

**II PETER 3:11-18**  
**WALK IN HOLY CONDUCT!**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to II Peter chapter 3 as we continue our study through this letter that Peter wrote to persecuted Christians, telling them, showing them how they are to grow in the Lord and live exemplary lives! And this morning we will be finishing up this letter.

Peter's call for us to be diligent in our faith has an important reason behind it.

Peter wants us to be aware that the Lord's return is getting closer and thus, it should cause us to live our lives in such a way that it would bring glory to God and draw others to God through it!

Keep in mind that Peter has been speaking of the mockery of the coming of the Lord and the judgment of not only the false teachers who are bringing forth their false doctrine, but all of those who have rejected Jesus will be judged!

And to make sure that we understand this, Peter tells us to look at the past judgment of God, the flood, look at that evidence to show you that God does judge the wicked and He will judge this world once again!

Now, to me, I just don't understand this, but there are many Christians, and only the Lord knows where they stand, who are rejecting the fact that the Lord is coming back and that He is going to judge this world.

It is just like Peter said in II Peter 3:4, "**... 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.'**"

Let me show you what I mean, and I believe things are even worse today.

Deborah Dombrowski, in her article titled, *The End of The World . . . As We Know It*, wrote what she sees happening in the church.

Just listen to what she is saying and keep in mind what Peter has said here in II Peter chapter 3, because s so important and it will set the stage for what we will be looking at this morning.

You see, how you feel about the Lord’s return is going to affect your behavior!

Deborah wrote,

A growing number of well-known evangelical leaders today are teaching thousands of people that the world has a serious problem. The problem they describe is not what you might expect to hear, especially from evangelical leaders.

They believe that those who claim Jesus is coming back soon, and the Earth will face a horrible Armageddon or judgment are actually the cause of the world’s major problems and are prohibiting a time of great renewal from taking place.

Talk of biblical end-time prophecy is considered by these men to be unnecessary and downright dangerous.

[The late] Tony Campolo in his recent book, *Speaking My Mind*, suggests that these type of end-time thinkers are even the cause of wars.

He says, *“Their doctrines are a major factor in determining a far-ranging set of consequences that included American policies regarding militarism, the emergence of evangelical Zionism, attitudes toward Palestinians and the role of American geopolitics.”* (p. 207).

He later says their *“impact on geopolitics can only lead to war.”* (p. 215).

Rick Warren suggests that Jesus doesn't want us to even think about prophecy or His return.

Warren tells us that it is none of our business. He tells us that thinking about Jesus' return is a ploy by Satan to get us distracted. (PDL, pp. 285, 286).

Richard Abanes, author and speaker, in his book *End-Time Visions: The Road to Armageddon*, criticizes many Christians who believe we should discuss prophecy and that there is indeed a coming Armageddon. He puts solid, Bible-based Christian leaders in the same category as cult leaders such as David Koresh, who led his group to an untimely end.

Are these evangelicals the first ones to hate the idea of Armageddon and the disaster that is coming to the world before Christ returns?

In Warren Smith's book, *Reinventing Jesus Christ*, he quotes Barbara Marx Hubbard who says that those who believe in Armageddon are self-centered people who if not stopped will actually cause a self-fulfilling prophecy to take place – the destruction of the world.

Marx Hubbard tells us of a global peace plan, and she calls it an “*Armageddon alternative.*”

This alternative can actually save the world from Armageddon, she says, but only if enough people believe it and only if the world can be rid of these self-centered doomsdayers.

