

PART 6

**Theme: REMEMBER THE GOSPEL!**

2nd Peter represents the Apostle Peter's 2nd epistle. Written shortly after the first, the distinguishing mark of this letter is not only its focus on the gospel, but its efficient and effective presentation. In this respect, Peter does two things. First, he reminds us of what the (true) gospel teaches (1:1-15), then he provides us with those reasons we should not only remember what this gospel teaches, but also why it is important that we are growing strong in our commitment to its truths (1:16-3:18).

1. What Peter reminds us is the true/saving gospel message (1:1-15):

Through faith in the righteousness of Christ we GAIN a justified and glorified/exalted state (or "standing") with God. Though we have GAINED a justified and glorified state through faith in Christ, we MUST MAINTAIN this state/standing through faithfulness. Such maintaining should not surprise us given the reason God justified/glorified us, as well as the commitment we made in order to gain that justification (Peter says he intends to "remind" his audience of the "qualities" associated w/maintaining established in 1:5-11, which means they were preached as part of the gospel message received). Faithful maintaining (then) looks like growing in those areas/attributes of obedience God commands in His Word. Failing to maintain will mean losing what we gained; faithfulness (on the other hand) will mean that our justified/glorified standing before God and w/Christ remains intact along with the salvation it promises. IOW: Faith + Faithfulness = Salvation NOT Faith + Nothing = Salvation (1:1-11). Peter thought it was incredibly important to remind believers about this aspect of the true/saving gospel message (i.e. that we must maintain what we have gained if we hope to be remain justified and be saved) (1:12-15).

2. Why Peter thought it was so important to not only remind believers of this gospel (of G&M) but see that they were growing strong in their commitment to its truths (1:16-3:18):

2.1. B/C the gospel (of G&M) is not the invention of men, but the message of both Christ and the OT Scriptures (1:16-21).

2.2. B/C false teachers w/b preaching a gospel of (G&NO M) and leading many astray by appealing to feelings vs. facts(2:1-2a).

2.3. B/C this heretical "gain but no maintain" group will condemn the true gospel (of G&M) and true Christians (2:2b-19a).

2.4. B/C the additional tools of entrapment used by the (G&NO M) teachers mean we have our work cut for us (2:10-19).

2.5. B/C embracing the false gospel (of G&NO M) will render true Christians apostate (2:19-22).

2.6. B/C difficult times w/these kinds of people was predicted by the prophets/Jesus/the other apostles (3:1-3).

2.7. B/C the false teacher's gospel (of G& NO M) is based on the idolatrous belief that God decided a long time ago, to no longer punish for unfaithfulness (i.e. He is no longer a God of Wrath, only a God of Love).

