

2 Peter 1

1 *Peter* was written to comfort sufferers. 2 *Peter* goes out to soldiers, battling the false doctrines of heretics. Jude is a companion volume with many similarities. They are certainly appropriate for our day when so many false doctrines are abroad. We need the knowledge and strategy of these books for our spiritual battles. While sufferers need grace, which was the emphasis in the first letter, soldiers in the battle for the faith need "knowledge." Words related to knowledge occur at least 16 times in 2 *Peter*.

1), 2) In this salutation, Peter shows he has abandoned the earlier bravado in which he claimed too much for himself. Here, he is Simon (the old man) and Peter (the new). He is a lowly slave (*doulos*), and he is Christ's apostle. He knows his potential, and he knows his past. He writes humbly to his readers, but with the authority of one commissioned by Christ to this pastoral work. His readers have the same precious faith that Peter has, and now he wishes for them **grace**, the fountain of all good things, and **peace**, the crown of all earthly blessings. This good shepherd certainly loves his sheep.

3) As we face the battle for truth, Peter reminds us that we have all the equipment we need for the fight. Half of your education is knowing where to find the other half. We can find in the knowledge of Christ everything necessary to live and to walk a godly life. This bestowment by God is final. He Who called us also equipped us to answer the call and get to the work included in the divine call.

4) Because God is so good and glorious, He has bestowed upon us the promises of His Word - they are great because He is great, and they bring great things to us; they are also precious, meaning we cannot calculate their value. The promises of God enable us to become new creatures in Christ Jesus, sharing in His nature; this new nature brings with it new appetites. Satisfying those appetites will help us have victory over the old desires of this sinful world. Contrast a pig or dog with a sheep.

5), 6), 7), The Christian life begins with the new birth, but it does not stop there. There is the addition of a host of things that fill us up and make us to be mature in Christ. While spiritual growth is the work of the Holy Spirit in a life, this text reminds us that the believer must exert every effort in chorus with the Spirit for real growth to take place. To the faith that brings the new birth should be added these: **1, goodness**: a high standard of moral excellence; **2, knowledge**: practical application of spiritual truth; **3, self-control**: Solomon wrote in Pr 16:32, that "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city;" **4, perseverance**: used 32 times in NT, this means to "abide under," to stay at the task. Don't be a quitter! **5, godliness**: which speaks of "piety, man's obligation of reverence toward God." Such a person will seek to do God's will, while blessing men around him; **6, brotherly kindness**: letter for letter, our word "Philadelphia." This is a special affection for those who belong to the family, along with its practical results; **7, love**: here is the famous word, "agape," which loves without cause, without there being a reason to love. It sees an object and works for its welfare, even in the face of rejection, and without hope of getting anything in return. It takes no account of the cost involved in blessing its object. It is God's love in John 3:16.

8), 9), Four negative qualities are mentioned here that are to be avoided. In the knowledge of Christ, we can be **ineffective**: this means to be idle - to do nothing with our faith! This is unthinkable! If we are idle, we shall also be **unfruitful**: fruit-bearing requires effort; a lazy farmer will harvest no crop. Adding the 7 qualities in vss 5-7 will delete these two qualities. Failing to grow in the seven virtues will guarantee that a person will have 2 more defects - **1, Spiritual nearsightedness** - Peter says this person is blind in a specific way, being unable to see the big picture or take the long view; and, finally, **2, forgetfulness** - not remembering the precious work Christ did for us.

10), 11) False teachers and false teaching can send weak and carnal believers into a spiritual tailspin of doubt and insecurity. A life may be robbed of its fruitfulness and the abundance of its reward in heaven. Peter here urges the readers to strive to live so as to give themselves assurance of the security that is theirs in Christ. God's election and calling make us **secure** (standing), but it is the outworking of grace in our lives that makes us **assured** (state). There is a present benefit of such striving for godliness, as well as a future one. Presently, we may be spared from stumbling in our walk, damaging God's testimony. In the future, we will enter the port of heaven with a great cargo of blessing, many rewards, rather than being saved by the skin of our teeth. Contrast with 1 Cor 3:15.

