

Live Like Jesus is Coming Again (Part 2)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 August 2023

Preacher: Jeff Jackson

[0 : 00] I'm glad and I'm sad. We come to the end of this marvelous letter in 2 Peter. It's very, very encouraging in so many ways to have gone through this together.

God willing, he gives us breath for life, many more books to go through, but we still have this one to finish to try and complete today. The title of my message then is Live Like Jesus is Coming Again. Live Like Jesus is Coming Again. And I'm going to pick this up in, if you will allow me, in chapter 3, as we close all of this out, we'll run right into the context.

We'll be dealing with verses 17 and 18, the last two verses to close out this letter. 2 Peter 3, verse 1. This is now, beloved.

The second letter I'm writing to you in which I'm stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.

[1 : 15] Know this first of all, that in the last days, mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?

For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues, just as it was from the beginning of creation. For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God, the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.

But by His word, the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord, one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promises. Some count slowness, but is patient towards you, not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat and the earth and its works will be burned up.

[2 : 38] Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning and the elements will melt with intense heat.

But according to His promise, we are looking for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the scriptures to their own destruction.

You, therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. As I spent this week praying and meditating on this passage and the text that I would be preaching from this morning, I imagined myself sitting in a prison cell isolated from Suzanne, from my wife, isolated from my friends, from you, from all that I know, from all that is comfortable to me.

And I imagined myself like Peter about to be executed, not because of anything that I've done criminally wrong, but because of my faith in Christ.

[4 : 54] I'm in prison and I'm about to die because I love Jesus and I've tried to serve Him in my life. I just allowed myself to sit and imagine what that would be like. And as I thought about my final

words to all of you and to others whom I love, it resounded in my own heart as clear as could be.

I would express my love to you by simply encouraging you to love Jesus Christ and each other with your entire being. I just can't think of a better, more fitting way for me to express love to those whom I love most than telling you that.

There may be so many other things that I might want to say, but if I'm going to say the main thing, that'd be it, wouldn't it? Love Jesus with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength and love each other as you love yourself.

I so much want to honor Peter's heart as he closes out his final letter to those he loved.

I can imagine him in his cell awaiting his death. And as he reflected on his life, I'm absolutely certain that Peter, being Peter, shed many tears, both, I imagine, in joy and maybe in sorrow.

[6 : 24] He was a man whose life was full of sorrows and hardships, challenges, trials, great failure in his life, we all understand and remember that time he failed the Lord Jesus.

But great joy as Jesus restored him and as he spent decades now serving Jesus Christ faithfully in giving himself. He has seen God do mighty, mighty things in his life in the way of his ministry.

I can also imagine that he might have battled feeling sorry for himself. He might have battled feeling very alone and very isolated from all that he loved and wanted to do with whatever remained of his life.

But you know, we don't even get a hint of any of that from what we read in this letter, do we? His letter reflects his strong, vibrant, unyielding faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and his deep, deep, unquenchable love for the Lord, for God's word and for God's people.

This was a man sold out for Jesus. And even at the end, all he can think about is penning a letter to the people Jesus loves and encourage them to keep doing the main thing.

[7 : 46] Perhaps so that when they came to the point in their lives when they were facing their death and contemplating the fact that I'll be taking my last breaths here in these last few moments, they would be able to reflect on a life of serving Jesus and a life that counted for Christ.

that means something. Jesus is coming again. Live like he's coming again. Peter has taken pains to answer, what do you and I as believers do while we wait for Christ's coming?

What do we do? He's written this, his final letter before he's killed, to tell God's loved ones, keep the main thing the main thing.

Jesus is coming again so give all that you are to being godly people. This is his constant refrain through this letter. Be godly, be holy, be godly, be holy.

Godliness is simply god-likeness. For you to be godly is for you to be like God, which you think about that, me like God?

[9 : 00] Now I know me pretty well. That's a miracle. That's nothing short of a miracle, isn't it? It is the miracle of salvation. It is the miracle of the Holy Spirit living in you so that you can be like God.

I can say it this way. it's being like God so that what we see of you is Jesus in you.

What we see of you is Jesus in you. So I'm not at all interested because I fight it. I mean, deep down I am, but I fight it.

Deny myself. I don't want to be interested in presenting Jeff to you and convincing you that Jeff is all that. I could make a list of all the things that I'd love for you in my flesh to think about Jeff.

But as a believer, as a follower of Jesus, as a learner at the feet of my Lord, as someone who's been given life because someone died for me, that Jeff, I want you to see Jesus in Jeff.

[10 : 14] I want you to know the Lord who gave me life. I want you to know the Jesus who makes my life worth living and gives me hope for living again for all eternity with him.

So I say again, being like God so that what we see of you is Jesus in you. That's what Peter is interested in.

