockers again), we are not really sure this whole Jesus coming back thing is real.

- Now, I want to echo something Paul said that I feel is very pertinent as it relates to these mockers and their statements about Jesus' return. And here is what Paul wrote.

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

- The King James says it this way:

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

- Translating it into modern words, Paul is saying, for those who have been enlightened and been given eyes to see and ears to hear.
 - Which includes – all those who have been given the gift of faith. Which is the Supernatural Ability to believe!
 - To them, the cross is the power of God.
 - To everyone else, it's simply foolishness.
- And I will tell you, there really is no truer statement than what Paul says here in 1 Corinthians. And why?
 - Because if you truly think about it the whole story of Jesus seems a little ridiculous.
 - Here is a man – who was supposedly born of a virgin.
 - Lived a relatively peaceful life.
 - Didn't really make any waves until He began His ministry.
 - Even then, He was meek, humble and spoke softly – and mysteriously, while never claiming to be the Messiah.
 - Yet He did allude to it repeatedly.
 - He was also patient, allowing God to work inside the hearts and the minds of the people, and it was those people who eventually figured out who Jesus truly was as one by one they had that "Ahh Ha" moment – which came to them by way of divine revelation.
 - A perfect example of what I am trying to say – and one that gives me cold chills – if I can be honest – shows up in Matt. 16:13-20 when Jesus was interacting with the disciples. And here is what was said.

Matt. 16:13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (Once again – notice Jesus never says who He is)

Matt. 16:14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."

Matt. 16:15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

Matt. 16:16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Matt. 16:17 And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

- Now the key to all of this lies in verse 17 where it says:

“Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven”.

- I bring this up for 2 reasons. The first being – remember, mockers will always be here and back then they showed up in one way. In our day, they show up as another.
 - Today – as we can see interest in the Church and Christianity is on the decline, and that decline is directly tied back to prophecy.
 - A prophecy that says in 2 Timothy 4:3-4:

2 Timothy 4:3 For *the* time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires,

- We also know from other places in scripture, that in the last days the church will become apostate. (It will fall away). We are seeing that play out before our very eyes, and there may be no greater proof for all of us than this church you all are sitting in here today.
 - It was built in the 60’s and closed shop this past year.
 - That’s not a one-off situation. It’s happening all over this country. Churches are closing their doors.
 - Also, according to a statement by the Southern Baptist Convention, right now there are more churches who need Pastors than there are Pastors to fill the positions.
 - And – the seminaries are seeing a decline in attendance as well.
 - So, as you can see – based on God's prophetic word, we are at the end of the last days!
 - There is simply no way around it
 - But there is another reason, I mentioned Matt. 16:13-20, and it ties directly back to our discussion and teaching from last week – the discussion of Calvinism versus Arminianism.
- Jesus Himself makes it clear that God is the one who opens the hearts of men, and He explains why He set it up that way in Ephesians 2:8-10 – where Paul (once again says the following).

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of

yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

Ephesians 2:9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

- So, whether you are an Arminian / Freewill person or a Calvinist, there is simply no debate on who does the work in the heart of men.
 - And as I said last week that statement along with the others I made previously, are not where the rub comes in between these two camps.
 - The rub comes in when the Calvinist says God doesn't open the eyes of everyone – meaning everyone doesn't get a chance.
 - Or if you are an Arminian you say everyone gets their eyes opened – everyone gets a shot, but's it's their choice.
 - That is where the two roads diverge.
- Now – I want to give you my personal stance on this issue because I think it's important where I stand on the whole thing. First – I want you to know that I will not make it a thing. Meaning I will not set up shop on one or two topics of scripture and then allow this church to be identified by those topics.
 - There is simply way too much work to be done for us to get hung up on a thing!
 - Let me also say, Churches love getting hung up on things. They love saying – I know something you don't know.
 - Or we got it right and you don't.
 - What they should be hung up on is doing the work of ministry in their everyday life, because the world does not care about all this stuff.
 - They are simply watching to see if your walk matches your talk – and that's the truth of the matter.
- But back to my view on this whole thing, I began in ministry as a hard core Arminian. So hardcore I would argue with you to the death over the topic.
 - Matter a fact, I couldn't believe anyone would believe anything else other than God opens the eyes of everyone.
 - Then I started studying and teaching the Bible, and slowly my paradigm began to shift. I could not deny the fact that most of the Scripture spoke of how God was Sovereign.
 - How He was in control and how He was the one doing the work!
- Now I wouldn't say I became a card-carrying Calvinist by no means. I will say however – the evidence for Calvinism is everywhere in the Bible.
 - But then – the more I studied I began seeing man's responsibility sprinkled in with God's Sovereignty as well.
 - Which led me to the place where I am today, which is in the center of the issue – with a Sovereignty leaning.

- I didn't say Calvinist leaning – because I don't believe everything John Calvin taught.
- And to be honest with you – I'm perfectly fine with whatever way it is.
 - If the Calvinists are correct – then it's okay with me.
 - And if the Arminians are correct – that works as well.
- Having said that, I will tell you that if the thought of either side of this debate makes you angry, you are approaching the topic with the wrong paradigm. And let me explain what I mean.
 - To the Arminians I say – If God came down to earth and held a press conference this morning and said, hey guys – the Calvinists are correct, especially as it relates to Salvation.
 - And if Jesus' statement made you mad or upset then you need to check your motive in believing what you believe.
 - Because for me I can truly say, I don't worry about it – and whatever God says I am good with it.
 - On the other hand, if God said to the Calvinist, the Arminians are correct, and Jesus words made them mad – then once again I would tell them to check themselves.
 - Check their heart and motive.
 - And I will tell you why, because no matter where you stand on this topic, what I can tell you is this – in God's dichotomy:
 - He is the Creator.
 - He is the Master.
 - And He is the one who sent His Son to redeem men back to Himself.
 - And it's God's Sovereign choice to do whatever He pleases.
- And so – if you close your eyes and imagine Jesus Himself telling you what the truth is, about anything, and it was opposite what you had been taught or believed your whole life, and if His words – in any way make you mad, then at the heart of your feelings – would be the issue of pride.
 - Meaning, the moment you get upset about what Jesus told you to be true, it's no longer about God – it's all about you.
 - And that is fact
- Which leads me to the issue: Becoming too dogmatic about either side of this topic. Specifically how it effects our approach to ministry.
 - You see – there is only one true way to approach ministry, and that's with humility – which is the absence of Pride by the way.
 - And you can only arrive at this place in your life, when you see yourself the same way Paul saw himself, or the same way Peter saw himself:
 - As a “Bond Servant” of the Lord Most High
 - A Bond Servant – A slave who earned his freedom but decided to stay with his master!

