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2 Peter 2:18 - 3:9



2 Peter - Steve Gregg

In this passage from 2 Peter 2:18 - 3:9, Steve Gregg discusses the importance of recognizing false teachers and the consequences of falling away from the truth. He explains that as the truthfulness of God becomes more evident, untruthfulness becomes more obvious in contrast. Gregg warns the readers that those who have hardened their hearts against the truth may be demon-possessed and will fall away unless they remain unsaved. He also explores the use of proverbs to illustrate how disgusting it is for a person to go back to their old ways, comparing it to a dog returning to its vomit. Finally, he touches on the idea that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, signaling the end of the universe as they know it.

Transcript

We left off last time at 2 Peter 2 and verse 17 where he's been giving a description of the teachers that he wants his readers to be wary of. There will be good teachers and bad teachers. There will be false teachers and he wants them to know the difference.

You know, if a false teacher is someone who just taught things that weren't true, it would be easier to recognize them. Oh, this guy's lying. He said there's no God.

Well, we know there's a God. But when they say, well, God doesn't care about your sin because after all you're under grace. Therefore, they're appealing to something carnal in you.

It's real easy for you to say, well, that sounds true, you know, grace. Grace means we're not under the law. Grace means it's not working.

So I guess maybe that does mean we can sin. Praise God. They don't see it as an ungodly thing.

They see it as an exaltation of the grace of God. And that's what was really a problem in the early church and is a problem in some churches now. They see the more we sin, the more grace of God is extolled.

After all, if God is made to look generous by forgiving sinners, think of how generous he looks if they're really bad sinners. Think of how God is glorified by our being really sinful and him forgiving us for that. So, I mean, this is actually Paul said some people would teach that.

In fact, some people said that Paul taught that. If you look at Romans chapter three, verse five says, but if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, that is, if God looks better by contrast to us, the more unrighteous we are. God's by contrast, God looks so much better than us.

He says, what should we say? Is God unjust to inflict wrath? Why should you be mad at me for being unrighteous if it just makes him look better? Is he unjust to punish me for that? I speak as a man, certainly not. For then how would God judge the world? For if the truth of God has increased through my lie, he means by this, if the evident truthfulness of God has become more obvious because of my untruthfulness by contrast, and, you know, inclines people to appreciate God's honesty when they meet a liar like me. If God's truth has increased through my lie to his glory, why am I still judged as a sinner? He says, and why not say, let us do evil that good may come as we are slanderously reported and some affirm that we say.

Their condemnation is just, he says, the people who say that about him, they deserve to be condemned because they are misrepresenting him. Some say that Paul is saying, let's just do evil because that makes God glorified. You know, if grace abounds, if sin abounds, grace much more abounds.

And he deals with that more, of course, in Romans six, which we won't get into. But there's two main questions he asks, which he thinks some people will actually ask. In Romans six, one, he says, what then shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? And he answers, certainly not.

And he gives a long answer. Then in verse 15, he says, what then shall we sin because we're not under the law, but under grace? He says, certainly not. And he argues against that.

But notice, these are actually ways that he thinks some people could take the teaching of grace and misconstrue it. If you sin, it makes God's grace abound. If, should we sin so that grace may abound? And since we're not under law, but under grace, should we sin? And Paul says, no, that's absolutely the opposite of my message.

But you can see how persons through perhaps selfish ways of wanting to understand things would say, well, I guess grace does mean that. I guess I can continue in sin. And Peter is saying, teachers who say that, they're false teachers, even though they may seem like they're making a good argument.

It may seem logical, but it's not right. If they're living in sin and encouraging other people to sin, beware of them. He says in verse 18, for when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through licentiousness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.

So Christians are people who have escaped from previous error. Assuming that the Christians are Gentiles here, they've escaped from paganism when they became Christians. But though they've escaped from one error, these people are entrapping them in a new error.

They're bringing them back into bondage. While they promised them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption. For by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.

Now, it's interesting that people who teach that you can sin and get away with it are representing themselves as advocates of liberty. We're not legalists here. We're not into bondage to the law.

We have liberty in Christ. You can sin. You're free in Christ.

They promised liberty, but look at them. They're slaves themselves. They're slaves of sin.

