

W@W2Pet21

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SHAMELESS AND STILL SINNING

2 Peter 2:13-14 *They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, revelling in their pleasures while they feast with you. With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed--an accursed brood! (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

How do you recognise a false teacher, or spiritual deviant who infiltrates the church? Peter has already pointed to their heresies and lies ([v1](#)), greedy exploitation of the vulnerable ([v3](#)), filthy living and lawlessness ([v7](#)), despising authority ([v10](#)), arrogance and slander ([v10-11](#)), blasphemy and ignorance ([v12](#)). They will not exhibit all of these characteristics, but all will show some. Now Peter uncovers their shamelessness. They just cannot stop sinning and even celebrate their sinful behaviour. Even if they want to (and there is little evidence that they do), they are unable to stop polluting themselves and the churches they seek to influence.

Even in the context of the church fellowship, their appetite for self-satisfaction is unlimited, whether through drink and personal pleasures, or by luring the gullible into their web to satisfy their lust for power. They use those who look up to them, rather than serving them. Their expertise is in getting their own way at the expense of others; although any objective eye can see that their whiteness is so deeply stained that they have no right to participate in the fellowship meals, let alone lead them. How different from the ministry of our Lord Jesus. And how right He will be to bring harm to those who harm His Body ([cf 1 Cor 3:17](#)).

Of course, apart from Jesus, there is no teacher or leader who can claim to be without sin. So what is the difference between the false teacher and the leader who struggles with sin? Firstly, their destiny is different: harm for the rebel and help for the weak. Secondly, their attitude is different: the rebel is unashamed, while the weak sinner feels shame most deeply. Thirdly, their lifestyle motivation is different: the self-righteous knows no repentance, while the penitent sinner longs for change and holiness ([cf Luke 18:9-14](#)). So, if you are oppressed by 'spiritual people' who do not live by the truth, be comforted that God will deal with them. If you are weak, be comforted that the Lord will restore the repentant. But if you use God's people to indulge your own sinfulness, beware: repent before the Lord uses His hand!

Prayer: *Holy God. It is sad to reflect that some greedily seek self-advancement while pretending to serve in Your Name. I do not want to be like them. Help me to continue to struggle against temptation and the evil which oppresses me, to repent of past failure and to lay hold of Your grace to grow more like Christ. Thank You that You will deal with the wicked who twist Your truth and despise Your mercy: but I also pray that You may bring them to repentance before it is too late. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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W@W2Pet22

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THE MADNESS OF FOLLY

2 Peter 2:15-16 *They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey--a beast without speech--who spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

While a few people are intentionally evil, most do not set out to be wicked. This probably applies to the well meaning politician, the ambitious professional, the hard-working trader, and the compassionate spiritual leader. Yet many dabble in sin, are entertained by evil and consider alternatives to truth. This is because human nature is perverse and instinctively resistant to God and His Truth. So, along with everybody else, we are all tempted to play with fire. But 'going wrong', is rarely a sudden climactic event; it is the end point of a process that starts when we wander from the right way.

Of course there needs to be a reason to tempt us into sin ([cf James 1:13-15](#)). Peter uses the remarkable story of Balaam to illustrate his point that wandering off the right path leads to disaster unless stopped: in this case by a talking donkey! If you do not know the story, read it in [Numbers 22:1-38](#) - it is one of the most ironic and amusing episodes in the Old Testament! But Peter gets under the skin of Balaam's character by highlighting his weak point; he "loved the wages of wickedness". In other words, as the 'high' or 'buzz' rewards the drug-taker and money rewards the thief, so every sin has an attractive outcome. That may only last for a moment, or may be overtaken by disaster; but the pull is strong enough for the temptation to be fatal ([cf Rom 6:23a](#)).

In God's mercy, Balaam (who was tempted to take money in exchange for cursing Israel) was rebuked by a talking donkey that could see God's way better than the false prophet. Sometimes God does intervene in unique ways to prevent us going off track (as in the Damascus road experience [Acts 9:1-6](#)); but far better when we choose to stay close to the Lord and not to wander. However well we have run in the past, keeping right still depends on our willingness to submit to God's Word. Failure to read, reflect on the scriptures and live obediently to them will inevitably induce spiritual instability. That spiritual wobble will make it impossible to steer a course straight towards Jesus. When that happens, a personal catastrophe looms ahead: if it happens to a teacher, many others are dragged off course too, and the judgement is more severe ([cf James 3:1](#)). So we need to keep coming back to the Scriptures and praying for those who presently refuse to do so.

