

Watch Yourself II Peter 3:17

Life at times can be just like a Michigan road – full of potholes and patches. In her book 100 Most Dangerous Things In Everyday Life and What You Can Do About Them, she takes a tongue in cheek look at some things that can be hazardous to our health, things that are unnoticed threats in life. Did you know that shopping carts cause over 27,000 injures in the US.

If there is ever a reason to stop washing dishes and go to paper plates it's the fact that dishwashers harm more than 7,000 people in our country.

Even though it's filled with facts, the book is meant to poke fun at the things we fear. Jesus called His followers to a life of faith with a goal of pursuing the mission of God in the world. As a Christian there isn't anything to be afraid of in terms of what is coming. Peter talked about the day of the Lord as a day of complete destruction. It's the end of the world as we know it. Instead we are to look forward to the promise of the day of God, a day which begins eternity. Until that day arrives Peter points out how we are to live. We are to be holy and godly living a life that is spotless and blameless.

From our passage today in II Peter 3:17 Peter gives some closing remarks – two really for us to think carefully about. They are a reminder that we should live in complete confidence in God. As we draw closer each day to the Lord's coming again we need to be ready.

It's an expectation that helps to prepare us
It's an exhortation that helps to protect us

I. IT'S AN EXPECTATION THAT HELPS TO PREPARE US

“Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this.”

The word “therefore” is a term of conclusion. It

looks back at all that was said and provides a concluding comment. It's looking to a result. We again note one final time Peter's affection for these believers. We have talked in the past that the term is used for endearment and for empathy and for encouragement.

In 3:1-2 the beloved were to be mindful

In 3:8 the beloved were not to be ignorant

In 3:14 the beloved were to be diligent

In 3:17 the beloved were to beware

It's a call to be engaged. A person who is alert and expectant is less likely to be taken by surprise. He won't be caught off guard. Because he cares for them Peter wants them to be prepared.

I'm more likely to listen to someone who genuinely cares for me than I am a complete stranger. This final word is Peter's way of telling his readers to sit up and pay attention. “What I have to say is out of love for you and I want you to be ready for whatever is coming. Pay attention, this is serious stuff and I'm telling you all this because I deeply care about you and what happens to you.”

But rather than repeat everything he just said he makes a simple statement – “You already know this”. That phrase is one word in the Greek.

Proginosko

Pro means before

Ginosko means know

It literally means then to know before.

From it we get our English word prognosis. It means to know beforehand based on previous knowledge or experience.

You go to the doctor following some tests and he gives you a prognosis. He's looked at your tests, shares the results options and chances of recovery. With that prognosis, a patient is better able to prepare himself or herself with what is ahead and what the issues along the way might be.

A weatherman looks at the conditions that are

developing out at sea and begins to make a prognosis about a pending hurricane and develops a number of models as to where it will hit on land and what to expect in terms of inches of rain, wind speed and ocean swell. The prognosis helps residents in those areas to be able to prepare knowing what to expect.

Peter has given his readers a prognosis. It's stuff he says they already know so he's not going to lay it all out again. The term has no expressed object attached to it. It could be the specifics of the preceding verses about how to live in light of the Lord's coming or about how false teachers will distort the truth of God's Word or it could refer to the whole letter.

Whatever the case may be it serves as a warning on what to expect and how to be prepared. They are to expect false teachers who will teach error in an attempt to lead them astray so be prepared by living according to God's divine power and promises that will help them escape the corruption of the world.

They are to expect certain character traits of false teachers like an immoral lifestyle and greed.

They are to expect them to be in churches teaching their false doctrine to lead them astray so be prepared by adding to their faith, goodness and knowledge and self-control and perseverance and godliness and kindness and love.

They are to expect the day of the Lord which will be a series of horrific events for the purpose of destroying the earth and those false teachers and essentially all those who follow them so be prepared by the same faith as Noah and Lot who were rescued from destruction by faith.

They are to expect the day of God which is the eternal destiny of those who have been saved by faith through Christ standing strong in the Word that was given through the prophets.

It has been said that to be forewarned is to be forearmed. If you know in advance what is coming, you are better prepared.

Because both Peter and Paul had taught them about such things they should live as followers of Christ and pursue godliness and holiness. They would prepare them for all the stuff that was going to come their way. Essentially it meant that they had no excuse not to be ready.

Jesus told the story about the 10 virgins waiting for the bridegroom. They knew that he was coming, but didn't know when. Five of them had adequately prepared for his arrival while the other five had not. They were all informed but not all prepared.

That's what Peter is saying in this opening statement. You have been forewarned. There should be an expectation about your preparation. You don't have any excuse if you aren't ready. With what they/we know, appropriate measures can be taken to be ready.

It's an expectation that helps to prepare us.
It's an exhortation that helps to protect us.

II. IT'S AN EXHORTATION THAT HELPS TO PROTECT US

“Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.”

Peter says that we are to be on guard. When two fencers are about to do battle, one will say to the other “on guard”. Essentially it means to get ready. Be careful to avoid getting tricked or taken by surprise. Be alert. Be vigilant. Be ready. It can also mean to protect. It comes from the root word which means to be a watchman.

