

Title: **Final Directions to the Last Stop (Part 4)**

Passage: **2 Peter 3:17-18**

Theme: **Avoiding the dangers of a lost reward**

Number: **07122Pe3.17-18(40)**

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{Read Passage}

[i] Most of us know t/frustration of not finishing things we've started
Unfinished books // projects. This morning we have t/opport. to finish something we began a little over 2 yrs. ago

[ii] You might imagine what it was like for Peter to finish this letter
He was aged; He wore the battle scars of ministry as a testimony to X's faithfulness; He sensed that his tour of duty in X's army was about finished.

He'd never again have t/opportunity to address this 1st c. CH – those to whom he'd written a few years prior in his first letter.

His desire is that they would faithfully fight the fight of faith to t/very end – even as he had done. That they wouldn't fall prey to t/false teachers & their damning doctrine.

[iii] Same for us, of course

We are truly in a battle. That battle begins when we are enlisted by God's sovereign choice of us. It continues t/o our earthly lives.

This is serious; we can't play games; we can't rest easy; we can't let down our guard.

Genuine believers will survive.

Wounded? Yes. Suffer? Yes. But by God's grace we endure.

There will always be those who won't.

Mutinous turn-coats who jump ship.

Unfaithful soldiers who defect; would rather wear t/uniform of t/enemy.

Can't be true of us.

. . . we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul. [Hebrews 10:39]

We're in a foreign land. The great desire in our hearts is to make it home. That's t/last stop & here in 2 Peter 3:14-18 we have what amt. to Peter's Final Directions to [that] Last Stop.

These 5 vv. give us 5 key exhortations we're to take to heart as we run t/race which is t/Xn life to the finish.

First of all, we saw in v. 14 ==>

I. A Day to Remember (14)

Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things . . .

. . . be diligent . . .

σπουδαζω – same word used in 1:10 of our being diligent to make our calling and election certain.

Here's we're told ==>

. . . be diligent to be found by Him spotless and blameless, [and] in peace.

Live your life in such a way that you won't be ashamed at His coming.

II. A Delay to Consider (15)

That delay is the time between X's resurrection/ascension & His return.

And consider the patience of our Lord to be salvation . . .

God's patience as it relates to His judgment.

What's being delayed is His judgment (in this context is equated with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ)

Third aspect of Peter's final words of exhortation ==>

III. A Danger to Avoid (16)

As also in all his letters [επιστολη], speaking in them concerning these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the unlearned and unstable twist, as also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

The danger to avoid is 2-fold: We are to avoid those who twist Scripture; we are avoid being guilty of this ourselves.

. . . unlearned and unstable twist . . . the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

He uses the verb στρεβλωω.

1. From στρεβλος (twisted) and στρεφω (to turn)

Noun was used of torture devices [BAGD]

Thus one meaning of the verb was to put to the rack.

We could say, to put eyes to the picture ==>

. . unlearned and unstable torture . . . the Scriptures, to their own destruction. [Typical word used of eschatological judgment]

Next point tells us how to satisfy t/demands of v. 14 {cite}

IV. A Discipline to Pursue (17-18a)

Make no mistake – being a disciple of JC involves discipline. Words disciple and discipline are related.

What is the discipline we're to pursue?

A. Two-fold (neg. and a pos.)

Both of these form a 2-part summary of the entire letter. Peter sums up everything he's said to this point in these 2 vv.

1. Negatively: Guard (be on your guard) - v. 17

Being a disciple means that I will apply the effort to guard myself and the church from error as I pursue Christ.

You, therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men [and] fall from your own steadfastness,

a. Note how Peter turns a corner here

You, therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand . . .

(1) Fourth time in this chapter – "Beloved" (3:1,8,14)

(2) Here the word order is significant

Ἑγμεῖς οὖν, ἀγαπητοί,

(a) You = emphatic

YOU, therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand . . .

i. "You" stands in contrast to "them"

Who are you? ==> "beloved" those for whom God has poured out his electing love in XJ. Those whom God loves in a very special way. Those whom God destined not for wrath but salvation (1 Thess. 5:9). Those for whom Christ gave His life – His friends. (like Abraham you are "the friend of God").

Contrast? "Them" = "unprincipled men" (later in t/verse).

2:15 - those who have forsaken t/right way and have gone astray. Not sons of Abraham (father of faith) but sons of Balaam (father of false prophets).

You, therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand . . .

IOW - you have no excuse for ignorance.

he's demonstrated to them that t/teaching of t/apostles is consistent w/OT prophets // He and TAP & are in agreement on topics such as X's return/judgment/necessity of holy living & that those who teach contrary are little more than untaught and unstable souls who distort t/Scriptures to their own destruction.

You know these things. Knowledge = power.

Now that you know . . .

. . . be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men [and] fall from your own steadfastness,

You think you stand take heed

. . . be on your guard . . .

b. φυλάσσω = middle impv (to be on guard against / look out for)

(1) Noteworthy uses in the N.T.

Used in Luke 12:15 where Jesus warns

... be on your guard against every form of greed ...

Used of guarding oneself from false teaching.

1 Timothy 6:20 where Paul tells Timothy

... guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called "knowledge"—

2 Timothy 4:14–15

14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. 15 Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching.

General sense of guarding against idolatry

1 John 5:21 21 Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

Here==>

... be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men ... (i.e. false teachers) - "unprincipled" we saw earlier in 2:7 (Lot, was oppressed by t/sensual conduct of unprincipled men)

(2) Does God Himself guard us?

Yes, of course.

Golden chain of redemption in Romans 8 ==>

29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son . . . 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

That chapter goes on to say that nothing can separate God's elect from t/love of Christ.

Phil. 1:6.

1Peter 1:3-5 - God caused you to be born again; You have an inheritance reserved in heaven; He will protect you by His power unto that day.

We know that God will guard those who are truly His so that they do not fall away as to be eternally damned. That, however, doesn't mean that we are not responsible to "be on guard" so that we do not fall away.

Again, we live in that eschatological tension of the "already and not yet."

Warning is that you don't ==>

. . . fall from your own steadfastness,

What does that mean?

Some say this means you can lose your salvation. Not a view consistent w/Scripture. We just saw that God does guard us. Golden chain of redemption cannot be broken.

Some say this is to be weakened or compromised by false teaching which can be true of genuine believers.

Ironically, this same Greek verb (συναπαγω = to be carried away) . . . **be on your guard so that you are not carried away . . . and fall from your own steadfastness,**

Same verb is used in Gal. 2:13. What's so ironic about that?

Paul uses it to describe how Barnabas was carried away by t/hypocrisy of whom? Peter!

Certainly it applies to true believers.

I think it's also a warning to false professors. Word "fall" is also used of apostasy (to fall away from t/truth so as to be damned).

IV. A Discipline to Pursue (17-18a)

1. Negatively: Guard (be on your guard) - v. 17

Being a disciple means that I will apply the effort to guard myself and the church from error as I pursue Christ.

2. Positively: Grow (grow in grace) - v. 18a

Being a disciple means that I will apply the effort to grow in my Xn life as I pursue Christ.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

a. The word "but" draws another contrast

Personal spiritual growth is the best way to keep oneself from t/danger of falling from steadfastness.

John Piper puts it this way ==>

"The antidote to deception and destruction is growth in the grace and knowledge of Christ. The contrast between 2Pe 3:17 and 2Pe 3:18 is between, on the one hand, a tree which does not grow and so loses its stability in the earth and is blown over by a wind of false teaching and dies, and, on the other hand (v18), a tree which keeps its roots planted in God's grace and so grows and stays healthy and stable and does not get blown over by false teaching."

You are much more susceptible to falling backward when you are standing still than if you are moving forward. If I'm standing back on my heels it wouldn't take more than a good shove to move me backwards. But if I'm moving forward

b. Two parts: growing in grace and knowledge

If you want to grow in grace (graces of Xn living to God's glory) you must also grow in knowledge (true knowledge of JC) – again we're brought face to face w/what it means to be a disciple.

c. To be a μαθητης is to be a learner

Not just head-knowledge, but practical knowledge. Knowledge that impacts t/heart // results in Christlikeness // brings about a more intense pursuit of X.

(1) That's true growth – It has movement – It doesn't stand still

That is t/best evidence of whether one is a true Xn or a pretender. Puritan Thomas Watson: The growth of grace is the best evidence of the truth of it. Things that have no life will true grow: a picture will not grow, a stake in the hedge will not grow; but a plant that has a vegetative life grows. The growing of grace shows it to be alive in the soul.

Have you ever seen an artificial plant that looked so real that you had to touch it to find out that it wasn't?