12), 13), 14) Peter did not apologize for reminding people about things he may have said before. In fact, he emphasized the necessity of our being reminded. The NIV has "remind" in verse 12 and "refresh your memory" in verse 13. Both expressions are verb infinitives in the *present progressive* tense. The reminders kept on coming, again and again. How soon we may forget things if we do not repeat them and cherish them in our minds. Peter was writing Scripture that would be around long after he was gone to heaven - a tool God could use throughout the church age! They had knowledge and a good foundation, but they needed to be reminded - as we all do. One well-known black preacher said of repeating a sermon, "If it didn't bear repeating, I shouldn't have preached it the first time." Repetition is a great teaching tool. As long as Peter was in the flesh, he planned to stir up their minds by way of remembrance. Peter was aware of the temporary nature of his ministry. He knew he would one day die, and he felt that the time of his departure was near (compare Paul in 2 Tim 4). Jesus had told Peter that he would lay aside his body, a beautiful image for death. He would fold up his earthly tent at the end of his pilgrimage down here (1 Pet 2:11). His teaching would outlive him in the Word.

15) Here Peter uses a second image for death - "departure," borrowed from Jesus, Moses, and Elijah at the transfiguration (Luke 9:31), when they spoke of Jesus' "exodus" from the earth. His death was not an end, but a leaving one place to arrive at another. As the Israelites had taken a trip from the bondage of Egypt to freedom in Canaan, Peter would be set free from bondage to his flesh, fleeing to God's presence in heaven. It has been said that "God buries His workmen, but His work goes on." This was the desire of Peter's heart, and it should be of ours, as well. What are we doing

that will live when we are gone? Are we wasting our lives, or spending, investing them to win people to Christ and equip them to carry on the battle for truth when we have gone? God help us!

16) Peter had been with the Incarnate Word, Jesus, for over three years. Now God the Spirit uses him to give us a portion of the written Word. This apostle was not a researcher who put together a story, maybe making up some parts as he went along. No! He was there with Jesus on the Mount (was it Tabor, or Hermon? We don't know) when the Savior was metamorphosized, that is, His inner being of Deity shown through His outward robe of humanity. His presence had power and majesty, and Peter was an eyewitness to the great event! This was truly a foretaste of glory divine!

17), 18) For an ignorant and uneducated fisherman, Peter certainly writes in eloquent Greek here! It may be that a secretary was used, but these are Peter's words, and what words they are! God gave honor and glory to Jesus on what Peter called "the sacred mount." It came in the form of a voice from heaven - the Father's voice - that spoke in glowing terms of the Father's approval and pleasure in the Person of the Son. This Son is the *agapetos* of the Father, the "beloved One." Notice the "we" in verses 16 and 18. The first person plural indicates that Peter was not the only witness to Christ's transformation there; James and John also saw what Peter observed. John also testified to Jesus as One he had heard, seen, studied, and touched (1 John 1:1-2). This was no ethereal phantom - this was the real, flesh and blood, incarnate Son of the living God!

19) Imagine this - Peter has just described one of his many encounters with Jesus Christ. This, a very special viewing of God's manifest glory in His Son on the Mt of Transfiguration. At least two of the senses were employed as they heard and saw the miracle. We would love to have had such an *experience* ourselves. But Peter now tells us we have something better than even such a great personal encounter with Christ - we have "a more sure word of prophecy!" He elevates the written Word of God above his unparalleled personal experience! And we have that blessed Word today!

20), 21) No writer of Scripture was an independent journalist of spiritual ideas. Each and every one of the 40 or so of them wrote in symphony with the Holy Spirit and with each other! Moses was guided, borne along, by the same Holy Spirit Who affected the mind and heart of the apostles and their associates who gave us the New Testament. This is Peter's version of 2 Timothy 3:16. "Revelation" means that the truth came from the mind of God. "Inspiration" has the idea that the Holy Spirit guided the penman as he wrote, insuring that the mind of God was recorded as it pleased God. What a treasure we have in the volume of Scripture. We do well to employ ourselves to study its pages to learn the mind of God for us. It is truth without any mixture of error. It is the Word of God!

2 Peter 2

1) Satan's most effective weapon has always been deception by counterfeit. In OT times it was false prophets; now it was false teachers. They move in among God's people and plant doctrinal errors that strike at the roots of the faith. As with all who oppose God, they vigorously deny His authority over them, even though He sent Jesus to die for their redemption. This will bring swift retribution upon them from God; He will not always be silent.

