

Commentary on 2 Peter



By David Guzik

2 Peter 1: The Sure Christian Life

A. An Encouragement to Know God and What He Has Done For Us

1. (1) Introducing a letter from Peter, to believers.

a. **Simon Peter**: The Apostle called himself **Simon Peter**. Perhaps, since he wrote this letter later in life, he still didn't want to forget where he came from, and that sometimes he was still more like the old **Simon** than the new **Peter**.

i. We remember that **Simon** was his given name at birth; **Peter** was the special name given to him by Jesus, to call this man to "rock-like" thinking and behavior.

ii. Some have said that Peter didn't write this letter because the subject and style is somewhat different than 1 Peter. Yet the *purpose* of the two letters are quite different. 1 Peter was written to encourage Christians under the threat of violent persecution; 2 Peter was written to warn those same believers of the danger of false teachers and harmful influences.

iii. "Convinced that the **best antidote for heresy** is a **mature knowledge** of the truth, Peter exhorts his readers to have a proper appreciation for prophecy, to live holy and godly lives while awaiting Christ's coming and to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord." (Kirby)

b. **A bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ**: The order of these titles is important. Peter considers himself *first a bondservant*, and *then an apostle*. His standing as a **bondservant** was more important to him than his status as an **apostle**.

c. **To those who have obtained like precious faith**: Peter wrote to those who had the same salvation he had experienced, which he called "a **like precious faith**." This faith was **obtained**, and not by the efforts of man, but **by the righteousness of our God**.

i. "He tells us too, that faith is 'precious;' and is it not precious? For it deals with precious things, with precious promises, with precious blood, with a precious redemption, with all the preciousness of the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (Spurgeon)

ii. **Like precious faith** probably speaks to the fact that the Jews and Gentile enjoyed the same **faith**, and therefore the same benefits in Jesus. "God having given to *you* – believing *Gentiles*, the same faith and salvation which he had given to *us* – believing *Jews*." (Clarke)

d. **Our God and Savior Jesus Christ**: The grammar of the ancient Greek proves that Peter said that **Jesus Christ is our God and Savior**. "The expression *God and our Savior* is in a construction in the Greek text which demands that we translate, *our God and Savior, Jesus Christ*, the expression thus showing that Jesus Christ is the Christian's God." (Wuest)

i. "The grammar leaves little doubt that in these words Peter is calling Jesus Christ both God and Savior." (Blum) "It is an absolute proof that St. Peter calls Jesus Christ GOD, even in the properest sense of the word." (Clarke)

2. (2-4) A Greeting Expanded into an Understanding of the Value of the Knowledge of God.

a. **Grace and peace be multiplied to you**: Peter indicated that **grace and peace** – those two most precious gifts – are ours **in the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord**. As we know God we gain these essential foundations for living.

b. **His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness**: However, not only grace and peace – but **all things that pertain to life and godliness** are ours **through the knowledge of Him**. Knowing God is the key to **all things that pertain to life and godliness**.

i. These things come to us through **His divine power**. “Divine power! What stupendous issues are grasped in that term, divine power! It was this which digged the deep foundations of the earth and sea! Divine power, it is this which guides the marches of the stars of heaven! Divine power! It is this which holds up the pillars of the universe, and which one day shall shake them, and hurry all things back to their native nothingness.” (Spurgeon)

ii. We are willing to try almost anything except **the knowledge of Him**. We will trust in the schemes and plans of men instead of **the knowledge of Him**. We will try knowing ourselves instead of **the knowledge of Him**. We need to come to the same place the Apostle Paul did, when he said *that I may know Him* (Philippians 3:10).

iii. According to Blum, the ancient Greek word **knowledge** doesn't refer to a casual acquaintance. It means an exact, complete, and thorough knowledge.

c. **Through the knowledge of Him**: We come to **knowledge of Him** as we learn of Him through His Word, through prayer, and through the community of God's people. It is true that we need God alone, but God does not meet us only in our “aloneness” but also in the community of His people.

d. **Who called us**: This knowledge of God comes to those who are **called**. It is knowledge, but it is not mere intellectual understanding or intuition. It is the knowledge that comes by experience – the experience God's people have of God Himself.

e. **Who called us by glory and virtue**: It is Jesus' **glory and virtue** that motivated Him to call us, and it is His **glory and virtue** that draw us to Him.

f. **By which you have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises**: This explains the value of the **glory and virtue** of God that calls us. By these He gave us **exceedingly great and precious promises**. This means that the promises of God are based upon His **glory and virtue**, and therefore perfectly reliable because God would never compromise His **glory and virtue**.

i. Psalm 138:2 reminds us that God honors His Word even above His name. We never have to doubt any promise of God. Instead we should *let God be true but every man a liar* (Romans 3:4).

ii. For these reasons, God's promises are both **exceedingly great** (in the sense of being large and imposing), and they are **precious**, in the sense of being valuable. “Many things are great which are not precious, such as great rocks, which are of little value; on the other hand, many things are precious which are not great—such as diamonds and other jewels, which cannot be very great if they be very precious. But here we have promises which are so great, that they are not less than infinite, and so precious, that they are not less than divine.” (Spurgeon)

iii. “It was of considerable consequence to the comfort of the Gentiles that these promises were made to *them*, and that salvation was not exclusively of the Jews.” (Clarke)

g. **That through these you may be partakers of the divine nature**: This explains the value of these **great and precious promises**. Through these **promises**, we are **partakers of the divine nature**. Peter's idea is similar to

Paul's idea of our glorious status as adopted sons and daughters of God (Galatians 4:5-7).

h. **Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust:** God is above and beyond the **corruption** of this world. It should also be that way with those who are the **partakers of the divine nature**. The **corruption that is in the world** expresses itself **through lust** – the ungodly desires of this world.

3. (5-7) How to Live as a Partaker of the Nature.

a. **Giving all diligence:** We are *partakers of the divine nature*, but once we are made spiritual sons and daughters, growth in the Christian life doesn't just happen to us. We are supposed to give **all diligence** to our walk with the Lord.

b. **Add to your faith virtue:** We begin our walk with the Lord with **faith**, but faith progresses into **virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love** – love being the capstone of all God's work in us.

i. **Add to your faith:** Literally in the ancient Greek, "*Lead up hand in hand*: alluding, as most think, to the *chorus* in the Grecian dance, who danced with joined hands." Clarke)

ii. The scope of the list demonstrates that God wants us to have a well-rounded Christian life, complete in every fashion. We can't be content with an incomplete Christian life.

iii. Of the word **self-control**, the Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest says the Greeks used this word **self-control** to describe someone who was not ruled by the desire for sex.

c. **Giving all diligence:** These beautiful qualities are not things that the Lord simply pours into us as we passively receive. Instead, we are called to give **all diligence** to these things, working in partnership with God to **add** them.

4. (8-9) How to Use These Qualities to Measure our Christian Walk

a. **If these things are yours and abound:** If we have these things, and **abound** in these things, it is evident to everyone that we are not **barren nor unfruitful** in our **knowledge** of Jesus

i. The words **barren** and **unfruitful** characterize the lives of many Christians, who lack these qualities because they lack in their knowledge of God – knowing Him relationally in an increasingly fuller and deeper sense.

ii. **Abound:** Some may feel good that these qualities are seen in us from time to time. But Peter says they should **abound** in us.

b. **He who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness:** If we lack these things, it shows we have "eye trouble." We are **shortsighted**, unable to see God, only ourselves. This makes us virtually blind, showing we have **forgotten** that we were **cleansed from his old sins**.

i. "Such a man sees the things of time, and fails to discern those of eternity... he sees himself and his fellowmen, but not God. This nearsightedness is destructive of a true Christian experience, and therefore makes advance impossible." (Morgan)

ii. The *reason* for this condition is also stated; such a one **has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins**. "That is to say, he has failed to respond to all the enlargement of life and vision which came to him when he received the cleansing of his nature at the very beginning of his Christian life." (Morgan)

iii. Perhaps this one **has forgotten** how bad he was, and *how much he needed* this cleansing. Perhaps this one **has forgotten** how *great and complete* the cleansing is, making a once guilty sinner now as pure and as white as snow (Isaiah 1:18).

5. (10-11) Making Our Call and Election Sure

a. **Be even more diligent to make your call and election sure**: How can we be sure that God called us, and that we are His elect? By doing **these things** spoken of in 1 Peter 1:5-7 (*faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love*). As we see these things in our life, we know that our lives are becoming more like the nature of Jesus. It shows that we are being *conformed to the image of His Son* (Romans 8:29).

i. It is possible for an unsaved person to do many moral and religious duties. But the “**these things**” Peter wrote of are matters of the heart, and should be evident in anyone *born again*. Simply put, if we are called, if we are elect, then we are born again – and if we are born again, it shows in the way that we live.

ii. “It will be asked, however, why is *calling* here put before *election* seeing election is eternal, and calling takes place in time? I reply, because calling is first to us. The first thing which you and I can know is our calling: we cannot tell whether we are elect until we feel that we are called. We must, first of all, prove our calling, and then our election is sure most certainly.” (Spurgeon)

b. **For if you do these things you will never stumble**: In pursuing these things we keep from stumbling. Continual growth and progress in the Christian life is the sure way to keep from stumbling.

c. **Entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**: Peter here reminded his readers of the great reward of a **calling and election made sure**. They would enter heaven gloriously, not as *through fire* (1 Corinthians 3:15).

i. “There are two ways of entering a port. A ship may come in, waterlogged and crazy, just keep afloat by continual working at the pumps; or it may enter with every sail set, her pennon floating at the mast-head. The latter is what the apostle desires for himself and those who he addresses. He desired that an entrance abundant should be ministered unto them.” (Meyer)

ii. F.B. Meyer also wrote that the idea of an “abundant entrance” was really a *choral entrance*. The idea was of a Roman conqueror coming into his city, welcomed by singers and musicians who would join him in a glorious, happy procession into the city.

iii. “Will your entrance into heaven be like that? Will you enter it, save so as by fire, or to receive a reward? Will you come unrecognized and unknown, or be welcomed by scores and hundreds to whom you have been the means of blessing, and who will wait you?” (Meyer)

iv. **Will be supplied**: “Just one thought more. It is said that the entrance is to be ‘ministered to us.’ That gives me a sweet hit that, I find, is dwelt upon by Doddridge. Christ will open the gates of heaven, but the heavenly train of virtues – the works which follow us – will go up with us and minister an entrance to us.” (Spurgeon)

B. The Need to be Reminded

1. (12) Peter Explains Why He Writes About Things They Have Heard Before – the Basics of Christian Living.

a. **For this reason**: Peter just wrote about the promise of *entrance* into *the everlasting kingdom* of God (2 Peter 1:11). Because coming to that kingdom is so important, it is helpful and necessary for Peter **to remind you always** of the basics of the Christian life.

b. **I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know**: Even though his readers did **know** the truth, in light of what was at stake – their eternal destiny – it is worth it to go over these things again and again.

- i. A sports team going for the championship will practice the same fundamentals over and over again. They do this, even though they know the techniques, because they know what is at stake.
- ii. For this reason, Christians should never get tired of hearing the basics of the Christian life. We should rejoice every time Jesus Christ and His gospel and plan for our lives is preached.
- c. **Established in the present truth:** **Established** is the same word translated *strengthen* in Luke 22:32, when Jesus told Peter “*when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.*” Here, Peter fulfilled that command of Jesus. He would establish and strengthen us by reminding us of the basics of the Christian life.

