

A Study of Second Peter
Week One
2 Peter 1:1-21

Day One

1:1 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: 2 Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. 3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

v. 1 – There is some debate in theological circles whether Peter wrote this letter. As far as I’m concerned, he did. Why do I say this? I have also maintained that the Spirit who inspired the Word is the same Spirit who protects the Word, allowing it to be passed down from generation to generation. I don’t think the Spirit would have allowed someone to write who said they were Simon Peter but were really someone else. That would be a misrepresentation and God cannot lie. End of debate for me.

Peter started out mentioning Jesus twice in the first verse! For the Apostles of the Lamb, as the original apostles are often called, everything was about Jesus. That is the way it should be for us as well. Our doctrine, structures, titles, and work should all be directed to, motivated by and because of Jesus. I have said in previous studies that this absolute focus on Jesus in the writings of the apostles has challenged me over the last few years. I had to face that often my teaching did not include Jesus’ name nor did it direct the people back to Jesus the way I should have. I have made significant changes in my preaching and teaching as a result of this insight.

v. 2 – Grace and peace. I am often greeted in churches I visit by the phrase, “Grace and peace.” When I hear it, I always hope it is a meaningful expression for those who use it and not just a trite phrase that everyone in the church employs. Peter didn’t just want grace and peace for his readers, he wanted grace and peace in abundance.

Furthermore, Peter wanted this abundance to come through the knowledge of Jesus. The apostles and early church did not debate about Jesus, nor did they see Him as just one factor in their lives. Jesus was everything. Most importantly He was the Way, Truth and Life for all those who followed Him. The apostles knew no other way but for Jesus to affect and impact every area of life. Jesus wasn’t a sideline for the early church—He was everything!

v. 3 – Peter again mentioned knowledge in this verse. The point I am trying to make is that this knowledge wasn’t theological, it was practical. Knowing Jesus isn’t correct answers from catechism; it’s life itself. And that life should then impact our careers, marriages, children, giving, thinking and worldview (economics, government, medicine, and other institutions).

I am not against theology, but I am very much against theology that doesn't find its way into every day life, making us better fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, workers, government servants, or citizens. **Are you a better person for following Jesus? Do people know you follow Him? Can they tell by your behavior? Has your knowledge of God found its way into your daily life?**

Day Two

4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

v. 4 – God has made promises through His word to His people. The purpose of the promises is two-fold: participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world. Can you think of any of these promises? Here are a few I can think of, but feel free to add to the list:

1. Give and you shall receive – avoids greed.
2. Die and you shall live – combats ambition and envy.
3. Serve and you will lead – lessens the need for self-promotion and power.

When you do any of those I mentioned, you become more like God, participating in the divine nature. That doesn't mean you become divine, so don't get weird on me concerning that. We are, however, to be conformed to the image of Jesus and as you take steps to do your part to participate in God's promises, He will do His part. That is His commitment to you.

In fact, in some sense you can determine how God responds to you by how you respond to him and others first. Consider and meditate on this passage:

The LORD has dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he has rewarded me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD; I have not done evil by turning from my God. All his laws are before me; I have not turned away from his decrees. I have been blameless before him and have kept myself from sin. The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight. To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the crooked you show yourself shrewd. You save the humble but bring low those whose eyes are haughty (Psalm 18:20-27).

v. 5 – Peter urged that the reader make every effort to obtain the results of God's promises. Where did Peter start? He started with faith. That is where it all begins for

“without faith, it is impossible to please him” (Hebrews 11:6). From there, Peter listed “goodness” next, which is translated “virtue” in the King James. This virtue seems to mean courage or fortitude and fits in with the message of Peter, which was to allow the suffering that stems from faith build patience and longsuffering in one’s heart. Next on the progression is knowledge. The more we know about God, the more we can worship and reverence Him. The more we know about what He wants us to do, the more pleasing we can be to Him. So the progression so far reads faith to goodness to knowledge.

v. 6 – If we know much, but still don’t temper our carnal nature, we will be knowledgeable whom God can’t use. We will speak a good talk, but we won’t walk a good walk. So we must learn to say “no” to the sin that clings so easily to us. From there we advance to perseverance, and that is necessary so that we don’t fall short of the finish line:

No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize (1 Corinthians 9:27).

