Standing Firm Until the Last Day

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[0:00] But we're going to turn now to our Bible reading for this morning and it's our last study! together in Peter's second letter so we're going to read some verses from 2 Peter first! of all in chapter 2 and then in chapter 3 so if you turn to 2 Peter chapter 2 and we're going to read the first three verses and then skip down to verse 18 so 2 Peter chapter 2 then and verse 1 but false prophets also arose 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 their condemnation from long ago is not idle and their destruction is not asleep down to verse 18 for speaking loud boasts of folly they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error they promise them freedom but they themselves are slaves of corruption for whatever overcomes a person to that he is enslaved for if after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our lord and savior jesus christ they once again are entangled in them and overcome this last state has become worse for them than the first for it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness then after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them what the true proverb says has happened to them the dog returns to its own vomit and the sow after washing herself returns to wallow in the mire and then down to chapter 3 verse 10 but the day of the lord will come like a thief then the heavens will pass away with a roar and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed since all these things are thus to be dissolved what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of god because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn but according to his promise we are waiting for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells therefore beloved since you are waiting for these be diligent to be found by him without spot and blemish and at peace and count the patience of our lord as salvation just as our beloved brother paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters there are some things in them that are hard to understand which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction as they do the other scriptures you therefore beloved knowing this beforehand take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability but grow in the grace and knowledge of our lord and savior jesus christ to him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity amen

standing firm until the last day turn with me again would you to second peter this is the last of our studies for the time being in this very timely letter this very timely word for living through the world's last days which is what we're doing and living so as to be ready for the last day that is the day of judgment which will surely come to all as peter says so clearly in chapter 3 verse 10 here like a thief suddenly when you don't expect it so his message is you must always be ready and that of course was the message of the lord jesus christ and last time if you remember we saw how in chapter 3 peter towards the end of the chapter tells us how we are to be ready what kind of people ought we to be he says in verse 11 and his answer is that we are to be active we're to be active never passive in the face of god's sovereign plan which he lays out for us we're to be active in purity diligently striving to be spotless and blameless to be fit for our true and new home where only righteousness dwells and verse 15 he reminds us we're to be active in patience that is grasping that christ's delay in his coming is not slowness but is as verse 9 says for salvation to give time for people to repent and therefore we are to be active in gospeling calling people to repentance and faith active in purity active in patience and verse 18 active in progress growing in maturity through growing in the

