

## 2 Peter

I want to congratulate each of you for hanging in there with this year's Bible study. We always start off with such excitement and anticipation, but by the time we get to the end of the 30 lessons, it's easy to fall into the attitude that we're ready for a break, right? It's understandable, and I hope each of you take some time to enjoy your summer. However, as I have said in the past, I hope you won't take a break from your relationship with God. He loves you so much, and He has more of Himself He wants to reveal to you. He has more to bless you with, but you need to come to Him. Wanting to take a break from People of the Word is ok, but I encourage you to remain vigilant in your pursuit of a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.

Today, we arrive at the second to last book, or letter, we're going to cover this year – 2 Peter. This is Peter's last known written communication to the believers. It was one of the latter letters accepted into the canon of Scripture. Peter would shortly be martyred after writing this letter. He has some important final words for believers, so let's get to them.

We're introduced to the author in the first verse, "*Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours.*" You see the humility in Peter's opening, claiming first his given name and then his heavenly name – then **first** as a **servant** and **secondly** as an **apostle**. This is the **new** Peter – remember the pride he used to display before the Lord? "*I will never deny you*", he would say. Someone who is walking in the Spirit and choosing to follow God with no conditions is incapable of maintaining pride or ego. When you're walking in the Spirit, you have a constant sense of what John the Baptist said so beautifully, "*I must decrease, and He must increase.*"

Peter is also confirming Jesus as both God and Savior. So just in this verse we see a changed man in Peter. That's what we should be seeing in each of our lives as

followers of Jesus - change. We received the gift of salvation and acknowledged Him as Lord at our conversion. We did this because we recognized God loves us and wants what is best for us – He has a plan for each of us, and a big part of that plan is to mold us into the image of His Son. Since we’re all born with a sinful nature, by definition, choosing to accept Jesus, Who is perfect and holy, as Lord and Savior mandates ***there’s going to be change.***

Peter continues in verse 2, “*Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*” Similar to Paul’s greetings in his letters, grace always comes before peace. God’s sovereign grace – His amazing character to love the unlovable – must be first present before peace can be experienced. Jesus is called the Prince of Peace, and this title is appropriate because He is God. Jesus came to the world and to our hearts out of His grace, and when He is present, He brings His peace.

Verse 3, our memory verse, which was so well covered in our devotion today is worth covering one more time, “*His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.*” Notice the past tense of this assurance – “has given”. What does this mean? We ***already have*** this divine power for a godly life. We don’t need to search for it, we don’t need to earn it, and we sure don’t need to, and can’t, buy it. Through our knowledge – through our faith – in the One who called us by His own glory and goodness, He has **ALREADY** given us everything we need for a godly life. Ephesians 1:3 promises that we have been blessed with **every** spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. The world of therapy, psychiatrists, and psychologists along with a good chunk of the pharmaceutical industry could be eliminated if we, as Christians, began to tap into the things God has already given us to live a godly life.

In verse 4, we see regarding what He’s given us that, “*Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may*

*participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”* So what are these great and precious promises? One of the key ones is the promise of being born again – becoming a new creation. The born again new creation comes with a divine nature. Notice the deliverance language that comes with this new creation – we escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. We do this because when Jesus died on a cross for our sins, upon our confession of faith in this truth, our sin nature died with Him. That’s a glorious part of the transaction that happened at the Cross of Christ. The burdens, the guilt, the addictions, the shame, and the sin – all products of our sin nature – were all crucified with Christ. If we truly believe this component of Christ’s finished work at the Cross, then we have in our possession via the greater power of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit the escape from the corruption of the world caused by evil desires.

I’ve skipped over verses 5-7 as I’m going to close with them. To remind you, they encourage us to add to our faith goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, and love. The homework likens these things, as “home improvements”, which is a good analogy and challenges us to evaluate our personal and individual “construction projects” – are our lives exemplifying these things? The homework also rightly relates these improvements to the fruits of the Spirit. Verse 8 promises us that as we adopt these traits, it will keep us from being ineffective and unproductive in our knowledge of Jesus. There’s an important point being made here regarding the purposefulness of our faith. We’re not to sit at home in front of the TV or the computer all fat and happy with our faith. This verse tells us our faith should be **effective** and **productive**. That implies our faith must be put to work. Remember what James said what happens to faith without works? It’s dead. God has given us the gift of a new and fully forgiven life – we’re to be **infectious** with this new life – that’s what makes us effective and productive followers of Jesus Christ.

