

The Scriptures and the Last Days

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[0:00] And so we're now going to turn to our Bible reading. And Willie Philip, our senior minister, I'm delighted to bring one to you.

Do turn up to 2 Peter, and we're going to read from a few places. I'll keep you right, but do turn first to 2 Peter chapter 1. If you're in the visitor's Bible, that is page 1018.

2 Peter chapter 1. Beginning at verse 1. Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue and virtue with knowledge and knowledge with self-control and self-control with steadfastness and steadfastness with godliness and godliness with brotherly affection and brotherly affection with love.

[2:05] For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Turn over to chapter 2. Chapter 2, verse 1. But false prophets also eruse among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them, the way of truth will be blasphemed.

And in their greed, they will exploit you with false words.

And then over to chapter 3, verse 1. This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved.

In both of them, I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this, first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

Amen. This is God's Word, and we'll return to it shortly. We'll do turn with me, if you would, to 2 Peter.

[3:52] And as Geoff says, we're coming back this evening to Peter's second letter. Back in July, actually, we spent three weeks looking mostly at chapter 1.

Very helpfully, with Fraser and Joel and Kerr preaching to us. But I think that Peter's message is so important that it's worth us spending a bit more time focused on it.

And we're going to do that for a few Sunday evenings. Although next Sunday evening will be different. Next Sunday, as part of our 20-year celebration of the Cornhill Training Course here in Scotland.

We're having an event next Saturday afternoon, but on Sunday evening we'll be having here at our 5 p.m. service a Thanksgiving service, and I hope we'll be joined by some folk from other churches that have been involved with Cornhill over the years.

We look forward to Craig Dyer, who's the pastor now of Hamilton Baptist Church, coming to preach to us. Craig is one of the trustees of Cornhill Scotland, and in fact, exactly 20 years ago next Sunday, Craig was the preacher at the commissioning service for the first year of the Cornhill Training Course.

[5:13] So we've dragged him back 20 years later. I've said to him, he's still around in 20 more years. We'll probably have him at the 40th anniversary, but he feels that that might not be

necessary. But some of you may remember that, and we certainly have got a very great deal to be thankful for, for all that has been achieved through Cornhill under the Lord's hand.

It's right that we acknowledge that, and so we're going to be doing that next Sunday evening. So do come and don't miss that. But tonight, we're going to dip our toes back into the second letter of Peter.

We're going to be anchoring ourselves over these coming weeks in chapter three. Of course, it's a short letter, very coherent. So we'll be dipping back and forward in it, especially this evening. And we want to try and get clear on its whole message for us, which really is, I suppose you could call it a prescription for us as believers living in the world's last days.

And that prescription is summed up very succinctly, really, in the first two verses of chapter three. Let me just read those verses again. Peter says, this is now the second letter I'm writing to you, beloved.

[6:19] In both of them, I'm stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.

Now, Peter's constant refrain through this letter is to point his readers back, back to the words of the prophets and the apostles of Christ.

And so I want us to focus particularly this evening on that vital message of the scriptures for these last days that we're living in. And I think it is a very timely message for the church today.

We are living, I think it's fair to say, in days of turmoil for the world. It's perhaps just beginning to dawn on Western nations like ours the enormity of the problems that are facing us economically and in other ways.

We've had decades and decades of profligate spending of money that we don't have, money that we've borrowed from the future, from our grandchildren and great-grandchildren. And the weight of that debt is becoming a crushing burden.

[7:34] If you read the news, you'll see that bond yields are going higher and higher as trust in governments is going lower and lower and collapsing. And their credit worthiness along with it.

So they have to charge higher and higher interest. Alongside that, energy supplies are critically low due to the apparently intractable war in the Middle East and with Russia and Ukraine.

And Europe is very, particularly in a fragile and troubled situation. Gas storage is at historic low levels for this time of year before winter. Diesel prices are rocketing.

the United Kingdom is very vulnerable because we have destroyed nearly all of our gas storage. We've bet the house on windmills.

And alongside that, of course, as a society, we're living in a time, aren't we, when we're seeing great fracturing and polarizing. We're seeing volatility socially in really quite alarming ways.

[8:39] The gulf between the ruling elites in our nations and the populations is becoming really quite vast. Serious academics, not fringe cranks, but serious academics in our universities are writing about the very real possibility of civil war in the foreseeable future.