Commentator David Helm quoted the great London preacher Charles Spurgeon. As Spurgeon was encouraging his own congregation and godliness in a particular sermon, Spurgeon said this, As you walk the streets of London, remember, you've got the reputation of God in your hands.

As you walk the streets of Williamsburg, remember, you have the reputation of God in your hands. That's sobering.

Well, Peter has something in mind for us. Peter wants us to represent Jesus in a total life commitment to holy, godlike, godly living.

[11 : 32] His emphasis for this mindful commitment is captured in four commands. Jesus is coming again. As you wait for his return, be diligent.

That was last week. So just let me give you a quick review here before we jump into what we want to talk about in verses 17 and 18. In verse 14, therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by him in peace, spotless and blameless.

Now, friends, look, your ability, listen, please carefully, your ability to apply holiness and godliness to representing Jesus in your life is a gift of God's grace.

Diligently make the most of what Jesus died to give you and don't take him for granted. I want to take you to Ephesians 5 real quickly right at the outset here and show you something of how Paul and Peter are kind of tag teaming on this idea.

Ephesians chapter 5 verse 15 through 17. Paul says, Therefore, be careful, be circumspect, be prudent, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time because the days are evil.

[13:17] So then, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. That is Peter's main idea.

understand God's will, understand God's truth, base your life on that truth, and begin to live in response to that truth every moment of every day.

Let that be the foundation, the concrete that you put your feet on, the rock of the Lord Jesus and his truth, and live out of that. And I know that's not a very difficult concept to understand.

It's just impossible to live apart from grace. Isn't it? You try to gut that out for a little while and see how well that works for you. This is a grace thing.

Jesus is coming again. So as you wait for his return, be diligent, but also from last week, be doctrinal. I'm going to take a little bit more time in this review for this one just to make sure we're grasping what I mean here.

[14:26] Verses 15 and 16. Regard the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the scriptures to their own destruction.

All right? God himself is waiting, but he is not idle. We are waiting, but we are not to be idle.

We are to regard God's waiting as salvation. Now, that's why he says this. I'm not going to re-preach all of this. Just bear with me in it. Verse 15. Regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. This is in direct corrective to what the mockers or deceivers are saying about Jesus isn't coming again. Don't worry about all of that.

Has he come? Is there any evidence at all that he's coming? Everything's going on just as it always is. It's just ticking away. This is the way of it. This is the way it's going to be.

[15:45] Now, Peter comes and he says once again, no, regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. That's the truth. That's doctrinal truth.

And so that's what you need to rest on. The delay doesn't have anything to do with an apathetic God who is indifferent to what's going on and what he's made or in your life.

He is tearing because he wants to save. Now, we want to hold on to that because that becomes important for us as it defines who we are as his disciples.

Jesus is waiting. Jesus is tearing. What does that mean for us as his followers? What does that say to you and I as people who are taking our cue from him?

You see where I'm going? This is very, I think it's brilliant. What do you expect? The Holy Spirit wrote it. It's brilliant.

[16:46] So we are to regard God's waiting as salvation. Let me clean it up. His patience is our cue to be about speaking the truth in love.

Peter is telling us this because God's patience in delaying coming because of salvation, that becomes our cue.

Ah, okay. so in that waiting, I follow the waiting of my God and I am not idle. I am about the same thing that God is about as he waits.

What is it? Kingdom building. Building his kingdom in the hearts of human beings. Bringing people to become disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ and growing them up as those disciples as they build treasure in heaven and then going out and getting some more.

He is waiting, but he is not idle. And we can't be idle either. Now, let's bring another doctrinal dot into this in Matthew 28.

[17:57] This is a passage that we're very familiar with. Matthew 28. What do we commonly refer this to this passage as?

The what? The Great Commission. Absolutely. Thank you. The Great Commission. Matthew 28. And we'll look at 19 and 20.

Go, therefore, and make disciples. That's the point. Going is not the point. Making disciples is the point. That's the main verb.

Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you and lo, I am with you always.

So we are constantly teaching these people all that Jesus has taught us in Scripture, all the truth. We are making disciples and helping them grow up into him.

[19:01] And now, take that little dot and let's connect it over to Colossians 128. Another little verse, very familiar to us. It's all throughout our website.

Colossians 1 verse 28. We proclaim him, Jesus, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom so that we may present every man complete in Christ.

The goal is that we present every man and woman, boy and girl, complete in Christ. That is mature, grown up. This is Peter's theme.

Grow up in Jesus. This is the main thing. We are left here to grow up into him, to become more like him. One day we'll be glorified in him and it'll all be made perfectly complete.

Right now we're here. It's not perfectly complete for us yet. And so we are constantly striving and speaking and ministering and serving as we grow up into him, the head over all the church.

[20:14] That's what we're seeking to do. So we proclaim Jesus, we warn every man, we instruct every man with all God's wisdom. This is the instruction of scripture.

