

Title alarms but many supposed Christians fall away and perish in their sins. Scripture replete with warnings and examples of apostasy. We must take these seriously about ourselves or we may end up spiritual casualties.

Two major themes in 2 Pet: danger of false teachers, certainty/significance of Christ's return. Don't stumble at the finish line of the Christian race. Whatever self-denial and suffering we must face, it will be worth it all.

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Persist in spiritual vigilance and grow as Christians.

Vv. 17 and 18 linked by "but." Really, two sides of one coin. Our spiritual experience is never static. Making progress or losing ground like a canoe in a stream. Paddle or drift! If you're not on guard, you'll succumb to sinful influences. If you're growing, you have been on guard to some extent.

INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- The readers' identity: "beloved," those who are dearly loved, prized, valued, indicating a close relationship, esp. between a parent and child. A favorite designation of Jesus as the Father's "beloved Son," very frequent for Christians, esp. beloved as those "in Christ." Be encouraged to remember God loves you in a special way by His grace! You are not just anybody in the world: you are esp. beloved by God.
- The readers' knowledge: "ye know these things [or, this] before[hand]," either the epistle broadly [of false teachers, Christ's return), or v. 16 (Scripture-twisting leads to ruin). "Before" what? → Upcoming days of your temptation to fall/opportunity to thrive.
- The readers' responsibility and advantage: "therefore, seeing ye know" or "therefore, since you know this beforehand" (NKJV), you are expected to make use of this revealed truth which can really help you. More light means more responsibility and more help to survive/thrive.

I. PERSIST IN SPIRITUAL VIGILANCE (v. 17), intense, constant, wary watchfulness (from *vigil*: keep awake).

- A call to vigilance: "beware," military term for watch out, take extra precaution. Military readiness is "the ability of military forces to fight and meet the demand of assigned missions" (DOD). Acknowledgement of risk, fortification beforehand, anticipation of specific threats, forethought about countermeasures. We need such preparedness in spiritual warfare (Eph 6.10-13). Else, we're marching to defeat.
- A potential catastrophe: "lest ye [so that you will not] also . . . fall from your own steadfastness" (freedom from indecision), no bogeyman but a real threat! Those who fall thought they'd never fall (Matt 26.33). Note the word "also," as others have fallen before you! A church member turned atheist hit rock bottom and wrote: "I feel like God has given me genuine faith now. I want to apologize for my apostasy."

- The way to catastrophe: "being led [or, carried] away with the error of the wicked" (lit., the lawless). We are all prone to peer pressure (as Peter and Barnabas, Gal 2.11-13). So we really need to mark and avoid them (Rom 16.17, 18). "A companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Prov 13.20). "Bad company ruins good morals" (1 Cor 15.33 ESV). In our day, this applies to all kinds of media (entertainment, social media, etc.).
- A common mistake: to think that real Christians, eternally secure, do not need to be careful. 1) Some who feel sure they are saved are mistaken and presumptuous (they heed not 2 Pet 1.10) and vulnerable to apostasy. 2) Even real Christians are vulnerable to their Father's truly painful chastening for sin (Heb 12.11). They may "fall into grievous sins, and for a time continue therein" (cf. 2LCF 17.3).

Trans: The blessed alternative to apostasy is spiritual growth!

II. GROW AS CHRISTIANS (v. 18)

- A call to growth. Here, a sign of life (living things grow). Only the regenerate truly grow spiritually. All life/growth a gift from God (1 Cor 3.7). Yet a command implying duty.
- Two aspects of spiritual growth: in grace/favor and in knowledge (not mere information but personal intimacy and love) of Christ—a warm call to draw ever-nearer to Christ for ever-sweeter communion!

Grace is the foundation of the lives of believers and is entirely God's gift, and yet believers are exhorted to grow in it, to be nurtured in it, and to be strengthened by it. Grace is not a static reality. Believers are to grow in it until the day they die. Otherwise they might be carried away by the lawlessness of the false teachers (Schreiner, T. R., in loc.).

- How do we do this? As Peter counseled earlier in the letter (1.3-11):
 - Trust the sufficiency of His powerful gifts for life and godliness (3).
 - Attend to the exceeding great and precious promises (4).
 - To faith, diligently add virtue, [spiritual] knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (5-7).
 - Be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure (10).
 - THEN God promises those who "do these things": "you will never fall; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (10, 11). In other words, YOU WILL REMAIN CHRISTIANS, and more than that, you will be gloriously welcomed into Christ's eternal kingdom!

Avoiding those teaching error is not enough. You must proactively, energetically, persistently to spiritual growth. All those with ears to hear join heartily in Peter's closing doxology, "To Him [our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ] be glory both now and forever. Amen." Ω