There's more and more talk, isn't there, of international conflict and war in Europe. Now, these are things that most of us who are alive today can barely conceive of.

These have not been things that have been remotely part of our thinking. But these things happen, don't they? They have happened. And they'll happen again.

And when these things happen, Christians will not be immune, will we? We will not be immune from the effects of the various crises that come to our world, that come to our nation.

And in fact, Christians have additional concerns. What about the church of Jesus Christ? How will she fare? We face increasing hostility, I think it's fair to say, from a society that by and large rejects God.

[9:58] It doesn't seem likely that's going to change any time soon. And so, we are living in difficult days and it seems entirely possible that those days will become much more difficult.

So, it's as well, isn't it, that we have in our Bibles a letter like this from Christ's apostle Peter, a letter which is written to guide us to live in exactly these kind of difficult days.

Peter wrote this, first of all, in the first century to Christians who were in very difficult and tough circumstances. They were living through the travail of what Peter called the last days.

And we are still living in these same last days, in the final era of our world's history, the era that was inaugurated by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

And by the way, it's no surprise that these last days should be long. We'll see that when we get to chapter 3, verses 8 and 9. Peter himself talks about the very nature of people seeming to think that God is slow in keeping his promises because these days are extending.

[11:04] There's not a surprise. And there's a great deal here in these chapters to teach us how to think, how to live in this world's last days, whatever those days bring to us in terms of turmoil and crisis and hardship and difficulty.

So we're going to spend some weeks, as I've said, getting to grips with what Peter teaches us here in Jesus' name. And the first thing, the most important thing really, that Peter draws our attention to here, and all through the letters have said, is the vital importance of the Scriptures.

They are the authoritative key and they are the utterly sufficient guide for all churches and for all time.

And by the way, that's what our church believes. We have not departed from it, as sadly the National Church has departed from its own declaratory articles, but those articles say this, and we still believe it.

This church adheres to the Scottish Reformation. It receives the Word of God which is written in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as its supreme rule of faith and life.

[12:21] And we avow the fundamental doctrines of the Catholic, the universal faith founded thereupon. And the principal subordinate standard of the church is the Westminster Confession of Faith, approved by the General Assembly of 1647, containing the sum and substance of the Reformed Church.

Those statements are simply saying that the Scriptures are the authoritative key and the completely sufficient guide for all Christians, for all churches, for all time.

And that's what we're going to look at this evening. But one or two things to note first of all. Firstly, note that Peter wrote this letter not to particularly Christian leaders and teachers.

He wrote this letter to ordinary Christians like each one of us. Perhaps he did that because precisely he feared that there were problems in leadership in the church just as there are often today.

So he goes directly to the members of the church and says you all need to know this about the Scriptures. Look at chapter 3 verse 1. I'm writing to you, plural, beloved, God's people.

[13:32] It's a direct encouragement, a direct word to all, to ordinary Christian people. This is a letter for every one of us who professes Christ. And it is a word of huge encouragement. Look back to chapter 1 verse 1.

You'll have heard it when Josh read it. See what an extraordinary privilege. privilege. An extraordinary privilege that belongs just to ordinary Christian people. You, he says, have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours, says the apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because, look at verse 2, you can have a real knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord. We can know the Lord Jesus as intimately as any apostle, is what he's saying.

And therefore, we can know God intimately. Look, because verse 1 says clearly, doesn't it, our God and Savior is Jesus Christ. And he has given us direct, intimate knowledge of God himself.

What a wonderful, what a remarkable privilege that is. That every single Christian believer has all that, the very highest, the very best relationship with Almighty God that is possible.

[14:48] There's no need to have special priests, special leaders to give you something extra. It's yours already, that high privilege of knowing God. But of course, with that privilege comes very high responsibility because we must grow and be fruitful in that knowledge of God that he's given us.

Look down to chapter 1, verse 8. We're not to be ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of God. but to make every effort, verse 5, to supplement your faith with virtue and virtue with knowledge and knowledge with self-control and self-control with steadfastness and steadfastness with godliness and godliness with brotherly affection and brotherly affection with love.

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In fact, if you turn over to the very last verse of the letter, at the end of chapter 3, you'll see that Peter ends his letter just as he began it, with that exhortation to grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

That is the responsibility that goes along with that wonderful high privilege of being called to know the Lord Jesus. That's why we're to be diligent, he says back in chapter 1, verse 10, to make our

calling and election sure.

