

Series: **A Firm Foundation** – week 11

CDOBC – beginning on 8/28/16

Today's Title: **“On Guard and Growing”**

November 13, 2016 ~ 2 Peter 3:17-18

Objective: To help believers remain strong and continue growing in their faith.

When I was a youth pastor, my last mission trip with my youth ministry was in the summer of 2001 to San Francisco - and we ministered mostly in the Tenderloin district, which is not a high-income part of town. KQED - the npr station in San Francisco calls The Tenderloin district the sketchiest neighborhood in San Francisco. ([https://www2.kqed.org/pop/2013/06/28/in-defense-of-the-](https://www2.kqed.org/pop/2013/06/28/in-defense-of-the-tenderloin-truths-about-sfs-sketchiest-hood/)

[tenderloin-truths-about-sfs-sketchiest-hood/](https://www2.kqed.org/pop/2013/06/28/in-defense-of-the-tenderloin-truths-about-sfs-sketchiest-hood/))

For 5 days we ministered in this area of the city - serving in various ministries and social agencies bringing the love and truth of Christ to those we served.

Each day our group would split-up and serve in 2 or 3 locations - and one afternoon, in the store front next to one of our groups - there was a shooting.

Obviously, this shook up some of the students - and that evening we spent some time talking through the day's events and prayed for those involved.

Sometimes you are aware of the dangers - and you do everything you can to protect yourself.

At other times, you find yourself in a dangerous situation.

You walk a few city blocks and all of a sudden, you're in a place which is not safe.

Most people are pretty careful about this - they make sure they don't wander into danger - that is - unless we're talking about spiritual dangers.

Physical dangers are easier to spot - they seem more obvious to us all.

But spiritual dangers can be more stealth.

Spiritual dangers are often very subtle and initially appear to be harmless - but in reality, they can bring great pain and destruction to your life - to your faith.

Turn in your bibles to **2 Peter 3:17-18**

Are you flirting with spiritual dangers?

Are you growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ?

Are you living for the glory of Christ?

17 “You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.

18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

Protect against spiritual dangers vs. 17

“You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.”

Peter connects what he said in vs. 16 where he warned about the “ignorant and unstable” who “twist” the Scriptures - he says “You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand...”.

What they knew beforehand was the existence and reality

of the false teachers who were “ignorant and unstable...twisting” the Scriptures. Peter had told them this a number of times in his letter - and he’s reminding them one last time of the danger of false teachers.

Peter says since you are aware of this: “take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people...”

Peter knew what he was talking about.

Peter had a history of not being on guard - of not “taking care” to make sure he wasn’t “carried away”.

On the night Jesus was arrested, Peter was “carried away” by the questions thrown his way in the courtyard that night. He didn’t know it, but he was fighting spiritual dangers he couldn’t identify.

What are spiritual dangers? After all, you can’t fight the enemy - you can’t defend yourself against danger if you don’t clearly identify the enemy or the danger!

I thought of 3 different categories of spiritual dangers - they all lead to the same place, but they take different paths to get there. Protect against:

1) *False teachers*

The obvious way to get “carried away” into spiritually dangerous territory is to follow false teaching. When you are not discerning (*maybe just foolish?*) and you begin to sit under the teaching of someone who is not accurately teaching the Bible - you will be “carried

away” into a spiritually dangerous place. Most often false teaching will center around a denial of the inspiration and authority of Scripture / the deity of Jesus / the role and authority of the Church / the return of Christ and judgment / the meaning and application of grace and law.

2) *Sinful* living

You can sit under good, accurate teaching of God’s Word - but if you ignore what the Bible says and you live according to your sinful desires, you will be drawn away from the safety of God’s truth - and you will live in the midst of spiritual dangers.

Famous quote: *The Bible will keep you from sin...and sin will keep you from the Bible.*

It’s crucial for you to realize how powerful sin is - and when you say ‘yes’ to sin, you will be pulled away from the truth and grace of Christ.

Your spiritual life will suffer - you cannot honor God’s Word and obey your sinful desires.

When you have a sinful lifestyle, you will “lose your own stability.”

I see it all the time - someone comes to me and they are fully invested in sinful living - and their life is a mess! It may even look OK on the surface - they may appear to be OK - but they’re not. Their heart is a

disaster - they are double minded - they are confused and frustrated - and often find themselves in situations where they can't escape.

3) Social pressure

This is perhaps the subtlest because it seems so innocent - so relaxed.

- *This is the pressure to fit in.*
- *This is the pressure to be quiet and not say something which sets you apart from the rest of the group.*
- *The pressure to give up church and hang out with your friends...or simply to sleep in.*
- *The pressure to go watch a movie which is not healthy for you as a Christian to watch.*

These are not pressures which present a direct/frontal assault on Christianity - but they are spiritual body blows which eventually wear down your conscience - they wear down your dedication to Christ and your determination to pursue holiness and obedience. After a period of time, you discover you have drifted...you've been "carried away" from the truth.

It's important to note something in the grammar of vs. 17: "carried away" - (*Gr: passive voice*) - which means being "carried away" - this moving away from God is not intentional - you find yourself moving away from Christ even though you never intended to move away from Christ. Your being "carried away" from Christ is actually a

secondary effect of your actions / choices. You just wanted to have fun - to fit in - to make sense of something. You never intended to move away from Christ, but you were “carried away” from Him through the predictable outcomes of your choices.

