

The Ever-present Crisis

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"You therefore, Beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest you, also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." [2 Peter 3:17](#).

The Apostle has told us that there will come, in the last days, scoffers. We, therefore, know this is to be the case, for we have been informed concerning it. Forewarned is forearmed and now that we see the scoffers and cannot help seeing them, we perceive another proof of the truth of Scripture. Every time a blasphemer opens his mouth to deny the truth of Revelation, he will help to confirm us in our conviction of the very Truth of God which he denies! The Holy Spirit told us, by the pen of Peter, that it would be so, and now we see how truly he wrote.

I do not think it is of any use to sit down and fret about the badness of the times. Ever since I first understood anything, I have always heard that there has been "a crisis." Somebody or other has continually assured me that we were just on the brink of something perfectly horrible. I have never been quite able to see that the times at any particular period have been very much worse than they used to be. Thirty years ago they seemed to me to be about as bad as they could be—and I could not see any room for their getting much worse! I used to, then, constantly hear laments about "the good old times," and I remember saying that the times, then, were the good old times, for time was never so old before. And, taking all things into account, I thought that, perhaps, the evils of that time were not so very much greater than the evils of the ages that had gone before. Still, I do incline a little to the belief that the times have become worse of late. At any rate, in this matter of scoffers!

The scoffers who used to be in holes and corners have now come out into the open and, worse still, they have climbed into the pulpits! And if not there, actually to scoff, they insinuate doubts and undermine the faith of many who formerly believed. The times are certainly now very perilous, whatever they may have been in the past, and, as we look into the Scriptures, we see that the New Testament, even where it does not take the exact shape of prophecy, nevertheless does give us many indications of what we may expect in human history—and those indications are being verified continually all around us! Seeing we know these things before, we are bound to pay the more earnest heed to the lesson of Peter in the text before us which seems to me to be most suitable to the times in which we live!

There is another matter that ought not to be passed over without much searching of heart and much lamentation— and that is that in all our churches of every sort there is a

very dreadful leakage continually going on. It is so with ourselves. We receive large numbers into fellowship, but there are continually large numbers going out from us, not always by sin, but many, of course, by death and emigration and removal. And there is a large proportion of members who drop out of sight, although, at the time of their admission, they gave credible evidence of conversion, according to the judgment of those who watch over men's souls. Look in any of the lists that are published by any religious body—at the column recording the numbers of those who are dropped for non-attendance and so disappear from the church roll—and you must be saddened to see how many are thus lost to us who, at one time, appeared to become good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Because of that sad fact, I thought it all the more necessary that I should speak at this time upon the words in our text—"You therefore, Beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest you, also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

I. First, dear Friends, there is a TITLE here given to all Believers which is well worthy of our careful consideration for a little while. The Apostle says, "You therefore, Beloved."

Peter is not the Apostle of Love. We do not expect to find him speaking in such terms as we have in John's Epistles. Yet it is very amazing that the greatest praise of love was written, not by John, but by Paul. And here, Peter, without seeming to go at all out of his way, speaks just as affectionately as John might have spoken. I suppose he felt that when he was administering a rebuke, and when he was warning against a great peril, it was right that he should speak in the most affectionate terms. I do not think that we shall ever do people much good by bullying them. I question whether any receive rebukes at all if they are not administered in love. They only resent them if they are spoken in anger. But when the tone of the reprover is that of affection, then even stripes will be accepted, even as it was with David when he said, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head."

In our text, Peter, very honestly warning those to whom he wrote in plainest terms, calls them, "Beloved." Nor was he using a word which was not true. I do not think that it is always a wise thing to call everybody, "Dear this," and, "Dear that." In fact, if anybody talks like that to me, I always begin to suspect that there is some motive for such endearing terms. It seems to be the natural course of things that if people say, "Dear this," and, "Dear that," and, "Dear the other," they think that, possibly, by such talk they can get something out of us and, therefore, they use those unctuous terms without meaning them in their heart. Have we not known people call each other Brother and Sister when all the while they were gossiping one another's character away? It was not so with Peter—he really loved those people to whom he was writing. And it was because he loved them that he wrote so plainly to them and gave them the needed warning so very honestly. Let us, in passing, learn this lesson—that real affection is a necessary qualification of one who is to be a leader of God's people. Continually

to blend this affection with faithfulness is the part of true wisdom, for we shall be cutting and wounding to no good purpose unless we use the lancet with a very tender hand. If we must cut deep, even to the very heart, then it must be done with great tenderness—a lion's heart must be linked to a lady's hand.