That's what we're supposed to be about. Friends, I say it again. I'll put it up here so you can see how I'm couching it. God is waiting.

Jesus is coming. His delay is our signal for disciple making. Go get them. Go get these people. Bring them in here and then let us put our arms around them and help them grow up into Jesus because they're just like us.

Those people out there are facing the trials and struggles and challenges. They're getting beat up all the time. People are not standing in line to hug them and tell them how great they are.

So we need to go get them and bring them in here. Some of them, many of them, need to come to know Jesus and his peace and love and gentleness and kindness and forgiveness, right?

[21:24] And experience his grace. We need to get those people and bring them in. Bring them into the fold. And then once we have them in here with us to put our arms around them and speak the truth and love to them so that they're growing up in Jesus in a constant way so that as they get to know us, as we get to know them, as they begin to reveal the places in their lives where they struggle with the flesh, we can come alongside of them and create these opportunities to breathe the spiritual air of God's grace and forgiveness together.

This is what we're about at Grace Church. Grace Church. We're about creating an atmosphere where we are all breathing in the forgiveness and grace of God together.

And people are at different places and levels in their growth in the Lord and their understanding of spiritual things. So sometimes we say things that sound a little doctrinally off or a little off this way or that way.

We love each other through that. We move together through that in the grace and mercy, forgiveness, kindness, gentleness, the joy of the Holy Spirit together, together, together.

The world does everything it can to pull us apart, to distract us away, to draw us into ourselves.

What does pain most often do to any typical average human being, whether it's pain physically that you feel or pain emotionally that you feel, the strain of a relationship, the loss of a job, the loss of a loved one, some physical ailment that you're having to deal with?

[23:04] What does pain do typically to any human being? What's the first temptation that we face? It pushes us in, doesn't it? And we start thinking in terms of, I just got to get relief.

I just heard a tragic story that I'm going to share with you. I have followed this man and his ministry for years. I don't even know, 15 years or more.

And I'm not going to use names or tell you where he is, but I just got word this past week that after all these years in a very, very remote place in the world where he had taken his wife and raised four children, had they had their children on the mission field in this very, I mean, this is a place where

they had to go and use a boat to bring stuff in down this river so that they could be supplied. Then they got to the point where they had to cut an airstrip out of the jungle so a plane could bring stuff in for them to build things and help these people. That's how primitive. Well, he got diseases and it racked his body and the pain became so bad and nobody on the outside knew this. His wife knew it. He started drinking. He admitted that he was drinking two bottles of Jack Daniels a day plus taking eight to ten Xanax tablets with the alcohol a day.

[24 : 33] And he said, I could barely function. Well, I'm sad to tell you he's lost his wife. He's lost his kids. He's out of the ministry. He's lost everything.

He shacked up with a woman. He lost his mind. And he recently wrote and talked to his supporters and other people sent out by his home church in defense of himself. And he said, it's about time I speak. And he shared all everything I'm telling you. He shared himself and he gave details. I'm not even telling you the details. He went into detail and he shouldn't have. And then he said, I've lost everything and I'm a broken man. I don't have any money. I don't have any place to live. I don't have anybody to take care of me. I don't have anybody who cares for me. And then he signed it a broken man. And asked for prayer. Pain.

[25 : 32] Pain will do that. It will drive you into yourself. And he never should have looked to alcohol and pills for that relief. I'm not judging him. I'm just saying he knows that now.

Too late. He's lost it all. Pain. Pain. I understand that sin and death and pain are our enemies and they're the result of sin.

Pain in this life should drive us to Jesus Christ. There are lots and lots of people in the world who are in pain. Again, I say to us, God's delay in coming is our signal for disciple making. We need to reach them, folks. We need to bring them in. And I'll say this. I'll add this. Now, I have come under some heat for this, but that's OK. I am not ashamed at all or embarrassed at all or apologetic at all about finding Christians out there who are in churches that they shouldn't be in because they're not preaching the gospel and they're not helping them become more Christ like and grabbing them and saying, come to grace.

We'll help you do that. And they can call me a sheep stealer or whatever else they want. It really doesn't matter to me. You'd be surprised how many conversations I've had out here with people in my face about that.

[26 : 56] Say, well, brother, start preaching the gospel and telling them to grow in Jesus and I'll back off until that. They're open game. Because I want them to know Christ, I want them to hear the gospel and I want them to grow in Jesus.

And that's what we're about at grace. So take down your rainbow flags. Stop telling people who are living in sin that it's OK with God because that's an offense to the Lord.

I serve that kind of thing. All right. I got to move on. So this is the main thing. This is the main thing. This is what our church is about by God's grace. All right. Lest I sound proud or boastful about all of that, I'm boasting in the Lord Jesus. We're trying to be faithful to the gospel.

