

Text: 2 Pt 3.17-18

We are in our last verses of 2 Peter, and the last “beloved be” of 2 Peter 3.

Beloved, Be On Guard

Constable begins his comments on this section with:

“Peter concluded his epistle with a summary of what he had said and a doxology. He did so in order to condense his teaching for his readers and to redirect their living to glorify God one final time.”¹

One commentator noted the abrupt ending of 2 Peter. There are no closing words, greetings to individuals, etc., as is usual among most epistles.

The abrupt ending supports the genuineness of the epistle — a forger would not have forgotten to create the usual closing.

Read 2 Pt 3.17-18

When Paul summed up his ministry to the Ephesian elders, he said:

Ac 20.20-21 ... I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house,²¹ solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter is saying much the same thing here.

Proposition: The Christian life at its bottom line involves shunning the old life and embracing the new life in Christ — the *weak* believer fails to take the bottom line seriously.

I. Our danger of drifting (17)

A. The apostles give us ample warning

1. The danger is known in advance (*proginōskontes*)
2. The source of advance warning
 - a. The repetitive examples in the OT (1 Cor 10.6)

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 2 Pt 3.17.

1 Cor 10.6 ¶ Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.

- b. The considerable warnings of the apostles (3.2)
 - c. Peter's own words in this epistle (ch. 2-3)
3. Our reaction to warnings: *often distaste!*

Notice how I've described chapter 2: "the gruesome chapter"

B. The danger of overwhelming error

- 1. The image of being "carried away" is the imagery of being overtaken in a flood
- 2. When you read chapter 2, you are flooded with error
 - a. Bad doctrine
 - b. Bad behaviour
 - c. Bad men

The reaction is repulsion, and "I'd never be like that"

3. To extend the metaphor
- a. The first signs of a flood aren't overflowed banks
 - b. The first signs are rising water
 - c. A little error can lead to a lot of error

A word from Spurgeon:

"I know some who have said, 'Really, it does not matter what we believe, so long as we are right on the main point.' But it does matter, for those who neglect any of Christ's words shall fall little by little. Every truth is a diamond of untold value. I do not know whether there is such a thing as an unimportant truth. Somewhere or other, near to it, there may lie certain consequences that we are unaware of. Truth being neglected, an error may fill its place, and that error may become pregnant with mischief from generation to generation. It is an ill time for the Church of Christ when it begins to walk

blindfolded, or when it even desires to neglect any of the precepts or the doctrines that Christ has left behind Him. Moses was to make the tabernacle according to the pattern shown to him on the mountain, and Ezekiel was to remind the people of his day of the exact pattern of the house of the Lord, and we need constantly to be put in mind of all that makes up the palace of truth where Christ dwells.”²

- The doctrine of baptismal regeneration crept into the church in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. At first it was an error, but it eventually dominated a wide swath of the church and is the official teaching of the Roman church today.

C. The question of spiritual condition

1. Is there a difference between being “carried away” and “falling”?
2. Is apostasy in the sense of “no salvation at all” possible for a believer?

Peter writes to believers, “beloved, be on guard”

- There is a serious danger to spiritual life.

I’ve known believers of whom I was wholly convinced of their testimony. They decided to “relax a little ... don’t need to be so strict...” Today they are living very far from the Lord. Where are they?

- *I don’t know.*

Beloved, be on guard

II. Our need of growing (18a)

A. Growth opposes falling away: this is the other side of the story

“Continuing spiritual growth is the effective safeguard against falling.”³

² Spurgeon, *2 Peter*, 2 Pt 3.17.

³ Hiebert, *Second Peter and Jude*, 177.

1. No article in the Greek: lit. “grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord”
2. That means he could be talking about one thing or two separate things (I tend to think two things)

B. Growing in grace

1. This goes back to the beginning of the epistle
 - a. Grace brings salvation (1.1)
 - b. Peter desires the multiplication of grace to the readers (1.2)
 - c. Through grace, we have everything we need to grow in godliness (1.3-4)

2. Growing in grace addresses our will: imperative

- a. Interestingly, though, we can't grow by a force of our will — we must submit to growth

1) We accept Christ by yielding to him

2) We grow in grace by yielding to him

Do you have trouble with your temper? You need to yield to God, trust that he will solve your problems, don't try to win by the force of your own wrath.

- b. Spurgeon describes it as swimming in a pool of grace

“But 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.”⁴

⁴ Spurgeon, *2 Peter*, 2 Pt 3.18.

C. Growing in knowledge of our Lord and Saviour

1. Early in the book Peter says the way we find grace multiplied is “in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” (1.2)
2. We learn what Jesus is like, we imitate him
3. We learn how the “Jesus-life” should operate: we follow the path
4. We go through experiences that put our knowledge under a test: it shows itself strong
5. We develop the fruit of the Spirit (or the virtues in Peter’s language) and enjoy the blessing of exercising it in our life

Growing in grace involves surrendering our will to him.

Growing in knowledge involves filling our minds and ways with him.

III. Our object of attention (18b)

A. This is one of the very few doxologies directed at Christ in the NT

B. Peter isn’t just using a flourish to end his epistle

1. Everything that happens in our life is to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ
2. He saved us
3. He helps us grow
4. He keeps us from the wicked one (and the wicked ones who would overwhelm us)
5. To him be the glory

C. Granting glory to Jesus puts Jesus in his proper place: he is our God

“For a Jew, committed to the truth of Isaiah 42:8—‘I am Jehovah, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another,’ this doxology gives clear expression to the deity of Jesus Christ.”⁵

⁵ Hiebert, *Second Peter and Jude*, 180.

1. Peter glorifies the Lord
2. So do we

Conclusion:

“We grow as we utilize the ‘means of grace,’ namely, things that channel God’s grace (help) to us, such as reading the Bible, praying, meeting with other believers for fellowship and mutual encouragement, and obeying God.”⁶

Proposition: The Christian life at its bottom line involves shunning the old life and embracing the new life in Christ — the *weak* believer fails to take the bottom line seriously.

⁶ Constable, *Expository Notes*, 2 Pt 3.18.