Verse 11 then offers this wonderful promise to those who choose to remain focused on our faith and being effective and productive – we’ll receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I’ve tried to envision what this might look like, but it’s just too awesome to comprehend. I’ll gladly settle for simply a smile from Jesus with His arms open wide and telling me, “Welcome home, my son.”

Verse 12 is a weird statement from Peter – even though He knows the believers he is sending this epistle to are firmly established in the truth, he tells them he will *always* remind them of these things. If he’s so sure that they know the truth, why does he feel compelled to keep reminding them of it? He tells us in the next verse - it is right to refresh our memories of the truth. Why? Have you ever played the game “Pass it down”? You get a group of people lined up, and the first person whispers a truth into the first person’s ear. That person is then charged with whispering the same truth into the next person’s ear. The communication goes on and on until you get to the last person. That person is then asked to repeat the truth, and it is often the case what the last person says is the truth is actually different from the original communication. Not only do we easily forget things, we also get them mixed up, don’t we? That’s why Peter is absolutely right; we need to keep refreshing ourselves of the truth of the Word of God – that’s why we keep coming to POW!

In verse 14, Peter acknowledges the shortness of his life on Earth. As our homework pointed out, he was confirming Jesus’ words in John 21, which the homework noted where Jesus told him how he would die. History tells us not long after penning this letter, Peter would be crucified, but upside down as he didn’t feel worthy to be crucified upward as His Lord and Savior was. I love Peter so much – he is one of the great examples of how God can change a person. He went from prideful big mouth – something I can relate to – to humble and bold.

Verses 15 & 16 begin to allude to the primary focus of this letter – the issue of false teaching. He tells the recipients of this letter he is going to make every effort even after his death to help the people remember the truth. He then makes a very important statement of fact – what he and the rest of the apostles are preaching isn't a myth – it's not a cleverly devised story – it is the truth. Moreover, he makes the powerful statement that he and the rest of the disciples were *eyewitnesses* of his majesty – in this comment he is referencing what he, James, and John saw at the Mount of Transfiguration where they saw Jesus in his glorified state speaking with Moses and Elijah.

Peter boldly claims he, James, and John actually heard the Father's voice confirm Jesus' identity as the Father's Son. When someone is accused of a crime, it is the job of the prosecutor in the courtroom to convince a jury of the defendant's guilt. Absent a confession by the defendant, the most powerful ways to prove the claims of the prosecution is to provide at least one eyewitness to the purported claim. If the eyewitness is credible in the jury's eyes, it is highly likely the claim being made is true – it's been verified.

One of the more powerful testimonies to the truth of the resurrection was the number of eyewitnesses to seeing Jesus in His resurrected state. 1 Corinthians 15:6 tells us, *"After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep."* Sometimes it only takes one credible eyewitness to convince a jury of a claim. More than 500 people saw Jesus in His resurrected body – that is very powerful eyewitness testimony.

In the next several verses, Peter touches on the topic of prophecy – he defines what is true God-given prophecy for the purpose of helping the people to recognize not only what was true, but also how to identify a false prophet. That's the wonderful thing about the truth – it never changes, and once you know the truth, you are then

equipped to identify the lies that challenge the truth. Peter tells us the prophetic message they're carrying – the truth that Jesus was the Messiah, and He was going to come again was ***completely reliable***. He paints a picture of a shining light in a dark place – an image of us in today's darkening world – with the promise of the hope of His return – first in our hearts and then, ultimately, before our eyes.

Peter goes on to make it clear that Scriptural prophecy was not from the prophets but ***from*** God ***through*** the prophets who were being moved by the Holy Spirit. In verses 20 and 21, he gives us some insight into how the prophets in Scripture understood, or, in reality, didn't understand or couldn't interpret what the Holy Spirit was telling them to write. Do you think either Daniel or John understood what they were writing in Daniel's book or John's writings in Revelation about the end times? No way. Solely God gives all true prophecy. The true test of a prophet is whether or not his/her prophecy comes true all the time.

