

2Peter 11-09-09b

Let's resume our study now in 2 Peter. For those of you that wondered what was being discussed on the break, I will recap it for you. First of all, if you haven't already figured it out, the verse I was looking for was confused by some weird sort of mental dyslexia.

It wasn't 2 Corinthians 5.24, it's 1 Corinthians 15.24, the one somehow migrated to the other side of COR period. So 1 Corinthians 15.24-27 is the passage that talks about the Lord Jesus subduing all things to himself and then turning over all of those things and himself to the Father in the kingdom of the Father. And what this tells us is that the kingdom of our God and of his Christ, in all cases, when you have a kingdom, all three members of the Trinity are over that kingdom.

There's an emphasis during the millennium of the rulership of the Lord Jesus Christ. His enemies are made a footstool for his feet. He rules with a rod of iron.

He rules on the throne of his father David on earth, but he is also the head of all things to the church during that period. And we are subjected to him who is the head of all things if you go to Ephesians. And so in that sense, we are a part of the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, just not the millennial division of his kingdom.

But when you go to the kingdom of the Father, that is of course still also the kingdom of Christ. The lamb is the light. The kingdom of this world is become, as the Hallelujah Chorus says, the kingdom of our God and of his Christ.

The other thing we discussed during the break was the mentioned in verse nine, he who lacks these things. And in verse 10, if you do these things, if you lack these things, you're blind and have forgotten about cleansing of sin. If you do these things, there is an abundant entrance supplied into the everlasting kingdom of the Lord.

And so these things, of course, in both cases go back to verses five through seven. And although these seem like attributes and something that would have to sort of come about naturally rather than through the doing, it isn't a matter of climbing steps or offering sacrifices or some specific action. This is the development of characteristics and virtues and attributes.

So how can you do these things if it is sort of a matter of becoming? Well, once again, the clue is there in verse nine, because I have the same question, how he says, if you lack these things and if you do these things, well, how would you lack them? Two ways, by not paying attention, being blind, not looking, not seeing, being short-sighted. And this is the biggest problem. As I've mentioned before, over the years people have expressed at one time or another, they've said, well, you know, I just, I'm not sure I'm really living up to the standard of the Lord.

I'm not sure, I don't have confidence that I'm really in the plan and purpose of God. I really am worried that I'm not doing what I should. And my response is always, don't worry.

The fact that you are worried is the best evidence that you have nothing to worry about. The fact that you have a concern about whether or not you are in the center of God's will is the best evidence that you are. It's people who are unconcerned and don't care and think that everything is nailed and wired and squared away.

Those of us are the ones who need to worry. So if we are short-sighted and blind, we're not even considering whether there's any virtue. We're not considering whether there's any perseverance or any brotherly love or any self-control or any virtue or any new knowledge.

We're content with the knowledge we have. We're content with our level of function. And we just become complacent.

We become sort of apathetic. We think that we're just going to march in place and we'll remain where we are. And of course we never do.

But if we are not blind, if we are not short-sighted, we are going to be looking at these attributes in the same way that a lady looks after her flower garden. I want to check that soil. I'm going to stick my finger in the dirt.

I want to look at the leaves. How many of them are turning yellow? How many pebbles are falling off? Is it blooming? Is it healthy? When's the last time I gave it some nourishment or does it need a different kind of light? Should I move it? We tend these things. We look to them.

And the other key, one being diligence in observation, the other is diligence in cleansing. Claiming the principles that we have seen so often in 1 John 1, Psalm 51 and other passages, ensuring that sin does not become an obstacle, that sin does not separate between us and our God and that our sins do not hide his face from us so that he does not hear and that his arm seems to be short and he does not save. So if we want to do these things, we've got to pay attention to verse nine and not be lacking.

And that is how the abundant entrance will be supplied. That is how our calling and election are made sure. We are called to holiness.

We are called to this chorus of virtues and attributes. We are called to be diligent and we are chosen to live in this age with the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the new and better promises on which the new covenant is based. That's our election.

We were chosen to live now, not 3,000 years ago, not 5,000 years ago, not 500 years from now. We have been chosen, we have been called and we want to make that choosing and that calling and election sure. So Peter says he's going to be diligent on his part to remind us and that's what this letter does.