(3:4) "They (i.e. the false teachers) will say, 'Where is the promise of His coming?'" = Where is the dreaded day of global judgment for sinful/rebellious living threatened in the Bible? "For ever since the fathers fell asleep (i.e. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – Exo 3:15; Deu 1:8; BTW this reference affirms that the "scoffers" [3] Peter is speaking about in these verses are the false teachers of the previous chapter and not people outside of Christianity – e.g. atheists. These false teachers saw themselves spiritually connected to the OT Patriarchs, as legitimate Christians.), all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." = Massive revisionist thinking in relation to Israel's past judgments due to their refusal to live in obedience to God's Law (i.e. for failing to maintain what they gained), caused these false teachers to view God as having changed His approach to human rebellion after the flood of Noah. IOW: Time changes all things (including God). Since the time of the Patriarchs (they reasoned), He had become a kinder, gentler God. He had decided to let mercy trump justice and love replace wrath. Things essentially "were "continuing as they were from the beginning of creation" (i.e. w/o the threat of judgment). In secular terms, this means God got a good psychiatrist who helped Him realize people are doing their best as poor victims who cannot help what they do and therefore should be shown pity and support (versus making them responsible for their actions through punishment). This line of reasoning on the part of the false teachers is the same as that which inspired homosexual activist, Gilbert Baker to use a rainbow to symbolize the homosexual movement ("The rainbow's in the Bible. It's a covenant [of peace] between God and all living creatures. He knows [i.e. He understands] the struggle of gays and lesbians." – Gilbert Baker). As such, God is done being wrathful w/people for their lifestyle choices. God instead loves and accepts all people who will look to Him as simply Savior (consider again, this was the false teacher's view of Jesus, 2:1 - His blood had "bought them" a pass out of coming judgment. Hence, the reason they felt no need to repent and maintain their covenant standing thru faithful, holy living to Jesus as "Master"). What Peter therefore is revealing in these verses, is the theological foundation of the false teacher's gospel (of G & NO M). It was based on the extremely idolatrous view so common today w/in the Evangelical church. Because of the Cross, God can no longer be wrathful w/His people. In relation to them, He is now a God devoted exclusively to love and mercy. The biblical warnings of eternal destruction, wrath and a "promise of His coming" in judgment – b/c of unfaithfulness, are only applicable to pagans. Though God may be disappointed when His people rebel or remain unfaithful, His love and continued blessings will remain on them (no matter what). A good example of this is the Evangelical position on apostasy as hypothetical (i.e. It is impossible for Christians to commit. Warnings exist only to scare). Likewise, this kind of thinking is also picked up in the doctrine of Eternal Security (i.e. Once a person has become justified thru faith in Christ, they can never lose that state or their eternal salvation.). According to Peter, such an idolatrous view of God is the result of overlooking four truths: 1) Length of time doesn't change God's mind or promise to destroy all who rebel against Him. (3:5) "For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, (3:6) and that by means of these (lit. through which) the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. = The key phrase in these verses is "the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed". Peter's point is that the span of time from creation until the first "world" was destroyed in the days of Noah ("deluged with water and perished") was (also) very long (almost 2,000 yrs), yet it did not mean God had somehow become tolerant of man's sin during that time - or changed His gospel. God's expectation of faithful obedience remained the same. So also, His resolve to make good on His promise (i.e. "word") to punish people for their failure in this area. It is in this respect, Peter says **(3:7) "But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly." = According to Peter, the passing of another 2,000 yrs (from the time of the flood/fathers until the 1st century) had made no difference to God's previous plans or approach to dealing w/rebellious human beings. And that b/c what determines God's actions (and the course of history) is again, God's "word" (or promise) – not the passing of time. So then, just as God's former promised judgment came to fruition, so His future promise would also come to fruition. Man's faulty view of "time changes all things" does not apply to God. 2) God's wrath is especially directed at those who reject faithfulness. The term "ungodly" is used in the NT to refer to both pagans and those claiming to be Christians**

(e.g. 1Pe 4:18; Jud 1:4). IOW: what places a person in this category is not their profession but their practice. It refers to those whose lifestyle is the antithesis of God (i.e. the opposite of image-bearers/imitators; those who disobey His Law/the self-exp. Of His character). As such, no-one – including those making a profession of faith in Christ, is exempt from God's coming wrath, if they choose to reject the obligation of living in faithful obedience to Him. They are the special target of God's judgment/fire ("being kept... for the destruction of the ungodly"). Hence why Peter says what he does in His first epistle (1Pe 1:16-17; consider also Heb 10:30). 3) God gives time for the purpose of repentance not the removal of wrath. Remember, the basis of the false teachers' gospel was (again) driven by the fact that things had changed for God's people during the time of the Patriarchs (or after the flood). Since then, there had been no global catastrophe yet people (incl. many of those claiming to be His people) lived in unfaithfulness. If God was still so concerned about obedient living – especially among those who acknowledged Him in faith, then why had he allowed things to "continue" w/o such major consequences for so long? What they (also) overlooked however was God's perspective on time and the reason for giving such time to rebels. **(3:8) "But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."** = What seems like a long time for us is nothing to God. Once more, it is therefore no reason to think He has changed His mind about what He requires – nor how those will fare who choose to reject the need for faithful obedience. Such time (from our perspective) should instead be viewed as God giving us the opportunity to repent (of such thinking and behavior) before it is too late. **(3:9) "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise (of again condemning in final judgment, all those who refuse the necessity of faithful obedience) as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."** = Paul speaks the same way in his letter to the Romans, affirming also such patience as "storing up additional wrath" for those who claim to be God's people yet continue to operate under the false gospel (of G&NO M) (Rom 2:1-17 = The Jews in Paul's day were also embracing a false gospel of G & NO M). Therefore, things going good in our lives (or just b/c we are experiencing no present consequences), though we are live in unfaithfulness to God's Law (or outright reject the necessity of such obedience to our salvation), should never be taken as a sign that God is okay (or good w/us). Rather, we can be sure that we (too) are storing up wrath for God's promised second day of global judgment. 4) The coming promised judgment will be according to our works. **(10) "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed."** = The thoughts and behavior of every human being that were done during their life on planet earth wb "exposed" and assessed before the throne of God - which wb the only thing remaining after everything else is "burned up and dissolved" (Rev 20:11-12). It wb (as before) a judgment according to works. Not in the sense of merit, but as the means to determining a person's faithfulness to Christ. This (btw) is the only thing ever mentioned (i.e. works/deeds) when the Scriptures speak on the subject of the "day of the Lord"/final judgment (Rev 20:13-15; Rom 2:6-8). IOW: there is no mention of faith (or the faith of people being "exposed"). As such, the false teachers and those who follow their gospel not requiring such faithfulness will fare no better than the pagan. So then, rejecting the gospel of G&M means you don't know the God of the Bible (you think it's all love and no wrath or punishment for unfaithfulness). Like the false teachers, you possess an extremely idolatrous view of God which will not fare well for you on that promised day of fiery judgment.