In chapter 2 we get into the heart of Peter's message of this epistle and the title to today's lesson, "Beware of False Teaching". This is the second lesson in a row Carol has me covering this subject, so it's an area that we obviously need a lot of guidance. Peter warns in verse 1 that there were false prophets among the people, and there will be false teachings in the church. Peter warns of both the ***strategies*** of these people – they impart their evil agendas secretly and introduce heresies – or lies about the truth of God – and the ***consequences*** of those who come to follow such false teaching – denying the Lord who bought them and then bringing swift destruction on themselves. He goes on with the warnings of those who listen and come into agreement with these false teachers, "*Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.*" The Greek word for disrepute is "*blasphemo*", which is where we get the word, "blaspheme". In other words, those who follow false teaching, by definition, become defamers of what is true.

Vickie and I have old friends that were once solid followers of Jesus Christ. As time has passed, they have fallen victims to philosophical teachings that have done what is always the agenda of teachings that don't support Scripture – the agenda is to discredit the infallibility of God's Word and, as a result, call into question God's true character. They have chosen to reduce the Bible into just one of many resources to help them shape their god into something that appeals to their flesh. We've witnessed the damage this moving away from the truth has done to both of them – it is very sad. There are *real* consequences to turning our backs on the truth of God's Word – don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

In verse 3, Peter identifies the motive of false teachers – greed. I'm sure you've either received in the mail or seen on TV these despicable shysters who promise you God's blessings if you give your money to them. They claim with your money they can reach more and more people “for God” – turns out they must have to do this reaching out on their private jets and wearing expensive clothes and jewelry. Peter makes it clear their efforts are not going unnoticed by the Lord – their condemnation and destruction is coming. God is not mocked brothers and sisters – He sees what's going on, and He will deal with these false teachers.

This truth of God's wrath against false teaching shakes me to my core. My constant prayers to God as I prepare these lectures are not whether or not you are entertained or feel better about me. My sole prayer is that what I present to you is *true* – that it is consistent with the Word of God and accurately represents God's character according to Scripture. Carol reviews all my lectures, and I invite every one of you to check what I say against what it says in the Bible. The last thing I want to do is lead you down the wrong path – I know the rest of the lecturers feel the same way.

Peter continues to give Biblical history examples of judgment on sin – in verse 5 he speaks to the flood. However, he reminds us that God protected Noah and seven

others. This example is one of the reasons I believe in the pre-Tribulation Rapture – another example of God delivering His people out of His wrathful judgment. Peter moves on to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and what happened to those ungodly towns. Billy Graham once said that if God does not judge the United States, He owes Sodom and Gomorrah an apology.

Peter then gets to Lot in verse 7 and calls him a righteous man. You may, or may not, remember the list of “partygoers” during my last lecture. I presented you a list of *facts* of sinful behaviors about certain notable Old Testament people but, as finished works of faith, God forgives these behaviors and sees them in a new light. The Old Testament stories of Lot are not terribly uplifting, but we once again see how God sees us in our forgiven state – He sees Lot as a righteous man with no mention of his Old Testament failings. Verse 8 gives a description of Lot that should ring true to those of us who are also righteous because of our faith in being covered by the blood of the Lamb. We are tormented by the lawless deeds we see and hear. Does that sound familiar?

In verse 10, Peter sheds some more light on the unrighteous false teachers – they follow the corrupt desire of the flesh and despise authority. How a person responds to authority is a test of one’s humility. For those of you who remember the 1960s, it was a decade of upheaval – much of which was a railing against authority – largely the government’s position on the Vietnam War as well as our country’s shameful history of civil rights for minorities. Some challenges to authority are actually healthy – everyone is accountable.

At the heart of despising authority, though, is the issue of how one responds to the issue of being submissive to some kind of power. The lie behind those who relentlessly despise authority – despise power, is their negative reactions to authority are nothing more than *their* attempts to have *their* power become the rule. In other words, those who despise authority are in nothing more than a power struggle. The



only way to deal with these competing power struggles is to acknowledge where the *real* power in life is – that is in Jesus Christ. When someone comes to the realization there is no point in attempting to win a power struggle with God, the amazing thing that happens is they actually become *more* powerful when they submit to His power.