Why did the Apostle Peter love these people and call them, "Beloved"? I think we can answer the question by putting ourselves, in our inferior ministry, in a similar position. All those who are converted and brought to Christ are truly beloved by God's people for Christ's sake. Wherever we can see anything pertaining to Christ, we wish to give the love that is due to Christ. Where we see that the Holy Spirit has worked the life of God in any Believers, we feel that the life which is in us is in sympathy with the life which is in them. There must be, on the part of a minister of Christ, a deep and intense affection towards all those whom he believes to belong to Christ. Especially is this the case with our own converts—there is a tie of the nearest and most powerful kind which unites us to those who have been brought to the Lord Jesus by our instrumentality. Do they flourish? Then we also flourish. Do they decline? Then our heart languishes. They are our epistles and when they are blotted, we feel that there is a spot upon ourselves. But when they are legible and men read them to the glory of God, our soul is full of delight! I trust that we can say of all those whom we have brought to the Savior—and whom we have seen united in the fellowship of the Church—that without using the word unmeaningly, we can call them, "Beloved," And it is because they are beloved that we long to see them "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." We pray the Lord to have them always in His holy keeping, to preserve them from the temptations which are in the world through lust, to deliver them from the power of their own inbred corruptions and make them perfect in every good work, to do His will, working in them that which is well pleasing in His sight.

Workers for Christ, learn the lesson of this title before we pass on to the next part of our subject. Go, in the spirit of love, to deal with those whom you would bless. Love them to Christ if they are unconverted! Bind them to the Cross with cords of love if they are converted. And if, being converted, they have wandered away from their Lord, draw them back "with cords of a man, with bands of love," remembering, yourselves, lest you, also, be tempted to stray from your Savior! There, then, is the title which Peter here uses—"Beloved."

II. The second thing which I notice in the text is, A WATCHWORD given by Peter to those whom he addressed. "You therefore, Beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware."

That word needs to be sounded in the ears of young converts very soon after they come to know the Lord. They are men and women given to appetite and they are very apt to eat whatever is set before them which looks like spiritual meat—and many a disease may be engendered in them by eating unwholesome spiritual food! This warning word, "Beware," needs to be spoken, today, with much earnestness. Beware of many of the books that are

given you to read! Beware of much of the teaching that is rife in the present day! Beware of the example of some who are called Christians! Beware of the deceitful talk of some who would make a gain of you and lead you away from Christ! Beware, above all, of yourself—beware of leaning to your own understanding, beware of giving the reins to your own will, beware of trusting in your own grace and believing that you are beyond the gunshot of the enemy! This is not the best watchword we can give you for your comfort, but it is oftentimes a necessary watchword. Going round the camp at night, we may well whisper in the ear of the sentinel, "Sleep not, but beware!" And waking up the army in the morning, we may well sound the word down the ranks, "Beware!" All day long, all night long, in every place, from every quarter, beware, for the world is full of adversaries! Every bush conceals a foe—almost every tuft is at the verge of a rifle-pit. Beware, you are in an enemy's country! You have no right to sleep, or to say, "I am perfectly safe and need not watch." This is the watchword we give you, even as Peter gave it long ago, "Beware."

Be not credulous—"Beware." Remember how the Apostle John says, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Drink not in every novelty, listen not to every new teacher, be not "carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they are in wait to deceive," but, "beware."

