

THE SECOND LETTER OF PETER

Adult Bible Study
Msgr Charles Pope

This letter can be appreciated both for its positive teachings and for its earnest warnings. It seeks to strengthen readers in faith (2Pe 1:1), hope for the future (2Pe 3:1-10), knowledge (2Pe 1:2,6,8), love (2Pe 1:7), and other virtues (2Pe 1:5-6). This aim is carried out especially by warning against false teachers, the condemnation of whom occupies the long central section of the letter (2Pe 2:1-22). A particular crisis is the claim by "scoffers" that there will be no second coming of Jesus, a doctrine that the author vigorously affirms (2Pe 3:1-10). The concept of God's "promises" is particularly precious in the theology of 2 Peter (2Pe 1:4; 3:4,9,13). Closing comments at 2Pe 3:17-18 well sum up the twin concerns: that you not "be led into" error and "fall" but instead "grow in grace" and "knowledge" of Jesus Christ.

Second Peter is clearly structured in its presentation of these points. It reminds its readers of the divine authenticity of Christ's teaching (2Pe 1:3-4), continues with reflections on Christian conduct (2Pe 1:5-15), then returns to the exalted dignity of Jesus by incorporating into the text the apostolic witness to his transfiguration (2Pe 1:16-18). It takes up the question of the interpretation of scripture by pointing out that it is possible to misunderstand the sacred writings (2Pe 1:19-21) and that divine punishment will overtake false teachers (2Pe 2:1-22). It proclaims that the parousia is the teaching of the Lord and of the apostles and is therefore an eventual certainty (2Pe 3:1-13). At the same time, it warns that the meaning of Paul's writings on this question should not be distorted (2 Pe 3:14-18).

In both content and style this letter is very different from 1 Peter, which immediately precedes it in the canon. The opening verse attributes it to "Symeon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ." Moreover, the author in 2 Pe 3:1 calls his work a "second letter," referring probably to 1 Peter as his first, and in 2Pe 1:18 counts himself among those present at the transfiguration of Jesus.

Nevertheless, acceptance of 2 Peter into the New Testament canon met with great resistance in the early church. The oldest certain reference to it comes from Origen in the early third century. While he himself accepted both Petrine letters as canonical, he testifies that others rejected 2 Peter. As late as the fifth century some local churches still excluded it from the canon, but eventually it was universally adopted. The principal reason for the long delay was the persistent doubt that the letter stemmed from the apostle Peter.

Among modern scholars there is wide agreement that 2 Peter is a pseudonymous work, i.e., one written by a later author who attributed it to Peter according to a literary convention popular at the time. It gives the impression of being more remote in time from the apostolic period than 1

Peter; indeed, many think it is the latest work in the New Testament and assign it to the first or even the second quarter of the second century.

The principal reasons for this view are the following. The author refers to the apostles and "our ancestors" as belonging to a previous generation, now dead (2Pe 3:2-4). A collection of Paul's letters exists and appears to be well known, but disputes have arisen about the interpretation of them (2Pe 3:14-16). The passage about false teachers (2Pe 2:1-18) contains a number of literary contacts with Jud 1:4-16, and it is generally agreed that 2 Peter depends upon Jude, not vice versa. Finally, the principal problem exercising the author is the false teaching of "scoffers" who have concluded from the delay of the parousia that the Lord is not going to return. This could scarcely have been an issue during the lifetime of Simon Peter.

The Christians to whom the letter is addressed are not identified, though it may be the intent of 2Pe 3:1 to identify them with the churches of Asia Minor to which 1 Peter was sent. Except for the epistolary greeting in 2Pe 1:1-2:2 Peter does not have the features of a genuine letter at all, but is rather a general exhortation cast in the form of a letter. The author must have been a Jewish Christian of the dispersion for, while his Jewish heritage is evident in various features of his thought and style, he writes in the rather stilted literary Greek of the Hellenistic period. He appeals to tradition against the twin threat of doctrinal error and moral laxity, which appear to reflect an early stage of what later developed into full-blown gnosticism. Thus he forms a link between the apostolic period and the church of subsequent ages.