If you couldn't touch it how could you tell? If all you were allowed to do was look at it from a distance?

If you watched it over the course of days and weeks you'd see that it doesn't grow. Growth is evidence of life.

Christian life isn't one of standing still or resting easy that "I'm saved."

d. I've been thinking for years about the problems in the American evangelical church as far as the disjuncture between profession and practice

Scholars have identified an acute problem in this regard among younger folks tabbing it "moralistic therapeutic theism."

That is t/dominant religion of adolescents & in our culture adolescence extends into the 20s.

MTD ==>

1. "A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth."
2. "God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions."
3. "The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself."
4. "God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem."
5. "Good people go to heaven when they die."

This attitude has infected t/evangelical, so-called Bible-believing CH. Not only among t/younger folks, but even among those who aren't.

(1) We have an out-of-balance theology of justification

For example, we can talk about someone being “saved” because that’s a past event. So far, so good. But what about someone who dabbles in Christianity? The sort of person who goes to church (or not) professes to be saved, but is worldly? There really is no pursuit of Jesus Christ in this person’s life. They keep one foot in the world and one foot (loosely) in the church. But that person is deemed “saved” (by themselves and others) because they profess to have been saved. In this case we have made a horrible disjuncture between justification and sanctification.

If you’re not a follower of Jesus, you’re not a Christian. And if you’re intent on following self and the world, you’re not a follower of Jesus.

We tend to define people on a past event (salvation) rather than a present commitment (Christ).

IOW - It doesn't matter what you say if there's no real evidence in what you do.

Instead of plastic plants we have plastic Xns - no evidence of growth because they're dead. They haven't been converted.

If you're wondering if that's you here's a key question:
Are you following JC?

There are so many who can give you the right answer to the question "Are you saved?"

Yes, I prayed to receive X when I was 10.

Yes, I believe that JC died for me and that I'm not saved by my works.

(same people work hard to demonstrate that)

Are you following after JC? Are you a disciple? Are you pursuing Him?
Or are you pursuing yourself // world.

Are you like X or are you like t/world? That's different.

Spurgeon put it this way ==>

A man cannot be saved unless he has become a learner in the school of Christ, and a learner, too, in a practical sense, being willing to practice what he learns. Only he who does the Master's will knows his doctrines. We are, if we have chosen the good part, sitters at the feet of Jesus, just like Saul of Tarsus sat the feet of Gamaliel; Christ is to us our greatest Instructor, and we take the law from his lips. The believer's position is that of a pupil, and the Lord Jesus is his teacher. Except we be converted and become as little children, we can in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven. Sitting at the feet of Jesus indicates the childlike spirit of true discipleship; and this is the one thing needful: there is no salvation apart from it.

John Piper in a sermon said about Jesus words in Luke 14:27 ("whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple") that: "Bearing a cross does not mean primarily having hard times. It means going to Golgotha. It means dying with Christ – dying to the old attitudes of envy and strife and jealousy and anger and selfishness and pride; and turning to follow Jesus in newness of life. When we make disciples we bid people to come and die to their old, destructive ways and to live for Jesus, who loved them and gave himself for them."

The goal of a disciple is to be like his master. Are you at all like JC?

John 15:8 “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

Romans 6:22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

If there's no sanctification (changed life / X likeness) there's no justification & if there's no justification there's no eternal life.

Wonderful if we could design plants that prevented weeds?

Part of t/course

While the growing of healthy plants doesn't prevent weeds; the growing of a healthy believer goes a long way in preventing the thorns of undisciplined living.

Disciplined living = being a disciple. Following JC. Goal: finishing well.

Paul could look at t/end of his life and say ==>

2 Timothy 4:6–8 . . . the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

We all want to be part of a story that ends well. If truly know JC as Lord and Savior, we will be.

But not every such story ends well.

I came across one such story this past week. The Story of Marianne Hearne.

As a young girl raised in a Xn home she had her first crisis of faith when she was 5 or 6. She tore her dress and was sure that her mother would be upset. So she prayed.

“O Lord, have mercy upon me, and mend my dress for me, for Jesus’ sake, Amen.” Every few minutes she would measure the hole to see if it was getting smaller. She imagined that it was but then t/realization struck that nothing was happening. She cried bitterly in disappointment with God.

