

Studies in Second Peter

"The Great Escape"

Second Peter 1:1-11

Introduction

I always get a big kick out of the sign on Highway 43 South that reminds you to not pick up hitchhikers. A few miles later, you pass by Corcoran State Prison and you understand why you might not want to stop for hitchhikers!

"Escape" was on Peter's mind as he penned his second letter. He mentioned *escaping* in the following verses:

2 Peter 1:4 ... having **escaped** the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.

2 Peter 2:18 ... the ones who have actually **escaped** from those who live in error.

2 Peter 2:20 ... after they have **escaped** the pollutions of the world...

He was using the illustration and imagery of an **escapee** from prison to make a spiritual point. A Christian is someone who, by God's **indwelling power** and through God's **incredible promises**, has escaped from the prison of sin and has been set on the highway to pursue personal holiness (1:4). But among Christians there are always false teachers who *lower* or *loosen* the standards of personal holiness (2:18). They are not free at all but are themselves "entangled" in sin (2:20). They promise you greater freedom, but by following them you end up falling back into your old sins - sins you were set free from.

Think of it this way: **You** are the escapee, and that's good. You are now free and walking along the highway that leads to heaven. False teachers keep stopping, asking if you want a ride in their latest

teaching. Their 'ride' becomes a dangerous detour from which many believers find it difficult to ever recover their true freedom.

Keeping with Peter's illustration, we'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 You're An Escapee Who Can Live Free On Earth, and #2 You're An Escapee Who Can Look Forward To Eternity.

#1 You're An Escapee
Who Can Live Free On Earth
(v1-9)

First Peter was written to help strengthen believers against the external problem of persecution. Second Peter was written to help strengthen believers against the internal problem of false teachers. We'll see that the false teachers Peter confronted were peddling a doctrine that encouraged Christians to be sensual, arrogant, greedy, and covetous.

You might think to yourself, "*Who would follow such nonsense?*" One of the largest movements in contemporary Christianity is the prosperity doctrine that teaches health and wealth - encouraging **all** believers to be both covetous and greedy! Millions of people are involved in it. Peter would say that the teachers of it are false teachers who are themselves entangled in sin. Christians buying-in to it are on a dangerous detour.

The illustration and imagery Peter chose was that of an escapee. Sticking with that, there are always at least three things you want to know about any escapee: (1)How'd they escape? (2)What is their escape route? And, (3)How do they avoid recapture?

Peter told you how to escape in verse one.

2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

Don't pass over his name too quickly. In his first letter, Peter introduced himself as "Peter"; here he introduced himself as "Simon Peter." In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus changed his name from

Simon to Peter. It anticipated the incredible transformation which was to take place in Peter's life after he was born-again.

OK, that's great; but Peter was a "bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ." Wasn't he a special case? Wasn't he the first pope?

No! Not a special case... *Not a pope at all!* He said that what happened to him is the experience of *anyone* and *everyone* who becomes a Christian: You "obtain like precious faith with us..." The word "precious" was used to describe foreigners who asked for and received equal citizenship in their new country. Peter said **all** Christians receive equal citizenship in eternity; therefore **all** share equally in God's power and promises while on earth.

How do you become a Christian? It is through "faith... by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ was both fully "God" and fully human. As a man, He could represent all men as their "Savior" from sin. On the Cross at Calvary He took upon Himself your sin and He offers to give you His perfect "righteousness." Your part is to simply believe by "faith" and, when you do, you are saved from sin, death, and Hell for all eternity.

That is how you escape. It is the only way of escape.

Having been set free, you now have an escape route to follow. It's in verses two through seven.

2 Peter 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,

"Grace" describes the generous heart of God Who determines to treat you as He wishes rather than as you deserve. "Peace" is the result of God's grace: You are at peace with God, and you can experience the peace of God. These qualities are "multiplied to you" the more you have "knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." Notice it's not so much knowledge *about* Jesus; it's knowledge "of" Him. This is drawing close, getting-to-know Him in a personal way knowledge. There is a place for *intellect*... But this is *intimacy*.

2 Peter 1:3 as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

"Life and godliness" could be simplified to read, *a godly life*. Along the highway to heaven you are free to lead a godly life. We'll see later in this letter that the false teachers were telling believers that they did not need to live a godly life.