The principal divisions of the Second Letter of Peter are the following:

- I. Address (2Pe 1:1-2)
- II. Exhortation to Christian Virtue (2Pe 1:3-21)
- III. Condemnation of the False Teachers (2Pe 2:1-22)
- IV. The Delay of the Second Coming (2Pe 3:1-16)
- V. Final Exhortation and Doxology (2Pe 3:17-18)

I. Chapter 1

A. Greeting

1. **1 *Symeon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of equal value to ours through the righteousness of our God and savior Jesus Christ:***

B. Grace

1. ***2 may grace and peace be yours in abundance through knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. 3 His divine power has bestowed on us everything that makes for life and devotion, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and power. 4 Through these, he has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature, after escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire.***

a. Knowledge - a key term in the text. We have discussed before that this term always means more than mere intellectual knowledge. Rather it means deep intimate person experience of the Lord.

b. Divine power - the life of grace. That which makes possible our total transformation

c. Promises -

(1) *Ez 36:24 For I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.*

(2) *Jer 31:33 But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

d. Share in the divine Power - the life and power of God to transform us. The Power of the Holy Spirit.

e. Escape the life of corruption - bondage to sin.

2.

C. Growth

1. ***5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge, 6 knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with devotion, 7 devotion with***

mutual affection, mutual affection with love. 8 If these are yours and increase in abundance, they will keep you from being idle or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 Anyone who lacks them is blind and shortsighted, forgetful of the cleansing of his past sins.

2. **Supplement your faith** - faith is more than an abstract intellection acceptance of dogmas. It is a transformative power that has practical effects in our life
 - a. Virtue - habitual goodness
 - b. Knowledge - deep intimate personal experience of God and the glory of his truth
 - c. Self-control - authority over my life
 - d. Endurance - ability to accept and carry the cross
 - e. Devotion - willingness to do what God asks
 - f. Love - I really love the Lord and my neighbor, Divine affection for God and others.
 - g. Mutual affection - I even like God and my neighbor
3. **Any one who lacks these is blind** - Their vision of faith is distorted. They have turned it into an abstraction. Their vision falls short - shortsighted
4. **Forgetful of past cleansing** - forgetful of the power conferred on them at Baptism.

D. Gladness

1. *10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more eager to make your call and election firm, for, in doing so, you will never stumble. 11 For, in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you.*
 - a. Eager - enthusiastic for the things of God. The Holy Spirit confers joy and gladness so that we do not keep the commandments or follow God's will because we have to but because we want to.
 - b. This eagerness and joy makes the blessings multiply because we are more responsive to the grace of God offered.

E. Guidance

1. *12 Therefore, I will always remind you of these things, even though you already know them and are established in the truth you have. 13 I think it right, as long as I am in this "tent," to stir you up by a reminder, 14 since I know that I will soon have to put it aside, as indeed our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me. 15 I shall also make every effort to enable you always to remember these things after my departure.*
2. Peter like any good pastor realizes he cannot say something once, he must keep saying it. Repetition is the Mother of Studies. He will keep repeating and exhorting as long as he lives.
3. Further, as Bishop and Pope he will see to it that others are instructed to preach along these lines. Thus this teaching will go on after he is gone.

F. Genuineness

1. *16 We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that unique declaration came to him from the majestic glory, "This is my Son, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased." 18 We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain. 19 Moreover, we possess the prophetic message that is altogether reliable. You will do well to be attentive to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 * Know this first of all, that there is no prophecy of scripture that is a matter of personal interpretation, 21 for no prophecy ever came through human will; but rather human beings moved by the Holy Spirit spoke under the influence of God. advise.*
2. Peter states that his message is genuine for a number of reasons:
 - a. He is a first hand witness of things of which he speaks. He's not just preaching slogans or repeating hopeful myths. He is speaking of something which he personally knows and has witnessed.
 - b. Further, his message is the fulfillment of the trustworthy message of the scriptures. All that the prophets promised.
 - c. Lastly, the Holy Spirit confirms the message as authentic. Note how seriously the Holy Spirit was taken in those days. Peter in effect acknowledges implicitly the presence of the Holy Spirit, guiding the Church.