They've been overcome by sin, and if you are overcome by something and you serve it, then you're its slave. And that's what he says, that they are brought into bondage by sin. So how can they promise liberty if they themselves are not free? For if, of course he's assuming that any sensible person wants to be free of sin.

See, the people he's describing actually just want to be free from restraint. They want to be free to sin, not free from sin. Peter's just taking it for granted that any sensible person knows that freedom from sin is desirable.

And these people show they are not free from sin. They are in bondage to sin. So they don't have the liberty that a person would sensibly really want.

They promise liberty, which means freedom, in their case, freedom to sin. The liberty to sin. But if you are espousing the liberty to sin, you will not maintain liberty from sin.

Sin is the enemy, and it will seek to overcome you and bring you into bondage. For, verse 20, if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than to have known it, or than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.

But it has happened to them according to the true proverb, a dog returns to his own vomit, and a sow, a female pig, having been washed, returns to her wallowing in the mire, the mud. Now, who are these people described in verse 20? For they, if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, first of all, they are Christians, are they the teachers? I don't think so. It's true that verse 19 is talking about the teachers, but I think that's an aside.

He has just described their victims in verse 18 as the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. They have escaped the pollutions of the world. I think in verse 19 there's a sort of a parenthesis about the teachers, but in verse 20 he comes back and talks about those in verse 18 who have escaped from those who live in error.

And if after they have escaped, they're entangled again. I think this is a reference to the victims of the false teachers. And they are people who were Christians.

At least it says they've escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Isn't that what saves a person is knowing Jesus? Jesus said that in John 17:3. He said this is eternal life that they might know you, the only true God and Jesus Christ. When we said knowing God, knowing Jesus, that's eternal life.

These people have had eternal life. These are not false converts. Sometimes those who have a stake in proving that a Christian cannot lose his salvation will have to argue.

These are not really Christians we're talking about. They have known the way of righteousness, but knowing it isn't the same thing as being on it, on that path. He says they've known Jesus, though, and not only has they known Jesus, but they've obtained deliverance from their sinful past.

The power of deliverance from sin is part of the gospel message. And you don't receive that deliverance from the pollutions of the world without coming to Christ. And these have done so through coming to Christ.

He says if they are again entangled in those things and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. Well, the beginning is when? The beginning is before they were Christians. Before they had escaped the entanglement of the world the first time, that was the beginning.

Coming to Christ was the second stage. Falling away and becoming entangled again is the third stage, and it's worse than the first stage. It's worse than before you were converted.

I mean, one might say, well, no, he's just saying it's worse. They've come to a worse place later in their Christian life than they were at earlier in their Christian life, in the beginning of their Christian life. He can't be meaning that because anyone would know that's true.

If you backslid, you're not in as good a place as you used to be. But the worst thing is it's not just you're worse than you used to be. You're worse than you were at the very beginning before you made progress at all.

Before you were in Christ, you were not saved. Now you've been a Christian, now you've fallen away. You're worse off than before you were a Christian.

Now, why would that be? Well, because before you were first saved, you were a pre-Christian. If you fall away, you're a post-Christian. Now, the difference is, and I mentioned this before when we were talking about Hebrews and some of the warnings there, C.S. Lewis said it's like the difference between a virgin and a divorcee.

A virgin is very idealistic, very winnable to a man, very naive and very inexperienced. Many times she can be led into a marriage very unwisely because her guard isn't up. She's innocent and she's naive.

A divorcee is jaded. A divorcee has already had a bad experience with marriage. They may have already decided they're not going to have any more of that.

They've hardened themselves at least against the husband that they used to have. And they're not innocent anymore. They're not naive anymore.

And it's easier to win a person who's newly hearing the gospel for the first time than to win someone who's experienced Christianity and decided they didn't want it anymore. Someone who's already accepted Christ for a while and said, I'm done with that. And, you know, drawing them back, they had to harden their hearts against the truth to do that.

When they were pre-Christian, their hearts weren't necessarily hardened. They were just pristine. But now they're not pristine anymore.

They're not unjaded anymore. They've hardened their hearts against what they knew to be true. And when you've hardened your heart, it's harder to win them again.

This is the statement. It's worse for them than the beginning. It's a statement that Peter heard Jesus use in a slightly different context.