2. (13-14) The Urgency in Peter’s Heart

- a. **I think it is right:** Because of what is at stake, Peter knew it was **right** to remind people constantly, especially because he knew that the days of his earthly life were soon coming to an end.
- b. **Shortly I must put off my tent:** Peter considered his body no more than a **tent**. A **tent** is a temporary place to live. Tents should be taken care of, but you wouldn’t invest large resources into fixing up a tent. You save your real resources for a more permanent place to live. Our more permanent place to live is heaven, and we should invest more in heaven than in our **tent**.
 - i. How did Peter know that **shortly I must put off my tent**? Perhaps it was because Peter was simply getting old. Perhaps it was because the flames of persecution were getting hotter around him. Church history tells us that Peter *did* die a martyr, **just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed** him.
 - ii. This shows that Peter believed that the prophetic words of Jesus were to be fulfilled literally. Jesus **showed** Peter that he would die a martyr, and he believed it – even if he might have *wished* it were only symbolic.

3. (15) Peter Prepares for the Future.

- a. **I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder:** Peter put this reminder in a letter, so that we could have a constant reminder even after his departure.
- b. **After my decease:** Peter seemed aware of the significance of the passing of the apostles, and the need to preserve the authoritative teaching of the apostles and prophets. This, the written teaching of the apostles and their associates, is the foundation of the church preserved by God for all generations.

C. The Sureness of Apostolic Testimony

1. (16-18) The Evidence of the Transfiguration

- a. **We did not follow cunningly devised fables:** Peter solemnly declared that the testimony of the apostles – *testimony they endured torture and gave their lives for* – was not based on clever fables or even half truths, but on eyewitness testimony; that they **were eyewitnesses of His majesty**.
 - i. **Fables** translates the ancient Greek word *mythos*. Some people think the gospel and the Biblical record are just ancient myths. They may admire their power as myths, but Peter rightly insists that his message was no myth – it was history, seen by **eyewitnesses**.
 - ii. We can reliably reconstruct historical events from the testimony of **eyewitnesses**, who must be checked to see if they are telling the truth. The apostles and writers of the New Testament have been checked for centuries and have been found truthful.
- b. **Eyewitness of His majesty:** When did Peter eyewitness the **majesty** of Jesus? There were many occasions, but one probably stuck out in his mind: the transfiguration of Jesus, recorded in Matthew 17:1-8, Mark 9:1-9, and Luke 9:28-36. We know this because Peter quotes here what God the Father said to Jesus at the Transfiguration: “**This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.**”

- i. At the transfiguration, Jesus was *transformed* in glory before the apostles, not merely changed in outward appearance. The effect was extremely striking; Jesus became so bright in appearance that it was hard to look at Jesus. He shined *like the sun* (Matthew 17:2).
 - ii. One may see that this shining glory was not a *new* miracle, but a “pause” in an ongoing miracle. The real miracle was that Jesus, most of the time, could *keep from* displaying His glory.
- c. **This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased**: At the transfiguration, the Father spoke from heaven to declare His approval of and joy in God the Son. As Peter wrote this, we sense the words were still ringing in his ears, because at the transfiguration he made the mistake of making Jesus equal with Moses and Elijah, who appeared along with Him.
- i. Those words from heaven were important, because Jesus had just told His disciples that He would have to be crucified and His followers would also have to take up their cross to follow Him (Mark 8:31-38). His disciples needed this word of assurance to keep trusting in Jesus, and needed to hear that Jesus was still well pleasing to the Father, even though He said He would be crucified.
 - ii. The words from heaven also clearly put Jesus above the Law and the Prophets. Jesus was not merely another, or even a better law giver or prophet, He was and is the **beloved Son**.
 - iii. Essentially, the voice from heaven was a rebuke to Peter (Mark 9:7). Yet now, what was once a rebuke became a sweet memory.
 - iv. Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus because they represented those caught up to God (Jude 9 and 2 Kings 2:11). They represented the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah). Moses and Elijah also figure together in prophecy, with a strong connection to the witnesses of Revelation 11:3-13.
- d. **And we heard this voice which came from heaven**: It was awesome for Peter and the disciples to see the transfigured, glorified Jesus. It was awesome for them to hear **this voice... from heaven**. Yet the experience itself did not transform their lives. Only being born again by the Spirit of God did that, giving them boldness beyond measure. The transfiguration was awesome, but it was a passing experience until they were born again.

2. (19) The Evidence of Fulfilled Prophecy

- a. **And so we have the prophetic word confirmed**: Peter’s experience at the transfiguration was amazing. But even more sure than Peter’s personal experience was the testimony of God’s word about who Jesus is. The fulfillment of **the prophetic word confirmed** is a certain, reliable testimony of the truth of the Scriptures.
 - i. “Taken according to the common translation, it seems to say that *prophecy* is a surer evidence of Divine revelation than *miracles*; and so it has been understood.” (Clarke)
- b. **Which you do well to heed**: When we consider the prophetic testimony to Jesus, we **do well to heed** it. There are at least 332 distinct Old Testament predictions regarding the Messiah that Jesus fulfilled perfectly. The combination of this evidence together, from a simple statistical perspective, is absolutely overwhelming.
 - i. Professor Peter Stoner has calculated that the probability of any one man fulfilling eight of these prophecies is one in 100,000,000,000,000 (10 to the 17th power). That number of silver dollars would cover the state of Texas two feet deep. Stoner says that if you consider 48 of the prophecies, the odds become one in 10 to the 157th power.
- c. **As a light that shines in a dark place**: No wonder Peter could say that the prophetic word is **confirmed**, and that it is as a **light that shines in a dark place**, something we should cling to **until the day dawns** and Jesus returns.

3. (20-21) Principles for Prophetic Assurance.

a. **No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation**: Even in Peter's day, enemies of Jesus were twisting Old Testament prophecies, giving them personal and bizarre meanings so as to exclude Jesus from their fulfillment. But Peter says that prophecy is not of **any private interpretation**, but its meaning is evident and can be confirmed by others.

i. Though Peter here speaks of **prophecy of Scripture**, the same principle is true for the gift of prophecy today. There must be sober *confirmation* of any prophetic word, and that not through another prophetic word, but through the Scriptures. In the gift of prophecy, God never speaks to *only* one person, and always provides confirmation.

b. **Prophecy never came by the will of man**: It is wrong and invalid to twist prophecy to our own personal meaning, because prophecy does not come from man, but from God, though it comes through **holy men of God** – but only as they are **moved by the Holy Spirit**.

i. "Far from *inventing* the subject of their own predictions, the ancient prophets did not even *know* the meaning of what themselves wrote. They were *carried beyond themselves* by the influence of the *Divine Spirit*, and after ages were alone to discover the object of the prophecy; and the fulfillment was to be the absolute proof that the prediction was of God and that it was of no *private invention*." (Clarke)

c. **As they were moved by the Holy Spirit**: According to Green, the ancient Greek word translated "**moved**" has the sense of *carried along*, as a ship being carried along by the wind or the current (the same word is used of a ship in Acts 27:15, 17). It is as if the writers of Scripture "raised their sails" in cooperation with God and the Holy Spirit carried them along in the direction He wished.

II Peter 2: The Rise and Fall of False Teachers

A. Facts About False Teachers.

1. (1) The Presence and Work of False Teachers

a. **But there were also false prophets:** Even as there were *holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit* (2 Peter 1:21), so also there were **false prophets** – and **false teachers** today. Peter stated this as a fact and not as a possibility; and he said they were **among you**, not only on the outside of the church.

i. "There were not only holy men of God among the Jews, who prophesied by divine inspiration, but there were also false prophets, whose prophecies were from their own imagination, and perverted many." (Clarke)

b. **Who will secretly bring in destructive heresies:** False teachers work **secretly**. It isn't that their teaching is secret, but the deceptive nature of their teaching is hidden. No false teacher ever announces himself as a false teacher.

c. **Destructive heresies:** False teachers bring in **destructive heresies** that destroy by telling lies about Jesus Christ and His work for us and in us. By these **heresies** people are hurt and destroyed. Heresy isn't harmless.

d. **Even denying the Lord who bought them:** False teachers deny the **Lord who bought them**. In this, Peter says that at the very least, they *appear* to be saved, otherwise Peter would never say that the Lord **bought them**. At the same time, they are false, destructive teachers.

i. Even a person who has what appears to be a godly walk and relationship with Jesus Christ can still bring in destructive heresies. Often times, the worst damage is done by *good men* who teach lies. Their lies are accepted far more easily because of the good character of the man.

e. **Bring on themselves swift destruction:** False teachers are promised **swift destruction**, even though they aren't judged fast enough in the opinion of many.

2. (2) The Popularity of False Teachers

a. **Many will follow their destructive ways:** This reminds us that false teachers may be popular. Just because something "works" in attracting a crowd of followers, it doesn't mean that it is of God. We know that God's work will always bear fruit, but the devil's work can also increase.

i. The most distressing aspect of the work of false teachers is not that they are *among you* (2 Peter 2:1). False teachers always have been and always will be among Christians. The most distressing fact is that so many Christians **will follow their destructive ways**.

b. **Because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed:** When false teachers are at work and when crowds are following them, the **way of truth** is **blasphemed**. God's holy name and honor are disgraced.

3. (3) The strategy and destiny of false teachers.

a. **By covetousness:** False teachers use **covetousness** – both their own and in their followers. Many false teacher, both today and in previous times, present a gospel that has self-gratification at its heart. All this is presented **with deceptive words**, because false teaching never announces itself.

b. **Their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber:** Peter assured us that false teachers *will be* judged. Even though it seems they prosper, their judgment is not **idle**. God's wrath pours out on them even in allowing them to continue, thus heaping up more and more condemnation and hardness of heart in themselves.

B. God Knows How to Take Care of Both the Righteous and the Ungodly

1. (4-6) The Ungodly will be Judged.

a. **If God did not spare the angels who sinned**: God judged these wicked angels, setting them in **chains of darkness**. Apparently some fallen angels are in bondage while others are unbound and active in the earth as demons.

- i. The sin of angels can be thought of in two main ways: in the original rebellion of some angels against God, and in the sin of the "sons of God" described in Genesis 6:1-2.
- ii. It is clear that at some time, angelic beings had a period of choosing; of testing when their future destiny would be determined. "How long that probation was to last to them, and what was the particular *test* of their fidelity, we know not; nor indeed do we know what was their *sin*; nor *when* nor *how* they fell. Jude says *they kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation*, which seems to indicate that they got *discontented* with their lot, and aspired to higher honours, or perhaps to celestial domination." (Clarke)
- iii. It may be that the sin of Satan and his angels (Revelation 12:4, 12:7) was occasioned by the plan of God for mankind.
 - Man is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) and angels are not. Satan and his angels resented this plan to create a being that would be more closely connected to God than they were.
 - Though mankind is beneath the angels in dignity (Hebrews 2:6-7a, 2 Peter 2:11), it is the job of angels to serve mankind (Hebrews 1:14, 2:7-8, Psalm 91:11-12). Satan and his angels resented a plan that would command them to serve lesser beings.
 - Redeemed mankind will be lifted in honor and status above all angelic beings (1 Corinthians 6:3; 1 John 3:2). Satan and his angels resented a plan that would glorify these lower beings to places above them.
- iv. "It sprang from the admiration of their own gifts, it was confirmed by pride and ambition, it was perfected by envy, stirred by the decree of exalting man's nature above angels in and by Christ." (Trapp)
- v. At the same time, we can not conclusively say we know *why* the angels sinned because the Scriptures do not give us more than hints. "God has made known what is useful for us to know, that the devils were originally created to obey God, that they fell from grace through their own fault because they did not submit to God's rule; and therefore that the wickedness which cleaves to them was accidental and not organic to their nature, so that it cannot be attributed to God... Those who are dissatisfied with these evidences can have the theology of the Sorbonne which will teach them about angels till they have had more than enough and will thrust them down to the depths along with the devils." (Calvin)

b. **Cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness**: By not keeping their proper place, they are now kept in **chains of darkness**. Their sinful pursuit of freedom put them in bondage.

