

CONQUERING THROUGH CONFLICT

A Study of 2 Peter

STUDY TEN

How to Live in Troubled Times

2 Peter 3:14–18

Peter was saying, “Tough times call for strong-minded saints. Don’t be caught unaware.”

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

CHRISTIANITY is not a sail-on-tranquil-seas religion. Whoever thinks that those who follow Christ cruise blissfully through life isn’t aware of what the Scriptures really teach.

The people who cast the longest shadows across the sacred text were courageous, tough-minded spiritual seafarers, slugging it out against overwhelming odds in the roughest storms. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Esther, Ruth, David, Paul, and Peter were all stouthearted saints, able to persevere through hardship and remain faithful to the end.

Because tranquil times represent the exception rather than the rule, God’s Word focuses most on troubled times . . . telling us how to face them rather than trying to escape them.

Peter’s final words provide us with a case in point. Right down to the last verse in 2 Peter, he puts the truth before us in unmistakable terms meant to fill our sails with courage.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

The Lord sends His followers into the world equipped with His Word and empowered with His Spirit. Pray for fortitude today.

Father, the way is difficult for me. The world is not kind to those who walk Your narrow way. And so, I depend on You today to fill me with courage to speak, strength to follow, and resolve to stay close to You. Help me to grow wiser and deeper in my faith as I study Your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In our first *Searching the Scriptures* study, we illustrated the themes of 2 Peter as parts of an arrow. Three subjects comprise the feathers: warnings, reminders, and promises.

Peter *warned* about false teachers who “teach destructive heresies” (2 Peter 2:1), scam people out of their money (2:3), lure unstable souls into sin (2:14), and flaunt their “twisted sexual desires” (2:18). He warned scoffers who ridicule Christ’s return that judgment will come when the Lord comes suddenly to judge the ungodly and purge the earth with fire (3:7).

Peter *reminded* the believers to stand on the truths of Scripture—the words of the prophets, Christ, and the apostles (3:2). And then, Peter *promised* God’s power for godly living (1:3–4), and he assured them of God’s rescue from the coming judgment (2:9).

These warnings, reminders, and promises would be useless if not acted upon. So, the main shaft of Peter’s “arrow” is *diligence* in exhibiting godly qualities (1:5–10), grounding in the Word (1:19–21), and avoiding entanglements of sin (2:20). Finally, the tip is *hope*—the apostle’s vision of an eternity with God in the new heaven and new earth, “a world filled with God’s righteousness” (3:13).

Peter recapped these themes in the closing verses of 2 Peter—Peter’s final written words before he was martyred for his faith.



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Observation: Strong Words for Handling Today

Use your skills of observation to overview *2 Peter 3:14–18*. In this first reading, look for the overall themes—the warnings, reminders, promises, the exhortation to be diligent, and Peter’s concluding words of hope. Write down your initial impressions.

Now, let’s focus on the details of this passage, highlighting four central commands.

Be Diligent—2 Peter 3:14

What command do you see in *2 Peter 3:14*?

How does this command tie back to Peter’s exhortations in *1:5–7*?



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“Be diligent” means to do your best. Do your very best to live in peace and without fault. We’d say to our kids, “Behave yourself.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Be Confident—2 Peter 3:15–16

Scoffers had shaken the believers’ confidence by casting doubt on Christ’s return. How did Peter build back their confidence in 2 Peter 3:15? What is the purpose of Christ’s delay?

What did Peter accuse the false teachers of doing in 3:16?

How does 3:15–16 mirror Peter’s message in 1:16, 19?



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Be on Guard—2 Peter 3:17

Peter issued his primary warning in *2 Peter 3:17*. What do you observe in this verse?

How does this command echo *1:10*?

The apostle was saying, “When you buy into error, your foundation gets shaky, and you lose your stability.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Grow—2 Peter 3:18

What do you see in Peter’s last written words: *2 Peter 3:18*?



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How does this exhortation reflect his opening prayer in 2 Peter 1:2?

Grace and knowledge are to be kept in balance. Keep learning, but don't let learning outrun your grace. Also, stay full of grace, but don't let it lose knowledge.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Anchoring Ourselves to God and His Word

In the interpretation section, let's probe the meaning of two key Greek words Peter used. The first one, “distort,” is *streblōō* in Greek (2 Peter 3:16 NASB). This word appears only here in the New Testament, and Peter chose it intentionally to picture what false teachers do to the Word. Look up *streblōō* in Bill Mounce's online Greek dictionary at billmounce.com. Write down the vivid image this word conveys.



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Peter said that if we follow these truth-stretchers, their errors will sweep us away. We will “lose [our] own secure footing” (3:17). The Greek word translated “secure footing” in Greek is *sterigmos*. This word also appears only here in the New Testament, and Peter again chose it intentionally. What does *sterigmos* mean?

What is the best way to keep our footing, according to Peter? To “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (3:18). The image is a strong tree with deep roots, broad limbs, and bountiful fruit.

How does *grace* balanced with *knowledge* produce a healthy, growing Christian? Name some characteristics of each quality and how they balance each other.

Grace will keep you tolerant. Knowledge will keep you strong. Grace will make you compassionate. Knowledge will make you discerning. Grace will help you smile. Knowledge will help you think. Grace will result in vulnerability. Knowledge will result in stability.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: The Writings of Paul

In 2 Peter 3:15, Peter specifically acknowledged the divine inspiration of Paul’s letters by connecting them to the “other parts of Scripture.” This is no accident. Paul’s letters were already circulating among the churches, and in his letter, Peter gave Paul’s writings his apostolic stamp of authority.

Why was it vital to the growth of Christianity for Peter to authorize Paul’s writings?

Read Paul’s statement about the Scriptures in *2 Timothy 3:16*. What confidence do you have in God’s Word as your guide in life?

Whatever you hear, filter it through the Scriptures. Don’t let your experience or your emotions be your guide. Let the Book be your guide. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Application: Following Peter's Commands

How do you navigate your troubled times? The same way the early Christians did. First, *be diligent* “to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight” (2 Peter 3:14). Take a review of your life lately. Are you at peace with God, living pure and blameless? What areas might need attention?

Second, *be confident* in the promises of Scripture. Do you hold fast to the Christian hope, patiently waiting for Christ's return? What difference might this hope make in how secure you feel?

Third, *be on guard* to “not be carried away by the errors” of wicked people (3:17). What impact does the false teaching by the scoffers of our day have on your heart? How can you find stability in the shifting currents of culture?



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Fourth, grow in the “grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). The more you know Christ, the greater your experience of His grace—and the deeper the roots grow. How has your faith grown through grace and knowledge? Who in your life has benefited from your growing stronger? Who needs your strength today?

Peter stated his goal plainly: “to stir you up” (2 Peter 1:13 NASB). Has Peter accomplished his goal with you? Has he rattled your cage a bit? Maybe spurred you on to greater conviction or shook you awake to the dangers of false teaching? How about Peter’s amazing prophecy of end times? What part of Peter’s letter has stirred your soul the most?

Peter’s call to action is just as urgent in our world as it was when Peter wrote it. Fix your eyes on Christ. Guard yourself from error by rooting yourself in God’s Word. Live in anticipation of Christ’s return, and, with the principles you gleaned from 2 Peter, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.



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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, may I grow in grace and knowledge. May Your Word be my bread and Your Spirit be my sustenance. I long to know You more. I look forward to Your appearing. I put my confidence in Your Son. Help me to share His truth with those I meet today. In Jesus' name, amen.