But one that's kind of interesting, and he might have had it in mind. In Matthew chapter 12. In Matthew 12 of 43 through 45.

Jesus said, when an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places seeking rest and 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 takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself. And they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that man is worse than the first.

The same assessment that Peter makes of the backslider. Here's a man who had a demon. He got saved.

He got delivered. The demon was cast out of him. His first state was demon possessed.

His last state is worse because he's even more demon possessed. Because the demon that was cast out is allowed to come back. Opening the door to that demon opens the door to a lot more demons, apparently.

Now, Jesus is using the case of that man as an example of what's happening to Israel in his generation. He says, so shall it be with this generation. We won't get into that application, but we could.

But the point here is that Jesus describes a person who is demon possessed, set free, and saved. But later, inhabited again by demons. But worse than before.

And his latter state was worse than his first. That's what Peter says about these people. The last state of that man is worse for them than the beginning.

Because they're no longer soft-hearted. They've had to harden themselves against truth in order to fall away. If you know God and you decide not to follow him anywhere, you have to harden yourself against conviction.

Once you're hardened, it's harder to reach you. You're not in as good a place as you were before you were saved. And certainly the implication is you're not saved anymore.

If your last condition is worse than your unsaved condition, it's hard to say that that would be the case if you're still saved in any sense. So this seems to be talking about the loss of one's relationship with God and the salvation that comes with the relationship with God. It says it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness.

Well, when they didn't know the way of righteousness, they weren't saved. Still, it was better for them then. It would have been better for them to remain unsaved than to get saved and depart.

Because departing, it's harder to win them back, as the writer of Hebrews made very clear. In Hebrews 6, verses 4 through 6. Here he says, better that they never knew the way of righteousness, that they never were converted, that they never knew Jesus, than having known that way to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. This would be in a decisive way.

Peter's not referring to a Christian who turns aside under some kind of temptation and sins. This is not just talking about sin, this is talking about departing from God. This is talking about going back to a life of sin.

You know, when a Christian falls back into a sin, out of weakness or whatever, the devil often brings condemnation to their heart and makes them think that they're not a Christian anymore. And they've fallen away. Sinning, you know, accidentally or out of weakness, more or less rarely, is not the same thing as going back to a life of sin.

He's describing departing from Christ to a life of sin. The fact that Christians do sin occasionally is acknowledged everywhere in Scripture. And he's not denying that here.

He's talking about those who've turned away from the holy commandment to follow Christ. They're not following Him anymore. It says, it has happened to them according to the true proverb.

Now, he actually gives two proverbs here. One of them is from Proverbs 26.11. In Proverbs 26.11, Solomon said, As a dog returns to his own vomit, so a fool repeats his folly. So this is pretty fitting for what Peter's talking about.

Somebody was a fool before. They go back to their folly. It's like a dog going back to his vomit.

A dog's eaten the same meal twice. The second time is not so good as the first time. You know, it's the same food.

And they're going back to it once it's quite spoiled. And in a sense, going back to the world when you're a Christian, I think, I can only say this theoretically because I haven't done it, but I believe that it must spoil the world considerably for you. I mean, when you don't know about God at all and you're sinning, you could probably live with a clear conscience more or less.

Not entirely, but somewhat. You don't have a nagging awareness of God, making it all miserable. But if you've been a Christian, lived for God, then you decide you want to go back to sin.

I don't see how you can enjoy that again. That kind of food tastes good maybe the first time, but once it's been vomited out again and you're eating it again, I don't see how that could not be spoiled. That would be awful.

And of course, the picture of a dog eating its vomit is intentionally disgusting, you know? Humans will not eat their own vomit. Dogs will eat any disgusting thing. Garbage, their own feces, whatever, you know? So the proverb, both in Solomon's case and in Peter's case, quoting it, is to say there's hardly anything more disgusting than a person going back to their old ways.

It's as disgusting as a dog, which to the Jew is a very unclean animal, going back to its vomit. And this is why they are unclean, because of behavior like that. An animal that does that is pretty disgusting.

How could it not be an unclean animal? These people are unclean too. And it says the other proverb, he quotes, now this is not from the Old Testament, this is just maybe a proverb that was floating around in the Greek world at the time or the Roman world at the time, that a sow, having been washed, returns to her wallowing in the mire. The idea, of course, is that you can clean up a pig on the outside, but it's still a pig inside.