And he says, I will be careful in verse 15 to ensure that you always have a reminder of these

things after my decease. And this letter is that reminder. This is that second part.

Many times you have a basic and an advanced course in something. First Peter is the basic course. Second Peter is the advanced course.

Far fewer people reach the end of a course of instruction than start at the beginning. I have often thought with some bemusement about my class at Annapolis. We started in July of 1975 with 1,423 midshipmen who raised their hands, wearing their Dixie cups and swore the induction oath in Tecumseh Court.

1,423 of us all there. Four years later when we graduated, there were 929, something like that. We lost about a third of our class over the four years.

And it's sobering that people, and it has happened since. Somebody says, look to your right and look to your left. I know guys that go to flight school and go to other difficult programs of instruction.

They say, look around. You're not gonna see as many people at the end as you're seeing at the beginning. Some of them are, there's a huge attrition rate.

SEAL School and some of the really elite training programs, they lose two thirds, three quarters of their students. And this is why Jesus said that narrow is the way and straight is the gate that leads to life. Here's my question.

I've, innumerable times, you've heard me quote that just almost every Bible class. Narrow is the way and straight is the gate that leads to life. Few there be that find it, right? Now here's my question.

The gate and the road are preexistent before any people start traveling. Why didn't God make a great big wide road and a great big wide gate? Why is it a skinny road and a narrow gate? Is that what means that there's so few people because it's such a skinny road and such a small gate that hardly anybody can find it? Why didn't God make the road to destruction narrow and the road off the gate over the cliff to be narrow? The roads and the gates preexist. Why is that? Because God knows ahead of time that most of the people who start are not going to finish, that most of us are gonna be on the wide way going through the broad gate that leads to destruction.

That's why they're built that way. God does capacity planning. He knows ahead of time.

Gotta have a big road because this is where most people are gonna go. I only need a little skinny road over here, only need a narrow gate because there aren't gonna be very many people coming this way. Why should I waste the pavement? Why should I waste the brick? No point.

It would just make a glaring contrast if I have the gates and the roads the same size and people are wandering all around this big wide road. That's why. So we want to be diligent to make our

calling and election sure.

Peter says, I am going to end every expense for versus telling us. I'm not gonna be negligent. I'm gonna be diligent.

Even though I'm gonna be dead, I'm gonna make sure that you're reminded of these things. That's what this letter is. This is the advanced course.

At Fort Sill, we had what they called FAOBC, the Field Artillery Officers Basic Course. And then we had the advanced course. There weren't nearly as many officers going through the advanced course as there were going through the basic course.

Why? Because there's a lot more second lieutenants than there are captains. There is attrition. There is a narrowing as you go up.

And it was much easier to staff and fund and teach and carry out the advanced course than it was the basic course. Many fewer people. And the people who were there were more mature and more experienced, easier to teach, more intelligent students.

We had lieutenants that I do not know how they got a commission. Dumber, literally dumber than a box of rocks. I had a lieutenant send me a note when he got called down a couple of times in class for not being prepared and not being ready and making bad grades on his test.

And he wrote me a note back and he said, I can't, C-A-I-N-T, no apostrophe, do the work because I be barthed, B-A-R-T-H-E-D, with headaches, H-E-D-A-K-E-S. This is allegedly a college graduate commissioned second lieutenant in the United States Army. I be barthed with headaches.

Well, these guys get weeded out. You don't find these guys coming back for the advanced course, right? Well, we as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ do not want to be barthed with headaches. We want to be diligent to make our calling and election sure.

We want to be the narrow road, straight gate, spoo-day believers. And Peter tells us how to do it. He says in four verses here, I think it is right for me to remind you, I am going to remind you, and even after my decease and I shuffle off my mortal coil, I'm gonna make sure you are reminded of these things.

Four verses in the word of God. Space is precious in the Bible. And Peter spends 12, 13, 14, and 15 saying, this is how much I want you to know, how important it is for you to pay attention to this advanced course letter.

It is shorter, it is sweeter. It doesn't sound the same as the first one. Why? Numerous reasons, not the least of which is, this is advanced stuff.

Doesn't circulate to as many believers as you do. It doesn't circulate to as many believers. It isn't as quickly accepted because your basic level people either didn't hear it or when they heard it, didn't know what was going on.