Be not too confiding—"Beware." Trust in the Lord with all your heart, but watch against men, for there are some who would, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect! They are watching to see how they can deceive you. If they cannot lead you into some great and gross error, they will insinuate doubts and questions. They will leave behind a spark, if they cannot kindle a fire. Just as when Captain Cook went round the world, he landed on every shore and scattered all manner of English seeds broadcast, so there are some who go up and down the land sowing tares among the wheat—and they are never better pleased than when they drop a handful of the evil seed in the mind of some youngster who has but lately come to Christ and who does not, as yet, know the devices of the adversary! "Therefore, Beloved, beware." Be not too confiding, but be always on the watch against evil of all kinds.

Above all, be not careless, but, "beware." I know some who have said, "Really, it does not matter what we believe, as long as we are right on the main points." But it does matter, for they who neglect any of Christ's Words shall fall by little and little. Every Truth of God is a diamond of untold value! I do not know whether there is such a thing as an unimportant Truth of God. Somewhere or other, near to it, there may lie certain consequences that we know not of and, the Truth of God being neglected, an error may fill its place—and that error may become pregnant with mischief from generation to generation! It is an ill time for the Church of Christ when she begins to walk blindfolded, or when she even desires to neglect any of the precepts or the doctrines which Christ has left behind Him. Moses was to make the tabernacle according to the pattern shown to him in the mount—and Ezekiel

was to remind the people of his day of the exact pattern of the house of the Lord—and we need constantly to be put in mind of all that makes up the palace of Truth where Christ dwells. May we be helped to escape all carelessness by giving heed to this Apostolic watchword!

I pass on the watchword, "Beware," to you, dear Friends, and pray especially that you may beware of the errors of the wicked. There are plenty of them. May you watch both against the errors which are matters of doctrine and the wickedness which is matter of practice! And may you be kept from both of these!

III. Advancing a little further, I want you to notice, thirdly, AN ARGUMENT in our text. There are really two arguments. "You therefore, Beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest you, also, fall"

First, "seeing you know these things before, beware." If you are deceived, you will be culpably, guiltily deceived because you have been warned. If you should be led away from Christ and His Truth, from holy living and holy thinking, you will be led astray willfully because you have already received the intimation that you must watch and pray lest you enter into temptation! Peter here tells you, first, that there are scoffers. Then mind that you get out of their way. He tells you, also, that there are seducers and that they shall wax worse and worse. Take care that you do not let them seduce you. Of course they will not come to you with the name, "seducer," printed on their foreheads—they will appear to you not as messengers of Satan, but as angels of light—and they will pretend to be very nice, excellent people, when all the while they will be only excellent in doing mischief. And Satan will think well of them because they serve his purpose.

You are warned that these people will twist the Scriptures. They are great hands at that evil employment. They assert that anything can be taught from the Bible and so it can if a man is only wicked enough to twist it from its proper meaning! There is no book under Heaven that cannot be made to say the exact opposite of what its author intended, if a man is only sufficiently delivered from the power of principle to twist it. Such a man is a thief, for he steals words and uses them for his own wicked purposes when they were meant for quite another end! No doubt he can make any misuse that he likes, even of Holy Writ. But the Scripture as God gave it to us is plain enough—on all the great Truths of God, it is a child's book. There are certain great Truths, undoubtedly, in the Word of God, which are hard to be understood, but even those are not difficult because of the language in which they are proclaimed, but because the Truth, itself, is mysterious and deep. Therefore, dear Friends, if we come honestly to the Scriptures and seek to be taught of the Spirit, we shall learn the things of God. But we must not be surprised if others act dishonestly and twist the Scriptures to their own destruction, for it has been foretold that they will do so. You know this before, therefore, beware! Be on your guard.

Then the second argument is, "Beware lest you, also, fall." As some have turned aside, twisting the Scriptures to their own destruction, you may do the same, for you are of the same nature as they are. Say not with Hazeel, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Left to ourselves, we are dogs, enough, for anything, Brothers and Sisters! If we are without the Grace of God, neither dogs nor devils are worse than we are! We are quite capable of believing a lie and of clinging to it until we perish if the Grace of God does not keep us to the Truth and preserve us to the end. Let us never begin to think ourselves exempt from the weaknesses of human intellects, or even from the perversities of human minds. But watch, for with the same nature as other men, the same danger is around us as is around other men. And unless God, in His infinite mercy, shall preserve us, we, too, shall apostatize, forsake the faith and become worse than infidels.