And if it's still a pig inside, as soon as it gets a chance to do what it wants to do, it'll go back to the mud. You won't be able to keep it clean. Now what's interesting about these statements is, frankly, a Calvinist could use these statements to good effect.

Because the dog returns to his vomit because it is a dog. If it wasn't a dog, most animals would not do that. Most animals won't eat their own vomit.

So it is that the dog has been a dog all along. It's because he's still a dog, even though he may have been sleeping and not acting like a dog for a while, yet when he wakes up again, he goes back to his dog behavior and eats his vomit. Showing his dog nature has never been changed.

Or the pig that's been washed. Certainly this is a picture of superficial reformation on the outside. The pig is still a pig inside, and that's why it goes back to the mud.

You see, a Calvinist would say this proves our very point. Some people do backslide, but it's because they weren't really converted. They weren't real Christians.

They were never changed from an unclean animal into a clean animal. They never became sheep of Christ. They were pigs and dogs all along, and they proved it by doing what pigs and dogs do.

You can clean up the outside. You get them to conform to the church's ways for a while, but if they're not really saved, they've got that unconverted nature in them, and they'll prove it. Now, in answer to this, I would say two things.

On one hand, this is true. Peter could be talking about people who are not really converted. There are such people.

Even those of us who believe that it is possible for a real Christian to fall away, we don't deny that there are some people who aren't real Christians, and they thus fall away. There are people, like Jesus said, many will say to him that day, Lord, Lord, we did these things in your name. He'll say, I never knew you.

Not you fell away, but I never knew you. You were never a real Christian in the first place. There's no doubt Jesus said many like that.

Many will say that. I think that any Christian of any theological camp can admit that. There have been lots of people who put on the Christian external behavior for whatever

motivation, maybe because there was someone in the church they wanted to impress, their parents, a girl, somebody, maybe an employer who was looking for someone honest, and they thought, well, I'll join the church, and that'll make me look like an honest person, that'll give me promotion.

There's different ways. People sometimes just enjoy the church because it's the only place that they're not lonely. They have people who actually love them there, and nowhere else have they ever been loved.

They might like the music. There's all kinds of things that attract people to church besides a real surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord. So the church has in it people who are really pigs and dogs, but they've been washed.

They've cleaned up their act in order to fit in, but because they're not really saved, they do return to their old ways. That old nature just beckons them, and they just can't keep up the sham. They can't keep the mask on long enough, and so they go back.

This is not a problem for anybody. Calvinists think that this is the case with all backsliders. People who are not Calvinists, like myself, can say, no, that's true of many backsliders, but not all.

By speaking of them this way, he's not insisting that all people who backslide fit this category. There are people who backslide in other categories, but some certainly are in this category. Now, the other thing to point out here is that this might not even be saying that they were unconverted.

It sounds like it if they remained dogs all along, but even converted people still have part of them that's still the dog. We have a flesh. We still have a dog in the race, in the world's race.

We try to deny it. That is, we try to say no to it. We try to overcome it.

The flesh and the spirit are at war against each other. And it's like, you know, the dog is trying to fight, you know, the godly man in there, the pig. There's still a bit of piggy nature in us.

We feel it all the time when we're tempted to do the wrong thing and something in us says yes, something else says no. The flesh says yes. The spirit says no.

If you give in to the flesh, then you go the way of the dog, the way of the pig. Even the true convert has some pig in him still. And if he goes back to his wallowing in the mire after he's been washed, it proves that he gave in to that aspect of his nature.

It does not mean he never had a new nature. It doesn't mean he never was a Christian at all, but it means that there was something of that old sinful nature in him that still drew

him and to which he succumbed and went back to the way of the pig, back to the way of the dog. So, although, you know, on the surface, there's these two illustrations, the dog and the pig, both of which were unclean animals to the Jews because of their filthy habits and because of the actually the qualifications for an animal being clean were pretty narrow and they didn't fit in those qualifications.

But the fact that these proverbs can certainly apply to someone who's never been converted and proves it by going back to his old ways doesn't mean that it can't also apply to people who have been converted because the Bible is very explicit about that fact. Once you're a convert, you're not an angel. You're part angel and you're part pig, you know.