What is God's primary weapon of power? – Love. I say that because what were Jesus commandments to us? To love God with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength and to love others as we love ourselves. Do you think He would give us commandments with no power? Jesus is all about change – He seeks to change people's lives from believing the lies of the Devil and coming to the truth of Who God is. The best way to effect that change – with the greatest power – is through love – through agape love. For the believer, the power struggle ends because they can come to trust in the greater power – the greatest Authority – Jesus.

Peter continues sharpening our awareness of what to look for in false teachers in verse 12, *“But these people blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like animals they too will perish.”* One of the sure signs of a false teacher is how much fear he/she has in his/her life. Peter makes the point that false teachers blaspheme in matters they do not understand. Let's face it; there are parts of Scripture that can be difficult to understand – even for believers. I've always looked at Scripture as somewhat of a foreign language. Without an interpreter or a teacher, the Bible can be hard to understand. That's one of the main reasons God gave us the Holy Spirit – He is our interpreter and teacher of His Word. Please don't look at Carol, Jim or Jeff Swaney, me, or any of the other lecturers as all that smart. All we're bringing to you is what the Holy Spirit gives to us first.

For the person who doesn't believe, he/she does not have the Holy Spirit to explain and confirm the truth of Scripture. Without that understanding, the fearful person – the one whose pride and arrogance cannot handle those things that aren't

readily understandable on their own – they’re going to demonstrate their fear of not understanding by challenging what is not understandable and then profess what is understandable to them. This is what Peter means by their instinct.

One of the more difficult things I’ve found in life is to see the lack of justice on those who habitually abuse others – who take advantage of a corrupt system and steal from the weak. Peter promises here in verse 13 there will be justice. He also describes the unrighteous as getting bolder in their sinful behavior – doing things in broad daylight – there’s no more shame or standard. Does that sound like today?

In verse 14 Peter expands the characterization of the unrighteous to that of adultery – seeking to defile what is innocent and sacred. Romans tells us that God ultimately will give sinners over to themselves – He’ll remove His restraints on them. Without this restraint, their sin consumes them – it’s all they can do. They just want more and more of the temporary pleasures of sin – they’re insatiable and become experts in their greed for more.

In verses 15 & 16, Peter relates the heart of false teachers to those of Balaam. As a refresher, Balaam was a prophet who was asked by the king of the Moabites to go with them and pronounce a curse against the Israelites. Balaam first submitted to the Lord and asked if he could go, and the Lord said, “No”. Well this alleged prophet saw the profit he could make with the Moabites and went back to the Lord again after they pressed him to go. Ultimately, he did go, and God humbled him via speaking through his donkey. We’ve mentioned earlier that one of the sure signs of a false teacher is greed, and Balaam is a good example of just such a person.

Verses 18 & 19 add to the list of character traits of false teachers – they mouth empty and boastful words; they appeal to the lustful desires of the flesh; they entice people who are searching from their already bad choices; they then promise them a false kind of freedom. Peter then makes this incredibly wise observation about those who profess a false freedom “*people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.*” The

homework poses the question, “How do you think we see examples of that truth today.” Well, I’m going to make that question a little more personal, “Is there anything or anyone in **your** life that is mastering **you** as a slave?” Please know I’m not posing this question in judgment of you – if we’re honest, most of us are allowing – yes, I said allowing, which means we’re making conscious choices - to be slaves – to be mastered. This can be an uncomfortable question to ask ourselves, so the smart thing is to ask God and let Him reveal the truth. Not only will He reveal the truth, He also desires to deliver you from that slavery. He’ll do it in love, but He won’t do it unless you ask Him.

As we head into the final chapter of this letter we see two primary themes. The first theme is the challenge to live lives that resemble the character of God. We see exhortation such as “wholesome thinking”, we’re to “live holy and godly lives”, and we’re to “make every effort to be spotless and blameless”. Peter offers the reason why we should do these things we can be at peace with Him. It’s not easy living like this in today’s world, is it? First of all, there’s temptation everywhere to live in a manner that doesn’t remotely look like these descriptions. Secondly, if, by God’s grace, we do move to living a life that mirrors God’s holiness, we’re going to find ourselves ridiculed, labeled extremists, and mocked and excluded. Peter’s point is important – it is better to be at peace with God by living in a godly way than succumbing to the misery of the way the world lives and then being at odds with the Lord. We need to focus on being Biblically correct – not politically correct. I’d rather fight the world than God.

