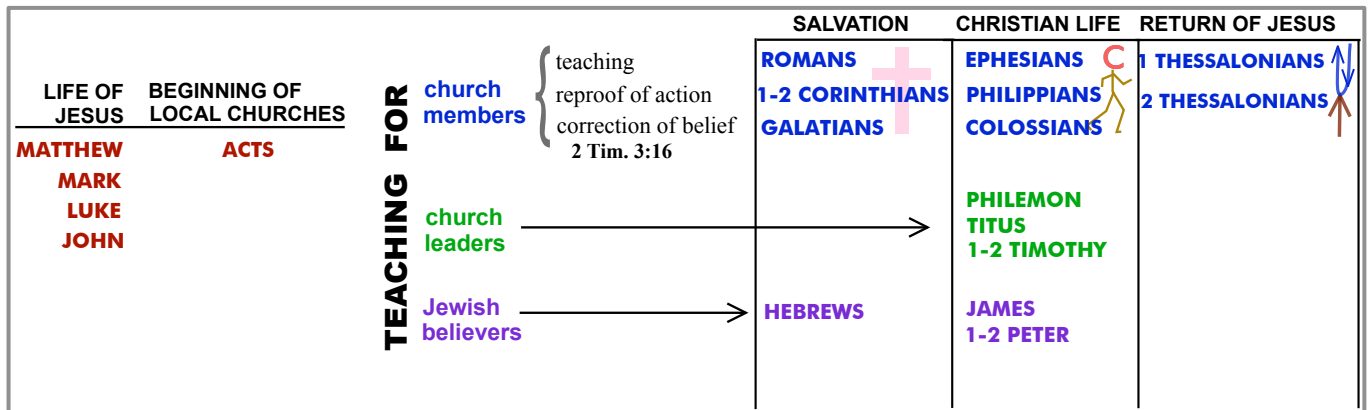


Lesson #21 - 2 PETER 2019

Before starting this lesson, read **the 3 chapters**.



Once again, in thinking about the New Testament books, we see they start with the **LIFE OF JESUS** in the four Gospels. Acts tells about the formation of **LOCAL CHURCHES**. All the rest is teaching either about **SALVATION**, the **CHRISTIAN LIFE** or the **RETURN OF JESUS**.

There is teaching for **members** of the local churches, for **leaders** of those churches and then, teaching for **Jewish believers**. They are part of the Church, but have special Jewish issues and questions. **HEBREWS** is about salvation. **JAMES** is about conduct of the Christian life and the two books of **PETER**, about suffering in the Christian life.

The first verse of 2 Peter, chapter 1, says Peter is the author. He uses his Jewish name Simon or Simeon and his Greek name Peter. He tells us who the letter is for in 3:1. *This is now my 2nd letter to you.* Peter is writing the same people who received 1st Peter - that is, the second-generation Jewish believers in northern Asia Minor.



To refresh our memory, Peter lived and worked with the Jews in the five provinces in northern Asia Minor. He was there some 20 years from 42-62 AD. He then moved to Rome. Even tho Peter had left, over the next 3 years many more Jews became believers in Asia Minor. They were still new in their faith when Nero began the severe persecution. They did not know what to do or how to think. This is why Peter wrote the 1st letter to them in 65 AD. He explained how they should handle persecution from government and society.

Another 3 years go by. During this time Peter is working with Jewish believers in Rome and sees a change take place within the local churches. False Jewish teachers are coming in to change the gospel message. They are both clever and bold in their approach, greedy for money and immoral in their living. What concerns him the most is that so many believers in the church are accepting their false teaching. Even worse, they are attacking church members who say the teaching is wrong.

As the false teaching increases within the city of Rome, persecution from the Roman government also increases. In late 67 or early 68 AD, Peter is taken prisoner, put in a Roman dungeon and condemned to death. Because he is not a Roman citizen, he is facing death by crucifixion.