IV. Now, in the fourth place, let us briefly notice A CATASTROPHE which is foreshadowed in the text. "Beware lest you, also.. fall from your own steadfastness."

Beware lest you fall from your steadfastness as to belief of the revealed Truth of God. Beware lest you neglect this truthful doctrine and that, till, at last, you drift into a sea of error. Do not believe what some tell you, that it is of no consequence what we preach, or what you hear. On the contrary, cleave closely to Holy Scripture. Judge everything that we say, or that anyone else says, by the supreme test of the Inspired Word. If I say anything to you merely on my own authority, reject it! But if it is on the authority of God's Word, reject it at your peril! Hold that fast which is really written in this Book and pray that it may be written on your heart by God's Holy Spirit. Be prepared at all times to judge by the Law and by the Testimony, that which you hear, for, if it is not according to this Word, there is no Light of God in it. Take care that you do not depart from the steadfastness of your faith in these Truths of God, for there are some who have not really drunk in any error, yet they do not believe the Truth in the very power of it. They adopt a creed as a mere letter, but what is the use of that? One dead creed on the shelf is as bad as another—we need to know in our own soul the Truth of God is. The Truth concerning sin so as to hate it—the Truth concerning the Atonement so as to prize it—the Truth concerning the Deity of Christ so as to rejoice in it!

I cannot stay to mention all the Truths of God in detail, but these and every other Truth are to be laid home to the soul and tested and proved in the daily life. Oh, that none of us may fall from our steadfastness in this matter! As with an iron grip, hold what you hold in these evil times of doubt and unbelief. To my mind, it is a pleasant thing, nowadays, to meet with a person who really believes anything. I have found a man up to his neck in error and yet holding firmly some one Truth of God. I have said to him, "Sit down, my Friend, and let us have a talk, for you believe something, and so do I, and so far we can get on together." But it is different where there is nothing at all believed, where it is, "Whichever you please, you pay your money and you take your choice." We are told that we must "keep abreast of

the times." And, "truth is always advancing." If it is so, then one thing was true in the year 1800, and another in the year 1830, and a different thing was true in the year 1840, another in 1860, another in 1880—and we are going on to a new truth for 1900! Some seem to think that the Truth of God changes like the moon, or like the weather! In their opinion, it is never at one stay, but ebbs and flows like the troubled sea when it cannot rest! But we believe in the Truth of God that never alters and never can be altered, but stands Immutable as God, Himself! May we be kept steadfast in our belief of that!

And, dear Friends, it is a painful thing when men are not steadfast in their practice. Of all the griefs the Church ever feels, the keenest is when those who once stood in her midst dishonor the name of Christ by unholy living. Are there not many such? They did run well, but what has hindered them that they do not still obey the Truth? Once they were regularly at the Prayer Meetings. Once, they were among the most earnest Sunday school teachers and Christian workers, but where are they now? Eaten up with worldliness, honeycombed with the desire after amusements that are, at least, questionable, their spiritual life is reduced to the lowest ebb, and even their morals begin to be very doubtful. God save you, beloved Friends, from such a catastrophe as that! We cannot live too near to Christ—the very marrow of religion lies in that which some men think to be the too great precision of it. I am certain that the full enjoyment of true religion does not belong to the great mass of Christian professors—they do not get near enough to the center and heart of it all to realize what its sweetness is. They do not sufficiently consecrate themselves to their Lord and Master, or live in such complete fellowship with Him as to really get at the marrow and fatness which are stored up in the central regions of true godliness. The Lord help us to get there, and when we do get there, may He keep us in that blissful spot!