The second theme of chapter 3 is the Day of Judgment. There are 4 “Days” in Scripture – they are:

- The Day of Man – this began with Adam and Eve and continues to this very day

- The Day of Christ (Philippians) – this will begin when Jesus appears in the clouds and raptures the church into heaven to relieve us from the horrors of the 7-year Tribulation and Great Tribulation period.
- The Day of the Lord (verse 10), which begins with the Tribulation and continues through the Millennium – the 1,000 years of Jesus’ reign on earth after the Great Tribulation
- The Day of God (verse 12) – this begins after the millennium – the heavens and earth need to be cleansed of the effects of Satan

Peter elaborates on what it will be like on the Day of the Lord in verse 10, *“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.”* In verse 12, he offers some unsettling observations regarding the Day of God, *“That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.”*

It’s easy to become fearful when we hear of these future judgments – they sound horrific. The good news, for those who come to faith in Jesus, is He took the judgment. Also good news is wherever there is God’s judgment, there is also hope for the faithful. Verse 13 promises, *“But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.”* There’s coming a glorious day where we will be forever in the presence of God. That alone is worth a lifetime of Hallelujahs. For me, though, a close second of the blessing of being in God’s presence will be the permanent removal of Satan’s influence. I will be rejoicing when that dude is tossed into the lake of fire.

So when is the Day of Christ coming? I believe very, very soon. Peter mentions the scoffers who keep asking when is He coming? The homework asks a great question, “Why does He wait?” What was your answer? There was a great song in the 70s by a Christian musical group called “Country Faith” – the song was called “Come Quickly Jesus”. The title of the song is the first part of the chorus, but the second half

of the chorus is Jesus responding, “Wait, I want to save a few more souls. To just a few more the story could be told. In God’s Kingdom, a few more it will hold.”

This is the heart of 2 Peter 3:9, “*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*” I’m so thankful God waited long enough for my family and me to be saved. Who in your lives do you hope will be saved prior to the Lord’s return? The Day of Man is rapidly drawing to a close, my brothers and sisters – we need to love on the lost and tell them the truth. Judgment is coming, but God loves them so much that He sent Jesus to take their place for that judgment. It’s a great message – let’s get busy.

Ok – as I mentioned earlier, I skipped over verses 5-7 of chapter 1 because the Lord gave me a visual that I think you might find helpful – I call it The Stairs of Faith. Beginning in verse 5, we see the steps of our progression in faith. You want to know what God’s will is for your life? Climb the stairs of faith. The first step is the step of faith – to believe Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God, that He came to Earth in human form to become the only acceptable permanent sacrifice for the consequences of our sin, and that He was resurrected as the Father’s stamp of approval that His sacrifice was indeed acceptable. That belief continues into an eternal relationship with Him as He forms you into His image – and we’re going to see that as we climb these steps of faith, we are actually taking on His image – His character.

Notably, the very first step of faith – the very first thing we see revealed to us and seek to emulate regarding God’s character is His goodness. Nothing in Scripture is presented without purpose and power, so I don’t believe it is accidental or happenstance that the first thing we’re to adopt in our faith journey is a desire to become good people. Prior to Adam and Eve’s sin in the Garden of Eden, everything was good. It was a fruit that they ate that brought in sin and evil. As a result, it makes

sense that our *first* step of faith should begin with a redefining of what is good, and that goodness is found in God. God replaces that evil fruit we were eating from with the fruit of Himself, and His fruit is goodness.

After God redefines goodness, we are to build up in our knowledge of God by committing to reading, studying, and living the Word of God. It's pretty hard to fall in - and stay in love with someone that you don't have any knowledge of, right? As we get to know someone - we grow in knowledge of someone - we come to understand his/her character - is this someone I can trust? A key component of faith is trust, and trust doesn't get established overnight. Trust is built overtime and through a relationship coming to know the character of God. An additional critical component of developing knowledge of the true God is learning to recognize when we're presented with lies about God. That is the singular effort of the enemy - to deceive us about the truth of God, so we won't trust and have faith. If we come to know the truth, we will in turn also come to recognize the lies.

