

Book: 2 Peter
Series: *True Faith vs. False Teaching:
Add To Your Faith, Knowledge*
Lesson 13: *A Case Study: Future Events
and True Faith*
Text: 2 Peter 3:11-18
Date: Sunday, November 25, 2012

Colonial Hills
ABE
Baptist Church

Key



= Teacher Information



= Discussion Starter

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TEACHING TIP

Personally praise your “Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” as you prepare this lesson.

NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

TBD

INTRODUCTION

Illustration: When my sisters were in high school, they had a science teacher who would frequently do experiments in class. However, it turned into a bit of a class joke when many of those experiments would go awry and the teacher would respond, “Well, it worked in the basement!”

In chapter 1, we looked at true faith in the laboratory. In the ideal setting of God’s ordained process, we discovered that true faith glories in its positional richness (1:1-4) and then, with diligence and effort, adds to it the practical wealth of excellence, knowledge, godly character, and love (1:5-7). This cooperative venture between God and man establishes that believer as useful and fruitful and strengthens Him with confidence that His eternal future is secured (1:8-11). It furthermore provides him with a reliable foundation (1:12-21), against which false teaching and false living is easily identified and repudiated (2:1-22).

Nevertheless, when we look at those who seem to be on the side of true faith—“believers” in our churches—we don’t always see what we witnessed in that laboratory, and we perhaps hear ourselves questioning, “Well, it worked in the basement.”

Even more soberingly, when we compare our own Christian experience to what Peter wrote in chapter 1, we discover a shallow understanding of our position in Christ, a habitual failure to manifest His character of self-control or godliness or love, an ignorance of His lordship over our lives, a confusion regarding the various theologies and doctrines being proclaimed, a leaning towards the fleshly indulgences of some professing believers, and oftentimes a lack of assurance that we really are His in the first place. Indeed, sometimes, in our own lives we have to admit, “Well, it worked in the laboratory.”

As in the high school science class illustration, the solution is quite simply to return to the laboratory, review the ordained process, discover the missing components, and once again practice the findings. In essence, that’s what Peter does in chapter 3, as he employs a specific case study (i.e., the doctrine of Jesus’ second coming) to practically illustrate how those who claim to be true believers will respond to that truth—so that what worked in the laboratory will work in their lives, as well.

We will keep our considerations over this lengthy passage simple, as we study the passage under two main headings.

TRUE FAITH PROFESSES BIBLICAL TRUTH (vv. 11a, 12b-14a).

According to verses 1-2, Peter wrote both of his epistles so that his genuinely believing readers¹ would remember both the predictions (lit. “words spoken before”) of “the holy prophets” and the command of “the Lord and Savior” Jesus Christ as spoken through “the apostles.” We noted last week that false teaching looks unfavorably on and repudiates both those aspects of truth. Contrariwise, true faith loves God’s promises and obeys Jesus’ commands.

With specific regard to the doctrine of Jesus’ second coming, referred to in verses 4, 7, 10, and 12, true believers profess an unwavering belief in those realities. Their profession of biblical truth evidences itself in two responses.

1. We should accept biblical truth (vv. 11a, 12b-13).

Notice the clear contrast between the response of true believers and false teachers. When false teachers read in their Bibles about the “promise of His coming,” they reject that clear teaching in favor of their own observations (i.e., walking by sight instead of faith—cf. 3:1-7). On the other hand, true believers simply assume that what they read in the Bible is reliable (1:16-21) and therefore true (3:11a, 12b-13).

Verses 11-12 ask a question that is predicated upon the assumption of a truth. True believers simply accept that verse 10 is indeed biblical truth. Literally rendered, verse 11 starts, “All these things being destroyed in this way” (“seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved,” KJV; “since all these things are to melt away in this manner,” NET)—true believers don’t have to be convinced; they simply accept what the Bible teaches. Although they’ve never seen anything like verse 10 and may not understand exactly how verse 10 is going to unfold, true believers simply accept that it is true.