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knowledge of our lord and savior jesus christ there's a great emphasis isn't there on active response because of course none of that will happen naturally none of it will happen automatically by default so we're to positively pursue these things but it's not all what we might call positive pursuit because added to all of this positive encouragement is in fact a very necessary negative side a warning look at verse 17 take care he says lest you lose your stability take care not to go that way but rather verse 18 to go on growing in grace and knowledge of jesus christ and away these last two verses really summarize and focus the message of peter's whole letter so i think it's a good way for us to end our study by focusing on these last two verses today and i want to do that under under two headings because peter reminds us here of two things he reminds us of the constant peril that we face but also crucially of the constant protection that we do have there's a real warning and a real encouragement and that is a mark of the true gospel the true gospel gives us always both of those things not just one or the other and we've got to pay close attention says peter to both of these things if we are going to be people who are not destabilized but rather be people who are standing firm until the last day so let's try and digest first of all the message of verse 17 which is all about the constant peril the danger that even faithful people he calls them beloved in the lord even faithful people may lose
their stability by being carried off unawares into error you therefore beloved knowing this beforehand take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability that's a very negative verse isn't it do not we tend to not like negative teaching we want to be positive all the time that's what the marketers will tell you isn't it you need a positive message people work in the media and social media selling things influencing you got to have a positive message but the bible is actually full of very necessary negatives things that are vital actually for our health and our well-being and actually just just takes a moment's thought to realize how important these negatives are i always find that when i'm driving and getting instructions from google maps or apple maps is rather unsatisfactory you come to your junction it will say turn left at the junction or it'll say take the second exit at the roundabout but very often the roads are complicated aren't there and there's all sorts of turnings how much better if it said to you not at the crossroads not at the traffic lights not at that fork but at the roundabout isn't that much clearer maybe i can patent my own version of a necessary negative map hey i could make a fortune but it's much clearer isn't it and you see clarity is infinitely more important in god's direction for our lives and that is why god has given us both positive and negative commands and we're fools if we ignore them we must teach biblical negatives i'll never forget being at a conference for ministers quite a number of years ago and there was a point when we were sharing about our churches and our work for prayer and so on and one man who had quite recently gone to a church was telling us of some of the great difficulties he was having with great confusion about so many things in the congregation and at first he said it really surprised him because he was following somebody who had had an evangelical ministry a bible teaching ministry for many many years and he couldn't understand why this church was so confused about certain key issues and then it clicked with him that his predecessor had never taught the negatives the necessary negatives it only taught the positives and so when faced with real critical issues the congregation was confused and anything but clear but god's negatives god's warnings are so necessary i remember the first time i went to australia and so many beautiful beaches around sydney and around the the sydney harbor area and so on but every one of these beaches has a great big sign on it with red saying beware of sharks don't swim i saw so many of these and i saw so many people swimming i thought well this is just a joke nobody really takes this seriously and then i remember a couple of weeks after i'd come home reading in the newspaper about several people who'd been mauled by sharks on one of the very beaches that i'd been quite tempted to go in swimming those signs were very necessary and clearly the sensible people who still live in sydney take heed of those signs i remember once being on holiday where i like to go in portugal and up on the west coast beaches of portugal there are beautiful long beaches with huge atlantic rulers it's rather like the north of scotland except it's sunny and often there are surfers on these beaches but there are signs warning swimmers beware there are dangerous currents well i find that out once when i was swimming on those beaches with a friend
and i was swimming as fast as i could swim to get back to the shore and i was going backwards out the way and only afterwards i realized just how closely perhaps we'd come to drowning those signs were there for very good reason and the bible's warning signs are there for our good the negatives have a supremely positive role don't they and the lord jesus himself often warns in the world he

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says to his disciples you will have tribulation you will have trouble that's a big negative isn't it who wants to hear that but what a comfort it is when we do face trouble and tribulation to know that our lord has warned us and it's not outside his sovereign knowledge or his sovereign plan for his people and sometimes that trouble comes to the church from outside from persecution from opposition you see that don't you if you read through the book of acts you certainly know it if you read through church history but also as we often see as well in the book of acts the trouble comes from within from within the professing church that's how the devil attacks god's people and that is what peter is warning about here isn't it the constant peril that can destabilize that can ultimately destroy followers of jesus is a peril here that is peddled by leaders within the professing church of jesus christ look at chapter 2 verse 1 again which we read there will also be false teachers among you and they will smuggle in they'll secretly bring in destructive heresies he says this will not be a grenade assault with things being lobbed in from outside those things you can recognize quite easily but this this will be like poison gas it's invisible it's got no sound it's got no smell it's deadly before you even realize that it's come and affected you and that is so absolutely accurate because destabilizing falsehood always comes closed in the language of love the language of inclusiveness the language of progress the language of affirmation all the nice words all the words that are so very positive notice not negative but don't be fooled says peter because that kind of teaching can hide fundamental error lawlessness he calls it in verse 17 of chapter 3 and sinister power to come among you and to carry false and destructive things which can seriously damage you damage your own stability so that in the end as chapter 3 verse 16 says you become like them unstable ignorant twisted to destruction and when your when your whole mind becomes unstable when your brain becomes unstable because it's damaged ultimately you will lose all balance won't you that's what happens when when somebody has a series of strokes