We're trying to get out of ourselves, deny ourselves, take up our cross and fall. So this is what our church is about. So I'm saying it now going on record. I've been on record many times.

[27 : 55] So is my brother Greg as he's preached and taught. If someone were to ask you, what's Grace Church Williamsburg all about? Here's how we can help you answer that because you're going to get this if you haven't gotten it already.

What's Grace Church Williamsburg all about? Here it is expressing our love to Jesus Christ through great commission discipleship. Let me put it up here.

Expressing our love to Jesus Christ through great commission discipleship. We say to Jesus, I love you as we love each other. We say to Jesus, I love you supremely.

When we get outside of ourselves and we go out here and we make the sacrifices necessary to bring people to Christ. To share the gospel, to risk being embarrassed, ridiculed, talked down to, spit at, cussed at, laughed at.

We risk because we love Christ. Christ. And we turn then to love them. And we keep loving them and we keep loving Christ because it's about loving Jesus, whether they love us back or not.

[29 : 05] We're grounded in the love of Christ. That's what grace is about. We do great commission work because we love Jesus first and foremost.

And that compels us to turn to love our neighbor as ourself. I believe Jesus had something to say about that in the way of the first and greatest commandments. We are learning.

Hear me carefully. We are learning to deny ourselves. We're all in a process. We are learning to take up our crosses. We are learning to follow Jesus together.

As we invest our lives in making disciples for the greater glory of God. You know, you hear me say that and you think, gosh, that's just not rocket science.

No, it's not. But once again, it's one of those mandates that we have from the Lord that says, yeah, you'll never understand that or give your life to it or sacrifice for it apart from grace.

[30 : 04] God's work of his divine favor in your life. That's what motivates us. That's what gives us the power. That's why Peter's telling us to grow in it. Lies in life are legion, aren't they?

In the gift of his son, God has given us the treasure of his wisdom. Jesus is our wisdom. I want to take you, if we can, to James 3.

James 3. 17 and 18. Just turn one book previous to 1 Peter. Again, this is me.

I said it a minute ago. This is me helping you connect some doctrinal dots. So I'm still reviewing here. I'm sorry. We're still reviewing. James 3.

17 and 18. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

[31 : 14] And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. And so let me say this to you about the wisdom of God that I've just mentioned.

Jesus is our wisdom. That is a gift from the spirit. Jesus, the wisdom of Jesus to be doctrinal. Here it is to be doctrinal.

What I mean by this is to base your life on God's wisdom from above. It's to base your life on Christ and the wisdom of Christ that he brings to us.

So for you to be a doctrinal person, you to be a person of scripture, you are seeking to be married according to the truth. You're seeking to be in your job based on God's truth.

You're seeking to raise your kids biblically based on God's truth. This makes you a doctrinal person. Look, you are going to live by someone's doctrine. It might as well be the Lord's because because that's the one that counts.

[32 : 21] Amen. But you are going to live by somebody's wisdom. It's either going to be worldly or it's going to be biblical. Be doctrinal. Be people of the word. This is what we're called to.

Jesus is coming again. So as you wait for his return now, point number three, be discerning. Be discerning. I'm back in second Peter.

Let me define this for you. Discernment is the understanding and appreciation of the real knowledge. That is Peter called it true knowledge throughout this letter.

The true knowledge of God's revelation that produces holy living. Where do we go to have God revealed to us in the word? So we're talking about the Bible.

Discernment is the understanding and appreciation of the true knowledge of God's revelation in scripture that produces holy living.

[33 : 24] And then to be discerning is to understand how to use God's wisdom to truthfully assess the issues of life and apply God's clear directives for holy and godly living.

So this is more than you just getting the answers to the problems or the questions that you have about life. God, what's your willingness and that and the other? That's all fine.

But please understand that primarily what we're concerned with as we apply discernment to life is we want to understand God's holy directives for godly living.

We want to be godly people. We want to live in the will of the Lord, making the most of the time, knowing that the days are evil. So let me couch this for you in this way.

If someone you dearly love was in danger of making some life, life altering, life changing decisions based on lies that other people had told them. Can I be safe here if I were to say that if that was someone you really cared about, you would do everything you could to intervene in some way and expose the lies and tell them the truth.

[34 : 43] Do you understand parents are doing this all the time? Right. And as they get older and older, the stakes get higher and higher, don't they? Because now they're making up their minds about stuff and they're getting hit with stuff and it's not just concrete thinking anymore. It's abstract thinking.

And so they're out there trying to figure out how to connect the dots and they're in a vulnerable position. So parents are doing this all the time. I want to believe that if you knew that someone you love was about to make some life changing decisions for the worse based on lies that people were telling them, you try to expose them and tell them the truth.

It might it might go something like this. You might say, sweetheart, look, look, I know I know what you've been told. I understand. And I know that it might sound to you right now.