2. We should appreciate biblical truth (vv. 11b-12a, 13-14a).

Furthermore, true faith responds by appreciating biblical truth. We all recognize truths that we accept, but don’t appreciate. For example, I accept that my Patriots lost to Eli Manning and his New York Giants again last year in the Super Bowl. I’m not in denial about that; I accept that it happened. But I certainly don’t appreciate it. Giants fans, however, both accept and appreciate that outcome.

True believers not only accept the teaching of Scripture; they also appreciate it as beneficial. In this case study, they actually anticipate Jesus’ return with joy. Three times, the apostle describes their response as (lit.) “expectantly awaiting” (vv. 12, 13, 14—“look for,” KJV; “wait for,” NET). As this word is used throughout the New

Testament, we see that it includes both a waiting for a future event to happen and an eager certainty about that coming event (cf. Matthew 11:3; Luke 8:40; Acts 10:24).

Illustration: The idea is similar to what is expressed when a host says, “Come in! We’ve been expecting you” (cf. Matthew 24:50), but with even more excitement and satisfaction.

Indeed, brothers and sisters, Jesus’ second coming is both the hope and culmination of our salvation. It will happen; Scripture has certainly predicted it, and our faith has accepted that promise. With joy and excitement, we can await the sound of the trumpet (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11)!²


What makes this particular prediction so joyous is that, while it speaks of negative judgment for that which is cursed by sin (vv. 7, 10, 12b), it also guarantees³ (lit.) “new heavens and a new earth in [both of] which⁴ righteousness resides” (v. 13).


Therefore, in overflowing appreciation for the grace of God in His climactic salvation, true believers are even described as responding to this truth by “hastening” it (v. 12). Indeed, with every fiber of their faith-filled beings, they readily pray, “Maranatha! Lord, come!” (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:22; 1 John 2:28; Revelation 22:20).

Application: [At this point, that idea of “hastening” would make it really easy to hasten to (excuse the pun) application related to holiness, for the passages cited above make it clear that to “hasten” His coming is to be prepared for it through holy living. That application certainly needs to be made and is started immediately in the second main point. Indeed, the whole remainder of this passage (3:14-18) is going to demonstrate that true faith is both profession plus practice; there is no exception. If you really accept and appreciate truth (i.e., profess it), then you

will demonstrate that by applying it (i.e., practice it). Otherwise, you never really accepted it in the first place (James 2:19).

So, that application certainly needs to be made and will be made in this lesson’s second main point. In the meantime, we will just apply the concepts of accepting and appreciating truth, especially the truth of this specific case study.]

 How do we determine whether or not we are accepting and appreciating truth? (1) *Do you argue with what you read and learn in your Bible or hear in preaching?* (2) *Do you read your Bible and listen to preaching?*⁵ (3) *Does truth lead you to meditate more deeply on it and wring out of it every bit of spiritual benefit (cf. Psalm 119:148)?* (4) *Does truth cause you to worship and rejoice in God, the Originator and Teacher of that truth (cf. Psalm 85:10-11; 89:1-2; 119:89-90)?* (5) *Does truth motivate you to share it with others who need its life-giving power (Isaiah 50:4; Titus 1:1-2)?* (6) *Has a recent truth from your Bible reading/study or a sermon made your heart happy (cf. Psalm 19:8)?* (6) *Is truth transforming your attitude, your spirit, your mindset, your evaluations, etc. with the joy and worth of the Lord?*

 With regards to this specific case study: (1) *Is the truth of Jesus’ return something you think about regularly (“expectantly await”)?* (2) *Do you find yourself ever thinking about what it will be like when Jesus returns?* (3) *Are you filled with a fearful joy of seeing your Jesus?* (4) *When you are confronted with the “nasty now-and-now,” are you still able to rejoice in the promise that “the best is yet to come” and that He will “right all wrongs” (cf. Hebrews 10:34)?* (5) *Is this truth helping you walk by faith in what you cannot see (an eternal perspective—Colossians 3:1-4) instead of by sight in what you can see (v. 13)?*

Transition: Returning again to a previous illustration of two paths—one of true faith (chapter 1) and the other of false teaching (chapter 2)—we are reminded again here, quite simply, that as the denial of biblical truth is accompanied by a fitting lifestyle of such denial, so true faith expresses a genuine profession of biblical truth and weds to that a godly practice of that truth.

