

2 Peter 1

Overview

- Numerous false teachers had infiltrated their group and were teaching dangerous, false doctrines; the key message in 2 Peter is that the **best way to defend against spiritual error is to know the truth**

2 Peter 1:1-2 Introduction

- *v1 Slave/apostle*--balance of humility & dignity, needed by all who would serve Christ & His church
 - *Simon*--outside the Gospels, used only in Acts 15:14, to support acceptance of the Gentiles
 - *Slave*--inalienably possessed by God, constantly in His service, with no rights of one's own
 - *Received*--they have not earned it; it has been allotted to them through God's mercy & love
 - *Faith*--opinions split on whether this is the ability to believe or the body of doctrine
 - *As ours*--usage parallels when an alien gains the same rights of citizenship as the native-born
 - *God and Savior*--grammar indicates one person, not two: a clear statement of Christ's deity
- *v2 Grace and peace*--same as in 1 Peter 1; one indicator that this was indeed written by Peter
 - *Through the knowledge*--grace & peace multiplied as one comes to know Jesus better & better
 - *Full knowledge*--knowledge of Jesus Christ is what we might call "the master-science of life."
 - In the New Testament, *knowledge* is characteristically personal knowledge—Peter is saying that Christianity means an ever-deepening personal relationship with Jesus Christ
 - **MacArthur:**¹ "Knowledge" is a key word in 2 Peter (vv. 2, 5, 6, 8; 2:20; 3:18), which implies an intimate knowledge. Peter doesn't emphasize a superficial knowledge, or a mere surface awareness of the facts about Christ, but a genuine, personal sharing of life with Christ, based on repentance from sin and personal faith in Him. The deeper and wider that knowledge of the Lord, the more "grace and peace" are multiplied in the believer.
 - **McGee:**² He uses the Greek word *epignosis*, meaning "super knowledge." It is a knowledge which comes by the Holy Spirit's taking the things of Christ and making them *real* to us.

2 Peter 1:3-11 Confirming One's Calling and Election

- **MacArthur:**³ Believers needed to be reminded that their salvation was sustained by God's power (1:3-4), that it was confirmed by fruitful growth in the faith (1:5-7), and that it would eventually result in honor and abundant reward (1:8-11). Because false teachers and heretical doctrines continue to flourish today, we need to hear, understand, and heed the warnings of 2 Peter.
- *v3 His divine power*--His power is the source of the believer's sufficiency and perseverance
 - Christ's love is backed by his power and is, therefore, a victorious love; He bestows all things necessary for true religion and true life--not withdrawn from the world but to be triumphant in it
 - To each promise in Scripture which begins with "Whosoever," we can say, "That means me!"
 - *Called us*--requires that we understand His revealed majesty as the only Lord and Savior
 - *Goodness/virtue*--has to do with goodness and the courage to excel in life
- *v4 Participate in the divine nature*--become "new creations" by virtue of being born again into Christ
 - As partakers, we can share in Christ's moral victory over sin and glorious victory over death
 - Having received the Holy Spirit, we are being conformed to the likeness of Christ

¹ John MacArthur: *1 & 2 Peter; Courage in Times of Trouble*; Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, 2007; page 70.

² J. Vernon McGee: *Through the Bible with J. Vernon McGee, Volume 5*; Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville; 1983; page 719.

³ John MacArthur; same source as in footnote 1; page 69.

- *Escaped the corruption*--freed from the power that the rottenness in the world has over them through their fallen, sinful nature; believers can defeat the power of sin by His power
- v5-7 In light of all God's blessings, we must be totally dedicated with maximum effort to live for God
 - *Add/equip*--from Greek word for "leader of a chorus", as providing the choir for a Greek play
 - Literally, to lavishly provide everything needed for a noble performance, an army, a Godly life
 - We are to add our full & complete devotion to the marvelous faith & grace given first by God
 - To keep climbing the ladder of virtues is to come ever nearer to knowing Jesus; the further we climb, the further we are able to climb
 - *Faith*--the starting point of the Christian life. . .*love*--the preeminent fruit of the Christian life
 - *Knowledge (gnosis)*--spiritual knowledge gained through the Holy Spirit & focused on the person & Word of God; this may be a dig on false teachers & their esoteric knowledge which leads to immorality
 - *Godliness*--to be godly is to live reverently, loyally, and obediently toward God
 - *Brotherly kindness*--focused on the needs of others
 - *Love (agape)*--desiring the highest good for others; loving the sinner but not the sin
 - Lists were commonly used for instruction & games to enable remembrance
 - We must strive for constant Christian growth, always aiming to grow in love for others
 - **Bengel**⁴ (Lutheran clergyman) on the 10 virgins (Matt 25:2): "The flame is that which is imparted to us by God and from God without our own labor; but the oil is that which a man must pour into life by his own study & his own faithful effort, so that the flame may be fed and increased."
 - **Barclay**:⁵ Faith does not exempt one from works; the generosity of God does not absolve one from effort. Life is at its noblest and its best when our effort cooperates with God's grace to produce the necessary loveliness.
- v8-9 Those who don't climb grow blind without Jesus' guiding light & short-sighted to true values
 - *Unproductive*--the "fruits" we yield result from growing faith & knowing Jesus more deeply
 - *Nearsighted/blind*--a professing Christian who is missing the virtues mentioned is unable to discern his or her true spiritual condition and thus remains spiritually immature
- v10-11 Although without God's grace & mercy we could do nothing, we are not absolved from making every effort to grow in Christ
 - We grow in our assurance of election & salvation as we see spiritual fruit in our lives
 - These qualities do not merit entry into heaven; they are the fruit of Jesus' perfect righteousness
 - *Stumble*--not to lose one's salvation, but to "trip up" or suffer a reversal
 - *Rich welcome*--the hope & reality for every believer who lives a faithful, fruitful life here on earth
 - Ponder upon and pray for guidance on the areas/characteristics in which you need to grow