Prayer: *Father God. As You welcome home all the prodigals who repent, please help me to live close to You and desire to stay on Your pathway. I pray for those of my friends, family and colleagues who cannot see the folly of wandering off from You. Please bring them to repentance and faith, and help me to set them a good example. For the sake of the honour and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in His Name. Amen.*

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EMPTY PROMISES

2 Peter 2:17-19 *These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity--for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

This chapter of the Bible does not seem full of encouragement, but it is intended to encourage Christians to stay 'on track'. By explaining how God will judge the false teachers who corrupt the church, Peter was saying the same as Jesus who said that preventing people from receiving the truth was a very serious matter ([cf Mark 9:42](#)). Peter is now passionate about protecting the church from false teachers, and has used this chapter to describe the anatomy of evil imposters in great detail. As he sums up his case, he exposes them as people who have nothing to offer. They are empty people with empty words, expressing empty promises.

Unsurprisingly they are most successful with empty hearers; that is, those who know they are empty of truth and of the power to live holy lives: such folk will soak up whatever appears to give them power and wisdom. These may be new believers, disillusioned believers, frustrated believers, backsliding believers as well as those who long for the power of God to liberate them. All these are likely to be impressed by the power-dynamics of the big meeting, the intense emotional experience some preachers can induce, and the testimonies of people they have satisfied. But without the straightness of Gospel truth and Bible doctrine, the needy will be seduced but unsatisfied, enticed but unenlightened and back in the slavery they wanted to escape.

The truth is that all false religionists are slaves themselves, that is why they cannot liberate others; they only compound their oppression. They use words without meaning; like dry springs, they cannot bring life. They appeal to people's lusts instead of exalting God's holiness; they confuse the vulnerable sinner and disappoint the seeker. And there are plenty of enthusiastic religionists like that, and many who follow them. But their fate is black indeed, and God will have no hesitation in administering judgement to the unrepentant. But what of Peter, who Jesus called, "Satan"; and of Paul who was a persecutor? They repented and received mercy to cover their sin and grace to start a new life. So there is hope for even the most belligerent false teacher ... as long as they repent and receive Christ (see www.crosscheck.org.uk).

Prayer: *Holy God, by Whom every thought is weighed. Thank You for Peter's clear description of those who might try to pull me away from Your truth and into dangerous territory. But thank You too for the Bible truth which keeps me safe, and is full of promises that You will never abandon me. Keep me close to Your truth and give me a heart to win those who are empty, but make a lot of noise, although they do not know what they are talking about. Bring them to repentance and faith; and help me to discern the emptiness of religious lies. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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WORSE THAN IGNORANCE

2 Peter 2:20-22 *If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud." (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

It seems that some of the false teachers described by Peter had been accepted as members of the church, and in fellowship with other believers. Having analysed their behaviour and motives in this chapter, he now makes one of the 350+ apostolic conditional statements starting with "if". These are a very important part of Biblical theology because they stimulate us to think clearly about holy things ([2 Peter 3:1](#)). The "if" statements give us the consequences of possible actions, and therefore stir our hearts to flee from all that will bring God's curse but embrace what leads to His pleasure and blessing.

If the false teachers of this chapter had once been impressed with the true gospel, and had come to know Jesus Christ and had learned to walk His way; then their defection from the truth, dragging others with them, was a very serious matter indeed. Their ungodly lifestyles and flagrant disregard of the apostles' teaching had marked them out for particular judgement. Peter says that their apostasy had left them in a worse situation with God than when they were ignorant of the truth. Hard words indeed! But as every former backslider knows, it is not until they understood the gravity of their rebellion before God, that they wanted to repent and come back home.

It is every pastor's nightmare to see a believer reject the gospel. Worse still is a leader who is unrepentant of error, or teaching a different gospel ([cf Gal 1:8-9](#)). Alas the church worldwide is still confronted by such spiritual wreckage. What is to be done? Jesus was very stern about the dangers of flouting God's powerful grace which has overcome the Evil One ([cf Matt 12:43-45](#)), and Peter is uncompromisingly graphic in saying "A dog returns to its vomit". In fact, the Bible offers no comfort to any believer (teacher or taught) who continues to repudiate the truth and willingly welcomes evil. The message to the church is simple: "Don't go there, don't even think about it"! To the sinful leader, the only message is, "Repent"! In days when the worldwide church faces challenges from heresy, error, compromise, syncretism and persecution - we need the message of this chapter more than ever, to help us stay on track with Jesus.