[16:11] And you see, Peter's letter is concerned to tell us that whatever else living in these last days of the world may bring to us, it must bring, it must bring growth in Christian people and growth in Christian churches.

And so he tells us how to grow as Christians and as churches in the face of hostility, in the face of much skepticism in these last days. And he says that's sure to be around us, chapter 3, verse 3, there will be scoffers everywhere in these last days.

Last Sunday evening, Paul Brennan was speaking about the scoffer from Proverbs. Well, the scoffer is the characteristic person of the last days, according to Peter. And what Peter's telling us is, and this is somewhat alarming, that not only will the scoffers be outside the professing church, but actually you will discover them inside the professing church.

That might seem shocking, but it's not a shock to the apostle Peter. In fact, if you read through chapter 2, and I would encourage you to do that when you go home, you'll see it is full of sober warnings, isn't it, of just exactly that.

We read it in chapter 2, verse 1, it's always been the way. There were always false prophets among the people, just as there were true prophets. And so it will be among you, false teachers, even denying the master within the professing Christian church, but actually denying the very thing at the heart of the faith.

[17:45] But I think we have to admit that that is the tragedy of the church so often in our day. One of the most wicked things, one of the most disgraceful things in our day is seeing and hearing church leaders who put stumbling blocks in the way of struggling Christians.

It's exactly what Peter's talking about. People struggling with sexual purity, with temptation, people who are struggling to honor the Lord Jesus with their bodies and in their lives.

And yet sometimes are told by those who hold positions within the professing church of Jesus Christ, no, you don't need to struggle. We can affirm you as you are. We can affirm your sinful desires.

Express yourself as who you are. It's shocking wickedness, isn't it? But it's particularly terrible because it's spoken by those who claim God's authority.

People like that really need to read 2 Peter chapter 2 very carefully and very soberly, don't they? Verse 18, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by essential passions of the flesh, those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.

[19:00] They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he's enslaved. For if, after they've escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they're again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

It would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.

Those are very strong words, aren't they, from Christ's apostles. And anyone who professes leadership in the Christian church has to take those warnings very seriously, don't they?

And Peter is very alert to the dangers of these things, especially for young Christians. What does he say that these so-called Christian leaders do?

Well, look at chapter 2, verse 14. They entice unsteady souls. Verse 18, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh, those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.

[20:16] You see, those who are not yet well taught. And they're most vulnerable, aren't they? New Christians who have little knowledge. Very often the most vulnerable.

That's why what they need above all other things is teaching in the scriptures. Christian fellowship is great. Lots of Christian singing is encouraging. But they need the leading of God's word if they're going to escape from those who would entangle them.

So that's why Peter is writing to remind them of the great privilege that is theirs in the knowledge of our God and Savior, but the great responsibility that they have to grow in that knowledge.

Chapter 3, verse 1, I'm stirring up your sincere minds because you need to think straight if you're going to go on in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus.

That word sincere means unalloyed. It means there's nothing false mixed in. Clear thinking, unalloyed thinking, it's Christian thinking, says Peter.

[21:22] And Christian thinking, clear Christian thinking, must always be biblical thinking. Do you see that there in chapter 3, verse 2? To go on with God, to go forward in knowledge and grace, he says you must always be going back, back to the scriptures, to the whole Bible, to the Old Testament, the predictions of the prophets, and to the New Testament, the commandment of our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

Isn't that striking? And that's why he's written two whole letters. Primarily, he says, to stir them up, to remember always, to keep the Bible, the whole Bible, as the rock of authority and the rock of sufficiency for their lives and for the church.

And it's so important for you to always, always remember, says Peter. Because he knows that Satan is constantly on the prowl seeking to devour, seeking to destroy Christ's church and his people.

He says that in his first letter, doesn't he? He's like a roaring lion seeking to devour. He wants to destroy the spiritual life, the spiritual growth of Christian believers.

prayers. He wants to stop us communicating with God. And God communicates with us through his living and abiding word.

[22:51] That's what Peter calls it in his first letter. And he wants to destroy our relationship with our God and Savior through cutting off communication with him. That's how all relationships are destroyed, isn't it?

communication breakdown. One party stops listening to the other. That's why counseling is simply helping to restore communication, help people start talking with one another again so they can hear one another, listen to one another.