It might sound promising, but it's not. It's not what you've been told has been twisted to sound better than it is. So please, hon, please trust the truth of what I've told you, please trust the truth of what those of us who love you and want the best for you have tried to tell you and are telling you stand on that truth and don't let yourself be carried away and ruined by these false promises and these lies.

They're going to take you to a dark, bad place when you do something like that. When you say something to that effect and try to plead with them, did you did you hear me say one single time stand on me?

[36 : 19] I said, please trust what I'm telling you. Trust me that I'm telling you the truth. Stand on the truth. Look, examine it. Go to the truth. That's what you want to do, right? That's what you would do.

That's the heart and spirit that we're seeing in Peter by what he's writing and how he's expressing it. Peter's pastoral heart is just pulsing with concern for these believers.

He knows the wolves are circling. Now, please, please notice with me then, friends, the parallels and how Peter expresses his heart in verse 14 and in verse 17.

All right, I'm going to show you because we see we see something of Peter's thought process in his concern that you and I grasp how the truth should control our lives.

We kind of open this up and we see Peter's thinking. We see how concerned he is that you and I hold on to and own how the truth of God should control our lives.

[37 : 30] In verse 14, it looks like this. Therefore, beloved or cherished ones, since you look for these things, that's the key, a new heaven and a new earth, be diligent.

That was my first point. Now you drop down to verse 17. You, therefore, cherished ones, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard.

Since you look for these truthful things, knowing these truthful things beforehand, that's the pattern. That's the foundation.

It's what you're looking to. You see what I'm saying? It's it's what you're grounding yourself in. It's what you know. It's what you're allowing to influence you.

Since you're looking for these things and since you now know these things beforehand, be diligent, be on your guard. But what's all that based on?

[38 : 36] What you know. What you're looking to. You have advanced warning. You have advanced knowledge. You have insider information. And that's what you should be basing all of this on.

Be on your guard. Since you look for these truthful things and know this beforehand, because, you know, you know what you know to be God's truth.

Be diligent, doctrinal and discerning. So what is the danger paramount in Peter's mind? Here it is. Doctrinal error.

Leading them to fall from their own steadfastness. Look at verse 17. You, therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard.

So that purpose clause you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness.

[39 : 50] Peter doesn't want the scripture twisting of the mockers to carry away God's people into doctrinal error. So he calls them to be on their guard.

This is our responsibility. This is something, husbands, that you need to take super seriously, husbands and fathers, as you safeguard your family from doctrinal error.

On many occasions, I have had dads, husbands, some of them acquaintances, a couple of them friends in my ministry say to me.

In conversations about the church they're in and boy, you know, it's gotten tough. And we here's what he said this week. And here's what the preacher and here's what, you know, and this came from the and it's and it's and they know it's bad.

They know it's terrible. And then they they invariably they say this to me. But God hasn't told me to leave yet. You know where I'm going, don't you?

[40 : 52] I'm thinking, brother, now I don't I didn't say this. I'm going to be a little cheeky. This is Jeff and then I'll give you the no. Let me just give you the Lord. What we should say then is, brother, what is the scripture tell you?

What are you waiting on? This is your responsibility to have your family in a place where people are worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ in spirit and in truth.

If you're not getting the truth where you are, run. What are you waiting on? You are released, friend. Get your family under gospel preaching and teaching.

Here it comes. But do you have a youth program? This is where the gentleness of Jesus and the calm and the patience of the marathon in ministry comes into play, doesn't it?

More than one time I have had men in my life listen to me and do this. Thank God for those gentlemen who were patient with me.

[42 : 09] And walked with me. And wept with me. Please, please take into account what Peter is saying here.

About the poison of doctrinal error. He doesn't want these people to be carried away. So he says, be on your guard. Be on your guard is a call to discernment.

And spiritual vigilance. And that is our responsibility. So I've drawn the whole concept and main point of be discerning from this command.

Be on your guard. Here's the way that it looks in the Greek for those of you who follow this kind of thing. It's phulaseste.

Phulaseste. It's the verb form of phulasos. It simply means be on your guard.

[43 : 16] Be vigilant. Be careful. Keep watch. Keep an eye on. It reminds me of 1 Peter 5.8.

So I'm going to go there. 1 Peter 5.8. In his first letter, Peter had already said to these folks, Be of sober spirit.

Be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Now that's the reality.

We can try to be an ostrich and stick our head in the sand kind of thing and all that. But that's not going to change this reality. The devil is prowling around and he's looking for people to devour. He's looking for the stragglers.

Those prideful, independently minded people who want to stay on the periphery. Satan uses the men of 2 Peter 2.

[44 : 18] You'll remember. You remember. And their followers to distort the truth. To draw you away from devotion to Jesus Christ.