Verse 16, for we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. What is the liberal argument against 2 Peter and Jude and James and some of the other less circulated books? They're a cunningly devised fable. They are pseudepigrapha.

They are spurious. Peter didn't really write this. Jude didn't really write Jude.

It's a cunningly devised fable. Peter says, this is not a cunningly devised fable. Well, one of the things, if you're going to create a forgery, there are some things to think about.

First of all, there has to be some sort of motive. If you're going to forge a book and make it in the name of an apostle, you need some sort of reason. Now we have people in the modern day who claim to be apostles, claim to have been visited by the Lord, claim that God spoke to them and told them stuff.

And it quickly becomes apparent what their motive is. God spoke to me and said that I should build a 777 bed hospital and you should pay for it. So send your money now.

God spoke and said that I should be on television and you should pay for it. So send me money now. Sometimes there is a strand of theology, an aberrant variation that is struggling for acceptance and it needs authority.

So you have the Gnostic books. Gnosticism was the idea that you can get there through reason and through having a sort of an out-of-body mental experience of gnosis, it's all knowledge. We have a kind of Gnosticism circulating even in this world today.

There have been people who have followed the isagogical, categorical, exegetical path and have ended up in Gnosticism. I don't really have to do anything except take in the Gnosticism. And it's gonna make me into a spiritual hero and a spiritual Superman.

That's Gnosticism, that gnosis alone can get you there. It can't. Peter says, you need epinoia, but you've got to be diligent and you've got to add all of these other things to it or you are going to be short-sighted, blind, and barren and unfruitful in your knowledge.

You've got to add these other things. Gnosticism, or well, the Gnostics, they were kind of amalgamating and incorporating some Greek philosophical stuff that was floating around at the same time, much as you have an amalgamation and a confluence and an unhappy mixture of philosophy with Christianity today. You've got, let's take the best of what the world has and mix it with the best of what we find in the Bible and we'll just get a super mix.

And it's not, it is corruption, it is dilution, it is confusion. God's word doesn't need any help, doesn't need any addition. Look at the end of Revelation to find out what happens to people who try to add to the things that are written in this book.

So Peter is saying, look, we didn't make this stuff up. This is not a cunningly devised fable. What is the purpose of a cunningly devised fable? To advance somebody's agenda.

It is either a financial agenda, it is a philosophical agenda, it is a political agenda, it is to aggregate and aggrandize themselves with either power or money or whatever. Well, I ask myself the question, if second Peter were actually such a letter, and that's a second class condition, it's not true, but if it were, what is its purpose? What does the pseudonymous author, in other words, the forger of this letter, have to gain by writing this letter? Is there an appeal for money anywhere? No. Is there in some way an elevation to power? What does the author gain if he forges this letter? Does this letter tout some alternate theology, some alternate denomination, some alternate thing that's not in the canonical scriptures? In no way, in no shape, in no form, does this letter do anything but affirm and strengthen and amplify what's in the rest of the acknowledged New Testament.

I don't see anything that a forgery has to gain by this. He's not building a movement. He's not answering an argument.

You have the contraposition and the hireses and the other early church fathers arguing against one another because he's a heretic. No, you're the heretic. And they're arguing alternate views.

There is none of that in this book. In fact, this letter warns against such things. So watch for that as we go through the remainder of the book because this is a big part of the theme and Peter introduces it here.

We did not follow cunningly devised fables. When we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and this is one of the keys. Genuine scripture always focuses on, glorifies, makes central the Lord Jesus Christ.

And there's nothing more central about the Lord Jesus Christ than his coming, his judgment, his fulfillment of God's promises to the Old and New Testament saints. And Peter says, I didn't make up a bunch of stuff here. I am telling you about the Lord Jesus Christ and his coming.

And I tell you this as an eyewitness of his majesty. Now, anybody can claim to be an eyewitness, but it was known from the circulation of earlier correspondence and earlier visits by the apostles, exactly what had gone on during the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. And people had already heard about the transfiguration.

Peter says, look, I didn't have to make anything up. I was there. Now, if you're skeptical, you say, well, let's just suppose for the moment that this is a forger claiming to be Peter.