I remember that happening to my father had a series of strokes and ultimately his balance was so poor and then one day he fell broke his hip and he never walked again and you see when that kind of thing happens in the church of Jesus Christ it is deadly serious isn't it and that is what's happened in the church of Jesus Christ in a widespread way in our western world in our own nation the biggest threats in so many ways to the church in our nation and others like us comes from inside the professing church and ordinary people sitting in the pew today in so many churches are in danger because they're being taken in by the secret incursions of what Peter calls here what they are destructive heresies which if people listen to them follow them will carry them away into error into lawlessness and into total instability and ultimately into a disastrous fall a fall a fall which Peter says from which no recovery will be possible and that will happen to people individually and that will happen to institutions of the church and if you doubt that that anything could be that serious well look back to chapter 2 verses 20 and 21 see what Peter says if after they've escaped from the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ they are 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 given to them the commandment of our Lord and Savior through your apostles from the true apostolic gospel and if that happens says Peter if you fall back into it it is worse than have never ever having had that truth and that's a very sobering thing to come to terms with isn't it because if we think about that in terms of individuals of churches of denominations even of nations who have known the truth of the apostolic gospel of Christ but have turned from it it's worse than have never ever been exposed to these things again that echoes the kind of language of the Lord Jesus doesn't it it will be better he says for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for these times where Christ himself has taught in their synagogues why is that so why is it so awful to be carried away like that well chapter 2 verse 1 you see sums it up because such falsehood really is a terrible sin and rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ himself personally they deny even the master who bought them it's to deny

[19:10] Jesus Christ as Lord as master and it's to deny Christ as Savior the one who bought them and that must be the ultimate sin and rebellion mustn't it it's to refuse the grace of God it's to refuse the forgiveness of God and that is why Peter says it must ultimately bring self-destruction you see how serious that is what he's saying is that you can still be calling yourself a Christian you can still be going through all the rituals of outward Christianity you can even be a leader in Christ's church these people are teachers and leaders but at heart you can be denying Christ as Lord and denying him as Savior because you've substituted a Jesus of your own imagining not the real Jesus but as Paul says a different Jesus and a different gospel which actually is no gospel at all it's shocking isn't

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it but

Peter's just echoing Jesus Christ's own words Matthew chapter 7 when he's speaking of the day of judgment and Jesus himself says many will say on the day of his coming Lord Lord we did so much in your name and Jesus says I will declare to them I never knew you depart from me you workers of lawlessness note the word lawlessness just the very word Peter uses here in chapter 3 verse 17 carried away by lawless people and so Peter is saying to the church very seriously you are in constant peril take care that you are not carried away by the error of lawless people and lose your own stability you need this negative command this warning so how do you recognize these who are denying the Lord and Master well again Peter has made this very clear all through his letter there are two very telltale features and the first is that such people disbelieve and discredit the apostles authoritative witness to Jesus they devalue the apostolic gospel look again at chapter 1 verse 16 well Peter says that the apostolic witness is not myths but reality it's eyewitness reality we 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 but the false teachers you see those who will imperil the church they write off the apostolic witness it's just myths and inaccuracies they talk as some Christian so-called scholars do of demythologizing the gospel to get back to the real Jesus of history as though the real Jesus of history was different from the Jesus of the gospels and the Jesus of the scriptures they attack apostolic doctrines things like the virgin birth things like the bodily resurrection of Jesus or especially today the reality of God's wrath and judgment the reality of God's rule about how we should live not as we wish and not identifying as we want to but as God tells us we are they deny God's revelation about reality his word which tells us what is real and what is fake and delusional we saw in chapter 3 verse 5 they conveniently bury the facts the facts of scripture the facts of history about God's judgment and that's what Peter's warning us about here in chapter 3 verses 16 and 17 those who twist the scriptures to their own description and the result is destabilized Christians and destabilized churches so that they are in real peril of falling away falling away from the truth that alone can really save and that's always a marker of destabilizing error people use all sorts of nice language and fine sounding arguments but always one way or another it discredits and disbelieves the apostolic authoritative witness to Jesus there's a sort of person who says well forget about
Paul let's just get back to Jesus Jesus is our teacher well look where that leads says Peter it leads to instability and it leads to collapse and the second telltale feature just as clear not only do such people discredit the apostolic gospel the apostolic authority but they also despise and they disobey the authority of commands of the apostle chapter 2 verse 10 says they despise authority as people always do when the authority tells them to do things they don't want to do and not to do things they do want to do that's what makes young children cross isn't it when they're parents when they say no don't do that and they'll say I hate you or children in the schools when the teacher tells them not to do things and that's especially so today isn't it with the with the apostolic commands notice how chapter 2 verse 10 closely brings together the despising of authority and the desire to indulge in the lusts of defiling passions self indulgence and denial of authority always go together people don't like it when the bible tells us that things we like are wrong and Peter calls us to the commands of [25:47] Jesus notice chapter 3 verse 2 through his apostles through the apostles that's where we hear Jesus words but look at verse 3 again those who want to reject the commands of Jesus through the apostles want to follow their own sinful desires so when Peter says in verse 14 to be diligent to be found without spot and blemish they say no satisfying our glands is much more important to us than what you say about godliness the chapter 2 verse 14 says look at them their eyes are full of adultery they're insatiable for sin sexual satisfaction and satisfaction for their greed notice how those two things go together because at heart they're both the same things aren't they Paul tells us in in Colossians chapter 3 these things are idolatry covetousness is idolatry we so often find those things go together don't we when there's a scandal in public life so often those two things go together this greed and this sexual misbehavior people are led astray by greed and their desire for money and possessions and their desire for sexual satisfaction they despise and they disobey the apostles commands all the ones that they don't like and there are many apostolic demands that people today don't like