2.8. B/C the only way you wb ready for the coming judgment and new creation is if you possess the gospel (of G&M).

(3:11-14) "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness (as discussed, both words carry the same essential meaning, careful to obey all of God's Law), waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish (i.e. maintain the cleansed/righteous standing you received from Christ, see 1Pe 1:19; Exo 12:5), and at peace (the result of maintaining is remaining in a good, peaceful relationship w/God)." = What (then) Peter communicates twice as the proper reaction/response (i.e. "lives of holiness and godliness"; "diligent to be found in Him without spot or blemish") to such apocalyptic news ("the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn") should not be a surprise given the fact that: 1) such destruction is for this very reason (i.e. It is meant for "the destruction of the "ungodly" [3:7] and exposing "the works done on...the earth [3:10]"), and 2) it coincides w/our beginning as Christians (1:5-10, 12 – these "qualities" were again reminders of what we committed ourselves to when we began our marriage to Jesus). Hence why (then) Peter can say that such coming judgment (according to our deeds/works) is something we look forward to (i.e. we are "waiting for and hastening the day of God"). B/C we maintain thru faithful obedience (our relationship w/Christ), that day - though experienced by others as horrific (incl. those in the false gospel camp), will be the day of our deliverance. The same is true as it relates to the new creation ("we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth"). Like the coming judgment, this new creation is only a good thing if we are those living faithful obedient lives since this (too) is dependent on righteous living (i.e. it is a place where only "righteousness dwells"). As such, a theology which has a biblical view of God, is (most assuredly also) proclaiming a gospel of (G&M) since this is the only plan of salvation consistent w/such a God. What (then) all of this means is the essentially the flip-side of the previous point and the "no worries, God's not mad at you, it's all good, just believe and grace will take care of the rest" message of the false teachers. The only way you wb ready to meet this kind of a God, (Who judges us according to our works in the old world and qualifies us according to the same works for life in the new world), is if you are both possessing and practicing the gospel (of G&M).

2.9. B/C not knowing and growing in the gospel of G&M makes you the perfect target for self-deception or the deception of false teachers.

(3:15) "And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, (16) as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters (i.e. matters regarding the gospel of G&M, the coming judgment according to our works and punishment for the ungodly professors of Christ – e.g. 2Co 5:9-10; 2Th 1:8-9). There are some things in them (i.e. Paul's writings) that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures." = Not knowing or growing in the gospel (G&M) will make you the kind of people Peter is talking about. IOW: it is not just the false teachers he has in mind. Anyone who does not have a robust understanding of the G&M concept as taught throughout God's Word (including the writings of "Paul" and "the other Scriptures") will b/c of such biblical "ignorance", become the "unstable"/unfaithful (i.e. no knowledge = no conviction = no commitment to live in faithful obedience). The combination of these things leads a person to self-deception: the misinterpretation (or twisting) of the Scripture. Instead of seeing the message of G&M, they come away believing just the opposite (i.e. that which leads "to their destruction.") Peter's solution: **(3:17) "You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand (i.e. knowing that you can be duped into believing what is wrong; that the danger of such delusion is real), take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people (i.e. the false teachers of G&NO M and those who follow them) and lose your own stability (i.e. lose your standing w/Christ; fail to maintain what you gained and lose your justification - 1:9), (18) But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (i.e. grow in the gospel of G&M – see 1:8). To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen"**. In closing, consider in total what has been said about the theological makeup of the false teacher's (G& NO M) gospel: 1) it denies the necessity of obedience to Christ's Lordship (2:1), 2) it despises submission to authority (2:10), 3) it promises freedom from the obligation of holy living (2:18-21), 4) it promotes lawlessness/no OT LAW (i.e. it is the "error of lawless people" – 3:17). Is this not the majority of the Evangelical church?