***“The species known as self-centered humanity will become extinct. The species known as whole-centered humanity will evolve . . . Those who choose this version of the future will be there. Those who do not choose it will not be there.”***

Marx Hubbard's own book of “*Revelation*” describes a message she received from the “*Christ.*”:

***“You are to prepare the way for the alternative to Armageddon, which is the Planetary Pentecost, the great instant of co-operation which can transform enough, en masse, to avoid the necessity of the seventh seal being broken.”***

She continues: ***“Tell them to recognize the God within themselves, and to follow that light through the darkness of tribulations to the dawn of the Universal Age, when only the God-conscious continue to exist, and everyone is like Christ. Those with the seal of the living God on their foreheads will be with Christ at the time of the transformation. I cannot ‘return’ until enough of you are attracted and linked.”***

According to Marx Hubbard it is these self-centered believers that are standing in the way. And yet in the book of Revelation, in the last chapter, Jesus says not once but three times, ***“I am coming quickly,”*** while John in the same chapter tells us not to seal the words of the prophecy because the time is at hand.

In Warren Smith’s book, ***Reinventing Jesus Christ***, he quotes Alice Bailey who was ***“told by her spirit guide over fifty years ago that the ‘Forces of Darkness’ would oppose the ‘new gospel’ and the ‘New Age.’”***

Is this new gospel and Transformation one and the same as Brian McLaren’s New kind of Christian and Emerging Church?

Is it the same as Rick Warren’s spiritual awakening and global Transformation?

With so many similarities, one can only surmise that they may indeed be so.

And if that is the case, will there be a growing hostility and anger towards those of us who say, Maranatha, come quickly Lord Jesus? (I Corinthians 16:22).

- Deborah Dombrowski, *The End of The World – As We Know It*

Do you understand what they are saying?

We are the problem because we believe in the Word of God, and we believe in the Lord's return is getting close.

And do you see that they are bringing New Age and Eastern Mysticism into the church, a new Gospel, a different Jesus!

This is not by those outside the church, but from within and many are following their destructive doctrines. It is the lie of Satan in the garden, you shall be as God and now the church is saying it!

Now how do I know that Armageddon, the judgment of God is coming?

Like I have said. I can look back to the past judgment of God, the global flood that came to pass and the earth shows me the evidence of a global flood.

What does it show?

It shows billions of dead things buried in rock layers, laid down by water all over the earth!

Thus, because of what God has done in the past, because I trust in His Word, I have full assurance He will judge the earth again, the Tribulation Period. Then the Bible tells us that Jesus will set up His Kingdom on this earth, and after His Millennial reign He will judge the earth with fire and create a new heaven and a new earth, the eternal state!

And please understand that this is not just a feeling that I have. It is not just hopeful thinking. No, it is because the Word of God has said it and thus, I believe it!

Also, as Nathan Busenitz tells us, *“The hope of Christ’s coming was of paramount importance for the early church. In fact, its certainty was so real that first-century believers would greet one another with the term ‘maranatha,’ meaning ‘Lord, come quickly.’ Instead of being frightened by the possibility, they clung to it as the culmination of everything they believed. Not surprisingly, the New Testament reflects this intense anticipation by referencing Jesus’ return, whether directly or indirectly, in every New Testament book except Philemon and 3 John.”*

- Nathan Busenitz, *Living a Life of Hope*, p. 122

Just as it was important for the early church to believe in the soon return of Christ, it is also important for us, no matter what others may say.

We have the Word of God that gives us the information of the things that will transpire before Jesus returns.

I have called our study this morning – ***WALK IN HOLY CONDUCT!***

I know that sounds strange when I say that we will be talking about the Lord’s return. But hear me out on this.

In knowing that the Lord’s return can happen at any moment, it is eminent, it should cause us to walk accordingly, and that is what Peter is going to show us.

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into the following main points. They are,

***LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS – II PETER 3:11-15a***

***THE WORD OF GOD – II PETER 3:15b-16***

***STAND STRONG AND GROW – II PETER 3:17-18***

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in II Peter chapter 3, beginning in verse 11 and let's see what the Lord has for us this morning as we study His Word and look at this topic - ***WALK IN HOLY CONDUCT!***

### **II PETER 3**

#### **VERSES 11-15a**

Keep in mind that Peter is writing to his fellow brethren, Christians, who are being persecuted for their faith and that persecution is going to increase even more as the days go on.