TRUE FAITH PRACTICES BIBLICAL TRUTH (vv. 14b-18).

We saw in our previous lesson that, in reference to false teachers, sometimes their deception precedes their debauchery (chapter 2), while at other times their debauchery predicates their deception (3:1-10). Either way, its evident that the two go hand-in-hand, and one will lead to the other.

Likewise, true faith *never* evidences itself in the first point only. That kind of faith is a fake faith. This is obvious when you remember from point 1 that part of professing biblical truth in this case study is both accepting and appreciating it, and we saw such appreciation under the concept of “hastening the coming of the Day of the Lord” (v. 12). 1 Corinthians 16:22 and 1 John 2:28 make it clear that there can be no obedience to that concept of “hastening” this prophetic event unless there is also an accompanying holiness to prepare for that event. In other words, we know whether or not our heart attitude before our Lord Jesus really is “hastening” His coming by looking at our lives and seeing if there is any holiness. “Hastening” Christians are holy Christians, and there are no exceptions. You can say that you are “expectantly awaiting” Jesus’ return, but if you are not “purifying yourself as He is pure” (1 John 3:3), then your faith appears to be fake and your profession (point 1) false.⁶

Verses 11-12 ask the question: since true faith professes belief in Jesus’ second coming, (lit.) “what sort [of people] is it necessary for us to be”? The word “necessary” has the idea of “fitting” at least or “compulsion” at most. There is a certain practice that is absolutely necessary to authenticate true faith’s profession. In this case study, true faith professes belief in Jesus’ second coming, and then complements that with (lit.) “holy behavior and godliness” (v. 11). This is just what true faith does. In our particular case study, a true profession in biblical truth will lead to transformed practice (i.e., “holy behavior and godliness”) in at least three areas.

Notice again, though, as we saw in chapter 1, faith’s natural production is accomplished through our cooperation and spirit-

filled effort. Thus, as in 1:5 (also 1:10, 15), we are admonished here to “be diligent to be found” righteous in our practice. Even that word “found” expresses our need to be active in this process:

The Greek verb...[for] “found” is the same as is found in v. 10, translated “laid bare.” In typical Petrine fashion, a conceptual link is made by the same linkage of terms. The point of these two verses thus becomes clear: When the heavens disappear and the earth and its inhabitants are stripped bare before the throne of God, they should strive to make sure that their lives are pure and that they have nothing to hide.⁷

1. **Our “faith” should affect our relationship with God (vv. 14-15a).**

A professed belief in Jesus’ return sanctifies our relationship with God in at least three ways.

a. **Peace with God**

As we recognize that we will indeed see Jesus and be judged by Him at His appearing (2 Corinthians 5:10), we strive to be found “at peace” with Him now (v. 14). This is the natural byproduct of exercising our diligence for a second purpose.

b. **Purity before God**

We should extend effort towards being (lit.) “spotless and blameless before Him” (v. 14). We know from 1 Peter 1:19 that there is only one spotless One—“a Lamb, namely Christ” (NET). If we are in Him, we know that we have been clothed with His unblemished righteousness. Nonetheless, our practice can look far from spotless if we are stained by the world (James 1:27), are discontent and argumentative in our ministries (Philippians 2:14-15), or fail in our duties as servants of Christ (1 Timothy 6:14). Therefore, we must allow truth to wash and rewash us so that we are found “spotless” before Him (Ephesians 5:26-27).

The idea that we should be spotless and blameless “before Him” reminds us that external moralism is not enough here. Since “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do [i.e., to whom we are accountable” (Hebrews 4:13), we must do battle against the lordship of our lusts in our hearts. Whereas false teachers are led by their lusts (cf. 2:10; 3:3), true believers will live all their lives, say all their words, and think all their thoughts with the recognition that “Thou, God, seest me” (Genesis 16:13) and “Thou, God, will hold me accountable.” What a practical aid belief is to proper behavior!