- i. Those who insist on freedom to do whatever they want are like these angels: so "free" that they are bound with **chains of darkness** (a powerful poetic description of their miserable bondage). True freedom comes from obedience.
- ii. **Cast them down to hell**: The ancient Greek word translated **hell** is literally *Tartarus*. In Greek mythology, Tartarus was the lowest hell, a place of punishment for rebellious gods. Peter borrowed this word to speak of the place of punishment for **the angels who sinned**.
- iii. Angels have a high office and a high service of God; yet it was still possible for them to fall. We should take ample warning from this. As well, we can understand that in some ways we can sin worse than these angels did. "I answer that the devil never yet rejected free grace and dying love; the devil never yet struggled against the Holy Spirit in his own conscience; the devil never yet refused the mercy of God. These supreme pinnacles of wickedness are only reached by you who are hearers of the gospel, and yet cast its precious message behind your backs." (Spurgeon)

c. **And did not spare the ancient world**: God judged **the ancient world**, the world before Noah's Flood, because *the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*. (Genesis 6:5)

d. **And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction**: God judged the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, making them an example of His judgment, *because the outcry against*

Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave. (Genesis 18:20)

e. **Making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly:** These three examples of judgment show us the important principle that Peter wants to highlight.

- God judged **the angels who sinned**, so *no one is too high to be judged*.
- God judged **the ancient world** before the flood, so *God doesn't grade on a curve*.
- God judged **Sodom and Gomorrah**, so *even the prosperous can be judged*.

i. Therefore, what makes the **ungodly** think they can escape God's judgment? Their coming is certain. As Jesus said in Luke 10:10-12, for those who reject the truth *it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom*.

2. (7-9) The Righteous will be Delivered

a. **And delivered righteous Lot:** Peter already told us how the Lord delivered Noah (2 Peter 2:5). Now, he shows us that the Lord **delivered righteous Lot**.

i. "The preservation and deliverance of Lot gave the apostle occasion to remark, that God knew as well to *save* as to *destroy*; and that his *goodness* led him as forcibly to save righteous Lot, as his *justice* did to destroy the rebellious in the instances already adduced." (Clarke)

b. **And delivered righteous Lot:** Lot was **righteous** in God's eyes, though perhaps it was hard for others to see his righteousness. Yet the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah **tormented his righteous soul from day to day**.

i. Lot's **soul** was **tormented**, but he failed to follow through with godly actions and separate himself and his family from the ungodliness of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Lord **delivered** Lot because of his **righteous** soul; yet Lot lost everything else because of his too-close association with those wicked cities.

c. **Then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations:** Even as the Lord delivered Lot, He knows how to deliver us from the **temptations** we face, and He knows how to **reserve the unjust** for the day of judgment. We can trust in God's deliverance of the godly because it is just as certain as His judgment of the ungodly.

i. **The Lord knows how:** We can take great confidence in this. Many times *we* do not know how, but **the Lord knows how**. This is a good principle for both life and doctrine. "For instance, sometimes we meet with perplexing doctrines; perhaps we endeavor to effect reconciliation between the predestination of God and the freedom of human action. It is better not to wade too far into those deep waters, lest we lose ourselves in an abyss. 'The Lord knoweth.'"

ii. The **unjust** have reservation made for them: they are reserved **for the day of judgment**. But believers have no such reservation. God will deliver us from the very day of judgment, from the very time of wrath that He pours out on the earth (Revelation 3:10).

iii. "According to the Revised Version, and I think that translation is correct, the punishment has begun already. The Lord knows how to go on even now punishing the ungodly." (Spurgeon)

iv. "Peter (if any man) might well say, 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver his;' for he had been strangely delivered, Acts 12." (Trapp) In Acts 12, God wonderfully delivered Peter from prison and He painfully delivered Herod to judgment. God knows how to do both.

C. A Description of the Ungodly Among Them

1. (10-11) They are fleshly and proud.

a. **And especially those who walk according to the flesh:** These ungodly ones are *especially* reserved for judgment. They live according to the flesh, not the spirit, and are marked by **uncleanness**.

b. **They are presumptuous, self-willed:** These ungodly ones are proud, despising authority. In their presumption they will even speak ill of spiritual powers (Satan and his demons) that the angels themselves do not speak evil of, but the angels rebuke them in the name of the Lord instead.

i. Much of what goes on under the name of spiritual warfare shows this kind of pride and presumption.

While we recognize our authority in Jesus, we see that it is only in Jesus that we have it – and we leave the **reviling accusations** to Him alone.

c. **Whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation**: Here Peter contrasted the behavior of **those who walk according to the flesh** with **angels**, that is, faithless angels. The faithful angels did not slander or exaggerate in what they said or how they represented the sins of others; these who walked according to the flesh did.

2. (12-13a) Their spiritual doom is sealed.

a. **Like natural brute beasts**: Since they function in the flesh, not the spirit, they are like animals. They are fit only for destruction (**made to be caught and destroyed**) and they are ignorant.

b. **And will receive the wages of unrighteousness**: The ungodly will be “paid” for their evil – and their fleshly lives will be paid the **wages of unrighteousness**.

i. “What these evil men, who were troubling Peter’s people, were doing, was to say that they loved and served Christ, while the things they taught and did were a complete denial of him.” (Barclay)

3. (13b-17) A list of the sins of the false teachers.

a. **Carousing in their own deceptions**: These ungodly false teachers are a dangerous and corrupting presence in the body of Christ, not only deceiving others but deceiving themselves also.

i. “The word here rendered riot (**carousing**), comes of a root that signifies to break, for there is nothing that doth so break and emasculate the minds of men as rioting and reveling; luxury draws out a man’s spirits, and dissolves him.” (Trapp)

b. **Having eyes full of adultery**: Their heart is set on the flesh, and their **eyes** on **adultery**, both spiritual and sexual. They prey on the unstable to join them in their ways (**enticing unstable souls**).

i. Literally, Peter wrote that *their eyes are full of an adulterous woman*. “They lust after every girl they see; they view every female as a potential adulteress.” (Green)

c. **They have a heart trained in covetous practices**: They are equipped, but not for ministry, only for selfish gain – they are truly **accursed**. We all train our hearts in something, either training them in covetousness and lust, or in godliness.

i. “The metaphor is taken from the *agonistae* in the Grecian games, who exercised themselves in those feats, such as *wrestling, boxing, running, etc.*, in which they proposed to contend in the public games. These persons had their hearts schooled in nefarious practices; they had *exercised themselves* until they were perfectly *expert* in all the arts of seduction, overreaching, and every kind of fraud.” (Clarke)

d. **Following the way of Balaam**: They are like Balaam, who was guilty of the greatest of sins – leading others into sin and that for the sake of his own gain. Balaam had to be restrained by a **dumb donkey** because he would not listen to God.

e. **These are wells without water**: These ungodly false teachers are empty – as useless as **wells without water** – and like clouds that bring only darkness, and no nourishing rain.

4. (18-19) The allure of the false teachers.

a. **They speak great swelling words of emptiness**: The message of the ungodly false teachers is empty of real spiritual content, though it is swollen big with words. Their allure is to the **lusts of the flesh** in their audience, just as the crowds who wanted bread from Jesus, but didn’t want Jesus Himself (John 6:25-27, 6:47-66).

b. **While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves**: They promise freedom, but freedom can never be found in the flesh, only in God’s Spirit. Freedom isn’t found in what Jesus can *give* us, but only in Jesus Himself. When we seek freedom in the wrong way, we become **slaves of corruption** (decay and death).

c. **By him also he is brought into bondage**: In being overcome by the flesh and the false teachers, they become slaves to both.

5. (20-22) The danger of falling away and following after false teachers.

a. **The latter end is worse for them than the beginning**: It is better for a person to have never known a thing about Jesus than to hear some truth, hold to it, and later reject it. Greater revelation has a greater accountability.

i. Their **end is worse... than the beginning** because they have returned to **the pollutions of the world**. "These [pollutions] are called *miasmata*, things that *infect*, *pollute*, and *defile*. The word was anciently used, and is in use at the present day, to express those noxious particles of effluvia proceeding from persons infected with contagious and dangerous diseases; or from dead and corrupt bodies, stagnant and putrid waters, marshes etc., by which the sound and healthy may be infected and destroyed." (Clarke)

ii. "St. Augustine has improved on this image: 'The whole world,' says he, 'is one great diseased man, lying extended from east to west, and from north to south; and to heal this great sick man, the almighty Physician descended from heaven.'" (Clarke)

b. **It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness**: Peter described a picture that certainly has the *appearance* of people losing their salvation.

- He speaks of those who **have escaped the pollutions of the world**.
- He speaks of those who did this **through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**.
- He speaks of those who had **known the way of righteousness**.

i. Christians warmly debate the issue of whether or not it is possible for a true Christian to ever lose their status as a true Christian and fall away to damnation. Perhaps the best way of understanding the issue is to say that it is certainly true that those who *appear* saved – those who fit the description of Peter here – can end up in a place where **it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness**.

ii. Regarding these, those with a Reformed perspective will say that they were actually *never* saved; those with an Arminian perspective will say that they were actually saved and *lost their salvation*. To divide along the lines of this debate – which focuses on things that are unknowable to outside observation – seems to fall into the category of being *obsessed with disputes and arguments over words*, as in 1 Timothy 6:4.

c. **A dog returns to his own vomit**: Their nature as **dogs** is displayed by the way they return to the **vomit** of the flesh and the world. They are like the *brute beasts* described in 2 Peter 2:12, more animal than godly because they live for the flesh.

i. "The dog which has got rid of the corruption inside it through vomiting it up cannot leave well enough alone; it goes sniffing around the vomit again." (Green)

II Peter 3: Living Like a Last Days Christian

A. The Certainty of the Last Days and God's Promise.

1. (1-2) Another reference to the importance of being reminded.

a. **I now write to you this second epistle**: Peter already wrote to them about the importance of being reminded (2 Peter 1:12-13). But here he wants to emphasize what they should know in light of the coming of Jesus and the prophecies surrounding His coming.

i. "The purest minds need stirring up at times. It would be a great pity to stir up impure minds. That would only be to do mischief; but pure minds may be stirred as much as you please, and the more the better." (Spurgeon)

b. **That you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before**: Peter knew the importance of *reminding* his readers of the Scriptural message, both received from the Old Testament (**spoken before**) and contemporary to his own day (**and of the commandment of us**).

i. Peter clearly believed that the **words** of Scripture were important; the **words** themselves, and not merely the *meaning* behind the words.

ii. "Peter believed in the inspiration of the very 'words' of Scripture; he was not one of those precious 'advanced thinkers' who would, if they could, tear the very soul out of the Book, and leave us nothing at all; but he wrote, 'That ye may be mindful of the words' – the very words – 'which were spoken before by the holy prophets.' 'Oh!' says one, 'but words do not signify; it is the inward sense that is really important.' Exactly so; that is just what the fool said about egg-shells. He said that they did not signify; it was only the inward life-germ of the chick within that was important; so he broke all the shells, and thereby destroyed the life... If the words could be taken from us, the sense itself would be gone." (Spurgeon)

c. **By the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior**: by placing the messengers of the new covenant on the same level as the messengers of the old covenant, Peter understood the authority of the New Testament, even as it was being formed.

i. Peter understood that Jesus gave His **apostles** the inspired authority to bring forth God's message to the new covenant community. He understood this from passages such as Matthew 16:19, where Jesus gave the apostles authority to *bind* and *loose*, much as the authoritative rabbis of their day.

ii. *Your apostles* does not merely mean 'your missionaries', the folk who evangelized you. When the New Testament writers mean merely 'church emissary' by *apostolos*, they say so, or the context makes it plain (Philippians 2:25). Peter is referring here to the 'apostles of Jesus Christ.' It is they and they alone who are put on a level with the Old Testament prophets." (Green)

iii. Significantly, Peter saw this authority invested in **the apostles**, not in him alone. He would think it strange for supposed papal authority to be credited to him.

