

Review

The apostle Peter has written this letter to Christians everywhere. The first chapter was a wonderful reminder of how much Jesus has done for us.

It was also a loving exhortation to diligently continue in the faith.

He informed us that much of his ministry was simply to remind us of the basic truths of Christianity.

He also told us to continue to search the Scriptures, rather than merely accepting someone else's eyewitness testimony.

Of course, the reason that we need to place our faith completely in the Word of God - and not on people's experience or teaching - is because there are many false teachers all around us. The entirety of chapter two was spent warning us about these apostates - those who have secretly introduced destructive heresies into the church. And we spent the previous three Sundays examining what Peter had to say about them, their teachings, and their motivation.

I am concerned that those who have recently visited or begun attending may be under the impression that we are faultfinders - focusing in only on the negative. After all, Peter has not pulled any punches in his description of the false teachers, and certainly neither have I. But now, as we begin our study of chapter three, we are reminded that Peter's hatred of false teaching is solely because of his love for Jesus and His church.

3:1-2 Beloved

Peter calls us "beloved." He truly loved Christians everywhere. Remember that Jesus told the disciples,

John 13:35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

And Paul told the Thessalonians,

1Th. 4:9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another

This is an intriguing statement. God is the one who has taught us

to love one another. When we are born again, He puts His love for the brethren in our hearts. That's why Peter told us in his first epistle,

1Pet. 1:22-23 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again...

If we are born again, we have a love for the brethren. If we don't love the brethren, then no amount of teaching is going to make it happen. Sure, we can be exhorted to love more fervently, but if we don't love the brethren, we most likely have not been born of God. The apostle John said,

1John 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

Peter loved us, and through Christ, we will naturally love one another. Let's be fervent in that love.

The Commandment

In love, Peter is writing to us by way of reminder, saying, "Remember the Word of God. Remember what the prophets wrote. Remember what Jesus said. Remember what the apostles taught."

Again, this is the key: the Word of God. He can't repeat it often enough, because we are so prone to add other things to the Christian faith.

Sure, there are those who will come against you, argue with you, and find fault in you because of your complete devotion to the Scriptures. They will try to humiliate you or debate you into giving in.

They will often focus in on the most extreme-sounding aspects of your faith...

3:3-4 Mocking The Promise Of His Coming

Mockers abound. The Greek word for "mocker" (emp-aheek-TACE) literally means "one who plays with you to make sport of you."

The Bible says Jesus is coming to rapture His church.

1Cor. 15:51-52 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

1Th. 4:17 ...we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

That sounds pretty far-fetched, doesn't it? The mockers jump on this: "Oh, so any day now, you're going to be miraculously snatched up into the clouds to be with Jesus?"

I have no problem telling them that it's no more ludicrous-sounding than the idea of:

- a God who is eternal and righteous,
- or the concept of sin keeping a person out of heaven,
- or the notion that the death of Jesus Christ will pay the price for that sin if someone simply believes in Him.

I don't have a problem believing any of this. I am an intelligent, rational, and logical human being. And God has proven the truth of His Word to me through the sure Word of prophecy.

- Every prophetic statement is eventually proven true,
- every scientific statement has eventually outlasted multiple re-printings of school textbooks.
- Every factual statement is eventually proven true through archaeology.

Seeing as how God has proven to be right all the time, my logical mind has no problem believing what He says.

- He has told us that He is righteous, and that we are sinners.
- He has told us the payment for sin will be death and eternal separation from Him in hell.
- He has told us that He sent His Son Jesus Christ to die upon a cross, paying the death penalty for our sin.
- He has told us that Jesus rose from the dead three days later.
- And He has told us...

Rom. 10:9 ...that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved

Let the mockers mock. Let them try to debate and humiliate. The fact is, God's Word tells us that one day soon, Jesus is coming to get us, and I am not ashamed to believe it.

3:5-10 First A Flood, Next A Fire

Back in the early days of mankind, God had come to a point of needing to wipe out most of the world's population because of their wickedness. He chose to do this with a flood of water, in the days of Noah.

In the future, the world will be completely destroyed - again because of mankind's wickedness. But that time, it will not be in water, but by fire.

Mankind is pretty wicked today. So why doesn't he just take out the good people, and burn up the bad ones now? Because,

2Pet. 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

God Wishes For Repentance

Repentance. This is a word that basically means "to make a U-turn in your mind." Has God been delaying the day of judgment for you? Waiting for you to change your mind about Him?

Maybe the idea of Jesus dying on a cross to pay for your sins has never been understandable until now. Or maybe it seemed foolish to you until today. Maybe today is the very first time that you've really believed that you can have eternal life just by faith in Jesus Christ. If that's true, then all of God's waiting has been worth it to Him. Will you make a commitment to Him today?