And keep in mind what Peter just spoke of in II Peter 3:10, **“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”**

Judgment is coming and God is going to create a new heavens and a new earth, thus, **“since all these things will be dissolved, what many of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.”** II Peter 3:11.

This is a great perspective to have, especially in the days we are living in when we have seen so much evil growing and so much of our freedom is being taken away, and it is easy to get angry and bitter.

It is easy to just throw in the towel and grab for all that you can. But Peter is telling us that these days are coming to an end, live them according to the things of God!

We need to understand that. Since the Lord is coming back, since all the worldly things are going to be destroyed, live accordingly, live holy lives.

You see, why hold on to the things of this world so tightly when they are going to be destroyed?

John put it this way in I John 2:15-17, **“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”**

In other words, how foolish we are to invest everything in things we can't keep, when we can invest in the things we can't lose, things which are eternal.

We need to keep in mind that this is not our home, we are just passing through. Our citizenship is in heaven and thus, live accordingly!

And that phrase, **“what manner of persons ought you to be”** is better translated, **“how astonishingly excellent you ought to be.”**

One writer put it like this. He wrote, *“Look, beloved, there are a lot of things for you to do while you wait. There are manifold opportunities to be productive. A waiting life is filled with varied splendor and activity. So get about all your holiness and godliness.”* (David Helm, 1 & 2 Peter and Jude, pp.265-266)

I love that because it truly shows us what we are to be like. You see, the return of Christ, the imminent return of Jesus should have an impact upon our lives! It should cause us to live holy lives, we should live in a way that honors God!



Paul tells us in Titus 2:11-14, **“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”**

If your hope is in this world, you will be disappointed, and it will be seen in the way you act and the things that you say. Just look at people in our nation today, are they happy?

Absolutely not. Things did not go their way, so they are angry, they are mad, and even violent!

But, if your hope is in Christ and His return, you will be blessed. You will be filled with the joy of the Lord! Yes, we are to be different, we should be different because of our Lord!

It is as John tells us in Revelation 21:1, what we are looking forward to, **“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away . . .”**

You see, righteousness will fill the land, there will be no more sin, no more sickness and we will be with the Lord for eternity!

Thus, *“how astonishingly excellent you ought to be.”*

Now what about this phrase, the **“day of God”** compared to the **“day of the Lord.”** Is there a difference?

Some say they speak of the same period of time. Others say it is speaking of a different period of time.

I believe the day of the Lord is not just speaking of the Tribulation Period, but as we saw in II Peter 3:10, it continues on through the Millennial reign of Christ and the creation of the new heavens and earth!

Let me also say this. The “**day of God**” I believe is dealing with the eternal state, specifically the creation of the new heaven and the new earth and not the period of judgment or the Millennial reign of Christ.

I think it is specific and thus, Peter admonishes believers, considering the transitory nature of this present world, to live lives of holy conduct and godliness, because, as John the apostle said: “**the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.**” (1John 2:17)

And as believers, those who have repented of their sins and asked Jesus to be their Lord and Savior, Peter tells us in II Peter 3:14, “**Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.**”

And The Amplified Bible puts it like this, “**So, beloved, since you are expecting these things, be eager to be found by Him [at His coming] without spot or blemish and at peace [in serene confidence, free from fears and agitating passions and moral conflicts].**”

In other words, what are you looking for?

Who are you looking for?

If your eyes are upon the Lord and His return, if you are diligent, steadfast in the faith there are two main points that will be manifested in your life as you have a biblical worldview, or you live as God has called you to live.

Those two things are as follows.

➤ ***WE ARE TO BE FOUND IN PEACE***

If you have confident faith in the Lord and trust in His Word, you will be at peace.

That should just make sense. You see, your emotions will be at ease, your mind will not be anxious or worried because you have given those things to the Lord.

Jesus said in John 16:33, **“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”**

Our peace is only found in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace!