- Which means (once again), it's not about you, (your wants and your desires). Rather it's all about God, all the time.
 - His wants and desires. More specifically – it's all about “His Will”.
 - And let me explain what I mean as it relates to your work in ministry.
- You see – if I am an Arminian and I share the Gospel with someone, because I believe without me they may not get saved – I am totally wrong in my doctrine.
 - God is the one who does the saving – not us.
 - And if He intends on someone being saved, I assure you – He will save them with or without me.
- On the other hand, if I am a Calvinist and I say, Oh well, I am not worried about talking to that individual. God's going to save who He will save. Once again – my doctrine is all messed up, and I have fallen way short of the mark.
 - Because you see – in both these scenarios there lies a problem deep beneath the surface, and that problem is: you have put yourself at the center of the universe rather than placing God there.
 - The correct paradigm for both views is this –
 - The reason I tell people about Jesus, and the reason I live my life for Christ is so that God will use me.
 - Which by the way brings my freewill into the equation.
 - In other words, I have a choice whether I get in the game or not.
 - If I apply myself, if I work on myself, if I study, attend church – fellowship etc.
 - Then I will grow spiritually, and the result of that will be God will use me.
 - On the other hand, if I choose to do none of the above – God won't use me, but He will use someone else.
- The biggest take away I want everyone to get out of today's lesson, which comes from my nearly 20 years of Bible study and teaching is this: God is our Master, and we are His slaves.
 - And slaves don't have opinions. They simply do what they are told, end of Story.
- Now the harsh reality for most church people is that they have never been told that we are not the center of the universe in God's World.
 - On the contrary, the mainstream church has evolved overtime. Slowly twisting God's Word into telling us that God is our buddy.
 - That Jesus is a Genie in a bottle; ready, willing and able to grant our every wish.
 - That is not how the Bible describes God's relationship to His children, and it is certainly not how the Apostles describe or viewed themselves.
- And just so you know – when you fully grasp the concept of God being Lord and not my buddy, it is a very liberating feeling. Because – if you are an Arminian, you no longer must feel trepidation, about sharing Christ with someone.
 - You simply share and if they receive it – well then, to God be the glory!

- And if they don't, you move on because you're not responsible for the outcome.
- That doesn't mean that person won't receive Christ in the future, it just means God wasn't dealing with them in the moment you spoke to them.
- On the other hand, if I am a Calvinist – then I should be even more compelled to be a witness. Which remember isn't necessarily what I say, but rather how I live my life.
 - I should feel more compelled to grow in my spiritual sanctification so that God will use me.
 - Not just sit back and say, Oh well – God is going to do what He's going to do. Therefore it doesn't matter what I do!
 - You see – as I said earlier, many times – at the heart of this debate is nothing more than pride!
 - And honestly, I believe that is why God has allowed these two topics to remain a mystery.
 - To keep us on our toes and guessing.
- But in reality – we don't have to guess. We just simply need to let God be our Lord and Master. And then study His Word (His instruction manual), and then do what it says.
 - We should do that without any worry – as it relates to who gets saved and who doesn't.
 - Because the fact is, we simply don't know. Only God does.
 - And it's not our job to know. It's our job to do what He said in the Great Commission.
 - And what was that? Well, let me read it to you once again:

**Matt. 28:19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
 Matt. 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”**

- Now, here's what interesting about the “Great Commission”. If I asked 30 Christians, men and women who have been Christians for 10 plus years, to tell me what the Great Commission says – they will say it says “go tell” – meaning go tell people about Jesus.
 - But that's not what the Great Commission says. It says “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”
 - And then in verse 20 it says, “Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you”.
 - So, what this tells us is that if we want to make disciples, we must teach them!
 - But teach them what? God's Word – which contains everything we are commanded to do.
- Now some might say, well preacher – are you saying we are not supposed to tell people about Jesus? Are we not supposed to share the Gospel?
 - The answer is yes you are – If that's the opportunity you've been given.

- But that's not what the Great Commission says. It doesn't say "Go Tell" them about Jesus.
- Now – using the rule of inference from Hermeneutics, which is one of the rules we learned last week, you could say – well it doesn't say that – but how can you make disciples if they don't first hear the Gospel – and become saved.
 - I would say you can't, but that's not what the Great Commission says.
 - And I have a theory on this, and I would like to share it with you.
 - Here's my theory: God is saving people each and everyday all around the world. Just as the Psalmist says:

Psalm 3:8 That salvation belongs to the Lord

Psalm 62:1 My soul waits in silence for God only; From Him is my salvation

- And what we know about believers (God's Children), is that the Bible speaks specifically of how some have been gifted in sharing the Gospel. Where others have not (per se').
 - I'm not saying only a select few can share the Gospel. I am saying that when some believers share the Gospel there seems (many times) to be a response.
 - Kind of like those who have the gift of evangelism.
 - And whether I am 100 percent correct on that concept or not – it doesn't really matter for the purposes of my theory, except as it relates to my next statement. And that is, God is Sovereign over salvation – it's His work.
 - But the mechanism that brings about conviction which leads to salvation is His Word!
 - That is a truth of scripture.
 - His Word is the mechanism He uses to save people.
 - It's not our personal testimony by the way.
 - This is a fact – just go study Paul and his encounter with the Philippian Jailer.
 - Paul (of all people) never uses his personal testimony as a means of leading the jailer to salvation.
 - He instead carries him to the scriptures.
 - The result was not only was the jailor saved, but his entire household was saved.
 - And this is the case found elsewhere in scripture as well.
 - Such as with Phillip and the Ethiopian Eunuch.
- So, what that tells us is: if we want to see people saved, and we want to see people become disciples, we as believers must learn God's Word.

- And then teach it to others – not just rely on our experiences with God as our proof that God is who we say He is.
 - The Bible gives us clear examples of how men are saved.
 - From those examples – we can know that salvation is a byproduct of conviction, which comes by way of His Holy Manuscript.
- And so, what we also know is that even though we don't have control over someone's salvation, we do have control over how much we study and learn and are able to share God's Word with other people.
 - Which (as I said) is the means by which people are saved.
- And so my theory is this – if we focus on our studies and prayer time with God, salvation will be a natural byproduct for some of those we encounter.
 - Or – on the other hand we could use the same ole method the church has been using for the last 50 plus years. Which is what?
 - Don't worry about knowing God.
 - Don't worry about becoming well versed in the scriptures.
 - Just go tell people about Jesus.
- And let me say one more thing about this method before closing this morning. That is, once a person is saved, the next step in their walk is to begin a journey of sanctification.
 - Which is growing and becoming more like Christ.
 - And when we do that – our lives begin to change. And we slowly become a witness.
 - All by how we act and conduct ourselves. By how we handle ourselves.
 - Especially – when the outcome is not in our favor.
 - It's easy to be all about Jesus when everything is going our way, but the true test comes when things aren't going our way.
 - That's when the world is watching.
 - And that's when God will give you the opportunity to be a better you – that's when your faith will be tested.
 - And that's when your testimony speaks the loudest.
 - And so – once again – as we have seen time and time again, all of this is cyclical: you study, you grow, you mature – you become!
 - Or another way to say it is, what you ingest – you eventually become!
- So – with all this in mind, where are we on this Calvinist versus Arminian topic?
 - I say, don't worry about it. Just get busy studying and learning and ingesting God's Word.
 - Then watch how God begins using you!
 - Amen – Amen!
- Come back next week – as Peter makes a shift in his subject matter once again as he

begins speaking more in depth about the earth and its purpose and how it all ties into the end of times.

- I'll give you a little cliff hanger for next week. We are going to be talking about a hot topic:
 - The topic of Climate Change.
 - And I think you'll find my research to be somewhat fascinating.

- Good morning. It's good to see everyone! Last week I left you with a cliff hanger statement of sorts. Well kind a – sort a – but maybe, not really.
 - It depends on where you are on the topic of “Climate Change”. I say that – tongue and cheek sort of! You'll see what I mean later.
 - Anyways – before getting into all that, I told you last week that Peter was going to make another shift in topic, or you might say, a shift in his methodology or reasoning back against these mockers.
 - Mockers who were mocking Christians.
 - Saying – and I am paraphrasing here, they were saying, “You Christians keep talking about the Lord's return”, that Jesus is coming back, but where is He?
 - Matter a fact, ever since the fathers have fallen asleep He hasn't returned.
 - Another way to say it is, it's been 2000 years – and Jesus is nowhere to be seen.
 - So – obviously what you guys are saying isn't true about Jesus coming back.
 - That really is the jest of what the mockers were saying and as I said previously, I could see them saying that using that statement as their proof that Jesus isn't who they say He is!
 - I mean really – It makes sense to me that the unbelieving world would use the fact that Jesus still hasn't returned – as backup to what they were trying to prove.
 - And then of course, their statements are what led Peter to write this in verses 3-9. As usual we will back up and catch verses 3-7 and then move forward in context.