Application: What is going on if such professed belief is not curtailing my behavior? *I may not have really accepted and grown to appreciate that truth (3:11-13). I may be “deliberately suppressing” the truth (3:5). I may not have faith or may not have added to it a submission to Jesus’ lordship (1:1-7).*

c. **Perspective on God**

Finally, according to verse 15, a genuinely professed belief in Jesus’ coming will adjust my perspective on God. The word “account” means to reason through and come to a conclusion. It was used in 1:13 and 2:13, and most recently and helpfully in 3:19. The reiteration of the word “patience” in verse 15 further proves that Peter is exhorting true believers to have a different perspective on God’s “delay” than the false teachers. While they regard God’s patience with either denial or licence, true believers must regard it as an opportunity for “salvation.” While an evangelistic application here is certainly appropriate (especially in light of God’s heartbeat expressed in 3:9), the primary application seems to be for individual believers to recognize what God is wanting to accomplish in their own lives during this “delay” on earth.

Application: Does your perspective on what you’re doing on earth before you die need to change? Do you recognize just how purposefully God has ordained to diligently use all the events of today to transform you into the image of His Son so that you are “found before Him” in purity and peace (cf. Romans 8:28-30; James 1:2-4)? This verse reminds us when we are prone to lessen our effort and diligence that God never lessens His. This time on earth is purposeful—it is for our “salvation”; it is so that we have an opportunity to experience His gracious salvation in ways that would be lost if He merely glorified us all now.



What perspectives about God would be lost if God immediately glorified us upon our justification—if sanctification were skipped? *open discussion*

2. **Our “faith” should affect our response to truth (vv. 15b-17).**

In his final few verses, Peter again takes an opportunity to practice 1:12-15 and establish us in truth. Indeed, if we are genuine professors in biblical authority, then we will respond to its truth in three ways.

a. **We should be sure as to its reliability.**


Peter has already addressed this issue in 1:16-21. Here, he briefly returns to it, and a few observations are helpful. First, Peter considered Paul’s writings to have equal authority with the Old Testament and therefore to indeed be Scripture. The statement that the “unlearned and unstable wrest [Paul’s writings] as they do also the other Scriptures” (v. 16) clearly reveals this. Secondly, Peter recognized that this was so, only because of the “wisdom given unto him” by God (v. 15; i.e., Paul was “carried along by the Holy Spirit,” 1:21). Paul’s writings, like the eyewitness Peter’s, were indeed inspired by God and not by Paul’s imagination or impulse (cf. 1:20-21; 2

Timothy 3:16). Thirdly, Peter is writing to the same people to whom Paul⁸ had previously written (v. 15). His message is no different, because his source of authority is the same as Paul's (cf. 1:19-21).⁹

b. We should study it for wisdom.

In the gracious wisdom of God, some truths have been kept secret for God alone, while others “belong unto us and to our children forever” (Deuteronomy 29:29). Since He is almighty infinite God, we will never fully know Him, but in our Bible He has revealed Himself in a unified, comprehensive, even repetitive¹⁰ manner. Peter wrote two biblical books (v. 1), and Paul contributed several others (v. 16), and those “books making up a book” need to be studied so that we might understand the “wisdom” of God (v. 15).

The necessity for diligent study of God's Word is further highlighted by the difficulty of the task. Peter admits that (lit.) “in [Paul's letters] some things are hard to understand” (v. 16).¹¹ Those who refuse to study carefully and under the spirit's control—the “unlearned and unstable [cf. 2:14]” false teachers—end up “wresting,” twisting, or distorting¹² the biblical teaching, thereby bringing “destruction” upon themselves (v. 16; cf. Galatians 1:8-9; Revelation 22:18-19).¹³

 **Application:** How can we avoid “twisting” Scripture “to our own destruction” when we study it? (1) *“A significant principle is seen here: The primary proof texts used for faith and practice ought to be the clear passages that are undisputed in their meaning. Heresy today is still largely built on obscure texts.”*¹⁴ (2) *Practice deference regarding interpretations of difficult passages.* (3) *Be sure to prayerfully rely on the Holy Spirit to provide illumination in your Bible study (v. 18).* (4) *Interpret Scripture by Scripture, especially since Peter intimated*

here that certain themes run throughout. (5) Know what are the marks of false teaching and false teachers so that you can avoid it (cf. 2:1-3:10).

c. We should secure our commitment to it.