And, oh, to be steadfast in our labors for Christ—not diligent, today, and sluggish tomorrow! Let us always be like the racer who is intent on reaching the goal, pressing forward as though he could not go fast enough to win the prize—so let us always be panting to do more for the glory of God. We have many professors who are like runners that are short-winded—they could win a sharp, short race, but they cannot hold on through life—and who among us could do so unless the Lord should hold us up? This is the point of Peter's warning, let us see that we fall not from our steadfastness of Christian progress, but always be as if we were arrows shot from the bow of the Eternal that must speed onward till we reach the target of perfection! Beware, therefore, lest you fall from your steadfastness, for that would be, indeed, a terrible catastrophe.

V. And now, fifthly, just for a minute, notice that here is A WARNING. "Beware lest you, also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

A man does not usually go bad all of a sudden. "Oh," says one, "there is So-and-So, who was with us a little while ago, but he has gone into gross sin." Just so, but long before there were any outward signs of evil, there was the undermining going on in his character, depend

upon it. When men fall, it is often the case that they have been "led away." Somebody gets hold of your ear and leads you away. Some get a hold on your empty pockets and lead you away because of your needs. Some get hold of your eyes and lead you away by your eyelids. There are many points where a man may be grasped by one who is seeking to destroy him, but, dear Friends, I beg you not to be easily led away by anybody! Know what you know for yourselves—do your own thinking! When you want to find the Truth of God, work your passage to it—study the Scriptures for yourselves, always seeking the instruction of the Holy Spirit—and then, if you are led, do not be "led away." It would take a great deal to lead me away from what I know, from that Refuge wherein I have hidden, from that Rock whereon I have built for time and for eternity. My Lord—

"To whom or where could I go, If I should turn from You?"

If you are led away, dear Friends, do not be led away by error. If somebody can teach you more than you now know, and it is really God's Truth, go and learn it. If there is an upper room at the feast and the King says to you, "Come up higher," go up higher by all means! We do not want you at the lower end of the table if there is better fare at the higher end of it. But do not let men lead you away with error, especially when it is "the error of the wicked"—and you can soon determine that. I will tell you how you can detect men who would lead you away with the error of the wicked. You can always be sure that those who would make you think lightly of the Scriptures are leading you away with the error of the wicked! He is no good man who thinks little of the best of books—the Book of God! I will have nothing to do with that man who makes me think less of the Word of God than I used to think! I know at once where he comes from and understand what his objective is—if possible, to lead me away with the error of the wicked! Have nothing to do with any man who would make you think less of Christ than you do! His error must be the error of the wicked!

If he begins to point out to you some defect in Christ's teaching, or some fault in His life, or tells you that He is not very God of very God, get out of his society at once! I would have you do what John is said to have done with Cerinthus who denied the Deity of Christ. John was in a bath, to which the unbeliever came, and it is said that John hurried out at once, for fear that he should be contaminated by contact with Cerinthus, or lest the bath should fall on them both! Something of that kind of spirit the most loving followers of Christ will be sure to have. You can be sure of this, that he will do you no good who does not honor your Lord and Master, so get out of his company as soon as you can.

And shun also those people who would make you think less of prayer, for they would lead you away with the error of the wicked. You know how some of them talk, "No doubt it is a very proper thing for people to pray. It does them good and relieves their mind, but to suppose that God hears prayer and answers it is positively ridiculous!" Yet for all that, they say that they would not discourage us from praying. Now, personally, I feel inclined

to say to a man who tells me that, "My dear Sir, you have as good as called me an idiot, and I am very much obliged to you for the compliment." "No," he says, "I did not call you an idiot." But I am an idiot if I go on praying when I know that God does not hear me! I say that a man is a natural fool who, believing that God never hears and answers prayer, yet goes and kneels down to pray. Why, he might as well go to the top of a hill and whistle to the winds! Surely, if there is no effect produced by prayer, it is idle to say that it will do us good to pray! We are not so foolish as to believe that! When we get to that state of mind, we hope to be taken in at Earlswood or at Bethlehem. But we have not come to that condition just yet and, when any speak ill of prayer, we understand that they do not know even the elements of true religion! If a person were to say to me, "I will teach you to read," and he began by saying of the first letters of the alphabet, "That is not A, and that is not B," I would say, "Oh, thank you, I will not trouble you any longer. I knew better than that when I was quite a little boy!"