You remember that all through 2 Peter 2? The whole chapter was nothing but about false teachers and what they do. Peter is a faithful pastor.

He's a faithful shepherd. He isn't shy about confronting error. He isn't shy about calling out unprincipled men who arrogantly teach what they teach as truth.

And it's not truth. he's warned his readers beforehand about these lawless men that's the literal rendition of unprincipled men that the new american standard uses they're lawless men in chapter two he called them animals they're like beasts they're like ravenous beasts they are driven by their appetites the idea of lawless or unprincipled is rooted in what peter's already told us about them just from chapter three alone we'll just go there so i want you to follow this along look at this they follow after their own lusts in chapter three verse three they deliberately deny christ's coming verses four and five they are ungodly verse seven they are untaught and therefore they are unstable regarding the truth and so what do they do they twist they twist the truth to their own ends verse 16 and finally from our passage they are lawless peter had actually compared these men to the men of sodom in chapter two verses six and seven now guys we don't want any of us being compared to the men of sodom do we these men are driven by deceitful lusts deceitful lusts i had somebody ask me about this not too long ago in a conversation where we were kind of uh taking this apart a little bit and they and they asked me i don't understand why in the world would people like this want to be in the church why would why would people like this come to grace what's in it for them you remember my sermons about this i all of chapter two answered that question as i preached through that chapter and the bottom line is this who's sending them who's sending them who's prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour who they're emissaries aren't they remember i asked the

question well do they know that about themselves i would think most of them probably don't but it doesn't matter that doesn't change who sent them that doesn't change why they're here they come in and they say what they say and they do what they do and they act like they act because they have an agenda and that agenda is not your growth in christ's likeness it's to get from you it's to take from you and your family in heinous ways this is one of the reasons that you have shepherds and they better be on the job they better know what they're looking for and they better know how to look for it so these are bad guys from chapter two we know that they hide among us in church life their consciences are clouded by hypocrisy and peter says they never cease from sin or from enticing unstable souls they come in and they hover and they watch they evaluate they listen they move among us they laugh with us they joke with us maybe even cry with us but all the while they're picking up on the unstable and the unsteady and the vulnerable and they're looking for a moment they can step in and exploit and they're hard to sniff out

men we need to be vigilant so i don't want us everybody who walks through the doors they walk in we're doing this don't do that reg and i are not newbies at this so we we've done a few of these rodeos before and we know what we're listening for and what we're looking for you would be surprised probably to find out so i'm just going to let the cat out of the bag when we fellowship together and we do things together we watch and we listen we watch how you're reacting to people we listen to what people are saying to you we hover we do and there have been more than one occasion where we've watched interactions happen and gotten together and gotten together and went so far the track record is pretty good it's kind of sad to say isn't it that the flags turned out to be real people are funny the world is full of enticements to its thinking values priorities and lifestyles so peter knows that if we are not spiritually vigilant we will succumb to worldly ways and we will subject ourselves to sliding into even more compromise in our walk of faith with the lord jesus now let me say that again we're talking about sliding into compromise rarely does this happen in one big stroke the gentleman that i told you about that had been in ministry for many many many many years it didn't happen overnight it was little compromises along the way no matter what the excuse that's what we're talking about that's what peter's concerned about so look what peter has told them beforehand is what he's calling them to and it's designed to prevent the process and product of all false teaching the process involves you being carried away into error and the product is that you will fall from your own steadfastness now friends peter's use of carried away you therefore beloved knowing this beforehand be on your guard so that you are not carried away his use of carried away makes a striking point being carried away is all about who you allow to influence you who you listen to whose opinion is most important to you who do you want to impress isn't that something you get into certain circles with certain people and all of a sudden you become a little bit of a different person because it's become very important to you in that moment that these people think you're cool intelligent educated up on the times whatever if you experience this the temptation to this you don't want to sound like the odd man out you don't want to be the only person standing in the group that's kind of going yeah you don't want to be that person right you don't want to be that person this is this is the subtle slide of compromise because we don't want to be mocked we don't want to be ridiculed we don't want to be thought of as being shallow all right let me take you to a passage of scripture and show you that this is actually in the bible that strong spiritually sound people struggle with this it's in galatians