It's the same word used in Luke 2:8 of the

shepherds who kept watch over their flocks in the field.

In II Thessalonians 3:3 Paul tells Timothy that the Lord protects him from the evil one.

In I Timothy 6:20 Paul exhorts Timothy to guard or protect what has been entrusted to him.

In II Timothy 1:14 Paul tells Timothy to guard or protect sound teaching.

In Jesus's prayer in John 17:15-17 He asks the Father to protect his followers from the evil one and to sanctify them or make them holy through the Word of Truth.

Peter expresses this term as a command that is to be for life, make it a daily habit. Don't ever stop being on guard.

The attack of the enemy won't stop so you don't stop guarding or protecting. Don't stop being alert. There is always an enemy that we have to be watching for and protect from.

Peter exhorts believers to be on guard. But be on guard for what? He mentions two things.

A. Be On Guard Against Deception

They knew the truth but knowledge alone wasn't sufficient to protect them. They needed to be on guard.

"be on guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men"

Your translation may have "wicked". Both words mean to without morals. They are like the people in Noah's day who did every imagination of the thoughts of his heart. Their heart was continuously evil.

We are to guard against these kinds of people

because their intent is to deceive and lead astray, lead away from the truth.

I hope you will consider coming to the next Creation Matters. The topic is on marks of a cult. With the growing number of cults that are forming truth how can you tell what's right and what's wrong? It sounds so much like what the Bible says and maybe they quote from the Bible. That video will deal with how we can know what a cult looks like.

False teachers either misquote or misinterpret the Bible. They want to mislead you from the truth.

That's what the devil did in the garden when he confronted Eve.

Genesis 3:1-5

Four little words caused Eve to doubt or question God. "Did God really say?"

Not only did Satan misquote what God said, casting doubt in the mind of Eve, but she also misquoted what God had said.

It resulted in being incorrectly interpreted and the rest, as they say, is history.

How important it is to know the Word of God to help protect you.

"Be on guard so you won't be carried away by the error of lawless or wicked men."

The word implies here that both the false teacher and the person being led astray are both being carried away by error.

About this J. I. Packer writes: the "implication is that keeping company with false teachers or those who follow them will inevitably cause the believer to also be led astray. People not grounded in the truth can find themselves led away by arguments that seem logical or beliefs that seem easier to understand."

The essence of Psalm 1:1 is that a person who walks, stands and sits with the ungodly will not be blessed. They will be led to follow the wicked.

If these believers Peter was writing to weren't on guard they were in danger of being led astray by error.

II Peter 2:18 says that false teachers "mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error."

In contrast the believer grounded in the faith, according to II John 1-2, "knows the truth, and because of the truth, [that truth] lives in us and will be with us forever."

We are to be on guard against those who would lead us into error, those who would cause us to wander from the path of truth.

That's the first thing we are to be on guard against. Be on guard against deception.

The second is to be on guard against downfall.

B. Be On Guard Against Downfall

If the Word of God is the foundation for the believer, it stands to reason that when you take that foundation away, the fall is inevitable.

"be on your guard so that you may not...fall from your secure position."

Now, before I say anything else, I need to be abundantly clear here about one very important truth from this verse. This verse does not mean that a person can lose his/her salvation. That's not what it means when it says that you will fall from your secure position.

It is the word *sterigmou* in the Greek and means to be steadfast, or to be secure or firm or make strong. It's the same word used in 1:12. (Turn back there)

If they were seduced by false teachers they would

be in danger of wavering from and rejecting the truth. In essence, you can fall from steadfastness, standing firm in faith. To fall is to become unstable.

John MacArthur helps us here when he writes: "Peter's concern wasn't that his readers would fall from salvation, but that they might slip from doctrinal stability and lose their confidence in the truth."

We might go back to back to Satan's words in the garden "did God really say."

I Corinthians 16:13

Ephesians 4:11-14

Psalm 1:1-3

Now when we conclude our study of II Peter next week we will see Peter's recommendation for ensuring that we stand firm in our faith on the Word of God to help us stand firm and guard against the deception of false teaching – "But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

That's the key to effectively standing strong and being steadfast.

That's the key to having a firm foundation that won't crumble.

That's the key to standing guard.

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!

Jesus asked the Father on behalf of all His followers in John 17:17 to "Sanctify them by Your truth; Your Word is Truth."

Is it our desire to love His Word as the Psalmist who declared "Oh, how I love Your law! I meditate on it all day long." (Psalm 119:97)

Psalm 19:10-11 “They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than hone, than honey from the comb. By them Your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.”

Unwavering faith is built on the firm foundation of God’s Word.

There are a lot of dangers out in the world. Many want to get us sidetracked or derailed. Peter is giving us a warning to heed. He wants to prepare us. He wants to protect us. The best way is to be in God’s Word regularly. From it we are warned. By obeying it there is great reward.

To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

If you don’t know the Word well, any way may seem right. Don’t be led astray or fall. Stand on guard using the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. That is how we stand against the enemy.

On what are you building the foundation of your faith?