2 Peter 1:12-21 Prophecy in Scripture

- Today, the concept of truth is under attack--this is an important passage for us to understand & apply
- v12-15 Preaching often reminds people of what they already know--they may have forgotten, may prefer not to look at some truth, or may not have fully appreciated some aspects of the truth
 - *Tent*--not a permanent abode; this world is not our permanent residence
 - *Made clear*--recalls Jesus' prophecy in **John 21:18-19** Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your

⁴ Bengel: cited in Barclay, same page as in footnote 5

⁵ William Barclay: *The Letters of James and Peter*, Revised Edition; Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1976; page 300

hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

- *To see that after my departure*--may be a reference to the Gospel of Mark
- *v16-18* Peter gives eyewitness testimony to the Transfiguration
 - The Transfiguration story is a foretaste of the triumphant glory of the Second Coming
 - What Peter, James & John had seen made their testimony more credible than the false teachers’
 - Matt 16:29, Mk 9:1 and Lk 9:27 all precede the Transfiguration with Jesus’ prophecy that some standing there would not pass from the world until they had seen Him coming in His kingdom
 - *Eyewitnesses*--a technical term used in some mystery religions for becoming one with a god through an initiation ritual representing suffering, death and resurrection
 - *Stories/fables*--often concocted by false teachers to gain followers, wealth, and power
- *v19* Both God’s voice on the mountain & the prophets pointed to Jesus’ Kingdom on earth
 - Taking both the prophets and the vision remove any doubt
 - *Prophecy/prophetic message*--the entire Word of God
 - *Do well to heed*--those exposed to false teachings need to cling to the truth of inspired Scripture
 - *Morning star*--God’s written Word is a lamp that dispels the darkness with perfect but limited revelation; at the Second Coming, the living Word will provide perfect & complete revelation
 - **McGee:**⁶ And the prophets, as he will make it clear in the next verse, were more than amanuenses who took dictation from God; rather, they expressed their own feelings and thoughts. Nevertheless, God was able to transmit His complete will and word through the men who wrote Scripture. This is the thing that makes it a miraculous Book. You see, the Word of God is not only deity, it is human, very human. It is like the Lord Jesus who was both God and man.
- *v20-21* When the prophets spoke, it was no private opinion; they were giving a revelation from God
 - *Scripture*--a reference to all of the Old Testament & by implication, all of the New Testament
 - *Human will*--Scripture was never produced as a result of a person’s decision
 - **MacArthur:**⁷ The word inspired means literally “breathed out by God:” or “God-breathed:” Sometimes God told the Bible writers the exact words to say (e.g., Jer. 1:9), but more often He used their minds, vocabularies, and experiences to produce His own perfect infallible, inerrant Word. It is important to note that inspiration applies only to the original autographs of Scripture, not the Bible writers; there are no inspired Scripture writers, only inspired Scripture.
 - Further, no one can go to Scripture and interpret it as it suits themselves
 - We must read Scripture prayerfully seeking the Holy Spirit’s guidance and also humbly go to the works of scholars to learn what the Spirit taught them
 - No portion of the Scripture is to be interpreted apart from other references to the same subject
 - Heretics and evil people were interpreting the prophets to suit themselves
 - **Jeremiah 23:16** This is what the Lord Almighty says: “Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. (note: speaking of false prophets)
 - **McGee:**⁸ Peter is telling us that we have “a more sure word of prophecy.” He puts a sure rock under our feet. The Scriptures are something that we can have confidence in. No wonder the Word of God has been attacked more than anything else. If the enemy can get rid of the foundation, he knows that the building will come crashing down.

⁶ McGee: same source as footnote 2; page 727

⁷ MacArthur: same source as footnote 1; page 78

⁸ McGee; same source as footnote 2; page 729