[53 : 04] it's chapter two i know i'm loading you up here at the end you're going to end with a full spiritual stomach i can tell you that galatians chapter two and let's look at the context here beginning in verse 11 paul is writing here to the christians in galatia but when cephas came that's peter when peter came to antioch paul says i opposed him to his face whoa why i had to confront him because he stood condemned because he was wrong what did he do well verse 12 prior to the coming of certain men from james peter used to eat with the gentiles but when these men came peter began to withdraw and hold himself aloof fearing the party of the circumcision so some highfalutin leaders came from jerusalem with james and peter wanted to impress them as a devout jew and so he started pulling away from the gentiles to impress these other people verse 13 the rest of the jews here's the bad part the rest of the jews joined peter in hypocrisy with the result that even barnabas was carried away by hypocrisy did you see that paul uses the same verb for carried away that peter is using obviously peter is not a false teacher i say it again peter is not a false teacher but the issue is the influence we allow ourselves to come under for good or for bad so commentator peter davids explained this scenario this way and i thought this would be helpful to you just to kind of capsulize it here being carried away is what happened to barnabas in galatians 2 13 where

despite being a colleague of paul he lost his bearings and joined peter and other jews in separating himself from gentiles in the celebration of the lord's supper which at that time was then a full meal so folks if you're not spiritually discerning the influence of false but flattering and fascinating teachers can carry you away into error so that you will fall from your own steadfastness this is very serious this is why i had to do a whole sermon on this and take some time with it your spiritual vigilance and perception will help guard your heart from these poisons to your faith now here's the question does falling from your steadfastness mean that you lose your salvation in other words and i put it up here so you could see the word that you would apostatize that you would apostatize or does it mean something else all right first of all true believers genuine believers cannot lose their salvation we believe and teach that at grace if you're in the faith you cannot be unfaithful you cannot lose your salvation but but professing quote unquote i'm making air quotes here believers professing believers can apostatize and it's only a matter of time before they do apostasy is what we see in second peter 2 17 through 22 if you'll go back there with me second peter 2

some of you might remember this from when i preached through this these are springs without water remember he's talking about the false teachers these are springs without water mists driven by a storm for whom the black darkness has been reserved for speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires by sensuality those who barely escape from the ones who live in error promising these people freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption for by what a man is overcome by this he is enslaved for if after after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the lord and savior jesus christ they are again entangled in them and are overcome the last state has become worse for them than the first for it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than having known it to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them it has happened to them according to the true proverb a dog returns to its own vomit and a sow after washing returns to wallowing in the mire you can see from this example from peter that we're talking about people who made a profession of faith but it never got into their heart these are people who were acting like christians but they weren't they had never come to a saving knowledge of jesus christ they had never been born again and truly converted how do we know that because they turned away they turned away they were never part of the faith in the first place in other words we have to come to those conclusions because the scripture teaches us that we cannot lose our salvation you didn't do anything to earn your salvation it was given to you as a gift of god's grace in his son well god gave you that gift what what does this mean now you have the power to undo it you have the power to undo what god did for you and the miracle of his grace shame on you you don't have that kind of power bust your bubble none of us do i don't and i'm glad because let me tell you something about jeff jackson if it were possible for jeff jackson to forfeit his salvation he'd do it because that's the kind of moron that he is the stupidity moronic stupid sin makes us stupid it's insane it's crazy the kinds of things that we choose as christians knowing that jesus christ is our life we go play in the mud thank god we have a patient kind merciful savior amen who is so ready to receive us as we confess and seek his forgiveness and look to him does falling from steadfastness mean you lose your salvation no i want you to see this very clearly so i'm going to give you a few scriptures i'm moving toward a close first john 2 19 they went out from us but they were not really of us for if they had been of us they would have remained with us but they went out so that it would be shown that they all are not of us there are people who make professions of faith that does not mean they're in the faith only time tells in first timothy four first timothy chapter four let me put that up there for you the reference but the spirit the holy spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron these are people this is another illustration of people who were not truly in the faith they made a profession they gave an outward evidence that they look like us and sound like us but the fact that they turned away the doctrines of demons showed that jesus never lived in their soul jesus never lived in their heart god keeps his true children from apostatizing look at this one but the lord is faithful and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one we have confidence in the lord concerning that you are doing and will continue to do what we command that's the truth that's doctrine may the lord direct your hearts into the love of god and into the steadfastness of christ who is our rock jesus and then this one look at this one now to him now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of his glory blameless with great joy god is going to make you stand in his presence with great joy

spotless that's a guarantee that's a promise put it in the bank if you're a genuine believer that's your future peter is a wonderful example of how the lord does this in our lives isn't he he caused peter to stand peter stumbled but he didn't fall away by the grace of the lord he wants to be faithful to teach these things jesus taught him and he wants to minister that truth with the same gentleness the same patience which jesus used to help peter stand again when he failed folks that's what we minister to each other we take our cue from jesus and the apostles don't we what did jesus tell peter as a result of making peter to stand again i'm belaboring this point a little bit because i want you to understand the truth of scripture here and stand on this doctrinal content what did jesus tell peter as a result of peter caught being caused to stand again what did he say look at this simon simon behold satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat but i have prayed for you that your faith may not fail and you when once you have turned again strengthen your brothers ah i love that jesus's word strengthen is from the same root word peter used for steadfastness jesus also taught peter and the other disciples to be on their guard to be discerning especially as it concerns issues of jesus coming again just to show you a quick very quickly another example of this mark the gospel of mark my goal is that you'll be full of scripture by the time you leave this place mark 13 21 through 23 and then if anyone says to you behold this is a this is me saying to you that jesus himself is teaching

