

EXPOSITION OF II PETER

Message #14

II Peter 3:14-18

One of the first single volume commentaries on the entire Bible that I purchased shortly after coming to faith in Jesus Christ was that of Matthew Henry. Matthew Henry was a pastor in London in the 1600s who studied the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and wrote a devotional commentary. Shortly before he died he wrote these words: “A life spent in the service of God, and in communion with Him, is the most comfortable life that any one can lead in this present world” (Herbert Lockyer, *Last Words of Saints and Sinners*, p. 56). Matthew Henry’s final words are clearly consistent with the inspired words of the Apostle Peter.

When Peter writes these final verses, he knew this would be the last words he would ever write. He knew that his death was imminent. His life had been an incredible journey. At one time he had been a rough, tough, worldly, sinful fisherman. But now he was a skilled, tender, heavenly apostle writing inspired Scripture. The transformation that had taken place in his life was remarkable. But his transformation is no more remarkable than the transformation that is possible for us all.

We may notice that **verse 14** begins with the inferential conjunction “therefore” (διό). This is the strongest inferential conjunction in the Greek language, which means this is even stronger than a causal clause. The primary point that Peter emphatically communicates as he writes these last sentences is this:

BECAUSE THE LORD WILL SOON COME TO GET HIS BELOVED PEOPLE AND WILL BURN UP THE OLD HEAVENS AND EARTH AND CREATE A BRAND NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH, GOD’S PEOPLE NEED TO CAREFULLY WORK ON THEIR OWN SPIRITUALITY AND ON CAREFULLY UNDERSTANDING THE WORD OF GOD.

This is one of the most powerful and practical endings to a book of the Bible that you will ever see. Actually, since this is Peter’s last few verses before he died, this is one of the most powerful and practical endings to a life you will ever see.

As Peter ended this letter, if we back up to **verse 11**, there are nine final messages that he presents to God’s people. There are nine practical ways this tremendous information in II Peter should affect our lives:

FINAL PRACTICAL APPLICATION #1 – We should pursue holy conduct . **3:11a**

We may recall that the words “holy conduct” in Greek are plural. What this means is that we are to set ourselves apart many times and many ways externally in light of Scripture as holy people of God. Holy conduct is external conduct. We need to think very seriously about how we are living our lives.

This is not stressing a legalistic living, but a holy living that squares with New Testament Grace Age teaching.

FINAL PRACTICAL APPLICATION #2 – We should pursue godliness. **3:11b**

We are to have a reverent piety toward God and His Word. This refers to an internal reverence that we have for God, His Word and His worship. We are to live our lives with a godly reverence for who God is and for how great God is.

We are living in a very irreverent world and we need to be reverent people in this world.

FINAL PRACTICAL APPLICATION #3 – We should be diligent to be found by Him in peace. **3:14a**

Theologically there are two types of peace one may have in his relationship with God:

- 1) One may have peace with God the moment one is justified (Romans 5:1); and
- 2) One may have the peace of God in one's own spiritual life (Philippians 4:7; Colossians 3:15).

Since Peter addresses this to the “beloved,” we know that he is not speaking about positional justification peace, but practical peace that may be found in one's spiritual life by pursuing the ways of God.

Now before we tackle these things, there are two key grammatical points that we need to make:

The verb “be diligent” (σπουδασατε) is aorist active imperative. What this means is that we have been commanded by God to eagerly, diligently, zealously, and actively pursue the action. Now the infinitive “to be found” (ευρεθηναι) is aorist passive infinitive. The aorist tense puts this at a specific point of time, which is the moment we face our eschatological judgment.

What this means is that we need to be taking steps in every moment of the time of our lives to see to it that we are at peace with God. When the moment comes for us to be raptured or die, we want to be found in a peaceful relationship with God. We do not want to have had a breach in our relationship with God when we face God.

Every moment of our life should be a moment when we are pursuing being at peace with God.

FINAL PRACTICAL APPLICATION #4 – We should be diligent to be found by Him spotless. **3:14a**

The word “spotless” (ασπιλος) is one that refers to a life that is lived in a pure unstained way (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 65). It is true that even the best of saints like Paul had times when he sinned. In fact, he called himself the “chief of sinners” (I Timothy 1:15). However, Paul would quickly run right to Jesus Christ and His cleansing power when he did sin (Romans 7:24-25). The diligent pursuit of his life was that he would live it in an unstained way.

What this means is we need get after moral purity and any kind of purity. We need to be eagerly pursuing a spotless, morally pure life as we wait for judgment day. Purity is something we must make every effort to gain.