II. Chapter Two - False teachers

A. Problem defined

1. ***1 There were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will introduce destructive heresies and even deny the Master who ransomed them, bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their licentious ways, and because of them the way of truth will be reviled. 3 In their greed they will exploit you with fabrications***
2. The Old Testament period experienced a lot of false prophets. There are many texts that deal with them. Here are just two:
 - a. Jer 14:13 Then I said: "Ah, Lord GOD, behold, the prophets say to them, 'You shall not see the sword, nor shall you have famine, but I will give you assured peace in this place.'" And the LORD said to me: "The prophets are prophesying lies in my name; I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds. Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who prophesy in my name although I did not send them, and who say, 'Sword and famine shall not come on this land': By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem, victims of famine and sword, with none to bury them -- them, their wives, their sons, and their daughters. For I will pour out their wickedness upon them.
 - b. Deut 18:20 But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.' And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?'-- when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you need not be afraid of him.
3. Jesus also indicated that there was a problem here:
 - a. Mat 7:15 "*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit. A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits.*
 - b. Mat 24:10 *And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold. But he who endures to the end will be saved.*
 - c. Mark 13:22 *False Christs and false prophets will arise and show signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect.*
 - d. Luke 6:26 *"Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.*

4. We have talked before about the chief characteristic of a true prophet is that he or she loves the people to whom they prophesy.
5. **Heresy** - the word is rooted in the Greek word meaning “to choose” Hence the problem of heresy is picking and choosing what to believe: Cafeteria Catholicism if you please. Heresy usually contains so element of truth to the exclusion of other truths which balance it.
6. **Licentious** - freedom taken to an extreme. For a Christian, true freedom is rooted in the will of God. Thus to sin is not freedom it is bondage.¹ To claim I should be free to do anything I want, even sin is licentiousness, an abuse of freedom
 - a. *The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to "the slavery of sin." (Catechism of the Catholic Church # 1733)...By deviating from the moral law man violates his own freedom, becomes imprisoned within himself, disrupts neighborly fellowship, and rebels against divine truth (1740)*
7. **Greed** - the insatiable desire for more. Peter may be referring to their lust for power or to the fact that false preachers often pretentiously display their wealth.
8. **the way of truth will be reviled.** - a common problem today. An unpunished bigotry in our age is Christian bashing. Our teachings are reviled as out of date, intolerant, homophobic, harsh, out of touch etc. But time will prove where wisdom lies.

B. Punishment Definite

1. *but from of old their condemnation has not been idle and their destruction does not sleep. 4 For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but condemned them to the chains of Tartarus and handed them over to be kept for judgment; 5 and if he did not spare the ancient world, even though he preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, together with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the godless world; 6 and if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (to destruction), reducing them to ashes, making them an example for the godless (people) of what is coming; 7 and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man oppressed by the licentious conduct of unprincipled people 8 (for day after day that righteous man living among them was tormented in his righteous soul at the lawless deeds that he saw and heard), 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the devout from trial and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,*
2. We do not always live to see the punishment of false prophets. Sometimes their punishment lies beyond the veil. But this text is clear, punishment

¹Jesus said, *Whoever sins is a slave to sin* (Jn 8:34)

lies in store. A three-fold example is advanced here:

- a. The fallen angels
- b. Noah
- c. Sodom and Gomorrah

3. These punishments serve as a warning and example to believers and to the godless
4. Tartarus - a Greek reference to hell.
5. In contrast, God will rescue the Just from their trials.

C. Portrait of deceivers

1. ***10 and especially those who follow the flesh with its depraved desire***

- a. The flesh is that part of us that resists God, that doesn't want to have a thing to do with God. That part of us that says, I will do what I want to do and I will decide what is right and wrong.
- b. ***Depraved desire.*** - Desire's are of their nature good and necessary. Without them we would not care for ourselves. What makes them depraved? At the root of the word depraved is the word, privation which usually refers to a lack of something that ought to be present. Hence every desire has to be balanced by other virtues and concerns such as justice, generosity, temperance, and so forth. Otherwise desire becomes depraved, that is it lacks balance and measure.