Peter knows these false teachers in Rome will move eastward to all the communities of Jewish believers. So before his death, he wants to warn the believers back in Asia Minor. In his 1st letter, he warned them about persecution from outside sources - government and society. Now in this 2nd letter, he is warning about persecution from inside sources - from within the local church.

WRITING STYLE – Jewish

There is repetition, picture language and circular thinking. The content is based on stories or beliefs from the Old Testament, which were well-known to Jewish readers, but unknown or obscure to Gentiles. Written in 68 AD.

OUTLINE

What they, as believers, will need	1
What the false teachers will be like	2
What the scoffers will say	3

WHAT THEY, AS BELIEVERS, WILL NEED

CHAPTER 1

THEY NEED CLARITY ABOUT JESUS

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. 1:1

In English it looks like Peter is talking about 2 persons, *God* (the Father) and *our Savior, Jesus Christ*.

But Peter is writing in Greek. His readers can see by the Greek grammar that Peter is only talking about Jesus. He is reminding them what the Christian faith believes about Jesus.

Jesus is **Deity**, God the Son

Jesus is our **Savior**

For the Jews, He is their promised Messiah, translated as **Christ**.

Jewish believers need clarity about Jesus - who He is.

THEY NEED CLARITY ABOUT GOD THE FATHER

*May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the **knowledge** of God **and** of Jesus our Lord.* 1:2

The Greek grammar shows that now Peter **is** talking about 2 persons - *God the Father*, and *Jesus* who is deity and has authority (Lord). His readers need *knowledge* about both of them.

In the Greek, there are at least 5 words for knowledge of different kinds. We are interested in 2 of them.

Gnosis.

This means *general* knowledge about moral and spiritual issues that comes thru experience.

In the Bible this word is not general knowledge about all subjects. It is limited just to moral and spiritual issues. This general knowledge is necessary. The more facts one has, the more he can see how things fit together. As Jews, they have the facts about God the Father from their Old Testament. Now, it is general knowledge about Jesus they need to put together.

Epignosis

This means *accurate, deeper knowledge* about moral and spiritual issues.

It comes thru gathering and using one's general knowledge of spiritual facts

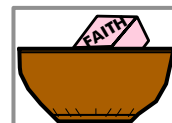
Peter is telling his readers, they need **gnosis** - the facts about Jesus. But they also need *epignosis*, an accurate, deeper knowledge of both God the Father and Jesus as Lord.

This will give them grace and peace in abundance.

It will also give them a belief and trust in God's power and promises that leads to spiritual maturity.

THEY NEED SPIRITUAL MATURITY


Everyone who is born into this world receives "x" amount of faith as a gift from God. Picture it as everybody holding a container. Into this container God puts the same amount of faith. He then holds people responsible for how they use that faith according to the information they have about Him.





Peter is writing those who used their "x" amount of faith to believe in Jesus. By faith they accepted His payment for them. But they are going to need more faith.


Faith to stick with their beliefs when others in the church are denouncing them.
Faith to believe Scripture is the word of God when church leaders deny it.
Faith to obey God's rules when everyone else is disobeying.

Besides more **faith**, these believers will need other qualities to resist the false teaching. But God does not give things carelessly. If a person never uses what He gives them, He has no reason to give them more. But if they use the faith they got in the beginning, it provides God with an opportunity to **add** to their faith.

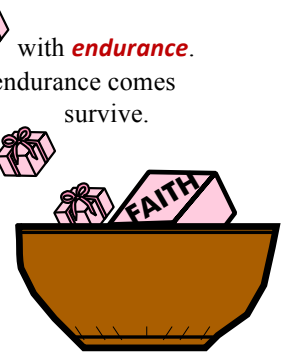
Because these believers had used the faith in their container, God will now add the gift of more faith which will also include the quality of virtue or goodness.  The actual Greek means *moral excellence or courage – often in relation to standing up for what is right and standing against that which is wrong*. For the readers of Peter's letter, when teachers in their churches present wrong teaching, they as believers will not only have faith but will also have **courage to defend the faith**.