Just then, Marianne’s aunt happened by her room and went in to kiss her goodnight. Seeing her tears, she gathered her up in her arms to comfort her. Marianne sobbed out her story. “I will mend it for you,” said her aunt. “Perhaps that is God’s way of answering you. Perhaps He sent me in here tonight on purpose.”

The dress was mended, as was Marianne’s faith.

I pick up the story as told by another ==>

That pattern of God sending a person to minister to Marianne during crises of faith would continue throughout her life. The next time was just a few years later, when Marianne was 12 years old and her mother suffered a long and difficult illness. Marianne prayed for her mother’s healing, and when that didn’t work, she began to bargain with God. “O Lord, if you must have one, “ she prayed, “please take our father to heaven and leave us our dear mother.” Then later, “Let us all die when

Mother dies, if she must.” Mother died on Christmas Day and Marianne thought that “the Babe of Bethlehem could never be anything more to me again.” When her crushing grief began to recede, anger took its place. She still went to church each week, and sat through the sermons seething, indignant and antagonistic. One day her Sunday school teacher, Miss Eliza, beckoned her to sit beside her. She reached for Marianne’s hand with a look of infinite compassion. Marianne later wrote that as she sat holding her teacher’s hand and listening to the sermon “All bitterness died out of my heart. At first compunction, the penitence, then resolve, then peace took possession of me, and I was quite another child when the service came to an end, for my heart was full of love and joy.” Through just a kind look and a small gesture, the teacher’s love became a catalyst for Marianne’s healing. Marianne grew up to become a famous writer and editor in England. She knew George Muller and considered Charles Spurgeon a lifelong friend. She edited a Sunday school newspaper with a weekly circulation of over 130,000 people, wrote books and taught a Bible class of young women. She was solidly established in the public eye as an evangelical leader and an example for women to follow. That made what happened next even worse. On May 3, 1873, a newspaper called *The Christian World* began to publically question the truth of basic doctrines like the existence of hell, the literal reality of the creation account and the infallible inspiration of the Bible. They were influenced by a movement that burned through England in the late 19th century, leaving the rubble of a dead church behind. Marianne said that this declaration broke her heart. *The Christian World* was a sister publication to her Sunday school paper. What would become of her if she publically disagreed with their new theology? Within days, men from her church came to her and asked her to distance herself from the publication. Her friend Charles Spurgeon took a public stand on the issue (labeling it the Downgrade Controversy) and clearly proclaimed that this was not an area on which a Christian could compromise. An

older couple came to Marianne and offered to let her live with them for the rest of her life so that she need not corrupt her faith for the sake of an income. God provided many people to help Marianne through this crisis of faith. But this time she didn't submit. She later wrote, "I am afraid I acted a coward's part. I was so busy that I resolved not to spare the time, at present, to try to solve the great problems for myself." Already attracted to the teaching of Universalism, Marianne allowed herself to slide into the new theology without thinking seriously about it or praying it through. This heretical teaching riddles her writing in the last half of her life, rendering it useless to the Kingdom of God. [Susan Verstraete. Christian Communicators Worldwide]

2 Timothy 4:10–14 . . . Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me . . . We take it that he had deserted X before he ever deserted Paul. 1 John 2:15.

IV. A Discipline to Pursue (17-18a)

1. Negatively: Guard (be on your guard) - v. 17

2. Positively: Grow (grow in grace) - v. 18a

e. Are you growing? Crocodiles grow their entire lives.

There are times when it doesn't seem like we are.
Times when our lives seem stagnant; when our joy seems nil.

If you look at an Oak tree you can't discern t/growth but you know it's alive. If you could see it over the course of 5 years or 10 . . .

When God wants to make a squash he takes 6 mo. when He wants to make an Oak he takes 50 years.

f. How do we grow? That's another sermon

1. Private means of grace (spending time alone w/God in prayer and reading of His Word).
2. Public means of grace (involvement in a good local CH; ministry; learning; fellowship w/other believers)
3. Watching the company we keep and the friendships we form.
4. Habitual communion w/Christ.
5. Suffering.

-- From A Body of Divinity, by Thomas Watson.

1. The signs of our not growing in grace, but rather falling into a spiritual consumption.

[1] When we have lost our spiritual appetite.