2. ***and show contempt for lordship.***

- a. Lordship here means authority. God's authority and by extension Church authority and all lawful authority
- b. This is a characteristic of our age which has widespread contempt for authority
 - (1) Rom 13:1 *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.*
 - (2) 1 Peter 2:17 *Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.*

3. ***Bold and arrogant, they are not afraid to revile glorious beings, 11 whereas angels, despite their superior strength and power, do not bring a reviling judgment against them from the Lord. 12 But these people, like irrational animals born by nature for capture and destruction, revile things that they do not understand, and in their destruction they will also be destroyed, 13 suffering wrong as payment for wrongdoing.***

- a. Revile glorious beings - It is not exactly clear who these beings

are. The context seems to suggest of all things, the fallen angels. Why? Because the good angels are mentioned in the next verse. It is odd to call them glorious beings but there is a wisdom here. Even the fallen angels have a power that we must respect. It is very dangerous to minimize the power that demons have. They can appear as angels of light and are very crafty. We should have a healthy respect for our opponent.

- b. Thus, the danger that these bold and arrogant heretics embrace is to brush aside the power of Satan and his demons. This too is common in our age which dismisses or ignores the power of evil and prefers to call it other things. We need to develop a healthy respect and sobriety for the reality and power of evil.

4. ***Thinking daytime revelry a delight, they are stained and defilements as they revel in their deceits while carousing with you.***

- a. Here too is a problem of our age. It is bad enough that people sin in secret but at least they were discreet. Today however many glory in their sinful lives publicly and announce their sins as though they were virtuous.
- b. Further they try to draw Christians into their way of thinking. Many Christians have been willful participants and even certain churches have set aside biblical teaching in favor of the demands of sinners.

5. ***14 Their eyes are full of adultery and insatiable for sin. -***

- a. ***Eyes*** - there is a connection between the eyes and sin. It is through the eyes and ears that most external temptations arise. Thus, custody of the eyes and ears is an important virtue for which to strive. But the hardened sinner looks for temptation and revels in it.
- b. ***Adultery*** here can mean literal adultery, or it can mean general sexual sin, or it can mean sin in general since all sin is infidelity to God.
- c. ***Insatiable for sin*** - sin and rebellion as attitudes tend to grow in the disobedient. There is an addictive quality to many forms of sin. Further, there is a break down in the barriers which once kept us from sin. What once caused a person shame no longer does so because of repeated sin.

6. ***They seduce unstable people, and their hearts are trained in greed. Accursed children!***

- a. To seduce is to intentionally lead others to sin.
 - (1) Prov 1:10 *My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, "Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood, let us*

wantonly ambush the innocent; like Sheol let us swallow them alive and whole, like those who go down to the Pit; we shall find all precious goods, we shall fill our houses with spoil; throw in your lot among us, we will all have one purse"-- my son, do not walk in the way with them, hold back your foot from their paths; for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood. For in vain is a net spread in the sight of any bird; but these men lie in wait for their own blood, they set an ambush for their own lives. Such are the ways of all who get gain by violence; it takes away the life of its possessors.

- b. **Unstable people** - Those who are weak in faith are most vulnerable to temptation and seduction. They have little going on in their mind to cause them to discern or judge proposals placed before them.

7. ***15 Abandoning the straight road, they have gone astray, following the road of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved payment for wrongdoing, 16 but he received a rebuke for his own crime: a mute beast spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.***

- a. Balaam was a prophet for hire whom Balak, the Moabite king hired to curse the Israelites. Though at first he resisted he did go forth with this mission but was unable to complete it when his donkey refused to move. Further, each time he opened his mouth to curse, blessing came forth instead. It was also Balaam who later suggested to the Moabites that they seduced the Israelite men using Moabite women. This would lead them to worship Baal and weaken them as a nation. The Israelites later executed Balaam for this.
- b. The point here is that these false prophets are in the same mode as Balaam. They prophesy for money and power and seduce the people of God into wrongdoing.
- c. There are surely such false prophets today. For example pornographers who for profit seduce people to wrongdoing. Drug pushers, some others in the music industry etc. Who for profit seek to seduce people into wrongful and hurtful lifestyles and decisions.