Then as they use their faith that has courage, God will add the gift  of more faith that includes **insight**. They will have insight to know when to speak up and when to be silent; when to oppose and when to do nothing; when to stay and fight and when to leave.

As they use that faith with *insight*, God will add to their container more faith  that will have **self-control**. When these believers know they **should** be silent, they will have control to **be** silent. When they know they should resist false teaching, it can be done under the control of the Holy Spirit. Their tempers and emotions can stay calm. When they know they should leave the local church, they can do it without bitter words and resentment. Self-control.

As they use that faith along with *self-control*, God will add more faith - this time  with **endurance**. They will be able to keep going no matter what other people do or say. Out of faith with endurance comes **dependence** on God. They will become aware of how much they need God in order to survive.

As they use their faith and dependence on God, He will add to their container caring and **empathy** for other members of the congregation. Finally, God will add the gift and ability to **do what is right** regardless of their feelings. This is love that is commanded, that comes from the will.



God provides this process to equip His believers when they face false teaching. Paul referred to these qualities as the fruit of the Spirit. (Gal.5:22-23) Simply put - it is a description of spiritual growth or maturity.

Peter now explains the importance of these qualities.

For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. 1:9-10

Peter is saying, without these qualities, Jewish believers...

- ...Will be ungrateful of Jesus' payment in the past
- ...Blind to the truth about Him in the present
- ...Uncaring about His return in the future

But with these qualities...

- ...They will not fail in their beliefs
- ...They will not stumble in their morals
- ...Their lives will confirm they are genuine believers

All of these qualities - this spiritual maturity - is based on deeper knowledge about God the Father and Jesus as Lord. Peter is not going to be available to keep teaching them. So he reminds them where to get their accurate spiritual knowledge.

First, from the New Testament books that had been written up to that time of 68 AD. This would include the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. False teachers will say the New Testament stories about Jesus are just myths or legends like the ones in the Jewish Mishnah. Peter assures them the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke were written by people who personally saw or heard Jesus. Or they interviewed people who knew Him. What the New Testament says about Jesus is based on facts that people saw and heard.

As an example, Peter gives his own experience. He can state as a fact that Jesus is deity because he saw the glory of Jesus' deity on the Mount of Transfiguration.

For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory, saying "This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven, when we were with Him on the sacred mountain. 1:16-18

Peter saw the glory of Jesus' deity.

Since he is writing Jews who use the *Old* Testament as a basis of their faith, he assures them, prophets in the Old Testament also spoke from God.

Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 1:20

The prophets did not just decide one day they would write a book. They did not initiate the message; it did not come from their opinions. The explanations they gave were not their own interpretations. They received them from God.

In chapter 1 Peter tells his readers what they as believers need to prepare for false teachers. They need accurate, deeper knowledge about God the Father and about Jesus, so they can spiritually mature. They get that knowledge from God's Word.

WHAT THE FALSE TEACHERS WILL BE LIKE

CHAPTER 2

From the Old Testament, they know that in Jewish history, there were always false prophets mixed in with the true prophets. Now in their day, there will be false teachers, along with the genuine. What makes these false teachers so dangerous is they will become a part of their local churches. They will come in, say the right words and act the right way. Because they are capable and have charisma, after a while, they will be given leadership and authority. Once they are in power, they will begin to cleverly introduce heresies.

THEY WILL CHANGE THE MESSAGE ABOUT JESUS

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. 2:1

Most translations use the word *Master* - some use the title *Lord* - denying the Master or Lord. The New International Version says *Sovereign Lord*. In the Greek, Peter uses a word the Greeks used **only** for their gods to show their deity and authority. Peter uses this special word for Jesus, to emphasize **His** deity and authority. The actual Greek word is *despot*. Everyone in Peter's day understood the special, positive significance it had - authority and deity.