2) Sadly, many people follow these false teachers - many who once professed faith in Christ. Enamored with their filthy ways, weak ones are drawn away after them. Do not be surprised at the numbers of people in Kingdom Halls, Mormon Temples, and Christian Science reading rooms. And the church gets a black eye because these and others like them call themselves "Christian."

3) Balaam and Simon the sorcerer are examples of fakers who were covetous for gain. Inventing fables, they get rich off naive Christians. While it may appear that they are getting away with it, be assured that God is aware of their wrong, and He is not asleep at the controls. They will be judged - doom and destruction will soon be theirs.

4) Peter now embarks upon a lengthy recounting of past times of God's judgment of evildoers, in some of which cases intermingled believers had to be spared the destruction of judgment. He first mentions fallen angels, those who followed Satan in rebellion against God. Seeking to ascend above the clouds, they were rather sent to the dark dungeon of Tartarus to await final judgment. Angels and men suffer while waiting final punishment.

5) If false teachers think their numbers protect them from God's judgment, let them revisit Noah's day. The whole world was in wickedness except for 8 people in Noah's family. The pre-flood civilization got away with nothing - God destroyed every one of them with a worldwide "cataclysm." Fear not, however; God was able to deliver the eight righteous people in the midst of the destruction of earth by flood. He protected them from sin and judgment.

6), 7), 8) A second civilization got far from God in the days of Lot. Noah's world died by water. Sodom and Gomorrah's citizens died by fire. God rained down on them fire and brimstone for their sexual perversions and other sins. Can judgment be far from us in this wicked culture? What God did to them was made an example for all men for all ages to observe. And yet today some who profess to know God condone the sins for which those civilizations perished! While Lot lived in the city, God sent angels to warn him to leave, and he was rescued. Peter gives us insight into Lot's stay in Sodom, telling us that exposure to the lawless and perverted ways of the people there wore him down, he being a righteous man. A believer cannot enjoy sin for long - it will become distasteful at length. The metal of Lot's soul was tested day after day. He was in the world, but he was not of the world. The lewd and unlawful deeds of the Sodomites were constantly seen and heard by Lot, which literally brought torture to his soul. Lot made a bad choice in locating near, and then in, the twin cities of sin. What a disservice he did to his family when he left the company of Uncle Abraham. Oh, that he had sacrificed wealth for his family! Alas, like so many even in our day, he sacrificed his family for wealth. Such a man can never be called a success.

9) The conclusion of the illustrations is now stated. God knows how to do both these things - judge the wicked, and deliver the righteous while doing so. It is sad for those like Lot that they move into Sodom, and then Sodom moves into them. Lot

was not a separated man, and he paid a great price for his communion and compromise with the world's wickedness. He was delivered, but he lost his wife, 2 daughters, and all that he possessed.

10) As surely as sinning angels, the world of Noah's day, and the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah were judged, false teachers will also come under God's judgment. It will especially fall on those loose-living libertines who hotly pursue fleshly appetites in things that defile the soul. These arrogant ones have no fear to speak evil of authorities that are above them. They are motivated by selfish desires and pride. They could not be more unlike our selfless Lord Jesus.

11) Consult Jude 8-9 for a parallel passage. Before the Lord, even angels are careful about pronouncing judgment. These wicked false teachers do not have that holy reserve, and they do things even the angels of God are reticent to do - pronouncing slanders against celestial beings.

12) The sin nature is locked into a man like instinct is into a beast. If grace does not intervene, man will follow sin like an animal follows instinct. The only value brute beasts have to man is to be captured and killed. Graceless men trying to move into the realm of the spiritual are as worthless there as a wild beast in civilized society. The beasts perish, and so will these false teachers.

13), 14) God always balances the books in His universe - sometimes sooner, sometimes later. The harm done by false teachers will come back to them. God will see to it. While wicked men normally do their wickedness under cover of darkness, these "pseudo-prophets" are so bold as to relish the idea of flaunting their carousings in broad daylight. The law of sowing and reaping is woven into the fabric of God's universe. Pretending to be spiritual, hanging out with Christians, cannot protect a false teacher from the divinely-promised punishment for their adulteries, their seduction of the weak, their unbridled greed. While we must be careful not to enter into judging people's motives, we cannot help but see some moving about in "kingdom circles" who have no love or loyalty for the coming King. Their unceasing continuance in sin argues against their being true believers (see 1 John 3:9).