That man, again, who begins to speak lightly of sin, will lead you away with the error of the wicked. You know how he talks, "Do not listen to those old-fashioned Puritan notions! You can go and mix in society, you can indulge in this and that amusement and yet you can be a Christian all the same." Ah, yes! I constantly see persons trying to see not how near they can live to God, but how far they can live from God and yet be called Christians! There are some who seem to be inculcating on our youth this kind of doctrine. Do not keep away from temptation, but go into temptation. Do not burn yourself, but just singe your hair. Do not, by any means, actually kill yourself in the machinery, but get a finger cut off every now and then—then you will know something of the nature of steel and of how it operates when it cuts through a bone. That is very instructive, no doubt!

This is the typical of the talk that we hear from many in this evil age, "Of course you must know a little about life. Young people are not to be always tied to their mother's apron strings—they must go out and learn a little for themselves." That is, drink a little poison every now and then just to see how it operates on you. Take a drop of acid and see what it will do for you. My advice is—Keep clear of all such things! Let this warning be always remembered, "Beware, beware, beware." I have never yet come under a rule of life that seemed to me too severe. On the contrary, I still find myself all too apt to wander in thought, if not in act, and I would be glad if I could not only be bound, but nailed right up to the Cross.

"Oh," says one, "what do you mean by that expression?" I mean that I wish I could realize the truth of Paul's words, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me." I would gladly have no liberty to do anything that is even questionable! I would find my liberty in being perfectly holy. Oh, that God would help each one of us to reach that point! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 2 PETER 3.

Verse 1. This second epistle, Beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. The purest minds need stirring up at times. It would be a great pity to stir up impure minds. That would only be to do mischief. But pure minds may be stirred as much as you please and the more the better! There are hallowed memories in the minds of all Christians, but those memories are apt to lie asleep—it is well to ring the alarm bell and wake up all the memories within the Believer's heart, even as Peter did when he wrote—"I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance."

2. That you may be mindful of the Words which were spoken before by the holy Prophets, and of the commandment of us, the Apostles of the Lord and Savior Peter believed in the Inspiration of the very "Words" of Scripture. He was not one of those precious "advanced thinkers" who would, if they could, tear the very soul out of the Book and leave us nothing at all. He wrote, "That you may be mindful of the Words"—the very Words—"which were spoken before by the holy Prophets." "Oh," says one, "but words do not mean anything—it is the inward sense that is really important." Exactly so—that is just what the fool said about eggshells. He said that they did not matter—it was only the inward life-germ of the chick within that was important! So he broke all the shells and, thereby, destroyed the life that was within!

We contend for every Word of the Bible and believe in the verbal and plenary Inspiration of Holy Scripture, believing, indeed, that there can be no other Inspiration but that. If the Words could be taken from us, the sense, itself, would be gone.

3. Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers. A prophecy which has been abundantly fulfilled! You need not go far to find them—they come in the form of living men—and they swarm in the form of their books. They are to be met with almost everywhere! Like the locusts, they fill the air and hide the light of the sun! "There shall come in the last days scoffers."

3. Walking after their own lusts. Errors of doctrine are almost always attended with errors of practice and, certainly, they legitimately lead that way. Those who scoff according to the lusts of their intellect are very likely to live according to the lusts of their flesh! The two things are congruous. They are born from the same cause, they flourish for the same reasons, and they tend to the same ends! "Walking after their own lusts."

4. And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. Only the modern scoffers have tried to improve upon their predecessors, for they say, "All things have developed by evolution from the beginning, which never had a beginning, but which somehow or other has always existed." Thus the scoffers change their tune, but they never alter their spirit—it is always an attack upon the revealed Truth of God! Indeed, they scarcely seem to believe that there is any revealed Truth, and they will only accept that which they might, themselves, have invented! Notwithstanding what these men say, all things have not continued as they

were since the beginning of the creation, for there have been great interpositions of Divine power in the past, as Peter goes on to show.