The next step is godliness. I watch Buddhist monks and they are self-controlled in a manner of speaking. They are not godly; they have only focused on succumbing their natural appetites. There must be a goal to our study and discipline and that goal is godliness—of becoming like God Himself. This of course can only be done in the power of the Spirit, with our cooperation.

v. 7 – The last two steps are brotherly kindness and love. The Christian life isn’t a life of study; it is a life of service that impacts the people around us—first our fellow believers and then the world. Most of Paul’s letters were teaching in the first half, and application in the last half. So there you have the progression: faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. **Why not do some kind of assessment of where you are at in your walk where each of those steps are concerned?**

Day Three

8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

v. 8 – None of the qualities in the progression outlined above are static. One never arrives at any of them. They are to be present in all our lives, but they are also to be growing and increasing. So perhaps the progression should read: grow in faith, grow in goodness, grow in knowledge, grow in self-control, grow in perseverance, grow in godliness, grow in brotherly kindness and grow in love. So you must not only assess where you are concerning each quality, you must also determine if you are growing in those areas. So, are you? How can you measure each of those characteristics?

When these qualities are present and increasing, they will keep you from being *ineffective*. The Greek word for *ineffective* here is *argos*, which means lazy, shunning the work that one ought to perform. The word for *unproductive* is *akarpos*, which means unfruitful, not yielding what it ought to yield. The implication is that God expects you to increase in the qualities Peter listed so you can bear fruit. This is consistent with what Jesus said:

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name (John 15:16).

Are you bearing fruit? If not, you may be lacking in some of the qualities listed in verses five and six above. Or you may be lazy or unwilling to bear that fruit. What are the reasons, do you know? What are you prepared to do about it? Perhaps a spiritual coach would help. If you were out of shape physically, you could employ a personal trainer. How about a personal spiritual trainer? What price are you willing to pay to bear fruit? Or will you be content with being a nice person?

v. 9 – Peter went one step further. He said if you lack these qualities in increasing measure you are blind and have a short memory. You have forgotten that God has forgiven your sins and that your life isn't your own any longer.

And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again (2 Corinthians 5:15).

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

Who are you living for? Who or what is Lord of your life? Are you growing and increasing in the most important things in God's eyes?

Day Four

10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 12 So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.

v. 10 – How can you make your calling sure? I think by producing the qualities that Peter mentioned in verses five and six. You can prove that God is real in your life by producing fruit and character. I can remember when I first met the Lord. I would pray that God would make Himself so evident in me that people would look at me and know that I followed Jesus. I realized, however, that God didn't want me to *look* like a little Jesus. He wanted me to *act* like a little Jesus.

The way to remain steadfast in your walk is to work on the disciplines that will produce the progression above, starting with faith and ending with love. If you work on righteousness, evil will have no place in your life. This is consistent with what Paul taught as well:

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God (Romans 8:5-8).

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation — but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (Romans 8:12-15).

v. 11 – The fruit of a godly life is the reward for those who live it. Yet there's more, for God is watching and He rewards as well. That is the goal and incentive of faith:

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that **he rewards those who earnestly seek him** (Hebrews 11:6 emphasis added).

v. 12 – There is a phrase, “Some things bear repeating.” Peter knew that this process and progression was so important that it was worth repeating. The results were so critical and the rewards so fantastic (and everlasting) that he decided that he would not assume everyone was on the same page, so to speak and teach, even if he repeated himself.

This is a good principle to follow. When I pastored, I had to keep in mind that new people were coming to the church all the time. I didn't have to come up with “new material” all the time. I had to go back over the same material on a regular basis so that those who had heard would be reminded and those who hadn't could be instructed. I also tried to follow a general schedule of what I would teach throughout the year: giving in October, worship in May, and Christmas theme in December. Then I taught through the book of Acts for 18 months to emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit.

My point is that, if you are teaching or pastoring, you must repeat your material, whether working with children or adults. Don't assume everyone has heard what you're teaching and don't assume they understood it the first time.

Day Five

13 I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, 14 because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things. 16 We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we

told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

vs. 13&14 – No one will live forever. In fact, no one is sure how long they will live. I know that sounds ridiculously basic, but how many know that to be true, yet act in a manner that is contrary to the truth. For instance, how many leaders don't have a plan of succession if they should die (especially pastors). Many people I know, especially young people, don't have a last will and testament. We make plans for what we will do when conditions are hopefully more ideal or less stressful in 10 or 20 years, and we talk like we have those years guaranteed to us.

Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom (Psalm 90:12).

Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil (James 4:13-16).

Peter was writing because he knew he would die, and it sounded like he felt his departure was imminent. It's not clear whether the Lord had revealed this to him recently or whether it was just that he was getting older.

v. 15 – Peter was willing to make every effort to insure that the flock would be able to remember what he taught after he was gone. That meant he was making an effort to write. Writing is an effort. It takes time, first of all, and then a commitment to clarity so that those who read may understand. That is why if you are serious about writing, you must identify an editor, someone who will critically appraise your work and give you valuable input and perspective.