2 Peter 3:3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts,

2 Peter 3:4 and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.”

2 Peter 3:5 For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water,

2 Peter 3:6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.

2 Peter 3:7 But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

2 Peter 3:8 But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

- So, verse 9 caused us to pause for 2 weeks and go deeper – and expound further on the

debate between Calvinism versus Arminianism.

- I am not going to dive back into that discussion this morning, but if you weren't here and you are interested, you can go to our website – and listen to the previous two weeks messages for further clarification (If you call it clarification when you're done).
- Now having said that, I would like to say this – and then I will let sleeping dogs lie, and that is – just remember when dealing with this topic, or any other topic of debatable doctrine, always be cognitive – to keep the main thing the main thing.
 - Meaning – don't lose track of what's important.
 - And what is important? First – it's salvation. We should want to see people saved.
 - And the person of Jesus Christ – specifically His life, death, burial and resurrection is the key to salvation.
 - More specifically – someone's belief in Jesus.
 - Which brings about the revelation of not only who he is – but also who that person is before a Holy and Righteous God.
 - Which is (as we know), a sinner in need of a Savior.
 - And of course that individual must not just believe – but also confess and acknowledge the work of Jesus on the cross – and how that act is what makes our salvation possible in the first place.
 - Then – after salvation – we are commanded to move to sanctification, which is simply growing and maturing spiritually as a believer and follower of Jesus Christ.
 - Or another way to say it is becoming more like Christ!
 - And as we've learned – that can only take place when someone becomes intimate with God – learning in a much deeper way who God and Jesus truly are.
 - The method or facilitation of this process can only happen one way, which is by and through the ingestion of God's Word.
 - Which means we must study and know His Word if we want to mature because as we've learned, it's God's Word that Saves You
 - And its His Word that Sanctifies You!
 - So, be careful not to make anything in scripture a thing and certainly don't make something a thing to the point or degree that it causes you to become hard and or callused and puffed up.
 - Instead remember – there is much work to be done.
 - And never forget that doctrine and or arguments over doctrine can become a means – by which the enemy sidelines you.
 - It can be a slippery slope - Amen – Amen!
- Moving on, I said last week – we were going to touch on a topic that is somewhat of a hot button in our society today, and that topic – is the topic of climate change.
 - Now when I say climate change, as said earlier – I am speaking with a little tongue

and cheek, and I will admit – Peter's final writings here in Chapter 3 have zero to do with “climate change”.

- But when we read the final verses of Chapter 3, you will see somewhat how climate change could come up in today's teaching.
 - Because even though the Bible doesn't specifically speak on this topic, it does speak rather vividly – about a day when Climate Change will be a stark reality
 - And that thought started me thinking about the topic of climate change especially as it relates to our modern-day thinking, but more specifically, it got me thinking about the earth and our relationship to it.
- But before we do that let's read Peter's final words in 2 Peter 3:10-18 as move ever so closely to the completion of yet another book or letter of the Bible. My NASB Bible entitles this section: A New Heaven and New Earth

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

2 Peter 3:14 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,

2 Peter 3:15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,

2 Peter 3:16 as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

2 Peter 3:17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,

2 Peter 3:18 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.

- So, as I said, Peter makes a shift in his topic where he moves from explaining why it is that the Lord has not returned.
 - It's because - His timing is not our timing.
 - It's because - something has not happened yet.
 - It's because - it's not time.
 - Because – everyone who is going to be saved in human history has not been saved.
 - Because as Paul says in Romans 11:25 “The fullness of the Gentiles is not complete”
- Then from there Peter immediately moves into writing about the Lord's return, and he does so through the topic of eschatology – which is the study of the End of Times.

- Now – as always, the question for me is why? Why does he do that?
- I mean – there are mockers mocking the Christians, which is part of the reason Peter is writing to them. And these mockers are using as their proof the fact that Jesus has not yet returned, that it's been thousands of years.
 - But then he jumps to this topic of The End of Times.
 - Actually, I would say he moves to the topic of what happens when "The End of Times" begins and finishes.
 - Specifically – he speaks about our hope of the New Heavens and New Earth.
- So, wonder why he does this?
- Well – remember in this section of scripture Peter is writing, all to encourage these believers to lift them up!
- And so, if we stay in context with the theme of his writings, we can know that his writings here at the end of Chapter 3 must be in keeping with this same logic.
 - And logic, as we learned (when we studied Hermeneutics few weeks ago), is one of the rules that we use when interpreting scripture.
 - Having said that, even though encouragement is his intent, for you and I there is a lot more for us to unpack, and we will begin with verse 10 with the concept of The Day of the Lord.
 - This is important because the encouragement these people receive from their understanding of the end of times.
 - Specifically – what happens to this world and subsequently what our future is in this world.
 - The answer to that question is where the encouragement comes from.
- The words "Day of the Lord" are also important – because they show up in other places in scripture, using the same words but worded differently.
 - Such as in verse 12 in this same set of verses where Peter calls it – "The coming day of the Lord".
 - Also in the Old Testament, it's called the Day of Yahweh.
 - Or in other places it's called, "The great and terrible or dreadful day of the Lord"
 - For most Christians, they wouldn't know this to be the case if they hadn't studied these phrases.
- Which is what has led many believers to become confused about this topic. And let me just say this before we move on, the topic of the end of times is another one of those highly debated topics as well!
 - Or let me say, the views on what happens when Jesus returns is a highly debated topic. Maybe even in some sects – more highly debated than Calvinism versus Arminianism.
 - And so, let's dig in and discover what this Day of the Lord thing is all about.
 - But first, before we do that, I want to touch on the topic of our earth and climate change.

- Maybe a better way to say it is – the earths’ purpose – and then we will hit this climate change debate head on.
- To do this we will have to answer a fundamental question: what is the purpose of the earth as it relates to us?
 - And to answer that question, we need to venture back to where it all began in the Book of Genesis – so let's pick up and read Genesis 1:26-31

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

Genesis 1:27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Genesis 1:29 Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;

Genesis 1:30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, *I have given* every green plant for food”; and it was so.

Genesis 1:31 God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

- And so, just to set the context, for purposes of time this morning let me explain what is going on in this scene. It's simple – and you probably know the story very well.
 - Basically – God created the Heavens and Earth. And just a side bar – He did so through His Word.
 - After creating the Heavens and Earth He then created Adam and Eve, and placed them in the Garden where everything was perfect – until something happened.
 - And what happened?
 - Well – as we know the serpent enters the garden.
 - He catches Eve alone.
 - Begins speaking to her, confuses her.
 - Confuses her as it relates to God's Word and His rules and instructions as it pertained to eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.
 - And what were His instructions?
 - God told Eve and Adam that they could eat from any tree in the Garden – just not from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

- So, Satan (the serpent) twists God's Words and says – God didn't mean what He said, (at least not the way you heard it).
- Which then causes Eve to question what God said.
 - From there she does something God told her not to do.
 - And what was that?
 - She eats from the tree!
 - And then (of course – as we know – misery loves company).
- So, she gives Adam the fruit as well, and then Adam partakes.
- And of course, as we know, the scriptures say God told them – if you eat from this tree, you will surely die.
 - But when Eve eats – she doesn't die (I am assuming). Even though the scripture doesn't say it – but it's inferred.
 - But I assume, the fact she didn't die is one reason Adam was so quick to eat as well.
 - From there – Moses writes the following about this situation -

Genesis 3:14 The LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this,
Cursed are you more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you will go,
And dust you will eat
All the days of your life;

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity

Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

Genesis 3:16 To the woman He said,

“I will greatly multiply
Your pain in childbirth,
In pain you will bring forth children;
Yet your desire will be for your husband,
And he will rule over you.”