8. ***17 These people are waterless springs and mists driven by a gale; for them the gloom of darkness has been reserved. 18 For, talking empty bombast, they seduce with licentious desires of the flesh those who have barely escaped from people who live in error.***

- a. Again the emphasis here is that they prey on the weak and the recently converted.
- b. Paul writes something similar in a text which is somewhat controversial today due to its reference solely to women.
 - (1) 2 Tim 3:1 *But understand this, that in the last days there*

will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it. Avoid such people. For among them are those who make their way into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and swayed by various impulses, who will listen to anybody and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth. As Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith; but they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.

9. **19 They promise them freedom, though they themselves are slaves of corruption, for a person is a slave of whatever overcomes him.**

a. We have commented on freedom above to sin leads to slavery, not to freedom.

(1) *The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes. There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to "the slavery of sin." (Catechism of the Catholic Church # 1733)...By deviating from the moral law man violates his own freedom, becomes imprisoned within himself, disrupts neighborly fellowship, and rebels against divine truth (1740)*

10. **20 For if they, having escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of (our) Lord and savior Jesus Christ, again become entangled and overcome by them, their last condition is worse than their first. 21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment handed down to them. 22 What is expressed in the true proverb has happened to them, "The dog returns to its own vomit," and "A bathed sow returns to wallowing in the mire."**

a. To Know Jesus and then turn back is worse than never to have known him at all. Neither condition is good but one carries greater condemnation. Recall the parable of Jesus

(1) *Luke 12:47 And that servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating. But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating.*

Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more.

b. Another Parable -

- (1) Mat 12:43 *"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest, but he finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and brings with him seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. So shall it be also with this evil generation."*

III. Chapter Three - In dat great Gettin' up Mornin' Fare you well

- A. **BE MINDFUL** - 1 *This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you; through them by way of reminder I am trying to stir up your sincere mind, 2 to recall the words previously spoken by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and savior through your apostles.*
1. Note the appeal to the mind: Have a sincere mind, a mind without faults. Be able to think clearly and properly regarding matters of faith.
 2. Where is orthodoxy to be found? In the teaching of the prophets and the apostles. Ours is a revealed faith and has parameters regulated by that revelation.
- B. **BE SOBER** - 3 *Know this first of all, that in the last days scoffers will come to scoff, following their own passions 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? From the time when our ancestors fell asleep, everything has remained as it was from the beginning of creation."*
1. Many deny the faith due to their own agenda. Their agenda is usually rooted in the passions, and justifying the bad behavior that results from obeying the passions rather than the truth. It is essential that we be sober regarding this fact.
 2. It is also important to be sober about the fact that false teachers have been and will continue to be a problem. This is attested to all throughout scriptures:
 - a. Acts 20:29-31 - *I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.*
 - b. 1 Tim 4:1 - 2 *Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, through the pretensions of liars whose consciences are seared,*
 - c. 2 Tim 3:1-5 *But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it. Avoid such people.*

- d. 1 John 2:19 *Children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come; therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out, that it might be plain that they all are not of us.*
3. The essential problem here seems to be that they deny the second coming of Jesus in glory. They do this because it is convenient. If, in fact Jesus will not come in glory to judge the living and the dead, then I can behave in any way I please. Reject the coming judgement and there begins a toning down of the moral message of the scriptures.
4. Every thing has remained the same? -
- a. At one level this can seem true.
 - b. But is it true? Is nothing new?
 - (1) Let's discuss this in class.
 - (2) Rom 7:6 *we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.*
 - (3) 1 Cor 5:7 *Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed.*
 - (4) 1 Cor 11:25 *In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."*
 - (5) 2 Cor 5:17 *Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.*
 - (6) Gal 6:15 *For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.*
 - (7) Eph 4:22 *Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*
 - (8) Col 3:9 *Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.*
 - (9) Heb 9:15 *Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance,*
 - (10) Heb 10:19 *Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain,*

- that is, through his flesh,*
- (11) 1 John 2:8 *Yet I am writing you a new commandment, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.*