For your journey, you've been given certain resources: God's *power* and God's *promises*. Let's look first at God's power. God's "divine power" refers to the amazing truth that, if you are a Christian, God the Holy Spirit lives within you; He indwells you. God also has given you "all things that pertain to life and godliness." We'll see more about that in a moment. First, you see what is meant by a godly life. You're told to look at Jesus, Who showed the human race the "glory and virtue" - **the godly life** - that was possible if a man would fully submit himself to the indwelling Holy Spirit. **You** are now "called" to live a godly life of glory and virtue by that same power.

In harmony with God's power, you have His promises:

2 Peter 1:4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.

The "exceeding great and precious promises" are God's Word. God's Word, the Bible, is the specific means by which you are "given... all things that pertain to life and godliness."

Think of verses three and four like this: You are an escapee walking along the road. To make progress, you need two things: You need *directions*, and you need the *ability* to follow them. The promises - God's Word - are your directions. The power - God's Holy Spirit - gives you the ability to follow them.

You become "a partaker of the divine nature." It's not anything mystical; it simply means you are following God's will as revealed in God's Word by depending on the Holy Spirit.

The godly life is contrasted with your former life. In your past, before you were saved, you were subject to "the corruption that is in the

world through lust." "Corruption" is a summary of the world around us. It refers to a moral decomposition; it refers to filth and perversion. Those elements of the fallen world appealed to your "lusts." They appealed to the evil passions of your flesh.

Many of us were entangled in corruptions that are in the world through our lust. *Then we were saved! We were set free from them!* We became **escapees**. We were set free, not to return to them, but to live and lead a godly life.

You are saved by grace through faith the moment you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. **But living a godly life is not automatic.** Look at the beginning of verse five:

2 Peter 1:5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith...

You are given God's power and God's promises when you are first saved by "faith." You must "add to your faith" by "giving all diligence." "Diligence" means *eagerness*. "Add" means *to supply*. God has given you everything you need: His power, and His promises. But you are never forced by God; you remain free. You must be eager to supply your cooperation. Simply put, everyday you choose whether or not you will cooperate with God.

You choose to cooperate with God when you eagerly supply the following seven traits:

2 Peter 1:5 ... add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,

2 Peter 1:6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,

2 Peter 1:7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.

1. You should be eager to supply "virtue." "Virtue" is a rare word. It was sometimes used of land that was fertile and ready to be planted (Barclay). Here in our context it means you cooperate with God by cultivating a relationship with Him so He can plant His Word in your heart and bring forth fruit. Cultivating involves things like weeding... Pruning... Fertilizing... Whatever it takes to remain ready to receive God's Word.
2. You should be eager to supply "knowledge." "Knowledge" is practical wisdom to deal with the day-to-day issues of life. Here

in our context it means you cooperate with God by following His wisdom rather than the wisdom of the world.

3. You should be eager to supply "self-control." It literally means *to get a grip on yourself*. It means you ultimately believe that God's power and promises really can enable you to overcome any fleshly lust.
4. You should be eager to supply "perseverance." This is the voluntary suffering of hard and difficult things. This is where cooperation can get really tough for us. We want out of our difficulties, not to go through them suffering.
5. You should be eager to supply "godliness." Here the word means a desire to please God. You are willing to subordinate your own desires to the one ruling desire to please God. The fear of God becomes your way of life.
6. You should be eager to supply "brotherly-kindness." You involve yourselves with other Christians and serve them, considering them better than yourself.
7. You should be eager to supply "love." "Love" is the word *agape*, the supernatural, selfless love God puts in your heart. You are eager to supply it by becoming a channel through which God's love can flow to unbelievers. You think of your life in terms of how it impacts others for God rather than how you are impacted by them.

These seven traits are your escape route. On the surface they may seem to restrict you. But that's only because we are looking too much at the surface - too much at our earthly circumstances and not enough at eternity. Peter said they will keep you free.

We've seen how you escape, and we've seen the escape route. How do you avert recapture? By *abounding* and by *avoiding*.