Genesis 3:17 Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’;

Cursed is the ground because of you;
In toil you will eat of it
All the days of your life.

Genesis 3:18 “Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;

And you will eat the plants of the field;

Genesis 3:19 By the sweat of your face

You will eat bread,

Till you return to the ground,

Because from it you were taken;

For you are dust,

And to dust you shall return.”

- So, inside these verses in Genesis, you have (what is) the answer to the question: what is the purpose of the earth and its relationship to us.
 - Let me read Verse 28 of Chapter 1 to you one more time for context, I'll read it one more time.

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

- So – according to the Creator of the universe we are cursed and so is the earth.
 - And our punishment for Adam and Eve's mistake is that we will work the earth (by the sweat of our brow) – but it's ours to subdue.
 - The word "subdue" in Hebrew is a verb – it means to bring into bondage.
 - It means – we are to make the earth our slave.
 - Bring it into subjection – make it work for us.
 - Which means – we are to do with it as we see fit, at least from the standpoint of it providing for our needs.
 - An example of that would be "water"
- We – in America and around the world – have figured out how to clean up and purify water.
 - And I don't know about you, but I am personally thankful we have done that.
 - But this wasn't always the case.
- At one time many people died daily – after drinking water out of a creek or river.
 - So, we did what God told us to do and in America, we subdued it and created a way to clean it up – make it safe to drink.
 - The same thing applies to sewage.
 - The same thing with fossil fuels.
 - With coal.
 - With electricity – hydro and nuclear power etc.
- God gave us this earth – and not only allowed us – but told us to subdue it.

- To bring it into subjection for the purposes of sustaining life.
- And for the countries that have done that, the results speak for themselves.
- For the countries that have not! Well – if you have ever been to those countries the results are not good!
 - And so, when we apply logic to all of this it tells us something – and what does it tell us?
 - It tells us that we are not here for the earth, the earth is here for us.
- But wait – someone might say, well preacher – that’s all fine and dandy, but what about protecting the environment for the next generation, for our children – I mean, if we ruin it, how will they sustain life?
 - My answer to that individual is, yes – I agree we should be responsible with the resources we have been given
 - But – for the believer – you must never forget this thing (this world we live in) – is temporary.
 - It’s so temporary that we could call the earth disposable or a throw away.
 - Meaning, if you understand how this whole thing ends, you will understand why we are to extract all we can from this planet.
 - Subdue it – bring it into bondage.
 - Because eventually (and soon) – this earth is going to go through *the ultimate climate change*, and the earth (as we know it) will cease to exist.
 - That’s exactly what Peter is referencing here in 2 Peter Chapter 3:10

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

- So, due to my lack of political correctness in this situation we know what we are to do with the earth and the resources it gives us.
 - And we know the future of this planet.
 - So God said (paraphrasing here), use this planet – make it work for you.
 - Use it while you can, because soon – I am going to destroy it!
 - And not only is the earth going to be destroyed, but also, all the works it has produced.
 - Which tells us our earth is a temporary resource – created by God, for our sustenance.
 - Nothing more and nothing less!
 - And one day it will all end with something Peter calls, “The day of the Lord”
- So, the day of the Lord, do you wonder what that is?

- The phrase "the day of the Lord" refers to a specific time, yet future, and is (as I previously stated) – referenced elsewhere in Scripture – under different terminology.
 - And believers will know when that day has begun because it begins when the Antichrist rises up and makes a covenant with Israel, and it will conclude with the burning up of the present heavens and earth (as referenced in Dan. 9:27).
- And that is exactly what Peter says here in 2 Peter 3, but that's not all he says, and to be honest – that's not his point.
 - So, what is his point?
 - Well – let me re-read verse 11-13 and I'll explain as we close.

2 Peter 3:11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,
2 Peter 3:12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!
2 Peter 3:13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

- Here is the context of Peter's writings, and it not only applied to them, but it also applies to us as well.
 - Guys, this life and this world is temporary and as believers we know exactly how the movie ends.
 - So – the question is what sort of people ought you be?
 - You should be Holy in your conduct!
- But what does that mean?
 - It means – we should be sold out to Christ.
 - It means – that your actions and reactions should be God honoring
 - It means you should live your life knowing Jesus is coming back at any moment!
 - Because He is – we know He hasn't yet. But know this – to the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day!
 - So – don't think God is slow – as some would count slowness.
- But know this – God is going to return – and it will happen like a thief in the night.
 - You won't know it – you won't expect it.
 - And you can't anticipate it!
 - And remember – this life is short.
 - But the believer's home will last forever!
 - Amen – Amen!

- We are here to finish up our teaching and journey through 2 Peter, and today we will be studying a portion of the final verses of the 3rd Chapter
 - Some of what we've learned so far, is 2nd Peter is a very short letter – only 3 Chapters long – and we began this letter on June the 24th of this year.
 - I believe we have managed to extract just about every ounce of juice we could out of Peter's writings, and we did so with some 17 teachings – and between today and next week that will put us at 19 total teachings for this letter.
 - Which means, after next week – and over this past 11 years, we will have taught through 19 Books of the Bible.
 - 6 Old Testament & 13 New Testament
- Now before we jump into the final verses of 2 Peter 3 this morning, I would like to do a quick re-cap of where we have been with this letter.
 - Maybe better said – I want us to review at a high level what we know about the context of the letter (which is key).
 - We could say what the theme and or purpose of the letter was.
 - Remember, 2 Peter was written to a group of people (primarily Gentile believers) – who were residing in or around Asia Minor.
 - Today the area known as Modern Day Turkey!
 - And as we've learned, 2 Peter was believed to have been written in or around AD 65-68 – which was right before his death.
 - 2 Peter was also believed to be the last letter ever pinned in the New Testament.
- I am not going to spend a lot of time rehashing the introduction of this letter. If you weren't here for the introduction, I want to encourage you to go to our website and listen. Having said that, I do want to highlight one thing – (one very important thing). And that is the purpose of the letter.
 - If you take all 3 Chapters of 2 Peter and melt them all down into one main purpose or theme it would be this: 2 Peter is "a call to action" for Christians everywhere.
 - To Grow and Mature Spiritually.
 - This call was not just for obvious reasons, but it was a call to mature and grow – so that they, and all future believers could combat false teaching as well as combat the coming Apostasy of the Church.
- And what is the coming Apostasy of the Church?
 - It's when the church falls away in the last days
 - Essentially – you could say it falls away and abandons its faith!
 - Which leads us to a question: Were those people who fell away ever actually saved to begin with?
 - Which then leads us to another question – If someone falls away from their faith now/today, even before the "End of times", were they ever really saved?
 - It's an important question to consider and if you've ever contemplated that question, well you are in luck this morning because I have the answer.

- The answer is – who knows – who knows?
- Only God knows the heart of a man!
- What we do know is that in the last days, “The church” will be full of people, and many of those people will not be saved.
 - And that’s certainly scary to think about, but not as scary as my next statement, which is – according to scripture – the church will not only be full of people who are not saved.
 - But it will be full of people who think they are saved – but in reality they are not!
 - We know this to be the case because in The Book of Revelation, the church is believed to be pictured throughout history in the 7 letters, written by John to the 7 churches which resided in Asia Minor!
 - So, as I said – when you study the characteristics of each one of those churches you will clearly see how each church, and its characteristics, pictures the church throughout history.
 - With the final church being the church at Laodicea – which represents our current church age.
 - Meaning, its characteristics represent our current Church age.
 - What were its characteristics of that church? Let me read it to you.