I am a big proponent that everyone should be writing in some capacity, if not for publication, then for your own journal to record your journey in Christ. Do you write? You may ask, "Who will read it?" Well, you will for one and the Lord for the other. There are people like Wesley, Fox and others who wrote journals and those journals were published after their deaths. I admit that these cases are few and far between and those men founded movements and had followings, but it can happen. It will never happen, however, if you don't write. No one can publish or read what you don't write.

v. 16 – The fact that Peter alluded to cleverly invented stories meant that some had the capability to concoct such tales and others had accused the apostles of doing just that. Even today I hear some speakers telling tales of angels they've seen and experiences they've had. I was in Ohio last year and I heard a preacher who held the people in the palm of his hand with his rhetorical skills—but he had nothing to say! Yet he was a craftsman and knew how to speak, that's for sure.

I determined long ago that, if the Lord ever released me, I wanted to be the best speaker I could be with content. And the only content I am interested in is truth from or truth that the Bible corroborates. It doesn't have to be "either or." One doesn't have to be a good speaker without content or a boring speaker with content. Jesus was a great teacher and speaker. I want to be like Him and I think He can teach how, don't you?

While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, "How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: "'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'" David himself calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?" **The large crowd listened to him with delight** (Mark 12:35-37 emphasis added).

Day Six

17 For 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." 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. 19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

v. 17 – Peter was referring to Jesus' transfiguration in Matthew 17:1-5. Verse five is particularly important:

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased . **Listen to him!**"

God the Father wants His creation to listen and obey the Son. He isn't content for us to experience the Son, but to obey Him. The transfiguration must have been quite an experience, but that wasn't the lesson of the event. It was the affirmation that Jesus received and God expected Jesus to be revered and obeyed. The Father didn't say that Jesus was one way, but the only way to heaven. No one else in history has received this kind of affirmation from heaven, therefore this person Jesus is worthy of our obedience and worship.

v. 18 – Peter, James and John were eyewitnesses of this event, handpicked by Jesus to see His glory. They were also instructed not to tell anyone what they had seen as they were coming down the mountain to rejoin the others. Can you imagine seeing and hearing what they had just seen, but being expressly forbidden to tell anyone? Why do you think Jesus didn't want them telling anyone just yet? Probably because they could not have kept this event in perspective. It would have been too spectacular and would have clouded his coming suffering and death. Many already wanted to install Him as king on David's throne.

v. 19 – I had always interpreted this to mean that, while Peter had heard a voice from heaven, the written Word was more reliable than any such experience. Now I am not so

sure that is what it means. The Old Testament prophets had referred to Jesus, especially Isaiah. Of course, these prophecies were shadows of what was to come and not at all clear. In some sense the Old Testament prophecies gave us the silhouette of Jesus. Then He came and gave us the full picture. We can now go back to those Old Testament prophecies to see and understand so much more, because now we have seen Jesus and have an account of His earthly ministry. In other words, we have the prophetic word made more certain because of the eyewitness accounts of men like Peter.

This is not the first time that I had to unlearn or release some interpretation of Scripture that I maintained. I think that is a healthy thing, don't you? I am always learning and you should be, too. At times, we make certain assumptions about the word. At other times, we hear a teaching that isn't quite right, yet it "sticks" with us. So I always approach the Word as a student and not as a teacher who already has the answers. In other words, I am learning along with you as we work our way through these studies.

Day Seven

20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

v. 20 – Men could not have concocted the prophetic utterances concerning Jesus. They were inspired by God. Nor were these utterances then subject to their own interpretation. Just because God used them to deliver the Word didn't mean at that time they had inside information on what the prophecy meant. That would only come when Jesus Himself appeared.

It seems that Peter was still referring to the fact that the apostles did not deliver cleverly concocted tales about Jesus, but rather were delivering the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies in the life and stories of Jesus. So in a sense, Peter was saying that even he could not interpret the prophecies. He was simply reporting the facts of the Old Testament and the facts of his walk with Jesus.

v. 21 – This is a simple, straightforward truth. No prophecy about Jesus ever had its origin in man or his imaginations. The books of the other religions and world movements, on the other hand, are filled with fairy tales and cleverly concocted stories. Their books even contain drawings and pictures of gods and goddesses, nature and man, couples and children. But they are nothing but fiction. Peter told the truth. The prophecies were delivered by men who spoke from God as they were carried along by the Spirit.

And now you and I have inherited these promises and prophecies. We must declare them as supreme and preach Jesus to the ends of the earth. We have been entrusted with the same prophecies and testimony as the first readers of Peter's letter. Are you ready to take your place in your generation as a carrier and protector of the truth about Jesus? I hope you are.