2. (3-4) The Message of Scoffers

a. **Knowing this first**: Christians should not be surprised to find that there are those who scoff at the idea of Jesus coming again. Peter told us that the **scoffers will come**. This is the **first** think to know.

i. "Every time a blasphemer opens his mouth to deny the truth of revelation, he will help to confirm us in our conviction of the very truth which he denies. The Holy Ghost told us, by the pen of Peter, that it would be so; and now we see how truly he wrote." (Spurgeon)

b. **Will come in the last days**: In a sense, the **last days** began when Jesus ascended into heaven. Since that time, we haven't rushed towards the precipice of the consummation of all things; but we have run along side that edge – ready to go anytime at God's good pleasure.

- i. "With the advent of Jesus the last chapter of human history had opened, though it was not yet completed." (Green)
- c. **Walking according to their own lusts**: These words remind us that scoffers do not only have an intellectual problem with God and His Word. They also have a clear *moral* problem, wanting to reject the Lordship of Jesus Christ over their lives.
- d. **Where is the promise of His coming?** This is the message of scoffers. In the thinking of these scoffers, Christians have talked about Jesus coming for two thousand years and He still hasn't come back yet.
- e. **All things continue as they were from the beginning of creation**: The scoffers base their message on the idea that things have always been the way they are right now, and that God has not and will not do anything new in His plan for creation.
 - i. "The argument of the false teachers is essentially a naturalistic one – a kind of uniformitarianism that rules out divine intervention in history." (Blum)

3. (5-7) The Error of Scoffers

- a. **For this they willfully forget**: The scoffers presume upon the mercy and longsuffering of God, insisting that because they have never seen a widespread judgment of God, that there will never be one. But **they willfully forget** God's creation and the judgment God poured out on the earth in the days of Noah.
 - i. A literal belief in Creation, in Adam and Eve, and in Noah's Flood are essential for a true understanding of God's working both then and now. To deny these things undermines the very foundations of our faith. Sadly, today it is many Christians who **willfully forget** these things, thereby putting themselves in the place of scoffers.
- b. **That by the word of God the heavens were of old**: The Bible clearly teaches that the active agent in creation was God's **word**. He spoke and creation came into being.
- c. **The world that then existed perished, being flooded with water**: Peter's point is that things on this earth have not always continued the way they are now. The earth was different when God first created it and then it was different again after the flood. Therefore no one should scoff at God's promise that He will make it different once again, judging it not with water, but with fire. The same **word of God** that created all matter and judged the world in the flood will one day bring a judgment of fire upon the earth.
 - i. "The lesson taught by the flood was this is a moral universe, that sin will not forever go unpunished; and Jesus himself used the flood to point to this moral (Matthew 24:37-39). But these men chose to neglect it." (Green)

4. (8-10) Truths that Scoffers Deny but God's People Cling To

- a. **That with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day**: What seems like forever for us is but a short time for God, just as an hour may seem to be an eternity for a child but a moment for an adult.
 - i. Peter quoted this idea from Psalm 90:4: *For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.* "All time is as nothing before him, because in the *presence* as in the *nature* of God all is *eternity*; therefore nothing is *long*, nothing *short*, before him; no *lapse* of ages impairs his purposes." (Clarke)
 - ii. "All things are equally near and present to his view; the distance of a thousand years before the occurrence of an event, is no more to him than would be the interval of a day. With God, indeed, there is neither past, present, nor future. He takes for his name the 'I AM.' ... "He is the I AM; I AM in the present; I AM in the past and I AM in the future. Just as we say of God that he is everywhere, so we may say of him that he is always; he is everywhere in space; he is everywhere in time." (Spurgeon)
 - iii. Peter did not give some prophetic formula, saying that a prophetic day somehow equals a thousand years. He instead communicated a general principle regarding how we see time and how God sees time. When people use this verse as a rigid prophetic "key" it opens the door for great error.

- iv. "God sees time with a *perspective* we lack; even the delay of a thousand years may well seem like a day against the back-cloth of eternity. Furthermore, God sees time with an *intensity* we lack; one day with the Lord is like a thousand years." Green)
- b. **The Lord is not slack concerning His promise:** The truth is that God *will* keep His promise, and without delay according to His timing. Any perceived delay from our perspective is due to the **longsuffering** of God, who allows man as much time as possible to repent.
 - i. Many of those who are Christians today are happy that Jesus didn't return ten years, or five years, or two years, or one year, or even two months ago. There is a compassionate purpose in God's timing.
- c. **Not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance:** Peter here revealed some of God's glorious heart. The reason why Jesus' return isn't sooner is so that **all should come to repentance**, because God is **not willing that any should perish**.
 - i. We understand that God is **not willing that any should perish** not in the sense of a divine decree, as if God has *declared* that no sinners will perish. Rather, Peter's statement reflects God's heart of love for the world (John 3:16), and His compassionate sorrow even in the righteous judgment of the wicked.
 - ii. It is the same thought as expressed in Ezekiel 33:11: *As I live, says the Lord GOD his way and live.*
 - iii. "So wonderful is his love towards mankind, that he would have them all to be saved, and is of his own self prepared to bestow salvation on the lost." (Calvin)
 - iv. "As God is *not willing that any should perish*, and as he is *willing that all should come to repentance*, consequently he has never devised nor decreed the damnation of any man, nor has he rendered it impossible for any soul to be saved." (Clarke)
- d. **But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night:** Though the Lord's longsuffering love to the lost makes it seem that perhaps He delays His coming, the truth is that He will indeed come. And when Jesus does return, He will come at a time that will surprise many (**as a thief in the night**). The ultimate result of His coming will be a total transformation of this present world (**in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat**).
 - i. God *could* destroy the earth again as He did in the days of the flood. "There is still *water* enough to drown the earth, and there is *iniquity* enough to induce God to destroy it and its inhabitants." (Clarke) Yet God has promised to deal with this world with *fire*, not *flooding*.

B. Living in Light of the Last Days and God's Promise

1. (11-13) Holy and godly living in anticipation of a new created order.

- a. **Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be:** In light of the fact that this world order and the things associated with it will be dissolved, we should live our lives seeking first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness – that is, having holy conduct and godliness.
 - i. We tend to think that the world is more enduring and will last longer than *people*. This is not true, and Peter reminds us of it. *People* will live into eternity, longer than even the earth.
 - ii. **Will be dissolved:** "They will all be *separated*, all *decomposed*; but none of them *destroyed*." (Clarke) "The solar system and the great galaxies, even space-time relationships, will be abolished... All elements which make up the physical world will be dissolved by heat and utterly melt away. It is a picture which in an astonishing degree corresponds to what might actually happen according to modern theories of the physical universe." (Bo Reicke, cited in Green)
 - iii. "This world, so far as we know, will not cease to be; it will pass through the purifying flame, and then it may be the soft and gentle breath of Almighty love will blow upon it and cool it rapidly, and the divine hand will shape it as it cools into a paradise more fair." (Spurgeon)
 - iv. **What manner of persons ought you to be:** "The king is coming; he is coming to his throne, and to his judgment. Now a man does not go up to a king's door, and there talk treason; and men do not sit in a king's

audience-chamber when they expect him every moment to enter, and there speak ill of him. The King is on his way, and almost here; you are at his door; he is at yours. What manner of people ought ye to be? How can ye sin against One who is so close at hand?" (Spurgeon)

b. **Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God:** Peter says there is a sense in which we can *hasten* the Lord's coming. It's remarkable to think that we can actually *do* things that will "help" Jesus return sooner. In the immediate context, Peter says that we hasten the Lord's coming by our **holy conduct and godliness**.

i. We can also hasten the Lord's coming through *evangelism*. Paul said that God's prophetic focus on Israel will resume when the *fullness of the Gentiles has come in* (Romans 11:25).

ii. We can also hasten the Lord's coming through *prayer*. Even as Daniel asked for a speedy fulfillment of prophecy regarding captive Israel (Daniel 9), we can also pray "*Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*" (Revelation 22:20).

c. **Because of which the heavens will be dissolved:** Peter tells us that the very elements of this world order **will be dissolved**. God will genuinely make a **new heavens and a new earth**, even as Isaiah promised: *For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind* (Isaiah 65:17).

d. **A new earth in which righteousness dwells:** The most glorious characteristic of this new heaven and new earth is that it is a place **in which righteousness dwells**. In God's plan of the ages, this happens after the millennial earth ruled by Jesus Christ. It is the re-creation of this world order as described in Revelation 21:1: *Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.*

2. (14-15a) Keep Diligent and do not Despise the Longsuffering of God.

a. **Looking forward to these things, be diligent:** If our hearts are really set on the glory of the new heaven and new earth, we will endeavor to walk godly in regard to our brothers and sisters (**in peace**) and in regard to God (**without spot and blameless**).

b. **The longsuffering of our Lord is salvation:** It is easy for Christians to sometimes resent the **longsuffering of God**: after all, it in some sense delays His coming. Yet, **the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation** for others, and it is salvation for us.

i. "We are puzzled at the longsuffering which causes so weary a delay. One of the reasons is that we have not much longsuffering ourselves. We think that we do well to be angry with the rebellious, and so we prove ourselves to be more like Jonah than Jesus. A few have learned to be patient and pitiful to the ungodly, but many more are of the mind of James and John, who would have called fire from heaven upon those who rejected the Savior. We are in such a hurry." (Spurgeon)

3. (15b-16) A Note Regarding the Letters of the Apostle Paul.

a. **As also our beloved brother Paul:** It is fashionable for some critics to say that the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul aren't in agreement with Jesus. Yet here Peter affirmed Paul's teaching in the warmest terms. He called Paul **beloved**, and he said that Paul wrote with **wisdom**.

i. This praise from Peter is even more wonderful when we remember that at one time Paul publicly rebuked Peter for public compromise (Galatians 2:11-21).

b. **In which are some things hard to understand:** Though Peter praised Paul's ministry, he admitted that some things in Paul's writings were **hard to understand**, and those who were **untaught and unstable** could use some of the difficulties to their own ends, twisting Scripture.

c. **Twist... the Scriptures:** Peter reminds us that the Scriptures *can be* twisted. Just because someone quotes the Bible doesn't mean that they teach Biblical truth. It's possible that they **twist... the Scriptures**. That is why we should be like the Bereans, who *searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so* (Acts 17:11).

i. "It is worthy of remark that Paul's epistles are ranked among the *Scriptures*, a term applied to those

writings which are divinely inspired, and to those only." (Clarke)

ii. "I may just add that the verb [twist], which the apostle uses here, signifies to *distort*, to *put to the rack*, to *torture*, to *overstretch*, and *dislocate the limbs*; and hence the persons here intended are those who proceed according to no fair plan of interpretation, but *force unnatural* and *sophistical meanings* on the word of God." (Clarke)

iii. **To their own destruction:** "Peter is very firm. The action of the false teachers in twisting Paul to justify their own libertinism and rejection of the parousia is so serious as to disqualify them from salvation." (Green)