He's read the gospel account and he says, I'm Peter and I was there. Look at verse 17, for he, the Lord Jesus received from God, the father, honor and glory. When such a voice came to him from the excellent glory, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

Now, let's just think of the catalog of possible things that a forger might want to claim in order to make you believe that he's really Peter. I am the Peter who threw the net on the other side of the boat and pulled up the fish. I am the Peter that walked on water.

I am the guy, the only one besides the Lord Jesus to ever stay on top of liquid water, unassisted with skis, floats. Jesus said, step out and I did. I am the Peter who handed out the bread and the fish.

I am the Peter who did this. I am the Peter who said, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. This author doesn't claim to have done anything.

It would be natural for someone who wanted to impersonate Peter to grab onto some glorious thing that Peter had done. What does he say? I am the Peter who saw the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ revealed. You're never far wrong when you're looking at the glory of the Lord Jesus.

And this is what Peter claims as his identification card, I am someone who saw one of only three, actually one of five, if you wanna be accurate, who saw the transfigurational glory of the Lord Jesus on the mountain. Who are the five? Peter, James, and John, Moses, and Elijah, right? They saw his revealed glory on the mount. Peter says, you wanna know that it's really me talking? This is my credit card.

Moses knows that glory. He saw some of it when he went up Sinai. Remember, and his face came down, he was glowing.

Elijah saw it, he went up in the chariot of fire, the chariot that was radiating the glory of God when he went out of this world. We heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with him on the sanctified mountain, on the mountain where we saw those and knew who they were, those Old Testament prophets. And then listen to what he says.

We have the prophetic word made more certain, confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place. Now, Peter doesn't say you should heed this because I'm telling it to you. He says, you should heed it like you heed a light that shines in a dark place.

So let's think about that for a minute. This is what I had to do, because I thought, well, it seems like a bit of a shift in direction here. He's making the case that he is who he says he is, but he says, I'm giving you this word that is more certain, and you should heed it like a light shining in a dark place.

Well, if it's dark, the electricity is off in the night and you need to see and get around and do some

stuff, take all your food out of the refrigerator and put it in a ice chest or something, because it could be a long haul. And you turn on a light, you get a flashlight or a Coleman lantern or light a candle. What do you do? Do you stare at the candle? Do you stare at the flashlight? Do you stare at the Coleman lantern? You get it lit, you just sit there and stare at it.

Well, I wonder if this really is a candle. I wonder if this really is a Coleman lantern. I wonder if there really is any light coming out of this flashlight.

We don't do that, do we? If there's a light shining in a dark place, how do we know that it's a good light? We look around to see if we can see anything, right? If I hit the button on a flashlight, I don't typically shine it in my face to see if there's a bulb in it and a good battery. I pointed at something in the dark and see if I can see anything, right? We have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed like a light that shines in a dark place. If you've got any question about the veracity of this letter, Peter says, shine it on something and see what you can see with it.

See if it works. It's a light shining in a dark place. Don't spend your time trying to, well, is this a real candle or is this a Memorex candle? Is this a real flashlight or is this a toy flashlight? Is this a real Coleman lantern or is it just a picture of a Coleman lantern? Fire the thing up and see if you can see anything with it.

Heed it like a light that shines in a dark place. Hold it up and check the illumination until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. When you operate in the light of this prophetic, more certain word, Peter says, there will be a dawning of light in your heart and a precursor, an omen of, a harbinger of the kingdom.

Universally in scripture, the sun rising with healing in his wings, the S-U-N sun is the coming of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is his presence. You feel his warmth.

You see his glory. And the sun rising, you have it in Malachi. You have it here and in other passages.

And this is the kingdom age dawning. Peter says, when you hold the light of this revelation that he is writing in this letter up, there will be a dawning. There will be a lifting of darkness in your heart.

And you're going to see the morning star. You're not going to see the sun itself. The kingdom isn't going to come in the light of this scripture, but you're going to see the morning star.

You're going to see the planet rising, Venus, which says the sun is just about here. It's as close to sunrise as you're going to get until the sun actually rises, right? So this is a great way to verify scripture. Now I started to bring, I couldn't find it, but I've got a big thick compendium of reject scripture, not just the apocalypse, but pseudepigrapha and the gospel of Peter, the acts of Peter, the assumption of Moses and all these wild things that the early church, even being Catholics,

threw out and said, even we don't believe this stuff.

It's called the other Bible. And if you want to, you don't really even have to buy this. Just find a copy and peruse it.