And Satan wants to destroy the life of the church, destroy our communication with our God and Savior. He wants us to forget, to reject, to get confused about God's word to us in Scripture.

the chief problem isn't always that there's direct heretical and false teaching, although sometimes there is, but very often there's just confusion, there's just forgetting God's word to us.

So let's get absolutely clear about Peter's command, that those living in the world's last days should always remember that the word of God, the whole word of God, the Old Testament and the New Testament, is the only rock of stability in the church and in our Christian lives.

[24:06] And therefore it can never be neglected. It must never be closed, it must always be an open book in the corporate life of the church but also in our personal life as Christians.

The Scriptures alone is what gives us everything we need, everything that pertains to life and godliness, as he says in chapter one. Because the Scriptures are two things, they are our authoritative, key, and they are our sufficient guide for living in these worlds last days.

So that's what Peter is saying. Let's think clearly about those two things. First of all, the Bible is the authoritative key to every question that might face the church or Christians today.

And we face all kinds of questions, don't we? The whole realm of sexual morality I've mentioned. It's a worldwide issue in the church, especially in the western church. The uniqueness of Christ is a real issue.

Is Jesus really the only way to God? Must we and dare we evangelize those who are Jews or Sikhs or Muslims or whatever, as well as just those who are secularists and atheists?

[25:26] There are all sorts of other issues, aren't there, people that are facing us today. The whole creation order of male and female is being confused and collapsed today. The whole goodness of procreation has been questioned today by people who say we should stop having families to save the planet.

The sanctity of human life has been questioned today in our parliaments. although thankfully the latest bill to bring in assisted suicide was defeated again just recently.

But there are so many of these things. And there are many people who are saying if the church is to survive, if the church is to make progress in this 21st century western world, well it must become more progressive.

Of course the Bible is still important, but the Bible can't be authoritative now in the same way as it once was. It certainly can't be the sole authority.

And that's the kind of thing that people are saying even within the professing church. Oh the Holy Spirit is opening our eyes to more truth. New light is coming to us from God's word.

[26:37] And it sounds very plausible doesn't it? It sounds very spiritual. But notice that Peter's answer is very different to that. No. Peter says do you want to make progress?

Do you want to advance the cause of Christ in these last days of this world and planet earth? Well, if you do, remember that the way forward is the way back.

Back to the scriptures. That's the only way forward there is for your Christian life and for your church life. That's what you need to remember. That's what he's saying in chapter three verse two. Remember the predictions of your holy prophets and the commandment of our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

disciples. If you look back to chapter one and verses 13 and 14, that's where he expands just what he summarizes there in chapter three verse two.

Chapter one verse 13. I think it right as long as I'm in this body to stir you up by way of reminder since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. [27:44] He knows he's going to die soon. And so he's writing verse 15 to remind you so that after he dies you'll always remember these things he says. Well what things?

Well the absolute authority of the scriptures of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Read on there to chapter one verses 16 and following you'll see that he's expanding on both of these things. First the New Testament the words of the apostles because we apostles did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

When he received honour and glory from God the Father and the voice was born to him by the majestic glory this is my beloved son with whom I'm well pleased we ourselves heard this very voice born from heaven because we were with him on the holy mountain.

See unlike the false teachers unlike these progressives the apostles words are not clever myths they're not clever distortions of the truth.

[28:51] That's the mark of the false teacher their teaching is shaped always by a desire for a certain lifestyle. That's very plain in chapter two if you look at verse three.

Their greed shapes their message and their greed they exploit you. And their sexual desires shape their message verse two they follow their own sensuality.

But no says Peter in total contrast to that our witness is true we were eyewitnesses of his glorious majesty. See faith in the word of Christ's apostles is not at all or ever some sort of leap into the dark.

It's trust in the honest words of honest men who saw with their own eyes and heard with their own ears the ministry of Jesus Christ and witness his resurrection.

And verse 17 says they were ear witnesses. He points that out. They heard the voice of God himself from the glory on the mount of the transfiguration saying to them this is my beloved son listen to him.

[30:01] And they did heed him and that's why the apostles words faithfully bear the command of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and they do so still today to us directly through them.

It's the word of the apostles and it's their gospel that are the New Testament scriptures. Now that is so important because you sometimes will hear people saying ah you see but our teacher isn't those apostles like Paul and Peter who are flawed.

Our teacher is Jesus. Look again at chapter 3 verse 2. The command of our Lord and Savior Jesus comes how?

Through your apostles. When they speak he speaks. Some of you will remember Christopher Patton.