Peter has given us a warning here lest we treat God's Word casually. He has shared these things with us ahead of time (i.e., “seeing you know these things before[hand]”), so that we can be on our guard or protected (“beware”; cf. 2:5 where the word was used to speak of God “protecting” Noah). The danger, of course, is that we become one of those “unstable souls” (2:14) who is “led away [or astray]” by the deception and debauchery (lit. “deception of the lawless”; cf. 2:7) of these false teachers and thereby “falls [away] from our own steadfastness” (v. 17).

The contrast couldn't be more apparent: either we are “steadfast” and strengthened (Gk. *sterigmos*) true believers or we are “unstable” (Gk. *asteriktos*) false professors. The difference is how we respond to biblical truth. May this warning encourage us to secure our commitment to (or, renew a “firm grasp on,” NET) the plain truth of God's Word.

3. Our “faith” should affect our recognition of reality (v. 18).

Finally, those who have the true faith of 1:1-4 allow that profession to transform their understanding of reality. No longer is their Christianity an afterthought, an add-on, a convenience, a nuisance, etc. No longer do they allow their faith to just float, coast, take care of itself, etc. No, they recognize that their faith is the most important thing about them. They understand that their whole identity is wrapped up in who Jesus has made them. They understand the inescapable reality that that under the lordship of Jesus, they have both a great need and a great responsibility every moment of every day.

a. We are dependent upon Jesus.

True believers know their inability, deception's power (2:1-3), and Christ's sufficiency (1:1-4). Therefore, their final word on the issue is, "I need grace today. I need Jesus today." They actively depend upon and "grow in" the grace of the knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to stabilize and sanctify them.

Application: While it sounds simplistic, Peter ends his epistle by exhorting believers to the most basic and most necessary of spiritual disciplines—"read your Bible and pray." These are indeed the channels through which the grace of Jesus is extended (cf. Acts 20:32; Hebrews 4:16). These are the means through which a relationship with Jesus is cultivated, and if you doubt that He is sufficient, you need to preach the gospel to yourself again and rehearse the precious nature of your faith (cf. 1:1-4).

b. We must worship Jesus.

In light of everything we've learned throughout this letter, this should go without saying. And, in a sense, it does. Peter doesn't command his readers to worship Jesus; rather, he signs off by leading us in worship: (lit.) "to Him be the glory both now and into that eternal day. Amen!" Brothers and sisters, the very substance of our faith is that Jesus has restored our relationship with God (1 Peter 3:18) and provided for us every possible spiritual blessing (Romans 8:32; Ephesians 1:3; 2 Peter 1:1-4). There is no other reasonable or appropriate response to that than sheer, wholehearted, unending praise to Jesus.

If our hearts are still too "routine," unthinking, apathetic, calloused, or cold to render to Jesus such unhindered glory, consider another certain prophecy that shows us what will be the theme of all eternity.

And they sung a new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof, for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth."... "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing." (Revelation 5:9-10, 12)

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. (Revelation 21:23).

If true faith accepts, appreciates, and applies such passages, then let us anticipate the eternal chorus by extolling the name of Jesus now in our hearts, homes, and church.

Application: While worship is not merely vocal in what we say, but also visible in the way we live (i.e., Jesus is worshipped when we "add to our faith" His excellence—1 Peter 2:9), true believers must not be shy about their fervent and grateful love for the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. When we chose to let His honor fill our mouths, we cannot help but find it permeating our hearts, too (Psalm 107:2).