Paul, in Colossians 3:15 tells us, **“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.”**

But how is that done?

There are so many things moving us away from that peace of God. What can we do about it?

Paul goes on to say, **“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”** Colossians 3:16-17.

As we move closer to the Lord’s return this world is not going to get better, there will be more uncertainty, wars, financial problems, diseases, immorality but we as Christians can have peace because our peace is found in Jesus and we are not swayed by what we see. The Lord is coming back, and He has already warned us of these things!

It doesn’t matter how terrible things might get, our peace is settled by the Lord and what He has promised us!

Let me explain it like this and hopefully you will understand what I mean.

I think we would all agree to the fact that God is peace. In I Corinthians 14:33 Paul wrote, **“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”**

Thus, if God is the God of peace, then to know God is to rest in His peace. You see, the more we draw closer to God the more we can enjoy His peace.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, as we move away from God, the less peace we will find because this world system is at war with God and thus, it has no peace for you!

Focus on the Lord and enjoy that peace that He has for you!

➤ ***WE ARE TO BE WITHOUT SPOT AND BLAMELESS***

Peter is speaking of our Christian character, our Christian reputation. It deals with how we are living out our faith.

Paul, in Philippians 2:12-15 tells us, **“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, 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. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”**

Paul is not speaking of salvation by works, but one that works.

In other words, God has worked in you now you need to work it out and live it!

We are to be lights in this world that is filled with darkness.

In regard to our reputation, we must be able to be trusted. That our yes is yes, and our no is no and if we say we are going to do something, we will do it!

You see, Peter just spoke of those that were not godly, the false teachers and he told us of them, **“But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray . . .”** II Peter 2:12-15a.

Don't have those spots and blemishes but live holy lives, lives filled with godly character, a godly reputation because that will bring glory to God!

You see, it all boils down to this. The world is watching us as difficult times come upon us to see how we are going to respond to them.

They are going to see if our talk matches our walk and if we truly have peace in the midst of these storms or we are going to be in turmoil!

The world is watching to see if our character is one of holiness in the midst of difficult times.

The world is watching to see if our reputation is good, so that we can be trusted even in difficult times.

They want to see if we are going to live what we say we believe, if our faith is real!

Folks, the promise of Christ's return is a powerful incentive for holy living!

Don't let so-called Christian leaders tell you we are not to be looking for His return, because that is contrary to what the Scriptures are teaching us.

Remember what we read in Titus 2:11-15, **“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.”**

Don't ever be ashamed to speak forth the truths of God, to be excited that He is coming back, it is our blessed hope!

It is as Spurgeon wrote, *“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?”*

That is what Peter is speaking of not only to those in his day, but through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he is speaking to us today as well. Thus, may we live our lives accordingly – ***BE DILIGENT!***

In that first part of II Peter 3:15 Peter tells us, **“and account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation . . .”**

What is that all about?

Let's face it, we long for the return of Jesus! We can't wait until righteousness fills this land.

But let's think about that for a minute.

If the Lord was to return right now, then it would cut short the opportunity for others to be saved! Yes, "*the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation.*"

Can we wait just a little longer if it meant a few more souls would be saved?

We need to do that.

Will it be more difficult for us?

You bet it will!

But this is just for a time and for those that don't come to Jesus, it is an eternal judgment for them. Thus, we need to be patient as we wait for the Lord to return!

In other words – *LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS* should honor the Lord!

As we move on, we will be looking at – *THE WORD OF GOD!*

VERSES 15b-16

Remember what Paul said to Peter in Galatians 2:11-21, **“Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, ‘If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”**

Paul rebuked Peter for his compromise, for not eating with the Gentile believers when the Jews came.



Now Peter could have been angry at Paul, holding a grudge against him. But, as you can see, Peter was not angry with Paul, he did not hold it against him but took the rebuke to heart and loved Paul.

And Paul did it in front of all not to destroy Peter, but to show him his hypocrisy and to encourage the Gentile believers that there is no longer a wall of separation between Jew and Gentile because Jesus has torn down that wall!