15), 16) These false teachers are guilty of following "the way of Balaam." Consult Numbers 22 for the story of this one whose greed for "filthy lucre" (base gain) led him to undermine the people of God, even when God would not allow him to pronounce a prophetic curse upon them. See also Jude 11 and Revelation 2:14 for other NT references to this event. It was not enough that these teachers forsook the right way, they followed a way that is roundly condemned in Scripture. This "hireling prophet" was rebuked by a man's voice coming from a donkey's mouth. I fear that too many of today's ministers are more concerned about their income than is appropriate. I have served four ministries full-time and scores, if not hundreds of churches part-time over my nearly 6 decades of preaching. Never once have I negotiated salary, always trusting that where God guides, God provides. The current trends about ministers and money grieve me as a minister of the gospel.

17) Peter concludes with a summary description of the false teachers as God sees them. They disappoint their hearers by failing to produce what they promise - not unlike the failure of a waterless spring to quench thirst or a wind-driven cloud to drop rain. While teachers of the truth are fountains of life and bearers of light, these are empty, dry, and destined for the darkness they try to bring upon others. God is just Who will punish them so!

18) How is it that these false teachers get a following? Well, they appeal to the flesh, offering religion **and** riotous living! They lead men to believe they can have favor with God while living after the flesh. So those whose lives need to change are enticed right back into sin. Some of them even say there is no hell to fear anyway, so why not indulge...?

19) False teachers promise freedom from prudishness, legalism, restraint - not freedom from sin. Paul taught that to serve sin is to become enslaved to it. These teach the opposite - they claim freedom while becoming slaves to the lusts of the flesh. Christ came to make us free indeed from sin - by the cross and the Spirit's power. Obey!

The following verses (20-22) were recently used in a debate with me to try to prove that a saved man can be lost again. The clear teaching of such passages as John 10:28-30 and Romans 8:38,39, are so convincing that whatever these verses teach, it cannot be that a saved man can ever be lost.

20), 21) It appears that these false teachers, and perhaps some whom they drew after themselves, had been exposed to some knowledge about Christ. They decided that rather than follow Him by faith into the escape from sin, they would indulge their fleshly appetites **to sin** in unbelief. Peter here echoes the teaching of Jesus, in Luke 12:46-48, that not only will unbelievers be separated from God in eternal punishment, but there will also be degrees of punishment (see also Rev 20:12, the "books" will be opened). One who receives and rejects more light has greater accountability and will receive greater punishment.

22) Peter quotes appropriate proverbs about dogs returning to vomit and hogs to the mire. This is about the nature of a person. As long as a dog remains a dog, and a hog remains a hog, they will do what those beasts naturally do. A change of nature, however, will bring about a change of behavior. When a sinner becomes a saint, appropriate actions follow. "In Christ...new creations." Praise God!

2 Peter 3

1) The big fisherman speaks with the affection of the apostle John, calling them "beloved." He tells us this was his 2nd epistle, written to the same group as the first, and written to stir their minds. Christianity is not a "mindless" faith. The battle for the mind is a great warfare, and Peter wishes to strike a blow at Satan for the minds of believers. What food nourishes your mind? Would Peter approve of your choice of "food for thought?"

2) What he wants them (and us) to remember is the Scripture! He speaks of the "holy prophets," that's the Hebrew Scriptures. "Our Lord and Savior" represents the gospels. "Your apostles" completes the Bible reference to the rest of the NT. The examples are for our following, the doctrine is for our learning, and the commands are for us to obey. While

writing Scripture, Peter calls us back to the Bible. How goes your Bible study these days? Are you on track?

3) While God speaks his truth, Satan has his preachers of error. We **must** know that not everyone who speaks on the subject of Christ's coming will speak truth. As we see so often, doctrinal error and immorality go hand in hand. These teachers walk in lusts. Has the combination of immorality and the propagation of untruth ever been more abundant than we see them today? Don't be swept in by either! Think right and live right - these also go together.