Prayer: *Loving Lord. Thank You for the great salvation won for me by Jesus Christ on the cross. May I never renounce His grace nor slander His salvation by walking away from Your truth and love. I pray for those who once ran well but now are a danger to themselves and others. May they come to their senses and accept again the truth of Your holy Word. And please help me to be a loyal servant of Jesus, faithfully explaining Your word in the family, at work and in the church. In His Name. Amen.*

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THINKING CHRISTIANLY

2 Peter 3:1-2 *Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

In the 1940s Harry Blamires wrote, "There is no longer a Christian mind. There is still, of course, a Christian ethic, a Christian practice and a Christian spirituality" (from: The Christian Mind: how should a Christian think?). He was, and is, right. Likewise, John Stott has encouraged Christians to 'think Christianly'. But the idea is still remote to many; even though Peter wrote about it two millennia ago. He uses the term 'wholesome thinking' which means the kind of thinking that comes from considering what is true of God and the gospel, and which leads to integrity of belief and action.

It is quite possible to have Christian ideas and behaviour, and even participate in Christian forms of worship, without having thought about any of it. It is just a routine or ritual. Such believers are at serious risk of being seduced by persuasive spiritual entrepreneurs, or disillusioned when life is hard. By contrast, Peter emphasises the need to understand the basis of our faith in Christ, in order to be well rooted and stable; sure footed and able. Paul also knew the importance of being absolutely sure about his faith as he faced suffering ([cf 2 Tim 1:12](#)). Unless believers understand clearly why they are safe in Christ, they will feel unsafe; and their doubts will make them vulnerable to their own doubts or the solutions offered by false teachers. So, any Christian ministry which does not stimulate people to think about God's Word and its implications, is defective; even though it may have many adherents.

The way to start thinking Christianly is to understand what the Bible says. That is the only satisfactory way to know what is true. God still speaks through the text, written by prophets and apostles but all inspired by the Holy Spirit. The more we immerse ourselves in the Scriptures, the more our minds become calibrated to understand what pleases or offends the Lord. Then we can use Christ-calibrated minds to understand why and how the world around us is so dysfunctional, and why the gospel is so essential. Those who think Christianly will live like Christ (because that is a radical choice which is impossible without a serious thought-through decision). And only those whose mind is Scripture-tuned will dare to move from a comfort zone to mission. All the great missionary pioneers, whose legacy is now seen world-wide, were people of the Book. And interestingly, that is what some people still call us. So let's live up to our reputation!

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank You for revealing Yourself in the Holy Bible. Help me to learn how to think about things in the way that You do, as I learn from Your Word day by day. May Your Word shape my thinking and result in a lifestyle which pleases You, and cheerfully advertises Your grace to those around me at work and home as well as in the church. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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FACING MOCKERS

2 Peter 3:3-7 *First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.(NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

Although the civilised world is supposed to be a tolerant place, Peter is quite direct: scoffers will come (cf [John 15:18-19](#))! It is all related to the nature of the Christian faith. Unlike the religionists of his day (and ours) Christians are unique in having a personal relationship with God through King Jesus, who has authority over everything and everybody. But human nature wants to ignore God's right to rule and those who do so are liable to mock anybody who accepts the authority of Jesus in their life.

Most people give no thought at all to the return of Jesus Christ, and the ensuing judgement. They assume that there will be no day of reckoning because they cannot see any evidence that God does that sort of thing: therefore they follow their own desires assuming no risk of having to account for their actions. But the evidence of God's judgement does exist. Noah's flood is the Bible's account of God's holy wrath in action. Although the story was well known, people of his day chose to forget that it was all about judgement. But God did not give Noah a huge boat building project just so that we might have a sentimental account about wildlife rescue! God is holy, and has given us a powerful example of what happens to unbelieving scoffers who refuse to be saved: they are overwhelmed by the consequences of their own disobedient desires.