Chris Patton was once a conservative government minister and he was the chairman of the conservative party who masterminded the conservative campaign in the 1993 general election which everyone expected John Major to lose but somehow miraculously he won the election but Chris Patton lost his seat at the election and he was a great friend of John Major's and as a sort of consolation John Major sent him to be the governor of Hong Kong and he was the last governor of Hong Kong and he wrote a very interesting biography detail in particularly his time as governor of Hong Kong and I remember reading it and there was a very striking sentence in it where John Major on his departure for Hong Kong said to him now Chris remember when you speak the Chinese government hears me when you speak they hear me and that is what Peter is saying here when the apostles of Christ speak we hear the command of our Lord and Savior Jesus

[32:05] Christ the New Testament scriptures are the authoritative key to answer every single question that faces the church and Christians today and so also are the Old Testament scriptures look at chapter 1 verses 19 and following we have something more sure he says the prophetic word

and he says that that is still like a light in the dark to teach us God's truth until the very end of time a light shining until the day dawns now you see the false teachers these so-called progressives their teachings are driven by their own sensual desires they want doctrine that will not justify their own behavior the way they want to live it's very plain in chapter 3 verse 3 but the prophetic word by total contrast look at verse 21 it never came from man's desires or thoughts no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit alone that word carried along really means driven along it's the word that's used of Paul in the storm in the sea when they were on the ship in Acts chapter 27 and the ship was being driven relentlessly by the wind nobody on board could move it or change the course even if they wanted to so do you see what Peter's saying for the church to be progressive in the biblical sense that is to stay alive to grow to be strong in the force of of skepticism and in the face of opposition to progress it must always be going back to one place to the sole authoritative key to the scriptures of the Old

Testament and the New Testament the words of the prophets and the command of our Lord and Savior through his apostles that is as Jude puts it the faith that is once and for all delivered to the saints so the scriptures alone are the key to unlocking the truth about any question and need every question in the church today and will be so right until the very end of time and so any church or any Christian leader who seeks to undermine that truth or erode that truth is not apostolic is not orthodox and it's simply false and of course there are many attacks on the apostles and the apostle Paul is very often the victim of those attacks and that's nothing new in fact Peter says that himself in chapter 3 and verses 16 and 17 we're just reading those he speaks about Paul in all his letters and he says in verse 16 the second half there are some things in them that are hard to understand well there are on there when we read Paul's letters which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction as they do other scriptures that you therefore beloved knowing this beforehand take care that you are not carried away with the error of these lawless people and that you don't lose your own stability don't be destabilized be sure of the true authority by contrast look at the last verse 18 you instead grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior

Jesus Christ through these scriptures how are we to do that well that's that's Peter's second main point really in this letter about the importance of the scriptures not only is the Bible the authoritative key to answer every question that the church or the Christian might have but the Bible is the sufficient guide for all Christian growth for all Christian fruitfulness it's not just the Bible's authority that's under attack today it certainly is but it's also the Bible's sufficiency that is often under attack especially within the church there are those who accept the Bible's authority but in reality for real progress in the Christian life a real growth for a fuller relationship and experience with God well they think the scriptures themselves alone are not really quite sufficient they need to turn somewhere else to special experiences to special prophecies perhaps given for them words of knowledge revelations for me and for my life or particular forms of music perhaps Christian so-called worship or special blessings or whatever it might be but you see Peter saying the opposite to that he's saying in his whole letter which is devoted to growth and grace and growth and personal knowledge and relationship with our Lord and Savior he's saying that comes from the scriptures it's not just a letter about refuting error it is that but all of that is so that ordinary

Christians indeed all Christians can grow in a deep relationship with their Savior and Lord Jesus Christ and that happens as you resist the error of unbiblical thinking and as you grow in true knowledge and that knowledge is the knowledge that's imparted by the bright and shining light of the biblical revelation from the very beginning until the very end Old Testament and new so how do we grow how do we grow in grace and in godliness we'll look back at chapter 1 again and verse 3 what is what does he say he says God's divine power has granted to us has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness everything that we need for growth in the knowledge of the Lord and we have it where verse 4 in the great and very in the precious and very great promises so that through them says