But in our day, the word *despot* has a totally negative meaning. This points out the problems in Bible translation. Should it be word for word or thought for thought? In this case, word for word would give an absolute wrong meaning. The words *despot* or *Master* certainly do not point to Jesus' deity and authority. This is why the New International Version, using thought for thought translation is so much better. It brings out Peter's original meaning - *denying the **Sovereign Lord** who bought them*.

Denying His **sovereignty** means they reject Jesus' authority

Denying Him as **Lord** means they reject Jesus' deity

Denying "**the One who bought them**" means they reject that His payment provides salvation for all

They reject His payment for them personally

THEY WILL CHANGE THE MESSAGE ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

And many will follow their sensuality and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. 2:2

The teachers themselves will be guilty of immorality. They will bring shame to God's name. They will refuse to accept authority. Immorality will be flagrant and excessive.

They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. 2:14

Some greed is for money.

Peter gives an example from the Old Testament - *Balaam - who loved the wages of wickedness*. Balaam was a wayward prophet of God in the days of Moses. When a wicked king wanted to hire him to curse the Jews, at first he refused. The king offered more money and Balaam said he would pray about it. When the king offered him even more, he said he would sleep on it. The next morning Balaam agreed to do it. In other words, when the price was right - he was willing to do anything. Greed for money.

But there is also greed for power, prestige or control.

These false teachers will have greed in all of these areas.

THEIR CHARACTER – described in picture language

These men are springs without water. 2:17 This phrase has 2 meanings.

1. In the Middle East, there were large areas that were dry and barren. If there was vegetation, a thirsty traveler would assume there was also a spring of water and his thirst could be satisfied. But many times the spring had dried up. It was without water. The traveler had to leave disillusioned and still thirsty. Peter uses this as a picture of the false teachers. They will leave people who are seeking God, disillusioned and spiritually thirsty.

2. Jesus used the phrase *springs of living water* as a picture of the Holy Spirit inside of believers. These teachers are springs *without* water - they are without the Holy Spirit. Altho they are in leadership in the local churches, they are not believers.

These men are not believers 2:20-22 Peter uses picture language about animals

In plain English, Peter is saying the false teachers move into town and start attending the services in the local church. They continue to attend for an extended time and get an accurate knowledge about the authority of Jesus - that He is Savior and the promised Messiah. By being in the church for this long period, they have temporarily escaped the environment and influence of the world.

Inwardly they willfully reject the knowledge and opportunity to repent. But outwardly they appear to believe like everyone else. So after an extended time they are given a role of leadership. They pretend to have the right message. But little by little they begin to change the message and lead the church members into false beliefs and sinful actions.

In their own private lives, the false teachers willfully return to a life of sin. Because of this, God will send consequences in this life. In eternity, their punishment will be more severe because it will be based on what they knew and because they deliberately led others from God.

Thru picture language, Peter is saying that dogs and pigs can be cleaned up, but they always go back to what comes naturally. Those with only a sin nature will revert to what comes naturally. They will go back into sin.

Peter assures his readers that God will not let the false teachers get away with it. He gives 3 examples from the Old Testament where immorality was out of control and God brought judgment.

God judged the angels. 2:4

He judged the people who lived before the flood. 2:5

He judged the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. 2:6

In the past, before God judged these wicked groups, He protected His believers who lived among them. He rescued the families of Noah and Lot.

So now in the present, before God brings judgment on these false religious teachers, He will protect those who follow Him.

WHAT THE SCOFFERS WILL SAY

CHAPTER 3

FALSE TEACHERS - THEIR RIDICULE THAT JESUS WILL RETURN

You must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, where is this coming He promised? Ever since the fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation. 3:3-4

PETER'S ANSWERS

Do not forget this one thing, dear friends. With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 3:8

From a human perspective it had been a long time. God had been promising the Jews a land and kingdom since the days of Abraham. But from God's perspective of eternity, it has been a short time.