In Noah's day, the long period of ark-building gave plenty of opportunity for the scoffers to repent. But they ignored Noah's message (cf [2 Peter 2:5](#)) and had no excuse. In the same way, rejecting the gospel and mocking its messengers does not remove the certainty of judgement; it actually validates it. God has already appointed both the day of judgement and the judge (cf [Acts 17:31](#)). This has serious implications for the scoffers. Yet some believers are more troubled by the insults they receive than the need to see the mockers saved. If that is you, pray to recover a holy fear which restrains self and seeks the salvation of the lost.

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Although it troubles me when friends or colleagues mock me because I believe in You, help me to see that they are literally 'playing with fire': their scoffing is evidence that they cannot see the seriousness of what they are doing. Please enable me to bear the load of ridicule, and also to pray for those who are in such peril. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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MERCIFUL PATIENCE

2 Peter 3:8-9 *But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

God is infinitely bigger than the watch or diary. He does not have the little human horizon which cannot see clearly beyond the present, because He sees all the future and the whole of eternity in a single glance. But although God is outside of time, He knows every tiny detail of what will happen from now until eternity, and that includes the return of Christ. The fact that Jesus has not yet returned as judge does not mean that He will never come, it just means that there is a little more time for the world to prepare for His arrival.

God has set that date with such skill and care that that there is enough time for everybody to have the opportunity to repent and trust in His saving grace. As our Maker, He certainly does not relish our damnation but rather that we should be saved. His patience is not indifference: it is the gracious restraining of His wrath against our sin. The Greek word for 'patience' simply means 'long-angry' ... he hates our sin but has chosen to give sufficient time for those who will repent, to do so.

Peter does not want us to forget that although God is long-suffering, He is also a consuming fire. His apparent delay does not indicate that He has changed His mind about judgement, but rather that he has a deeply loving and compassionate heart which longs to save all who will turn to Him in repentance and faith. At the same time He will not forget to justly deal with all who rebel against His grace ... so we should not forget either.

Prayer: *Gracious God. I am amazed at your kindness in giving everybody an opportunity to respond to your grace. Thank you for Your patience with me, when I did not deserve it, in drawing me towards your love and granting me faith to trust you. Please help my family and friends, companions and colleagues to recognise your kindness and patience in the time you allow before their opportunity is lost for ever. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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ALL OF A SUDDEN

2 Peter 3:10 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

When Jesus returns, there will be more warning than if a thief visits your house. Jesus Himself makes the same point in [Matthew 24:43](#) "But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into." This statement divides the world into two groups, those who are waiting and ready to meet Jesus; and those who are neither expecting Him nor prepared to meet Him.

The unprepared group are in for more than a shock. Not only will Jesus visibly and audibly appear (cf [1 Thess 4:13-5:3](#)), all of a sudden with no immediate warning, but that event will start a process in which the planetary and stellar bodies in space will disintegrate spectacularly, and the earth itself will be a blazing inferno. There will be no hiding place. Everything will be opened up for Divine inspection and judgement, but those who love the Lord Jesus will be caught up with him and saved.

The repetition of "will" is important to Peter. He is as certain about this cataclysm as about anything he has ever seen. He does not say, "may" or "could" or "might", because all those words give room for thinking that there is a chance that this great end-of-history event will not happen. Peter would disagree, Jesus definitely and certainly will return to save His people and destroy the universe as we know it, before He creates a new heaven and new earth which will be the home of righteousness (cf [2 Peter 3:13](#)). If your heart says, "I long for that day", it shows how much you love the Lord, and are confident that the blood of Jesus will cover your sin, and ensure your place with Jesus. If you say, "I do not want that day to come", it shows that you need to get right with God now, before it is too late (see www.crosscheck.org.uk for more details).

Prayer: *Holy God. Thank You for alerting me to the certainty of the return of Jesus and onset of judgement for the world. Please show me if I am ready for that day, and if not, how to make peace with You through the sacrifice of Jesus. In His Name. Amen.*

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W@W2Pet29

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WHAT IS LEFT AFTER THE FIRE

2 Peter 3:11-12 *Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

Fire is so destructive. It will consume whatever burns and melt whatever will not. Nothing is untouched or unaffected. When God's day of destruction comes, every possession we cherish will be lost for ever. All our earthly props will have no value at all. Even the planet itself cannot be saved. All the time and effort spent on 'improving' our lifestyle will count for nothing. Only our souls will remain, with the character we have formed from our deep desires. The godly will be seen for what they are, and the wicked will be totally exposed.