This doesn't mean you aren't responsible for your moving away - because you are.

You were lax - careless - you didn't pay attention to the dangers around you - and you let down your guard - you flew too close to the flames - you flirted with sin - and eventually it began to draw you away from Christ.

Peter never intended to deny Christ that night.

In fact, he was insistent at dinner a few hours earlier that if necessary, he would die with Jesus (Luke 22:33)!

That's the point...Peter's helping us realize spiritual danger is dressed in camouflage. When we are not on guard - when we don't “take care” and protect against spiritual danger - the danger can get close enough and begin to carry us away from the truth and grace of Christ.

This is the command in vs. 17 - “take care” (*be on guard - on the lookout*) - and in the Greek, this verb indicates we are performing this action upon ourselves. In other words, Peter's not telling us to *‘take care of others and make sure they are protected from spiritual danger’* (We should do that...but that's not what he's saying here) - he's telling you to take care of yourself and protect yourself from spiritual danger!

It can be danger from social pressures - as it was in Peter's case.

It can be a danger from false teaching and from sinful choices we make.

"error" can come from all three!

The result: you will "lose your own stability".

Peter's not saying you will lose your salvation - he's saying you can become unstable in your faith - in your understanding of Biblical truth and how you apply the truth in your life.

1 John 3:7

"...let no one deceive you."

2 John 8

"Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward."

When you drop your guard (or never develop a guard) and you are "carried away" from the truth of Christ and begin to follow "the error of lawless people and lose your own stability", you will find your faith twisted and powerless.

You will be frustrated with your faith because it will not have the impact in your life God intends.

Progress in your Christian faith vs. 18a

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

"grow" - 2nd command in our verses today - it's in the **Active voice** (as opposed to the passive voice of "carried away")

Our mission statement for CDOBC is: *To reach people for Christ and help them grow in their faith.*

How do you grow in your faith?

There are many ways - Peter lists 2 of them here in **vs. 18**.

First is to learn about and live out the grace of God.

God's grace is one of the great distinctions of Christianity.

Grace is a foreign concept to other religions in the world - but it's a central truth and practice for Christians.

Grow in God's grace by:

- Reading the Bible and studying passages where grace is prominent. (Rom. 3)
- Read about and study the Reformation which recaptured the power and wonder of God's grace.
- Read books on grace which are Biblically based:
(“What’s So Amazing About Grace” - by Phillip Yancy / “The Grace of God” by Andy Stanley / “Transforming Grace: Living Confidently in God's Unfailing Love” - by Dr. Jerry Bridges)
- Do a bible study on grace with other Christians.
- Listen to sermons on grace - on passages which center on grace
- Be more gracious each day - apply what you learn about grace. Don't be a grace bobble head! Grace should transform how you interact with others - how you view yourself (no pride) - how you view God.

Second is to learn about and live out your knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Peter is specific in the knowledge he advises for us. He wants us to focus on Jesus - as our Lord - and as our Savior.

As Lord, we learn about His authority over us - His commands we must obey - His power and position over our life.

As Savior, we learn about His substitutionary death - His atoning sacrifice - the value of His shed blood - His love for us and willingness to take the punishment we deserve. When we think about Jesus as our Savior, we can't help but think about God's grace!

2 Peter 1:2

"May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."

The primacy of God's glory - now...and forever! *vs. 18b*

I mentioned a few moments ago our church's mission statement which is a paraphrase of the Great Commission Jesus gave the church in **Matthew 28:19-20**.

However, there is something more foundational to what we do than the directives we received from Jesus.

The most important thing we do as a church is to glorify God.

Question #1 in The Westminster Shorter Catechism is:

Q. 1. *What is the chief end of man?*

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

Above all else - as a follower of Christ - as a child of God - our primary duty is to glorify God.

Peter says:

“To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

To define God’s glory, we can say: *“God’s glory is the beauty and excellence of His many perfections.”*

(Source: <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/god-created-us-for-his-glory>)

One of the ways we draw attention to His glory - and thereby glorify God is by our obedience. When we obey God’s Word, we are putting God on display for all to see - and He is glorified through our actions.

1 Corinthians 10:31

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

Matthew 5:16

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

Much of this has to do with motive. The person who does good works for the sake of good works eventually loses their motivation for doing good works.

However, if your priority is to live in a way which glorifies God, then your good works flow from this overriding desire to glorify God. Your good works are an expression or a display of God’s work in your life.

So... our priority is to live in a way which glorifies God.

We do this “both now and to the day of eternity.”

Don't put off your obedience until another day.
Obey His Word today - glorify Him now...today!
When Peter says "and to the day of eternity", he's simply saying we need to display the glory of God until He returns.

Apply it...

Guard against spiritual dangers (command in vs 17)

This requires you to read and study the Bible. You must gain an awareness of spiritual things and a mind which will think biblically and can discern spiritual threats.

Develop a Biblical IQ

"Grow in the grace and knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ". Your greatest defense is the grace and truth of Christ.

Display God's glory today...and every day!

Start today...now - and keep on until Jesus returns.

Close in prayer