4. (17-18) Conclusion.

a. **Since you know this beforehand:** We, who know of the Day of the Lord and await it with patient expectation, must persevere lest we **fall from your own steadfastness**. We must take care to keep abiding in Jesus.

i. "In order that they might know how to stand, and to be preserved from falling, he gave them this direction: 'grow in grace;' for the way to stand is to grow; the way to be steadfast is to go forward. There is no standing except by progression." (Spurgeon)

b. **But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ:** We prevent a **fall from your own steadfastness** by a continual growth in **grace and knowledge of Jesus**.

i. **Grace** is not merely the way God draws us to Him in the beginning. It is also the way we grow and stay in our **steadfastness**. We can never grow apart from the **grace and knowledge of our Lord**, and we never grow out of God's grace.

ii. "But you will remark that our text does not say anything about grace growing; it does not say that grace grows. It tells us to 'grow in grace.' There is a vast difference between grace growing and our growing in grace. God's grace never increases; it is always infinite, so it cannot be more; it is always everlasting; it is always bottomless; it is always shoreless. It cannot be more; and, in the nature of God, it could not be less. The text tells us to 'grow in grace.' We are in the sea of God's grace; we cannot be in a deeper sea, but let us grow now we are in it." (Spurgeon)

iii. We must also grow in our **knowledge** of Jesus Christ. This means knowing more *about* Jesus, but more importantly, *knowing Jesus* in a personal relationship.

c. **To Him be the glory:** When we are this ready and this steadfast in the **grace and knowledge of our Lord**, it gives God glory.

i. Spurgeon noted that this second letter of Peter ends on "two trumpet blasts." One is from heaven to earth: **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**. The other is from earth to heaven: **To Him be the glory both now and forever**.

ii. **Amen:** This final word is not included in all ancient manuscripts of 2 Peter, yet it is appropriate for a letter affirming the truth in the face of the danger of false prophets and scoffers. We can say there are four meanings to "Amen":

- It expresses the *desire of the heart*.
- It expresses the *affirmation of our faith*.
- It expresses the *joy of the heart*.
- It expresses the *declaration of resolution*.

iii. Under the law, **Amen** was only said at the declaration of the *curses* (Deuteronomy 27:14-26). Under the New Covenant, we say "Amen" at the announcement of a great blessing and praise to God.

Adam Clark added this insightful postscript to Second Peter:

"We have now passed over all the canonical writings of Peter that are extant; and it is worthy of remark that, in no place of the two epistles already examined, nor in any of this apostle's sayings in any other parts of the sacred writings, do we find any of the *peculiar* tenets of the Romish Church: not one word of *his* or the *pope's supremacy*; not one word of those of affect to be his *successors*; nothing of the *infallibility* claimed by those pretended successors; nothing of *purgatory*, *penances*, *pilgrimages*, *auricular confession*, *power of the keys*, *indulgences*, *extreme unction*, *masses*, and *prayers for the dead*; and not one word on the most essential doctrine of the Romish Church, *transubstantiation*." (Clarke)

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Jude: Contending for the Faith

A. The Danger that Prompted Jude to Write this Letter

1. (1) The author and the readers.

a. **Jude**: The name is literally "Judas." But to avoid connection with Judas Iscariot, the infamous man who betrayed Jesus, most English translators have used the name "**Jude**".

i. There are six people named "Judas" mentioned in the New Testament, but the best evidence identifies this as the one mentioned in Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3: **Jude**, the half-brother of Jesus.

ii. **Jude**, like the other half-brothers of Jesus (including James), didn't believe in Jesus as the Messiah until after the resurrection of Jesus (John 7:5 and Acts 1:14).

b. **A bondservant of Jesus Christ**: Jude was a *blood relative* of Jesus, but he considered himself only as a **bondservant of Jesus Christ**. The fact that he wanted himself to be known this way instead of introducing himself as "Jude, the half-brother of Jesus" tells us something of the humility of Jude and the relative unimportance of being connected to Jesus by human relationships.

i. Jesus spoke of this relative unimportance in passage such as Mark 3:31-35 and Luke 11:27-28.

ii. Without a doubt, Jude valued the fact that Jesus was his half-brother and that he grew up in the same household as Jesus. But even more valuable to him was his *new* relationship with Jesus. To Jude, the blood of the cross that saved him was more important than the family blood in his veins that related him to Jesus. Jude could say with Paul, "*Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.*" (2 Corinthians 5:16)

c. **And brother of James**: James was an important leader of the church in Jerusalem and the author of the New Testament letter that bears his name. Both James and Jude were half-brothers of Jesus.

d. **To those who are called**: Jude wrote to Christians. This is not an evangelistic tract and it deals with things that believers need to hear, but often don't want to.

i. Jude identified his readers as Christians in three specific ways:

- They were **called**. A person is a Christian because God has **called** them. The important thing is to *answer* the call when it comes, just as we answer the telephone when it is ringing.

- They were **sanctified by God the Father**. This means that they were *set apart* – set apart from the world and set apart unto God.

- They were **preserved** in Jesus. Jesus Christ is our guardian and our protector.

2. (2) Jude gives a warm and typical greeting.

a. **Mercy, peace, and love**: This is not the same greeting as found in most of Paul's letters (which usually begin with some variation of "Grace and peace unto you"). Yet it is substantially the same.

b. **Be multiplied to you**: In the mind and heart of Jude, it wasn't enough to have **mercy, peace, and love** *added* to the life of the Christian. He looked for *multiplication* instead of simple *addition*.

3. (3) The call to defend the faith.

a. **I was very diligent to write to you**: Jude's initial desire was to write about our **common salvation**. But something happened – Jude **found it necessary to write** a different letter. We might say that this was the letter that didn't *want* to be written.

i. The letter of Jude is essentially a sermon. In it, Jude preached against the dangerous *practices* and *doctrines* that put the gospel of Jesus Christ in peril. These were serious issues and Jude dealt with them seriously.

- ii. We should be happy that Jude was sensitive to the Holy Spirit here. What might have only been a letter from a Christian leader to a particular church instead became a precious instrument inspired by the Holy Spirit and valuable as a warning in these last days.
- b. **Concerning our common salvation:** Our salvation isn't **common** in the sense that it is cheap or that everyone has it. It is **common** in the sense that we are saved in **common**, in community. God doesn't have one way for the rich and another way for the poor, or one way for the good and another way for the bad. We all come to God in the same way. If it isn't a **common salvation**, it isn't *God's* salvation – and it isn't **salvation** at all.
- i. An individual Christian may not know it, understand it, or benefit by it, but to be a Christian is to be a part of community. To be a Christian means you stand shoulder to shoulder with millions of Christians who have gone before. We stand with strong Christians and weak Christians; brave Christians and cowardly Christians; old Christians and young Christians. We are part of an invisible, mighty army that spans back through the generations.
- ii. "Upon other matters there are distinctions among believers, but yet there is a common salvation enjoyed by the Arminian as well as by the Calvinist, possessed by the Presbyterian as well as by the Episcopalian, prized by the Quaker as well as by the Baptist. Those who are in Christ are more near of kin than they know of, and their intense unity in deep essential truth is a greater force than most of them imagine: only give it scope and it will work wonders." (Spurgeon)
- iii. In the 1980s a survey poll found that 70% of Americans who go to church say that you can be a *good* Christian without going to church. This doesn't match with Jude's idea of a **common salvation**.
- c. **Exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith:** This was the great need that Jude interrupted his intended letter to address. The ancient Greek word translated "**contend**" comes from the athletic world – from the wrestling mat. It is a *strengthened* form of the word meaning "to agonize." Therefore "**contend**" speaks of hard and diligent work.
- i. The verb translated **contend earnestly** is in the *present infinitive*, showing that the Christian struggle is continuous.
- ii. We **contend earnestly for the faith** because it is valuable. If you walk into an art gallery and there are no guards or no sort of security system, you must draw one conclusion: there is nothing very valuable in that art gallery. Valuables are protected; worthless things are not.
- d. **Exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith:** If we emphasize the word **you**, we see that this was something that Jude wanted each individual Christian to do. There are many ways that every Christian can **contend earnestly for the faith**.
- i. We contend for the faith in a *positive* sense when we give an unflinching witness, distribute tracts, make possible the training of faithful ambassadors for Jesus, or when we strengthen the hands of faithful pastors who honor the Word of God in their pulpits. These are a few among many ways that we can **contend earnestly for the faith** in a *positive* sense.
- ii. We contend for the faith in a *negative* way when we withhold support and encouragement from those who compromise the faith, when we speak out against the preaching of another gospel, or speak out against a manner of living that contradicts the message of the gospel.
- iii. We contend for the faith in a *practical* sense when we live uncompromising Christian lives and give credit to the Lord who changed us.
- iv. Obviously, faithful missionaries and evangelists **contend earnestly for the faith**. But do does the Sunday School teacher or home group leaders who is faithful to the Scriptures. People like this contend for the faith just as much as a front-line missionary does, and each one of us should contend for the gospel wherever God puts us.
- e. **Contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints:** Here, Jude tells us what we are contending *for*. There is a lot of earnest contention in the world but usually not for the right things. **The faith once for all delivered to the saints** is something *worth* contending for.

i. "The faith" doesn't mean our own personal belief, or **faith** in the sense of our trust in God. The phrase **the faith** means "The essential truths of the gospel that all true Christians hold in common." **The faith** is used in this sense repeatedly in the New Testament (Acts 6:7, 13:8, 14:22, 16:5, 24:24; Romans 1:5 and 16:26; Colossians 2:7, and 1 Timothy 1:2 are just some of the examples). We must **contend earnestly** for the *truth*. "The *faith* is the body of truth that very early in the church's history took on a definite form (cf. Acts 2:42; Romans 6:17; Galatians 1:23)." (Blum)

ii. **Once** means that the **faith** was **delivered** one time, and doesn't need to be **delivered** again. Of course, we *distribute* this truth again and again. But it was delivered by God to the world through the apostles and prophets **once** (Ephesians 2:2). God may speak today, but *never* in the authoritative way that He spoke through the first apostles and prophets as recorded in the New Testament. "There is no other gospel, there will be none. Its content will be more fully understood, its implications will be developed, its predictions will be fulfilled; but it will never be supplemented or succeeded or supplanted." (Erdman)

iii. **For all** means that this **faith** is for *everybody*. We don't have the option to simply make up our own faith and still be true to God. This faith is for **all**, but today, it isn't popular to really believe in **the faith once for all delivered to the saints**. Instead, most people want to believe in **the faith** they make up as they go along and decide is right for them. More people believe in "the faith that is in my heart" than **the faith once for all delivered to the saints**.

iv. In the book *Habits of the Heart*, Robert Bellah and his colleagues wrote about an interview with a young nurse named Sheila Larson, whom they described as representing many American's experience and views on religion. Speaking about her own faith and how it operated in her life, she said: "I believe in God. I'm not a religious fanatic. I can't remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It is 'Sheilaism.' Just my own little voice." We might say that this highly individualistic faith is the most popular religion in the world, but the idea that we *can* or *should* put together our own faith is wrong. Christianity is based on one **faith**, which was **once for all delivered to the saints**.