5-7. For this they willingly are ignorant of that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men. Admire the power of God's Word! It was by the Word of God that the heavens were made, by the Word of God that the earth was drowned, by the Word of God that it has been preserved ever since—and will be preserved until, by that same Word, fire shall come to devour all the works of men. As surely as Noah's flood came, so surely shall there be a burning up at the appointed season. "The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire."

8. But, Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. You are in a hurry. You do not understand the infinite leisure of the Eternal One. The wondrous system of Divine Grace seems to have hardly room and scope enough in the few years that men give to it by their prophetic calculations! But God's prophecies are being fulfilled to the very letter. It may be that the length of time for their accomplishment will be far greater than any have imagined, yet to God it shall still be a very little while. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." We cry, "How long? How long?" Yet, according to God's reckoning, it is but the day before yesterday that Christ died, and only about a week ago that Adam was expelled from Eden. A thousand years is, after all, a very brief space of time. If it is measured by our life, it seems long. But what is the life of a man? Measured other ways—and there are many other modes of measurement—it grows even longer. But measured by the eternity of God, it is a vanishing point altogether—there seems to be nothing left of it.

9. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. So He hurries not. He gives the sinner space and time enough in which to repent. Oh, that man would turn to God, moved by that gracious long-suffering of His!

10. But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. It is impossible to tell when it will come, but the Day of the Lord will come and, to the great mass of mankind it will come as a thief in the night. Though often warned, they will not expect it. The Lord's saints will watch for Him, for they are not in ignorance that that Day should overtake them as a thief. But, to the ungodly, the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night."

10. In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth, also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Men make great boasts concerning what they build and there are many wonderful works of men upon the face of the globe. But the day will come when there will be no trace of them

left, for they will have utterly disappeared! Why, then, should you and I live for these things—for the things which are seen, which are temporal? O Beloved, live for the things which are not seen, which are eternal!

11. Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness. These are garments which we should wear in prospect of eternity! These are things which no fire can touch, for holiness and godliness will outlive even the flames of the Last Great Day!

12, 13. Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the Day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. We believe that God will, in the end, have a complete victory over sin, and that even this poor world of ours, purified by the fire, shall be lifted up, in a sevenfold splendor, to be a part of the great Kingdom of our God. "New heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness."

14. Therefore, Beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless. Be diligent to get rid of all those spots which sin has made. In one sense, you are cleansed from them, already, but in another sense, the purifying work must constantly go on. You are to overcome your besetting sin—you are to vanquish all your tendencies to evil—every thought is to be brought into captivity to the mind of the Lord.

15, 16. And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul, also, according to the wisdom given unto him, has written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, twist, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction. If Peter, here, alluded to the Doctrine of Election, and the great doctrines that spring out of predestination, that is no argument why they should not be preached, for if they are not to be preached because men twist them, then nothing is to be preached, seeing that we are here told that they also twist other Scriptures unto their own destruction! Any rope will do for a man to hang himself with—and any doctrine will surface for a man to ruin himself with if he wishes to do so. The doctrine of Divine Mercy has been twisted into a reason why we should live in sin! The doctrine of Human Capability has been twisted into this falsehood—"I can repent when I like, or believe when I like and, therefore, I may leave it to the very last." There is no form of opinion which cannot be rendered mischievous! Our business is to study the Word of God and preach it as we find it—and if men will twist it, we cannot help that. Is it not so that the Truth of God will always be a savor of life unto life to those who believe—and a savor of death unto death to those who perish?

17, 18. You therefore, Beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest you, also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in Grace. The only way to prevent falling is to grow— the tree that grows will not fall over!

18. And in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen. An ascription of praise to Christ is never out of place at the beginning or at the end of an Epistle, or in the middle of it! You may praise the Lord Jesus Christ anywhere, at any time—it shall never be a waste of time to sing unto His name! "To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."