Rev. 3:14 “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:

Rev. 3:15 ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.

Rev. 3:16 ‘So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

Rev. 3:17 ‘Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

Rev. 3:18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and *that* the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

- What we just read was a description of the church of Laodicea at that time, but it could certainly be said that this church would be a pretty good representation of our modern-day church.
 - And so – as I said – if you go back through all 7 churches you can read and study their characteristics – you can match them up perfectly with the church’s behavior and characteristic throughout history.
 - And as we just learned they all culminate with the Church at Laodicea.
 - And when you study that church further you will discover that it was a church

that was booming, but it was neither hot nor cold – but lukewarm.

- And God said – for that reason, He would spew or vomit them out of His mouth.
- Now, if you do a deep dive into the meaning of Hot/Cold – and Lukewarm – you may or may not be surprised to find out that Hot would represent those who are saved.
 - Cold would represent those who are not saved.
 - And if that's the case, then what in the world is Lukewarm?
- For years many of the preachers in my life – taught that Lukewarm was just another term for “backslidden”.
 - But – if you apply one simple rule of *Hermeneutics* to the interpretation of the plight of the church at Laodicea (that being the rule of logic) – you will clearly see why that can't be the case.
 - This lukewarm group isn't just some group who has spiritually regressed and have fallen away.
 - This group is different. God said – I would rather you be – hot (saved) or cold (not saved).
 - But you lukewarm guys – are neither!
 - But how could that be?
- Well - If you do a study on this lukewarm group, you will discover this group is a group who thinks they're saved but they are not.
 - Which is why God said – I would rather you be hot or cold.
 - Because if you're hot, you're saved – and you know it.
 - And if you are cold – you're unsaved and you know it.
 - But if you are Lukewarm – you don't know what you are.
 - Which means you are deceived!
- The second reason I believe this lukewarm group to be a group who thinks they are saved but are not, lies in a study of soteriology – which is the study of salvation.
 - Meaning how salvation works, who initiates it and who finishes it.
 - Which (as we know) is none other than God Himself.
 - Having said that, we also know we can regress spiritually.
 - I am sure we've all experienced it, and the writer of Hebrews warned about spiritual regression when he said this in Hebrews 5:11-12

Hebrews 5:11 Concerning him we have much to say, and *it is* hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

Hebrews 5:12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

- So, clearly, we see where believers can regress spiritually
 - But for those of us who believe in God's sovereign hand in matters of salvation, coupled with the testimony of scripture –
 - Which clearly speaks to God's ability to keep us and hold on to us – until the end.
- What the Gospel of John says – when Jesus Himself told us in John 6:37, Of all that the Father gives Him, He doesn't lose any of His sheep.
 - That tells us that a spiritually regressed Christian doesn't lose his or her salvation
 - Even though logically speaking, we know there are highs and lows in our Christian Walk.
 - But God doesn't spew or vomit His children out of His mouth.
 - And since the act of spewing or vomiting (in the context of Revelation) – is speaking specifically about the Church at Laodicea, and more specifically about the people who are not saved – the only difference in those who are Lukewarm versus those who are Cold is deception!
- Now, the question that looms in my mind when studying all of this is – How does that happen?
 - Well, first, it is prophetic – the scriptures tell us it will happen.
 - But to be more specific, it happens because the mechanism that saves an individual, that grows a believer spiritually, that mechanism has been abandoned!
 - And what is that mechanism?
 - It's the Teaching of God's Holy Manuscript.
 - But why has it been abandoned?
 - Well – believe it or not, it hasn't been abandoned on purpose.
 - It has slowly happened over time.
 - But why?
- Well – really it traces its origin to one thing: the thing I call “The Spirit of Evangelism”, or “The Spirit of seeing people saved”.
 - This movement in and of itself was great – it is great!
 - But when the church begins to dumb down God's Word – or use it as a side-bar of some sort or even worse, not use it at all.
 - And in it's place uses praise and worship as a means of outreach – essentially entertainment – which is then followed up by some message that more mirrors the world or a motivational speech.
 - Which has nothing to do with God's Word!
 - That's when the trouble starts – and it's because of this extreme “hyper focus” on evangelism (which started some 50 years ago by the way)
- It's because of this movement – more specifically – the “Do whatever it takes to get people into church movement”. That's what's caused the abandonment of God's Word.

- And it lines up perfectly with what Timothy said would happen in the end of Times.
- Listen to what Timothy wrote in 2 Timothy 4:1-3 – Preach the Word

2 Tim. 4:1 I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:

2 Tim. 4:2 preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

2 Tim. 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,

- It's a simple concept to understand.
 - In our efforts to reach people for Christ, we began bending the messages, so they were more palatable.
 - Easier to digest.
 - And we invented new and improved ways to reach people for Christ
 - And nothing wrong with the intent or spirit of that – other than you can't abandon the mechanism that convicts the individual and then grows them spiritually!
- That's the reason the church becomes Apostate, and the reason people abandon their faith is because
 - Either A – they weren't saved to begin with.
 - or B – they were saved but they never matured.
- Now back to the question, if someone abandons their faith does it mean they are not saved?
 - Once again, no one knows who's saved and who's not – salvation is between the individual and God.
 - And it's not my job to make that determination.
 - My job – is simply to teach you God's Word.
 - And let you and God work out the rest.
 - I will say however, that if a person's life has zero sign of spiritual fruit.
 - If I were that person – I would be concerned!
 - But as I said, the short answer is – I have no clue who is saved and who is not!
- Having said all of this, the central theme of Peter's Second Letter, along with many other letters in the Bible, is to warn believers.
 - To grab their attention
 - To say to them – Hey, look up here, there is trouble brewing.
 - And you need to be prepared – you need to grow up spiritually so you can combat it when it arrives!

- And so what we know (from a historical context), is that the church Peter is writing to is a young church.
 - And even in its infancy they are already dealing with the world pressing in on them.
 - As these false teachers slowly try and make their way into this fellowship.
 - Which is what caused Peter to (not only warn them) about these men – but also describe them in detail!
- Peter said these men will look much like the false prophets of the Old Testament – the only difference being between them and the false teacher of today is that the False Prophets of the Old Testament moved in from the outside, teaching about other pagan religions.
 - Working diligently to lead God's People off track by promoting other religions all together!
 - Whereas these false teachers, on the other hand, would emerge from inside the church.
 - With the exact same goal in mind, but with a different methodology.
 - Maybe a more effective methodology.
 - Which was that of twisting and distorting of God's Word.
 - And so the message was a simple one – beware of these people.
 - Be on guard – be diligent.
 - Know GOD'S WORD.
 - For that is the only way you can know if someone is a false teacher.
- And Peter's message to them – is the same message to us.
 - We must be students of God's Word.
 - And we must, as Paul says, “Keep your eye on the prize”.
 - Don't lose heart and don't lose your focus.
 - Remember to keep the main thing the main thing!
 - Don't get caught up in this life and what it has to offer.
 - But keep your focus – remembering how this all ends!
 - And by the way, when you're down and out spiritually speaking, I want you to reflect on today's verses – because Peter's encouragement to those believers (applies to all of us sitting here today).
 - And as we know, encouragement is what led Peter to write the end of Chapter 3.
 - He wanted them to reflect on how this all ends!
 - And that brings us into today's final teaching of 2 Peter, where my NASB Bible entitles this section *A New Heaven and New Earth*.
 - No disrespect to the writers and translators of the NASB, but I came up with my own title – which is not much of a title – but it drives home the point.
 - And that is – Be of good cheer, because it's going to get a lot worse before it gets

better!

