

## CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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<b>Series:</b>	<b>Scripture Memory</b>		Pastor/Teacher
<b>Number:</b>	<b>84</b>		Gary L.W. Johnson
<b>Text:</b>	<b>2 Peter 3:17-18</b>		
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### BE READY AND DON'T FORGET! (Part 2)

In Luke 22:31-32 Jesus told Peter that Satan had asked permission to sift Peter like wheat, but Jesus declared that He would intercede for him so that Peter's faith would stand the test and not collapse. In this second epistle to his readers, Peter exhorts them to think clearly and to recall the teachings of the prophets and the apostles. He alerts them to the danger of the presence of scoffers in their midst, for these false teachers deny the return of Jesus Christ and the coming of the judgment day. Peter reminds the readers of the creation of the universe and the destructive forces of the flood. These facts the scoffers purposely forget. Yet as the world perished in the deluge, so heaven and earth will be destroyed by fire. Peter teaches the readers about time and eternity when he compares a thousand years with one day in the sight of God. The day of the Lord will be postponed because of God's patience toward sinners. Yet that day will come unexpectedly. When heaven and earth have been destroyed, a new heaven and a new earth will appear; they will be known as the home of righteousness. God's patience signifies salvation for the sinner. This is the message Paul also conveys in all his epistles. Some unstable people twist the meaning of Scripture. Peter concludes his letter by exhorting the readers to be on guard and not to be dissuaded by the false teachers. He urges the believers to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

- I. **THE EXHORTATION TO BEWARE OF DANGER.** An introductory participle, rendered "knowing *these things* beforehand" (*proginōskontes*), precedes the epistle's final warning. There is no expressed object of what they know beforehand, but clearly Peter is referring to the danger from the false teachers. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. The known danger and the resultant duty go together; "beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness" (*phylassesthe hina mē tē tōn athesmōn planēsunapachthentes ekpesēte tou idiou stērigmou*). "Beware" (*phylassesthe*), a present middle imperative, conveys the meaning "keep on guarding yourselves." "The word is not only a notice against dangers from without, but an admonition to watchfulness within." Let them be alert to the possibility of falling. "Being carried away with the error of the wicked" names the danger. "Being carried away" (*sunapachthentes*), an aorist passive participle, points out the danger of being led astray from the right path by keeping too close company with the false teachers. It is the very term used in Galatians 2:13 of Barnabas's being carried away by the impact of the wavering Jewish believers during the crisis at Antioch. Perhaps Peter recalled that humiliating occasion when he himself was carried away by the error of the Judaizers. Peter reminds his readers that "what was needed on their part was an habitual sense of their own weakness and danger, and the spirit of a perpetual vigilance. "With the error of the wicked," naming the source of the danger, stands emphatically forward: "with the error of the wicked being led astray" (Rotherham). The articular designation constitutes Peter's final evaluation of the false teachers whose work receives such severe castigation in chapters 2 and 3. The noun

rendered “error” (*plane*) means “wandering, roaming.” One may refer it to the misleading teaching of these men, as the rendering “error” implies, but more probably it has an active connotation of “leading astray,” counseling alertness against the deceptive influence of these men. The genitive, “of the wicked” (*tōn athesmōn*), placed attributively between the article and the noun, depicts the intimate connection between this awful danger and men of this character. The term stamps them as individuals who are rebellious and unprincipled in conduct, defying the restraints of law and custom. In 2:7, Peter used the term of the men of Sodom; these deceivers belong to the same category. “Lest . . . ye fall from your own stedfastness” (*hina mē . . . espesēte tou idiou stērigmou*) declares the danger against which he is warning them. The statement implies the possibility of such a tragic occurrence. The compound verb depicts an act of falling away from, or out of, a desired into a less desirable position or condition (cf. Gal. 5:4). “Your own stedfastness” (*tou idiou stērigmou*) marks the distinctive character of the readers. This noun, which occurs only here in the New Testament, points to a condition of firmness or stability; their own security lies in their firm commitment to God’s revealed truth. Their security lies not in their own strength or perseverance but in their unswerving adherence to the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

**CONCLUSION:** Thomas Adams was one of the great Puritan preachers. He wrote a massive commentary on 2 Peter that runs 885 pages (double column!). Charles Spurgeon declared it to unmatched among all the commentaries that he had read. Listen to Adams: “For use and application, here, it is but having recourse to our apostle’s caution. We may fall, therefore let us look to our standing. We may be led away; the devil will venture to try; therefore let us not give him one foot of ground; but if he beckons one way, be we sure to take the contrary. There have been some that stood in as little fear of falling, as now they are in hope of rising: pride and wantonness was the cause of their fall; faith and humility must keep us upright. When we remember what we have been, we have just cause to be ashamed; so when we consider what we may be, we have no less cause to be afraid. (Bern.). We know our beginnings, we do not foreknow our endings. We may be certain that thus we are; but that thus we shall be, is above our assurance. We see how much of our way we have past; we see not how much is left, or whether we shall be able to hold out to the end. As we have cause to pray, O God, when we are old and grey-headed, forsake us not, Psal. lxxi. 18; so to gird up our loins, and redouble our strength, that we may persevere. For it is nothing to begin, unless we continue; nor to continue, unless we do it unto the end, 1 Thess. v. 23. There is a proneness in the nature of man to fall. Not that when we stand, we are held up by force; for God offers no violence to the will of man, but sweetly disposeth it to desire its own good. Yet the Second Adam hath not so far cast out the first, but that the new ingrafted scions doth relish of the old stock, and still there is a tang of original corruption left in us; as a vessel, after much rinsing and cleansing, will smell of the first seasoning. . . . The conclusion is then plain, that there is still a tendency left in our nature to be led away into error. The seed of all sin is within us, therefore even of apostacy. A good scholar, that will ply his book in his master’s presence, yet may fly out when his back is turned. The bird that hath long contented herself with her cage, feeding and singing there; yet if she spies the door open, will whip out, and fly abroad. Our nature is like a deceitful bow, Psal. lxxviii. 57; which when it is bent to the full, except it be followed hard, till it be sure and fast, starts back again, and is as far off as ever. It is called, the flesh; and such flesh is it as will rot without salt: if it be not corned, it will of itself bring forth corruption. For use of this conclusion: We find here just cause to deplore our miserable estate by nature, and to consider how deeply our first parents have engaged us; so that (not to let go the former metaphor) we are all even sold under sin. We exclaim against any man that hath sold a city, or a country, or an army, to the enemy; but Adam sold the world. He sold his children, and children’s children, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: he sold all the patriarchs, and all the prophets, and all the princes of the earth: he sold all the apostles, Peter and Paul, and both their regiments, the glorious hemispheres of the world,

Jews and Gentiles: he sold all, even the dearest friends that God had among the sons of men; even the disciple whom the Lord loved, and the mother of the Lord herself, whom all generations call blessed. He sold his wife, yea, he sold himself; and if Christ had not provided for himself by a miraculous generation, Adam had sold him too. If Christ had been conceived in original sin, he must have died for himself: nay, he could not have died for himself, but must have needed another Saviour. Such a prodigal had we to our Father; and we take after him, for in this respect we are all prodigal children.”<sup>3</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> S. J. Kistemaker, *Peter and Jude: New Testament Commentary* (Baker, 1987), p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> D. E. Hiebert, *Second Peter and Jude: An Expository Commentary* (BJU Press, 1989), p. 176.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Adams, *A Commentary On The Second Epistle General of St. Peter* (rpt. Soli Deo Gloria, 1990), p. 804.