4) The sample of heresy Peter gives us is properly called "uniformitarianism." It teaches that "things uniformly just keep going as they always have. The conclusion is that man need not repent or follow some rigid code of life. There is no coming Judge Who will call us into account for our lives." This fails to take into account the flood or Sodom's destruction, already mentioned by Peter. And such judgments will accompany the coming of Christ!

5), 6) Peter responds to the argument that things just keep on as they are with two references - Gen. 1 and Gen 6. This history that they say has just been going and going was begun cataclysmically by God! They conveniently and deliberately ignore the fact that God spoke and the world as we know it came into existence, air, land, water. The same waters that were the cradle of creation were used by God to destroy creation. The flood of Noah's day was a "cataclysm," a devastating interruption of creation's uniform continuation. The word "deluge" translates the Greek expression that gives us our word "cataclysm." The false teachers are just wrong! God **did** step in and judge His creation, and Jesus **will** come in with a storm of judgment. Do not be lulled to sleep by the scoffers who deny God. They and we will all stand before Him and give account. We shall bow and give praise.

7) Here is the progression of the argument. God created - that was the major event that began it all. Things have not gone on as they were, there was a little thing called the flood, a major interruption of history. That was "**then**" ("the world of that time" vs 6). This is "**now**" ("the present..."), and history will repeat itself. God will judge again! In keeping with His promise never to use water again to destroy the earth, Peter says God will next use fire. While the earth will be thus judged, the main target of judgment is the world of men who refused to honor God.

8) Peter essentially says here that God is not on our timetable. While it looks like He has stepped out of the scene by His apparent long absence from cataclysmic intervention, His watch is still ticking. The thousand years that seem so long to us are like a day to God. He is not in a hurry, but He will come suddenly to destroy evil.

9) Scoffers charge that God must be slow in keeping His promise of a coming Judge, but He isn't. He is rather being **patient** with men, giving them an extended opportunity to come to Him through faith in His Son. This verse and 1 Tim 2:4 argue that God desires all men to be saved, though salvation is only applied where men trust Christ.

10) The "day of the Lord" refers to the coming time when God will manifest his sovereignty over all the earth to all its inhabitants. That includes the tribulation, the glorious second coming, the millennial earthly reign of Christ, the final judgments, purgation of the earth by fire, and the great white throne judgment. Included in that is the burning up of the earth as we know it - sounds like a worldwide nuclear holocaust, doesn't it? It's coming!

11), 12) The computer I'm working on, the radio you're listening to, the car you may be riding in, the house where you live, the building where you worship, and all the rest of material creation are going to be destroyed. It's all temporary. So instead of undue attachment to things (which will burn) we should live for eternal values - souls saved, lives changed, truth learned and believed and practiced, Christ coming, hell awaiting those who know Him not! These should drive us, not preoccupation with stuff! Does Peter here imply that we can do something to hasten the coming of God's day? Some say "yes," that by living godly lives, praying, witnessing, helping others find Christ, we can help bring the age to a close. If that be true, let's get busy telling people to prepare!

13) It seems that righteousness and the righteous are out of place in this world system. Take heart - the destruction of the old is to make way for the new, in which we who are righteous in Christ will find a suitable home. We are strangers and pilgrims here, but we shall be very much at home there. Yes beloved, the best is yet to come!

14) The passing nature of this soon-to-be destroyed world suggests that we need not be too fond of or attached to it. Rather, we should cling to that which is eternal. We should live like Him Who is eternal. He was spotless and blameless (1 Pet 1:19), and the same words are used in this exhortation to us here. We should be like Christ!

15) Perhaps referring to Rom 2:4, Peter says he and Paul agree that God's patience is a means of salvation; does he mean here that the longer Christ waits to return, the more opportunity there is for people to be saved?

16) Peter gives Paul's writings the authority of Scripture. He says some of Paul's sayings are hard to understand, and we agree. He says that those who distort Scripture are lost and will never come to understand and be saved.

17) Peter tells his "loved ones" they need to be on their guard against false teachers. Such alertness will prevent their being drawn away from their steadfastness in Christ. He does not suggest saved people could ever be lost.

18) O that we may grow in a personal, subjective, experiential knowledge of Christ! It is to His glory and by His grace when this happens. It results from walking with Him and studying the Book He has given for this purpose.