What a great lesson for us, to learn from our mistakes, errors and not be angry with those who may rebuke us!

Peter also tells us that some of the things that Paul spoke of; some of the things he wrote, were difficult to understand!

Peter is not saying we can't understand what Paul is saying but that some things Paul says are complex, they are deeper than the others.

Paul was a brilliant man and as you read what he wrote, you can clearly see that!

In saying that, what ends up happening is false teachers come along and twist the Scriptures to fit their agenda.

That is why you can have homosexual and lesbian pastors, gay churches, churches promoting unbiblical doctrine because they twist the Scriptures.

One writer put it like this in regard to what these false teachers are doing. He wrote, "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 sophisticated meanings* on the word of God." (Clarke)

What can we do about this?

Study the Scriptures so you know the truths of God and won't be misled by these false teachers with their false doctrines!

William MacDonald put it like this, *“Some Bible truths are hard to understand, such as the Trinity, God’s election and man’s free will, the mystery of suffering, etc. It should not disturb us if we find matters in the Bible which are above our understanding. The word of God is infinite and inexhaustible. In studying it we must always be willing to give God credit for knowing things which we can never fully fathom.”*

Remember what we are told in Deuteronomy 29:29, **“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”**

It is amazing at what people spend their time searching regarding things that God has not told us, and do you think we are going to guess the answer?

No way!

Like what the seven thunders spoke in Revelation chapter 10, people try to figure out what that means and yet, we see that John is told in Revelation 10:4, **“... ‘Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.’”**

Another one is trying to figure out who the Antichrist is!

I don't know about you, but I really don't care, and he is not going to be revealed until the Tribulation Period starts, and we are gone. Thus, I am not looking for the Antichrist, but for Jesus Christ!

Also, in Isaiah 55:8-9 we are told, **“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.’”**

Remember, He is God, He knows all things are we are not God, and we don't know all things!

Now I am not saying that God does not open His Word up to us, He does. The Holy Spirit will do that. You can read a passage 100 times and then, on the 101<sup>st</sup> time you might say, the light goes on and the Spirit of God has shown you something that you never saw in that passage before!

God does do that, but there are many things that we don't know!

How do we explain or understand that God is eternal?

How do we explain or understand the Triune God?

We can come up with ideas, but it is not something that our finite mind can understand!

Now let me also say this. Even godly men and women can disagree on nonfoundational issues in the Bible.

For instance, in Judges chapter 11, Jephthah is the Judge in Israel and the people of Ammon made war with Israel.

And Jephthah was called to lead in this battle against the people of Ammon.

So Jephthah, we are told, made a vow before the Lord that if the Lord gives them victory over Ammon, **“then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.”** Judges 11:31.

And after this great victory and Jephthah returning home, the first one out of his house is his daughter!

Now, the big question is, did Jephthah offer his daughter as a sacrifice, a burnt offering?

Many feel that he did!

And, like I have said, godly men and women debate over this.

Let me show you what I believe regarding this foolish vow of this man and what took place.

But please understand that this is not a foundational issue, and I am sure each person has done their research, has prayed about it, and believes what they teach on this point.

But here is my take on this issue.

Jephthah knew the Word of God; he knew the history of his people.

Now, in knowing the Scriptures I am sure he knew what is spoken of in Leviticus 18:21, which tells us, ***“And you shall not let any of your descendants pass through the fire to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the Lord.”***

Also, in Deuteronomy 12:31 we are told, ***“You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.”***

You see, God does not want human sacrifice, He has not called for human sacrifice, He does not want them to practice that which the pagan nations practiced, human sacrifice!

I know, that does not prove it, but I do want to show you what God’s Word says and that I believe from the text Jephthah knew God’s Word.

Now here is Jephthah’s vow again, **“Whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD’S, and (or) I will offer it up as a burnt offering.”** Judges 11:31.