You're part animal and part God. You've got the nature of God given to you. You're a child of God.

You've got his nature in you. You also have Adam's nature in you. It's not necessary to assume that these proverbs are intended to make the specific point that Calvinists would like to make about every case.

It's simply pointing out these people have gone the way of the dog. They've gone the way of the pig. This is intended to be an insult.

Just like when he says that their teachers are like Balaam who was rebuked by a donkey. A donkey is considered to be a stupid and unclean animal. But better than Balaam.

It had the higher moral ground than the prophet had, you know. It could speak down to the prophet and rebuke him. So the prophet was lower than the donkey.

These people are as low as pigs and dogs. These are unflattering animal comparisons in order to point out the disgust that Peter and God would have toward this kind of behavior. So we then move into chapter 3, the last chapter and the shortest.

Peter says, Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle. We're assuming that 1 Peter is the one that was preceded that he's referring to. Though it is possible, just possible, but not likely that there was another epistle to these people that was not 1 Peter.

This could be a different audience. But we don't have that. We only have 1 Peter preserved.

So by default we would assume that's the epistle he's talking about. In both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first, that scoffers will come in the last days walking according to their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.

For this they willfully forget, that by the word of God the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.

But the heavens and the earth, which now exist, are kept in store by the same word, reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

And then he does talk about the day of the Lord and the judgment coming then, but this portion we'll look at first. First of all, verse 2, he says that what he's writing is to remind them of things that were previously taught by the holy prophets, no doubt he means the Old Testament prophets, although there were, of course, prophets in the church also, and he may mean them, but I think the holy prophets here probably refer to the Old Testament prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior. Now, the word us is not found in the oldest manuscripts, so that in those manuscripts it says, us and the commandment of the apostles of our Lord and Savior, which sounds like the author himself might not be including himself among them.

The inclusion of the word us in the textus receptus would make Peter claim to be an apostle. Since many scholars favor the older manuscripts that don't have the word us, this has become one of the arguments against Peter being the author, because the author speaks of the apostles as someone else, like the holy prophets are someone else. Remember, we heard from the prophets and from the apostles.

However, of course, there's no reason why Peter, who's already called himself an apostle in chapter 1, verse 1, would expect the apostles to exclude him when simply saying, what you've heard from the prophets and apostles, of which I've already mentioned, I'm one of those apostles. I mean, the word us does not have to be there in order for it to be implied. Knowing this first, that scoffers will come in the last days.

Now, what are the last days? Now, this becomes interesting, because he does seem to move on in the passage to talk about the end of the world. Now, in our modern time, when people talk about the last days, they're usually thinking of the end of the world. And this use of last days might seem to be also talking about the end of the world.

Yet, what we've seen in many passages, including 1 Peter, and Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, that he believed they were living in the last days. And I've suggested that he means not the last days of the world, but the last days of the old covenant system, which came to an end in AD 70 when the temple was destroyed. And therefore, the coming of the new covenant system spelled the beginning of the end for the old system.

They were the last days of the old system. This is the way Peter usually talks, and Paul as well, and the writer of Hebrews, and John, who writes in 1 John, it is the last hour. And James, who says in chapter 5 that his people have stored up food in the last times.

And there's almost everyone, James, John, Paul, the writer of Hebrews, Peter, they all use the term last days or last hour or something equivalent to that to refer to the time they were living in, which seemingly means the last days of the old order, which they were living in. Now, an alternate view that has been suggested, and this is not my preference, but I might as well mention it. Lots of Christians think that the word last days was used to mean the whole church age, so that in fact the writers were living in the last days, but so are we.

It's just been a very long, drawn out last days. It's been 2,000 years of last days. This is possible, especially if the earth was in existence for more than twice as long before Christ came.

The last third of history could be called the last days, although being as long as they are could be thought to be the last centuries or millennia. But later, of course, Peter's going to say even in this chapter, a day to the Lord is like 1,000 years, and 1,000 years is like a day. So it's not impossible that he's thinking of the last days, and a day could be 1,000 years.

He could be thinking of the last days as the whole age of the church. This is certainly something that could be considered a possibility. On the other hand, I want to say that though he mentions the end of the world in the next verses, verses 10 through 13, and the coming of the new heavens and new earth, that doesn't mean that the last days he's speaking of here are associated with the end of the world.