Although we do not know God's timetable for the return of Christ, we know that He will come again. We don't need to know anything else in order to get ready for Him. And, because we do not know His date and time of arrival, we have no option but to live each day as if He will return before bed time. We dare not delay the start of holy living: to do so would demonstrate that we value what is worthless and despise what is priceless. Apart from the stain and shame that would exude from our character when we meet the Lord, how will our friends and colleagues be drawn to God's grace if we do not demonstrate God-honouring lives to support our gospel words?

Peter is clear; the coming inferno should focus our thoughts. If everything that this world values will disappear, we are fools if we do not set our minds on what pleases the Lord. Then our possessions and money can become tools in the work of the gospel, and our earthly society provide opportunities to reach those whose lives in eternity are now in certain peril. As believers in the Lord Jesus, we should feel obliged to stay holy and live as Jesus would. Anything less, shows the cracks of compromise, at best; or the awfulness of apostasy at worst. Either way we need get back on track, because Jesus might return today, and then what would we say?

Prayer: *Dear Lord. Thank you for such strong reminders that every follower of Jesus is obliged to live a holy life. Help me to see today in the perspective of the return of Jesus, and live to God before it is too late. In Christ's Name. Amen*

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LONGING FOR HOME

2 Peter 3:13-14 *But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

Everybody who travels away from home and loved ones experiences a recurrent thought, "I am so looking forward to going home!" And that should be every Christian's longing too. This world is not our real home (cf [1 Peter 1:1](#)): here, we are travellers on the move, but one day we will go to be with our Father. Those who are true believers cannot have their eyes glued to this world with its shabby values and widespread corruption, when the glories of a brand new heaven and earth make everything else pale into insignificance.

One of the wonderful 'things' about our home is that it is also the home of righteousness - a place in which everything that is right and true and lovely has no competition from the shameful deceits of the world, flesh and devil. It will be an environment where God sees that everything is good, just like His original creation (cf [Gen 1:31](#)). But what a contrast from this world. The challenge is how to get ready for a perfect lifestyle, and do we really want it?

If that is our desire, then we need to start living as we intend to continue for all eternity. The words, 'spotless', 'blameless' and 'at peace with God' are huge absolutes, and until we get to heaven we will not attain perfection; but if that is what motivates the longing of our hearts, then we will put every effort into living that way. This is no place for the half-hearted, the casual, or the careless; such attitudes are not worthy of the Lord at all, nor do they show much evidence of any eagerness to meet the Lord. So Peter says, "make every effort" ... and he means just that. If we have the hope of eternal life then we must put every bit of our will, effort, skill and resources into being the sort of people that God has called us to be. The failures can be confessed and forgiven; but what will He say to those who are not even bothered to try?

Prayer: *Perfect God. Help me to understand the importance of putting holy living right at the top of my personal agenda, and apply my heart and mind and soul and strength to pleasing You. May I see the value of learning to live the life of heaven, even though I fail and need your help to recover. May I never treat my eternal destiny with such casualness that I do not bother to try to live like Jesus. In His Name, Amen.*

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W@W2Pet31

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PURPOSEFUL PATIENCE

2 Peter 3:15-16 *Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

There is a big difference between strategic waiting and apathy. The first has a purpose in mind which cannot be completed until the time is right; the second has no interest in any end-point irrespective of the time. But God is never apathetic, He cares so deeply about everybody that He does not want anybody to perish; so He gives more time for sinners to repent (cf [2 Peter 3:8-9](#)).

This was not just Peter's gospel, but Paul's as well, who wrote in [Romans 2:4](#): "Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realising that God's kindness leads you towards repentance?" Both Apostles taught that divine 'delay' was not God's indifference, but the result of God's kindness: and so a response was required. Failure to respond in repentance and faith was to despise God's generosity. But there were false teachers who resisted the apostles' teaching and preached a very different interpretation. They taught that the 'failure' of Christ to return was evidence that God had no more interest in the world or the church, and therefore there was no point in believing the Apostles (whose teaching Peter puts on a par with the Old Testament Scriptures).