Pick any page, pick a paragraph, read it, get a copy of the Book of Mormon, get a copy of the Quran, just crack it open, read a few paragraphs and apply this test. Try to use it like a light. See if it illuminates anything.

See if you get any sort of dawn rising in your heart. See if you suddenly see the morning star vividly reflecting the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ just before the coming of the kingdom. Try it, read any of them.

I dare you, I've done it. It is the most dismal, dank, smelly, hodgepodge, incoherent, chaotic, babbling, rambling, nonsensical, disconnected, self-contradictory, conflicted morass of swampish detritus. You'll have no trouble assuring yourself and confirming for yourself, you know what? I know scripture.

Scripture is a friend of mine and you're no scripture. Try it out. Peter gives the test right here.

Second Peter is a great, it's probably the most canonical, if you could say that, of all of the New Testament books because he says, look, I'll tell you how you know scripture. Hold it up and see what it eliminates. And if you find the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ rising in your heart, if you see the dawning of the kingdom just over the horizon, if it enables you to add to your faith virtue and godliness and self-control and more epinosus and brotherly love and love, agape love, that's how you know it's scripture.

And just as far as we've gotten in this letter, you know that that's the case. This is not a forgery. It is not spurious.

Peter wrote it. I don't know and I don't really care why the style in Greek is different. The content does all of the things that scripture always does.

It points to Jesus Christ. And that's why the qualification Peter claims out of a very prolific and storied and up and down career as a disciple and apostle, what does he pick? The one moment when the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ was most clearly and vividly revealed to him. I am the guy that saw the glory of the Lord and I can tell you how to see that same glory.

That's why we know this letter is authentic and all protestations to the contrary, it's our goal to see the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the agenda for this letter. Why would any forger have that as his goal and need to claim to be somebody that he's not? It just doesn't compute.

It doesn't make any sense. So Peter says, we haven't made more certain knowing this first, no prophecy of scripture is of any private, and it says interpretation, but that's not really the best

translation. I think you have a footnote in your New King James that says of any private origin, and that's right.

And prophetic scripture doesn't happen apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It would be passing strange for a forger to say, by the way, the only good scripture is scripture that comes from the Holy Spirit and he's not writing under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Why would he say this? He would be sort of self-condemnatory, be convicted out of his own mouth.

If he's lying and saying he's Peter when he's not, the Holy Spirit wouldn't be in it. And all this author can do is talk about the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing this more certain prophetic message. And it's pretty bold to say there's more certain than the Old Testament prophets, but that's what he says.

So to me, the whole notion that Peter didn't write this is it gets more nonsensical the further you go. Well, this is a good place for us to stop. We'll do a quick review of those last couple of verses in chapter one and move into chapter two next time.

But remember, what is the thrust and the central point that Peter makes in this first chapter? There is a way to live the Christian life. We have got to look at these areas of character, these areas of spiritual function that he gives in verses five through seven. If we don't look, we're blind and short-sighted.

If we do these things, we'll have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we don't, we're going to be barren and unfruitful. He has told us what we need to do.

He has told us how to do it. What excuse do we have for receiving anything other than an abundant entrance as we go through that narrow gate? And we are one of those, reminds me of the first few finishers in a marathon. When they come through, all of the attention in the stands is focused because these are the ones that ran the race correctly.

They trained well, they prepared well, and here they come through that gate. They don't have to have nearly as big a gate at the finish of the marathon as they have at the beginning because there's big, long gaggles of people all trying to leave at the same time, but they're spread out pretty thin at the end. And that's the way it is in the spiritual race.

We have every provision. We have every instruction. We have every piece of epinosis necessary to run through that gate, sprint through the finish.

And that's what Peter says he is going to be diligent to remind us of even after his death as he has done for us tonight. Let's close in prayer. Father, thank you for this great letter.

Thank you for the ministry of the Apostle Peter, his faithfulness and his enthusiasm for communicating the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ to us and across the span of time and years. We find that enthusiasm and that dedication undimmed and undiluted. We pray that we can catch

that same fire, that God the Holy Spirit will make it flame and live within us and motivate us and encourage us to heed these exhortations and follow these instructions so that an abundant entrance will be supplied to us as well as we approach the impending and ever closer kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray these things in his name. Amen.