The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 3:9

Jesus keeps His promises. Because He has made salvation available to everyone, He does not want any to be separated from Him in eternity. The delay is so that people have more time and opportunity to believe. God has given free will to everyone. But in order to use free will, a person first needs to understand both sides of the issue - to see the pros and cons - to see all the details. This is why God has delayed. He wants everyone to have a fair chance to see His offer of salvation.

Believing that Jesus will return should have an effect on their lives.

It should lead to holy and godly living. 3:11

They should be diligent and at peace. 3:14

Even tho things are going to get worse, they can be assured God's plan will be accomplished.

God's Kingdom will come

Gentiles believers were always looking forward to *heaven* as their ultimate goal. But for Jewish believers, it was the privilege of living in God's kingdom. We the Church will participate in the Kingdom. But it was promised way back, in the beginning, as a reward to the Jews, as God's people.

Since Peter is Jewish and is writing only to Jewish believers, he is talking about what must happen before God's Kingdom will come. Things will get worse before it can come, but guaranteed, God's plan will be accomplished. There will be a Kingdom.

Paul confirms the salvation message in his letters 3:16

*He, Paul, writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters (of salvation and Jesus giving people time and opportunity to repent). His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the **other** Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

From this verse we know that by 68 AD, Paul's letters were not just in the churches he wrote to, but now in all the churches thruout the Roman empire.

We also know that Paul's letters are considered Scripture, equal to the **other** Scriptures, meaning the Old Testament.

In Peter's day, once the false teachers arrive in the local churches...

...Many church members are going to listen and accept the false ideas

It will sound more reasonable.

It will give them freedom to do what they want.

...They will turn on anyone who says the teaching is wrong

Those who want to follow God's ways are now going to suffer double persecution...

...From government and society

...From members of their local churches

This will be the hardest to accept. Only those who are spiritually mature will be able to get thru it.

Peter, in typical Jewish writing style, ends the book as he began.

*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. 3:17*

These believers need to effectively prepare themselves ahead of time.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 3:18

They are to continually grow - in understanding how to accept God's grace
in their knowledge of Jesus.

APPLICATION

Peter was not just describing his day - he was describing our day as well.

False teachers have infiltrated many of our local churches and are changing the message.

The message about **God** is changing.

Many religious leaders are teaching that God is in everything; therefore, everything is god.

There is a divine spark in everyone that needs to be discovered. We are all little gods.

The message about **Jesus** is changing.

Religious leaders are denying His deity or refusing to say He is the Son of God so as not to offend other religions.

Many books and teachers now say Jesus' death on the cross was not a payment; it was only an example.

People are denying the return of Jesus for the Church.

Others say the Church will set up and run the Kingdom. Jesus will not return until after the Kingdom.

The message about **Scripture** is changing.

People are teaching that Scripture is not accurate; it is not our authority; we cannot know what it means.

Emphasis on explaining the Bible, the defense of the faith, (or) saying Jesus is the only way is harmful in today's church. Brian McLaren, the leader of the Emerging Church, *A Generous Orthodoxy*.

This is false teaching.

The message about **salvation** is changing.

False teachers are saying: people are basically good. There are many ways to be right with God.

God loves everyone and will accept everyone. No one will be separated from God.

The message about the **Christian life** is changing.

There are no absolutes of right and wrong; whatever is right for you is OK. Any relationship is OK as long as you are committed; there is good in all religions; unity and tolerance are more important than belief; experiences are more important than facts; we need to be more like the world so they will accept us.

Tragically there are now missions and missionaries who say people can follow Christ but stay in their old religions to avoid persecution. Missions have created a special term for these people. They call them *Christ-followers*. They are not called *believers* because they do not believe exclusively in Jesus. They only follow Christ along with their other deities.

To protect the local church -

Spiritual leaders within the church must be convinced the Bible is God's Word; it is accurate, and it is the **only** authority to show us what is right and wrong from God's point of view.

Spiritual leaders must teach Scripture clearly, thoroughly and accurately so it can guide the lives of all who hear it.

Entertainment, cute stories and light-hearted thoughts need to be replaced with serious, in-depth explanations of what God wants us to know.