He could be still using the last days to mean the last days of the Jewish order. He's not saying the world will end at that time when these last days are here. He's just saying in the last days certain people will come saying things.

So if it were so, that before the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, cynics arose in the church saying, well, where's the promise of his coming? Then this would still be true even if Peter goes on later to talk about the end of the world is quite a bit further off. The last days might be the last days of the Jewish order, but not the last days of earth. But there will be a last day of earth.

He says in verse 10, the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, and that's going to be the end of the universe as we know it. So I don't know for sure whether last days here is meaning days not very long after Peter's own time, but before the destruction of Jerusalem, that period, or whether he's thinking of a longer protracted period nearer the end of the world. In any case, whichever he meant, he would have been right because in his day as well as ours, and no doubt at all times in between if you happen to have a

record of what all people said, there have been people who said, you know, Jesus isn't coming back.

Nothing has changed. He promised he's coming back. The fathers, that is our ancestors, they thought he was coming back and they're dead.

The fathers have fallen asleep. And look, he hasn't come. Everything remains the same as from the beginning.

Everything's pretty much unchanged. So if it's been unchanged this long, what makes us think anything's going to happen in the future? This is especially true of those who think that Jesus predicted the end of the world in his lifetime or in the lifetime of his disciples. And there are people who say that.

They said the apostles, they thought Jesus was coming in their own lifetime and he didn't. So they were wrong. True, if they believed he was coming in their lifetime, they were wrong to believe that.

And every generation so far that's passed has been wrong to believe that Jesus would come in their lifetime. That doesn't mean they were wrong to believe Jesus is going to come. And the point that Peter's making is they will think that because punishment has not come yet, and Peter's going to explain why it hasn't, but because it hasn't come yet, it's not going to come at all.

Now remember, this is a theme that he already brought up in chapter 2 about the false teachers. They haven't been judged yet. In chapter 2, verse 3, he says that their judgment is not idle and their destruction does not slumber.

And he gave examples of God postponing judgment but bringing judgment ultimately upon Sodom and the world of the flood and even the fallen angels. And therefore, this has been a theme already in 2 Peter earlier on, that God is going to judge but not necessarily immediately. And because of the postponement, some will take courage that it's not going to happen and they'll be established in their evil ways.

We've talked previously when we were talking about Hebrews about what Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 8, 11. He said, because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore, the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil. Because God doesn't judge an evil work right away, people think, oh, I got away with it.

So they become established in their ways because they think they're getting away with something. This is a common thing in human nature, even not with reference to God. The kid who steals his first candy bar from the 5 and 10 cent store.

He's afraid he's going to get caught, but when he's walking down the street eating it, he realizes, hey, I got away with it. He thinks, well, I'll do that again when I want a free

candy bar. And he will.

And if he gets away with it again, it becomes a pattern. He's afraid at first, but since he didn't get punished, why quit? And that's how human nature is. And so if people thought Jesus was coming in their lifetime 2,000 years ago, and he didn't, they said, oh, well, maybe he's not coming after all.

Maybe there never will be a punishment. And Peter says that's the way they're going to be thinking. These scoffers are going to be scoffing at the belief that Jesus is coming back because he will not have yet come back.

And therefore they will, what's it say in verse 3? They'll walk according to their own lusts. Why not? If Jesus isn't coming back, let's walk according to our own lusts. And they will say, where is the promise of his coming? Meaning they're mocking the belief that Jesus is coming.

Where is that? He promised it. It hasn't happened. Where's that coming that he talked about? For since the fathers fell asleep, who in their lifetimes expected his coming and did not see it, now they're gone.

All things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. For this, they willingly or they willfully forget. King James says of this, they are willingly ignorant.

It's one thing to be ignorant and forgetful, though you're trying hard to know and remember. It's another thing to want to forget or want to be ignorant of something. They don't want to remember that what? By the word of God, the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of water and in the water.

This is the creation, of course, in Genesis 1. God spoke and the world came into existence. Initially, all covered with water, but with another word on the third day, land, dry land came up out of the water. So you have the earth standing in the water and out of the water.

And this was created by God's word. Now, what he's going to get to is that that same word is the one that promised he's going to come back and judge. Now, if he could if he could command the world to come into existence by his word, that's a pretty that's a word to take seriously.