The Bible is not always easy to understand. But you should start to smell heresy when a hard bit is twisted to mean something which is inconsistent with what is plainly taught elsewhere in the Scriptures. In Peter's day, lots of false teachers were trying to make a name for themselves. If they could remove the possibility of Christ's return in judgement, they would eliminate the need for personal accountability, and therefore could more easily sway their hearers to believe what was false. Often the most dangerous teaching does not come from secularists or atheists, but from religionists who have contempt for God's grace, and His patience in giving them time to repent. Avoid such people like the plague; they have the potential to drag you badly away from the truth of the gospel.

Prayer: *Dear Lord God. Thank You for Your patience with this sinful world, in waiting for more people to respond to Your gospel of grace. May I never show contempt for providing more opportunity for my friends and colleagues to put their trust in You, by ignoring my daily responsibility to live the Jesus-life before them. In His Name, Amen.*

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ON GUARD

2 Peter 3:17 *Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

Peter really cared about the new believers; especially those who would face persecution. His final words of this letter sum up the reason for writing. He is not just a theorist because he is just about to face his own death as a martyr: so he shows the genuine affection in his heart for his readers, by calling them, "dear friends". He is not writing as a fierce schoolteacher but as a brother in Christ. And he is not presuming them to be ignorant, because they already know what he is writing about; but he knows how readily we all forget. So he reminds them (cf [2 Peter 3:1-2](#)) to think 'wholesomely' - to see their sufferings in the perspective of the second coming of Jesus.

When hard times come, it is easy to be taken 'off guard' and to react according to our fleshly instincts. Without regular reminders about how our uncertain lives fit into the certainty of God's purposes for the world and eternity, we can become seduced by false teaching. The Evil One, and his accomplices, have no greater pleasure than to dislodge us from the confidence that we are secure in Christ. Therefore Peter's reminders of the truths we should already know are intended to alert us; to wake us up to the reality that we live in a world where we are at serious risk of being dragged away from trusting in Jesus alone.

That is part of the purpose of Word@Work. To help you to remember who you are - a child of God, saved through the death of Jesus Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit - wherever you are, at home or work or church. When a crisis comes, we are inclined to grab the nearest 'fix' we can think of ... and if false teaching is around, that may seem to offer a very convenient way out of the problem. However, stand firm on the truth of God's Word, and be on your guard (expect that you may be caught off-guard) so that you do not get swept away from the security which is yours in Christ.

Prayer: *Gracious God. Thank you for understanding my human frailty and taking the trouble to remind me about truths which I may have learnt ages ago, but so easily forget. Help me to be ready and on guard to meet the challenges to my faith and confidence in the uncertainty of my daily life. May I never move from the sure ground of Your Word, nor allow myself to be enticed by false teaching, however attractive it might be. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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DESPITE IT ALL, GROW!

2 Peter 3:18 *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever! Amen. (NIV)*

You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

Which is more important in a battle: not to retreat, or to go forwards? Peter's letter has been full of warnings not to go backwards; reminding the early church to beware of false teachers and stay true to the Holy Scriptures. But in this last verse, before his martyrdom, he reminds them that they are designed to go forwards: to grow up into Christ. Yes, it is very important to identify heresy and to steer well clear: but heresy hunting can become almost a 'professional' Christian activity. However many errors are denounced, if we do not grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ, we have missed the point.

To grow in Christ involves increasing our capacity of receiving His grace. That starts when we first submit to His conviction of our sin, in repentance and faith. It continues as we get to know Him. But we can only extend our depth of relationship if it is based on a true understanding of who He is and what He has done. Faith which rests on our feelings or subjective experiences will always be deficient. That is why we must rely on what God says about Himself in the Bible. We have no other reliable evidence (cf [2 Peter 2:12-21](#)).

When we grow up as real believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, God gets the glory. Our faith cannot glorify ourselves - it is simply an admission of our utter dependence on the mercy and grace of God. Our knowledge cannot glorify us either - it has come from God, and holding it simply makes us more accountable. No, God gets the glory whenever sinners seek their Saviour, when the poor in spirit receive their inheritance and when the persecuted are sustained to keep going because they hope in Christ. He is the most wonderful Saviour ever!

Prayer: *Dear Lord God. Thank You for everything which You have done to enable me to be saved, and to enter into the blessings of your grace. Help me to bring glory to You by continuing to receive Your grace, and by depending on You every day. Help me to serve You and show your worth to others, in my work and witness. For the sake of Your glory. Amen.*

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