

Beware...Grow

(The Message of 2 Peter)

by Bryan Gibson

You can find these two words at the very end of 2 Peter, in the following passage: “You therefore, beloved, since you know these things beforehand, **beware** lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but **grow** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...” (2 Peter 3:17-18).

These two admonitions—beware and grow—sum up the message found in this epistle. One points to a problem, the other to the solution; one warns of danger, the other points the way to safety.

Beware

Look again at the above passage, specifically the warning issued—“beware lest you also fall...led away with the error of the wicked.” He’s talking about false teachers, the kind of folks discussed in the previous verse, who “twist” the Scriptures “to their own destruction” (3:16)—not to mention the destruction of those who follow after them. Chapter 2 is entirely devoted to a discussion of false teachers—their danger (vv. 1-3), their judgment (vv. 4-10a), their character (vv. 10b-16), and the influence they can have on others (vv. 17-22). Beware of false teachers. They’re doing the devil’s work, which is exactly why they’ll get to spend an eternity with him. If we’re not careful, we may end up in the same place.

Grow

Grow in the truth, the truth taught by “the apostles of the Lord and Savior” (2 Peter 3:2), whose reliability is unquestioned, because they were eyewitnesses, and because they confirmed what had been prophesied many years earlier (2 Peter 1:16-21). Grow—that’s what the remainder of this epistle is about. It’s how we keep from being led away, how we keep from falling, how we know when someone has twisted the Scriptures. How much does this epistle emphasize the need for growth? Consider this passage: “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self control, to self control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness” (2 Peter 1:5-7). And this one: “Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless” (2 Peter 3:14). The rewards of this growth? “For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ...for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:8, 10-11).

So beware of false teachers, and anything else that might lead us away from the truth; and grow, because that’s what will keep us out of danger, and ultimately lead us to eternal life.