Again, he knew the Scriptures, and he knew that God forbade human sacrifice as I have said.

He knew the history of Israel and what God required of them.

He speaks freely of the Lord, and he was Spirit-filled.

Now again, all that does not mean he couldn't stumble and fall into this sin, but I don't think that he did.

The word "**and**" in verse 31, *WAW* in the Hebrew, can be translated "*or*."

And if that is the case, it does change the meaning of this vow.

It would then read, "*Whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me . . . Shall surely be the LORD'S, or I will offer it up as a burnt offering.*"

I believe what Jephthah is saying is that if a person comes out, they are to be dedicated to the Lord, to serve Him.

If an animal comes out, it would be offered as a burnt offering to the Lord. He is distinguishing between the two, animals and humans!

As he saw his daughter come out, he recognized what this would cost him, for his daughter was now going to spend the rest of her life in service to the Lord.

Now that may sound okay, but you have to understand all that this meant.

She would not marry, nor have any children, which was a great sacrifice, not only depriving her of children but also Jephthah of having grandchildren.

And if she were going to be killed, why would she bewail her virginity instead of her death?

You see, she was willing to serve the Lord both day and night, a life of sacrifice unto Him. She, in a sense, was married to the Lord.

And we do see women serving in this capacity in Exodus 38:8, "**He made the laver of bronze and its base of bronze, from the bronze mirrors of the serving women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.**"

And in I Samuel 2:22 we are told, **“Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.”**

And in the New Testament we are told in Luke 2:36-38, **“Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.”**

We do see that there were women who were set apart for the Tabernacle service and even in the New Testament in the Temple.

That is what I believe is taking place here with Jephthah’s daughter.

Again, if she was going to be sacrificed as a burnt offering, I don’t think she would be bewailing her virginity but her death, as I have said, don’t you?

And in verse 39 we read that, **“He carried out his vow with her which he had vowed.”**

You see, it never says that he killed her and if he did the daughters of Israel would not **“celebrate”** this time, but they would lament.

Now in Judges 10:40 it does say they *lamented*, so what is up with that?

Doesn’t that mean that she was sacrificed?

No, it doesn’t and the reason it doesn’t is that the Hebrew word, **“lament”** can be translated *“commemorate”* or *“celebrate.”*

They are celebrating the dedication and faithfulness of this woman as she sacrifices everything to serve the Lord.

That is what I believe is going on here.

So it is not twisting the Scriptures and making new foundational truths, but some Scriptures are difficult to understand and we need to be careful we don't argue about these things, but we can agree to disagree on non-foundational issues!

And yet, for these false teachers that are twisting the Scriptures to make them say what they want instead of what God wants them to say, Peter speaks of their – ***DESTRUCTION!***

One writer put it like this, ***“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)

It is a warning!

Also note that Peter considered the writings of Paul as part of the Scriptures so don't listen to the foolishness of man that tries to deny the Scriptures. Peter understood that Paul's writings were inspired, as well as the entire Word of God, and so must we!

Now let me also say this, because you will hear people tell you this. ***“In 363 AD, the early churches came together in an ecumenical council (Council of Laodicea) and announced the Old Testament and 27 books (to form the New Testament) were to be read in churches. In 393 AD, the Council of Hippo affirmed this. In 397 AD, the Council of Carthage also reaffirmed the same 27 books as the standard and authoritative canon.”***

Again, Peter makes it clear that the writings of Paul were already part of the Scripture, and these letters were passed around to different churches and read long before these councils came together!

Thus, we have – ***THE WORD OF GOD!***

As Peter closes out this letter, he is showing us that we need to – ***STAND STRONG AND GROW!***

VERSES 17-18

Here is the warning as Peter prepares to be put to death for his faith in Jesus.

He is basically telling them, ***“You know the truths of God, you have been taught the truths of God, thus, don’t turn away from them! Stand strong and grow!”***

And the way we maintain our steadfastness is to keep walking faithfully in the truth of God’s Word.