Peter in his first letter chapter 3 says things about how husbands and wives are to relate to one another and people don't like hearing that today they don't like it in Ephesians 5 when Paul talks about the same things I look around sometimes at wedding services when these things are being

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read and I see the fizzing anger and disapproval on many people's faces same with Paul's commands to Timothy and to the Corinthian church and elsewhere for example about the appropriate roles for men and women within God's church well heaven forbid we're not having that in the 21st century goodness gracious but you see once you start disobeying and disregarding the apostolic commands for human life for human behavior for human relations for all of that within marriage within the family within the church then pretty soon you jettison other commands and other commands and soon there are none left that you're willing to take seriously but you see hold on a minute when people are disregarding these commands of the apostles of Jesus
Christ they're not just disobeying them Peter says they're denying their lord and master because it's his message it's his commands that come as Peter says here through the apostles and all of that will lead only to one place it will lead to destruction to a hopeless destiny of death so you need to know that says Peter don't be taken in don't be taken in by fine sounding arguments about how we know better today and how we can reinterpret these things today for a new world and a new age that's so different from the first century no and unless you realize that says Peter you are in constant peril from within within not without the professing church but he says in verse 17 of chapter 3 you know this now in advance so you can be on your guard and so that you will realize that you do have a constant protection despite that constant peril and what is that well look at verse 18 it's very plain and very simple don't be carried away by falsehood to be destabilized and to fall but rather grow instead in the rock-like solidity that comes from growing in the grace and knowledge of our
Lord Jesus Christ and that is all the protection you need he's saying and notice that in practical terms it's the very opposite of what destabilizing and false teachers want and want you to do they discredit and disbelieve the apostolic witness to Jesus in scriptures and they disobey the apostolic command in the scripture but Peter says you are to know the scriptures and you are to know the true savior see verse 17 knowing this beforehand that this refers back to verse 16 the scriptures including Paul's letters including the hard bits you've got all of this and you know that you need it and we don't disturb them we don't twist them distort things rather he says we receive the scriptures as the true grace of God and we stand firm in it that's how he ends his first letter and this whole second letter you see is about knowing God through Jesus
Christ the only way that he can be known begins in chapter 1 verse 2 multiplying the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ our Lord and it ends here in verse 18 of chapter 3 grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and that's why the whole letter is about recognizing the true scriptures and rejoicing in the true voice of our Lord and Savior that will be heard always clearly in them remember the words of the prophets of the Old Testament remember the apostles of the New Testament that's his message in chapter 3 verse 2 because in them in the words of the prophets and the words of the apostles you will hear your master's voice until the day he comes old gramophone records they come back into fashion so I don't have to explain to those under 40 what a gramophone record is but an old gramophone record often they were imprinted with
[32:22] HMV his master's voice and there was a little logo of the dog sitting listening to the gramophone record with the trumpet speaking and on the one hand you see a gramophone record like that is just a vinyl disc isn't it but on the other hand it contains a permanent imprint of that voice a voice that can be heard a voice that can be known recognized rejoicing and that's exactly the same with the scriptures yes they're the words of men they're holy and totally the words of the prophets the words of the apostles but as their words are heard just with a disc being played the master's voice is being heard to enrich our knowledge of him to nurture our souls with his grace to deliver his blessings to us that come through his voice which calls the dead to life my father's been dead now for 17 years but I've still got boxes full of tapes that have his voice on them in one sense it's just a tape a piece of a piece of a reel but I've still got a player