First, you abound:

2 Peter 1:8 For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be* neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In God's mathematics, your *adding* leads to His *abounding*. Peter used the illustration of a fruit-bearing tree. You're like a fruit-bearing tree that has been planted in the most favorable conditions possible.

If you will add the things he's just listed, you will be "neither barren nor unfruitful," but will bear abundant spiritual fruit as you grow "in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is something you must avoid:

2 Peter 1:9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

The pronoun "he" was an abrupt change of tense to the third person. This verse described the false teachers who were troubling the believers. They criticized the godly life and said their teaching brought real freedom. Peter said they were:

1. "Shortsighted," meaning they can't see the danger far ahead.
2. "Even to blindness," meaning they are living in darkness rather than light.

The phrase, "forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins," probably is a reference to water baptism. These guys had been water baptized and made a confession of faith. But it was only an outward ritual because they continued to live in their sins. They were never saved.

There will always be false teachers and false teachings in the Church. Many of them promote a greater freedom in your daily life. The freedom they promote is just your old entanglement with sin. You've escaped from the prison of sin and are on the highway to heaven. You should pursue godliness along the way. **Don't be so quick to take their detours!**

#2 You're An Escapee
Who Can Look Forward To Eternity
(v10-11)

I keep emphasizing that Peter thought backwards. He saw himself, and you, in eternity at the Reward Seat of Jesus - **after** your life on earth was over and done. Then he looked back to how it should affect your life on earth.

We can look at verses ten and eleven in reverse order to better get the sense of what Peter meant. First, you look at eternity:

2 Peter 1:11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

You are going to be face-to-face with Jesus! If you are a Christian, it will be an "entrance... supplied to you abundantly." It is a picture drawn from the Greek Olympic games. A victorious athlete would be escorted through a special "entrance" through the city in a lavish parade. In your case, your city is "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." "Everlasting" implies something much more than just endless time. It implies you will eternally be in the presence of Jesus. His is the coming "kingdom" of heaven, first on earth and then forever after.

This is the hope of all believers. Eternity puts everything on earth into a new perspective. While still on earth, verse ten said,

2 Peter 1:10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

"Calling and election" describe your salvation from two perspectives:

1. From the perspective of eternity, you were "elect," chosen by God from before the foundation of the earth.
2. From the perspective of earth, you were saved when you personally responded to the "calling" of God through a decision of faith.

Peter was using the two terms together to assure them they were saved. But how could *they* be "sure" they were saved - especially when false teachers were among them telling them otherwise?

They should "be diligent...[to] do these things." Diligently doing the things he listed in verses five through seven would bring a personal assurance of their security as believers.

I'm sure this is what Peter meant because he added, "if you do these things you will **never stumble**." He did not mean you would never sin. He used a word for "stumble" in a very particular verb tense that meant you would never fall in a way that you could not recover from.

It's a promise you will complete your journey home. "Never stumble" means you will not be left behind, but will indeed make it to heaven.

You can be saved but not have assurance. This verse was meant to strengthen you, not scare you. It's not about losing or forfeiting your salvation. It's about the assurance of your salvation.

If you are a Christian, you will not be left behind; you'll make it to heaven. But whether or not you have a lavish welcome at the Reward Seat of Jesus depends upon your choices along the highway home. There is a real danger of being detoured by false teachers. It may not sound that bad, as long as you're saved in the end. But it will result in a wasted, ruined life that ought instead to have been lived in joy and the service of God, Who longs to say to you, "Well done, My good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

Conclusion

Freedom isn't indulging your lusts in the corruptions that are in the world. Those of you who have done that know it is a prison. You were set free; don't return to things you were delivered from thinking you can 'handle' them. And you who were not entangled in certain habits: Don't add them to your life thinking you are free and can handle them. Vices are not virtues you should add to your life.

If you are entangled... Your escape route hasn't changed. It is through your cooperation with the power and promises of God. There are those who will tell you that what God has supplied is not enough. They try to convince you that you have an addiction... or a disorder... Something we've just discovered that is not covered in the Word of God.

Let me be clear: There can be organic, physical problems that hinder your spiritual progress and require medical help. But these are far rarer than we are currently led to believe.

For the vast majority of Christians, "His divine power has given to us **all things** that pertain to life and godliness."