**FINAL PRACTICAL APPLICATION #5 – We should be diligent to be found by Him
blameless . 3:14b**

Here is the greatest goal in life you will ever have. Here is the greatest ambition you will ever have - to live for God in a way that God says is blameless.

The word “blameless” (αμωμητοι) is one that refers to living our lives in such a way that no one could find continual fault with us (*Ibid.*, p. 26). Again this does not mean we are sinless, but it does mean that the eager pursuit of our lives is one that makes adjustments in view of the Holy Spirit and in view of Scriptures so we are without fault and blame before God.

Now the challenge “to be diligent” to work on these areas, indicates we need to keep after these goals by continually working on these things. In other words, we do not reach a state of sinless perfection, but we do need to continue to be diligent to work in these areas.

We do not want anything to fester in our relationship with God. We are to face things, confess things and confront things. In view of the future, we need to keep after a life that is not continually stained by sin nor one in which God could find continual fault.

**FINAL PRACTICAL APPLICATION #6 – We should regard the plan of God at the
present time. 3:15a**

We need to keep our focus on the fact that we will face God, but we need to view the present time as a time when God is saving people. We need to carefully consider the fact that the reason God is patiently putting up with this deranged world and the people in it is because He is in the process of saving people. This is the reason He hasn’t ended things yet.

**FINAL PRACTICAL APPLICATION #7 – We should carefully study to understand “all” the
writings of Paul . 3:15b-16**

Now the Apostle Peter brings up the Apostle Paul and it is fascinating that he does. In fact, he calls Paul “our beloved brother.”

Peter first met Paul three years after Paul had been saved in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:18). In fact, Paul stayed with Peter for fifteen days. Then a few years later, Paul ended up back in Jerusalem before Peter defending his theology at a council meeting in Jerusalem. At that meeting, Peter stood with Paul and defended his doctrine of grace over law (Acts 15:7-11). Some time after this meeting, Paul met Peter again in Antioch. At that meeting, Paul rebuked Peter to his face because Peter did not have a handle on the doctrine of the grace of God (Galatians 2:11-14).

Through the years the old fisherman, Peter, had become a Pauline promoter. In fact, it is pretty clear from this verse that Peter studied “all” of Paul’s letters. He came to understand the depth level of knowledge and theology that Paul truly had. Paul had been taught grace doctrine directly by Jesus Christ, and the Apostle Peter came to realize the depth level of things.

He knew some things Paul had written were “hard” to understand. Dr. S. Lewis Johnson in his exposition of II Peter stopped in his exposition at this verse and said, Peter, if you are listening, you need to know that we think some of the things you wrote are hard to understand so quit picking on Paul.

Now I want you to see from this verse what Peter says and what he doesn't say. **What he says is some things are “hard” to understand, not impossible to understand.** The Greek word “hard” (δυσνοητος) is one that means if we are going to understand some things of the Scriptures, it will require intense perceptive study, thinking, and consideration. Peter is not criticizing the depth level of Scripture; in fact, he is challenging believers to pursue a careful and accurate understanding of all of Scripture.

Now I want you to see here that understanding the Bible is not going to be easy. There are things that are going to have to be carefully researched and analyzed before they can be understood. The implication of **verse 16** is that there is a very careful right way to study the Bible and to rightly divide it and interpret it.

If we want our lives revolutionized by God, it will require that we go to work on seriously understanding every book of the Bible. There is no easy shortcut way. There is no little program, there is no little course, there is no little gimmick that will give you this depth. To carefully and accurately understand the Word of God will take hard work. Douglas Moo said unfortunately in most churches this kind of commitment to understanding God's Word is being replaced by “Marriage Seminars” and “Financial Stewardship Workshops” (*II Peter*, p. 219).

As I was traveling across this country, specifically Nebraska and Iowa, I was listening to Christian radio. Most of the programs that I was hearing were shallow things that really didn't say much of anything. There were only a couple of programs, Dr. McGee, Dr. Swindoll and Dr. MacArthur that seemed to care if they analyzed any text. Most of the rest were shallow rambling.

Notice what is said here; those who do not take this serious, systematic approach are untaught, they are unstable, and they not only distort Paul's letters, but the rest of Scripture they also distort to their own destruction.

Some people brag about the fact that they are self-taught. Biblically speaking there is no such thing. Someone who can teach must teach us properly or we will never get it.

Now the words “untaught” and “unstable” are given in the context of interpreting the Bible. The word “untaught” (αμαθεις) does not refer to one who is stupid, but it refers to one who is ignorant and untaught when it comes to a true interpretation of Scripture (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 23).