I can put it in and press a button and I can hear his voice speaking I've got his writings in fact I listen to his voice every single morning in our church's daily bible readings and it teaches me still and you see it's that way with the scriptures every time they're opened every time they're proclaimed our master's voice is being heard and he himself is teaching us he's rebuking us he's encouraging us he's correcting us he's leading us in righteousness and he will lead us on and on and on right until the day of his glory we have that constant protection from every peril and we have it in the words of our master in the living and abiding word as Peter says in his first letter by which we are born again but now he's saying by which we will be led in life all the way to glory if we keep listening and keep

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standing on his promises we cannot fall what's the way of safety the way of protection from all harm from everything that can destable us from everything that can destroy the church and destroy us with it well it's knowing more and more and more and more intimately our lord and savior the true savior as we listen to his gracious voice his strengthening voice that we find in every word in scripture that we have from the prophets and the apostles when the scriptures are opened and when they are taught not being twisted but truly and faithfully and obediently the master's voice is heard and his instruction his reproof his correction his training in righteousness is given to us his strengthening his encouraging his power the voice which calls the dead to life and the voice which leads us every day into life and that's where that's must be our chief focus always as the church of Jesus Christ to let his voice be heard to be heard loud to be heard clearly constantly in our personal lives in our corporate life in groups large and small in training others to handle that word truly and rightly and pass it on we meet the error of those who are being submerged in the world by ourselves being evermore submerged in the word that's our constant protection says Peter verse 17 but you knowing this beforehand because you have the warnings of these of these necessary negatives about the reality of the battles that there will always be in the church you take heed of that real protection and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ don't neglect the real task of going on and growing in grace and knowledge in the Lord Jesus the true Savior and Lord not the different
Jesus who others want you to believe in who's no Savior at all no master and you do it one way alone says Peter again and again through this letter by remembering by reveling in by rejoicing in the true scriptures our master's voice the words of the prophets and the command of our Lord and Savior through his apostles in other words the whole Bible you immerse yourselves constantly in the word of God which is the power of God for salvation and which alone has power to protect you and to protect Christ's whole church from instability from disaster that's a great word of direction for me for every church leader there's so many things to do so many decisions to be made so many actions to be taken so many things to be organized but the chief protection the chief protection for the flock of God is that the scriptures are constantly being opened and the true Jesus is being proclaimed and the voice of the true master is being heard and he did if that priority is neglected then all our true protection will be gone won't it and it's likewise the same thing for you for every one of us in our personal lives the answer to every assault on our stability from without and from within is just the same go on growing in the grace and knowledge of our
Lord Jesus Christ as we go on feeding on his great and precious promises to us in scripture which are everything that we need Peter says in chapter one everything we need for life and godliness so friends let's take the message of Peter seriously be warned he says you are in constant peril be realistic we have an enemy he's like a roaring lion he says in his first letter he wants to devour he wants to destabilize he wants to destroy Christ's church and Christ's precious people we are in constant peril be alert that peril begins when people within the church leaders even discredit the gospel swear from the apostolic commands play down and don't want to talk about things that people don't want to hear about today or disapprove of today but it ends says Peter in one place alone it ends in denying our Lord and Master
[39:38] Jesus Christ and not to be alert to that friends is just utter folly! It's just naivety! In fact it's a disobedience isn't it?

Because we're commanded to be alert to these things so be warned but comforted because we know the true grace of God we have the true gospel of God in these scriptures of the Old and New Testaments what a privilege so Peter is saying fear not stand firm in that and you will remain standing till the last day standing on promises we cannot fall because we will have the constant protection that we need so if we keep listening to the voice of the master says verse 18 then we will grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and to him says Peter be the glory both now and to the day of eternity amen let's pray together
Lord how we thank you that your word speak so honestly and so clearly to us placards before us the warning signs that we constantly need because we are weak and we are tempted and the evil one is ever near us but we thank you Lord that your truth is our deliverance from his lies to true liberty so keep us we pray growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior as we heed his commandment through your apostles miracles and we ask it for Christ's sake amen so can... know more than only could come me against ■■ fathers

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