that we're to be very discerning about people who are talking to us about end time stuff about jesus coming again all those matters behold here is the christ or behold he is there do not believe him for false christ and false prophets will arise and will show signs and wonders in order to lead astray if possible even the elect but take heed behold i have told you everything in advance and then over in verse 33 take heed keep on the alert do you see be discerning there take heed keep on the alert for you do not know when the appointed time will come it's like a man away on a journey who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge assigning to each one his task also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert therefore be on the alert for you you do not know when the master of the house is coming whether in the evening at midnight or when the rooster crows or in the morning in case he should come suddenly and find you asleep what i say to you i say to all be on the alert here it is folks this is the antidote to you and i slipping into compromise becoming increasingly apathetic about spiritual things thinking that other people who are more spiritual than you can do all the heavy lifting no no you need to listen to jesus don't you the threat to your walk with christ is real though you cannot lose your salvation you can be deceived drawn away and made to serve error man that's that's a terrifying thought to me and that's why verse 18 is the foundation of our walk and then i'm done look at this last point be devoted i spent all my time on that discerning thing so we'll do this one quickly be devoted in verse 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our lord and savior jesus christ to him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity amen this command this command to grow in christ caps the purpose of this letter in the bible peter reminds us of the main thing this is the pillar of peter's concern this is the pillar of peter's commands it's for us to be on our guard against the many many deceptive and alluring assaults on our spiritual allegiance to jesus so friends this verse is the point of you and i being here together this morning peter ends his final communication with his flock just as he began his letter to them he said this at the beginning of his letter grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of god and of jesus our lord that's how he started the letter that's how he ends it it's called an inclusio god here's a quote i wanted to share with you god grants grace so that believers can grow in the knowledge of himself spiritual growth in christ is proof of salvation in christ people people who don't have jesus living them they won't grow spiritually you understand there there's no such thing as stagnation in the spiritual life don't don't you that's not biblical terminology the bible sees your spiritual journey in one of two

ways you're either moving forward or you're going back you're either retreating into the mud pies or you're looking to the cross and moving forward that's your option there's no there's no neutral well i'm just going to cruise for a while don't be fooled there is no spiritual cruise control no such thing that's one of those compromise things that he tries to sneak in on you i'll just take a breather this is what i tell people all the time you can rest in heaven wear it out right now wear it out serve the lord give it everything you have whatever listen please friends whatever a local body of believers think they are and in whatever ways they go about being what they think they are if a church family misses the mark of this verse they miss and misuse the christian life god grants grace so that believers can grow in the knowledge of himself so here's the here's the question as we ended up how can my life in christ and my involvement in this church family help you grow in your life in christ

and in your involvement in this church family how can you and i strive together to grow up into him together that's ephesians 4 and i don't know how many others so this verse could be understood in this way grow in the grace and knowledge of our lord and savior jesus christ it could be understood in this way instead of letting down your guard and being carried away into error that will compromise your stable spiritual walk with the lord spiritually grow in the goodwill and in the biblical revelation of jesus as lord and savior don't and do this is growth in your relationship with jesus as your lord and savior so folks it's not just bible knowledge is it it's not just bible facts about jesus and his life god grows us in his gift of grace his saving favor and forgiveness so that we can grow to be more like jesus that's the point that will always be the point until he comes again it's about his people growing up into his likeness that's about making disciples so what do we do while we wait on jesus to come again we diligently we doctrinally we discerningly and we devotedly serve jesus we serve the truth we serve each other our lives will be full of unknowns won't they our lives will be full of twists and turns challenges trials beginnings ends god waits he loves you in the waiting until he brings you to your new beginning in heaven may you grow in the grace and knowledge of the lord and savior jesus christ to him be the glory both now into the day of eternity amen let's pray together father we have attempted this morning to fill our souls and our hearts to overflowing with the conclusion of this letter and just two verses where peter pours his heart out under the superintending influence of the holy spirit so we know that you wrote this through this man and you know that you desire for us to take this into our hearts and to be changed [73 : 16] to be transformed by the renewing of our minds that we would not be conformed to this world but that we would be given over in every way to living the main thing living for jesus christ so father in all ways i pray pastorally please father if we're going to miss anything today don't let us miss that loving jesus and turning to love each other in jesus is why you're leaving us here so help us to be faithful in that love help us to be faithful in our service to the truth and to each other that we would build treasure in heaven together and strive together in this great love with which you love us thank you for being our god and king and thank you for this wonderful message that we have seen in the letter of second peter in jesus name we pray amen