If that same word has promised to judge. Then you better better take it more seriously than than you're doing. He says, by which in verse six, the which refers back to the word of God or or no, by the water and in all likelihood, the last noun was the water.

But he could refer to a word also. He says, by which the world that then existed perished either by God's word or by the water that he created. One way or another, the world perished in the days of Noah.

And that's what you're referring to being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth, which now exists, which is since the flood are kept in store. Remember, he said back in chapter two, verse nine, that these wicked men, God is able to reserve the unjust under punishment.

They're under punishment waiting for the day of judgment, but they're reserved for that by God. So the world as it is now is reserved for a day of judgment that's coming. This reserved thing or kept in store thing is a reference to why it has.

The boom has not been lowered yet. God still is working on this project and he's got it planned. He's got a day set where this is going to happen.

In the meantime, the world that has been here ever since the flood is not being destroyed. It is kept in store. It is held in its present state.

That is, it hasn't been wrecked yet. The judgment hasn't come upon it yet. And that's by the same word, the same word that commanded the earth to come into existence and that brought the flood is the word that now keeps the world in store until the next time it's to be judged.

It is reserved for fire. Not water next time, but fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. So that's almost exactly like what he said in chapter 2 verse 9 about the teachers that God will reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.

So also the present earth by the word of God is reserved for fire until the day of judgment. But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is one day. Now Peter's not making this up.

He gets this from Psalm 40, Psalm 90, verse 4, where it's actually a Psalm of Moses. Moses wrote that Psalm. And Moses said to the Lord, a day in your sight is as yesterday when it is passed.

I mean, I'm sorry, he says a thousand years in your sight is as yesterday when it is passed and as a watch in the night. So Moses said that to a thousand years to God is like yesterday or even less, three hours. A watch in the night is three hours.

So he's not being exact. He's not saying a day and as a one to one corresponds to a thousand years with God and that we should use thousand years as a way of understanding a day or vice versa. But rather he's saying a long time like a thousand years is like a short time to God.

It's like yesterday or like even less, a few hours only. Now, Peter is taking that thought from Psalm 90 in verse 4 and saying a day to the Lord like a thousand years, a thousand years is like a day. It's all the same to him.

Now, some people think that what is being said here is that God doesn't experience time as we do. They say God is outside of time. But I mean, that may be true, but this word, this would not be a good way of saying that because a day where you mentioned a thousand years or a day, both are in time.

A day is a measurement of time and a thousand years is a measurement of time. Sometimes this is taken simply to mean, I think most commonly it's taken to mean that what's a long time to us is not a long time to God. He's eternal.

We're not. A thousand years is a really long time to us, more than a lifetime. Not so much with God.

He's been here forever. It's like a day in his life. And that could be too.

But it seems to me that in the context, what he's saying is this. These people have claimed that God's promise cannot be trusted because it hasn't been fulfilled yet. Yet, how much time has passed? Oh, a few years, maybe even a thousand years.

Well, maybe two thousand years. Well, what bearing does that have on God's faithfulness? God is faithful, and that's true whether he waits a day or a thousand years makes no difference. To him, a thousand years or a day, if that's the delay, if he delays a day or delays a thousand years, it's all the same.

His faithfulness is not impugned by the delay, no matter how long it is. It's the same whether it's a day or a thousand years to him. The Lord is not slack, he says in verse 9, concerning his promise.

That's his point. It's not like God is negligent in not coming on time and fulfilling his promises. He's not slack, not a slacker.

Because even if it's been two thousand years, he's still not slack. That's only like, it doesn't make any difference, no more than a couple days. His faithfulness in keeping his promises is the same no matter how long the delay.

The fact that he's promised it means it's going to happen. And the passage of time doesn't make it any less likely to happen. The fact, it just means it hasn't happened yet is all.

Some men count him as slack. He's not slack as some men count slackness, but he is long-suffering, which is a word that just means patient toward us. Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

So God's waiting to judge the wicked because there's still some people who haven't repented, who need to, and who will be punished with the wicked if he comes now. We sometimes think, why does God tolerate the wicked? Why doesn't he just judge? Well,

how would that go for some of your friends? Maybe some of those friends, if God waits, are going to get saved. If he doesn't wait, they're going to be judged severely.

