

In Peter chapter 3, we will be looking at verses 1 through 7. Now, throughout this book, as you likely know by now, Peter, writing by divine inspiration, has been addressing false teachers in the church. Now, as we come to chapter 3, you see that one of the doctrines these false teachers were denying was the coming judgment. And how does Peter respond to their denial of the coming judgment? Well, he responds to them by going back to the Bible. Now, this isn't something that Peter is just doing for the first time here in chapter three.

If you think about it, all throughout this book, Peter has been going back to the Bible. Remember how chapter one concludes. Chapter one concludes with a declaration about the clarity, sufficiency, and authority of the Bible. What we've just seen in chapter two is Peter repeatedly going back to the Bible. In chapter two, he references Noah and Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah, and Balaam, and he quotes from the book of Proverbs.

What is he doing? He is going back to the Bible. And as you come to chapter 3, and he addresses the false teachers' denial of the coming judgment, what does he do? He goes back to the Bible. You see, when Peter is addressing the false teachers, he does not appeal to philosophy. He does not appeal to human opinions or even to himself. He goes straight to the authoritative Word of God.

And the reason Peter is doing this is because the Bible is the final authority for faith and for practice. The Bible is the final authority for what you are to believe about God and what duty God requires of man. Your experience is not the final authority. Your philosophy or the philosophy of the world around you is not the final authority for what you are to believe about God and how you are to live your life. It is the authoritative word of God. This is why Peter continues to go back to the Bible. And so with this in mind, let us pray and then we will hear the reading and preaching of the word from 2 Peter 3. Let us pray.

Almighty God, unless the Lord builds a house, those who labor, labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. Unless you, O God, pour out your Holy Spirit, the word is preached in vain. O God, you are jealous for your glory.

You tell us in your word. Make your jealousy for your glory known through the proclamation of your word and the reading of it now. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen. 2 Peter 3, verses 1 through 7, this is the word of God. This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved.

In both of them, I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles. Knowing this, first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, where is the promise of his coming?

For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation. For they deliberately overlooked this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God. And that by means of these, the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word, the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Sends a reading of God's holy word. May he bless the reading and now the proclamation of it to our lives. Well, in our passage this morning, you are called to go back to the Bible and you are called to go back to the Bible for two reasons. Go back to the Bible first to remember the truth. But second, go back to the Bible to be changed by the Bible. So first, go back to the Bible to remember the truth.

You see this in verses one and two. Verse one begins, this is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. Peter begins here by mentioning that this is the second letter that he has written to them. Now the first letter he wrote to them is probably a reference to the book of 1 Peter. And you'll see there in verse one that he calls them beloved.

And he will call them beloved three more times in this chapter. in verse 8, in verse 14, and in verse 17. This shows his deep love for these churches. And it is actually this deep love for these churches that made him so boldly opposed to the false teaching. It was because of his love for Christ and Christ's bride, the church, that he was so vehemently opposed to these false teachers.

Imagine men here in the room this morning that your best friend's wife was under attack. Surely if that happened, you would intervene. You would try to defend her. Why? Because your best friend's wife is under attack. Peter's best friend is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus' bride is the church. Peter sees his best friend, Christ, sees his bride under attack, and so he is defending her. That's what makes him so vehemently opposed. It is his love for Christ and for his church that makes him so opposed to the false teachers.

He goes on in verse one and says, in both of them, that is these letters, I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder. In these words, Peter is stating that he has just been trying to remind them of things they already know. In this letter, he is not trying to tell his readers anything new.

He uses this word, stir up. This word stir up means to wake up. Just like you might wake someone up from physical sleep, Peter is saying that he is trying to wake them up from spiritual slumber. He wants them to be awake. He wants them to be ready. And when I was growing up, my pastor used to say, if I wake you up at 3 a.m., you better be able to give me the definition of justification. Now thankfully he never came over and put us to the test, but he was trying to make a point, and his point was simply this.

These glorious doctrines ought to be part of our bloodstream. They ought to be infused into the way that you think, into the way that you live. The person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ should not be like a dusty book on the shelf that you occasionally pull off and read. The person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the wonders of what he has done to bring you from eternal death to eternal life should be a glorious reality that you marvel at regularly and the doctrines that flow from this should be infused into you such that you are stirred up by way of reminder, by these things that perhaps you already know.

And how are they going to be stirred up by way of reminder? Well, he goes on to tell you it is by going back to the Bible, look at verse two, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of

the Lord and Savior through your apostles. Now, what does it mean for them to remember the holy prophets and the apostles? Well, this means they are to remember the truths of the Bible. The holy prophets is a reference to the Old Testament. And the commandment of the Lord through the apostles is a reference to the teaching of Jesus through the apostles.