4. (4) We need to contend for the faith because there are dangerous men among Christians.

a. **Certain men have crept in unnoticed**: In part, this is what makes them so dangerous – they are **unnoticed**. No one noticed that they were dangerous. They didn't wear a "Danger: False Teacher" name tag. These **certain men** probably claimed to be *more* Biblical than anybody else was.

i. **Crept it** means, "To slip in secretly as if by a side door." (Robertson) "Satan knows right well that one devil in the church can do far more than a thousand devils outside her bounds." (Spurgeon)

b. **Who long ago were marked out for this condemnation**: These **certain men** have a destiny – the destiny of every false teacher and leader. They are **marked** and destined **for this condemnation**, and it is enough to say that they are **ungodly men**. They are **ungodly** simply in the sense that they are not like God and no matter the outward appearances, they disregard God.

i. They were **unnoticed** by men, but not by God. The Lord is not wringing His hands in heaven, worrying about those who deceive others through their teaching and through their lifestyles. They may be hidden to some believers but as far as God is concerned, their **condemnation** was **marked out** long ago. Their judgment is assured. The truth will win out; our responsibility is to be on the side with the truth.

c. **Who turn the grace of our God into lewdness**: These **certain men** had received something of the **grace of God**. But when they received it, they turned it into an excuse for their **lewdness**.

i. The idea behind the ancient word **lewdness** is sin that is practiced without shame, without any sense of conscience or decency. Usually the word is used in the sense of sensual sins, such as sexual immorality. But it can also be used in the sense of brazen anti-biblical teaching, when the truth is denied and lies are taught without shame. Jude probably had both ideas in mind here, because as the rest of the letter will develop, these **certain men** had *both* moral problems and doctrinal problems.

ii. These words of Jude show that there is a *danger* in preaching grace. There are some who may take the truth of God's grace and **turn the grace of our God into lewdness**. But this doesn't mean there is anything wrong or dangerous about the message of God's grace. It simply shows how corrupt the human heart is.

d. **Who deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ:** These *certain men* deny the Lord Jesus Christ. They do this by refusing to recognize who Jesus said He was, and therefore they also deny who God the Father is also.

i. We are not told specifically how these men **deny the only Lord God**. It may be that they denied Him with their ungodly living or it may be that they denied Him with their heretical doctrines. Probably both were true.

B. Three examples that show the certainty of God's judgment against the *certain men*.

1. (5) The example of the people of Israel.

a. **But I want to remind you, though you once knew this:** Jude knew he wasn't telling them anything new. They were already taught this example, but they needed to hear it again and to apply it to their present situation.

i. Ideally, every Christian would read these allusions to the Old Testament and say, "Yes Jude, I know *exactly* what you are talking about." If we don't know what Jude wrote about, it shows we need to deepen our understanding of the Bible.

ii. "As for the root facts, the fundamental doctrines, the primary truths of Scripture, we must from day to day insist upon them. We must never say of them, 'Everybody knows them'; for, alas! Everybody forgets them." (Spurgeon)

iii. "The use of God's Word is not only to teach what we could not have otherwise known, but also to rouse us to a serious meditation of those things which we already understand, and not to suffer us to grow torpid in a cold knowledge." (Calvin)

b. **The Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt:** Jude reminds us of what happened in Numbers 14. God delivered the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. They went out of Egypt and without unintended delays came to a place called Kadesh Barnea, on the threshold of the Promised Land. But at Kadesh Barnea, the people refused to trust God and go into the Promised Land of Canaan. Therefore almost none of the adult generation who left Egypt entered into the Promised Land.

i. Think of what God did for the people of Israel in this situation, and then how they responded to Him. They experienced God's miraculous deliverance at the Red Sea. They heard the very voice of God at Mount Sinai. They received His daily care and provision of manna in the wilderness. Yet they *still* lapsed into unbelief, and never entered into the place of blessing and rest God had for them.

c. **Afterward destroyed those who did not believe:** Those who doubted and rejected God at Kadesh Barnea paid a bigger price than just not entering the Promised Land. They also received the judgment of God. Psalm 95 describes how the Lord reacted to them: *For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways. "So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest". (Psalm 95:10-11)*

i. The warning through Jude is clear. The people of Israel started out from Egypt well enough. They had many blessings from God along the way. But they did not endure to the end, because they **did not believe** God's promise of power and protection.

ii. This example gives two lessons. First, it *assures* us that the *certain men* causing trouble will certainly be judged, even though they may have started out well in their walk with God. Jude says, "The certain men might have started out well. But so did the children of Israel, and God **afterward destroyed those who did not believe.**" Second, it warns us that *we also* must follow Jesus to the end, and never be among **those who did not believe**. The final test of our Christianity is *endurance*. Some start the race but never finish it.

2. (6) The example of the angels who sinned.

a. **The angels who did not keep their proper domain:** Jude's letter is famous for bringing up obscure or controversial points, and this is one of them. Jude speaks of **the angels** who sinned, who are now imprisoned and awaiting a future day of judgment.

i. It is not too much to say that the New Testament no where else presents so many strange phenomenon, or raises so many curious questions within so narrow a space." (Salmond, *Pulpit Commentary*)

b. **Angels who did not keep their proper domain:** There is some measure of controversy about the identity of these particular angels. We only have two places in the Bible where it speaks of these particular angels sinning. First, there was the original rebellion of some angels against God (Isaiah 14:12-14, Revelation 12:4). Second, there was the sin of the *sons of God* described in Genesis 6:1-2.

i. Genesis 6:1-2 is a controversial passage all on its own. It says, “*Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.*” There is a significant debate as to if the *sons of God* are angelic beings, or just another way of saying “followers of God” among humans. Jude helps us answer this question.

c. **Did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode:** This offence was connected with some kind of *sexual* sin, such as the sexual union between rebellious angelic beings (the *sons of God* in Genesis 6:2) and the human beings (the *daughters of men* in Genesis 6:2). We know that there was some sexual aspect to this sin because Jude tells us in the following verse, Jude 7: *as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh.* The words *in a similar manner to these* refers back to the **angels** of Jude 6, and the words *gone after strange flesh* refers to their unnatural sexual union.

i. We know some things about this unnatural sexual union from Genesis 6. We know that this unnatural union produced unnatural offspring. The unnatural union corrupted the genetic pool of mankind, so God had to find Noah, a man *perfect in his generations* (Genesis 6:9) – that is, “pure in his genetics.” This unnatural union prompted an incredibly drastic judgment of God – a global flood, wiping out all of mankind except for eight people.

ii. We can add another piece of knowledge from Jude 6. This unnatural union prompted God to uniquely imprison the angels who sinned in this way. They are **reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.**

iii. As for the *specific* details of this unnatural union, it is useless to speculate. We don’t know how “fallen angel” genetic material could mix with human genetic material. Perhaps it happened through a unique form of demon possession and the fallen angel worked through a human host. We know that angels have the ability to assume human appearance at least temporarily, but we don’t know more than that.

d. **He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day:** God judged these wicked angels, setting them in **everlasting chains**. Apparently some fallen angels are in bondage while others are unbound and active among mankind as demons.

i. By not keeping their **proper** place, they are now kept in **chains**. Their sinful pursuit of freedom put them in bondage. In the same way, those who insist on the freedom to do whatever they want are like these angels – bound with **everlasting chains**. True freedom comes from obedience.

ii. If angels cannot break the chains sin brought upon them, we are foolish to think that humans can break them. We can’t set ourselves free from these chains, but we can only be set free by Jesus.

iii. This reminds us that these angels who sinned with an unnatural sexual union are no longer active. With His radical judgment back in the days of Noah, God put an end to this kind of unnatural sexual union.

iv. This example gives two lessons. First, it *assures* us that the *certain men* causing trouble will be judged, no matter what their spiritual status had been. These angels at one time stood in the immediate, glorious presence of God – and now they are in **everlasting chains**. If God judged the angels who sinned, He will judge these *certain men*. Second, it warns us that *we also* must continue walking with Jesus. If the past spiritual experience of these angels didn’t guarantee their future spiritual state, then neither does ours. We must keep walking and be on guard.

3. (7) The example of Sodom and Gomorrah

a. **As Sodom and Gomorrah:** These two cities (**and the cities around them**) also stand as examples of God’s

judgment. Their sin – which was most conspicuously homosexuality, but included other sins as well – brought forth God's judgment.

i. Sodom and Gomorrah were blessed, privileged places. They were situated in a blessed area: it was *well watered everywhere... like the garden of the Lord*. (Genesis 13:10)

b. **Having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh:** Jude refers to the account in Genesis 19, where the homosexual conduct of the men of Sodom is described. Ezekiel 16:49 tells us of other sins of Sodom: *Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy*. Sexual depravity was not their *only* sin, but it was certainly *among* their sins, and Jude makes this plain.

i. The sins described in Ezekiel 16:49 show that Sodom and Gomorrah were indeed prosperous, blessed areas. You don't have *fullness of food, and abundance of idleness* if you don't have material blessings. But despite their great blessing from God and material prosperity, they sinned and were judged.

c. **Suffering the vengeance of eternal fire:** In Genesis 19, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed with fire from heaven. But that wasn't the end of their judgment by fire. Far worse than what happened in Genesis 19, they suffered **the vengeance of eternal fire**.

i. This example gives two lessons. First, it *assures* us that the *certain men* causing trouble will be judged, no matter how much they had been blessed in the past. Just as Sodom and Gomorrah were once wonderfully blessed but eventually suffered **the vengeance of eternal fire**, so will it be with these *certain men*. Second, it warns us that *we also* must continue walking with Jesus. If the blessings of the past didn't guarantee their future spiritual state, then neither does ours.

C. More Sins of the *certain men*.

1. (8) The character of these dangerous *certain men*.

a. **Likewise also:** Jude connected the *certain men* with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah in their *sensuality (defile the flesh)* and in their rejection of God's authority (**reject authority**).

i. When Jude pointed out that these *certain men* **reject authority**, it meant that *they* wanted to be in authority. Therefore they rejected the authority of God and they rejected those God put in authority.

ii. Today, our culture encourages us to **reject authority** and to recognize *self* as the only real authority in our lives. We can do this with the Bible, by choosing to only believe certain passages. We can do it with our beliefs, by choosing at the "salad bar" of religion. Or we can do it with our lifestyle, by making our own rules and not recognizing the proper authorities God has established.

iii. In the darkest days of Israel, society was characterized by a term: *every man did what was right in his own eyes*. (Judges 21:25) Today, this is the pattern of all the world and especially Western civilization.

b. **These dreamers:** It is possible that Jude meant that the *certain men* were out of touch with reality. It is more likely that he meant they claimed to have prophetic dreams which were really deceptions.

c. **Speak evil of dignitaries:** Probably these **dignitaries** were the apostles or other leaders in the church. Their rejection of **authority** was connected with their speaking **evil of dignitaries**.

2. (9) Michael the archangel as an example of someone who would not speak evil of dignitaries.

a. **Michael the archangel... the devil:** Jude mentioned two kinds of angelic beings. **Michael** is among the angelic beings faithful to God, who are the servants of God and man. **The devil** is among the angelic beings rebelling against God, who are the enemies of man.

i. There are invisible, angelic beings all around us. There are ministering spirits sent by God to assist us, and demonic spirits who want to defeat us. The devil can't unsave a saved person; but through his deceptions he can corrupt and defile a Christian who is supposed to walk in purity and freedom. To the devil, we are time bombs, ready to wreck his work – bombs that he would like to defuse and make ineffective.