If you follow that logic, then it makes sense that the next step of faith is self-control. As we come to know God and trust God more and more, we become a greater threat to Satan and his forces. As with any battle in war, the enemy isn't going to easily surrender. Satan and his forces are going to throw the "kitchen sink" of temptations at us to derail the progress of our relationship with God. God's not going to change, so what will hinder the condition of our relationship with God will be how we *choose* to respond to the daily onslaught of temptations we are all faced with. By developing self-control, with God's power - not ours, we can choose not to submit to the temptations and continue to grow in God. The good news is, God knows we're going to fail from time-to-time, but He is faithful and full of grace, mercy, and forgiveness because He very much wants us to grow in Him.

As we learn to submit to the Holy Spirit's power to give us self-control, we hope that things will get easier to deal with. Unfortunately, there is a direct correlation between our desires to grow closer to God to Satan's desires to impede that growth. He doesn't give up – that is what persecution is. Consequently, the self-control we're building has to be sustainable – in other words, we must learn to trust in and rely on God's ongoing and **stronger** power –to persevere – to withstand overtime the continuing attacks of the enemy.

Let's take a quick review of our progression to this point – we've emphasized goodness, knowledge, self-control, and perseverance. These are all primarily actions focusing on our own behavior – the internal changes God is seeking to give us. The next step of faith is a transition from an ***inward*** focus to an ***outward*** focus – **godliness**.

What is meant by godliness? I would argue it is exhibiting God's character to others. Descriptions of God's character are endless, but at least a few of His traits include holiness, righteousness, and peacefulness. As I mentioned earlier, Jesus narrowed our marching orders as followers of Him to first love God with all of our hearts, minds, souls, and strength and, secondly, to love others as we love ourselves. The second commandment – to love others – is done by exhibiting godliness. Sadly, too many Christians and churches overemphasize the judgment of God to a non-believing world making that kind of godliness completely unappealing. The godliness this verse is talking about is one that presents the power of God through His grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

As we take on a more godly character, we're given a perspective on people from God's eyes and heart. Our sinful nature leads us to tear down people, judge, and condemn them. As we climb higher and higher on the steps of faith, this sin-based predisposition to push people away in judgment is overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit

putting in us a compassion for the unlovable. As we allow God to give us this new perspective, we become more attractive to those in desperate need for someone to show them the same grace, mercy, and forgiveness we've received. This is how mutual affection is built.

Not surprisingly at all, the top step of faith centers on what is, in my opinion, God's core character trait –love. As we climb each step, we grow internally and then externally through the surrendering of our wills and the dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit. As we look at these steps, we can see how each step is actually a component of the definition of agape love. Agape love is good. Agape love isn't blind – it is knowledgeable. Agape love is self-controlled – it is not reactionary and lashing out in selfishness. Agape love perseveres through difficult times and people. Agape love exhibits the beauty of God's character – in godliness. As that beauty is revealed to both the outside world and us, agape love brings mutual affection.

These are the stairs of faith. One more thing to notice – once we take that first step of faith – count how many steps there are to the fulfilling of our faith – seven. Remember the meaning of the number 7? It means completion or perfection. The stairs of faith are the picture of the completed or perfect Christian. Some of you might say, *'I don't have it in me to get up these stairs. I don't have that much knowledge. I'm not good with self-control. I give up easily.'* I have good news for you – God already knows this. More importantly, He sees you **now** as a finished product – He knows where you're going to end up – and that is a beautiful, loving image of His Son. If you choose to stop depending on your own ability to climb these stairs and ask God to be your escort, He will give you His power to get to the top. False teachers will deny this possibility exists – that you're stuck in your old ways. The truth is He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. The false teacher speaks of condemnation. The truth teacher speaks of forgiveness. The false teacher speaks words of hopelessness. The truth teacher speaks of new life. The false teacher



will want to keep you in prison. The truth teacher will tell you that you are free. The truth teacher will point you to the God of the Bible and tell you anything is possible with God. Who are you going to believe? Let's pray.