- And why do I call it that?
- Because as we know, the whole reason Peter is writing in the first place was to promote spiritual maturity – and to both warn and encourage these people.
- And so – with all that said – his parting words of encouragement look something like this.

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

2 Peter 3:11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

2 Peter 3:12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!

2 Peter 3:13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

2 Peter 3:14 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,

2 Peter 3:15 and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,

2 Peter 3:16 as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

2 Peter 3:17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,

2 Peter 3:18 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.

- Now – we are going to finish this morning with verses 10-11.
 - But before I break all of this down for you this morning, let me say, the Apostle Paul echoes the exact same sentiment in his writings that Peter does.
 - When he, after setting up churches in Asia Minor, these churches began experiencing persecution.
 - Paul said – and I will paraphrase here (but in context).
 - Don't worry – it gets worse before it gets better!
 - But be of Good Cheer – soon you will die and get to go be with your Father who is in Heaven.
 - And that my friends – is what's called the "Blessed Hope".

- And believe it or not – that is encouragement to the believer.
- It is – if you embrace the truth of that reality!
- You see, when you finally come to grips with how all this ends, it's a very spiritually liberating thing!
 - Because it changes the way you look at this life!
 - It will also cause you to pause in times of trouble and say to yourself – God is Sovereign and totally in control.
 - Ultimately – I'm not going to be here very long anyways!
 - For that reason – I choose to live my life in keeping with the old Hymn that says "It is well, it is well with my soul".
 - Amen – now moving on
- From here, let's exegete and expound on the remaining verses of 2 Peter 3, verses 10 and 11

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

2 Peter 3:11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

- In verse 10 Peter references a time he calls "The day of the Lord".
 - He says it will come like a thief in the night.
 - Which simply means, no one will know when it happens.
 - There will be no heads up or warning. It just happens.
 - And to further expound on that not only will humans be clueless when it happens – not even Jesus will know.
 - And we know this to be the case because of what He said when He spoke using the parable of the fig as an illustration – listen to what Matthew wrote in Matt. 24:36-41 (By the way – remember this is Jesus speaking).

Matt. 24:36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.

Matt. 24:37 "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah.

Matt. 24:38 "For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,

Matt. 24:39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Matt. 24:40 "Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left.

Matt. 24:41 “Two women *will be* grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.

- Once again, we see the consistency of scripture played out as it relates to the end of time – and or “The day of the Lord”.
 - No one knows when it will happen except the Father who is Heaven.
 - Now I personally find this fascinating. I mean, I can understand the angels not knowing, but what about Jesus not knowing?
 - Wonder why God doesn’t reveal His plans to the Son?
 - Especially – when the Son is the main character in the event!
- Well – if you have ever wondered about this – today is your lucky day because (as always) – I have the answer.
 - The answer is – we don’t completely know. It’s a mystery of God – much like the Trinity.
 - What we do know however, is that Jesus’ resurrection and ascension and eventual return, mimics the same process of that of the Jewish Wedding festival.
 - In the Jewish wedding festival, a young man becomes betrothed to a young lady.
 - It’s basically like an engagement. Not exactly – but close.
 - The young man becomes betrothed.
 - But he doesn’t get to marry her right away.
 - Instead, he must return to (and here’s where it gets interesting), he must return to his Father’s House and do something – what is it?
 - He must prepare a place – to bring his new Bride home to which lines up perfectly with what Jesus says in John 14:1-3 – He said:

John 14:1 “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

John 14:2 “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

John 14:3 “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.

- So just like in the Jewish Wedding festival – Jesus goes to prepare a place for us.
 - And then back to this whole Jewish wedding process thing.
 - When the young man returns to His Father’s house, he must prepare a place to receive His bride.
 - Maybe he needs to add on an addition to his father’s house or expand a room or whatever it is – what we know is that it’s all controlled by His Father.
 - And – that’s the same thing that happens with Christ's Second Coming.

- The Son cannot return for His bride until the Father says everything is ready!
- Which leads us to our previous teaching here in 2 Peter, where the mockers mock the church and say – where is Jesus?
 - Ever since the fathers fell asleep, He hasn't returned.
- Now – of course what we learned a few weeks ago in 2 Peter 3:8-9 is that the father is waiting on something to happen before He sends Jesus back.
 - And what is it? Well let's read verses 8-9 one more time for the answer.

2 Peter 3:8 But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

- As I previously explained Paul says this same thing in Romans, when he mentions a phrase known as “the fullness of the Gentiles” – and how it must come to pass.
 - The term "fullness of the Gentiles" and verse 9 here in 2 Peter are essentially saying the same thing.
 - And that is the thing that triggers the Father to tell the Son to go get His Bride.
 - When the last person on earth who will be saved is saved.
 - That's what led Peter to say the following in verse 11 – one more time and we will close here.

2 Peter 3:11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

- I want to close you out with this today – and I will expound on this more next week as we close out the letter.
 - One of our highest callings as believers is to that of Holy Conduct and Godliness.
 - Holy Conduct isn't just something you decide to do.
 - It's something you become.
 - The only way you can become more Holy and Godly – is to be transformed from the inside out by becoming more intimate with God.
 - And the only way to know Him in a more intimate and deep way is by studying His memoirs.
 - And what are His memoirs?
 - It's His Word.
 - That's where the "ah ha" moments of our lives come to pass.

- And that's where we see ourselves reflected clearly for who we are as a mirror.
 - But not just any mirror.
 - It's God's Mirror.
- And through it you will see true reflection of yourself like no other reflection you've ever seen before.
- You will essentially see yourself the way God saw you – prior to the covering of Jesus' Blood on your life.
 - And so, what's the application?
 - The application is simple. We must get back to the basics as a church and we must heed Peter's warning to this church as a warning to ourselves.
 - Be on guard.
 - Grow and mature – so that you will be equipped to handle all adversity, trial and tribulation.
 - And be of Good Cheer.
 - Remember – this thing is going to get a whole lot worse before it ends, but one day we get to be with the father in Heaven!
 - Amen – Amen!

- So this week – we are going to finish our journey through 2 Peter, and as I said last week, I believe we have extracted just about every ounce of juice out of this letter.
 - Having said that – that’s not really an accurate statement because as we know, Gods Word is like a kaleidoscope.
 - It's blue – it's blue green – it's yellow – it's red.
 - If you read and study it once – you get one thing.
 - You read and study it again, and you get something else.
 - What’s fascinating is how I’ll be having a conversation with someone over a particular scripture and they will say, have you ever studied the Gospel of John – the 3rd Chapter?
 - And by the way this just happened this past week.
 - And I will say, yes – you mean the story of Nicodemus.
 - And they will say yea, and I will say – what about it?
 - And they will say, did you know... and almost always they will tell me something I never caught when I previously taught through the book.
 - And like I said – this just happened!
 - And honestly, there is no other book of antiquity that can brag of such a thing.
 - Not the Koran – not Shakespeare – nothing!
- God's Word is so powerful that one passage can convict a person of one thing, and at the same time – the same passage convicts another person, but in a totally different way!
 - It reminds me of a time when I was teaching through a book or letter – I can’t remember which one it was – but after the service, a person ran out the door crying.
 - And I had no clue as to why.
 - So, I called that person later that day and said, “are you okay?” And they said – “Who told you about my situation?”
 - I said – no one. I don’t know anything about your situation.
 - And they said – “someone must have told you”. I said – I promise, I do not know what you are talking about and if I did, I promise you – I wouldn’t lie and say I didn’t.
 - And they said, “Well – it was as if you were speaking directly to my situation this morning”. I said – I promise I don’t know anything about it! And furthermore, if I did – I would never do that. And that’s the truth.
 - A truth - I want everyone here to know and understand!
 - I will never use this pulpit to push an agenda or highlight something a person in our congregation may be going through.
 - I will also never use the pulpit to voice frustrations within our fellowship.
 - I can’t stand it when preachers do that, and I won’t be a party to it!
 - So just remember that, especially if you think I am preaching at you.

