

## Living Godly Lives

### 2 Peter 3:10-18

2 Peter 3:10-13 - *“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. <sup>11</sup> Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, <sup>12</sup> looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? <sup>13</sup> Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”*

### Background Notes

In the first half of 2 Peter 3 we learned that at a future time the present heavens and earth will be destroyed by fire, and all the ungodly will be judged. The second half of the chapter spoke of that time as the “Day of the Lord.” When we compare all the Scriptures that deal with the events of the future “Day of the Lord,” our study can get a little complicated – and that is where eschatological charts are very helpful.

Of course, everyone is not in agreement as to how all the details fit together. We believe that the next event on God’s calendar is the Rapture of the Church, when the Lord Jesus will come to the air to call His Bride to be with Him forever. The Rapture could take place at any time – in other words, the return of the Lord for His church is imminent. A seven-year Tribulation period will follow the Rapture. The Tribulation period will be a catastrophic time of judgment for all people on the earth. Then the Lord will return to earth, and He will set up His earthly kingdom (Revelation 20). This earthly kingdom will last for 1000 years, and thus it is often called the “Millennial Kingdom” of Christ.

At the end of the 1000 years, there will be a rebellion against Christ because Satan will deceive many. But Satan will be defeated and will be consigned to hell forever (Revelation 20). At the end of that time the present heavens and earth will be destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:12). The final judgment of unbelievers will take place at the “Great White Throne Judgment” (Revelation 20). And then will come the “Day of God” with a new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells forever (2 Peter 3:13).

All these future events, from the Tribulation period on until the Eternal State and the “Day of God” all come under the title of “the Day of the Lord.” So the future Day of the Lord spans a long period of time. In verses 10-18 Peter concentrated on the end portion of the “Day of the Lord,” when the present heavens and earth will pass away by fire, and even the elements will be broken down with intense heat (verse 12). Talk about a nuclear holocaust!

Why has God revealed all these future events to us? Verse 11 gives us one big answer: “...*what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness...*?” In view of all these coming future events, Peter urged his readers (and that includes us) to be diligent to **live godly lives** and **avoid certain pitfalls** in the present time.

In the verses that remain, there are a couple of pitfalls that we must avoid as we wait for the Lord’s return. We’ll discuss these two pitfalls as our Doctrinal Points.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Some Scriptures are not easy to understand.

2 Peter 3:14-16: “*Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;*<sup>15</sup> *and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,*<sup>16</sup> *as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.*”

Notice the “therefore” in verse 14. In other words, in view of the coming Day of the Lord and the importance of these End Time events, believers should be diligent to live godly lives. Use the remaining time wisely. Lead others to the Lord. Remember, God’s patience and longsuffering is extending the time for folks to turn to the Lord Jesus and trust Him for salvation (v15).

The first pitfall that believers must avoid is **interpreting Scripture incorrectly**. One reason some Scriptures are misinterpreted is that some Scriptures are difficult to understand!

Notice once again in verse 16 that the apostle Paul’s epistles were **already** considered as **Scripture** by the early Christians. But verse 16 also says some writings of the apostle Paul are hard to understand. I think we can all agree that some things in the writings of the apostle Paul are hard to interpret! In fact, we could say that a number of passages in the entire Bible are hard to interpret! Some Scriptures are difficult to understand – for example, the teaching of “election” in Romans 9, and the teaching on the role of women in the Church in 1 Timothy 2?

The danger, or pitfall, with Scriptures that are difficult to understand is that untaught and unstable people twist them to make them say what they want them to say. For example, Scriptures dealing with the importance of baptism can be twisted and made to teach that baptism is necessary for salvation. Another example: The cults take the Scriptures that emphasize the humanity of our Lord and twist them in order to deny the Lord’s deity!

***Twisting and misinterpreting Scripture can lead to destruction*** (v16) - and that is certainly true of the cults. But even true believers are vulnerable to the potential pitfall of misinterpreting Scripture.

That's why the study of *hermeneutics* is very important. Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation, and the study of the principles of interpretation, especially of the Bible. It's ***crucially important to interpret Scripture properly!*** In fact, I consider that Hermeneutics is probably the most important Bible college course I teach!

By the way, my Hermeneutics course is on our website, [growingchristians.org](http://growingchristians.org), in case you'd like to look at and study some lectures on hermeneutics (at no cost on the website). The study of hermeneutics is helpful because some Scriptures are not easy to understand.

## **2. Some "wolves" are not easy to detect.**

2 Peter 3:17-18 - *"You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;<sup>18</sup> but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen."*

The second pitfall that we all must avoid is ***not recognizing false teachers***. In Matthew 7:15-16 the Lord Jesus said, *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits."*

In Acts 20:28-31, the apostle Paul warned the elders at Ephesus: *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears."*

And here at the end of 2 Peter, the apostle Peter warned his readers to beware of this dangerous pitfall: *"...being led away by the error of the wicked."* We can be led astray by the error of unprincipled, or lawless, or wicked men. I've seen it happen. Some of my former students have been led astray by the false teachings of the "prosperity gospel." They have followed "wolves in sheep's clothing," and they have been led away into error.

Entire churches and even Bible colleges and seminaries can be led away into error. How is this possible? It happens because some "wolves" are not easy to detect. As the Lord said, they disguise themselves so they appear to be fellow sheep. They twist Scripture, they deceptively teach a mixture of truth and error, and they use biblical terms and words falsely. Thus these "wolves" are often not easy to detect. Remember, Satan even can disguise himself as an "angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

The key to protection for us is in verse 18: *“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”* I trust that you are growing in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

We grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ by a steady diet of the Word of God. When we know the Word well, we will be less likely to be led astray. It’s vitally important to have a solid foundational knowledge of the Word of God - because some “wolves” are not easy to detect.

## Practical Application

### Don’t refuse rebukes!

Being rebuked by a fellow believer is one of the most difficult things to handle in the Christian life. Some rebukes are unfair and unfounded, and they are really hurtful. But some rebukes are right on (but they still hurt)! In my early preaching days, one of my uncles stood by the church door and rebuked me for everything he thought was wrong with my sermons! It hurt - but in the long run it helped! I would sort through his comments and reflect on what he told me, and those rebukes helped me to grow.

Rebukes can help believers to grow and mature. This was true in Peter’s life. In Galatians 2:11, the apostle Paul rebuked Peter for wrongly separating himself from Gentile Christians: *“Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood to his face, because he was to be blamed.”* The apostle Paul rebuked Peter to his face. Peter could have reacted negatively. He could have been defensive and angry, and refused to heed the rebuke. He could even have become bitter towards Paul.

But Peter did not refuse Paul’s rebuke - and he didn’t harbor a grudge. In verses 15-16, look at the way Peter referred to Paul: *“our beloved brother Paul.”* And Peter acknowledged that God had given wisdom to Paul, and that Paul had written Scripture!

Peter did not refuse Paul’s rebuke. As a result, he matured, and he grew in grace. And we should do the same. When we grow in grace, we bring glory to the Lord - both now and forever! And bringing glory to our Lord and Savior is the bottom line goal for our lives! *“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.”*

Rebukes can hurt, and they may often be unfounded - but sometimes they are right on. They can hurt - but they can also be very helpful. So don’t refuse rebukes!