A consumptive person has not that stomach to his meat as formerly. Perhaps, Christian, thou canst remember the time when thou didst hunger and thirst after righteousness, thou didst come to the ordinances with such a stomach as to a feast; but now it is otherwise, Christ is not so prized, nor his ordinances so loved. This is a sad presage that grace is on the declining hand; and thou art in a deep consumption. It was a sign that David was near his grave when they covered him with clothes, and he got no heat, I Kings 1: I; so, when a person is covered with the warm clothes of ordinances, and yet has no heat of affection to spiritual things, it is a sign that he is declining in grace.

[2] When we grow more worldly.

Perhaps we once mounted into higher orbs, we set our hearts on things above, and spake the language of Canaan; but now our minds are taken off from heaven, we dig our comfort out of the lower mines, and with Satan compass the earth. This is a sign we are going down the hill apace, and our grace is in a consumption. It is observable when nature decays,

and people are near dying, they grow more stooping; and truly, when men's hearts grow more stooping to the earth, and they can hardly lift up themselves to a heavenly thought, if grace be not dead, yet it is ready to die. Rev 3: 2.

[3] When we are less troubled about sin.

Time was when the least sin grieved us, as the least hair makes the eye weep; but now we can digest sin without remorse. Time was when we were troubled if we neglected closet prayer; now we can omit family-prayer. Time was when vain thoughts troubled us; now we are not troubled for loose practices. Here is a sad declension in religion; and truly grace is so far from growing that we can hardly perceive its pulse to beat.

II. The signs of our growing in grace.

[I] The first sign of our growing, is, when we have got beyond our former measures of grace.

It is a sign a child thrives when he has outgrown his clothes. That knowledge which would serve us before will not serve us now; we have a deeper insight into religion, our light is clearer, our spark of love is increased into a flame; there is a sign of growth. That competency of grace we once had is too scanty for us now; we have outgrown ourselves.

[2] When we are more firmly rooted in religion.

'Rooted in him, and established:' the spreading of the root shows the growth of the tree. Col 2: 7. When we are so strongly fastened on Christ, that we cannot be blown down with the breath of heretics, it is a blessed sign of growth. Athanasius was called *Adamas ecclesiae* [the Adamant of the Church, an adamant that could not be removed from the love of the truth.

[3] When we have a more spiritual frame of heart.

(1.) When we are more spiritual in our principles; when we oppose sin out of love to God, and because it strikes at his holiness.

(2.) When we are more spiritual in our affections. We grieve for the first rising of corruption, for the bubbling up of vain thoughts, and for the spring that runs underground. We mourn not only for the penalty of sin, but for its pollution. It is not a coal only that burns, but black[en]s.

(3.) When we are spiritual in the performance of duty. We are more serious, reverent, fervent; we have more life in prayer, we put fire to the sacrifice. 'Fervent in spirit.' Rom 12: 2: We serve God with more love, which ripens and mellows our duty, and makes it come off with a better relish.

[4] When grace gets ground by opposition. The fire, . . . burns hottest in the coldest season. Peter's courage increased by the opposition of the high priest and the rulers. Acts 4: 8, 11. The martyr's zeal was increased by persecution. Here was grace of the first magnitude.

III. What shall we do to grow in grace?

(1.) Take heed of that which will hinder growth, as the love of any sin. The body may as well thrive in a fever, as grace can where any sin is cherished.

(2.) Use all means for growth in grace.

1st. 'Exercise yourselves unto godliness.' I Tim 4: 7. The body grows stronger by exercise. Trading of money makes men grow rich; so the more we trade our faith in the promises, the richer in faith we grow.

2ndly. If you would be growing Christians, be humble Christians. It is observed in some countries, as in France, the best and largest grapes, which make wine, grow on the lower sort of vines; so the humble saints grow most in grace. 'God giveth grace to the humble.' I Pet 5: 5.

3rdly. Pray to God for spiritual growth. Some pray that they may grow in gifts. It is better to grow in grace than gifts. Gifts are for ornament, grace is for nourishment. Gifts edify others; grace saves ourselves. Some pray that they may grow rich; but a fruitful heart is better than a full purse. Pray that God would make you grow in grace, though it be by affliction. Heb 12: 10. The vine grows by pruning. God's pruning-knife is to make us grow more in grace. -- From A Body of Divinity, by Thomas Watson.

V. A Doxology to Cherish (18b)

**To Him [Christ] be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity.
Amen.**

A. See the connection?

John 15:8 "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

The more we grow in grace the more we glorify the God of grace.