From our study through 2 Peter, what specifically have you learned or been reminded about regarding Jesus that stirs your heart to honor Him? *open discussion*



If you could look into the face of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ right now, how would you express your grateful praise to Him? *open discussion*

CONCLUSION

"To [Jesus] be the glory both now and into that eternal day. Amen!"

ENDNOTES

¹ We noted in endnote 2 last week that the word for “pure” in verse 1 is *eilikrine* which comes from *heile*, meaning “the shining of the sun” and *krino*, meaning “to judge.” The idea, then, is that their minds or their thinking about themselves as believers was “sincere, pure, unsullied, free from spot or blemish to such a degree as to bear examination in the full splendor of the sun” (WSDNT). These were indeed true believers!

² To clarify, there is a difference between the rapture (at which the sound of the trumpet will call the redeemed to meet Jesus in the air) and the Day of the Lord in which Jesus will return in righteous judgment.

³ “According to His promise” in verse 13 shows that this is a guarantee.

⁴ The relative pronoun “which” is plural, demonstrating that both the new heavens and the new earth will be the dwelling place of righteousness.

⁵ You can’t accept and appreciate truth if you don’t know what it is.

⁶ This observation is further substantiated by the grammar in verse 14: (lit.) “Therefore, beloved, since you are expectantly awaiting these things, be diligent to be found...” “Expectantly awaiting” is a causal participle that answers why we should “be diligent to be found” righteous—the answer: “because we are already expectantly awaiting” Jesus’ return.

⁷ *The NET Bible First Edition* (Biblical Studies Press, 2006). Note #49 in verse 14.

⁸ “Peter graciously spoke of his fellow apostle as our beloved brother Paul, underscoring their common life and mission” (John F. MacArthur, Jr., 2 *Peter and Jude*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary [Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005], 134).

⁹ “That Paul had written to these people indicates that they are most likely Gentiles. Further, that Peter is now writing to them suggests that Paul had already died, for Peter was the apostle to the circumcised. Peter apparently decided to write his two letters to Paul’s churches shortly after Paul’s death, both to connect with them personally and theologically (Paul’s gospel is Peter’s gospel) and to warn them of the wolves in sheep’s clothing that would come in to destroy the flock. Thus, part of Peter’s purpose seems to be to anchor his readership on the written documents of the Christian community (both the Old Testament and Paul’s letters) as a safeguard against heretics” (*NET Bible note #53 in verse 15*).

¹⁰ Verse 15-16 literally read, “just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you, as also in all [his] letters, speaking in them about these things.” These verses indicate both that Paul was led by God’s wisdom in “all his letters” (inspiration) and that he spoke about “these things” in all his letters (repetition).

¹¹ “The word rendered hard to understand (*dusnoētos*) carries the additional connotation of ‘difficult to interpret.’ In using this term, Peter was not implying that Paul’s teachings are impossible to understand. He is simply recognizing that some are more complex than others, especially prophetic revelation (cf. 1 Peter 1:1–12)” (MacArthur, 135).

¹² The word literally means “to torture.” Applied figuratively, Louw and Nida define this verb as “to distort the meaning of something in communicating to others—to distort, to misinterpret, to change the meaning of, to explain falsely” (Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. [New York: United Bible Societies, 1996]), 405).

¹³ “Those complexities [in Paul’s writings] opened the door for the untaught and unstable—namely, the false teachers—to distort what Paul taught about the future. Untaught denotes a lack of information, and unstable a vacillating spiritual character. Distort speaks of wrenching someone’s body on a torture rack. The term vividly pictures how the false teachers manipulated certain prophetic issues, twisting them to confuse and deceive the undiscerning. Such distortion often continues today regarding prophetic revelation. Not surprisingly, the false teachers did

not stop with prophecy, but also distorted the rest of the Scriptures, including the biblical teaching on God’s law, repentance, justification by faith, and sanctification” (MacArthur, 135-136).

¹⁴ *NET Bible* note #56 in verse 16.