Peter you may become partakers in the divine nature in the promises of God that are written in his word see why people Peter keeps wanting to remind us about the importance of the Bible because through its sufficient wholly sufficient guidance and teaching and shaping of our lives we will reach the goal of our calling he says to share in the glory of God himself verse 3 his own glory and excellence the scriptures which are full of these great and precious promises they are God's fully completely sufficient resource which are given us as Peter to the very end of the world until the day dawns so that we will grow in grace that we will become truly fruitful for him and we will become like

him sharing his own glory devote yourselves to them says Peter in verse 5 make every effort to add to your faith virtue and knowledge and self-control and steadfastness and godliness and brotherly affection and love and so on grow in that grace grow in the knowledge of God through the power of the scriptures at work in your lives that's how it happens and that's how verse 8 comes to be so that you will be effective and fruitful not ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of God our savior that being granted we want to be like that don't we we want to be effective we want to be fruitful for Jesus not ineffective and unfruitful surely I hope so but what Peter's saying is we can't be and we won't be without the growth that comes from that right kind of feeding nothing as disappointing as there is is there a plant or a bush that just doesn't produce any flowers or any fruit

[40:22] Agnes was telling me actually this week about her potatoes being so deadly disappointing tiny little marble she's got and she said she said you know there's a reason why she didn't tend them she didn't give them any feeding I'll tell you my raspberries this year have been absolutely fantastic do you know why because I get bags of chicken dung from Edward Lobb and I stick them on in the autumn and my goodness they love that not that I've actually had any of them because my grandson has eaten virtually 99% of all of our raspberries but you've got to feed haven't you if you want a great yield it takes feeding it takes the right kind of food not just random hopes it's the same with our bodies isn't it you're not going to become a top class athlete if you just lounge around in a chair all the time and eat fish suppers and drink coke and Peter's just saying it's the same way with you as Christians he says you live in difficult days there are dark days that lie ahead for us for our world for our nation perhaps for our churches there's going to be great pressures there will be scoffers there'll be skeptics

Peter says right within the professing church who'll who'll he'll seek to take away your your true source of nourishment your true feeding to hamper your health and growth that's why I'm writing he says I don't want you to lose your stability I don't want you to be carried away with the error of these lost lawless people I want you to stand firm and I want you to grow I want you to be faithful and fruitful until the Lord Jesus returns so remember he says cherish trust obey the word of life that's written for you in the Bibles that's why you've been given these scriptures I wonder if we really do cherish our Bibles in that way today in our nation I wonder whether we've had it so good for so long and so easy that we we just take it all for granted but we never know do we never know what the future holds look what happened in China a couple of generations ago a land that had known freedom of religion was totally shut down by Mao's cultural revolution

Bibles were banned missionaries were cast out believers church leaders cast into prison would you be ready for that has that happened here we're naive I think to think that that could never happen here some of us might live to see that happening here in our very own country if that's so would we be saying this is the greatest the most precious thing that we possess I remember reading about a an imprisoned Chinese pastor and he was in prison for a long time and his work in the army barracks was to be cleaning the toilets of the officers and he discovered that they were using as toilet paper pages from Bibles that they'd taken off the Christians and he so prized the word of God that he would take these used bits of toilet paper leafs of the scriptures out of these latrines and clean them and read them and cherish them day by day because he was so hungry for the word of God the word of life that would give him everything he needed for life and godliness and for growth and for fruit bearing even in a horrible prison being treated like a dog because it brought him knowledge deep personal knowledge of his Lord and Savior

Jesus Christ a glorious knowledge that no prison guard could possibly take away from him however badly they treated him friends don't underestimate how important how serious Peter's words for us living in the west today we don't know what's around the corner that's why he says to us remember remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of our Lord and Savior through your apostles knowing this first of all that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing following their own sinful desires remember the scriptures so you will grow in the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence to share his own glory and nature and friends we'll keep standing and we will keep going forward as long as we never stop going back to the word of God in scripture cherishing it remembering it loving it and submitting to it well let's pray together Peter says you've been born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable through the living and abiding word of God for all flesh is like grass and its glory like the flower of the grass the grass withers and the flower falls but the word of the Lord remains forever and this word is the good news that was preached to you Lord help us we pray to cherish to be thankful for and to remember

always your authoritative and utterly sufficient word how we thank you that you have given us in this book everything we will ever need for life for godliness and for fruitfulness as your people help us to help one another we pray never to depart from the scriptures but to keep on going back to keep on remembering and to keep on living in their light until that day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts help us we pray and help us to help one another for we ask it in Jesus name
[47:14] Amen may may may