

2 Peter 3:15-16

“The Fight of Faith”

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I. Intro

Peter has some final points to make in this little letter before he closes it with a strong exhortation in 3:17-18. The letter as a whole is an “Encouragement against discouragement” and if we skip down to verse 17 we know the aim of this exhortation as Peter writes; “*You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also FALL FROM YOUR OWN STEADFASTNESS, being led away with error of the wicked.*” Here Peter tells the Christian of the greatest danger facing the follower of Christ... “Our Fall from or own Stability in Christ”! We Christians love to talk about the things that are aimed at us from a fallen world system, we love to talk about some in the government wanting to shut down churches from meeting, but the truth is many Christians haven’t been meeting for years! We live in an “unstable world” but again the truth is that our biggest problem isn’t the “government mandates” it is the professing follower of Christ who has fallen from their OWN Steadfastness. I have heard many a pastor quote Hebrews 10:25 as the basis of forsaking the governmental orders of not gathering together as a church but they need to read the context of this passage again as it reads: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” This exhortation isn’t aimed at defiance against a tyrannical governmental mandate, NO it’s an exhortation aimed at the lack of steadfastness of the believers and followers of Jesus who have “fallen from the lack of steadfastness in their own faith.” The greatest need for the follower of Jesus who has been established in grace is to strive to

continue in it. We do so against the tide of discouraging of trials that will take a determined awareness NOT to be led away! It is a similar warning as Paul's to the Galatians in 3:3 where is wrote; "*Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?*" This morning we will examine this exhortation of Peter to understand not only the reasons why we FALL FROM YOUR OWN STEADFASTNESS but the antidote to do so.

II. Vs. 15a Consider that

Vs. 15a First we will examine, according to the entirety of the letter, the three main areas of attack against our stability.

- A. First, in 2:9 and 3:4 we see that there was great pressure place upon the "the seeming delay of the return of the Lord." We have looked at this extensively but clearly Peter needed to continue to "remind them always so that they would be established in this present truth", 1:12. Throughout this letter Peter prepares them as did Jesus of the reality that in this life you will have trials and tribulations. It shouldn't be a surprise as we have been warned beforehand. This is important so that discouragement based upon ignorance and the lack of information can be thwarted. No one likes "bad surprises" the unexpected suddenness of unknown adversity can shake a person lose from their stability in Christ, so Peter has reminded them that such adversity is what is to be expected and he does so ahead of time so as to that they may say, "Oh, Jesus spoke of these trials and tribulations, but we can be of good courage because He has overcome the world!" God has taken great effort in His word to prepare us as much for "WHAT IS COMING" as He has for "HIS COMING" and our problem with discouragement is because we have ignored the FIRST message and only focused upon the second. Consider Paul's words in Gal. 6:9 "Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we SHALL REAP if we do not lose heart." It is losing heart that is the greatest thief to our reaping in due season!
- B. Second, in 2:12-22 Peter speaks of "The lies of false teachers" that had been effective in shaking the follower of Jesus away from the stability of the firm foundation in Jesus. We will not revisit all of their lies but clearly in verse 17 Peter was concerned that such lies were having an effect upon the believers as he says that they were endanger of being, "led away with the error of the wicked." It is not an easy thing to be a Christian in these days of information age. Sometimes I think that the greatest false teaching isn't "miss teaching" but the lack of "teaching". So much of what is being heard in our churches today isn't necessarily "untrue" it just isn't "THE TRUTH"! Due to increased challenges facing the church many a pastor's stands against not gathering has granted them a visible platform but with this opportunity instead of teaching the word of God they have spent their time talking more about their defiance which neither glorifies God nor further His kingdom....please pastors "stop talking about Covid".
- C. Finally, it is clear that Peter is not offering "New information" instead he need to

remind them as their problem was **NOT** in a lack of knowledge but rather in a lack of application of what they already knew. As such the third and most difficult area that attacked their stability in Jesus is clearly stated in verse 17 was their “**Own propensity towards instability and laziness.**” We need only to look at our own life and we will discover **the amazing determination and effort we possess with regards to our pursuits to achieve what interests us and at the same time examine the lack of determination when the beneficiary is the Glory of God and the furtherance of His Kingdom! Our instability has far more to do with apathy, indifference, and laziness than we are willing to admit.** And the truth is my mentioning this fact could very well be the reason someone uses to leave this Church and seek another as they didn’t want it pointed out! It takes an extremely great obstacle for something or someone to stand in between a person for what their heart longs for as they will endure anything in its pursuit. But when it is the things of God, loyalty to the gospel and the furtherance of His kingdom the smallest of inconvenience will stop any and all progress! This points out the true problem...it is that my heart is longing for the wrong things. Jesus said this in Matt 6:19-21 “*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*”

Having shown this throughout the entirety of 2 Peter the question next is what is the antidote to

FALL FROM YOUR OWN STEADFASTNESS?