Church members must be on guard and develop their knowledge to recognize error.

They need to learn from the sound teaching within the church and study God's Word for themselves.

They need to use their faith so God can add to it and lead them into spiritual maturity.

When a local church goes into error, we can pray God will use someone to rescue it - to bring it back to Scripture. If there are sufficient members in the congregation that want to return, God will answer our prayer. When we take a stand, we will be called judgmental, intolerant, unloving and narrow-minded. Leaders, other church members - even family may turn against us.

If a local church rejects or changes what Scripture says and nothing can be done, we will have to leave. That will bring unbelievable suffering and heartache.

To get thru persecution - not just from government and society, but also from within the local church, our strength will come from Peter's instruction.

Keep on growing in your ability to accept and experience God's grace.

Keep on growing in the knowledge of Jesus - who He is - what He is like,
what He has done - what He has promised - what He can do.

Keep on growing spiritually - this is our strength.

EXTRA INFORMATION FOR THE STUDIOUS AND INQUISITIVE

AUTHORSHIP OF 2 PETER

There are scholars who say Peter is not the author of this 2nd book. So we need to ask 4 important questions.

1. Why do the scholars question it?

The question is raised because the Greek language is so different between the 2 books. In 1 Peter, the Greek is smooth and flowing while in 2 Peter, it is awkward and jerky.

2. Is there a logical explanation? Yes

In 1 Peter 5:12 Peter says he wrote the 1st letter with the help of Silas (Silvanus is the Greek form of his name) Peter's first language was Aramaic. He knew Latin because it was the legal language of the Roman empire. He also knew Greek because he was a fisherman and that was the language of business. However, his Greek was not smooth like those who had grown up outside the land of Israel. Silas was a Jewish man who had been raised outside of Israel. Peter used him to put the 1st letter in fluent, smooth flowing Greek.

Peter writes the 2nd letter himself, so we would expect the vocabulary and construction to be more awkward. Because he is talking about specific problems, the vocabulary is limited to those problems. Writing from a Roman dungeon and knowing he will soon be crucified, would certainly affect and change his style of writing. So there **IS** a logical explanation of the language difference in this 2nd book.

3. Is there anything in the book that disproves his authorship?

No. In fact, the things said strongly prove Peter is the author.

4. What did the early church fathers say?

Because there were some in that day who questioned the authorship, church leaders and councils carefully checked it out. By 400 AD, 3 major church councils and the major church leaders all agreed the book was genuine and Peter was the author. These included Jerome (340-420 AD) and Augustine (354-430 AD).

1:4 *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.*

To "be partaker of" or to "participate in the divine nature" does not mean we are gods or have a divine spark in us. It means His nature is expressed thru our actions and attitudes. People can see His patience, holiness and goodness.

1:5, 11 *...make every effort to supplement (abundantly provide) your faith with virtue...*

...there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Peter commands these Jewish believers to "splurge" in using the faith that God gives them so they abundantly provide Him with the opportunity to give them more faith with additional qualities. This will develop spiritual maturity and they will be equipped to stand firm in the face of spiritual opposition.

In turn, God will "splurge" and abundantly, richly provide for their reception into the kingdom. The same Greek word is used – first of what the Jewish believers are to do and then what God will do for them. Because this is written only to Jewish believers, it is the kingdom that is emphasized, based on God's Old Testament promises to the Jews.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S WORD

Peter and Paul - the 2 people God most uses to begin and develop the Church, the Body of Christ - are both put in a Roman dungeon c. 68 AD to die for their faith. Both had seen the Church develop in its beauty and strength. Both see people bring changes in the message and life of the church. Neither of them could leave their prison cell to correct the situations, so both wrote one final letter just before their death.

Each mentions there will be false teaching that must be corrected.

Each mentions what Scripture is - God breathed, God directed, God's Word.

They mention what Scripture will do. It will be the source of teaching.

It will be the standard to show them what is of God and what is not.

It will show them what is right and what is wrong.