- ii. Many people today don't believe **the devil** exists, but the Bible says he does. Or, if they believe he exists, they think of him in funny images from the Middle Ages. Back then, *miracle plays* were a chief form of entertainment. They were sort of a pageant where religious stories were acted out on stage. The audience learned to look for one character that was always dressed in red, wore horns on his head, and had a tail dangling behind him. His shoes looked like cloven hoofs, and he had a pitchfork in his hand. The audience was amused by this silly characterization of Satan, and got the idea that he was sort of a comical character. The devil doesn't mind being thought of this way.
- b. **Michael the archangel:** The angelic being is mentioned by name in four passages of the Bible: Daniel 10, Daniel 12, Revelation 12 and here in Jude. Every time **Michael** appears, it is in the context of battle or readiness to fight. He is an **archangel**, which simply means a "leading angel."
- i. If **the devil** has an opposite, it certainly isn't God. It is **Michael the archangel** – another high ranking angelic being.
- ii. "Let it be observed that the word *archangel* is never found in the *plural* number in the sacred writings. There can be properly only one *archangel*, one chief or head of all the angelic host. Nor is the word *devil*, as applied to the great enemy of mankind, ever found in the plural; there can be but one monarch of all fallen spirits." (Clarke)
- c. **When he disputed about the body of Moses:** This is another obscure reference by Jude. The last we read about **the body of Moses** is in Deuteronomy 34:5-6; *So Moses, the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor, but no one knows the grave to this day.*
- i. We don't know where Jude received his information about this dispute. He may have received a unique revelation from God. But according to teachers in the early church, Jude referred to an apocryphal book known as the *Assumption of Moses*, of which only small portions survive.
- ii. We don't even know why there was a dispute **about the body of Moses**. Some have said that the devil wanted to use Moses' body as an object of worship to lead Israel astray into idolatry. Others have thought that Satan wanted to desecrate the body of Moses, and claimed a right to it because Moses had murdered an Egyptian.
- iii. It is more likely considered that the devil anticipated a purpose God had for Moses' body, and he tried to defeat that plan. We know that after his death, Moses appeared in bodily form at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-3) with Elijah (whose body was caught up to heaven in 2 Kings 2). Perhaps also Moses and Elijah are the two witnesses of Revelation 11, and God needed Moses' body for that future plan.
- iv. But for Jude, the main point isn't *why* Michael was disputed, but *how* he disputed with the devil.
- d. **Dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"** The manner of Michael's fight is a model for spiritual warfare. First, we see that Michael was *in a battle*. Second, we see that he battled with the *Lord's authority*.
- i. This proves to us that Michael is *not* Jesus, as some heretical groups have thought. Jesus rebuked the devil in *His own authority*, but Michael did not. "The point of contrast is that Michael could not reject the devil's accusation on his own authority." (Bauckham)
- ii. Significantly, Michael **dared not bring against him a reviling accusation**. Michael did not mock or accuse the devil. God hasn't called us to judge the devil, to condemn the devil, to mock him or accuse him, but to battle against him in the name of the Lord.
- iii. This relates to the *certain men* by a "how much more" line of thinking. If Michael **dared not bring against him a reviling accusation** against *the devil*, how much more should these *certain men* not speak evil of dignitaries.

3. (10) More of the bad character of the *certain men*

- a. **But these speak evil:** In contrast to Michael, who would not even speak evil of the devil, these *certain men*

spoke evil, especially when they rejected authority and spoke against dignitaries.

b. **Of whatever they do not know:** The *certain men* didn't even know the things or the people they spoke evil about. Their evil speech was made worse by their ignorance.

i. Since they also spoke against dignitaries and rejected authority, these *certain men* did **not know** about true spiritual leadership and authority – so they found it easy to **speak evil** against it.

c. **Whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves:** These *certain men* pretended to be spiritual, but their only knowledge was really *natural*. Even what they knew **naturally**, they still used to corrupt themselves with an unspiritual mind.

i. **Brute beasts** can be smart or clever in an instinctive way, but they obviously do not have spiritual knowledge. It was the same way with these *certain men*.

ii. "How ironical that when men should claim to be knowledgeable, they should actually be ignorant; when they think themselves superior to the common man they should actually be on the same level as animals, and be corrupted by the very practices in which they seek liberty and self-expression." (Green)

D. Three examples of the *certain men*.

1. (11a) The *certain men have gone in the way of Cain*.

a. **The way of Cain:** Cain's story is found in Genesis 4. Each of the sons of Adam and Eve brought an offering to the Lord. Cain (being a farmer) brought an offering from his harvest. Abel (being a shepherd) brought an offering from his flocks. God accepted Abel's offering, but He rejected Cain's sacrifice.

i. Many people assume that because Abel brought a blood sacrifice and Cain brought a grain sacrifice, that the difference between the two offerings was sacrificial blood. But the real difference was between *faith* and *unbelief*. Hebrews 11:4 makes this plain: *By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.*

ii. Cain's sacrifice was probably more pleasing to the senses than the carcass of a dead lamb. But his sacrifice was offered without faith, and therefore it was unacceptable to God. You can give to God whatever you have or whatever you are, but you must offer it *in faith*.

b. **The way of Cain:** Genesis 4:5 says that after God rejected his sacrifice, *Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell*. He became angry because he knew he was rejected by God. In a fit of anger Cain murdered Abel, and then he lied about it to God.

i. 1 John 3:12 tells us that Cain murdered his brother because Abel's works were righteous (by faith), while Cain's own were wicked. Cain's lack was not in works, but in faith.

c. **The way of Cain:** Jude says that Cain typifies a **way** that the *certain men* follow in. It is **the way** of unbelief and empty religion, which leads to jealousy, persecution of the truly godly, and eventually to murderous anger.

i. There is no greater curse on the earth than empty, vain religion; those who have a *form of godliness but denying its power*. (2 Timothy 3:5) No wonder Paul added, *and from such people turn away!*

ii. Many Christians are afraid of secular humanism or atheism or the world. But dead religion is far more dangerous, and sends more people to hell than anything else. These *certain men* were **in the way of Cain**, the way of dead religion.

2. (11b) The *certain men are in the error of Balaam*.

a. **The error of Balaam:** Balaam's story is in Numbers 22 to 25 and 31. During the time of the Exodus, Israel advanced to the land of Moab, after defeating the Amorites. When the Israelites came near, King Balaak of Moab sought the help of a prophet named Balaam.

i. The first delegation from King Balak arrived and God told Balaam to have nothing to do with them. God's initial words to Balaam were, *"You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are*

blessed" (Numbers 22:12).

ii. After the first visit another, more prestigious delegation came with great riches. Balaam wanted to go with them and God allowed him to go. Balaam lusted after the riches and prestige offered to him and God gave him over to his own sin.

iii. God warned Balaam to turn back when he was on the way to see Balak. Yet his heart was set on the rich reward King Balak promised and he continued on. Balaam even ignored a talking donkey, sent to warn him to turn back.

iv. Balaam knew that he has done wrong. In Numbers 22:34, he said to God *I have sinned.... Now therefore, if it displeases You, I will turn back*. But he didn't turn back. He continued on, refusing to see that when God says no, we must take it as a no. Instead, God gave Balaam what his sinful heart desired.

v. After meeting with King Balak of Moab, Balaam prophesied over Israel four times. But as he spoke forth God's word, he did not curse Israel – instead he blessed them each time. When he was unsuccessful in cursing Israel, Balaam advise Balak on how to bring Israel under a curse. Instead of trying to have a prophet curse them, he should lead them into fornication and idolatry and then God would curse a disobedient Israel.

vi. Balak did just that, sending his young women into the camp of Israel to lead Israel into sexual immorality and idolatry. Because of their sin, God did curse Israel – He brought a plague of judgment upon Israel that killed 24,000. Therefore Balaam was guilty of the greatest of sins: deliberately leading others into sin. Worse yet, he did it for money.

b. **Greedily in the error of Balaam for profit**: The greedy error of Balaam was that he was willing to compromise everything for money. The *certain men* Jude warned about had the same heart.

i. Many Christians would never deny Jesus under persecution, but might deny Him if offered a large sum of money. There is not a single sin that corrupt man will not commit for the sake of money. Covetousness is such a dangerous sin that it killed Jesus – 30 pieces of silver helped put Jesus on the cross.

ii. **Have run greedily** is literally "they were poured out" (Robertson). This is a strong picture of excessive indulgence. But Paul also uses the same term for the extravagant way God loves us: *the love of God has been poured out in our hearts*. (Romans 5:5)

3. (11c) The *certain men* live out the rebellion of Korah.

a. **The rebellion of Korah**: Korah's story is found in Numbers 16. He was a prominent man in Israel, and one day came to Moses, saying, *You take too much upon yourself, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourself about the congregation of the LORD?* (Numbers 16:3) Korah and his followers resented the authority God gave to Moses and Aaron.

i. When Korah said this, Moses fell on his face, knowing God's judgment would soon come. Moses then proposed a test: each group took censers (for burning incense) and came before the Lord. The Lord Himself would choose which man He wanted to represent Him: Moses or Korah.

ii. When they both came before God, the Lord told Moses to step away. Then, the ground opened up and swallowed Korah and his followers. After that, fire came down from heaven and burned up all of his supporters. They all **perished**.

b. **Rebellion**: Korah was a Levite, but not of the priestly family of Aaron. As a Levite, he had had his own God-appointed sphere of ministry, yet he was not content with it. He wanted the ministry and the authority of Moses.

i. Korah needed to learn this essential lesson: we should work hard to fulfill everything God has called us to be. At the same time, we should never try to be what God has *not* called us to be.

c. **The rebellion of Korah**: This was also a rejection of God's appointed leaders, especially God's appointed Mediator. When the *certain men* rejected authority and spoke evil against dignitaries, they walked in the **rebellion of Korah**.

- i. The rebellion of Korah “lies in the broader idea of a contemptuous and determined assertion of self against divinely appointed ordinances.” (Salmond, *The Pulpit Commentary*)
- ii. These three men came from quite different backgrounds: Cain was a farmer, Balaam was a prophet, and Korah was a leader in Israel. Apostasy is never confined to one group of people. “There are apostates in the pulpit, in the palace, and in the poorhouse.” (Coder)

E. What the future hold for these *certain men*.

1. (12-13) A vivid description of the depravity of these *certain men*.

a. **Spots in your love feasts:** The early Christians often met for a common meal, something like a potluck dinner. They called these meals **love feasts**, or “Agape Feasts.” When these *certain men* came, they were **serving only themselves**. They ate greedily at the **love feasts** while others went hungry.

- i. At the Agape Feast, everybody brought what they could – some a little, some a lot; but they all shared it together. For some slaves who were Christians it might have been the only decent meal they regularly ate. The selfishness of these *certain men* spoiled the fellowship. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 describes a similar problem in the Corinthian church.

- ii. It always spoils fellowship when we come to church with a selfish “bless me” attitude. Many who would never eat selfishly at a church meal still come to church concerned with **serving only themselves**.

- iii. **Spots:** Some Greek scholars think this word should be translated “hidden rocks” instead of **spots**. One way or another, it doesn’t make much real difference to the meaning of the passage.

- iv. **Serving only themselves:** Literally in the ancient Greek this is “shepherding themselves” (Robertson). They were shepherds of a sort – but only shepherding **themselves**.

b. **Clouds without water, carried by the winds:** **Clouds** without water are good for nothing. They bring no life-giving rain and they only block out the sun. They exist just for themselves. The *certain men* were like these **clouds**.

- i. Once while driving by a factory, my daughter Aan-Sofie looked at the billows of white smoke coming from the smoke stacks. She said, “That’s where they make clouds!” These *certain men* were like those empty clouds – good for nothing, **carried by the winds**, floating on the breeze from one fad to another.

c. **Late autumn trees without fruit:** By **late autumn**, trees should have **fruit**. But these *certain men* did not bear **fruit** even when they should. They were like trees that only take instead of give.

d. **Raging waves of the sea:** For modern man, the sea is often a thing of beauty. But to ancient man, especially in Biblical cultures, the sea was an unmanageable terror. Isaiah 57:20 expresses this idea: *But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt*. These *certain men* were busy and active like the **raging waves of the sea**, but all it brought was **foaming up their own shame**.