- If you share a situation with me in confidence I promise you – It will stay between us. And that’s all I’ll say about that topic!
- Moving on, this morning as I said, we will finish Chapter 3 of 2 Peter.
 - And it’s been an interesting journey.
 - As Peter calls these believers, and believers everywhere, to mature spiritually.
 - Peter (as we know by now) is writing this letter to this group of believers – calling for them to mature.
 - But also sending them a warning – as well as encouraging them to “keep their eye on the prize” (at least that’s what Paul calls it)
 - “Keep their eye on the prize” – as it relates to keeping the main thing the main thing.
 - Keep their eye on the prize as it relates to remembering specifically – that this earth is temporary.
 - Matter a fact – it’s so temporary I would call it disposable.
 - Which means, it’s a throw away.
 - We know this to be the case because one day Peter and Paul, among others in scripture, tell us exactly that this earth and its works will be burned up.
- Believe it or not, those words made up part of Peter's closing parting words of encouragement to this church.
 - Having said that, his words of encouragement are not encouraging words – at least in the way we think of encouraging words.
 - It was Spiritual Encouragement – which is a type of encouragement that starts with the end in mind!
 - Which by the way is the best type of encouragement.
 - I say it’s the best type – because it encourages us by letting us know how the story ends.
 - It’s kind of like a prison sentence really, where the only encouragement a newly convicted person may receive, is knowing that on a certain date he or she will be released, and it will all be over!
 - So letting the church know how this thing all ends, is Peter's way of encouraging this church.
 - And by extension, that’s his encouragement to us as well.
- You see, Heaven is our destination folks (not earth) – and heaven is a perfect place, with a perfect Father, where we will forever serve and praise Him for eternity.
 - No sickness – no pain – no heartache – no let downs
 - No depression and no pharmaceutical companies needed. No doctors needed.
 - A place where all believers will live eternally – in perfect harmony!
 - And that may not seem like encouragement – at least as it pertains to the here and now, but it is.

- Because if we will just pause for a minute and think about it, we will realize our life is on a timer – it's on a countdown.
 - And every day we live is one more day closer to our death.
 - One more day closer to Heaven.
- And so – we are living in a temporary state, as I said. Much like prison sentence.
- And soon – much sooner than you even realize, it will all be over!
 - But not for the believer.
 - For the believer, instead of saying soon your life will be over, the Bible tells us soon your life will begin!
- Which is interesting to think about because honestly – when we pray for a believer to be healed, or we say to ourselves – “today was a good day because I woke up on the right side of the grass”
- Or when a preacher writes a New York Times bestseller book called, Your best life now!
 - If I am being completely honest nothing could be further from the truth
 - Our best life is not now. It will never be now.
 - Our best life is yet to come! And it will be amazing when it arrives!
- It will be so amazing that when you die, I promise you would never want to return to this earth.
 - Which is what has always led me to say, when I die – do me favor, don't try and pray me back to this life!
 - Because I assure you that if God said, do you want to go back – my answer would be a resounding no!
 - I have no interest in returning to this dying earth!
 - With all its problems – sickness and pain!
 - And with that – I'll digress on this topic as well!
- Anyways moving on – today we will finish our teaching this morning in 2 Peter 3. And we will pick back up with verses 10-18, so we stay in context.
 - Once again – before we read this, remember Peter is making a shift in his topic or methodology.
 - Where initially – he warned this church about the false teachers who would be emerging from within the church.
 - And from there, he then moved into addressing the mockers – who were mocking these believers saying, where is this Messiah – I thought you guys said He was coming back, but ever since the fathers fell asleep He is nowhere to be found – so where is He?
 - And that statement is (as we know) what led Peter to say the following in verses 8-9

2 Peter 3:8 But do not let this one *fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

- You could put a few themes with those verses if you wanted to, but the one theme that stands out in my head is that God's timing is not our timing.
 - We must remember God is doing something – and He's still doing something right now today as we speak.
 - Which means Peter's words to this church apply to us as well.
 - So remember, with the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day!
 - From there, Peter now makes his shift into his encouraging words.

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

2 Peter 3:11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

2 Peter 3:12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!

2 Peter 3:13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

2 Peter 3:14 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,

2 Peter 3:15 and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,

2 Peter 3:16 as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

2 Peter 3:17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,

2 Peter 3:18 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.

- This morning as we finish the 3rd Chapter of 2 Peter, I would like to break these 8 verses down into 3 main parts or topics or themes if you will.
 - Beginning with Peter's statement about "The day of the Lord".

- I touched on this a few weeks ago and I won't spend all day on it. I just want you to understand what "The day of the Lord" is.
 - And maybe – more importantly what it is not.
 - First – let me start with what it is.
- The day of the Lord is speaking specifically about Christ's Second Coming.
 - His first coming was when He was born – along with the life He lived here on earth.
 - It was a time of Grace and Mercy.
 - A time in which Jesus came to teach and educate people on God and Himself
 - A time when He came to set up Apostles, all for the purposes of establishing His church.
 - All for the purposes of establishing an institution that would spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - And an institution that would provide a support system for all believers.
 - And finally, an institution that would educate believers on who God was and is, i.e... His Character – And once the realization of who He is sets in, the byproduct is that believers grow and mature.
 - And then of course, as believers mature, they will then help expand the church naturally – all by way of God drawing men to Himself, through those same believers.
 - Believers whose lives are being lived in a Holy and Godly Way!
 - And sure enough, backing up what I just said, Peter says the following in verse 11.

2 Peter 3:11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

- In other words, now that you know the Lord is not slow about His promise as some would count slowness, and now that you know – He is coming.
 - That God is patient as He is waiting on the last person to be saved, that will ever be saved on earth.
 - And now that you know that when the Lord comes, it will be like a thief in the night.
 - Now that you know He is going to destroy this entire planet along with all its works.
 - Another way to say it might be, now that you are educated, then live your life in way that reflects that reality
 - Which is how? Well, let's read it again – verses 11-14

2 Peter 3:11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

2 Peter 3:12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt

with intense heat!