III. Vs. 15b-16 Truths about stability

Vs. 15b-16 Before we look at what enables the believer not to “fall away from our own steadfastness” in light of what is often brought forth in the Church as cures from this illness I’m taken back by **what Peter doesn’t mention.** The fact that Peter doesn’t bring up these popular remedies can only suggest a few things:

1. They were not know yet and the treatment in the Word of God lacked insight that today’s church now has available. To believe this I would have to be incredible arrogant and have a view of a large man and a small God and that for me takes faith that I cannot possess.
2. That today’s remedies are not part of the cure but rather symptoms of the illness! This is the only position that I can agree with! As **Peter doesn’t bring up any appeal in four areas that all the Christian pop philosophies do:**
 - a. **Effort:** I see no words of Peter aimed at human will power and grit! He doesn’t say, “**Try harder...put you back into it!**” Peter’s antidote has nothing to do with human effort as he is well aware that just like in the garden the night of Jesus arrest when asked to stay awake he could not and fell asleep!
 - b. **Education:** Neither is this an appeal for further education or catch phrases when facing difficulties and adversity. Peter doesn’t say, “**Well brothers...there is no use of crying over spilt milk!**” Peter doesn’t say, “**Just keep looking up....keep**

positive....what's the use of complaining!"

- c. **Exercise**: Another thing Peter doesn't say or exhort is half time rally cry, "***Do you best team... and let Jesus do the rest!***" No amount of practice will keep us from falling from our own steadfastness if we do not have the right thing to start with!
- d. **Experience**: Finally, Peter makes no appeal to their past experiences, "***I know things haven't turned out as you expected, and the Lord hasn't returned but think on all the positive mountain top experiences you've had....look at them and cheer yourself up!***"

Having said that Peter gives "What can keep the believer stable!" And he says it is, "***The longsuffering of our Lord***" as such "***Longsuffering is salvation***"! In other words, the thing that we need to be stable is the very thing that caused us to be stable in the first place... "The Word of God" or more specifically the gospel! We confront the contradictions in our life that come about through adversity and stick to the word! We must not fall into the trap of using what we don't know to interpret what we do know! We don't always know the purpose of the circumstances in our life, but we do know in Whose Hand they have passed through, and we must use Him who we know to interpret what we don't know. Peter does this by reminding them of the security and stability of the WORD OF GOD!

1. Notice the words of Peter with regards to Paul's letters: In verse 16 Peter writes that **in all Paul's letters**, even though some of the things that Paul wrote are difficult to comprehend, people try to twist or choke out the truth as they did the **rest of the scriptures!** **The amazing aspect of Peter's statement is that even at this early date Peter affirms the inspiration of Paul's letters as being equal to the first testament as well as the gospels.** Paul's letters are God's Word not Paul's opinions! We don't need human wisdom when we can open our bibles and read God's truths that transform! The choice is simple: **Man's wisdom or God's wisdom!**
2. Next notice the descriptive words Peter uses to describe Paul as, "**our BELOVED brother**". These words in light of the history of Peter and Paul reveals that Peter had already overcome the greatest obstacle that hinders our stability in our faith....**Pride which keeps us from being teachable.** You remember Paul's description of their disagreement in Galatians 2:11-13 as it says that: "***When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles.***" How wonderful it is in the first century church that when corrected a man like Peter could take such correction and still recognize that the instrument God choose to use didn't keep him from growing in grace!
3. I also notice that Peter is ready to admit that some of the things of God's word through Paul were "***hard to understand***". But the difficulty in understanding must never be an excuse for our lack of stability. **The best gems are often found in the hardest rocks, so**

stay at the work as you will be rewarded if you remain. But it is certain that you will never gain the treasure if you leave the dig! It is here that I want to give you several truths that will enable you to be a successful minor in God's word:

- A. **Study the word carefully and with heart that desire to learn!**
- B. **Study the whole of scripture not just topics!**
- C. **Study with an open mind so that you will have an open heart!**
- D. **Study with a broken heart to grow more in love with Jesus!**
- E. **Study with a bended knee praying the truths into your own life!**