- i. Busyness is no mark of correctness. The fruit of these men was like the foam or scum at the seashore. Jude has in mind the ugly shoreline after a storm has washed up all sorts of driftwood, seaweed and debris.

e. **Wandering stars:** Like comets streaking through the sky, these *certain men* astonished the world for a time, and then vanished into darkness. An unpredictable star was no good for guidance and navigation. Even so these deceivers were useless and untrustworthy.

f. **Blackness of darkness forever:** This described their destiny. Unless they repent, they would end up in hell – and be there **forever**.

- i. The punishment of hell is **forever** because a *mere man* is paying for his own sins, offering an imperfect sacrifice which must be repeated over and over again for eternity. A perfect man can offer a single sacrifice; but an imperfect man must continually offer a sacrifice.

- ii. Our obligations to God are infinite and can therefore only be satisfied in Jesus, an infinite person.

2. (14-15) The certainty of judgment upon these *certain men*.

a. **Now Enoch**: Here Jude quoted from Enoch, who is described in Genesis 5 and mentioned in Hebrews 11. The ancient book of Enoch was not received as Scripture, but it was highly respected among both the Jews and early Christians.

i. "Tertullian tells us that the book of Enoch's prophecies were preserved by Noah in the ark, and that they continued and were read until the times of the apostles. But because they contained many famous testimonies concerning Jesus Christ, the Jews out of malice suppressed and abolished the whole book," (Trapp)

ii. Jude did not quote from Enoch to tell us anything new, but to give a vivid description of what the Bible already teaches. The Apostle Paul also quoted non-Biblical sources on at least three different occasions (Acts 17:28, 1 Corinthians 15:33 and Titus 1:12). This wasn't to proclaim a new truth, but to support an already established Biblical principle.

iii. Jude's quoting of the book of Enoch doesn't mean that the whole book of Enoch inspired Scripture – only the portion Jude quotes. In the same way, when Paul quoted a pagan poet, he didn't mean that the entire work of the poet was inspired by God.

b. **To convict all who are ungodly**: In this quotation from the book of Enoch Jude emphasized the words **all** and **ungodly**. God is coming to judge **all** of the **ungodly**.

c. **To execute judgment on all**: many people take the **judgment** of God lightly. But the most important question in the world is "Will God judge me? Am I accountable to Him?" If we are truly accountable to God, then we are fools if we do not prepare to face that **judgment**.

i. Think of someone arrested for a crime, with a date to appear in court – but made absolutely no preparation for their appearance before the judge. That person would be a fool. We shouldn't be so foolish, and instead take advantage of our court-appointed advocate – Jesus Christ (1 John 2:1).

3. (16-18) The methods of the *certain men*.

a. **Grumblers, complainers... they mouth great swelling words, flattering people**: Jude noticed that their methods all revolved around **words**. On top of their questionable lives, they were essentially a people of deception, departing from the foundation of Jesus Christ, and the apostles and prophets.

b. **These are grumblers, complainers**: These people were **complainers**. It has rightly been observed that whenever a man gets out of touch with God he is likely to begin complaining about something.

i. Grumbling "is to insult the God who gives us all things; it is to forget that whatever befalls us, nothing can separate us from His love, nor deprive us of that most priceless of all treasures, the Lord's presence in our lives" (Green).

ii. "You know the sort of people alluded to here, nothing ever satisfied them. They are discontented even with the gospel. The bread of heaven must be cut into three pieces, and served on dainty napkins, or else they cannot eat it; and very soon their soul hates even this light bread. There is no way by which a Christian man can serve God so as to please them. They will pick holes in every preacher's coat; and if the great High Priest himself were here, they would find fault with the color of the stones of his breastplate." (Spurgeon)

c. **Flattering people**: These *certain men* knew how to use smooth, flattering words to get an advantage over other people. They would say anything – good or bad – to get an advantage.

d. **But you, beloved, remember**: We are to be different. We are to remember what Jesus and the apostles said, **which were spoken by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ**. The word of God is always the answer to dangers in or out of the church.

i. The apostles had warned that just these things would happen; and even more so as the day approaches: *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the*

truth, and be turned aside to fables. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

e. **There would be mockers in the last time**: Perhaps Jude had in mind those who mock the idea of Jesus' return. Or he may mean the kind of men who mock those who don't go along the same path of destruction they travel on.

i. **Mockers... who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts**: Those who live according to their own ungodly lusts love to mock those who want to please God. Jude wants Christians to *expect* this kind of mocking, so they won't be surprised by it.

4. (19) The spiritual status of these *certain men*.

a. **These are sensual persons**: Essentially, these men were not *spiritual*; they were carnal and insensitive to the Holy Spirit.

i. **Sensual** in this context has nothing to do with sexual attractiveness. It describes the person who lives only *by* and *for* what they can get through their physical senses, and they live this way selfishly. Their motto is, "If it feels good, do it" or, "How can it be wrong if it *feels* so right?"

b. **Who cause divisions**: These *certain men* had an instinct to separate themselves and make **divisions**. "The word, found only once in the Bible, denotes those superior people who keep themselves to themselves – Christian Pharisees." (Green)

c. **Not having the Spirit**: This same description could be written over many churches, or church projects, or evangelism campaigns, or home groups, or even individual Christian lives. The church and the world truly need genuinely *spiritual* men and women today.

F. What to do about the danger of the *certain men*.

1. (20-21) Take a look *inward*.

a. **Keep yourselves in the love of God**: We know that God loves even the ungodly (Romans 5:6). Therefore Jude doesn't mean, "Live in such a way to make yourself unlovable to God." Instead, to **keep yourselves in the love of God** means to keep yourself in harmony with God's ever-present love.

i. But we should understand what it means when the Bible says that God loves the ungodly. The significance of the idea that God loves us all has been twisted considerable. Consider the sinner who defends his sinful practice by saying "God loves me just the way I am." His implication is that "God loves me; I must be pretty good." Actually, the fact that God loves him is a reflection on *God's* goodness, not his own. The perspective isn't, "I'm so great that *even* God loves me," but "God is so great that He loves *even* me."

ii. God's love extends everywhere, and nothing can separate us from it. But we can deny ourselves the benefits of God's love. People who don't **keep themselves in the love of God** end up living as if they are on the dark side of the moon. The sun is always out there, always shining, but they are never in a position to receive its light or warmth. An example of this is the Prodigal son of Luke 15, who was always loved by the father, but for a time he did not benefit from it.

b. **Building yourselves up on your most holy faith**: This is one way that we can keep ourselves in the love of God. It means to keep growing spiritually, and to keep building up. Jude tells us, "**build yourselves up on your most holy faith.**" This means that we are responsible for our own spiritual growth. It means that we cannot wait for spiritual growth to just happen, or expect others to make us grow.

i. Jude has shown us the frailty of men and how deceivers even infiltrated the church. If you entrust your spiritual growth to someone else, it will not only hurt your spiritual growth, but it may also lead you astray.

ii. Others can help provide an environment conducive for spiritual growth. But no one can *make* another person grow in their relationship with the Lord.

iii. **On your most holy faith**: The **most holy faith** is the same as *the faith once for all delivered to the saints* (Jude 3). Jude wasn't talking about growing **on your most holy faith**. We grow *on the foundation of the truth*.

c. **Praying in the Holy Spirit:** This is another way to keep ourselves in the love of God. The battle against wrong living and wrong teaching is a spiritual battle, requiring prayer in the Holy Spirit.

i. Many of our prayers are directed by our own needs, by our own intellects, or by our own wishes and desires. But there is a higher level of prayer: *Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us.* (Romans 8:26)

ii. The Holy Spirit may help us pray by giving us the right words to say when we pray. He may speak through *groanings which cannot be uttered.* (Romans 8:26) Or the Holy Spirit may do it through the gift of tongues, a gift God gives to seeking hearts, which want to communicate with Him on a deeper level than normal conversation.

iii. "Such is our sloth, and that such is the coldness of our flesh, that no one can pray aright except he be roused by the Spirit of God... no one can pray as he ought without having the Spirit as his guide." (Calvin)

d. **Looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life:** This is a third way that we can keep ourselves in the love of God. As we keep the blessed hope of Jesus' soon return alive in our hearts, this effectively keeps us in the love of God, and helps us to *not* give away our faith.

2. (22-23) Take a look *outward*, to those around you.

a. **On some have compassion:** Jude begins here to tell us what we must do with those who have been influenced by these *certain men*. We need to make a **distinction**, based on where they are coming from. Certainly, **on some have compassion**.

i. Using wisdom we approach different people in different manners. By being sensitive to the Holy Spirit, we can know when we should comfort, and when we should rebuke. Christians should not abandon a friend flirting with false teaching. They should help him through it in love.

ii. This means we continue to love them. No matter how bad a person is, or how misleading and terrible their doctrine, we are not allowed to hate them – or to be unconcerned for their salvation.

iii. **Compassion** often means watching over someone, helping them with accountability. "Meantime watch over others as well as yourselves; and give them such help as their various needs require." (Wesley)

b. **Others save with fear:** This second group must be confronted more strongly – but in **fear**, not in a sanctimonious superiority. You may need to pull **them out of the fire**, but never do it in pride.

i. This *outward* look is important. It demonstrates that we are not only concerned for our own spiritual welfare. It proves that we genuinely care about other Christians who are edging towards significant error.

3. (24-25) Take a look upward to the God of all glory.

a. **Now to Him:** Jude closes the letter with a famous *doxology* (a brief declaration of praise to God). Jude's doxology reminds us of God's care and of our destiny.

b. **Who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present faultless:** Jude's message of warning and doom might have depressed and discouraged his readers. Perhaps they thought that with so much false teaching and immorality around, very few Christians would ever reach heaven. Here he reminds them that the answer lies only in the power of God. He **is able to keep you**, and you aren't able to keep yourself.

i. In mountain climbing, the beginning hiker attaches himself to the expert so that if he loses his footing he won't stumble and fall to his death. In the same manner, if we keep connected with God, we cannot fall. He keeps us safe.

ii. By comparing passages of Scripture, we also find out who is really responsible for our safe keeping. Jude began the letter by addressing those who are *preserved in Jesus* (Jude 1). Then he exhorted Christians to avoid dangerous men and to keep themselves *in the love of God* (Jude 21). Here at the end he concluded with the recognition that it is ultimately God who keeps us from stumbling and falling. Paul put the same idea in Philippians 2:12-13: *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who*

works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

iii. Keeping us spiritually safe *is* God's work. But you can always tell the people He is working in, because *they* are working also. God doesn't call us to simply let the Christian life happen to us and He doesn't command us to save ourselves. He calls us to a partnership with Him.

c. **Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy**: As God is faithful, we won't have to slink shamefacedly into the presence of God. We can be presented before Him with **exceeding joy**.

d. **Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever**: This all reminds us of God's wisdom, glory, and power. Jude isn't trying to say that we can or should *give* these things to God. When we acknowledge and declare the truth about God, it glorifies Him. We aren't giving God more **majesty** or **power** than He had before; we are just recognizing and declaring it.

i. **Both now and forever**: This could also be translated "unto all the ages." This is "as complete a statement of eternity as can be made in human language." (Robertson) Our victory, our triumph in God, is **forever**.

ii. There is serious deception in the world and often among those called Christians. There are enemies of the gospel who have infiltrated the church. Yet despite the greatness of the threat, *God is greater still*. He wins, and if we will only stay with Him, we are guaranteed victory also.

iii. Jude is a book full of warning, but it closes with supreme confidence in God. Dangerous times should make us trust in a mighty God.