You might wish that God would take out all the tyrants and all the child abusers and all the murderers and wicked people. But when God judges the wicked, he's going to do the whole job. There's a day of judgment.

He's going to judge all the wicked. That might include some family members of yours, some friends of yours. Are you eager for that to happen? Wouldn't you rather he waited patiently? Of course, while he's waiting, wickedness continues.

But while he's waiting, opportunity still continues. The end of wickedness will come at the same time as the end of opportunity. For the sake of opportunity, for the sake of more people repenting who have not yet, God has waited.

That's why he's not being slack. He's just being patient. He's not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Now, this verse obviously tells us that God doesn't have some elect few that he wants to save. He wants all people to come to repentance. Which is, of course, contrary to Calvinistic views, but there is a way that Calvinists use this.

Notice it says that God is long suffering toward us. In the Alexandrian text, it says toward you. Who's you? Well, they say back in verse one, it's beloved the church, the Christians.

That God is patient toward the Christians, not willing that any Christians should perish or elect. They would say any of the elect should perish, but that all the elect should come to repentance. They don't believe God wants every person to come to repentance, only the elect.

That's what Calvinism teaches. And the use of the word you in that place may assist them in making that point here. You elect people, you Christians.

He's not willing that any of you will perish. So he might be willing that unbelievers perish, but not you. But that's a very abstract way of looking at it, because he hasn't identified a group called the elect.

As his readers here, although he did say that his readers in the first epistle were elect. But to my mind, this is not really capable of being limited in this way for the simple reason that the Bible teaches everywhere that God is not pleased with the loss of wicked people. In Ezekiel chapter 33 in verse 11, God is writing to people who did not repent, who therefore were not elect.

These are people who actually suffered doom under God's judgment and clearly were not counted among the elect, but he wishes they were. He says in Ezekiel 33 verse 11,

Say to them, as I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked would turn from his way and live. Turn, turn you from your evil ways.

For why should you die, O house of Israel? They were going to die. They were apostate. He says, I don't have any pleasure in killing you.

I want you to turn. I want you to repent. You're not the elect, but I want everyone to repent, even you.

I have no pleasure in your death. Clearly he's not talking to the elect here. Likewise, in Matthew chapter 24, or 23, excuse me.

Matthew chapter 23, this well-known passage. He says in verse 37, Oh, Jesus says, Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.

So Jesus said, I wanted to gather you, but it didn't happen. If they weren't willing and didn't get saved, they can't be counted among the elect, but God wanted to gather them anyway. He wished they were.

He wants everyone to be saved. He's not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. By the way, you might say, well, how does the Calvinist use this verse? Well, the ones I've talked to say, notice the difference.

He's talking to Jerusalem and the ones he wanted to gather were her children. But Jerusalem objected. And the argument is Jerusalem refers to the leaders of Jerusalem, the Pharisees, the scribes, the chief priests, the one who opposed Jesus and the apostles, that Jesus wanted to gather the children of Jerusalem, that is the people of Jerusalem to himself, but the leaders were not willing to let that happen.

Well, I don't really see how that changes much of anything. First of all, by the way, the children of Jerusalem and Jerusalem would be synonyms. In the Old Testament, the prophets would speak about Jerusalem and her children as the same thing.

But I mean, Jerusalem is not the leadership exclusively. But the point here is that even if the leaders of Jerusalem were prevented, some people from coming to Christ and they didn't come, that means they weren't elect because they didn't come. And yet he wanted to gather them.

So he still wanted to gather people who didn't come. You see, Calvinism teaches if God chooses to gather you, you will come. Irresistible grace will draw you.

If you aren't drawn, it's because he didn't want you. That's the Calvinist teaching. And yet the scripture teaches that God does want even those who don't come.

He wishes they would. It's his desire for them to. So I think Peter is making that point for us to hear.

This is a turning point. And I don't really know that we have that we need a whole session to take the rest of chapter three, but we have another session scheduled for it. So even if it turns out to be a shorter session, I think we should probably take a break here because to get into the next portion and try to close it, say, in five minutes would be a little hasty.

And although we are told to hasten the day of Christ in verse 12, I don't know that we want to hasten our treatment of an important passage that requires some scrutiny, actually. So we'll stop here.