Don’t **“fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.”** (II Peter 3:17)

How important that is for us to understand and to maintain that steadfastness of faith!

Let me also say this. Peter is not speaking of losing our faith, but, as Warren Wiersbe points out to us,

***True Christians cannot fall from salvation and be lost, but they can fall from their own “steadfastness.”***

***What was this steadfastness?***

***Being “established in the present truth” (2 Peter 1:12).***

***The stability of the Christian comes from his faith in the Word of God, his knowledge of that Word, and his ability to use that Word in the practical decisions of life.***

***One of the great tragedies of evangelism is bringing “spiritual babies” into the world and then failing to feed them, nurture them, and help them develop.***



*The apostates prey on young believers who have “very recently escaped” from the ways of error (2 Peter 2:18).*

*New believers need to be taught the basic doctrines of the Word of God; otherwise, they will be in danger of being “led away with the error of the lawless.”*

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, pp. 956-957

Thus, we need to continue to grow. In fact, that is what the Greek is saying here. Never stop but keep on growing in the grace of God.

Spurgeon put it like this, *“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.”*

And Peter says that we are to grow in the grace of God, what does that mean?

Grace means undeserved favor, we don’t deserve it, we don’t deserve eternal life, but God freely gives it to us.

Folks, Peter doesn’t say grow in devotion to God, or grow in your zeal towards God, or grow in holiness, as important as those are.

But to grow in grace because we are saved by the grace of God, we stand by the grace of God, and we will be taken to glory one day by the grace of God.

Thus, grace is not only the starting point, but it is the only point!

You see, 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.

Again, Spurgeon put it like this, *“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.”*

Peter also tells us we need to grow in our knowledge of Jesus, to have that intimate relationship with Him because the more we do, the more of Him will be seen in our lives.

The more we learn of Him the more we learn of ourselves and the more we see the bountiful, the never-ending grace of God.

It is as Paul said in Colossians 3:1-4, **“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”**

Keep in mind who Peter is writing to, persecuted Christians and, like it or not, that is part of the Christian life!

Warren Wiersbe put it like this. He wrote,

Growing in grace often means experiencing trials and even suffering. We never really experience the grace of God until we are at the end of our own resources. The lessons learned in the “*school of grace*” are always costly lessons, but they are worth it. To grow in grace means to become more like the Lord Jesus Christ, from whom we receive all the grace that we need (John 1:16).

- Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT*, p. 957

Growing in the knowledge of God is so important but we must also keep in mind that yes, it is easy to grow in knowledge but not in grace!

All of us know far more of the Bible than we really live. Knowledge without grace is a terrible weapon, and grace without knowledge can be very shallow.

But when we combine grace and knowledge, we have a marvelous tool for building our lives and for building the church.

But note that we are challenged to grow, not just in knowledge of the Bible, as good as that is, but “**in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**”

It is one thing to “*know the Bible,*” and quite another thing to know the Son of God, the central theme of the Bible.

The better we know Christ through the Word, the more we grow in grace; the more we grow in grace, the better we understand the Word of God.

So, the separated Christian must constantly be guarding himself, lest he be led away into error; he also must be constantly growing in grace and knowledge.

This requires diligence! It demands discipline and priorities. Nobody automatically drifts into spiritual growth and stability, but anybody can drift out of dedication and growth.

*“For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it” (Heb 2:1, NASB).*

*Just as the boat needs the anchor, so the Christian needs the Word of God.*

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 957

As I close this morning and we finish this letter, may you be watching for the Lord’s return and live your life as if He is coming back at any moment, because He can!

Thus, we have seen how we are to be – ***LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS!***

And living in the last days is according to – ***THE WORD OF GOD!***

Thus, we must – ***STAND STRONG AND GROW!***

It is like this. By knowing all that God has done for us, as Peter said, **“To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.”**

And folks, ***MARANATHA – COME LORD JESUS!***