The word “unstable” (αστηρικτοι) refers to one who is unsettled in understanding Scripture (*Ibid.*, p. 65). This kind of person is very superficial in his ability to properly handle the Word of God.

I have sat in enough Bible studies to know that many Bible studies are conducted by untaught, ignorant, unstable people who don't know a noun from a verb. These so called Bible study leaders love the limelight, but they don't even begin to know how to actually dissect a passage exegetically, which means to draw out exactly what is grammatically there.

Now what untaught and unstable people do with the Scriptures is they "distort" (στρεβλω) it. What this means is they twist, torture, and pervert the grammar and language (*Ibid.*, p. 420). They do not rightly divide grammatical contexts, they twist and torture them. Peter says these guys will be condemned and their condemnation will be deserved. They actually distort the Scriptures to "their own" destruction. The words "their own" (την ιδιαν αυτων) are emphatic. Tamper with God's Word in an inaccurate way and you are destroying yourself.

Peter Davids tells a story of a student he had in Greek who had no idea what he was doing. He asked him to translate into English Romans 5:1, which says "therefore having been justified by faith we have peace with the God" (δικαιωθεντες ουν εκ πιστεως ειρηνην εχομεν προς τον θεον). He said the superficial student twisted it and translated it "therefore being justified by works without faith." Peter Davids said he pointed out to the student that he was twisting and torturing the written Word of God and the student destroyed himself by inappropriate translation (*II Peter*, p. 305).

Last week a young freshman student at Frontier approached me between lectures and wanted to discuss a theological point. He opened his Bible to a verse, and in the verse was the use of a pronoun, which when accurately understood, settled his question. I asked the student, what is the purpose of a pronoun? He didn't know. So I told him. Then I said, what is the noun in the context that the pronoun is replacing? He couldn't decipher it, so I showed him and that settled his question. When it comes to the Bible, many people who are unlearned and untaught teach things they don't know anything about.

Years ago Haddon Robinson said that he has sat in so many churches where the Scriptures were twisted and tortured that he was shocked that he had not become an atheist. Peter's point here is that we need to carefully study "all" Scripture.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION #8 – We should be on guard to never be carried away by men of no principles from a steadfast relationship with God. **3:17**

What absolutely amazes me is that people would not ever think of letting an untrained surgeon operate on them. They would not think of letting an untrained pilot fly them in a jet. They would not think of letting an unskilled mechanic work on their vehicle, but they will go to church and sit under an untrained, unlearned person who verbally rambles from behind a pulpit, who has no integrity and no principles, and who has never taught straight through any book of the Bible.

That word "unprincipled" (αθεσμος) refers to one who does not submit himself to the Word of God. In the world of religion, there are many who are not interested in accurately understanding and applying God's Word to their lives.

One of the biggest threats to your faith is not being properly taught the Bible. One of the biggest threats to your faith is not sitting under someone who knows how to properly interpret the Bible. If you listen to bad teaching, it can affect you. If you get used to being fed slop, it will pull you down. Peter says, “be on guard.”

Peter says, do not ever allow yourself to be carried away by these unprincipled men who do not know what they are doing with the Bible. Unprincipled men butcher the Bible. They do not deal with grammar, syntax, and context. Unprincipled men invent unprincipled doctrines.

Peter says be on guard that there are these people out there who can come at you and pull you away from a steadfast grasp of God and His Word.

If you will keep your eyes fixed on Jesus Christ and on carefully understanding the Word of God, you will be steadfast in your faith all the way out of this world.

Dr. McGee said, “My friend, if you have a comprehensive knowledge of Scripture and apply it to your own life, you will be a steadfast Christian” (*II Peter*, p. 751).

PRACTICAL APPLICATION #9 – We should grow in grace and in deep knowledge.
3:18

It is very clear from this final verse that God intends that all of His people grow.

When you think about growth, such as in the growth of a child, it covers things like change, development, enlargement, energy, strength, advancement, and maturity. You expect a child that is growing to develop new appetites, new likes and dislikes.

God expects growth in His family and He wants to see the same kind of development in our spiritual lives, particularly in two areas: 1) Grace; 2) Knowledge. He expects us to grow in these two areas from this day until the day of eternity.

Here is the secret. Peter says grow in the doctrine of God’s grace and grow in deep knowledge of the Word of God and of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As you feed on God’s Word, it will transform your mind and your heart.

The Apostle Peter, at one failing moment of time in his life said, “I don’t know Jesus.” But when he writes II Peter he can say, “I know Jesus” and He is God, He is our Savior, and He is the Messiah.

To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Truly.