C. **BE TIMELY -**

1. **THEN - 5** *They deliberately ignore the fact that the heavens existed of old and earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God; 6 through these the world that then existed was destroyed, deluged with water.*
 - a. Creation and the flood shows that changes in the cosmos are function of the will of God. God acts when he will and how he will. But this much is clear, the cosmos are not in a steady state. There are changes that sweep through the Cosmos, *we have here no lasting city* (Heb 13:14). It is foolish to say everything will continue as is.
 - b. Earth was formed out of water? - Genesis is a bit murky on the exact process of creation. It is more poetry than science. It speaks of the earth however as a watery void and this is where the narrative of the process of creation picks up: Gen 1:1 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.*
 - (1) In other words,
 - (a) God created the heavens,
 - (b) Then he created the earth
 - (c) But the earth was a watery, chaotic place without life.
 - (d) In the subsequent days of creation the creation of light, the stars, the sun and moon were all created. Then the earth teemed with life. Finally man came forth.
 - (e) But note that the order of all this isn't so neatly spelled out.
 - i) Did the earth exist before the stars etc?
 - ii) What does it mean to have light before the sun and moon and stars?
2. **NOW - 7** *The present heavens and earth have been reserved by the same word for fire, kept for the day of judgment and of destruction of the godless.*
 - a. God gave Noah the rainbow sign, no more water but the fire next time!
 - b. It is a Christian tradition that when Christ comes he will judge the world by fire:

- (1) Mal 4:1 *"For behold, the day comes, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go forth leaping like calves from the stall.*
- (2) Mat 13:40 *Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age.*
- (3) Mark 9:49 *For every one will be salted with fire.*
- (4) Luke 12:49 *"I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!*
- (5) 2 Thess 1:6 *God deems it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant rest with us to you who are afflicted, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*
- (6) 1 Cor 3:12 *Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.*
- (7) Heb 12:28 *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.*

c. How are we going to make it? Only by being baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire!

3. **DOES ANYBODY REALLY KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS? - 8** *But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day.*

a. Time is variable even in creation. Why not in God's perspective too?

b. Notice it is a "fact" that time is different for God.

D. **BE PATIENT - 9** *The Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard "delay," but he is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance... 15a* *And consider the patience of our Lord as salvation,*

1. Note that it is possible to see things from a positive or negative

- perspective. Is God delaying or is he being patient?
2. Rather than fret, rejoice!

E. **BE PURE - 10** *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a mighty roar and the elements will be dissolved by fire, and the earth and everything done on it will be found out. 11 Since everything is to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be, conducting yourselves in holiness and devotion,...14 Therefore, beloved, since you await these things, be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him, at peace.*

1. Nevertheless the day shall come!
2. Are you ready for the coming of the Lord?
3. There should be a sobriety, a vigilance, a reverence for that day.
4. Be eager!

F. **BE PRO-ACTIVE - 12** *waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved in flames and the elements melted by fire.*

1. The text teaches we can hasten the day.
2. Yet it is also true that certain conditions must be fulfilled before the Lord will come in Glory:
 - a. Cf Catechism 671-677
3. So how can we hasten it? One of the conditions is that the Gospel go out to all the nations and that the full number of the Gentiles come in. We thus can hasten the day by evangelizing and by becoming a true Christian ourselves.

G. **BE POSITIVE - 13** *But according to his promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

1. We are not looking for destruction per se, but a new heavens and a new earth.
2. Rev 21:4 *he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

H. **BE PRECISE - 15b** *as our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, also wrote to you, 16 speaking of these things as he does in all his letters. In them there are some things hard to understand that the ignorant and unstable distort to their own destruction, just as they do the other scriptures.*

1. Some say all we need is the Scripture. But even Scripture speaks of the need for the Church to authoritatively interpret that Scripture. Hence Peter describes how many get confused and misuse scripture. In effect, he says

listen to me, that you may properly understand the scripture.

2. What is the bulwark of the truth?
 - a. 1 Tim 3:15 *if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.*

I. **BE PRINCIPLED** - *17 Therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, be on your guard not to be led into the error of the unprincipled and to fall from your own stability. 18 But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

1. Stick to your principles that you have learned from approved teachers. Be on guard against error. You have been warned.
2. How do we know who is to be believed.
 - a. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church....
 - b. The Church is an object of faith.
3. Further, grow in grace and knowledge, let these be stable foundations against error.