2 Peter 3:13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

2 Peter 3:14 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,

- So, because you now know all of this, live your life in a Holy and Godly manner!
 - Hastening the day, which means expecting the day.
 - This word is a verb – it means to live your life in a way that you are anxiously awaiting His arrival.
 - And so, the question for all of us sitting here this morning is – are we living our lives this way?
 - I would say the answer would be – not to the level we should be, and I include myself in this statement as well.
 - But why?
 - Because life keeps having a way of grabbing our attention, through the shiny things.
 - Things that (to be honest with you) do not matter considering how this thing ends but somehow keeps sucking us in like gravity – life has a gravitational pull on this world we live in!
 - And why – because this earth belongs to the enemy!
 - Meaning it is cursed, and as a result this world as we know it has been handed over to Satan temporarily.
 - Which tells us that the enemy is never going to allow our minds to get quite enough – to realize what's at stake, because as my old secretary used to say, there is always something in life taking the joy out of living.
 - Which means – it's up to us to recognize what's going on.
 - To be cognitive and aware and do something about it!
 - And what should we do about it?
 - We should set aside time every day for God.
 - I call it – giving God your “Firsts Fruits”
- First Fruits is a concept of giving God a sacrifice – by beginning your day by giving up the most valuable asset you have: Time
 - By praying and studying.
 - And we should do that (if possible), before our day gets going!
 - That is our only defense against getting caught up with the shiny things of this life.
 - I know I sound like a broken record, but that's the truth.
 - If you want to live a Holy and Godly life, then you must get intimate with God.
 - And the only way to get intimate with God is to get to know him – by setting

aside time everyday to spend with Him

- That's truth and testimony of the scriptures!
- And if you question that statement – I would tell you to take a 21-day First Fruits challenge, in which you get up every day, and before you do anything else such as check your phone, watch the news, check emails etc.
 - Instead, when your feet hit the floor, go straight into your quiet time with God and do it for 21 days straight without missing.
 - And just see what happens! I promise you – it will change your life!
- Moving on – so Peter mentions “The Day of the Lord” and this day is described by other names in the scriptures as well.
 - The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord
 - Or the day of Yahweh or the Day of Christ
 - And what we know about this day is that this day is the day of Christ's second return
- Now, when I began talking about “The day of the Lord”, I told you I wanted to explain what that day was and what it was not. So let me be clear:
 - This day has nothing to do with the rapture of the Church, where Christ returns partially – when He snatches out His Bride from this earth, right before the tribulation –
 - Christ's second coming is different, and it will not be like the first time He came to earth because there will be no Grace and Mercy.
 - This day will be dark, and it will reveal a side of God that most people don't like to think about – much less talk about.
 - Which would be the side of Him, that is made up of both judgement and wrath.
 - It will be a day that culminates at the end of the 7 years of Tribulation
 - A day that will end with God slaying His enemies
 - Casting Satan, the Anti-Christ, the False Prophet and all those who don't believe into their final destination. Into a place the scriptures call Hell!
- Now, I realize this is not a popular statement, but guys it's the truth and what's interesting about all of this is that God (even though this day is coming) – God is still showing us Grace and Mercy, for now, as we wait.
 - But how is He doing that?
 - Well verse 15 tells us how – listen to it one more time

2 Peter 3:15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,

- Paraphrasing in context here, Peter is saying that because God has not yet returned, and because you are not dead, you can still be saved! There is still time.

- The flip side of that being, that once He returns – it's all over.
- There will be no more opportunity for Salvation.
- That's why Peter says, regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.
 - He means be thankful "you mockers" that He hasn't returned yet because you still have time to repent and be saved.
- And so with all that said, I would be remiss if I didn't ask everyone in here this morning, are you saved?
 - Have you repented – and have you asked Jesus to forgive you of your sins and save your soul?
 - If the answer is no, then do me a personal favor and take the card that is in the pew in front of you and check the box that says salvation
 - Put your information on it, place it in the offering plate and let me call you to discuss or catch me after the service and let's talk!
 - And then for those of you who have made a profession of faith – by repenting and asking Jesus to save them.
 - If you haven't been baptized, then give us the honor of filling up the baptistery and baptizing you!
 - This baptistery is screaming for water!
 - So let me do the honor of doing that for you!
 - And for everyone who is a believer –
 - Do me another favor and ask yourself the question, am I living my life in a way that reflects what I say, what I believe?
 - In other words – am I living my life in a Holy and Godly way?
 - And if that's not the case, I would like for you to consider a rededication of sorts
 - A re-start – and if you want to talk about that, then put that on the card as well – or simply follow John's instructions in 1 John 1:9 where he says:

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- Peter's instruction to this church was simple.
 - Because you know how this thing ends – live your life accordingly.
 - In a Godly and Holy way!
 - His instruction to that church still applies to all of us sitting here today
 - I mean seriously folks, what are we doing?
 - We know how this thing ends, and we know the world we live in will soon be burned up.
 - So – if we truly believe that, then we should strive to live Holy and Godly lives!

- That is all believers' call to action.
 - And all you must do to get started – is repent of that fact and begin the process of prayer and study daily.
 - That's it! And God will take it from there!
- Moving on, next Peter says this – re-reading verses 15&16

2 Peter 3:15 and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 2 Peter 3:16 as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

- We touched on this earlier and I won't belabor the point, but Peter says – regard the patience of the Lord as salvation.
 - Once again he's saying, because there is still time, because the Lord has not returned yet people still can repent!
 - So, in that way, regard His patience as salvation – from there next he mentions Paul.
 - He says just as Paul says, according to the wisdom given him – he wrote to you.
 - The same thing I am teaching you.
 - Some of which is hard to understand – and for that reason the untaught and unstable distort.
 - Just as they do the rest of the scriptures, and they do so to their own destruction.
 - Essentially guys – God set up the church to be run by a plurality of Elders.
 - At least one of these men should be gifted to teach.
 - He should be the teaching elder i.e... the Pastor.
 - Which means this elder must be ready to spend the majority of his time in prayer and study.
 - And because his gift is that of teaching, he should be able to answer any question you may have regarding the scriptures.
 - Or let me say – he should be able to study the question and get you the answer.
 - Which means he should also be able to eliminate confusion in the mind of the believer if he is truly called to teach and preach.
 - Problem is, many preachers today don't know this or they know it and ignore it.
 - Which is a real issue because if you don't have an Elder Teaching Pastor inside the church, it's a real issue because of what Peter just said – where untaught and uneducated men distort the scriptures.
 - The only way an untaught and uneducated man can distort the scriptures is when the people they are teaching don't know what they are being taught.

- And so, you can see the danger when there is no teaching Pastor!
- People are led down all kinds of rabbit holes!
- And they don't even know it's happening.
- Next, we will close out here.

2 Peter 3:17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,

2 Peter 3:18 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.

- Verse 17 is just a continuation of what Peter just said in verse 16, but he adds something in – he says "Be on your Guard".
 - Peters' words should be etched in our brains.
 - Be on Guard, be aware, be cognitive, be vigilant.
 - Another way to say it is to be on the lookout.
 - Keep your eye out looking for the wolves in sheep's clothing.
- And then he finishes with a few words that may not seem like a big deal, but it is the crux of my entire ministry. Listen to it one more time.
 - verse 18 – I Peter, will pray for your safety and your prosperity here on this earth. May you find favor in this life and may nothing ever happen to you. Amen – Amen!
 - Is that what it said?
 - Nope!
 - Think about what I am saying here – Peter is warning these believers about the impending dangers that lie waiting in the weeds.
 - He has warned them about the false teachers.
 - He has given them feedback on why the Lord hasn't returned.
 - All so they can speak boldly against these Mockers.
 - Because Peter knows, the enemy is closing in on this church
 - That's why he wrote the letter in the first place, and as I have said – his call to action for these believers, and by extension to all believers, is to Mature so they can ward off the wiles of the enemy.
 - And once again – how do you do that, you mature.
 - And how do you mature? Well let's read verse 18 and you will see.

2 Peter 3:18 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.

- Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Here's what's interesting about this statement.
 - Peter's prayer and or statement is the same prayer and or statement Paul makes.
 - It's always the same prayer.
 - May you grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.
 - And why – because that is how you mature.
 - It's that simple – and there is no other way!
- If you want to become a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ and if you want the Lord to say to you one day, well done my good and faithful servant, then you must mature – and that process is always the same.
 - If you want to grow, get to know God in an intimate way – that's it!
 - And that's why Peter ends this letter the way He does because that's the last thing he wants them to remember!
 - And the same holds true for us – Amen – Amen!!