And I ask you, where are you going to go to learn about the teachings of Jesus through the apostles? You're going to learn about that from the Bible. And so Peter is essentially saying to them, I want you to be stirred up by going back to the Bible and being reminded of the truth again and again and again. You are facing these false teachers. They are trying to persuade you of error. Go back to the Bible. Test it against the light of God's word.

It has been said that those who specialize in studying counterfeit money, spend the majority of their time studying the real money so that they can quickly identify the false money, the fake bills. In the same sort of way, Peter is saying, you need to know the truth as it is found in the Bible so that you can quickly identify the faults, the errors. You don't need to spend most of your time, beloved, studying the latest philosophy. I'm not saying you can't read a blog or even read a big book if you really want to on some sort of philosophy. But the reality is, if you know the truth, you'll be able to very quickly spot the error. And so he is saying, you need to know your Bible. and be reminded of those truths so that you can spot error and identify it. Peter's readers already knew the truth, yet they must go back to the Bible to remember the truth.

What does this have to say to us today? It says we must continually go back to the Bible. We are forgetful people. You walk into a room, and you forget why you walked into the room. If that happens, Why would you think that you wouldn't be forgetful about spiritual realities? You need the reminders of the truth of the Bible. You will forget them on a daily basis.

And so you need to continually go back to the Bible. All week long, the world, the flesh, and the devil is wanting you to forget the truths found in God's word. And so to fight the forgetfulness of your flesh, the world, and the devil, You need to be in the word.

One of the things that Jamie mentioned last week in his Sunday school class was the importance of reading the whole Bible. And that's really on display here with the reference to the prophets and the apostles. You need to not just read the portions of the Bible that you like. You need to read the whole Bible. You need to read it from start to finish and continually read the whole Bible throughout your life. If you want to know who God is, you need to read your Bible. If you want to know how you're supposed to live your life, you need to read the Bible.

So let me just encourage you then with this, read the Bible, be in the word. But secondly, go back to the Bible to be changed by the Bible. And this is very crucial because as we expound upon this point, to go back to the Bible, to be changed by the Bible, This is a crucial difference between the believer and the false teachers. They may have gone to the Bible at some level. In fact, we know that they did because later on we'll talk about how they twisted the scriptures towards the end of chapter 3. But they didn't go to the Bible to be changed by it.

And we're going to see that as we expound on verses 3 through 7. Look at verse three, it begins, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing following their own sinful desires. He makes it clear here

that scoffers are certain to come in. He says they will come in. So don't be surprised if people mock the church. Don't be surprised if people are against God's people. They will be, they are.

Verse 3 says that this is going to happen in the last days. Now the last days are the time between Christ's ascension and Christ's return. That means that you and I are living in the last days because we are living in the time between Christ's ascension and Christ's return. The book of Hebrews puts it this way. Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets. But in these last days, that is, since Christ has come, he has spoken to us by his son. So right now, we are living in the last days just as much as a first century Christian on the other side of Christ's ascension.

But what you really need to see about these false teachers in verse 3 is that they are following themselves. They are following their own sinful desires, verse 3 says. Instead of God's Word being their final authority for faith and for practice, Instead of God's Word being the ultimate authority in their lives to tell them what they are to believe about God and what duty God requires of man, they themselves are their final authority for what they are to believe about God and for what duty God requires of man, how they are to live their lives and what they should believe about God. They make themselves their final authority. Now, what's the problem with this according to verse three? What's the problem with following yourself? Well, the self is sinful. They're following their own sinful desires. So when the unbeliever tries to determine what he should believe about God, or if there even is a God, Or when the unbeliever tries to determine how he should live his life, he starts with his sinful self.

And as a result, he totally misses the mark. He comes to completely wrong conclusions. It's like a ship that is sailing across the ocean, and it begins just slightly off target. What happens when that ship gets all the way across the ocean? It totally misses the destination. And that's the way the unbeliever works who's following himself. He starts at the wrong point, and as a result, he ends at the wrong destination. He can't get to the right place because he's starting from the wrong spot.

And this is what you see when you keep going into verse four. Look what they say, because they're starting with themselves. They will say, where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation. So their argument is basically this.

God has not intervened in the past, therefore, why should I think he will intervene in the future? He hasn't intervened in the past, therefore, he will not intervene in the future, therefore, there must be no coming judgment. Now, how does Peter respond to them in verses 5 through 7? Peter responds to them by going back to the Bible. He says to them, in essence, you say that God has not intervened in the past. Therefore, he will not intervene in the future.

But here, false teachers, is where you are wrong. God has intervened in the past. He intervened at creation, verse 5. And he intervened at the flood, verse 6. And he says he is going to intervene in the future, verse 7. Therefore, since he has indeed intervened in the past, You better believe him when he says he's gonna intervene in the future. You're completely mistaken. But the difference really between Peter and the false teachers underlying it all is their starting point. The false teachers start with themselves. Peter starts with the Bible.

And because they start with themselves, they don't ever ask the question, what does God say about the past? What does God say about the future? What they say is, what do I think about the past? What makes sense to mighty me? What makes sense to my life and my worldview? Not what has God spoken? What has he said? If God has spoken, shouldn't man listen to him? If God has spoken, if he has said something to us, Shouldn't we start with his authoritative voice and not our own ideas?

And this is what Peter does in verses five through seven. He starts by going back to the Bible, not himself. He says essentially in verse five, God created by his word. And then he says in verse seven, by that same word, he can judge the creation he has made. So why, if this is a fact, do people not believe it? If all of this which I have spoken is truth, is fact, shouldn't people just believe it? Verse five tells you why they don't. For they deliberately overlook this fact. That word deliberately is so important, isn't it?

It informs you. that this is willful rebellion against God. They do not like the authoritative Word of God, what He has plainly, clearly spoken in the Word. They are deliberately rejecting Him. Deliberately rejecting specifically here the coming judgment.

When a person denies the coming judgment, it is never on the basis of logic and evidence. People deny the coming judgment because they don't like the coming judgment. Haven't you ever woken up in the middle of the night and felt your heartbeat and thought to yourself, one day I'm going to die and I'm going to have to give an account? Or more clearly, from this portion of God's word, the Bible itself declares over and over again the coming judgment. So why does man deny this fact of the coming judgment? It is because man does not like the fact of the coming judgment. It is not a denial based on evidence. It is a denial based on wishful thinking and selfish desire. not wanting to believe what the Scriptures teach.

And so these false teachers, at the end of the day, are intentionally interpreting God's Word and God's world to fit their preconceived ideas and their lifestyles. They want to live a certain way and they want to think a certain way and so they come to the world of God and the Word of God and they interpret those in such a way that it is the world that is changed and the Word of God that is changed while they remain the same. They do not want to be changed by the Word of God. They want to change the Word of God to fit their own sinful desires. The bottom line, at the end of the day, that is where these false teachers are going. And so there's a question for us here today.

How do I come to the Bible? How do you come to the word of God? Do you want to be changed by God's Word or do you want to change God's Word? Do you want to reinterpret it in such a way that when you read it, you get to believe whatever you wanted to believe when you came to it? Or are you underneath the authoritative Word of God desiring to have it shape you and mold you and change you by the Spirit?

You see, that's what these false teachers don't get, and that's what they're not doing. They don't want to be shaped by the God who is King of kings and Lord of lords. They wanna come to his word and change it to fit what they already desired in their sinful hearts. One author put it like this.

If your lifestyle contradicts the word of God, you must either change your lifestyle or change the word of God. So this morning, are you presently right now aware of areas in your own life that are opposed to God's word? And then

you come to God's word and you read about those things that are opposed to your current lifestyle. And then you ignore them or you try to reinterpret them such that rather than being changed by God's word, you're changing it to fit your own evil desires. Are there areas of your life where God's word is saying something about creation, for example, where he says, this is how I made this world. And then your own thinking and your own desires are opposed to what God clearly says in Genesis one. And so you come to it and you try to change what God says. You try to get rid of the historical Adam. You try to change God's word to fit some idea that you already had, as opposed to saying, what does God say? I want to listen to him.

This can happen not only in grand doctrines like creation, it can happen with the 10 commandments, the laws of God. He speaks to us there and he tells us these 10 commandments. And you look at the Ten Commandments and you say, let me see how I can change that so that it doesn't impact the way that I'm currently operating.

Or maybe it's in the doctrine of the sufficiency of the blood of Christ. You come to the Christ of the God of the Scriptures, the second person of the Trinity, who came down and died on a cross, the infinitely worth, the infinitely valuable blood. He sheds it, and then you come to it, and you say, that blood couldn't be good enough for me.

That's as much unbelief as it is to, that's as much a refusal to be changed by the word as it is a refusal when you come to the commandments and you don't want to be changed by it. The point is much like what Jamie was sharing with us in Sunday school if you were here, we've got to receive the holy word of God as what it really is, the word of God. At every point, be changed by the spirit working through the word. Is this your heart's attitude towards the word? And wherever you see that it may not be, The text is just telling you, repent and be changed by God's word, submit to it. Love what your heavenly father has said in his authoritative word to his people.

Well, today we have seen this call to go back to the Bible, to remember the truth and to be changed by the Bible. Let us pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for giving us a Bible. We are grateful that we have a Bible in our own language. Father, we ask that you would help all of us here to be a people of the book, a people who go back to the Bible. And oh God, we pray that when we come to your word, we would not try to change it, but that we would long by your spirit to be changed by it. Oh God, that we might look more like our elder brother the Lord Jesus Christ. It's in his name that we pray. Amen.